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KAHİRE GENİZA KOLEKSİYONUNDAN TÜRKLERLE İLGİLİ ARAPÇA BİR BELGE

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ÖZET

Kahire Genizası denilen yerde, tüm Akdeniz ülkelerinden, özellikle de 11. yüzyıldan 13. yüzyıla kadar, İbranice ve Arapça belgeler içeren benzersiz bir koleksiyonun bulunması çok heyecan verici ve önemlidir. İbranice bir kelime olan *geniza* (ya da *genizah*) [גניזת] (“gizlenme” veya “gizlenme yeri”), bir Yahudi sinagogundaki ve mezarlığındaki depo alanı veya depo anlamına gelir. Bu *geniza* yerleri, yıpranmış İbranice kitapların ve dini konulardaki kâğıtların uygun şekilde mezarlığa defni öncesinde geçici olarak saklanması için belirlenmiştir. Cambridge Üniversitesi Dijital Kütüphanesi tarafından verilen bilgilere göre, orada T-S H5.111 olarak numaralandırılan ve İbranice ve Arapça olarak yazılmış bu *geniza* belgelerinden biri bulunmaktadır. Bu çalışmada, “Türklerle ilgili bir mesele”yi anlatan bu belgenin Arapça verso sayfasını açıklamaya çalışıyoruz. Özellikle Türk araştırmacıların dikkatini bu konuya çekmek istiyoruz. Ayrıca bazı yeni görüşler öne sürüyoruz.

Anahtar kelimeler: Türkler, İbranice, Yahudiler, Arapça belgeler, Kahire Genizaları.

AN ARABIC DOCUMENT REGARDING TURKS FROM THE COLLECTION OF CAIRO GENIZA

ABSTRACT

It is very exciting and important that a unique collection including Hebrew and Arabic documents, hailing from all over the Mediterranean countries, especially from the 11th through the 13th centuries, has been found in the so-called *Cairo Geniza or Genizah*.

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The Hebrew word *geniza* (or *genizah*) [גניזה] (“hiding” or “hiding-place”) means a storage area or a storeroom in a Jewish synagogue and cemetery. These *geniza* places are designated for the temporary storage of worn-out Hebrew-language books and papers on religious topics before proper cemetery burial. According to the information given by *Cambridge University Digital Library*, it is located there, one of these *geniza* documents which is numerated as T-S H5.111 and it is written in Hebrew and Arabic. In this article, we try to explain the Arabic verso page of this document which mentions an “affair of the Turks”. We want to point this issue out to Turkish researchers especially. Furthermore we discuss some new opinions.

Keywords: Turks, Hebrew, Jewish, Arabic documents, Cairo Geniza.

INTRODUCTION

Although in Europe, the church, the feudal lords, the cities, and the guilds etc. kept their documents both as titles of right and for other purposes, nothing of the kind of these documents is to be found in Muslim countries in that period; thus, such as Goitein also said, the researchers who study about the history of the Mediterranean countries during the High Middle Ages have often complained about the almost complete absence of archives in Muslim countries (Goitein, 1960, s. 91a).

Considering all these circumstances it is very exciting and important that a unique collection including Hebrew and Arabic documents, hailing from all over the Mediterranean countries, especially from the 11th through the 13th centuries, has been found in the so-called Cairo Geniza or Genizah. The Hebrew word “geniza (or genizah)” [גניזה] (*lit.* “hiding” or “hiding-place”) means a storage area or a storeroom in a Jewish synagogue and cemetery designated for the temporary storage of worn-out Hebrew-language books and papers on religious topics before proper cemetery burial and this word is derived from the Persian, like Arabic “janāza [جنّازة]” which means “burial”, furthermore in Persian, “ganj [گنج]” denotes a treasure, and its Biblical derivative, especially in Ezra 6: 1, stands almost for “archive” (Goitein, 1960, s. 91a; JewEn, 1906, s. 612a).

These “Geniza or Genizah” documents are already famous among researchers who are interested in Jewish and Arabic studies, especially the history and culture of Mediterranean societies. It was discovered in the Ben Ezra Synagogue in Old Cairo (Fuṣṭāt) at the end of the nineteenth century, they continue to be the subject of numerous studies, and also text editions, such as Regourd also said; the most important, pre-eminent and best-known publication concerning the

Geniza documents is written by S. D. Goitein, "A Mediterranean Society" (Regourd, 2012, s. 1-2).

1. The Discovery and General Content of Cairo Geniza

When the human body's having fulfilled its task as container of the divine soul, it should be buried, that is preserved to await resurrection. That's why the writings including the name of God, having served their purpose, should not be destroyed by fire or otherwise, but these writings should be put aside in a storage room or a special room designated for the purpose or in a cemetery/synagogue. Such a room was attached to a synagogue in Fustat/Old Cairo. From there and from the cemetery al-Basāfīn near the town, the documents of the Cairo Geniza were distributed to many libraries all over the world (Goitein, 1960, s. 91a-91b).

As we learn from Goitein, essentially this happened during the last decade of the nineteenth century, beginning with 1890, when a remarkable amount of precious Geniza papers was obtained by the Bodleian Library, Oxford, and coming to a head in 1897, when Solomon Schechter transferred the whole of the then still remaining documents of the Geniza collection to the University Library Cambridge, England (Goitein, 1960, s. 91b). A very remarkable collection is found at the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York in this country. This collection is brought from Egypt in 1896 by E. N. Adler of London. Furthermore, a smaller collection (from 1891) is protected in the library of the Dropsie College, Philadelphia. In addition, the Freer Gallery of Washington possesses about fifty documents, which were acquired by Mr. Charles L. Freer in Egypt in 1908. "Nothing is known about the provenance of these papers, but it stands to reason that they came from the cemetery al-Basāfīn, where Mr. B. Chapira of Paris excavated Genizah papers in considerable quantities" (Goitein, 1960, s. 91b-92a). Furthermore, a small collection belonging to the University Museum of the University of Pennsylvania was described by S. D. Goitein in 1958, and he says that there may still be some papers in private hands (Goitein, 1960, s. 92a). As we learn again from S. D. Goitein, the Geniza chamber was located in a synagogue which originally was a Coptic church. And it was sold to the Jewish community by the Coptic patriarch in 882 (Goitein, 1960, s. 94b). That's why Goitein thinks that the reason of comparatively little documentary material has survived from the tenth century is the Fatimid caliph al-Ḥākim ordered the destruction of the Christian and Jewish houses of worship, including the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem around 1012 and the synagogue under discussion also was burnt out (Goitein, 1960, s. 94b).

Mainly the materials found in the Geniza originated from Jews. However, there are some hundreds of pieces written in Arabic characters, and also these pieces were originating from government chancelleries or from private persons of Muslim or Christian persuasion (Goitein, 1960, s. 95b). At the same time, the “most of the Geniza papers make reading difficult and the great majority of them are fragments, representing the beginning, the end, or the middle or either side of a document, and many thousands are merely tiny fragments” (Goitein, 1960, s. 92b). Goitein also explains its requirement “to discuss briefly a third feature of the Geniza documents, which, in addition to their poor state of preservation and their utter disconnectedness, makes their study so difficult: the language in which they are written” (Goitein, 1960, s. 93b). The Geniza collection contains many hundreds of documents written in an impressive Hebrew and also the most of these documents have been published and used for historical researches.

“However, the vast majority of the Geniza papers, namely most of the private letters and legal deeds, and all business letters and bills were written in Arabic, and of course not in literary, but in living Arabic, which varied according to the country, the century, and the social layer from which they came. The writing of Arabic with Hebrew letters had its contemporary parallel in the writing of the same language by the Syriac Christians in their holy script and in modern times in the writing of Yiddish, which is a Germanic dialect, with Hebrew characters. The Arabic language used by the Jews was not a particular Jewish dialect, although some Hebrew phrases were of course used by the writers, but as the Jews were less tradition bound than their Muslim contemporaries, who wrote in Arabic characters, their Arabic, as a rule, is more colloquial and resembles a language which appears only in later literary sources or in the modern Arabic dialects.” (Goitein, 1960, s. 93b-94a).

As we read on the sources about the Cairo Geniza, in the Mediterranean communities there are many other aspects of social life, such as cultural and material civilization (housing, clothing and food, prices and standards of living), daily life, weekends and holidays, travel by land and by sea, illness and doctors, death and burial, social etiquette, and social ideals etc., and we can learn much from these documents about the community, its officers, and the social services, such as the provision for the poor, widows, orphans, invalids, captives and foreigners; about interfaith relations; about the government, its institutions, and their influence on the life of the individual (Goitein, 1960, s. 99b).

2. Examination

2.1. Information about the Document T-S H5.111

As we learn from the information given by *Cambridge University Digital Library*, the both sides of the document T-S H5.111 are written by two different alphabets and languages; furthermore, the information about the content of the document is below:

Recto: There is a Hebrew poetry including Judah ha-Levi's צַפְנָת יהִי לְמַחֵי; and *Verso*: It is a document of appointment, possibly for a position in the army, mentioning an "affair of the Turks" that the appointed person had dealt with successfully. The document is from Ca. 11th-12th century (CUDL 2019). Also other technical and historical information about the document are as follows:

"(...)

Date of Creation: 11th-12th century

Language(s): Hebrew (isolated Tiberian vocalisation); Arabic

Donor(s): Schechter, S. (Solomon), 1847-1915; Taylor, Charles, 1840-1908

(...)

Layout: 27 lines (*recto*); 4 lines (*verso*).

Provenance: Donated by Dr. Solomon Schechter and his patron Dr. Charles Taylor in 1898 as part of the Taylor-Schechter Genizah Collection.

Funding: The digitisation of the Taylor-Schechter Cairo Genizah Collection has been sponsored by the Jewish Manuscript Preservation Society, the Friedberg Genizah Project Inc., and the Arts and Humanities Research Council, UK.

Author(s) of the Record: CUL." (CUDL, 2019).

The document T-S H5.111 is online available for researchers, and this document is easily accessed on Cambridge University Digital Library [see for the image of the original document: (Retrieved from <https://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-TS-H-00005-00111/2> (3rd May 2019)].

2.2. Method

Regarding the Arabic verso page of the document T-S H5.111, the method of this examination can be explained by the following:

1 st step	Text in Arabic (in original form)
2 nd step	Transcription of Arabic text
3 rd step	Translation of the text from Arabic into English
4 th step	Translation of the text from Arabic into Turkish
5 th step	The vocabulary of the text

After the method given above, the chapters of *the notes*, *the vocabulary* and *the conclusion* are the following parts of this examination.

2.3. The Text and Translation of the Arabic Verso Page of the Document T-S H5.111

من يفاحش الموت بالعهد وقوع القنا وما كان

(1) Men yufaḥiṣ el-mevt bil-'ahd vuḳū' el-ḳinā vemā kāne

(1) Whoever fights by a covenant against death (when) a war occurs? Then

(وما كان) لنفس أن تموت إلا بإذن الله كتاباً مؤجلاً

(2) (*Vemā kāne*) li neḫsin en temūte illā bi iznillahi kitāben mu'ecceḻā.

(2) “(And it is not) [possible] for one to die except by permission of Allah at a decree determined.” (KSU 2019).

ولمال سندن لك فيما يعتمد عليه في أمر الترك

(3) Ve limāl sened lik fimā y'utemed 'aleyh fi emr el-türk.

(3) And like a bonded commodity, it depends on the order of the Turks.

وذلك على رسم من تاريخ مستمرأ

(4) Ve ḻalike 'ala resm min tāriḳ müstemirren.

(4) And so it is continuous like darkness.

2.4. The Notes on the Text

(1) القنا is an old Arabic word which means “war, battle” and it has been used rarely.

(2) This expression (وما كان لنفس أن تموت إلا بإذن الله كتاباً مؤجلاً) is an ayat from the Quran (Āl-i Imrān, 145).

(3) According to the Arabic letters on the document, we thought that this word can be considered in twofold: سمند لك or شمند لك. For the reading of سمند لك: One of these ways is that we can consider this expression being formed by Hebrew and Yiddish words [Hebrew *šemod* (/šemot) “Nouns” and *lik* “lake; like” Yiddish]. For the reading of شمند لك: The other way is to accept the structure being formed with an Arabic word and a Turkish suffix [Arabic *sened* “commercial

paper” + *lik* Turkish suffix). The first assumption can be seen as a more remote possibility because of written language of this document and the meaning of Hebrew and Yiddish words together. Therefore we accepted the second assumption as more logical possibility. However, it may also be considered by the researchers who are better in Arabic papyrology that this word is more likely to be read in other ways.

(4) تاریک is a Persian word which means “dark, darkness”. Unfortunately we couldn't be sure that the word was “تاریک tārik” because the fragment was damaged.

2.5. Vocabulary

Arabic Vocabulary with equivalents in English:

<i>English</i>		<i>Arabic</i>
But	:	إلا
Turkish (nationality)	:	الترك
War	:	القتال
Allah	:	الله
to die	:	أن تموت
(with) death	:	الموت
with permission	:	بإذن
by a covenant	:	بالعهد
thus	:	على رسم
on, over, into	:	عليه
and it is not; (then)	:	وما كان
under (their) command	:	في أمر
(the) book; decree	:	كتاباً
to anyone	:	لنفس
commodity, goods	:	مال
(it is) continuous	:	مستمراً
from	:	من
who?	:	من؟
delayed; determined	:	مؤجلاً
and this	:	وذلك
the occurrence	:	وقوع
to base on	:	يعتمد
to denigrate, to dispraise	:	يفاحش

Non-Arabic Vocabulary:

<i>English</i>	:	<i>Persian</i>
dark(ness)	:	تاریک

CONCLUSION

As we see in the information given by Cambridge University Digital Library, the researchers who have been worked in the digitisation of the Taylor-Schechter Cairo Genizah Collection¹ think that the Arabic page is a document of appointment, possibly for a position in the army, mentioning an “affair of the Turks” that the appointed person had dealt with successfully; and the document is from Ca. 11th-12th century (CUDL, 2019). Yet we can discuss these assumptions carefully here again.

The second line of the Arabic text is clearly cited from the Quran. Therefore we think that the author of this Arabic text is probably a Muslim. The author has used two non-Arabic elements; the one of those is a Persian word “تاریک”, and the other one is an Old Turkic suffix “+lik” [The suffix +lik derives adjectives from nouns. It forms derivatives with a variety of meanings and functions (as also nowadays in many Turkic languages) as Erdal (2004, s. 147) said, and also “Denominal derivation can express presence or absence of the entity denoted by the base or finally, serve syntactic purposes (as with the suffix +IXg).” (Erdal, 2004, s. 145; *see more for the suffix +IXK* Erdal, 2004, s. 147).]. According to these circumstances, we can assume that the author knows Arabic, Persian and also Turkish certainly. However, the words used (mainly Persian word and Turkish suffix) and the sentences formed by the author, the way or manner in Arabic text is expressed (the author wants to say that if they (Jewish or Arabic communities) don’t obey the orders of the Turks, the darkness will be continuous), all of these facts can indicate that the composer of the text was working for the Turks who order and have power on the region and probably he wasn’t Arabic, but a Muslim who lived in 11th or 12th century. As a result, in our opinions, it is also possible to say that the author can be a Seljukian or Kipchak (Qipchaq, Cuman or Polovtsian) Turk who knows Arabic, Persian and Turkish.

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¹ The digitisation of the Taylor-Schechter Cairo Genizah Collection has been sponsored by the Jewish Manuscript Preservation Society, the Friedberg Genizah Project Inc., and the Arts and Humanities Research Council, UK (CUDL, 2019).

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Appendix:

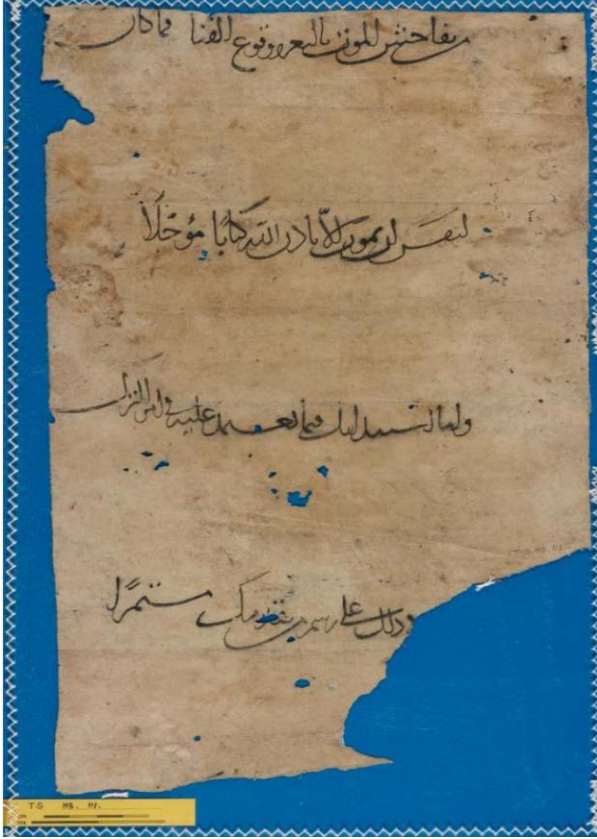


Figure 1. T-S H5.111

(CUDL, 2019, <https://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-TS-H-00005-00111/2>. Date of access: 03.05.2019.)