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Adres : ENDERUN KİTABEVİ, Beyaz Saray No. 46

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METHOD AND MOTIVE IN BOOK REVIEWING

Eleazar Birnbaum

«Comment is free, but facts are
sacred» -- C.P. Scott
Hak yerini bulur (Proverb)

I

The oldest known Turkish version of the *Ḳābūs-nāme*, dating from the 14th century, was published for the first time in 1981, with a 108-page Introductory Study by myself¹. *Osmanlı Araştırmaları/The Journal of Ottoman Studies* printed a review of it by Orhan Şaik Gök-yay², which was full of *ad hominem* denigration, such as rarely mars the pages of an academic journal. Rudeness, however deplorable, does not necessitate an academic rebuttal.

The present pages are occasioned by a much more serious consideration. The «manufacture» of evidence and the deliberate concealment of crucial material facts to defend untenable assertions are not merely ethical problems for the culprit, but an affront to scholarship, which the academic community must condemn unequivocally.

In 1944 Gökayay himself published (in Latin alphabet transcription) Mercümeḳ Aḥmed's 15th century Turkish translation of the

1 *The Book of Advice by King Kay Kā'ūs ibn Iskandar*. The earliest Old Ottoman Turkish version of his *Ḳābūs-nāme*. Text in facsimile from the unique 14th century manuscript, together with a study of the text and a select vocabulary, by Eleazar Birnbaum. *Mütercimi meḡhul ilk Türkçe Ḳābūs-nāme*. İnceleme, sözlük, tıpkı basım. Harvard Üniversitesi Basımevi, 1981. (= Doḡu Dilleri ve Edebiyatlarının Kaynakları, 6).

2 III (1982), pp. 327-332.

Persian *Ḳābūs-nāme*³. In a footnote in my book (p. 6 note 7, and its addendum on p. 62) I alluded to Gökyay's work :

Unfortunately there are many misreadings in it, e.g., in the second sentence of the book, *Filībēbōlīdā* 'at Philopolis' is misread as *Filibe yolunda*, and the Sultan's name Murād is inadvertently omitted (*Sultan ibn Muhammed* in place of Sultan *Murād Han* ibn Muhammed) **in the 1944 edition [**my addendum, p. 62].

This footnote led Gökyay to devote a full page of his review to attempting to show that I had grossly misrepresented the facts in both cases. In order to prove my inability to read Turkish, he provided what purported to be photographs (klišeler) of the passages in question.

II

Figure 1 is a reproduction of the part of Gökyay's review (p. 329) discussing the British Museum manuscript of Mercümeek Ahmet's *Ḳābūs-nāme* (OR. 3219), including his facsimile of a line in Ottoman script, allegedly reproduced from that MS :

Bunlardan birincisi Filibe yolunda yanlışdır (!). Bu, yazmada (Rieu Kataloğu, British Museum, OR. 3219) bütün başka okuyucuların göreceği ve okuyacağı gibi apaçık.

عَفَى عَنْهُمَا . تَرْكُنْ فِىلِيبِهْ يُولَدُكُ يَا مَشَادُ خِدْمَتِهْ وَارْ دُمْ

şeklinde harekelenmiştir (ypr.. b .safir-5).

Ve kendimizi ne kadar zorlasak bunun başka türlü okunmasının yolu yoktur. Sonra, o yüzyıllardan kalma bütün Türkçe kitaplarda ve onlardan sonra yazılanlarda biz Filibenin (Philippopolis) yazılı-

3 *Ḳābūs-nāme*. Keykāvus'un bu eseri Mercimeek Ahmet tarafından onbeşinci yüzyılın ilk yarısında Farsça aslından Türkçeye çevrilmiş ve Orhan Şaik Gökyay tarafından yeniden gözden geçirilerek nesrolunmuştur. İstanbul, Maarif Matbaası, 1944.

şını görmüyoruz, göremeyiz de. Çünkü Türkler aldıkları yerlerin adını hiçbir zaman onların, o dillerdeki söylenişi ile söylememişlerdir de, yazmamışlardır da.

Figure 1

This line in Ottoman script would appear to support his claim that the words are *Filibbe yolunda* and not *Filibëbölüdä* as I read. It is sad to be obliged to demonstrate that Gökyay has deceived his readers. *This photography is not from OR. 3219*, as he asserts. The real *OR. 3129 is in a different hand*, unvocalised and in a different spelling⁴, as the reader will see from Figure 2, the relevant portion of it reproduced below (fol. 1b) :

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
 الحمد لله رب العالمين والصلوة والسلام على خير خلقه محمد وآله
 وصحبه وسلم أما بعد شؤمك بملككم كذا بواضعنا الخاق
 عنداته والناس مرجك احمد بن الياس عني نعمما بكون فلي ببولين
 بادشاه خدمته واروم كوردمر سلطان جفان صلحقران
 ذمان سلطان بن السلطان سلطان مراد خان بن محمد بن بايزيد
 بن مراد بن عثمان بن اوجان خلد ملكه وايدد ولته الذك بكتاب
 طوتر بوضيف وخته دل او اعالي جنابك نه كتابد ديواستغاثتم

Figure 2

The reading *Filibëbölüdä* (line 4, last word) is incontrovertable, as this MS makes very clear distinctions between single-dotted and double-dotted letters. To read *yolunda* is absolutely impossible, and the *only* possible reading is *bölüdä*. It is precisely such an interesting archaic form as this, preserved in a MS, that a conscientious editor

⁴ A copy of the microfilm of the British Museum manuscript has been deposited with the editors of *Osmanlı Araştırmaları* for verification.

should record, rather than suppress⁵. Still less should he knowingly refuse to acknowledge its existence⁶, and heap abuse on those who do. *Hak söz acı gelir.*

III

In my book I referred to the fact that Gökyay had «inadvertently omitted» the Sultan's name, Murād, in his 1944 edition of Mercümeke Ahmed's *Ḳābūs-nāme*. In his review he alleges that his book does indeed contain the words that I claimed were missing, and he reproduces a portion of text in which the formerly missing passage is present. Here is the passage as Gökyay photographed it for *Osmanlı Araştırmaları*, III, p. 329 :

İkincisine gelince : Sultan Murād'ın benim tarafımdan ihmal edildiğini söylediği adı, bütün tarihlerimizde olduğu gibi benim cümlemdede de yerli yerindedir : Sultan-ı cihan, sahib-kıran-ı zaman, sultan ibnü's-sultan sultan Murād Han dir :

gördüm ki *Sultan-ı cihan sahibkıran-ı zaman sultan ibn es- sultan sultan Murad Han ibn Muhammed Han ibn Bayezid ibn Murad Han ibn Orhan ibn Osman* halledallahü mülkehu ve eb-

Figure 3

5 Although the ending *bolu* (from Greek *polis*, «city») is retained in the Ottoman form of several place-names (e.g., Gelibolu, Nigbolu) it did not long survive in the Turkish form of the ancient city of Philippopolis. Manuscripts of other works show that in Ottoman times, the norm was indeed *Filibe* (occasionally also *Filbe*). Those experienced in the critical reading of MSS know how often scribes, faced with a difficult word or name in their model text, «correct» it to something they understand, but which the author did not actually write. The author's original *Filibebohdā* might, in some later copies, easily become transformed into *Filibe yolında* by careless or ignorant scribes, but the copyist of OR. 3219 reproduced the word faithfully from his model text.

6 I expressly cited his 1944 edition which was the only one accessible to me. I assumed that the reprints were unchanged, but this seems not to have been the case; Gökyay's *klise* was presumably made from a corrected later edition. Could he not have written frankly that his omission in the first edition of 1944 had since been rectified, rather than denying any basis for the real fact?

Below (Figure 4) is the passage I cited in my footnote, as it *really appears*, photographed from p. 3 of the 1944 edition of Gökyay's own book :

Elhamdü Lillâhi Rabb-il-âlemîn¹. Ves-selâtü ves-selâm alâ hayr-i halkihi *Muhammedin* ve âlihi ve sahabihi ve sellem². Şöyle bilmek gerektir kim bu ez'af-ül-halki ind-Allahi ven-nâsi³. *Mercüme* *Ahmed ibn İlyas - afâ anhü*⁴ - bir gün *Filibe* yolunda padişah hizmetine vardım ve gördüm ki *Sultan ibn Muhammed Han ibn Bayezid ibn Murad Han ibn Orhan ibn Osman* halledâllahü mülkehu ve ebbede devletehu⁵ elinde bir kitap tutar. Bu zaif hastadil ol âli cenabından ne kitaptır deyu istida ettim. Ol lâfz-ı şekerbarından *Kabusname'dir* deyu cevap verdi ve eyitti ki hoş kitaptır ve içinde çok faideler ve nasihatler vardır; ama farisî dilindedir. Bir kişi türkiye tercüme etmiş, velî ruşen değil, açık söylememiş. Eyle' olsa hikâyetinden halâvet bulmazız⁶, dedi. Ve lâkin bir kimse olsa ki kitabı açık tercüme etse, tâ ki mefhumundan gönüller haz alsın. Pes bu zaif ikdam ettim, ben kemine tercüme edeyin⁷ deyince ol pâknazarlu⁸ padişah, senin ne haddindir, demediğ filhal tercüme et, deyu buyurdu. Eyle olsa⁹ ben kemine dahi sâyettim,

Figure 4

From sections II and III the readers of this journal may draw their own conclusions as to Gökyay's methods of scholarly proof.

7 On 15 May 1978 I sent Gökyay photographs of British Museum MS OR. 3219 (fol. 1b) and p. 3 of the 1944 edition of his own *Qabûsnâme*. This is the same material which I reproduce above. He never favoured me with a reply.

IV

When a hitherto unknown Turkish MS of such age and length as the oldest *Kābūs-nāme* translation is placed in its entirety before the academic world, a reviewer might be expected to inform readers of its place in Turkish literature, and its philological importance, and perhaps comment on some other matters of interest. Gökyay limits his comments to one single section of my book only: the Select Vocabulary. From it he picks out individual words, where he believes I have misread vowels, or misunderstood the meaning. In a number of cases he is actually right. Regrettably I miscopied some words from my cards onto my draft, and missed some typographical errors in proofreading, and on occasion had misread a vowel in the MS itself. Several of his suggested changes in interpretation are well-founded. I am always happy to accept good suggestions on their own merits, (even though deploring the abusive comments accompanying them in this case). Disagreements are inevitable in scholarly matters, and colleagues must examine the work of their peers frankly. It should, however, be possible to express differences politely. That is, indeed, the very stuff of genuine scholarship, and distinguishes it from political brawling and children's quarrels.