

## Werk

**Titel:** Neudecker, Hannah: The Turkish Bible translation by Yaꞗya bin 'Isꞗaꞗ, also called...

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(p. 98-99) might be premature considering the fact that there are still some native Karaite speakers today (cf. Csató & Johanson 1996).

Such small corrections are negligible against the indisputable value of this book as a guide to the fascinating world of Turkic languages. The authors' profound knowledge and rigorous scientific standards have not prevented them from writing a readable, for the aficionado even gripping, account of the linguistic interrelationship within the Turkic language family.

#### Reference

Csató, É. Á. & Johanson, L. 1996. Zur Silbenharmonie des Nordwest-Karaimischen. *Acta Orientalia Scientiarum Hungaricae* 48, 329-337.

Mark Kirchner: Review of Hannah Neudecker. *The Turkish Bible translation by Yahya bin 'Ishak, also called Haki (1659)*. Leiden University Library Ms. Cod. Or. 391a (= Publicaties van het Oosters Instituut 4). Leiden, 1994. 9, 404 pages + folia 289r-377v.

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In her "proefschrift", which came into being while she was a research assistant at the Department of Hebrew, Aramaic and Ugaritic Languages and Cultures at Leiden University, Neudecker presents the oldest Turkish Bible translation still in existence. The Ottoman manuscripts have been kept in Leiden (Leiden University Library Cod. Or. 386 and 391a) since the end of the seventeenth century. Nothing is known about the translator except for his name. However, Neudecker has successfully reconstructed the strange history of this early translation (365-382), a story featuring such distinguished *dramatis personae* as, for example, Levinus Warner (1619-1665), professor of Oriental languages at Leiden and resident of the States General at the Sublime Porte in Constantinople. Apparently, translating the Bible from Hebrew into Turkish proved too difficult an undertaking for Warner. He therefore passed the task on to a Jewish dragoman named Haki but succeeded in suppressing the true authorship of the translation. Other characters in this play are the great humanist scholar Comenius, who encouraged Warner to undertake the project and, among others, Ali Bey Bobowski, first dragoman at the Porte, who disliked Haki's Turkish ("obscure

et intricate”) and was finally commissioned by Warner to make a new attempt at translating the Bible into Turkish. Ali Bey Bobowski is not alone in his disapproval of Haki’s Turkish. The editor of the book under review, H. Neudecker, also complains of the shortcomings of Haki’s translation. Neudecker notices inconsistencies in the translation (1): “Haki translates difficult constructions correctly one moment, but incorrectly the next, literally one moment, and with a translation related to a Jewish commentary the next”. However, it should be mentioned that this kind of inconsistency is a general tendency of pre-modern translations into Ottoman-Turkish. The same goes for the editor’s criticism of Haki’s “wording”; using different translations for the same Hebrew words is by no means a sign of “inconsistency” but rather proper Ottoman style, which avoids the repetition of lexical elements. Neudecker’s introduction also contains some general observations on Haki’s “clause syntax”, which she describes as “Semitic instead of Turkish”. Regardless of the question which kind of syntax is used in our text, it should be noted that what is usually meant by “Turkish syntax” is the prototypical system of Modern Turkish. Ottoman Turkish “clause syntax”, on the other hand, shows influence from Persian and other Oriental languages. This means that Standard Ottoman Turkish, and not “Turkish”, would have been a more appropriate guideline for evaluating of Haki’s translation. From that perspective, Haki’s language might deviate less from the norm than Neudecker supposes.

The main part of Neudecker’s book is an excellent edition of Haki’s Bible translation (1 and 2 Samuel, 11-212) including his draft version (Cod. Or. 391a) and the variant readings from the fair copy (Cod. Or. 386). The “elaborate transcription system” employed by the editor combines the accuracy of a transliteration with the convenience of a broad transcription—beyond any doubt an improvement for Ottoman philology. (Nevertheless, I will quote the text without Neudecker’s diacritics wherever they are not needed to illustrate the problems under discussion.)

The edition is followed by detailed “Notes on interpretation problems” and “Notes on textual problems”. I would like to offer the following remarks:

The editor supposes that with *kırak*, as the counterpart of *mkh* “plague, blow” (1 Sam 4:8), Haki has formed a new deverbal noun by means of the morpheme *-(A)K*. In my opinion it is, more probably, a miswriting of *kıran* ‘id.’ (214).

Neudecker remarks that 1 Sam. 1:2 *wlw šty nšym* “lit. ‘for him two wives’” has been translated into Turkish using a predicate in the past tense: *var idi*. That is to be expected, since temporal reference, generally not expressed in Hebrew nominal sentences, is obligatory in their Turkish counterparts (238).

Neudecker treats 1 Sam 2:6 *öldürici*, a correspondence of the Hebrew active participle *mmyt*, as a substantive in opposition to the participle *-(y)An*. Thus she believes Haki’s translation to be “inconsistent”. In fact *-(y)lcI* is attested for participles not only in Old Ottoman Turkish but also in later periods (239).

*lebbeyke* (1 Sam 3:4) “here I am for you, i.e. waiting for your commands” is recorded in the Redhouse dictionary as *lebbeyk*. Neudecker wonders about the function

of the third *fatha*, not considering that *-ka* is simply the second person singular personal suffix, which is *-k* in pausa and in spoken Arabic (240).

The editor remarks that Haki erroneously translated 1 Sam 10:3 *gdyym* 'kids' as *oĝlan* 'boy'. Actually, *oĝlan* is simply a misreading; the manuscript in the appendix clearly has *oĝlaḵ* 'kid' (244).

Haki's translation of 1 Sam 17:51 *mt'rh* 'out of its sheath' as *kīninden* is compared to *keyn* 'clitoris', but it is more probably a miswriting of Turkish *kın* 'sheath' (250).

*diritlemezdi* for Hebrew *wl' yhyh* 'and did not leave alive' in 1 Sam 27:11 is obscure to the editor. Even if there are some doubts regarding its lexical content, this form should be connected to *dirilt-* 'to give life to'; a simplification of clusters such as */ltm/* is not unlikely in Turkic languages. Besides, there is a general tendency to drop *l* before the initial dental of causative suffixes (256).

Haki rendered 1 Sam 31:10 *tḵ'w* 'they fastened' as *muḥaldılar*, a form unclear to the editor. In my opinion it might be a misspelling of *mīḥla-*, *mīhla-* 'to nail' (259).

Neudecker analyzes 2 Sam 6:5 *defleler*, the translation of Hebrew *btḡym* 'with tambourines', as *def* 'tambourine with cymbals' with the postposition *-le* erroneously preceding the plural ending. Instead of turning Turkish grammar upside down, I propose Persian *dafla* 'a small tambourine' to be the word in question (261).

Chapter 4 (275-308) deals with the issue of which Bible text Haki used for his translation. There is actually every internal (e.g. rendering of proper names and Hebrew idiomatic constructions) and external (subdivisions according to Jewish tradition into weekly sections) evidence that the original Hebrew Bible and not an extant translation was used. This chapter also presents interesting comments on "the sentence structure" (295-304), which are based on a synopsis of the Hebrew text, Haki's and Ali Bey's translations (the latter also preserved in Leiden University Library) and a modern Turkish Bible (*Kitabı mukaddes*). It becomes clear that Haki's syntax is very close to that of the Hebrew text on the clause level but different on the phrase level.

Chapter 5 (309-364) discusses "the Turkish of Haki's Bible translation". It contains remarks on orthographic interchanges and, among other things, a list of spellings which differ from those in Redhouse's (old) dictionary. Since Redhouse is not even a very reliable source for Ottoman spelling of the 19th century, this reference work is of doubtful value for earlier periods of the language. Two further remarks:

Neudecker notes the absence of the letter *ta* in 2 Sam 19:26 *aldadı* 'he cheated' instead of *aldatdı* (1 Sam 19:17), but she does not note that there are also instances of *alda-* in Ottoman Turkish (319).

On p. 321 the author includes *çaşid* 'scout, spy' (2 Sam 15:10) in a list of words or spellings which Redhouse terms "vulgar" (instead of *casus*). Actually *çaşid* is a different etymon, which is semantically merged in *casus* (< Arabic).

Chapter 5 also contains valuable remarks on morphonology (326-357), especially concerning the vowels of suffixes. Neudecker compares the data of her text with

Doerfer's findings ("Zum Vokalismus nichtster Silben in altsmanischen Originaltexten", Stuttgart 1985) and those of Hazai ("Das Osmanisch-Türkische im XVII. Jahrhundert", Budapest 1973). Haki's creative approach to the Ottoman language is well illustrated by the interesting list of "denominal verbs not found in Redhouse's dictionary" (360-361).

Chapter 6 "The historical background of the translation" (see above) is followed by a good "description of the manuscripts of Haki's Bible translation" (383-397) and a reproduction of the relevant section of Cod. Or. 391a.

Neudecker's neat edition and comprehensive study represent an extremely valuable contribution to the history of the Ottoman language and culture. More milestones like this one are needed to advance the exploration of the earlier stages of Turkish.