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- Persian Letters - Letters -

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### *Rhedi to Usbek in Paris*

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I am now in Venice, my dear Usbek. If one has seen all the cities in the world, one is still surprised on arriving at Venice : one will always be surprised to see a city, towers, and mosques emerge from underwater, and to find a large population in a place where there should be only fish.

But this profane city lacks the most precious treasure on earth, which is to say, running water : it is impossible to perform a single legal ablution here. [1] It is an abomination to our holy Prophet ; and he never looks down on it from heaven but in anger. [2]

Except for that, my dear Usbek, I would be charmed to live in a city where my mind improves every day : I am learning about the secrets of commerce, the interests of the princes, the form of their government. I do not even neglect European superstitions ; I am applying myself to medicine, physics, and astronomy ; I am studying the arts ; in short, I am coming out of the clouds that were covering my eyes in the land of my birth. [3]

*Venice this 16th day of the moon of Chalval 1712*

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[1] Frequent ablutions are one of the fundamental requirements of Islam.

[2] Venice had difficulty defending its possessions against the Turks : after the loss of Candia (Crete) in 1670, it recaptured the Peloponnese in 1699, only to lose it definitively in 1715.

[3] A parallel between the experiences of Rhedi in Venice and of Usbek (who says in letter 1 that he left home for his own instruction) in Paris : see also Usbek's letter 67 on Western science.