

READING BIDLĪSĪ THROUGH AL-ŞAĦĪĦAYN: A ḤADĪT IN HAŞT BIHIŞT VI*

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Mustafa Dehqan¹

Many vague details are still surrounding the unpublished Persian text of *Hašt Bibišt* VI, which its author, Idrīs Bidlīsī (1457–1520), dedicated to the reign of Murād II (1421–1444, 1446–1451). An understanding of the state of affairs under Murād II before attempting textual criticism is vital in this context. Of significant advantage is the readiness of the sources to supply quite prolific material concerning sophisticated language of *Hašt Bibišt* VI. In a short time, *Hašt Bibišt*'s reading had somewhat changed and the former readings had been mostly forgotten, but there are, nevertheless, reports which do preserve them. This short article deals with a close scrutiny of these reports which enable us to form some conception of the readings given in the manuscripts of the *Hašt Bibišt*

Keywords: Idrīs Bidlīsī, *Hašt Bibišt* VI, Ottoman, *ḥadīṭ*, Murād II, Persian, *Şaḥīḥ*

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ЧИТАЯ БИДЛИСИ С ПОМОЩЬЮ «АЛ-САХИХАЙН»: ХАДИС В ШЕСТОМ ТОМЕ «ХАШТ БИХИШТ»

Мустафа Дехкан

Много неясностей связано с неопубликованным персидским текстом шестого тома «Хашт бихишт» («Восемь раев»), который его автор, Идрис Бидлиси (1457–1520), посвятил правлению султана Мурада II (1421–1444, 1446–1451). В этом контексте для критического анализа текста жизненно важно понимание сути событий при Мураде II. Значительное преимущество состоит в наличии источников, содержащих огромный материал, помогающий понять изощренный язык «Хашт бихишт». Вскоре после завершения труда его понимание в определенной степени изменилось, прежние прочтения были забыты, но некоторые источники сохранили их. Краткая статья исследует эти сведения, что позволяет нам в какой-то мере понять смыслы, скрытые в «Хашт бихишт».

Ключевые слова: Идрис Бидлиси, «Хашт бихишт – VI», Османская империя, хадис, Мурад II, фарси, «Сахих»

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¹ Mustafa Dehqan, Independent Scholar, Tehran, Iran; mustafadehqan@yahoo.com
Мустафа Дехкан, независимый исследователь, Тегеран, ИРИ; mustafadehqan@yahoo.com

*To Sacha Alsancakli
dar ḥalqa īm bā tu u ĉun ḥalqa bar darīm*

INTRODUCTION

The *Hašt Bihišt* (The Eight Paradises) is a history of the first eight Ottoman sultans, written in a sophisticated and hyperliterate Persian by Idrīs Bidlīsī (1457–1520). This history provides the elegant and most detailed Persian account of the early history of the Ottomans, including the scattered accounts and references to their neighbouring political states. It describes the historical events whereby the Ottomans headed by ‘Osman became known as Ottoman sultanate, and depicts the activities of the Ottoman sultans up to the sixteenth century. The sixth volume is devoted to the reign of Sultan Murād II (1421–1444, 1446–1451) and includes a great deal of information on the *ṣulṭān Murād* phase of Ottoman history that sometimes supplements the information provided in the Ottoman Turkish chronicles².

In addition to the historical reports mentioned above, some cultural and social materials are also given in the *Hašt Bihišt*. These materials include, for example, invaluable accounts on the exclusive character of Murād II. The panegyric descriptions and traditions concerning Murād II can be used to investigate the collective memory of the Ottomans about him. Other oral traditions presented by Idrīs, namely *Murād II and Old Woman*, all enable us to gain a deeper understanding of the character of Murād II and his reign.

The *Hašt Bihišt* utilizes a wider range of original sources than have been used in previous Ottoman Turkish chronicles about the formative period of Ottoman history and the socio-political phenomenon of the Ottoman Empire. While Ottoman histories written in Ottoman Turkish provide the most detailed source of information for Idrīs, Arabic and Persian literary perceptions and concepts also offer a substantial amount of information to him. The Turkish contribution to the study of *Hašt Bihišt* has not been substantial even though there has been an increase in the publication of defective translations of *Hašt Bihišt* in the last decades. To me, the main reason is that the Turkish scholarship has been impaired by the limited understanding of the same Arabic and Persian difficulties of the *Hašt Bihišt* as an extremely sophisticated Persian text. Without claiming to understand this text, I stress that what follows is only a tiny attempt to comprehend one of the countless problems of this chronicle.

A PROPHETIC TRADITION: SOME VARIANT READINGS IN THE STORY OF MURĀD II AND HIS BROTHER

The sources now available to us for Şehzade Mustafa’s rebellion against Murād II are far more numerous than those which Idrīs Bidlīsī, the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century scholar and statesman, had access to when writing *Hašt Bihišt* VI, about Şehzade Mustafa’s execution³. But although we are in a position to have more details about Şehzade Mustafa (also known as Küçük Mustafa), Idrīs’ brilliant analysis of the reasons why Murād II killed him still holds.

When Murād II was besieging Constantinople (entitled as ...*ġazā-yi Qustaṭṭāniyya va ittifaq-i muḥāsara-yi āngā*... in *Hašt Bihišt* VI), the Byzantines encouraged 12-year-old Şehzade Mustafa (known as *Muṣṭafā Ćalabī* in *Hašt Bihišt* VI) who was the governor of Hamid province to revolt. When the city

² About this work and its author, Idrīs Bidlīsī, see [Şükrü, 1931; Genç, 2019].

³ See for instance [Aşıkpaşazade, 1985, pp. 97–99; Müneccimbaşı, 2019, pp. 204–206].

was about to fall, the sultan lifted the siege and advanced on his rebellious younger brother. He caught Şehzade Mustafa and executed him before the situation became graver in 1423.

With regard to the much-quoted passage from Ottoman chronicles concerning Şehzade Mustafa's wish to replace the sultanate of Murād II with his own sultanate, Idrīs remarks that Şehzade Mustafa was an unlawful ruler by spreading a saying (*ḥadīth* 'news, story') traced back to the Prophet, according to which the revolt against the established ruler is unlawful hence should be dealt with sternly and forcefully to crush the rebellion:

idā buyi a li-ḥalīfatayn fa-uqtulū l-āḥir minhumā

If an allegiance was pledged to two caliphs, [do] kill the other one

Basing himself on the said *ḥadīth* recorded by several corpuses, especially Muslim ibn al-Ḥaǧǧāǧ in his *Ṣaḥīḥ* on the authority of Abū Sa'īd al-Ḥudrī, Idrīs then Islamicized the reason why Murād II killed his own brother. This *ḥadīth* must be read together with the verses 49: 9–10 where the believers are commanded to make truce among the warring factions of the *ummah*. Even the authentic *ḥadīth* reports are not transmitted verbatim in the Prophet's original wording, the wording in the said *ḥadīth*, in *Hašt Bihišt VI*, appears as wording coined by reporters⁴.

However, Idrīs is somewhat equivocal on the definition of the present *ḥadīth*. According to the earliest autograph manuscript, Esad Efendi 2199 (copied in c.1506), it is called *ḥadīth-i Ṣaḥīḥ/ṣaḥīḥ* ('a *ḥadīth* from *Ṣaḥīḥ*' / 'an authentic *ḥadīth*')⁵. The second important autograph manuscript (copied in 1513–14) and two later manuscripts (copied in c.1520 and 1560 respectively) define the same *ḥadīth* as *ḥadīth-i maṣāliḥ-i antumā* ('a *ḥadīth* for the benefit of you two')⁶. What do Esad Efendi reading and later readings imply for critical edition? Are early autograph readings and later readings antithetical to each other or can they supplement each other?

It may prove useful to compare the allusion to *ḥadīth-i Ṣaḥīḥ* with the Muslim ibn al-Ḥaǧǧāǧ's corpus which includes the same saying. I am only concerned with the meaning relating to the word *ṣaḥīḥ*. In other words, it is also possible to think that *ḥadīth-i ṣaḥīḥ* just means that in the writer's opinion, it is sound. It will not be a specific reference to Muslim's collection.

The second definition of the saying in the Nuruosmaniye manuscript and later variants is more problematic. Perhaps *maṣāliḥ-i antumā* indicated a relation with *maṣāliḥ al-ibād* in the *uṣūl al-fiqh* (The Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence)⁷. Accordingly, the dual plural *antumā*, which is used for a set of two people, refers to both Murād II and Şehzade Mustafa. That is, the benefit of sultan is to kill his younger brother. And younger rebellious brother's benefit is to be killed by sultan. The pronoun *antumā* would not need something following. It would be accepted not to attach a dual pronoun, that is *maṣāliḥukumā* as we have a Persian expression here (not Arabic). We learn from the present reading that Idrīs provided legitimacy for Mustafa's murder as a *şer'i a* act. In this case, the execution of an Ottoman dynasty member strongly suggests that he was against the Muslims, moreover, that he probably refused to embrace Islam⁸.

⁴ Cited for instance in [Muslim ibn al-Ḥaǧǧāǧ, 1998, vol. vi, p. 23; Biyhaqī, 1999, vol. viii, p. 144; Ḥaḫḫīb Baǧdādī, 1997, vol. i, p. 239].

⁵ Cited in [Bidlīsī, Esad Efendi, 2199, fol. 316v.].

⁶ Cited in [Nuruosmaniye 3209, Hazine 1655, and Tabriz 1874].

⁷ For this and what is discussed in the following paragraph, see [Ibn Ḥazm, 2001, vol. i, pp. 422–423; al-Fayyād, 1998, vol. i, p. 91].

⁸ For a useful study on the Ottoman family murders in this context, see [Tunç, 2014].

There is yet another possibility, which seems to be very close to the previous one. The last word of the definition given in the Nuruosmaniye manuscript and later variants can be read and understood as *intimā* ‘belonging, attribution’. The latter possibly suggests that Idrīs used a Persian adaptation of *maşālih al-intimā* ‘the benefits of what belong [to the caliphate/nation]’. Perhaps *hilāfa/ummah* got lost through adaptation or assimilation⁹.

CONCLUSION

To close, the second definition of this saying can be corroborated by further evidence or by younger scholars. It can however be adopted only in a modified form emphasizing the relationship between Şehzade Mustafa’s murder and the Islamic law. If it is to the benefit of the Muslims there is no harm in undertaking this murder by Murād II, even if it is a family murder. However, in my opinion, until more evidence is obtained, the reading of the Esad Efendi 2199 is preferable. For now, the same should be considered for the main text and the subsequent readings should be left aside. Not only the *hadī* but also its definition (*hadī-i Şahīh/şahīh*) is probably influenced by *al-Şahīhayn*.

Really, we made little progress as far as the textual facts connected to the *Hašt Bihišt* are concerned, but we have established that there are good reasons for reconstructing the variant readings. Every detail, no matter how trivial, is important in the edition of Idrīs’ Ottoman history, our knowledge of which is still rather inadequate.

Finally, the feeling that Idrīs changed some of his own accounts is unfounded. Idrīs did not innovate his earliest draft manuscript, Esad Efendi 2199. When the autograph Esad Efendi 2199 mentions something the next autograph Nuruosmaniye 3209 does not, this possibly means that the former chose, for whatever reason, to include a point which the latter chose to discard. This is not the author’s problem. This is the problem of the editor who has to decide which of these two to take to the main critical text and which to the margins.

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⁹ Might انتما be a misreading of ائمه *aimmah* (plural of *imām*)? If it is *aimmah*, the reference is very doubtfully to the most distinguished scholars of *hadī* in Islamic history, Muslim and Buḥārī, presumptively to rulers or leaders more broadly.