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PAUL RYCAUT, *THE PRESENT STATE OF THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE*. TEXTUAL TRADITION AND LEXICAL BORROWINGS FROM TURKISH

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Abstract

Paul Rycaut's *The Present State of the Ottoman Empire* is the first comprehensive description of the Ottoman Empire written in English by an author who reported firsthand. The first edition of 1666 was reprinted several times and translated into French, Dutch, Italian, Polish, Spanish, German and Russian. The present article provides information on the genesis, the structure and the sources of the English original as well as on the various translations and their interrelationship (the Spanish version was completely unknown until now, since the translator concealed the real authorship). On the basis of selected examples, the special interest of the work for the historical study of Turkish borrowings in European languages is illustrated.

1. Introduction

Sir Paul Rycaut (London, 1629 – *ibid.*, 1700)¹ spent more than 15 years in the Ottoman Empire. Between 1660 and 1667 he was in the service of the British Ambassador to the Sublime Porte, Heneage Finch, third Earl of Winchelsea. In 1667 he was appointed consul at Smyrna, which in those days, besides Aleppo, Constantinople and

¹ According to contemporary sources, the correct pronunciation is [ˈraɪkɔːt] (Anderson 1989: 19 fn. 3).

Alexandria, was one of the most important English trading places in the Levant.² During his sojourn at Constantinople and Smyrna (where he remained until 1677), Rycaut paid close attention to the politics and culture of his host country. He also acquired certain knowledge of Turkish. By establishing personal contacts with many local residents, he succeeded in gathering important information of the interior of the Ottoman Empire.³

2. The *Present State of the Ottoman Empire*

In the *Present State of the Ottoman Empire*, Rycaut furnishes the sum of his knowledge about the Ottoman Empire. The work was already printed in August 1666 in London for John Starkey and Henry Brome, but the year 1667 is indicated as the date of the publication on the title page. In this way, the editor tried to give the book the appearance of greater timeliness (as it is a common practice still today). The first edition was almost entirely destroyed in the Great Fire of London that raged across the city in September 1666. According to contemporary reports, only 22 copies of the first edition were saved.⁴

The text is subdivided into three main sections dealing with the governmental and administrative structures, the religious practices and the military affairs of the Ottoman Empire. The first two parts have a continuous page numbering (I. *The Maximes of the Turkish Policie* 1–96, II. *Of the Turkish Religion* 97–168), while the third part is paginated separately (*The Third Book, wherein is Treated of the Turkish Militia* 1–50). A second edition followed in 1668, now with a continuous pagination from the beginning to the end (1–218). The texts of the 1667 and the 1668 editions are basically identical. Some of the errors of the first edition, however, have been corrected in the second print: *fogiaes* (Engl. 1667/1: 9) > *hogiaes* (Engl. 1668: 9) (Tk. *hoca*), *seglo* (Engl. 1667/1: 13) > *seigh* (Engl. 1668: 13) (Tk. *şeyh*), *telkeregee bashi* (Engl. 1667/1: 29) > *teskeregee bashee* (Engl. 1668: 29) (Tk. *teskereci başı*), *faznadar bashi* (Engl. 1667/1: 36) > *haznadar bashi* (Engl. 1668: 36), *argees* (Engl. 1667/1: 41) > *atgees* (Engl. 1668: 41), etc. Other errors remained, for example *fazna agasi* (Engl. 1667/1: 37 = 1668: 37) for Tk. *hazine ağası*. The fact that the 1668 edition is the second one is not mentioned anywhere in the book. Therefore, it is often mistaken for the first edition.⁵ Further editions appeared in 1670, 1675, 1681, 1682, 1686, 1687, 1701, 1703 and 1704; since the fourth edition (1675) the title is *The History of the Present State of the Ottoman Empire*.⁶

The work is the first comprehensive description of the Ottoman Empire written in English by an author who reported firsthand. Unlike many earlier publications, the text is therefore characterised by a relatively high degree of originality. Rycaut himself underlines this fact explicitly:

² Cf. Speake (2003, vol. 2: 716ff.).

³ Cf. Heywood, Shaw (1972: 33ff.), Anderson (1989: 24ff.), Turhan (2003: 12ff.), Anderson (2004: 439ff.).

⁴ Cf. Anderson (1989: 42).

⁵ For example by Setton (1991: 208), Claydon (2007: 63), Suranyi (2008: 175), and many others.

⁶ For a survey on the various editions cf. Anderson (1989: 42ff.).

The Computations I have made of the value of their Offices, of the strength and number of their souldiery, according as every City and Country is rated, are deduced from their own Registers and Records. The Observations I have made of their Politie, are either Maxims received from the Mouth and Argument of considerable Ministers, or Conclusions arising from my own Experience and Considerations. The Articles of their Faith and Constitutions of Religion, I have set down as pronounced from the mouth of some of the most learned Doctors and Preachers of their Law, with whom for Money or Presents I gained a familiarity and appearance of friendship. The Relation of the *Seraglio*, and Education of their Youth, with divers other matters of Custom and Rule, were transmitted to me by several sober Persons, trained up with the best Education of the Turkish Learning, and particularly, by an understanding *Polonian*, who had spent nineteen years in the *Ottoman Court* (*The Epistle to the Reader*).⁷

In addition to his personal experiences, Rycaut also made use of written sources. Latin texts by Edward Pockocke (*Specimen Historiae Arabum*, 1650) and Ogier Ghislain de Busbecq (*Itinera Constantinopolitanum et Amasianum*, 1582) are named explicitly (Engl. 1667/1: 76 and 1667/2: 28). Furthermore, by reason of the numerous concordances, it seems likely that Rycaut also knew Ottaviano Bon's *Descrizione del Serraglio del Gransignore*, first published in 1608⁸ and translated into English in 1650 by Robert Withers (Bon 1650). Spellings like *seraglio* for Tk. *saray* (Engl. 1667/1: 10) or *giugé* for Tk. *cüce* (Engl. 1667/1: 35) corroborate the existence of Italian models.

It is likely that both Rycaut and Withers used an unedited Italian manuscript of Bon. For Withers this fact is secured, because his translation presents many differences in regard to the Italian edition of Barozzi, Berchet (1871). Also single lexical features like the use of *bocklava* < Tk. *baklava*⁹, that does not occur in the edition Barozzi, Berchet (1871),¹⁰ confirm that Withers' translation is based on a different manuscript. Also the above mentioned *giugé* in Rycaut might be taken from such an unedited version. The contexts in which the term is used in Rycaut and Bon are very similar, but the Italian edition (Barozzi, Berchet 1871: 434) gives the Italian equivalent *muti*, and also Withers (1650: 93) only has *mutes*. To gain clarity, it will be necessary in a first step to check the two unedited manuscripts of the *Serraglio* conserved in the Biblioteca Marciana at Venice.¹¹ It is to be assumed, however, that besides these some more apocryphal versions might exist:

Il manoscritto del *Serraglio* circolava, adespoto, tra Venezia e Costantinopoli, *res nullius* fatta conoscere ad uso di turisti curiosi, desiderosi d'informazioni sul piú inviolabile palazzo d'Europa. Ne abbiamo una prova scorrendo il *Viaggio a Costantinopoli* di Tommaso Alberti, un testo compiuto nel 1620. Qui si ritrova¹² [...] il trattatello del Bon, affettuosamente ricopiato, ma con vistose varianti. (Basile 2002: 143)

⁷ The "understanding *Polonian*" refers to Albertus Bobovius, i.e. Wojciech Bobowski (1610–1675), also called Ali Ufki or Ali Bey (Anderson 1989: 41 fn. 64).

⁸ Cf. the edition of Barozzi, Berchet (1871) (re-edited with notes by Basile 2002).

⁹ "[...] and having well fed, closeth up his stomack with a Bocklava" (Bon 1650: 118).

¹⁰ Where the equivalent passage runs: "e si continua terminando con qualche torta" (Barozzi, Berchet 1871: 94).

¹¹ It. VI 245 (5919) and It. VI 283 (57705) (Basile 2002: 143).

¹² Ed. Bacchi della Lega (1889: 60–206).

3. Translations

A considerable number of translations have been made of Rycaut's work, reflecting the great interest in information about the Ottoman Empire in 17th century Europe. The first translation to be published was the French version by Pierre Briot.¹³ It is not based on the first edition of 1667, but on the reprint of 1668. This fact is illustrated by examples like *seigte* (Fr. 1670: 39) that is more likely to derive from *seigh* (Engl. 1668: 13) than from *seglo* (Engl. 1667/1: 13) (the corrupted spellings correspond to Tk. *şeyh*).¹⁴ The numerous errors of Briot's text were corrected in a new edition prepared by the otherwise unknown "Sieur Bespier" in 1677. Besides a completely new translation of the entire text, on the basis of the original English version, Bespier provided detailed comments on many Ottoman facts and words.

In the same year, 1670, Briot's French text was translated into Dutch by Jan Hendrik Glazemaker.

Also the first Italian translation by Costantino Belli is based on the French version from 1670. The title page indicates 1672 as the date of the publication, but according to the dedication the text had already been finished in 1671. The translator obviously has no knowledge of Turkish, since he assumes all the typographical errors of the French version without any correction: *wactifi* (Fr. 1670: 68) becomes *waktifi* (It. 1671: 51) instead of *wakfi* (Engl. 1668: 37) (Tk. *vakıf*), *schatradeler agasi* (Fr. 1670: 69) remains *schatradeler agasi* (It. 1671: 52) instead of *schahzadeler agasi* (Engl. 1668: 37) (Tk. *şahzadeler ağası*), *mahames* (Fr. 1670: 377) remains *mahames* (It. 1671: 292) instead of *mahumes* (Engl. 1668: 213) (Tk. *mavuna*), etc. Further Italian prints, basically identical with the first edition, follow in 1673, 1674, 1681 and 1682. A lot of new errors appear in the edition from 1687 printed for Iseppo Prodocimi with the title *Historia rinovata nel stato presente dell'Imperio ottomano*. The text presents *schiletak aga* (It. 1687: 80) for Tk. *silahdar ağa*, *fozna agasi* (It. 1687: 100) for Tk. *hazne ağası*, *kadunt* (It. 1687: 102) for Tk. *kadın*, and so on. Furthermore, this edition is only comprised of the chapters on governmental and administrative structures (1–259) and military affairs (260–377). The note at the end of the text "Il fine della Prima Parte" makes it seem likely that originally a second volume had been planned, which apparently never saw the light of day.

In 1678 a Polish translation was published. According to the *Polski słownik biograficzny* (vol. 13: 64), the translator, who is not mentioned in the text, could be Kazimierz Krzysztof Kłokocki (1625–1684). The translation was made on the basis of one of the French versions.

A Spanish translation by Juan Bautista Lardito appeared in 1690. It is based on Costantino Belli's first Italian translation from 1672. The illustrations that accompany the Italian version (as well as all the other versions) are missing. Lardito's

¹³ For general aspects of translations from French into English in the 16th and 17th centuries cf. Hegner (2013).

¹⁴ For further editions of Briot's version (1671, 1672, 1676, 1677, 1678, 1686, 1696, 1709, 1714) cf. Anderson (1989: 293).

text is not known as a translation of Rycaut. Neither in the title nor in the preface any reference to the authorship of Rycaut is made. Only at one hidden location in the text Lardito mentions Rycaut, without saying a word about the fact that he is the real author of the text: “dize el Ricaut, Secretario Ingles” (Sp. 1690: 42). In another passage, the translator of the Italian version is mentioned, once more without any further explanation: “dize Const. Belli” (Sp. 1690: 145). Lardito tries to conceal his clumsy plagiarism by regrouping the chapters of the original text and by adding some supplementary information taken from other sources (e.g. from Menavino’s *Trattato de costumi et vita de Turchi*, 1548). The chapter on governmental and administrative structures is placed in Lardito at pp. 139–295, whereas in the Italian version, like in the original English text, it constitutes the first chapter (It. 1672: 1–132). The chapter on religious practices, on the other hand, is collocated at the beginning of the text by Lardito (Sp. 1690: 1–120), whereas in the Italian version it follows at pp. 133–232. In both versions the chapter on military affairs remains at the end (Sp. 1690: 333–408; It. 1672: 233–296). Actually, large parts of the *Historia del estado presente del Imperio Otomano*, are an exact copy of the Italian text. The similarities are not limited to the contents. Lardito also faithfully reproduces all mistakes of the Italian edition:

Quando tal *Testà*, overo Sentenza è portata al *Cadis*, ò Giudice, l’essequisce nel giudicio che prononcia (It. 1672: 145),

vs.

Quando esta sentencia, ò *Testà* es llevada al *Cadis*, ò Iuez, luego passa à la execucion (Sp. 1690: 21). – The passage refers to Tk. *fetfa*,

while adding a considerable number of new errors:

I Nani, che si chiamano *Giuge* hanno parimente il loro quartiere con li Paggi delle due camere, (It. 1672: 49)

vs.

Los Enanos que llaman *Geuges*, tienen tambien los quarteles en las dos Camaras de los Pages (Sp. 1690: 202). – The passage refers to Tk. *cüce*, that by the Italian spelling was rendered appropriately.

Many of the Turkish elements in the Spanish version are, by themselves, hardly understandable (*chab* 48, *dervies* 80, *goris* 138, *humaugi basci* 193, *pachmalach* 126, *pizchames* 201, etc.). Often they can be identified only by means of the original English version.¹⁵

A translation from French into German followed in 1694. The translator is unknown. The German version is not based on Briot’s translation from 1670, but on

¹⁵ The quoted examples correspond to Tk. *şah*, *derviş*, *gavur*, *hamamcı başı*, *başmaklık* and *bizeban*.

Bespier 1677 whose comments are included in the footnotes: “Mit den sehr gelehrten und judicieusen Anmerckungen des nicht weniger in Orientalischen Geschichten und Sprachen hochverständigen und wohlversuchten Mons. Pespiers vergesellet und illustrieret” (inner title).

Finally, a Russian translation, based on the Polish version, was published in 1741.

4. Borrowings from Turkish

Due to the large number of borrowings from Turkish, the *Present State of the Ottoman Empire* is of considerable linguistic interest. Hereafter, some examples of turkisms are compiled, which, according to our present knowledge, are first records in English:¹⁶

alemdar (Engl. 1667/2: 111): “Their second Officer is called *Alemdar*, who carries the Green Flag of *Mahomet*”. – Tk. *alemdar* (Meninski 3315; Redhouse 47) < Pers. *alemdar* ‘standard-bearer; officer of the Janissaries’ (Steingass 864; Stachowski 1998, n° 11), in turn < *alem* ‘flag, standard’ + the Persian suffix of the agent-nouns *-dar*.

bairacktar (Engl. 1667/3: 27): “Third is *Bairacktar*, or Ensign-bearer”. – Tk. *bayraktar* ‘standard bearer’ (Meninski 982; Redhouse 143) < Tk. *bayrak* ‘flag, standard’ + the Persian suffix of the agent-nouns *-dar* or (re-)borrowed as a whole from Pers. *bairāqdār* (Steingass 219).

delibaschi (Engl. 1667/3: 34): “[the *Delees*] have a Captain over them called the *Delibaschi*”. – Tk. *deli başı* ‘head of the deliler’ (Meninski 2131; Barbier de Meynard 1,751) < *deli* ‘soldier of a class of cavalry formed originally in the Balkans’ + *baş* ‘head’ + the possessive suffix *-ı*.

deuschirme (Engl. 1667/3: 29): “the triennial seizure of Christian Children for the Grand Signiors Service, which in Turkish is called *Deuschirme*”. – Tk. *devşirme* ‘the practice by which the Ottoman Empire took slave boys from their Christian families’ (Meninski 2223; Redhouse 292), verbal noun of *devşir-* ‘to collect, to gather’.

ebrihtar aga (Engl. 1667/1: 29): The *Ebrihtar Aga*, he that carries his water to drink or wash”. – Tk. *ibrikdar ağa* ‘official whose duty was to superintend the Sultan’s ablutions’ (Redhouse 509) < *ibrik* ‘water ewer with handle and long spout, used for washing one’s hands or for ablutions; teapot, kettle’ + the Persian suffix of the agent-nouns *-dar* + *ağa* ‘title for a civilian or military officer’, ‘lord, master’.

gebe (Engl. 1667/3: 33): “The *Gebegees* [...] are Armourors, so called from the word *Gebe*, which signifies in Turkish as much as Arms of Back and Breast”. – Tk. *cebe* ‘armour, cuirass, coat-of-mail; munitions of war’ (Meninski 1580; Redhouse 217) < Pers. *ğaba* (Steingass 356; Doerfer n° 155).

jamak (Engl. 1667/3: 12): “The other 25 [Voluntiers] remaining are called *Jamak*”. – Tk. *yamak* ‘locally hired soldier’, ‘assistant’ (Meninski 5607; Redhouse 1239), lit. ‘joined, connected, attached’ (Nişanyan 2012: 491).

massalagibashee (Engl. 1667/3: 38): “men used to travel on foot, who in Turkish are called *Massalageeler*, over whom is a superintendent called *Massalagibashee*”. –

¹⁶ For the bibliographical abbreviations used in this part see the *Bibliography* in Schweickard 2013–.

- Tk. *maşalacı başı* ‘head of the torchbearers’ < *maşala* ‘torch, lantern’ + the *-ci* suffix of agent-nouns + *baş* ‘head’ + the possessive suffix *-i*.
- orta-giami* (Engl. 1667/1: 14): “at *Orta-giami*, that is the *Janizaries Mosch*”. – Tk. *orta camii* ‘mosque of the Janissary corps’ (BarbierMeynard 1,150; Redhouse 902) < *orta* ‘battalion of the Janissaries’ + *cami* ‘mosque’ + the possessive suffix *-i*.
- pengik* (Engl. 1667/1: 59): “the *Pengik* or *Certificates*”. – Tk. *pengik* ‘certificate delivered from the customs house to the owner of a slave on payment of the slave tax’ (Meninski 895; Redhouse 925).
- saliane* (Engl. 1667/1: 52): “He hath farther three with *Saliane*, for account of which he is paid by the King’s Officers”. – Tk. *salyane* ‘yearly tax’ (Meninski 2923; Redhouse 981) < Pers. *sāliyān* / *sāliyāna* ‘an annual pension’ (< *sāl* ‘year’) (Steingass 643).
- zekat* (Engl. 1667/2: 98): “Fourthly, to perform faithfully the *Zekat*, or giving of Alms according to the proportion prescribed in a certain Book wrote by the four Doctors of theirs”. – Tk. *zekat* ‘alms; tax for helping the poor’ (Meninski 2455; Redhouse 1277) < Ar. *zakā(h)* (Wehr 379f.; Stachowski 1975–1986, 4,44).

The lexicographical analysis of the *Present State of the Ottoman Empire* and its translations is still far from being complete. In the OED, records from the first edition appear in the entries *abdest*, *bey*, *caftan*, *hanjar*, *namaz*, *naqib*, *oca*, *pasha*, *pashalik*, *reis effendi*, *shiah*, *talisman*, *tekke*, *topchee* and *topkhana*. In many other cases, however, the evidence from Rychaut is missing, even in the case of first records: *elchi* < Tk. *elçi* (Engl. 1667/1: 83 vs. OED 1824 s.v. *elchee*), *harach* < Tk. *haraç* (Engl. 1667/1: 17 vs. OED 1682 s.v. *caratch* / 1745 s.v. *harach*), *kadan* < Tk. *kadın* (Engl. 1667/1: 40 vs. OED 1843 s.v. *kadin*), *wakfi* < Tk. *wakıf* (Engl. 1667/1: 37 vs. OED 1836 s.v. *wakf*, *waqf* 1860 s.v. *vakoof*, *vakuf*), *zaim* < Tk. *zaim* (Engl. 1667/3: 4 vs. OED 1807 s.v. *zaim*), *zeamet* (Engl. 1667/3: 8 / OED 1807 s.v. *ziamet*), *zekat* < Tk. *zekat* (1667/2: 98 vs. OED 1802 s.v. *zakat*). The majority of Rychaut’s borrowings from Turkish are not taken into consideration at all by the OED.

As far as the various translations into other languages are concerned, the situation is similar. In the TLF, the French version of Rychaut is cited in a single entry (*kief*₂). The GDLI does not mention any of the Italian editions. The Russian edition has been totally ignored so far. Notable exceptions are Arveiller (1999), who records numerous examples from the French edition of 1670, and S. Stachowski (2014) who, in his *Słownik historyczno-etymologiczny turcyzmów w języku polskim* (cf. Schweickard 2015) lists and comments nearly all the Turkish borrowings of the Polish version.

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- Engl. 1668 *The Present State of the Ottoman Empire*, London, printed for John Starkey and Henry Brome, 1668 (with continuous pagination: 1–208).

Translations

- Fr. 1670 *Histoire de l'état present de l'Empire Ottoman, contenant les maximes politiques des Turcs, les principaux points de la religion Mahometane, les sectes, ses hérésies, & ses diverses sortes de religieux [...]. Traduite de l'anglais de monsieur Ricaut [...] par Monsieur Briot, Paris, chez Sebastien Mabre-Cramoisy, 1670.*
- Fr. 1677 *L'état présent de l'empire Ottoman, où sont compris les moeurs, les maximes, et la politique des Turcs, leur manieres de gouverner, leur discipline militaire, leur religion, leur mariages, leur forces par mer et par terre, et comment le Grand Seigneur se maintient dans l'éclat et la gloire, et se fait craindre [...]. De la traduction du Sieur Bespier, sur l'original anglois du Sieur Ricaut, Rouen, chez Jacques Lucas, 1677.*
- Du. 1670 *Verhaal van de tegenwoordige staat van het turksche kaizerryk, aangetekent en beschreven [...] door de heer Rykaut [...]. Door J. H. Glazemaker vertaalt, Amsterdam, by Abraham Wolfgang, 1670.*
- It. 1672 *Historia dello stato presente dell'Imperio ottomano. Composta prima in lingua Inglese [...], tradotta poscia in Francese dal Sig. Briot, e finalmente trasportata in Italiano da Costantin Belli, Venetia, presso Combi & La Nou, 1672.*
- It. 1687 *Historia rinovata nel stato presente dell'Imperio ottomano [...], Venetia, per il Prodocimo, 1687.*
- Pol. 1678 *Monarchia turecka opisana przez Ricota Sekretarza Posła Angielskiego u Porty Ottomańskiej residującego z francuskiego języka na polski przetłumaczona przez Szlachcica Polskiego y do Druku podána w Roku 1678, Słuck 1678.*
- Sp. 1690 *Lardito, Juan Bautista, Historia del estado presente del Imperio Otomano, Salamanca, Lucas Perez, 1690.*
- Germ. 1694 *Die neu-eröffnete Ottomannische Pforte, bestehend: Erstlichen, in einer Grundrichtigen, und aus eigener Erfahrung gezogenen Beschreibung deß gantzen Türkischen Staats- und Gottesdienstes [...], übersetzt aus deß [...] Herrn Ricaut, in englischer Sprach verfassten, und zu unterschiedlichen mahlen ins Frantzösische gebrachten Buch [...], Augspurg, Kroniger und Göbel, 1694, 1–150.*
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