

## TEKUR/TAKAWWUR: A CASE OF WORD GAME IN *HAŠT BİHİŠT VI*

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**Abstract:** Idrīs Bidlīsī (1457-1520), was one of the major contributors to Ottoman history in the sixteenth-century. He was probably not an attractive figure. His extensive knowledge as a historian and *adīb* and presumably his Kurdish origin made him unpopular among many of his Ottoman court contemporaries. There is much that remains obscure due to insufficient textual evidence on his works and especially his unpublished *Hašt Bihišt VI* but occasionally one gets a glimpse of Bidlīsī's work and style.

**Keywords:** Idrīs Bidlīsī, *Hašt Bihišt VI*, Murād II, Ottoman, Persian, Arabic

Idrīs ibn Ḥusām al-Dīn 'Alī al-Munshī al-Bidlīsī, better known as Idrīs Bidlīsī (1457-1520), was one of the most important scholars and statesmen of Ottoman-Iranian tradition in the widest sense of the word. After a life rich in some pioneering Islamic, literary, and historical achievements, he died at Empire's capital where he retired in his later years. Details of Idrīs' biography are discussed elsewhere<sup>1</sup>, while the present brief note deals with a textual aspect of his *magnum opus*, *Hašt Bihišt* (The Eight Paradises), which is dedicated to the history of the first eight Ottoman sultans. The emphasis on the textual data is methodologically important, as it stems from my conviction that the critical edition of the unpublished *Hašt Bihišt VI* should be studied with constant reference to the abundant textual information at our disposal.

There is a highly sophisticated and artificial style of Persian prose in *Hašt Bihišt*, characterized by a kind of rhythm as well as rhyme. These rhythmic prose, known as Idrīs' *musagga'āt* and his formal technicalities (*takallufāt*) are intentionally used for the display of the author's eloquence, wit, and erudition. However, this is not the only feature of Idrīs' hyperliterate prose. In some cases, he ignores the rhythm of the words and uses a single writing (*rasm al-ḥaṭṭ*) while referring to two different meanings. In other words, Idrīs' prose style includes also a word game to present different treatment of vowels and diphthongs. The first word bears primary stress and starts the sequence that carries the prosodic characteristics of the word. The second that holds exactly the same writing is destressed and appears normally in a neutralized meaning.

It is of course commonplace that the Persian texts written by Ottoman authors, while certainly having an integral part of the general Persian literature, produce at the same time some local particularities. This can be demonstrated by the following case, in which the Ottoman Turkish word, *tekur*, mentioned by Idrīs as a loanword in Persian is a good sample of the word game in *Hašt Bihišt VI*.

In the present example of Idrīs' game with words, the first word *tekur*, a title used in late Rūm Saljuk and early Ottoman times, comes from Ottoman Turkish *tekvur* or *tekfur*. Idrīs and several other historians writing in Ottoman Turkish or Persian employed the title and its variants to refer

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<sup>1</sup> For his life and times, see Genç, Vural. *Acem'den Rum'a Bir Bürokrat ve Tarihçi: İdris-i Bidlîsî (1457-1520)* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2019), especially chs.i-ii; for his works, see Markiewicz, Christopher. *The Crisis of Rule in Late Medieval Islam: A Study of Idrīs Bidlīsī (861-926/1457-1520) and Kingship at the Turn of the Sixteenth Century* (PhD dissertation, The University of Chicago, 2014), 127ff.

to independent or semi-independent Byzantine governors in Anatolia and Thrace<sup>2</sup>.

The Arabic word *takawwur*, not *tekur* for a second time, is the correct reading in the following sentence of *Hašt Bihišt* VI. Both classical and early modern Arab lexicographers define the *takawwur* as “fall down, decline, degeneration, or collapse”<sup>3</sup>. The *Hašt Bihišt* VI author says, in his introductory comments on Murād II’s struggle with the Byzantines on the demise of Mehmed I, *şūrat-i irtiḥāl* (i.e., a note of *Hašt Bihišt* VI by which one charms oneself against Christians) that the Muslims were bewitched by *tekur* or the lord of Constantinople. In other words, when he is called *tekur*, it is in the sense of “the former Muslim”. The same is true for the leaders of the Byzantines who reportedly hired this *tekur* ‘lord’ to strat a *takawwur* ‘decline’ of the Muslim sultanate. The sentence reads:

...*bi-munāsibat-i iḥtilāt wa irtibāt-i sābiq bā tekur-i İstanbul ıarḥ-i hawāḥwāhī andāhtand wa ḡahat-i istilā’-i takawwur bar ba’ḍī az bilād-i Islāmī fitna’i andāhtand*...<sup>4</sup>

...on the occasion of the former communication and relationship, they made a plan of friendship with the lord of Constantinople and they gave rise to a sedition for the dominance of decline on some Islamic lands...

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<sup>2</sup> See for instance Melikoff-Sayar, Irène. *Le Destan d’Umur Pacha (Düsturname-i enveri)* (Bibliothèque Byzantine-Documents, 2) (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1954), p.47, n.6; Dankoff, Robert. *Armenian Loanwords in Turkish* (Turkologica 21) (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1995), p.44.

<sup>3</sup> See Hindī, ‘Abd al-Raḥīm ibn ‘Abd al-Karīm Şafīpūrī. *Muntahi l-Arib fī Luḡat al-‘Arab* (Calcutta: Mirza Ashraf Ali Co., 1890), ii, 286; al-Biyhaqī, Abū Ḡa’far Aḥmad ibn ‘Alī ibn Muḥammad al-Maqqarī. *Tāḡ al-Maṣādir*, Ed. H. ‘Ālimzāh (Tehran: Mu’assisa-yi Muṭālī’āt wa Tahqīqāt-i Farhangī, 1987), ii, p.820.

<sup>4</sup> For this, which I consider the important autograph text (copied in c.1506), see Bidlīsī, Idrīs ibn Ḥusām al-Dīn. *Hašt Bihišt*, İstanbul, Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Esad Efendi 2199, fol.301v. For the variant readings, though slightly garbled, see MSS Nuruosmaniye 3209 (autograph MS, dated 1513-1514), Hazine 1655 (copied in c.1520), and Tabriz 1874 (copied in 1560) respectively: ...*bi-munāsibat-i iḥtilāt wa irtibāt-i sābiq bā tekur-i İstanbul ıarḥ-i hawāḥwāhī andāhtand wa ḡahat-i ṭama’-i istilā’-i takawwur bar ba’ḍī az bilād-i Islāmī fitna-yi dīnī wa duniyāwī barsāhtand*...(Nuruosmaniye 3209); ...*bi-munāsibat-i iḥtilāt wa irtibāt bā tekur-i İstanbul ıarḥ-i hawāḥwāhī andāhtand wa ḡahat-i ṭama’-i istilā’-i takawwur bar ba’ḍī az bilād-i Islāmī fitna-yi dīnī wa duniyāwī barsāhtand*...(Hazine 1655); ...*bi-munāsibat-i iḥtilāt wa irtibāt-i sābiq bā tekur-i İstanbul ıarḥ-i hawāḥwāhī andāhtand wa ḡahat-i ṭama’-i istilā’-i takawwur bar ba’ḍī bilād-i Islāmī fitna-yi dīnī wa duniyāwī barsāhtand*...(Tabriz 1874).

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## TEKUR/TAKAWWUR: სიტყვებით თამაში *HAŠT BIHIŠT*-ის მეექვსე წიგნში

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იდრის ბიდლისი (1457-1520) მეთექვსმეტე საუკუნის ოსმალეთის ისტორიის შექმნაში წვლილის შემტანი ერთ-ერთი მთავარი ავტორი იყო. სავარაუდოდ, ის არ წარმოადგენდა მიმზიდველ ფიგურას. მისი, როგორც ისტორიკოსის, ძალიან ფართო ცოდნა, მისი ადიბი და, სავარაუდოდ, ქურთული წარმომავლობაც მას ოსმალეთის კარზე მყოფ თანამედროვეთა დიდი ნაწილისათვის არაპოპულარულს ხდიდა. მისი ნაშრომების, და განსაკუთრებით კი, მისი გამოუქვეყნებელი *Hašt Bihišt*-ის მეექვსე წიგნის შესახებ საკმარისი ტექსტური მონაცემების არარსებობის გამო ბევრი რამ გაურკვეველი რჩება, მაგრამ მკვლევარს ხანდახან საშუალება მაინც ეძლევა იხილოს ბიდლისის ნაშრომისა და სტილის ბრწყინვალეობის გაელვება.