



‘ĀŞEM EFENDĪ

‘ĀŞEM EFENDĪ, SAYYED AĤMAD (1168/1755-1236/1819), an Ottoman Turkish linguist and chronicler, known as Mütercim (translator) in recognition of his translations of two famous dictionaries, the Persian *Borhān-e qāte*’ and the Arabic *al-Qāmūs al-moĥīṭ*.

Born at ‘Ayntāb (now Gaziantep) in the province of Aleppo, ‘Āšem came from a cultured family related to Shaikh ‘Oṭmān of Samarqand. He began to study languages while still a child, learning Persian from his father Rūḥī Moşṭafā Efendī, who was an Ottoman Turkish poet, and Arabic from K̄vāja Najīb ‘Abdallāh Efendī; before long he knew both well enough to write Arabic and Persian poems. After completing his studies, he worked as an official clerk and already enjoyed local fame for his wide learning. Difficulties arising from the war of 1203/1788-89 compelled him to part with the library left to him by his ancestors. In 1204/1789 he went to Istanbul and started on the translation of the *Borhān-e qāte*’. After presenting part of this translation to Sultan Salīm III, he found favor with the Ottoman court and was later appointed to the post of official chronicler (*wāqe‘a-nevīs*). He next translated into Turkish a biographical work in verse by Ebrāhīm b. Moĥammad Ḥalabī (d. 956/1549) and composed an Arabic vocabulary in verse for young beginners. While working as the official chronicler, he embarked on the translation of the *Qāmūs* and finished this task in four years. After the deposition of Salīm III in 1222/1807, he again saw hard times, but not for long because he was well regarded by Maĥmūd II. His last official appointment was that of *qāzī* at Salonica. He returned to Istanbul before his death on 9 Şafar 1235/1819.



‘Aşem Efendî’s works are as follows: 1. *Tebyān-e nāfe’ dar tarjama-ye Borhān-e qāte’*, Turkish translation of the Persian *Borhān-e qāte’* by Ḥosayn b. Kalaf Tabrizī. In preparing it, ‘Aşem consulted more than thirty other books (*Tebyān-e nāfe’*, p. 6, lines 6-10). He first gives the meaning of the Persian word and then, if necessary, provides further data, sometimes a clarification if the meaning given by the author of the *Borhān-e qāte’* is obscure, sometimes an additional meaning not given in the *Borhān*. He also discusses word formations and derivations. The data on plants are particularly valuable. The translation of the *Borhān* was completed by ‘Aşem Efendî on 1 Jomādā I 1212/22 October 1797 and printed in 1214/1799-1800. (For other editions, see F. E. Karatay, *İstanbul Üniversitesi kütüphanesi Türkçe basmalar kataloğu*, Istanbul, 1956, I, p. 321).

2. *al-Oqīānūs al-basīṭ fi tarjamat al-Qāmūs*, Turkish translation of the Arabic *al-Qāmūs al-moḥīṭ* of Abū Ṭāher Moḥammad Firūzābādī (d.817/1415), completed by ‘Aşem Efendî on 15 Dū’l-qa’da 1225/12 December 1810. It is a faithful rendering apart from the Arabic examples, which are not translated but left as they stand in the original. The translation of the *Qāmūs* was first printed by order of the Sultan Moḥmūd II (3 vols. 1230/1815-1233/1818; for other editions, see Karatay, op. cit.).

3. Turkish translation of the *Sīar* of Ebrāhīm b. Moḥammad Ḥalabī, a narrative poem. The translation was printed in 1248/1832-33.

4. *Toḥfa-ye ‘Aşem*, an Arabic primer in Turkish verse; printed at Bülāq in 1254/1838-39.

5. *Marāḥ al-ma‘ālī fi šarḥ qaşīdat al-amālī*, Turkish translation and commentary on *al-qaşīda al-lāmmīa fi’l-tawḥīd wa bad’ al-amālī* by Serāj-al-dīn Abū Moḥammad ‘Alī b. ‘Oṭmān Ūşī; translation printed at Istanbul in 1248/1832-33.

6. *Moḫher al-taqdīs be-ḳorūĵ ṭā’efat al-Feranses*, Turkish translation of the *Moḫher al-taqdīs be-dahāb dawlat al-Feranses* of ‘Abd-al-Raḥmān b. Ḥasan Jabartī; the chronicle is preserved in manuscript (Bibl. Nat, s. t. 1283).

7. A chronicle known as the *Tārīk-e-‘Aşem*, whose first redaction covered 1220/1805-1223/1808; later it was expanded by the author to cover the period 1206/1791-1223/1808; printed in Istanbul (n.d.).

‘Aşem Efendî also wrote Turkish, Arabic, and Persian poems; they have not yet



been collected and printed.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

See also Faḫīn, *Taḏkera*, Istanbul, 1271/1855, p. 266.

Jamāl-al-dīn, “Āīna-ye zorafā’,” in *Osmanlı tarih ve müverrihleri*, Istanbul, 1314/1896-97, p. 65 *ĪA* I, pp. 665-73.

*EI*² I, p. 707.