NAHḌA EPISTOLOGRAPHY: AL-SHARTŪNĪ'S *AL-SHIHĀB* AND THE WESTERN ART OF LETTER-WRITING

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Letter-writing represents one of the most important modes of communication in Islamic and Western societies. Arabic manuals on epistolography and collections of model letters abound throughout the medieval period and continued to be written right up to modern times. The research to date, however, has tended to focus on works of the pre-modern periods which rooted in the Islamic tradition cater primarily for a Muslim audience. Little is known about manuals produced in the Arab *nahḍa* and it is not clear what factors might have influenced them. Moving into the largely uncharted territory of *nahḍa* letter-writing manuals, this article takes a detailed look at al-Shartūnī's manual on epistolary theory and model letters, *al-Shihāb al-thāqib*. An analysis of this work reveals it as a significant attempt by al-Shartūnī to appropriate elements of the Western *ars dictaminis* (the art of letter-writing) into his manual for the benefit of an Arab-Christian audience in the *nahḍa*.

The Arab Renaissance (*nahḍa*) of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries represents one of the most important cultural phenomena in the history of the Arab world. Not only did *nahḍa* intellectuals make considerable efforts to preserve the Arabic language and revive classical Arab culture, but they also sought to assimilate Western learning and achievements through translation and adaptation in order to achieve the desired reform of their societies. Leading *nahḍa* reformers such as Buṭrus al-Bustānī and Muḥammad ᶜAbduh were convinced that humanistic education and learning was of the utmost importance for the progress of their societies and accordingly encouraged their close associates to pursue a number of disciplines including grammar, lexicography, poetry and rhetoric. A good example of the Christian intellectuals of the *nahḍa* who took an active interest in these disciplines was the Lebanese scholar Saᶜīd al-Shartūnī (1849–1912). Like many of his contemporaries, al-Shartūnī excelled in linguistic, literary, and educational activities during the *nahḍa*. He taught at various leading schools and institutions in Lebanon including the Greek Catholic school for higher education at ᶜAyn Trāz in the Mount Lebanon region, established in the 1790s; *al-*

Madrasa al-Patrikīya (The Patriarchate School) established by the Greek Catholics in 1865; and the *Madrasat al-Ḥikma* (The School of Wisdom), founded in 1874 by the Maronite Bishop of Beirut, Yūsuf al-Dibs. At the same time, he worked for the Jesuit College, today known as the Université Saint-Joseph, as a teacher and Arabic proof-reader, for over twenty years. His network of close associates include many of the leading intellectuals of the *nahḍa* such as Buṭrus al-Bustānī, and Muḥammad ᶜAbduh, and later influential figures like the writer and politician, Shakīb Arslān (1869–1947), and the Lebanese critic, Mārūn ᶜAbbūd (1886–1962), who were both his students at the *Madrasat al-Ḥikma*.[1]

Al-Shartūnī understood above all the need to make available to his compatriots textbooks on grammar, lexicography, poetry and rhetoric that would facilitate for them the acquisition of these disciplines. Although al-Shartūnī made important scholarly contributions to all these fields, his main interests lay in rhetoric. He produced two principal pedagogical works on letter-writing and composition, and one on oratory. His first major work, *al-Shihāb al-thāqib fī ṣināᶜat al-kātib* (The Shooting Star on the Art of the Writer, 1884), is a manual on epistolography, comprising theory and a large corpus of model letters in a style thought to resemble the pre-modern epistolary genre.[2] His other work, *Kitāb al-muᶜīn fī ṣināᶜat al-inshāᵓ* (Book of the Helper on the Art of Literary Composition, 1899) is a four-volume manual on general style and composition intended for use by students and teachers.[3] Al-Shartūnī's Christian background explains his interest in non-Muslim, Western rhetoric and oratory, as his reflected by his diverse endeavours in the field. The *Kitāb al-ghuṣn al-raṭīb fī fann al-khaṭīb* (Book of the Succulent Branch on the Art of the Orator, 1908) is a pedagogical manual on the principles and techniques of oratory based on Greco-Roman rhetoric. In this work, al-Shartūnī employs a question and answer technique to address various aspects of oration, which in addition to the rhetorical and stylistic elements of oration, deals with speech and body language.[4] He

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[1] For more on al-Shartūnī, his life and other works, see Abdulrazzak Patel, 'Saᶜīd al-Shartūnī: A Humanist of the Arab Renaissance (*nahḍa*)', unpublished Ph.D. thesis (University of Exeter, 2007); and Adrian Gully, 'al-Shartūnī', in *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2nd edn.), 12: 724–5 Henceforth, *EI*^{2}.

[2] Saᶜīd al-Shartūnī, *al-Shihāb al-thāqib fī ṣināᶜat al-kātib* (Beirut, 1884; reprint, Beirut: Maṭbaᶜat al-ābaᵓ al-yasuᶜiyyīn, 1913).

[3] Saᶜīd al-Shartūnī, *Kitāb al-muᶜīn fī ṣināᶜat al-inshāᵓ*, 4 vols. (Beirut: al-Maṭbaᶜa al-Uthmānīya, 1899).

[4] Saᶜīd al-Shartūnī, *Kitāb al-ghuṣn al-raṭīb fī fann al-khaṭīb* (Beirut: al-

also published an edition of Jarmānūs Farḥāt's (1670–1732) work on oratory and sermons entitled *Faṣl al-khiṭāb fī l-waᶜẓ* (The Division of Speech Concerning the Sermon, 1896), together with Fénelon's sermons which he had translated into Arabic.[5] Al-Shartūnī's interest in Western rhetoric is furthermore reflected in his translation of a speech belonging to the renowned Roman rhetorician Marcus Tullius Cicero (106–43 BC).[6] The speech entitled, *Khuṭbat Shīsharūn fī-l-muḥāmāh ᶜan Likāriyūs* (Cicero's Speech in Defence of Ligarius), represents one of Cicero's most outstanding legal orations which he delivered in defence of the Roman knight, Quintus Ligarius (*c.* 50 BC) who was accused by Julius Caesar of treason for having opposed him in a war in Africa. Al-Shartūnī translated this speech: 'out of a burning desire to acquaint Arabic speakers—especially those who lack the knowledge of a European language—with Cicero's speeches because none are available in the Arabic language'.[7] He also wrote an interesting article entitled *al-Bayān al-ᶜarabī wa-l-bayān al-ifranjī* in which he compares Arab and Western rhetoric.[8]

This article takes a detailed look at al-Shartūnī's work on epistolary theory and model letters known as *al-Shihāb al-thāqib fī ṣināᶜat al-kātib*. In this article, I examine my hypothesis that al-Shartūnī's theories on letter-writing are derived from the Western *ars dictaminis* (the art of letter-writing). The first part of this article gives a brief overview of the conditions, major figures and works that contributed to the birth and development of the epistolary art in the Arab world and the West. Al-Shartūnī's work is then examined alongside selected Western treatises to test this hypothesis. In addition, Arab works are consulted as and when required while recent studies on letter-writing are used to contextualize and reinforce discussions.

Arab Letter-writing

During the Arab medieval period, bureaucracies under Muslim Dynasties

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Maṭbaᶜa al-Adabīya, 1908).

[5] Saᶜīd al-Shartūnī, ed., *Faṣl al-khiṭāb fī-l-waᶜẓ li-jarmānūs farḥāt* (Beirut: al-Maṭbaᶜa al-kāthūlīkīya lil-ābaʾ al-yasuᶜiyyīn, 1896), 5.

[6] This speech was translated by al-Shartūnī from a French version of the speech which in itself was translated from the original Latin and published in Paris in 1853. See al-Shartūnī, '*Khuṭbat Shīsharūn fī-l-muḥāmā ᶜan Likāriyūs*', in *al-Muqtaṭaf* 32 (1907): 474–85.

[7] Ibid., 474.

[8] Hāshim Yāghī, *al-Naqd al-adabī al-ḥadīth fī Lubnān*, 2 vols, (Cairo: Dar al-Maᶜārif, 1968) 1: 203–6.

(Umayyads, Abbasids, Fatimids, Ayyubids, and Mamluks) were the catalyst for a class of chancery secretaries, who, having served a long apprenticeship in the art of composition (*inshāʾ*), compiled style manuals dealing with the theory as well as the practice of their profession. Across the Arab world, from Iraq in the East to Islamic Spain, a specialized literary genre of secretarial manuals, consisting of letters and documents to friends and rulers came into existence. These manuals enabled the secretaries to provide standardized forms of official correspondence, and demonstrate their unrivalled brilliance at letter-writing. Strict principles, for instance, were developed by the secretaries which ordered the format of the greeting, how the body of the letter was presented, and even the flow of the language, for it was the sign of a talented writer who could end each sentence of his letter with words in a specific metre.[9]

The secretarial manuals were of various types: some included collections of model letters and chancery material i.e. documents to rulers, and others outlined rules and techniques for writers and chancery secretaries, while many others combined both elements. Bjorkmann, for instance, classifies Arab letter-writing manuals into three main types. His classification is useful since it is based on a comparison with Western ones: 'Collections of models similar to the formularies of the West; treatises on stylistics and rules concerning the drawing up of documents (similar to the Western *artes* or *summae dictaminis*); or a combination of these two, i.e. formularies with theoretical commentary, or theoretical treatises with examples (similar to those found in the West from the twelfth century onwards)'.[10]

Although literature for scribes was extant from the early period of Islam, the first works were not, or not exclusively, letter-writing manuals, but more complex in nature and contents.[11] Gully points out that the

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[9] A. Arazi and H. Ben-Shammay, 'Risāla,' in *EI*^{2} 3: 532–9.

[10] Walter Björkmann, *Beiträge zur Gesrhichte der Staatskanzlei im islarnischen Ägypten* (Hamburg: De Gruyter, 1965), 306, quoted in Adrian Gully, 'Epistles for Grammarians: Illustrations from the *inshāʾ* Literature,' *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 23/2 (1996): 147–66 (149).

[11] These were general *adab* works such as the *Risālat al-kuttāb* of ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd al-Kātib (d. 750) and the *al-Adab al-kabīr* of Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ (d. 757). In the eighth and ninth centuries, a series of works of the *Adab al-kātib* genre appeared for the use of secretaries like Ibn Qutaybah's (d. 889) *Adab al-kātib*, the *Kitāb al-Kuttāb* of ʿAbd Allāh al-Baghdādī which, according to Sourdel, is the oldest known work on letter-writing, and the *al-Risāla al-ʿadhraʾ* by Muḥammad al-Shaybānī. Dominiqu Sourdel, 'Le "Livre des secrétaries" de

first real development in the writing of official documents came with al-Ṣūlī's (d. 946) *Adab al-kuttāb* (The Discipline of Secretaries) which, although among the earlier works of the *Adab al-kātib* genre, introduces rules for the supplication (*duᶜāᵓ*) and offers a definition of *inshāᵓ*. Dozens of manuals appeared in the subsequent years. Gully notes that during a period of nearly five centuries, which began with the *Adab al-Kuttāb* of al-Ṣūlī and culminated in the monumental *Ṣubḥ al-aᶜshā fī ṣināᶜat al-inshāᵓ* (Daylight for the Dim-Sighted in the Art of Literary Composition) by Aḥmad al-Qalqashandī (d. 1418), more than fifty works were devoted to the subject of *inshāᵓ*.[12] Some of the most important ones written during this period, include: Ibn Mammātī's *Qawānīn al-dawāwīn* (The Book of Chancery Regulations), al-Nābulūsī's, *Kitāb lumaᶜ al-qawānīn al-muḍiyya* (The Luminous Book of Illuminative Regulations), and Ibn Shith's *Maᶜālim al-kitābah* (Handbook of Writing) from the Ayyubid period; Ibn Faḍl Allāh al-ᶜUmarī's *Masālik al-abṣār taᶜrīf bi-l-muṣṭalaḥ al-sharīf* (Introduction to the Terminology of the Noble Arts) and *ᶜUrf al-taᶜrīf* from the Mamluk period and the culmination of all previous works on *inshāᵓ*, the *Ṣubḥ al-aᶜshā* of al-Qalqashandī (completed in 1412), the printed text of which runs to 14 volumes and some 6,500 pages.[13]

Inshāᵓ works continued to be produced during the Ottoman period but not at the same rate. In the sixteenth century, Aḥmad al-Karmī (d. 1624) wrote *Kitāb badīᶜ al-inshāᵓ* (Book of Literary Style Composition), an important work partly because, as Gully indicates, very little is known about the status of Arabic *inshāᵓ* literature of the sixteenth century.[14]

'Abdallāh al-Baghdādī', *BEO* 14 (1952–54): 115–53 (116 and 132). Gully, however, points out that these compilations did not display concrete homogeneity and that the absence of the term *inshāᵓ* in any of these works supports the view that the literature for scribes in the Abbasid period was still confined almost exclusively to the *Adab al-kuttāb* works and that manuals, or collection of epistolary models, in the later sense of the term were yet to emerge. Gully, 'Epistles for Grammarians', 148–9.

12 Ibid., 149.

13 These works are listed in C. E. Bosworth, 'A *Maqāma* on Secretaryship: al-Qalqashandī's *al-Kawākib al-durriyya fī-l-manāqib al-badriyya*', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies* 27/2 (1964): 291–8 (292–3).

14 Gully, 'Epistles for Grammarians,' 155. Al-Karmī's work consists of theory as well as model letters. His section on theory is inundated with examples of various salutations, address, and supplications. Aḥmad al-Karmī, *Kitāb badīᶜ al-inshāᵓ wa-l-ṣifāt fī-l-mukātabāt wa-l-murāsalāt* (Istanbul: Maṭbaᶜat al-jawāᵓib, 1882), 18.

Almost two centuries later, Ḥasan al-ᶜAṭṭār (d. 1835) produced a work entitled *Kitāb inshāʾ al-ᶜAṭṭār* (ᶜAṭṭār's Book on Literary Composition), which deals with the drafting of contracts and title-deeds and the composition of letters exchanged between common people and kings.[15] According to al-ᶜAṭṭār, 'the organisation of the world is achieved with these two arts, for one represents the wings of kingship, and the other is its sword'.[16] For Gully, al-ᶜAṭṭār's work attempted to illustrate the importance of scribal accuracy in an age which was characterized by 'a deterioration in writing and copying'.[17]

A number of manuals on composition were written during the *nahḍa*, but little is known about them. A good example is al-Shartūnī's manual on general style and composition, *Kitāb al-Muᶜīn fī ṣināᶜat al-inshāʾ* (1899), designed to enhance the student's writing skills and knowledge of the Arabic language through the provision of exercises. An interesting feature of this work is that unlike many earlier works dealing with letter-writing, it provides suggestions for rhetorical invention rather than model letters for copying. Al-Shartūnī gives two hundred suggestions/topics—some relevant to modern society and some less so—to help the student write a letter, a composition piece, or a short essay. The student is asked, for instance, to discuss the causes of the 1870 Franco–Prussian War, and the 1898 Spanish–American War,[18] or to describe the various major schools operating in the Arab world in the *nahḍa* period, including ᶜAyn Waraqah, ᶜAyn Trāz and Madrasat al-Ḥikma.[19] Elsewhere the student is required to write letters to family members based on the following suggestions: (1) description of how the summer exams went; (2) the attainment of the diploma which is being sent to the father; and (3) glad tidings to the father that the examinations have increased the desire for learning.[20]

Besides the obvious linguistic and literary intent of the work, one cannot ignore the moral aims behind it. Interesting examples include: 'the boy who is rewarded for his honesty by the owner of a vineyard because he resists his desire to partake of grapes that were ripe for harvest';

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[15] Ḥasan al-ᶜAṭṭār, *Inshāʾ al-ᶜAṭṭār* (Istanbul: Maṭbaᶜat al-jawāʾib, 1882).

[16] Ibid., 19–20.

[17] Gully, 'Epistles for Grammarians', 163.

[18] Al-Shartūnī, *Kitāb al-muᶜīn*, 1: 24–5.

[19] Ibid: 30-36. The work also provides suggestions for letters based on the following traditional themes among others: advice (*naṣāḥ*), plea (*istiᶜtāf*), and complaint (*shakwā*). Ibid., 83-90.

[20] Ibid., 4–6.

'respect for the Shaykh who has dropped his book – how should the student react?'; 'the evil consequences of those who have dealings with immoral people'; 'the faults of a boy name Zayd who has become a menace to society' and 'the walnut tree of a boy named ᶜAmr, and his dispute with his neighbour Paul'.[21] The use of names commonly found in classical and medieval Arabic treatises on language and grammar in the last two suggestions clearly reflects the strong presence of tradition in the work. The scenario about the Muslim ᶜAmr and his dispute with his Christian neighbour Paul, advances the same theme of mutual tolerance and co-operation between religious communities that permeates the writings of *nahḍa* reformist figures such as Buṭrus al-Bustānī and Muḥammad ᶜAbduh: ᶜAmr had a huge walnut tree in his garden near the wall of his neighbour Paul (2) the branches stretched into Paul's garden (3) Paul requested ᶜAmr to cut the branches which were coming into his garden (4) ᶜAmr angrily rejected the request (5) Paul sent one of his friends to ᶜAmr (6) The friend in a kind and sensitive manner reminded ᶜAmr of the legal ruling on this matter (7) ᶜAmr was extremely touched and sought reconciliation with Paul (8) Paul accepted and subsequently presented ᶜAmr with a bunch of roses'.[22] These examples bear witness to the same concern for moral and social reform that dominated the thinking and writings of *nahḍa* reformist thinkers and scholars.

Another work of the *nahḍa* era worth noting here is Aḥmad al-Hāshimī's (1878–1943) *Jawāhir al-adab fī ṣināᶜat inshāʾ al-ᶜarab* (The Jewels of Literature Concerning the Art of Composition in Arabic, 1901),[23] a literary anthology intended for use in schools. This work provides a large selection of letters incorporating the traditional themes of apology (*iᶜtidhār*), congratulation (*tahānī*) and description (*waṣf*)), and also model letters by Abbasid literary figures such as al-Khuwārizmī and Badī Zamān alongside letters by *nahḍa* literati such as Hamza Fatḥ Allāh and ᶜAbd Allāh Fikrī.[24] Van Gelder states that the 1901 edition ends

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[21] Ibid., 16. For further examples, see ibid., 4–24, 65 *passim*.

[22] Ibid., 77–8.

[23] More than a dozen editions of *Jawāhir al-adab* were printed and reprinted in the twentieth century.

[24] For more on Hashimī's *Jawāhir*, see G. J. H. Van Gelder, '145 Topics for Arabic School Essays in 1901 from Aḥmad al-Hāshimī's *Jawāhir al-adab fī ṣināʾat inshāʾ al-ᶜarab*,' in *Law, Christianity, and Modernism in Islamic Society*: *Proceedings of the Eighteenth Congress of the Union Européenne des Arabisants et Islamisants held at the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven 3–9 September 1996*, ed. U. Vermeulen and J. M. F. Van Reeth (Leuven: Uitgeverij

with something novel for Arabic literature: 'It provides a concluding chapter with 145 suggestions/topics for composition, and it is very likely that al-Hāshimī was influenced by Western examples in this respect'.[25] The suggestions for composition might be something novel for Arabic literature under Western influence, but are not unique to Hāshimī's work in the *nahḍa*. Al-Shartūnī's *Kitāb al-muᶜīn*, which was completed as early as 1898, provides numerous suggestions/topics for composition, as noted above. Moreover, like al-Shartūnī's *Kitāb al-muᶜīn*, some of the topics in Hāshimī's work are traditional, others regard modern society (its technology and its politics), while others are concerned with traditional ethics: (§37) Describe the town in which you are living. (§100) What is the use of knowledge and teaching? (§141) Which is more useful, railways or steamboats? (§145) Which is morally superior, he who endures his poverty or he who is thankful for his wealth?[26] In this regard, Van Gelder makes an important concluding remark which seems particularly relevant to similar works of the period including al-Shartūnī's *al-Muᶜīn*: 'Modernity in the Arab world was introduced not only by original and creative writers advocating the new and rejecting the old; it was also, and perhaps equally or even more effectively, brought about by more subtle means, in the garb of traditionality, edging in between the classical and the familiar'.[27]

During the same period, Rashīd al-Shartūnī (1864–1906)[28] produced Nahj al-murāsala (The Path to Correspondence, 1887), a manual on letter-writing which he wrote 'as a guide and aid for students'.[29] A notable feature of the work is the author's concern for hierarchical social relationships between sender and recipient which appears to guide the provision of much of the material in the theoretical section. Rashīd lists model salutations for the various Ottoman secular hierarchies, including

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Peeters, 1998), 292–3.

[25] Ibid., 293.

[26] Ibid., 294–5.

[27] Ibid., 299.

[28] Rashīd was the younger brother of Saᶜīd al-Shartūnī.

[29] Rashīd al-Shartūnī, *Nahj al-murāsala* (Beirut: Maṭbaᶜat al-ābāʾ al-yasūᶜīyīn,1887), 4–7, 144. Rashīd, like his brother, organizes model letters under the following themes: familiar letters, letters of advice, blame and excuses, condolence, congratulation, request, thanks, business letters, invitation. He also provides similar basic guidelines before each letter category. The theoretical section in *Nahj* is also modelled on his brother's *al-Shihāb*, but mainly limited to salutations. Al-Shartūnī covers a broader variety of topics, as I show below.

the Sultan and those under him in the various administrative and military ranks of the Ottoman Empire. He also provides extensive salutatory models for the various Christian ecclesiastical hierarchies including the pope, cardinal, bishop and others. For those with no official rank, he states they should be addressed according to the social hierarchical relationship between the writer and recipient As for litterateurs and poets, they should be addressed 'according to their rank in learning'.[30] Although Rashīd's manual would require further study, here and there, especially in the author's preoccupation with hierarchical social relationships between sender and recipient and in the salutatory material for Christian ecclesiastical hierarchies, one can detect the influence of the medieval Western *ars dictaminis*.

Western Letter-writing

In the West, the growth of secular and ecclesiastical bureaucracies established the conditions for the birth of the *ars dictaminis*.[31] The epistolary collections of the earlier medieval period, which included official letters and formularies were unable to cope with the demands of these bureaucracies. Equally, secretaries needed a means of standardizing and unifying modes of communication into a single framework. Writers therefore developed new rhetorical forms specific to letter-writing, by applying the principles of classical rhetoric to the letter, and from the eleventh century onwards a series of works on the *ars dictaminis* emerged.[32] Perelman notes that although these works drew from classical rhetorical texts, they modified the earlier theory to meet the ideological requirements of medieval institutions and the practical requirements of the epistolary form. They became, in a sense, an early prototype of the modern handbook of effective business writing. Moreover, the teaching and applica-

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[30] Ibid., 4–6.

[31] Murphy points out that the terms *ars dictaminis* specifically describes a theoretical manual or treatise on letter-writing, while *Dictminum* describes a collection of models usually complete letters. James Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages*: *A History of Rhetorical Theory from Saint Augustine to the Renaissance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), 219.

[32] Rhetoric was central to the study of the verbal arts during the Roman Empire, but after its demise and with the gradual rise of formal education in the medieval period, there was an eventual decline in the study of rhetoric for several centuries until the High Middle Ages. Rhetoric then experienced a revival in the arts of letter writing (*ars dictaminis*) and sermons (*ars praedicandi*). Ronald Witt, 'Medieval 'Ars Dictaminis' and the Beginnings of Humanism: a New Construction of the Problem,' *Renaissance Quarterly* 35/1 (1982): 6–7.

tion of these manuals became almost universal in literate medieval culture, and the form and style they dictated became present in almost all types of letters, from the official pronouncements of popes to the letters of students.[33]

The evolution of the *ars dictaminis* from classical rhetoric is perhaps best illustrated by a glance at some of the early figures associated with the genre and their works. Alberic of Monte Cassino (d. 1105), the Benedictine monk and teacher of classical rhetoric at the oldest monastery in Western Europe, is generally credited as a founder of the genre.[34] He adapted classical rhetorical theory to the letter in his two works: Bre*viarium de dictamine* (Epistolary Breviary) and *Dictaminum Radii* (Rays of the Epistolary Arts). Alberic, for instance, divides the letter into four parts based on Cicero's six parts of speech as follows: *exordium*, *narratio*, *argumentatio* and *conclusio*. According to Murphy, Alberic's works are particularly important since they demonstrate how rhetorical theory moved from the Ciceronian emphasis on *logos* to elements concerned with the specific relationship between the writer and reader, *ethos* and *pathos*. Likewise, they highlight how traditional rhetorical forms developed into new ones, that is to say, letter-writing.[35]

The rise of the epistolary art among its earlier figures such as Alberic is clearly rooted in the Christian tradition and one of its hallmarks appears to be a strong emphasis on teaching and pedagogy. The great Benedictine monastery acted as a breeding ground and school for the recruitment to the papal chancery, which Perelman indicates reveals a close connection between the rise of the chancery and the development of the formal teaching and practice of the art of letter writing. Alberic's pupil, John of Gaeta, served as papal chancellor for thirty years (1089–1118), before becoming Pope Gelasius II in 1118. The monastery also educated Albert of Morra who was chancellor to three successive popes before becoming pope himself as Gregory VIII in 1187.[36] According to Perelman, because the teaching and practice of letter writing offered one of the few opportunities for access to the seats of power, the ecclesias-

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[33] Les Perelman, 'The Medieval Art of Letter Writing: Rhetoric as Institutional Expression', in *Textual Dynamics of the Professions: Historical and Contemporary Studies of Writing in Professional Communities*, ed. Charles Bazerman and James Paradis (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991), 98.

[34] Ibid., 103.

[35] Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages*, 203–5.

[36] Perelman, 'Letter Writing: Rhetoric as Institutional Expression', 101.

tical and secular chanceries and courts, it soon became a regular part of the curriculum in cathedral and monastic schools, and later was taught in universities all over Europe.[37]

In the decades after Alberic, Murphy indicates that the centre of the dictaminal movement shifted from Monte Cassino in central Italy to the northern Italian city of Bologna, where in rapid succession a number of influential writers fleshed out the *ars dictaminis*.[38] The first of these writers was the learned Bolognese Adalbertus Samaritanu who wrote *Praecepta dictaminum* (Precepts of the Epistolary Art, *c.* 1120), a theoretical treatise with model letters. He is significant in the history of the *ars dictaminis* since he introduced a way of classifying letters not based on the styles themselves, as was the earlier practice with Cicero and Alberic, but using the relative social position of the writer and reader as his central criterion.[39] In this context, Perelman points out that whereas classical rhetoric always appeared, at least, to give precedence to logical argument as a means of persuasion, the rhetorical theory of the *ars dictaminis* seems to recognize hierarchical social relationships as the principal element of communication, reflecting a fundamental change in both rhetorical practice and the social organisation, which underlies it.[40] In the same period, Hugh of Bologna, who identifies himself as a canon of the Church, compiled *Rationes Dictandi Prosaice* (Reasons for the Art of Correspondence, *c.* 1120), a work which Murphy indicates offers the first systematic approach to the problem of supplying appropriate salutatory material for all the various levels of addressees (from Pope to bishop, to a teacher, to a soldier, and so on).[41] The work also presents a good proportion of model letters specifically related to school matters (a student's letter to his mother, to his master, etc).[42]

Anonymous authors wrote some of the other important works of the period such as the *Rationes Dictandi* (Principles of Letter-writing, 1135), a work which for Murphy illustrates the rapidity with which the basic doctrines of the *ars dictaminis* were crystallized in the Bologna region.

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37 Ibid., 102.

38 Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages*, 211.

39 Perelman, 'Letter Writing: Rhetoric as Institutional Expression',106.

40 Ibid., 106.

41 Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages*, 211, 217.

42 Alain Boureau, 'The Letter-Writing Norm, a Mediaeval Invention,' in *Correspondence: Models of Letter-Writing from the Middle Ages to the Nineteenth Century*, by Roger Chartier, Alain Boureau, and Cécile Dauphin, trans. Christopher Woodall (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1997), 24–58 (43).

This work helped establish in Bologna a basic doctrine, what Murphy calls the 'Bolognese Approved Format', comprising five parts of the letter: Salutation, the Securing of Goodwill, the Narration, the Petition, and the Conclusion. This format became an integral aspect of the Bolognese tradition and standard in most manuals. Moreover, the treatise is nakedly pragmatic with a minimum of prologue, and its whole tone marks it as an elementary manual for students, for use by those 'who make learned the tongues of infants'.[43] Mention should also be made of the monumental *Boncompagnonus* by the famous epistolographer Boncompagno of Signa (1215), who earned the title 'Prince of Epistoliers'. His work is divided into six books catering principally for the needs of students and Christian institutions. The first deals with the form of letters on the condition of students. The second book touches on the form of the letters of the Roman Church. The Third contains the form of letters that have to be sent to the supreme pontiff. The fourth is about the letters of emperors, kings and queens, and the missives and replies that subjects can address to them. The fifth book concerns prelates and their subordinates, as well as ecclesiastical matter. The sixth book consists of letters from noble and bourgeois men of the cities.[44]

New manuals continued to be produced well into the sixteenth century, but the basic doctrines continued to repeat what were essentially thirteenth-century Bolognese precepts.[45] Between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, letter-writing manuals were produced in the vernacular language of every country. In France, for example, manuals known as *secrétaries* were particularly popular and enjoyed considerable success. Between 1850 and 1869 alone more than 250 editions appeared. This success, however, was followed by a sharp and rapid downturn. According to Chartier, the teaching of writing, now understood as the ability to draft texts – including letters, had shifted to the schools. He states: 'at the very moment when the output of *secrétaries* began to wane, school manuals took to incorporating exemplary letters, supplied as worthy of imitation, and the epistolary form became a regular part of French *dictée* and composition'.[46]

Dauphin identifies four types of manual extant in the nineteenth century. The first deals solely with matters of theory and aims to preserve

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[43] Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages*, 221.

[44] Alain Boureau, 'The Letter-Writing Norm, a Mediaeval Invention', 46, 52. For a detailed outline of the subsections, see 52–6.

[45] Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages*, 267.

[46] Chartier, 'Introduction: An Ordinary Kind of Writing', 3.

'dogma', and is more concerned with formalism than with practical matters. He comments that although this kind of manual was rare by the nineteenth century, it was piously pillaged and served up piecemeal in introductions to most other manuals. Another type, he notes, includes 'the most run-of-the-mill kind of manual' which took the form of a recipe book, and was carefully targeted (at children, women or families). In these manuals, the theory was kept to a minimum but provided the greatest possible choice of model letters for the writer to copy directly or adapt to his or her needs. Another type of letter-writing manual was distinguished by a clear intention to educate. These manuals, he indicates, can be classified according to the age group targeted and the types of exercises used. They include a part (or volume) intended for the pupil, setting the task or specifying the subject of the letter to be written, and the part (or volume) intended for the teacher, giving the correct answer and the model. Finally, Dauphin notes that some manuals borrow the discursive form of the novel:

> the protagonists are identified, or at least named, and placed in a situation that requires them to correspond. A plot then unfolds through the entire manual. Sometimes the epistolary form is a mere pretext for a good gossip about *savoir-vivre* and the inculcation of proper manners.[47]

How does al-Shartūnī's work compare with some of the Arab and Western letter-writing manuals discussed above?

al-Shihāb al-thāqib

Al-Shartūnī explains how he was inundated with requests to compose a treatise on the principles and techniques of letter-writing for students. He states: 'the mounts of want flocked with requests that I put together a work that opens the doors of letter-writing for the student, and explains its techniques'.[48] He finally decided to take up this task at the behest of the proprietor of the Catholic Press who wanted a work, which dealt with the principles of letter writing and included model letters for personal and official purposes. Hence he has produced a manual which in his words: 'provides the student with the 'knowledge' of the eloquent ones, and teaches the confused novice the art of composition (*inshāʾ*)'.[49]

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[47] Cécile Dauphin, 'Letter-Writing Manuals in the Nineteenth Century', 131.

[48] Saʿīd al-Shartūnī, *al-Shihāb al-thāqib fī ṣināʿat al-kātib* (Beirut: 1884; reprint, Beirut: Maṭbaʿat al-ābaʾ al-yasuʿiyyīn, 1913), 5.

[49] Ibid., 5

While al-Shartūnī's work is distinguished by a clear intention to educate, it does not take the form of a school textbook. The model letters in *al-Shihāb* had to be fully suited to the skills and needs of its users, identified by al-Shartūnī as two groups at both ends of the social spectrum: 'the letters that we present have been moulded to serve the existing needs of the elites as well as the common folk'.[50] The large collection of model letters are therefore presented so that not only the student but even the everyday writer can put them to immediate use by making a few minor adjustments to suit his or her needs. Al-Shartūnī thus seeks to realize a humanising and didactic task, and to illustrate the principles of social interaction for all classes in society.

In the theoretical section, al-Shartūnī also provides stylistic directions and model salutations, signatures, and addresses for Christian ecclesiastical and secular Ottoman hierarchies. A substantial part of this section is taken up with model letters in nine categories. Before each category, al-Shartūnī also presents some precepts intended as a framework for the models. A total of two-hundred and thirty-six model letters of a personal or familiar nature are presented in what seems to be an attempt to cater for every possible situation.[51]

The organization of *al-Shihāb* is thus no different from earlier Arab and Western dictaminal treatises, especially from the twelfth century onwards, that combined theoretical discussions with model letters.[52] In its pedagogical aims, however, al-Shartūnī's work is closer to *nahḍa* works like his brother Rashīd's *Nahj*, al-Hāshimī's *Jawāhir*, and Western manuals that were intended for the benefit of students rather than earlier Arab ones designed specifically for use by professional secretaries and bureaucrats. In the provision of salutatory material for Christian hierarchies in particular al-Shartūnī's work very much resembles his brother's *Nahj* and Western dictaminal manuals written within the framework of the Christian tradition. The theoretical section in *al-Shihāb* provides an idea of its structure and scope, and is especially worth noting since it bears some remarkable parallels to the particular form of Western dictaminal manuals that were also intended to educate students. A brief comparison with the *Rationes Dictandi* (Principles of Letter-writing), a standard pedagogical work on letter-writing, clearly shows this:

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[50] Ibid., 6.

[51] Situation is used here and elsewhere to denote the epistolary/communicative context of a letter.

[52] See section on Arab letter-writing above, 40.

al-Shihāb		***Rationes***
Prologue	I.	Preface
Definitions of *inshāʾ*	II.	Definitions of terms
Definition of letter-writing	III.	Definition of 'epistle'
Ittisāq wa-l-jalāʾ 'harmony and clarity'		omitted
ījāz 'brevity'		omitted
The six parts of a letter	IV.	The five parts of a letter
al-ṣadr 'lit. very beginning'	V.	*Salutatio* (salutation)
al-ibtidāʾ 'lit. beginning'	VI.	*Benevolentiae captatio*
omitted	VII.	*Narratio* (narration)
al-gharaḍ al-maqṣūd 'intended aim'[53]	VIII	*Petitio* (petition)
al-khitām 'conclusion'	IX.	*Conclusio* (conclusion)
al-imḍāʾ 'signing, signature'		omitted
al-taʾrīkh 'date'		omitted
omitted	X.	The shortening of letters
omitted	XI.	The movement of parts
omitted	XII.	The 'constitution' of letters
Species of letters.[54]	XIII	Variation in letters.[55]

The comparison reveals that al-Shartūnī puts more emphasis on style by designating two sections to stylistic directions: *ittisāq wa-l-jalāʾ* ('harmony and clarity') and *ījāz* ('brevity') while the anonymous author of the *Rationes* deals with harmony and clarity very briefly under Section II: Definitions of Terms. The writer of the *Rationes* also devotes separate sections (X, XI, XII) to the letter, whereas al-Shartūnī does this within his discussion of its parts. The signature and date are two additions in al-Shartūnī's work and will be discussed below. Apart from this, however, the structure and focus of both works is remarkably similar. But are these parallels with the Western *ars dictaminis* confined to form only, or does it extend to the actual substance of the theories also? How does al-Shartūnī see the link between rhetoric and letter-writing? Does he use the relative social position of the writer and reader as his central criterion? How does al-Shartūnī's six-part letter compare with what Murphy calls the 'Bolognese Approved format'? Does he recognize hierarchical social relationships between writer and reader as the principal element of com-

53 Although I translate the *al-ṣadr, al-ibtidāʾ*, and *al-gharaḍ al-maqṣūd* literally here as 'very beginning', 'beginning,' and 'intended aim', they correspond to the salutation, goodwill and petition respectively in the Western *ars dictaminis*, as I show below.

54 Al-Shartūnī, *al-Shihāb*, 7–22.

55 Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages*, 221.

munication? To answer these questions, it is necessary to take each section of al-Shartūnī's manual in turn.

The Art of Composition and Letter-writing

Al-Shartūnī begins his section on theory by defining *inshāʾ* and *mukātaba* (letter-writing). He defines *inshāʾ* as follows: 'Linguistically, *inshāʾ* means the invention/discovery (*al-ījād*) [of some matter] while conventionally *inshāʾ* denotes the art of expressing the intended meaning through the [appropriate] choice and arrangement of words'.[56] He comments that the proper meaning of *inshāʾ* lies somewhere between these two definitions: 'For when someone wishes to express some matter, he or she invents an image which is then set forth…'[57] Al-Shartūnī then highlights that *inshāʾ* incorporates all types of writing, including the writing of books, speeches and letters. His treatise, however, is limited to letter-writing, and the writing of contracts and title-deeds.[58]

Al-Shartūnī's view of the art of composition (*inshāʾ*) as the invention of some matter which is then set–forth is particularly interesting. The main emphasis of al-Shartūnī's definition is rhetorical invention, just as in both Greek and Roman rhetorical theory. Figures such as Aristotle and Cicero gave much importance to the invention of materials by the speaker himself. Accordingly, invention features prominently in their works on rhetoric, alongside arrangement, style, memory and delivery, and became an integral part of later disciplines influenced by classical rhetoric, like the medieval arts of letter writing (*ars dictaminis*) and sermons (*ars praedicandi*). In Western dictaminal treatises, 'a composition' is similarly defined in terms of rhetorical invention, is supposed to convey the intentions of the sender and is only one of the many types of composition. The anonymous *Rationes*, for instance, opens with a section entitled 'what a written composition should be', which is then described as 'the setting-forth of some matter in writing, proceeding in a suitable order, and as a suitable arrangement of words set forth to express the intended meaning of its sender'.[59] Al-Shartūnī's definition of *inshāʾ* in terms of invention thus appears to be rooted in the Western rhetorical tradition.

Al-Shartūnī's subsequent definition of letter-writing underlines the inex-

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[56] Al-Shartūnī, *al-Shihāb*, 7.

[57] Ibid., 7.

[58] Ibid., 7.

[59] 'The Principles of Letter-Writing,' in *Three Medieval Rhetorical Arts*, trans. and ed. James Murphy (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), 6–7.

tricable link between rhetoric and writing in medieval society.[60] It also shows how the image of the letter as a mere alternative to speech continued to exercise a tenacious grip on authors' conceptions of letter-writing in the nineteenth century. Al-Shartūnī states: '[Letter-writing is] conversation with the absent one through the tongue of the pen. The best of it is that which serves the intended purpose and which takes the place of the writer in revealing his intentions, representing his condition, and presenting his desires to the addressee, in such a way that the addressee sees the writer with his eyes, as if he were speaking with his tongue.'[61]

Al-Shartūnī sees letter-writing as a means of overcoming absence – a substitute for conversation, which is particularly significant since he picks up the central theme of transcending absence that commonly underlies the openings of Western letter-writing manuals. In the nineteenth-century French manual, *The Grande Encyclopédie du XIX^e siécle*, for instance, a letter is described as a conversation between people who are absent from one another. To succeed at it, imagine that you are in the presence of whomever you are addressing, that they can hear the sound of your voice and that their eyes are fixed on yours.[62] Dauphin explains that the effort to transcend absence and the determination to think one's way into the other person's presence in *The Grande Encyclopédie* and similar French manuals is related to prayer. For Dauphin, however, to identify the letter with conversation and to justify it on the grounds of the absence of the addressee is a way of cancelling out or denying the cultural distancing that is involved. It is 'to bring down' writing, to assign it a secondary role as a mere image of 'natural' speech.[63] Despite the fundamental gain achieved in the shift from speech to writing and in the spread of written culture, the 'illusion of oral communication', Dauphin indicates, remained a cornerstone for the majority of letter-writing manuals in France where authors of letter-writing manuals continued to be locked into their stereotype of conversation. Sommer alone, in his *Manual de l'art épistolaire* (1849), recognizes that letters were more than methods for reconciling oneself to someone's absence, which for Dauphin hints at a more complex and distanced potential status for the letter: as evidence, as document, as a step in an official process, as a

60 Gully takes important notice of this in 'Epistles for Grammarians,' 148.

61 Al-Shartūnī, *al-Shihāb*, 7. For a slightly different translation, see Gully, 'Epistles for Grammarians', 148.

62 Dauphin, 'Letter Writing Manuals in the Nineteenth Century,' 132.

63 Ibid., 132.

way of organising discourse or as an instrument of reflection.[64]

Al-Shartūnī's view of the letter as a substitute for conversation may have been motivated by the same 'illusion of oral communication' that underpinned the majority of French letter-writing manuals in the nineteenth century. Although al-Shartūnī deals with the writing of contracts and title-deeds in section two of his work, his concept of letter-writing ignores its potential to be more than a medium for reuniting oneself with the absent addressee. In this sense, if al-Shartūnī's work is representative of Arab letter-writing manuals in the nineteenth century, it suggests that despite significant developments in written and printed culture during the *nahḍa*, the 'illusion of oral communication' remained a key basis for these works, as it did with the majority of French manuals.

Al-Shartūnī draws further parallels between rhetoric and letter-writing when he states: 'letter-writing uses the same approach as rhetoric, where the speech is determined according to the superiority, inferiority and equality that exists in the relationship between the speaker and the addressee'.[65] This principle, he adds, is central to letter-writing since all the other principles are derived from it. He describes some of its requirements as follows: '[the writer] should take care in adopting good manners and respect when writing to his superiors, honesty and frankness when writing to his peers and equals, and simplicity and openness when writing to his brethren (inferiors)'.[66]

Al-Shartūnī's words find meaning in the rhetorical theory of the Western *ars dictaminis* which, Perelman points out, recognize hierarchical social relationships between sender and recipient as the principal element of communication.[67] Al-Shartūnī clearly presents the judgement as to the relative social position of the letter-writer and recipient (or the judgement as to the proper hierarchical social relationship between writer and recipient) as the central principle of epistolary convention. The same principle has infused Western manuals on the *ars dictaminis* all along. Adalbertus Samaritanus, in *Precepta Dictaminum* (*c.* 1120), employed the relative social position of the writer and reader as his central criterion by dividing letters along the traditional Ciceronian threefold scheme, calling the high style, the 'exalted' (*sublimis*), the middle style,

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64 Ibid., 132–3.

65 Al-Shartūnī, *al-Shihāb*, 7.

66 Ibid., 7. These requirements are based on a threefold scheme of inferior to superior, equal-to-equal, and superior to inferior.

67 Perelman, 'Letter Writing: Rhetoric as Institutional Expression', 106.

the 'medium' (mediocris), and the low, the 'meager' (exilis).[68] The exalted referring to letters sent from an inferior person to a superior one; the meager to letters from a superior person to an inferior; and the medium to letters sent between two equals. Chartier points out that later works such as Puget de La Serre's *Secrétaire à la Cour* (1713) continued to present the judgment as to the relative social position of the letter-writer and recipient as the central principle. The work emphasizes the need to 'take care in honouring differently those to whom one writes, in accordance with their virtues, merits and qualities, without however overlooking and scorning oneself, which would be as much a fault as would be to glorify and raise oneself above one's condition'.[69]

Some of the requirements al-Shartūnī lays down for the central principle of epistolary convention need to be considered in more detail. In essence, this principle requires the writer to ensure that the civility, etiquette and style of the letter is suited to the social rank of the sender and recipient. Al-Shartūnī's description is particularly significant since it incorporates many of the same elements of 'propriety' (*bienseance*) described in the seventeenth-century French manual: '*Instruction à escrire des lettres*' in Puget de La Serre's *Le Secrétaire à la Mode* (1644).[70] According to Chartier, 'propriety' features prominently as one of the new requirements in this manual and means regulating the terms of epistolary exchange according to a precise perception of the positions occupied by the people involved in a given correspondence: 'he who wrote', 'he to whom the letter is written', 'he about whom one writes'. The main thing therefore was to suit the style, subject matter and etiquette of the letter to the situations and persons concerned. He furthermore adds that as in modes of behaviour governed by strict civility, one and the same formulation can assume a wholly different meaning depending on the rank or connections of different protagonists:

> What would be suitable when writing to one's social equal would be found lacking in grace and could occasion offence if addressed to some elevated personage. And that which is in good taste when spoken by an elderly person of authority would be quite ridiculous in the mouth of a man of few years or humble condi-

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[68] Perelman indicates that Adalbertus's division is not based on the styles themselves, as with Cicero or Alberic in the Breviarium, nor is it based on the subject matter, like Alberic's division of narratives. Instead, Adalbertus uses the relative social position of the writer and reader as his central criterion. Perelman, 'Letter Writing: Rhetoric as Institutional Expression', 105–6.

[69] Chartier, 'Secrètaires *for the People*,' 89.

[70] Ibid., 75.

tion. And one has to speak in different terms of a soldier, a man of letters and a Lady.[71]

There are many similarities between al-Shartūnī's description of the requirements of the central principle of epistolary convention and the description of 'propriety' found in 'Instruction à escrire des lettres'. Both, for instance, require the etiquette and style to be suited to the social rank of the writer and recipient. In fact, these similarities are not altogether surprising as 'propriety' is essentially regulated by the relative social position of the writer and recipient, a principle of epistolary convention which is as central to al-Shartūnī's work as it to most Western writing manuals. It therefore seems that 'propriety' in later French manuals is no more than a development of what is essentially the central principal of epistolary convention in al-Shartūnī's manual and earlier Western ones.

From the foregoing discussion it is not difficult to make out the inextricable link which al-Shartūnī sees between rhetoric and letter-writing. Embracing the most common image extant in nineteenth-century manuals, al-Shartūnī's definition stresses that the letter is a substitute for oral conversation, and therefore students should think of it as a written conversation. In his definition of the principle of epistolary convention he is quick to bring rhetorical lore to bear on the problem of composition. He thus clearly thinks it appropriate to employ rhetorical principles in writing as well as in speaking. From this premise, the basic qualities of a letter follow logically. To make oneself understood, the same ease and familiarity evident in oral conversation would need to characterize a letter, one therefore had to use a style that was natural, clear, and simple.

Stylistic Directions

Al-Shartūnī begins by very briefly comparing letter-writing to rhetoric, as he does in his discussion on the central principle of epistolary convention, stating that both arts require the language to be brief, harmonious and simple, and that the purpose of both arts is to set forth what is in the mind. He then discusses brevity, harmony, clarity and simplicity.

Arab letter-writing manuals and treatises on style and eloquence from the ninth century onwards include general advice for the stylist regarding the necessity for brevity (*ījāz*) and the need to adapt the style to suit the recipient. Perhaps under the influence of these works, al-Shartūnī presents a series of recommendations. He begins by defining brevity as the expression of the intended meaning with the fewest possible words, and

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[71] Ibid., 75.

comments that brevity is not only desirable but also compulsory in certain situations, while prolixity (*iṭnāb/taṭwīl*) is valuable when the (epistolary) context demands it. Al-Shartūnī furthermore explains that both brevity and prolixity have their appropriate epistolary context, and that there are some contexts that are suitable for prolixity (*iṭnāb*) but not for brevity and vice-versa. Brevity, he adds, is only acceptable on two conditions. First, the language used should adequately express the intended meaning. Second, brevity should not cause the speech to become sterile, muted and fragile, since this type of speech will be rejected and will fail to hit the ears. Moreover, he states that the appropriate epistolary context for prolixity (*iṭnāb*) is in letters to friends: 'where the lush of the pen will cool the burning heart', and where the mutual bond of friendship will allow both parties to know the condition of the other.[72]

Here al-Shartūnī advances the standard argument regarding brevity found in Arab treatises on style and eloquence. Ibn al-Athīr, in his *al-Mathal al-sāʾir*, for instance, states that brevity (*ījāz*) requires the writer to eliminate superfluous words and focus on the meaning (*maʿānī*) since often a few words mean a lot while many words mean very little.[73] Besides, al-Shartūnī echoes Arab letter-writing manuals when he states that brevity and prolixity have a place in letter-writing as long as they are used in the appropriate epistolary context. In *Kitāb badī*, Karmī notes:

'brevity is good in letter-writing but is not appropriate in all epistolary contexts. Brevity is more appropriate, for instance, in correspondence with kings and rulers who have tight time schedules, but not in correspondence with friends and loved ones, where prolixity is more suitable'.[74]

Al-Shartūnī furthermore provides advice on harmony, clarity (*al-ittisāq wa-l-jalāʾ*) and simplicity (*sadhājah*). Harmony and clarity require the writer to choose and arrange his words with precision, and to avoid uncommon words, aphorisms and maxims. Similarly, it is necessary for the writer to avoid far-fetched similes, bizarre figurative expressions and elegant structures that are no longer in use.[75] Simplicity requires that the language used is simple, natural and instinctive, and that the words serve the intended meaning. However, there is no harm in using certain rhetorical devices for increased eloquence, as long the

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[72] Al-Shartūnī, *al-Shihāb*, 9.

[73] Ḍiyā l-Dīn Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Mathal al-sāʾir fī adab al-kātib wa-l-shāʾir*, ed. K. M. M. ʿUwayda, 2 vols, (Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-ʿilmīya, 1998) 2: 52.

[74] Al-Karmī, *Kitāb badīʿ al-inshāʾ*, 5–6.

[75] Al-Shartūnī, *al-Shihāb*, 8.

meaning is not obscured and as long as they are used in moderation.[76]

Al-Shartūnī's stylistic directions on harmony, clarity and simplicity are particularly significant, since such advice is not so forthcoming in Arab letter-writing manuals. In Qalqashandī's *Ṣubḥ*, for instance, clarity and simplicity are mentioned parenthetically in the discussion on good introductions (*ḥusn al-iftitāḥ*) and good conclusions (*ḥusn al-ikhtitām*). One criterion Qalqashandī sets down for a good introduction is that the words used there are simple, in their correct form, with clear meaning, and not verbose. Similarly, one criterion he sets down for a good conclusion is the use of simple unambiguous words and clarity of meaning (*wuḍūḥ al-maᶜnā*).[77]

As in Arab treatises, mention of harmony and clarity in western dictaminal treatises of the medieval period is usually only in passing. The anonymous author of *Rationes*, for instance, recommends that a composition should be fashioned either in an approved and basic format or in accordance with circumstances. In elaborating on 'accordance with circumstances', he states that this is a method for the more experienced writers. In other words, a set of words ordered in a way different from ordinary syntax; it must by all means be made harmonious and clear, that is, like a flowing current.[78]

That Arab and Western letter-writing manuals of the medieval period mention harmony, clarity, and simplicity only in passing suggests these matters were considered to be superfluous. Later Western manuals from the sixteenth century onwards, however, placed much more emphasis on these, with clarity and simplicity alongside brevity, to the extent that they seem to have become among the standard requirements in some French ones. Chartier indicates that under the influence of such lessons in humanist letter-writing as had been formulated, for example, by Justus Lipsius in *Epistolica institutio* (published in Latin in 1591), French letter-writing manuals from the seventeenth century onwards categorically enjoined the writer to brevity, clarity and simplicity.[79]

Thus, the fact that al-Shartūnī devotes a section of his work to harmony, clarity and simplicity, not only shows the importance he attaches to these stylistic matters in letter-writing, but also suggests that he considers them to be additional requirements on a par with brevity. In

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[76] Ibid., 10.

[77] Aḥmad ibn ᶜAlī al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-aᶜshā fī ṣināᶜat al-inshāᵓ*, 14 vols, (Cairo: Wizārat al-thaqāfa, 1963–70), 6: 275, 312–13.

[78] *Principles of Letter-Writing*, 7.

[79] Chartier, 'Secrètaires *for the People*', 75.

this sense, his insistence on harmony and clarity perhaps reflects developments in letter-writing manuals from the sixteenth century onwards.

Parts of a Letter

Al-Shartūnī divides the letter into six primary parts as follows: *al-ṣadr* (lit. the very beginning), *al-ibtidāʾ* (lit. beginning), *al-gharaḍ al-maqṣūd* (lit. the intended aim), *al-khitām* (conclusion), *al-imḍāʾ* (signature), and *al-tārīkh* (date).[80] The fact that he systematically classifies the letter into six is significant since Arab letter-writing manuals in general offer no such classification. Al-Ṣūlī, for instance, deals with *al-taṣdīr, al-unwān, al-duʿāʾ*, and al-Qalqashandī with introduction (*iftitāḥ*/*istihlāl*), salutations (*salām*), supplications (*duʿāʾ*), conclusion (*al-ikhtitām*) and signature/stamp (*bayt al-ʿalāma*), but both offer no such classification.[81] In *Kitāb Badīʿ*, al-Karmī deals with greetings (*salām*), salutations (*ṣudūr*), titles (*al-alqāb*) and supplications (*adʿīya*), but equally falls short of providing a systematic classification for the parts of a letter.[82]

In fact, by classifying the letter into separate parts and assigning each part a separate function, al-Shartūnī's work clearly shows the influence of the Western *ars dictaminis* which is inextricably linked to classical rhetoric. His system of classification is essentially rooted in the Western dictaminal tradition which took the initiative of applying the principles of classical rhetoric to the letter, and divided the letter into various parts, much as rhetoric divided speeches into parts and assigned each part a specific function.[83] By the time the *Rationes* was written in 1135, the basic doctrines of the *ars dictaminis* had become well established in Bologna, and the Bolognese five-part letter had become almost a standard format in most manuals. This standardization is clearly reflected in

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[80] Al-Shartūnī, *al-Shihāb*, 10.

[81] Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn Yaḥyā al-Ṣulī, *Adab al-kuttāb*, ed. Muḥammad Bahjat al-Atharī, (Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-ʿilmīya, 1980), 39, 143, 187; and Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-aʿshā,* 6: 275–313 passim.

[82] Al-Karmī, *Kitāb badīʿ al-inshāʾ*, 18.

[83] Based on Cicero's six parts of speech Alberic of Monte Cassino was the first to divide the letter into four parts (*exordium, narratio, argumentatio*, and *conclusion*). Later writers still divided the letter based on classical rhetoric but with slight variation. Hugh of Bologna, for instance, lists three parts of a letter: *exordium, narratio*, and *conclusion* in *Rationes Dictandi Prosaice* (1119–24). By 1135, however, the application of rhetoric to the letter began by Alberic in the 1080's, had acquired a life of its own without further need for reference to Cicero. For this, see section on Western *ars dictaminis* above and Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages*, 220, 224.

Rationes which is almost entirely based on the five parts of a letter of the Bolognese tradition, including the Salutation, the Securing of Goodwill, the Narration, the Petition, and the Conclusion.[84] According to Murphy, the five-part (Bolognese) 'approved format', is the most striking adaptation of classical rhetoric, and is clearly derived from an analogy to the Ciceronian six parts of an *oratio*. He provides the following comparison:

Ciceronian Parts of an *Oratio* and Bolognese 'Approved Format' for a Letter:	
Exordium	*Salutatio*, or formal vocative greeting to addressee *Captatio benevolentiae*, or introduction
Divisio	(Omitted as a separate part)
Narratio	*Narratio* or narration of circumstances leading to petition
Confirmatio	*Petitio*, or presentation of requests
Refutatio	(Omitted as a separate part)
Peroratio	Conclusion, or final part[85]

It is worth considering al-Shartūnī's six-part letter alongside the five-part Bolognese 'approved format' to reveal any similarities and significant differences as shown in the table overleaf:

[84] *Principles of Letter-Writing*, 7.

[85] Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages*, 224–5. Murphy indicates that the medieval *ars dictaminis* has split the Ciceronian *exordium* into two parts and assigned its three traditional functions (to make the audience attentive, docile, and well-disposed) to two different parts of the letter. The *salutatio* secures attention, and the *captatio benevolentiae* serves the other two purposes. According to Murphy, this is a major difference; the whole subsequent history of the *dictaminis* indicates that these first two parts of a letter were the most important in the eyes of dictaminal theorists since the *narratio* and *petitio* (*confirmatio*) receive little attention from authors of the *artes dictaminis*. The same can be said about the *conclusion* since very little space is given to conclusions in most manuals, some authors even going so far as to list a mere set of 'farewell' (*valete*) formulas. Ibid., 225.

Al-Shartūnī	Bolognese format[86]	Cicero
Al-ṣadr	*Salutatio* or formal vocative greeting to addressee	*Exordium*
Al-ibtidāʾ	*Captatio benevolentiae*, or introduction.	
Omitted	*Narratio*	*Naratio*
al-gharaḍ al-maqṣūd	*Petitio*, or presentation of requests	*Confirmati*o
al-khitām	Conclusion or final part	*Peroratio*
al-imḍāʾ	omitted	
al-tārīkh	omitted	

Although al-Shartūnī's six-part letter marks a slight departure from the Bolognese 'approved format', he repeats almost the same basic principles that are essentially thirteenth-century Bolognese precepts. The *al-ṣadr* (initial greeting/salutation) and *al-ibtidāʾ* (goodwill/salutation) correspond to the *salutatio* and *captatio benevolentiae* in the Bolognese format. The *al-gharaḍ al-maqṣūd* (petition) stands for the *petitio*, while the *al-khitām* (conclusion) obviously refers to the conclusion or final part.

There is, however, no mention of the *narratio* or narration of circumstances leading to petition in al-Shartūnī's division of the letter. The *al-imḍāʾ* (signature), and *al-tārīkh* (date) are clearly two new additions in his manual, but ones which are discernible as early as the seventeenth century in French letter-writing manuals that departed from the Bolognese 'approved format'.[87] The '*Instruction à escrire des lettres*', for instance, divides letters into five parts, but departs from the standard five-part Bolognese format in its contents, especially in its inclusion of superscription and subscription to become: superscription, exordium, discourse, conclusion, subscription.[88] Although unclear here, the omission of the narration and the addition of the signature and date may well be to keep up with parallel developments in nineteenth–century letter-

[86] These are the same five parts of a letter listed in *Rationes Dictandi*, see *Principles of Letter-writing*, 7.

[87] See Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages*, 268.

[88] Chartier, 'Secrètaires *for the People*,' 75. The superscription refers to the opening address (i.e. recipients address) while the subscription is what we know today as the closing part of the letter. It usually includes a date and is followed by the signature.

writing manuals and the needs and demands of *nahḍa* society, as I will show in due course.

Al-ṣadr *(initial greeting/salutation)*[89]

The section on salutation occupies the greatest part of the theoretical section in *al-Shihāb* which reflects the relative importance of this part of the letter. Al-Shartūnī describes *al-ṣadr* (initial greeting/salutation) as the place for titles (*al-alqāb*) – its purpose is to express sentiment by honouring the recipient in a way that is appropriate to his (social) rank and status, and in a way that takes into consideration the relationship between the sender and recipient.[90] Although the requirement that the writer use the appropriate title is not uncommon in the Arab tradition,[91] al-Shartūnī's concept of the *al-ṣadr* is particularly significant since he employs the judgement as to the relative social position of the letter-writer and recipient as his central criterion for formulating a proper initial greeting/salutation. This in effect reinforces his view of the central position occupied by this principle in letter-writing.

Moreover, al-Shartūnī's description bears remarkable similarities with the definition and function of the salutation found in Western treatises. The author of the *Rationes*, for instance, splits the classical *exordium* into two separate parts (the salutation and the securing of goodwill) and then defines the salutation as an expression of greeting conveying a friendly sentiment not inconsistent with the social rank of the persons involved.[92] Thus, as with al-Shartūnī, the author uses the relative social position of the writer and recipient as his central criterion for formulating a proper salutation. Al-Shartūnī's salutation is subject to the same hierarchical social relationships between sender and recipient that guided the formulation of a salutation and the general composition of a letter in Western dictaminal manuals of the medieval period.

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[89] Though the *al-ṣadr* literally describes the 'very beginning' of the letter above, it performs much the function of the initial greeting which is part of the salutation, and corresponds to Murphy's *salutatio,* or the formal vocative greeting to addressee'. Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages*, 224–5.

[90] Al-Shartūnī, 10.

[91] The choice of appropriate title by the writer is mentioned, or at least implied, in several earlier treatises even though not covering all the cases mentioned by al-Shartūnī below. Al-Ṣābī, for instance, deals in detail with the specific titles (*al-alqāb*) for use in Caliphal correspondence. Hilāl al-Ṣābī, *Rusūm Dār al-Khilāfa*, ed. Mīkhāʾil ʿAwād (Baghdad: Al-ʿĀnī Press, 1964), 104–7, 128–132.

[92] *Principles of Letter-Writing*, 7.

Al-Shartūnī then goes on to mention additional considerations necessary to formulating a proper salutation. One of the main considerations he points out is the knowledge of the exact titles and terms associated with each rank in a particular era. He states, for instance, that the writer must endeavour to select the appropriate title (*laqab*) associated with each rank in a particular era.[93] This consideration is quite significant because it features prominently in Western dictaminal treatises. The author of the *Rationes* requires the letter-writer to select additions to the names of the recipients in a way that is appropriate to the recipient's renown and good character.[94] Furthermore, he provides exact titles and terms associated with each rank. He states if the salutation is ever directed to the Pope from the Emperor, or from some man of ecclesiastical rank, it is best for it to be sent in the following form or one like it: 'To the venerable in the Lord and Christ, by the Grace of God, august ruler of the Roman…'.[95]

Although al-Shartūnī appears to focus on the relative social position of the writer and recipient as his central criterion for formulating an 'initial greeting/salutation', unlike Western works of the medieval period he does not specify the social constraint that requires the sender to place the recipient's name before his own if the recipient is of a higher rank, or vice-versa. Adalbertus Samaritanus, the author of *Praecepta Dictaminum* (1111–1118), for instance, pioneered a long medieval tradition of social constraint that required the name of the more exalted person to precede that of the inferior in a salutation.[96] Similarly, the anonymous *Rationes*, requires that the names of the recipients should always be placed before the names of the senders unless a more important man is writing to a less important man. For then the name of the sender should be placed first, so that his distinction is demonstrated by the very position of the names.[97] In contrast to these authors, al-Shartūnī merely states that the specific title should be placed before the recipient's name. Al-Shartūnī disregarding this social constraint, however, seems consistent with developments that letter-writing had undergone after the Western renaissance, which I

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93 Al-Shartūnī., *al-Shihāb*, 10.

94 *Principles of Letter-Writing*, 8.

95 Ibid., 10.

96 This social constraint uses the judgement as to the relative social position of the writer and reader as its central criterion. Boureau, 'The Letter-Writing Norm, a Medieval Invention,' 39.

97 *Principles of Letter-Writing*, 8–9

discuss later.[98]

Next, al-Shartūnī presents titles with the proper greetings to be used in correspondence with persons holding the following ecclesiastical and secular ranks. The writer is required to place the specific (honorary) title before the name.

***Ecclesiastical ranks*:**

The Pope:	*Holy Father* (al-ab al-aqdas)
The Patriarch:	*His Eminence. O exalted noble patron of patrons Sir…*
The Cardinal:	*His Eminence. O Excellent, honourable, generous, exalted Sir…*
The Bishop:	*His Excellence…with reverence.*
The Priest:	*Honourable exalted Father Priest, or the Honourable Priest* fulān.[99]

***Secular ranks*:**

The King:	*His Majesty, the Great Sultān,*
The Grand vizier:	*His Excellency, His Highness, Mr*
Important Shaykh of Islam:	*His Excellency, His Eminence, Mr*
Distinguished or high-ranking persons:	*His Excellency, His Grace, Mr*
Military commanders:	*His Excellency, His Grace, Mr*
Advisors and Ministers:	*His Excellency, Mr*
The commander-in-chief or Marshal:	*His Excellency, His Grace, Mr*
The 1st Divisional General:	*His Grace, Mr*
The Divisional General	*His Grace, Mr*
The Brigadier-General:	*His Grace, Mr*
Those in the 1st position in the 2nd Division:	*His Grace, Mr*
Those in the 2nd position in the 1st Division:	*Honourable Sir*
Those in 2nd position in the 2nd Division:	*Honourable Sir*, *or the Bey*
Those in 3rd position (Colonel):	*His Excellency*, *or the Bey*
The Sub-Governor:	*His Honourable*
Those in the 4th position (Major/Captain):	*The generous Mr*or *Bey* or *Aga*
Those in 5th position (Captain):	*The guardian* or *Mr* or *Aga*[100]

Al-Shartūnī comments that other persons are given titles according to the (hierarchical) social relationship between the writer and recipient, for

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98 It should become clear in the section on signatures that classical and medieval letters were not signed and the identity of the sender had to be specified in the greeting (salutation). Signatures, however, were widely adopted after the Renaissance, and therefore it was no longer necessary for the sender to specify his identity in the greeting the name of the sender would usually be placed (after the recipient's name) at the end of the letter.

99 Al-Shartūnī, *al-Shihāb*, 11. *Fulān* proxy for an unnamed person or unspecified thing. Equivalent to so-and-so, or such-and-such in English.

100 Ibid., 12–13.

instance: *janāb* (Mr, Sir), *ḥaḍra* (Mr, Sir), and *janāb al-mājid*, and so forth.[101]

Al-Shartūnī's salutatory classification not only shows the discriminations between social rank in the Christian ecclesiastical and secular hierarchies of the Ottoman era, but also reflects the hierarchical social relationships that still existed towards the end of the Ottoman era. His list of secular/military titles, being a product of a period of Ottoman reformation when significant changes in the army were made and military ranks were re-categorized, make it possible to think of Ottoman Arab society as interactive and changing.

Furthermore, his classification clearly distinguishes hierarchical social relationships between the writer and recipient as the principal element of communication, thus, evoking a preoccupation with hierarchical relationships that commonly underpins medieval Western dictaminal manuals. The *Rationes*, for instance, lists salutations which *inter alia* provide for the following hierarchical relationships between the writer and recipient:

The Pope's Universal Salutation
The Emperor's Salutation to all Men
Salutations of Ecclesiastical Among themselves
Principally to Monks
Salutations of Prelates to their Subordinates
Salutation among Noblemen, Princes, and Secular clergy
Salutations of Close Friends or Associates
Salutations of Subject to their Secular Lords
Salutations of these same lords to their Subordinates
The Salutation of a Teacher to his pupil and vice versa
Salutations of parents to their sons and vice-versa.[102]

The nature of al-Shartūnī's model salutations represents what Murphy would say is a systematic approach to the problem of supplying appropriate salutatory material. Commenting on the nature of the model salutations presented in Hugh's *Rationes Dictandi*,[103] Murphy points out that Hugh's work offers us the first systematic approach to the problem of

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101 Ibid., 13.

102 *Principles of Letter-Writing*, 10–16.

103 For instance: '*A papa ad imperatorem* (from Pope to Emperor); *Ab imperatore ad papam* (from Emperor to Pope); *Ab episcopo ad papam* (from bishop to Pope); *A papa ad episcopum* (from Pope to bishop); …*Ad patrem* (to one's father); *Ad amicum* (to a friend); …*Ad militem* (to a soldier)…,' and so forth. Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages*, 217.

supplying appropriate salutatory material for all the various levels of addressees. He adds that these are no longer merely illustrative examples, designed to increase a reader's understanding of the subject, but phrases and even paragraphs that can be used verbatim in other situations. Al-Shartūnī's model salutations, which the writer can readily use in correspondence with various ecclesiastical and secular hierarchies of the Ottoman era, are thus similarly intended as models for copying rather than suggestions for rhetorical invention. According to Murphy, there is no precedent for this approach in ancient rhetorical theory. There is in fact no commonly accepted term to describe the intended process.[104]

Al-ibtidāʾ *(goodwill/salutation)*[105]

Al-Shartūnī defines *al-ibtidāʾ* as the greetings (*salām*) and nostalgia (*shawq*) expressed in the initial part of the letter after the *ṣadr*'.[106] He highlights how this part of the letter has been completely discarded at times, and how the Europeans and Arabs differ in its usage. He asserts that both the ancient Arabs and Europeans reduce and abridge the *ibtidāʾ*, which, he states, is a prerequisite of rhetoric (*balāghā*) rather than letter-writing (*murāsala*). Others, in contrast, lengthen the *ibitdā'* to the extent that one might think that it was the purpose (i.e. petition) of the letter itself, and that the *gharaḍ* was something superfluous. Furthermore, al-Shartūnī states that 'some of his people' imitate the ancient Arabs in that they abridge the *ibtidāʾ*, and quickly move on to the aim of the letter. The great majority of people, however, are against this since they believe it is a practice adopted from Europeans.[107]

Al-Shartūnī's description of the *ibtidāʾ* reveals that this part of the letter constitutes part of the salutation for him. Thus, if the *ibtidāʾ* performs the function of securing the goodwill of the reader, then al-Shartūnī sees the function of goodwill to a large extent in the salutation just as in the Western *ars dictaminis*. The author of *Rationes*, for instance, highlights that much of the function of goodwill is actually performed in the salutation. Therefore, he advises that once goodwill has been secured in the salutation, the writer should begin the rest of the letter immediately with

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104 Ibid., 216–18.

105 Though al-Shartūnī's *ibitdāʾ* literally refers to the 'beginning' of the letter and is part of the salutation, it also performs the function of securing the goodwill of the recipient, and corresponds to Murphy's *captatio benevolentiae*, or introduction. Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages*, 224–5.

106 Al-Shartūnī, *al-Shihāb,* 13.

107 Al-Shartūnī, *al-Shihāb,* 13–14.

the narration or the petition, or the goodwill should be pointed out rather briefly and modestly, since the goodwill is expressed repeatedly throughout the letter.[108]

It should be clear from al-Shartūnī's discussions on *al-ṣadr* and *al-ibtidāʾ*, that while in form these are Arabic terms which he borrows from earlier treatises,[109] in their actual function they describe the concepts of salutation and goodwill in line with the *ars dictaminis*. According to Murphy, the *ars dictaminis* had split the Ciceronian exordium into *salutatio* and *captatio benevolentiae* (goodwill). The *salutatio*, he indicates, secures attention, while goodwill makes the audience docile and well–disposed.[110] In this sense, if the function of the *salutatio* in the medieval *ars dictaminis* is to secure attention then al-Shartūnī's *al-ṣadr* fulfils the same function, while if the function of goodwill is to make the audience docile and well–disposed, then his *al-ibtidāʾ* fulfils this function when the writer sends greetings and expresses nostalgia after the *al-ṣadr*. Al-Shartūnī has thus split the Ciceronian exordium into two separate parts, the *salutatio* (*ṣadr*) and the securing of goodwill (*ibtidāʾ*).[111]

Al-gharaḍ al-maqṣūd *(the petition)*

Al-Shartūnī describes the *al-gharaḍ al-maqṣūd* as that part of the letter in which the writer articulates his aim/need (*al-dāʿī*). He states that this is an essential part (*ʿumda*) of the letter while everything besides it is superfluous (*faḍla*). Accordingly, all the other parts of the letter serve the *al-maqsūd*, and endeavour to affirm it. If the aim is lost, the subject matter (*mawḍūʿ)* of the letter will also be lost.[112]

Al-Shartūnī's description of the *al-gharaḍ al-maqṣūd* as 'an essential part of the letter', and as the place where the writer communicates his actual 'aim/need' to the addressee, corresponds to the definition of the 'petition' in the Western *ars dictaminis*. The author of the *Rationes*, for instance, describes the petition as that discourse in which we endeavour

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108 *Principles of Letter-Writing*, 17–18.

109 Al-Karmī, for instance, frequently uses the term *ṣudūr*, and al-Qalqashandī uses *al-ṣudūr* and *ibitdāʾ al-mukātabāt* in *inshāʾ al-marī*, 9; and *Subḥ al-aʿshāʾ*, 8: 160.

110 Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages*, 225.

111 The anonymous author of *Rationes* similarly splits the exordium into two separate parts, the salutation and the securing of goodwill. Goodwill, is then described as a 'certain fit ordering of words effectively influencing the mind of the recipient'. *Principles of Letter-Writing*, 16–18.

112 Al-Shartūnī, *al-Shihāb*, 14.

to call for something, and then distinguishes between the essential and superfluous parts of a letter. He states that if the salutation is removed, it is necessary for the securing of goodwill to be likewise removed, since they are contiguous and mutually connected. Similarly, if the narration is removed the letter will remain complete with just the petition and conclusion, but not with the conclusion alone.[113] Hence, for the writer of *Rationes*, as for al-Shartūnī, the petition is that essential part of the letter in which the writer expresses his aim/need to the recipient. Al-Shartūnī's *al-gharaḍ al-maqṣūd* thus evidently expresses the same concept of petition in Western letter-writing.

Al-khitām *(the conclusion)*

Al-Shartūnī defines the conclusion *al-khitām* as: 'the end of a letter which in personal correspondence should be in the form of a summary of the whole letter often with a supplicatory sentence, while in a business letter it should be kept brief'.[114] Al-Shartūnī's discussion is thus extremely limited to specifying the place and function of the conclusion, and in this sense echoes similar descriptions found in medieval treatises. In *Rationes*, the conclusion, for instance, is described as 'the passage with which a letter is terminated'. It states: 'the conclusion is used to point out the usefulness or disadvantage possessed by the subjects treated in the letter. If these topics have been treated at length and in a roundabout way in the narration, these same things are here brought together in a small space and are thus impressed on to the recipient's memory'.[115]

In line with the Arab dictaminal practice and culture of paying homage through supplication, al-Shartūnī perhaps finds it necessary to recommend a sentence of invocation as part of the conclusion. In *Ṣubḥ*, al-Qalqashandī describes some of the features of a good conclusion (*ḥusn al-ikhtitām*) as follows:

> a subordinate person (*marʾūs*) paying homage to a superior person (*raʾīs*) or either a superior reprimanding or showing admiration for the subordinate as required, for instance, by concluding with a supplication (*duʿaʾ*) in accordance with the conventions of the era.[116]

It seems therefore that al-Shartūnī's treatment of the conclusion shows

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113 *Principles of Letter-Writing*, 20–1.

114 Al-Shartūnī, *al-Shihāb*, 14.

115 *Principles of Letter-Writing*, 19

116 Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-aʿshā,* 6: 312.

influences of both the Western and Arab dictaminal traditions. As with *Rationes*, his discussion is fairly limited to a description of its place and function as a summary of the letter. Moreover, perhaps under the influence of Arab letter-writing manuals where the supplication is a requirement for a good conclusion, al-Shartūnī similarly requires the writer to conclude his letter with a supplicatory sentence.

Al-imḍāʾ *(signature, subscription)*

Al-Shartūnī states that linguistically signature (*al-imḍāʾ*) denotes permission/confirmation (*ijāza*) of, for example, a transaction that has been concluded. Technically, it denotes the signature of the writer at the end of the letter declaring that he is the originator of the letter, and that he acknowledges its contents, as is done with deeds and documents.[117]

Al-Shartūnī then highlights that it was common in classical letters for the identity of the sender and recipient to be specified in the salutation. This, he states, can be seen in the letters of (Jesus') apostles, the letters of pre-Islamic *Jāhilīya*, and in letters exchanged during the lifetime of the Prophet Muḥammad (pbuh), and for a long time thereafter. The writer, he indicates, would begin his letter by introducing himself appropriately, then describe the addressee and then follow with salutations, as can be seen in the introduction of the following letter from Saint Paul to Timothy:

> From Paul, by the grace of God disciple of the Messiah, our Saviour, to his faithful son, Timothy, sends peace, blessings and greetings from God, The father, and the Messiah, our Lord.[118]

He provides another example of a letter from the Abbāsid Caliph Manṣūr al-Mahdī to one of his deputies, as follows:

> In the name of Allāh the Beneficent, the Merciful. From al-Mahdī al-Manṣūr, by the grace of God, faithful servant and the one calling to God's religion, to Jaʿfar bin Ḥamīd al-Kurdī, peace be upon you.[119]

Al-Shartūnī further points out that the practice of identifying the sender in the salutation was later abolished, and instead, the writer would begin his salutation with the recipient's title, while the name of the sender would come at the end of the letter, a practice which he states might have been adopted out of respect.[120]

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117 Al-Shartūnī, *al-Shihāb*, 14.

118 Ibid., 14.

119 Ibid., 15.

120 Ibid., 15.

Al-Shartūnī's inclusion of the signature as one of the parts of the letter marks a clear departure from classical and medieval letters. In classical letters, for instance, the identity of the sender was specified in the salutation, and a seal or messenger would provide confirmation of identity when it was required. However, from around the sixteenth century onwards, signatures were widely adopted. This is especially true of the West, where signatures and personal marks became a primary means of identification. These were placed at the end of the letter's body and often formed part of the subscription in what today we refer to as the closing. Here, the writer would express compliments, and would often include the date followed by his signature. Al-Shartūnī's inclusion of the signature as one of the primary parts of his letter thus suggests that the practice of using signatures had become the preferred method in Arab societies by the nineteenth century.

Unlike Western works of the medieval period, al-Shartūnī did not specify the social constraint that required the sender to place the recipient's name before his own in the salutation if the recipient was of a higher rank or vice-versa.[121] His reason for not mentioning this constraint is explained by the arrival of the signature as a primary means of identification. The fact that classical and medieval letters were not signed meant that both the identities of the sender and recipient had to be specified in the salutation, and hence the social hierarchical preoccupation with whose name should come first. However, the signature gained widespread currency as the primary means of identification in letters after the renaissance, which meant that the sender's name would always come after the recipient's at the end of the letter. Hence, it appears that this particular medieval social constraint, which was governed by the central principle of epistolary convention, became redundant.

Al-Shartūnī then presents a list of model signatures to be used in correspondence with persons holding the following Ottoman secular and Christian ecclesiastical ranks:

Secular ranks:

The Sultan:	*Servant of Your Grandeur* or *Your servant* fulān
State authorities/distinguished rulers:	*Your servant* fulān
For those below them (in rank):	*Your Excellency* fulān

[121] See section on salutations above.

Ecclesiastical ranks:

The Pope:	*son of Your Holiness*
The Patriarch:	*son of Your Splendour*
Bishop:	*son of Your Excellency*
Priest	*Your son* or *son of Your Honour*
For those equal and inferior in rank:	*Your Brother*[122]

Al-Shartūnī also presents a list of model signatures to be used by holders of secular and ecclesiastical ranks in their correspondence:

Leaders to the common people	*Yours sincerely*
Patriarchs and Bishop to their subordinates:	*Wretched* fulān
Judges in their official correspondence:	*in want of God fulān*
In correspondence between a Muslim and Christian of equal rank:	*Yours faithfully/sincerely*
From a youth to an elder out of politeness:	*Your son*[123]

Al-Shartūnī's model signatures clearly reveal that the dictaminal preoccupation with hierarchical social relationships between writer and recipient still guided the provision of material. Equally, his model signatures for various levels of addressees suggest that honouring the recipient in a way appropriate to his (social) rank remained an important consideration.

Al-ᶜunwān *(the recipient's address, external superscription)*

Al-Shartūnī describes the *'unwān* as the address written on the reverse (*ẓahr*) of the letter, consisting of the recipient's name, and a title appropriate to the recipient's (social) rank.[124] His *ᶜunwān* thus refers to the external subscription consisting of the recipient's name and title. It performs much the same function as the address or external superscription in medieval and renaissance letters which was usually written on the outside of the folded letter to make sure that the letter reached its intended recipient, and consisted of the recipient's name, his rank and the sender.[125]

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122 Al-Shartūnī, *al-Shihāb*, 16.

123 Ibid., 16.

124 Al-Shartūnī, *al-Shihāb*, 17.

125 The 'Instruction à escrire des lettres' (1644) (in 'Le Secrétaire à la Mode'), for instance, similarly describes the external superscription as, 'that which is affixed on the outside of letters, when they have been folded, and contains the name and titles of the person to whom the letter is written, and the place where he or she resides,' Chartier, 'Secrètaires *for the People*', 75–6.

Al-Shartūnī notes several phrases for addressing the letter, for example: 'to be honoured with the attention of; to have the honoured attention of; to be bestowed the attention of; to the kind attention ofHe states that the sender can also use the abbreviated form *ʾilā* 'to' but this is only permissible when writing to one's inferiors and is prohibited when writing to one's superiors. He furthermore asserts that it is common practice to conclude the address with a supplicatory sentence, as in, for instance: 'may God prolong his life'.[126]

The fact that al-Shartūnī only allows the use of abbreviated forms in correspondence with one's inferiors is particularly significant since he echoes similar restrictions placed by seventeenth-century French manuals. According to Chartier, the *Instruction à escrire des lettres* mentions two devices that can be used in the internal and external subscriptions to indicate the greater or lesser esteem in which the letter-writer holds the addressee. First, to use abbreviated forms when writing to one's inferiors. Second, to place the name of the addressee in the internal superscription only when writing to one's inferiors.[127]

As in his sections on salutations and signatures, al-Shartūnī presents model addresses to be used in correspondence with persons holding the following ecclesiastical and secular ranks:

Ecclesiastical ranks:

The Pope:	*To have the honoured attention of the fingertips of the Supreme Pontiff, our Master, the generous and Holy Pope* fulān
The Patriarch:	*To have the honoured attention of the Supreme Pontiff, noble patron of patrons our Master* fulān *the Patriarch…*
The Archbishop:	*To have the honoured attention of the Supreme Pontiff, our Master fulān Archbishop* fulān...
The Priest:	*To be honoured with the attention of the revered exalted Father Priest, or the honourable Priest* fulān

Secular ranks:

The Governor:	*To His Excellency, the Premier, our Master (patron)* fulān*, Governor of Greater Syria.*
Provincial Governor:	*To have the honoured attention of the Premier, our Master* fulān*, the most magnificent Provincial Governor of Lebanon.*
The Sub-Governor:	*To be bestowed the attention of His Eminence al-Amīr* fulān*, the ruling Sub Governorof the most magnificent*

126 Al-Shartūnī, *al-Shihāb*, 17.

127 Chartier, 'Secrètaires *for the People*,' 76–7.

The Administrator:	*To have the honoured attention of the sublime* al-Shaykh fulān*, most respected Administrator of the district* fulān
To superiors:	*To the kind attention of the honoured Mr* fulān
To equals:	*To the kind attention of the dearest brother Mr* fulān.[128]

Underlying al-Shartūnī's classification of addresses, salutations and signatures, is a socially codified approach based on a trifunctional model of: superior to inferior, inferior to superior and equal to equal. In short, this approach continues to develop the dictaminal preoccupation with hierarchical social relationships between writer and recipient, and thus virtually dominates the best part of al-Shartūnī's theories on letter-writing.

As with the model salutations and signatures, al-Shartūnī's model addresses provide mostly for Christian and Ottoman secular hierarchies. So why does he cater jointly for these two categories throughout his manual? The strong Christian/Ottoman focus of al-Shartūnī's manual is best explained by the wider aspirations of the Christian intellectuals of the *nahḍa*, such as Buṭrus al-Bustānī, Adīb Isḥāq (1856–85), and Faraḥ Antūn (1874–1922), to lay the basis for a secular society or state in which Christians and Muslims would participate as equals within an Ottoman context, and where social status would be decided by secular credentials rather than religious affiliation. Many Christian intellectuals promoted the idea of a role for Christians within an Ottoman framework of legitimacy (Ottomanism), believing that this was their best chance of achieving such a state.[129] Al-Shartūnī evidently belongs to those intellectuals. That he lists secular Ottoman hierarchies alongside Christian ecclesiastical hierarchies strongly suggests that he is satisfied with the idea of a role for Christians within an Ottoman context. At the same time, his provision of separate model salutations, signatures and addresses catering both for Christian and Ottoman secular hierarchies highlights a desire to keep religious institutions separate from secular ones. This is most likely because al-Shartūnī, as with many Christian intellectuals of that period, felt that the moderate progress of Christians within the Ottoman Empire offered better prospects for Christians through gradual disappearance of religious discrimination than political Arabism which was inextricably connected to Islam.

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128 Al-Shartūnī, *al-Shihāb*, 17–18.

129 See Azzam Tamimi, 'The Origins of Arab Secularism,' in *Islam and Secularism in the Middle East*, ed. Azzam Tamimi and John L. Espositio (London: Hurst and Co., 2000), 22.

Al-taʾrīkh *(the date)*

Al-Shartūnī defines the date (*al-taʾrīkh*) as the timing (*tawqīt*) of the letter. He notes that Arabs and Europeans differ in its arrangement. The Arabs, he explains, regard the date as a superfluous (*faḍla*) part of the letter and therefore put it at the end, while the Europeans place the date in the top part of the letter as though they wish to draw the recipient's attention to it. He also highlights that some in the Arab world, in particular merchants and businessmen, follow the Europeans by placing the date at the top of the letter.[130]

Arab merchants and businessmen emulating the Europeans by placing the date at the top of the letter marks a shift from the standard Arab practice and shows that one of the main avenues of foreign influence in parts of the Arab world was through merchants and businessmen who naturally had the most contact with the outside world. The shift reflects parallel developments that letter-writing had undergone in Europe much earlier. In letters of the early renaissance period, for instance, the date would often come in the subscription followed by the signature in what we know today as the letter's closing (*khitām/ikhtitām*). Later, however, this practice was abandoned in favour of placing the date at the top of the letter. Thus, it appears that by the beginning of the twentieth century, sectors of Arab society had begun to assimilate letter-writing practices that had become the norm in Europe after the renaissance. This suggests a strong European (French) influence in the development of letter-writing in the Arab world during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Types of Letters

Classical and medieval Arabic treatises on *inshāʾ* distinguish letters under two categories: the *risāla ikhwānīya* (correspondence between friends) and the *risāla dīwānīya* (official prose), which together embrace a whole range of letters. According to Arazi, the exclusive subject of the *ikhwānīya* letters is deep affection: their function is to substitute the absent friend who is far away and evoked with nostalgia by the pining writer. Moreover, the *dīwānīya* letter, which later came to be know as *al-risāla al-inshāʾīya*, refers to official prose but differs fundamentally from the modern administrative letter. Arazi also points out that *dīwānīya*s were carefully crafted, text documents in which every term is weighed and pondered, and belonged as much to the tradition of eloquent discourse as to that of administrative prose.[131]

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130 Al-Shartūnī, *al-Shihāb*, 19.

131 A. Arazi and H. Ben-Shammay, 'Risāla', 536–7.

Although the majority of Arab letter-writing manuals organize letters under the *ikhwānīya* and *dīwānīya* headings, there is no single standard system of classification for the variety of letters that appear under these two main headings. Al-Shartūnī, for instance, highlights the difficulty of providing a suitable system of classification for all the types of letters, and then lists some of the systems of classification proposed in earlier manuals, as follows: 'some writers classify letters into four main types: you are asked something; you are asked about something; you are ordered to do something; you are informed of something. Requests, pleas, advice all come under (You are asked something); letters of inquiry come under (You are asked about something); letters of counsel, advice, admonition come under (You are ordered to do something); newsletters, letters of nostalgia, come under (You are informed of something).'[132]

The above system of classification is obviously based on the nature of the petition, and though al-Shartūnī does not acknowledge his source here, he is clearly quoting al-Karmī, who notes a similar system of classification based on the four types of petition (speech) in the introduction to his *Kitāb Badīʿ*: 'you are asked something; you are asked about something; you are ordered to do something; you are informed of something.'[133]

Moreover, al-Shartūnī notes that some writers have divided letters into three types. In the first, the requirement relates to the writer e.g. business letters, letters of request, gratitude, excuse and repudiation. In the second, the requirement relates to the addressee, for instance, letters of congratulation, condolence, blame, news, nostalgia and replies. In the third, the requirement relates to a third person e.g. letters of recommendation and intercessions on someone's behalf (conciliation).[134] Albeit unspecified, it appears that the system of classification being described here is based on the person prompting the letter.

Although al-Shartūnī notes various systems of classification for letters, he actually organizes his model letters under nine categories into what can adequately be described as a thematic system of classification, for example: familiar letters (*al-ahlīya*); advice (*al-mashūra*); blame and excuses (*al-lawm wa-l-iʿtizār*); condolence (*al-taʿziya*); felicitations (*al-tahniʾa*); requests (*al-ṭalab*); gratitude (*al-shukr*); business letters (*al-*

132 Al-Shartūnī, *al-Shihāb*, 21.

133 Al-Karmī, *Kitāb badīʿ al-inshāʾ*, 6.

134 Al-Shartūnī, *al-Shihāb*, 21–2.

tijārīya); invitations and messages (*riqāᶜ al-daᶜwāt*).[135]

Through these classifications, al-Shartūnī appears to adopt a system that was common in medieval Arab treatises. Al-Qalqashandī, for instance, classifies his *ikhwānīya* letters thematically into the following categories among others: *al-shafāᶜāt* (intercessions), *al-tashawwuk* (nostalgia), *al-istizāra* (invitation) *al-mawadda* (friendship), *khitbat al-nisāᵓ* (request for marriage), *al-iᶜtidhār* (excuses), *al-shakwā* (complaint), *al-shukr* (gratitude), *al-ᶜitāb* (disapproval), *al-ᶜiyāda* (visiting the sick), *al-dhamm* (lecturing), *al-ikhbār* (announcement) and *mudāᶜaba* (pleasantry).[136]

Though al-Shartūnī's manual clearly incorporates some of the themes listed in al-Qalqashandī's manual, such as: *al-iᶜtidhār* (excuses), *al-shakwā* (complaint), *al-shukr* (gratitude), the majority of themes in his manual are different. In fact, al-Shartūnī's thematic system of classification seems to have more in common with French letter-writing manuals than Arab ones. The *Instruction à escrire des lettres*, for instance, clearly adopts a similar classification of model letters. The themes listed include: letters of notification, advice, reprimand, command, entreaty, recommendation, complaint, reproach, congratulation, consolation, thanks, gentle irony, reply or letters announcing a visit.[137]

When it comes to more specific letters, some similar situations are imagined in al-Shartūnī's work and in al-Qalqashandī's work: letters congratulating the minister for his job; letter of condolence to the son or a letter for not writing for a long time.[138] Nevertheless, al-Shartūnī's work expands the range of possible letter types, writers, and the types of situations that could occasion the writing of a letter. He presents a total of 236 models letters in what seems to be an attempt to cover a wealth of different situations. Below are just some of the specific situations imagined in his model letters:

Al-Rasāᵓil al-ahlīya (familiar letters): from a student to a friend; student to his father/mother; brother to brother; student to teacher; son to father; student to uncle.

Rasāᵓil al-mashūra (letters of advice): from father to son, youth to his uncle; from friend to friend dissuading him from something he about

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135 Ibid., 248–9.

136 Arazi and Ben-Shammay, 'Risāla,' 536–7

137 Chartier, 'Secrètaires *for the People*', 74.

138 These are just some of the situations prompting a letter in al-Qalqashandī's *Ṣubḥ al-aᶜshā,* 9: 3-4.

which he has decided upon.

Rasāʾil al-lawm wa-l-iʿtidhār (blame and excuses): from an elder brother to a younger one admonishing him for bad behaviour at school; letter to a friend admonishing him for not writing; to a son rebuking him for preferring working in business over serving in the (Ottoman) government.

Rasāʾil al-taʿziya (condolences): letter of condolence to a friend on the death of his father; from a priest to his people, to someone who has loss wealth; to a judge who has wrongly been dismissed.

Rasāʾil al-tahniʾa (felicitations, congratulations): congratulating the Pope on assuming his new position; the Patriarch on assuming his new position; the (Ottoman) minister for obtaining his rank; from the archbishop to one of his followers; to the (Ottoman) minister for succeeding in the battle-field; from a former student wishing the school Principal Happy New Year; letter to a father wishing him Happy Easter; to the Bishop wishing him Happy New Year.

Rasāʾil al-ṭalab (requests): from a teacher to the Director of the (Ottoman) Bank; to the Principal requesting admission for one's son into school; requesting help from a friend; from a youth to the manager of the (Ottoman) chancery requesting a job; from an (Ottoman) soldier to his superior requesting leave; letter asking a friend for a loan; letter of request to the (Ottoman) district administrator.

Rasāʾil al-Shukr (gratitude): to a newspaper editor thanking him for his integrity; from a patient to his doctor; thanking someone for fulfilling a need; letter thanking the provincial (Ottoman) governor.

Al-rasāʾil al-tijārīya (business letters): from the owner of a paper factory to manager of a publishing house; letter informing about the establishment of a business firm; inquiring about a business venture; hiring a writer.

Riqāʿ al-daʿwāt (invitations and messages): Invitation to wedding ceremony; Invitation to a picnic; invitation to the banquet; invitation to dinner; interview request; note of inquiry; invitation to invigilate school examinations; invitation to engagement party; invitation to funeral; to the tailor (dressmaker); to the author, to the retailer.[139]

Some of al-Shartūnī's model letters, as with his salutations, signatures,

[139] For this and more, see al-Shartūnī, *al-Shihāb*, 248–9.

and addresses, also reveal a strong Christian/Ottoman focus, which has been explained in the light of the wider political aspirations of the Christian intellectuals of the Ottoman era. Of interest here are his model letters under *Rasāʾil al-tahniʾa* 'congratulations', especially New Year and Fête, because the range of letter types, writers, and types of situations that could occasion the writing of a letter envisage a largely Arab Christian audience. Al-Shartūnī's audience is key to understanding the distinct Christian focus of al-Shartūnī's letters and his approach in general. He wrote this work at the request of the proprietor of the Catholic Press, as he states at the beginning of his work, Al-Shartūnī therefore needed to produce a manual that catered for the needs of an Arab Christian audience and perhaps more specifically for students at the various Christian missionary schools of the Ottoman era. Most available letter-writing manuals left over from the medieval and early pre-modern periods, however, were produced by Chancery Secretaries who served in the Islamic bureaucracies of the Abbasid, Fatimid, Ayyubid and Mamluk Empires. These manuals inextricably rooted in the Islamic tradition catered primarily for the needs, customs and formalities of the Muslim majority rather than the Christian minority who, only having a *dhimmi* status under these bureaucracies, were no more than second class citizens.[140] Al-Shartūnī therefore turned to the Western *ars dictaminis* which already rooted in the Christian tradition offered a ready-made model, a justification for his approach that was perfect for the climate of tension in which he lived.

Al-Shartūnī's listing under *riqāʿ al-daʿwāt* (invitations and messages) is also worth noting, since it represents a new epistolary category as far as earlier Arab letter-writing manuals are concerned, and perhaps emerged as a direct result of European (French) influence. According to Chartier, a new generation of manuals (the *Nouveau Secrétaire Français*) appeared in France during the early nineteenth century and became very popular. These manuals, he indicates, were intended specifically for practical use and broadened the range of possible letter types, letter-writers and the types of situations that could prompt the writing of a letter by supplying models of marriage, birth and burial announcements. In so doing, this new generation of *secrétaires* demonstrated how often reliance was placed on printed forms.[141] Thus, al-Shartūnī's inclusion of

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[140] Arazi points out that people of the medieval period tended to view the epistolary art as a means of addressing the most important aspects of medieval Islamic society. Arazi and Ben-Shammay, 'Risāla', 536–7.

[141] Chartier notes that the attraction of the new *secrétaires* lay in their uni-

model letters under this category most likely reflects similar developments in French manuals of the nineteenth century that were designed specifically for practical use. The letters he supplies are designed to fulfil a clear practical purpose, which is not so apparent in some of the other (traditional) categories that feature in his manual. The variety of situations envisaged in these letters, moreover, reveal an Arab society in the later part of the nineteenth placing increased reliance on written forms to keep up with new social situations and formalities in the absence of oral communication.

Conclusion

The influence of Western letter-writing is evident right from the very start of al-Shartūnī's work. His concept of letter-writing picks up the same central theme of transcending absence through the letter that commonly underlies the openings of letter-writing manuals in the Western dictaminal tradition. Al-Shartūnī presents the judgement as to the relative social position of the letter-writer and recipient as the central principle of epistolary convention, much in the same way as earlier Western, especially French, letter-writing manuals. By highlighting that this principle is also integral to rhetoric, al-Shartūnī evokes the historic link between classical rhetoric and Western letter-writing. He again stresses this link when comparing the stylistic requirements in both arts. Al-Shartūnī's comparisons are thus evidently inspired by the Western dictaminal tradition which is deeply rooted in classical rhetorical theory. This influence is further evident when al-Shartūnī classifies the letter into separate parts and assigns each part a separate function just as Western dictaminal treatises. Although his six-part letter marks a departure from the Bolognese 'approved format' (five parts), his basic principles are essentially thirteenth-century Bolognese precepts. His reason for discarding narration, and adding the *al-imḍāʾ* (signature) and *al-tārīkh* (date), is to keep up with parallel developments in nineteenth-century letter-writing manuals, as well as the needs and demands of a *nahḍa* Arab society.

Al-Shartūnī's *al-Shihāb* presents multiple examples of model salutations, signature and addresses to cater for the secular and ecclesiastical hierarchies of the Ottoman era. Underlying these models is a socially

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versality, for they brought together in a single work materials that were traditionally kept separate and that related to different new and old epistolary genres and practices: letters of congratulation, commercial letters and forms, and models made necessary by the new formalities of social life. Chartier, *Secrètaires for the People*, 103–4 and 105–6.

codified approach based on a trifunctional model of: superior to inferior, inferior to superior, or equal to equal. This approach is particularly significant for three reasons. First, it continues to develop the medieval dictaminal preoccupation with hierarchical social relationships. Second, it suggests that this dictaminal preoccupation was still a constant feature in the letter-writing of the *nahḍa*. Third, this approach dominates the best part of al-Shartūnī's theory on letter-writing and shows that al-Shartūnī, as with authors of Western dictaminal manuals, distinguishes these relationships as the principal element of communication.

The focus of al-Shartūnī's manual on providing models for copying, rather than suggestions for invention, however, makes the links he creates between rhetoric and letter-writing seem rather illusory and superficial. Al-Shartūnī states at the beginning of his section on theory that the art of composition (*inshāʾ*) is the 'invention, discovery' (*al-ījād*) of some matter in the form of a mental image which is then set forth. Despite this, the almost exclusive focus of his manual, as with many Western manuals, is on providing models for copying rather than suggestions for rhetorical invention. His collection of model salutations, signatures, addresses, and letters, catering for every possible situation, thus makes letter-writing into a largely imitative undertaking. Considered together with the strong influence of hierarchical social and personal relationships over any form of reasoned argument, this effectively devaluates the classical tradition of rhetorical invention and argumentation. Hence, if al-Shartūnī views letter-writing as a means of transcending absence and as a substitute for oral communication, as his definition suggests, then this view of letter-writing also assumes that oral communication (rhetoric) itself is an imitative process.

Although al-Shartūnī's work essentially emulates the Western *ars dictaminis*, on occasion it has elements in common with al-Qalqashandī's treatise. Al-Shartūnī uses a similar thematic taxonomy to al-Qalqashandī and when it comes to more specific letters, his two hundred and thirty six model letters use similar situations, but clearly expand the range of possible letter types, letter-writers, and situations occasioning the letter by using a system of classification and themes very much similar to later French letter-writing manuals. His listing under *riqāʾ al-daʿwāt* (invitations and messages) in particular represents a new epistolary category which may well have emerged as a direct result of European influence. As with letters in French manuals of the nineteenth century, al-Shartūnī's letters under this category are intended to fulfil a practical purpose, and clearly reflect the degree of reliance that was placed on written forms in the absence of oral communication. Thus, while it is quite feasible that

al-Shartūnī borrows some elements from al-Qalqashandī, the fact that Western manuals also incorporate the same suggests that there are remarkable similarities between the two traditions, which though beyond the scope of the present study surely merit further investigation.[142] Considering that al-Shartūnī was writing for an Arabic speaking audience, however, he must have had some recourse to earlier Arab letter-writing treatises. This is reflected in his use of Arabic terminology to describe the parts of a letter which is clearly borrowed form earlier Arabic works such as al-Qalqashandī's. In this sense, al-Shartūnī assimilates letter-writing practices that relate to old and new Western epistolary genres through the medium of Arabic, which enabled him to produce an updated version of the Western *ars dictaminis*, adapted to the needs of an Arabic-speaking Christian audience in the *nahḍa*.

Al-Shartūnī's provision of salutations, signatures and addresses for Christians alongside secular Ottoman hierarchies throughout his manual clearly shows that he belongs to those intellectuals of the *nahḍa* who promoted the idea of a role for Christians within an Ottoman framework of legitimacy (Ottomanism), believing that this was their best chance of achieving a secular state in which Christians and Muslims would participate as equals. Thus, how better for al-Shartūnī to pave the way for such a state than by compiling a manual that clearly promotes the idea of a role for Christians in an Ottoman secular fold, and which at the same time is tailored to its administrative and practical needs.

The strong Christian focus of al-Shartūnī's manual is furthermore clearly reflected in his model letters, especially in the letters dealing with New Year and Fête under letters of congratulations which envisage a predominantly Arab Christian audience. Al-Shartūnī's audience sheds light on his approach. Available letter-writing manuals inextricably rooted in the Islamic tradition catered primarily for the needs and customs of the Muslim population. He therefore turned to the Western *ars dictaminis* which rooted in the Christian tradition offered a ready-made model, and a justification for his approach, that was perfect for the prevailing political and socio-cultural climate.

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[142] Such a study would perhaps take a closer look at the elements of theory endemic to both Arab and Western letter-writing and attempt to trace the sources and influences.