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in Mediator Texts

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Preface

Lars Johanson

This volume contains contributions presented at a workshop titled “The Mediators: Ottoman Turkish and Persian in Non-Arabic Scripts” organized by Éva Á. Csató and Filiz Kiral as representatives of the *Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul* and the German *Orient-Institut Istanbul*. The title was inspired by Professor Bo Utas’s proposal to initiate a research project on the role of the old “mediators” between Europe and the Middle East, a plan that will hopefully be followed up with further workshops.

The topic was also thematically relevant for an interdisciplinary research project being carried out at Uppsala University, “The Urban Mind. Cultural and Environmental Dynamics”, devoted to “linguistic ecology”: the relationships and interactions of linguistic codes employed in urban settings.

The workshop documented in the present volume dealt with the empirical value of so-called transcription texts, i.e. texts occasionally written in non-traditional non-Arabic scripts, and their importance for drawing conclusions about the history of spoken varieties. Some of the questions raised were the following.

1. What can we, in general, learn from written sources about spoken language? There are several basic problems. Written coding is always just some form of visual simulation, and written texts never represent spoken varieties directly. A phonetic script can be used for narrower speech representation, but sources of this kind are not available. Phonetically oriented scripts are even problematic because of the increasing gap over time between the graphic representation and the phonic substance.

2. What can we learn from texts in Arabic script? Its weak and strong sides are well known. For instance, the Arabic writing system adopted for Ottoman Turkish certainly did not reflect actual pronunciation. It was conservative, preserved older developmental stages and represented vowels poorly. But it was not *as such* less suited to represent Turkic, as is often claimed. Also the vowel notation can easily be disambiguated by means of diacritics, as shown for instance by the practice in modern Uyghur. The defective vowel notation even has its advantages, since it conceals less essential intralingual variation and interlingual differences, and the use of a less narrow notation may widen the area of validity and reach a wider readership.

3. Why can we learn more from texts in non-Arabic scripts? Unconventional graphic systems may mirror synchronic speech better, providing information on phonetic and phonological structures that are obscured by a conservative orthographic practice. Grammars, vocabularies and linguistic comments written by for-

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Transcription text, regraphization, variety? – Reflections on “Karamanlidika”

Matthias Kappler

It is a common opinion that the term “Karamanlidika”, or rather “Karamanlidika (Karamanli) book production” denotes a heterogeneous group of printed material which is entirely or in part written in Turkish (whatever this means, see below) employing Greek characters; in other words, books (or leaflets, brochures, catalogues etc.) containing Turkish texts in Greek script (Balta 1987: xvi). The same definition could be given in a modified form for “Karamanli” manuscript material. So far it seems that we are dealing with a graphic phenomenon. But it is not that simple. “Karamanlid” is sometimes described as a “variety of Turkish”; in many publications we encounter terms such as “langue / dialecte karamanlie, καραμανλίδικη γλώσσα, Karaman dili, Karaman Türkçesi, Karamanlîca” and many others that we will analyze below. In a workshop organized by Türk Dil Kurumu on 15 May 2009 in Nevşehir we find the terms “unutulan dil Karamanlîca”, and “Karamanlî ağzı”.¹ To make a long story short, all these terms point to a spoken variety, or even “language”. Given these conflicting approaches, I felt the need to discuss and analyze the aforementioned terms as they were proposed during the history of research on Karamanlidika texts, in order to obtain an overall picture of the problematic situation we face in Karamanlidika studies from a linguistic point of view, obviously without pretending to resolve the problem. It must be stressed that any basic consideration of “Karamanlidika” cannot be detached from cultural history, since writing always implies a number of symbolic values that can only be understood in a historical context. Notwithstanding this premise, research in Karamanlidika topics usually lacks linguistic arguments; for that reason the main arguments in this contribution will be of a linguistic nature.

In a previous paper (Kappler 2006: 656–658), I already hinted that the problematic term “Karamanli” was inadequate for both extra-linguistic and linguistic purposes, as firstly it narrows down the radius of distribution of the texts, the geographical and cultural structure of the Turkophone Orthodox population, as well as the numerous linguistic forms and varieties involved; and, secondly, because the term has been used in older approaches to Turkish dialectology (Kúnos 1896, see below) and in a Balkan context with the use of another (Cyrillic) alphabet (Dmitriev

1 <http://www.tdk.gov.tr/TR/BelgeGoster.aspx?F6E10F8892433CFFAAAF6AA849816B2EF8892E7DA0E206501>, visited on 21.06.2009.

1928, 1930), resulting in further confusion. In this contribution, I will attempt a more in-depth analysis, trying at first to summarize the discussion diachronically, and then to find an analytic key which could allow us to formulate further hypotheses.

The first researcher to employ the term “Karamanli” for the language of the Turkophone Orthodox population was Georg Jacob, who used in 1898 Turkish texts in Greek scripts to analyse spoken colloquial Turkish. However, already then Jacob warns against confusing this “Karamanly” with a specific Anatolian dialect (Jacob 1898: 696):

“In Kleinasien und Konstantinopel haben bekanntlich zahlreiche Griechen ihre Sprache mit der türkischen vertauscht, sind aber Griechen geblieben und pflegen ihr Türkisch mit griechischen Buchstaben zu schreiben. Man bezeichnet diese Litteratur in Konstantinopel als Karamanly, muss sich aber hüten, dabei an einen anatolischen Volksdialekt zu denken. Vielmehr steht dieses Karamanly der klassischen Sprache sehr nahe, zeigt aber doch, da der Bann der herkömmlichen Schreibweise mit dem Aufgeben des arabischen Alphabets einmal gebrochen war, manche Freiheit und gewährt, was besonders wichtig ist, einen Einblick in die Vokal- und Ton-Verhältnisse, von denen die arabische Schrift erstere nur ahnen lässt, letztere gar nicht zum Ausdruck bringt.”

His approach is basically graphical; he considers “Karamanly” as a graphic variety, whereas the terminology “Karamanly” itself, which he relates to “Konstantinopel”, can also be found in contemporary Ottoman Greek sources, such as Manouil Gedeon.²

The second linguistic study dealing with Turkish texts in Greek script (leaving aside Otto Blau’s “Griechisch-Türkische Sprachproben” [1874], since it treats texts from a different geographical area) is an article by Clément Huart (1900), which appeared two years after Jacob’s study. Beyond the importance of this article from a bibliographical point of view (it provides for the first time titles of Karamanlidika books from the library of E. Legrand and from the Biblioteca Marciana in Venice [Huart 1900: 474–476]), Huart is the first researcher to attempt a graphematic and linguistic analysis of whole body of Turkish texts in Greek script. The title texts of three books translated by Serapheim are transcribed into Arabic letters, which, according to Huart, better than Greek seem to fit the requirements for graphically representing Turkish (Huart 1900: 465):

“L’alphabet grec est tout à fait insuffisant pour représenter les sons de la langue turque, et son système vocalique, grâce à l’iotacisme de la prononciation moderne, entièrement incomplet. Aussi l’embarras est-il grand pour

2 Gedeon (1920: 13) mentions the church Agios Konstantinos of the “Karamanites”; see Kappler 2002: 23.

transcrire nombre de mots, et l’on arrive guère à ce résultat que par l’emploi de subterfuges.”

His transcription, I repeat, is done exclusively in Arabic characters (which he, of course, calls “caractères turcs”). Not one single word is transcribed into Latin. Concerning terminology, not even once does Huart mention the term “Karamanli” or something similar, defining the texts simply as “[...] en caractères grecs, mais en langue turque” (Huart 1900: 459). He links the language of the texts to the “turc d’Angora” without any linguistic argument, just on the grounds that the author, Serapheim, was somehow related to Ankara; on the other hand he provides interesting comparisons of some forms occurring in the text with the language used by Armenians and Ottoman Greeks (metathesis [Huart 1900: 470], epithesis -s on converb forms [Huart 1900: 469]).

Another early article concerning our subject was published in 1934. In his “Turco-Christian Songs from Asia Minor” Robert Dawkins presents eleven texts taken from the famous manuscript written by Anastasios Levidis from Zincedere. The texts are copied in Greek script, without transcription, accompanied only by an English translation. On this topic Dawkins comments (Dawkins 1934: 188):

“To his Greek I might have added a transcription either in the old Arabo-Turkish character, or in some recognised system of writing Turkish in Latin characters, or even in the new orthography of present-day Turkey, but it did not seem to me worth while to spend space upon doing this. The matter concerns only the reader who knows some Turkish, and such readers will have little difficulty in recognising the language in the form in which Levidis presents it.”

By this, Dawkins gives to understand that he was not interested in a linguistic analysis, which indeed his article does not include, and had only the practical goal of making the texts known to a wider readership. Coming back to terms for naming languages, Dawkins does not comment on the “variety” of Turkish he is dealing with, using the writing-related term “Turkish in Greek characters”, just like Huart, but he does also mention the term “Karamanlidika”, referring though not to language, but to book production (Dawkins 1934: 185):

“For the use of these Turkophone Greeks there sprang up the practice of printing Turkish in Greek characters, the so-called Karamanlitika books, and in the same way Turkish in Greek characters was used by them as a medium of correspondence.”

It might be added that the first time that Karamanlidika texts were mentioned in Greek bibliography, by Sophocles Houdaverdoglous-Theodotos in 1930, the term “Karamanli” or “Karamanlidika” is not used. Instead the Karamanlidika printed and manuscript production is referred to as “Τουρκόφωνος Ελληνική Φιλολογία”, and

the language is called “*τουρκικά δι’ ελληνικών χαρακτήρων*” (“Turkish in Greek characters”) without specifying linguistic varieties.

In 1940, the Italian Turcologist Ettore Rossi published another Turkish text in Greek characters, probably one of the oldest ones we know (sixteenth century), and probably not pertaining to the Asia Minor, but rather to the Balkan tradition. Rossi very carefully refers to the text as “*canto turco scritto [in] lettere greche*” (Rossi 1940: 237), mentioning also the well-known Gennadius text in the same terms. Thirteen years later (1953), Rossi published three Turkish inscriptions in Greek characters, and in the introductory paragraphs he gives extensive information on previous research. Interestingly, in this introduction he completely changes his terminology, referring to the texts as “Karamanli” (Rossi 1953: 69):

“Con il termine *qaramanli* relativo alla Caramania si usa chiamare il turco parlato e scritto dai Cristiani ortodossi dell’Anatolia, specialmente della Cappadocia, della Licaonia e della Pisidia conglobate verso il secolo XIV nel principato turco dei Qaraman, del quale restò il nome a una vasta regione dell’Asia Minore.”

Further, concerning language, he states (ibid.):

“Per estensione con lo stesso termine si designò il turco parlato e scritto dai Cristiani ortodossi della penisola balcanica e della Crimea, il quale si distingue dal turco, che fu detto *’otmânli*, e dai suoi numerosi dialetti per singolarità fonetiche e morfologiche, ma soprattutto per l’alfabeto greco (raramente slavo) usato nella sua scrittura.”

In other words, Rossi admits the existence of common phonological and morphological features of varieties of a Turco-Christian “language” covering not only Anatolia, but also the Balkans and Crimea, though on the other hand he stresses that these “peculiarities” are especially to be found in writing. It goes without saying that, from a dialectological point of view, it is highly improbable, or let’s say inadmissible, to assume a homogeneous variety peculiar to such a huge geographical area. Moreover Rossi does not give any documentation of these “common features” in his article. What does this change of attitude between his first article, where he carefully confines his characterization to writing, and this evaluation of “qaramanlica” (a term he also uses, Rossi 1953: 69) as a linguistic variety, be it a “language” or a “dialect”, stem from? The answer lies in the history of Karamanlidika research itself: three years before Rossi’s article, the first extensive study on linguistic phenomena in “Karamanlidika” texts had appeared, the “Anadolu Karamanlı ağızlarına ait araştırmalar” (1950) by Janos Eckmann, to which Rossi also refers in his article.

In fact, Eckmann was the first scholar to deal directly with a large number of texts from a linguistic point of view, and was the first one to attempt an analysis of the texts from the premise that they were written in a common linguistic form that he admits, though not homogeneous, still to be worth calling a “language”. Eck-

mann presents this “Karamanli language” as a linguistic macrosystem with a literary standard and “dialects” (Eckmann 1950: 167):

“Karamanlı dili, Yunan harfli eserlerde görüldüğü gibi, birlik göstermemektedir, fakat burada da bir “*edebî dil*” ve muhtelif “*ağızlar*” vardır.”

Linguistically, he divides his material into three categories: (1) “Doğrudan edebî Türkçe ile yazılı eserler”; (2) “Halk unsurları ile az çok karışık bir yazı dili ile yazılmış eserler”; (3) “Karamanlı halk dili veya ona çok yakın bir dil ile yazılmış eserler”. This mixed structure corresponds, according to Eckmann, to a language system, which he calls “Karamanlica” or “Karamanlı dili” (later also “Dialekt der türkischsprachigen Orthodoxen, der Karamanier”, see Eckmann 1958: 77), leading to the question: What is so peculiarly “Karamanlı” in Eckmann’s analysis? He mentions only two phenomena (Eckmann 1950: 168): one morphological, the word formation of Arabic nouns with Turkish suffixes *-ilk*, *-il*, *-slz*, such as *aflık*, *mübarekli*; and one consisting of Turkish or Persian nouns with the Arabic suffix *-iyet*, such as *serbestiyet*, *variyet* etc. He further hints at syntactical deviations, or “barbarisms” as he calls it (“...syntaxisi barbarizmlerle dolu ...”), but since his study examines only phonetics (planned analyses of other language levels [see Eckmann 1950: 168] could apparently not be realized), the phenomena in syntax are unfortunately not documented. It must be stressed that the aforementioned morphological phenomenon does exist outside Karamanlidika texts (e.g. *variyet* in *Türkçe Sözlük* [1988 edition], moreover *elastikiyet*, *kraliyet*, see also the detailed discussion of the phenomenon in Tietze 1987: 353–355), and that the syntactic deviations are an unavoidable language-contact induced by-product of a literature which essentially consists of translations from Greek. From a phonetic point of view, Eckmann’s material actually only shows the typical mixture of different features from the Ottoman standard language, substandard varieties, and Anatolian and Rumelian dialects. As Mefküre Mollova (1979–1980) has shown in a critical article about Eckmann’s work, the Karamanlidika texts analysed show up a great mixture, but cannot be considered as a determinable “dialect” (Mollova 1979–1980: 224):

“La présence d’un grand nombre d’arabismes et de persismes prouve que les textes en caractères grecs ne sont pas écrits en parlers karamanlis anatoliens, mais qu’ils sont des épreuves de la langue turque littéraire des 18–19ème siècles, parsemées de régionalismes et de dialectismes”.

Beyond this lexical argument, Mollova shows that phonetically all the forms can be traced back to existing varieties of Turkish. Her use of the term “parlers karamanlis anatoliens” obviously refers to the Turkish Central and South-Eastern Anatolian dialects spoken by Muslims and Christians indifferently. As I have hinted above, the use of the expression “Karamanlı” to designate this group of Turkish varieties comes from the first attempt to subdivide Anatolian dialects by Kúnos (1896), who calls “Karamanisch” the dialects “im südöstlichen Kleinasien zwischen Mersin und

Konya" (according to Kowalski 1934: 996).³ However, it is a fact that the denomination "Karamanisch" entered the early generation of research on Anatolian dialectology. Thus, we must keep in mind this tradition in order to understand how Eckmann (and also Mollova) make use of this expression. The problem is that Eckmann, perhaps unconsciously or, in any case, unreflectedly, transmits this dialectological term which originally had nothing to do with Turkish written in Greek characters, to the "Karamanlidika" production. Eckmann's unreflected terminology turned out to be a fatal misinterpretation in later years: since by then terms like "Karamanli language, Karamanlica" etc., in many studies dealing with Karamanlidika, stand not only for the *written tradition*, but also for the *language* of the Christian Turkophone population of Asia Minor, and, even worse, for that of Istanbul, South-Eastern Europe and the Crimea. After Eckmann, there were no linguistic studies on Karamanlidika material until recently, with the exception of Miller's dissertation (1974), which remained unpublished and which pushes the axiom of the "Karamanli language" to absurd dimensions (see critical remarks in Kappler 2006, also Anhegger 1979–1980: 167). This way, the ghost of a Christian "Karamanli" language managed to survive in many non-linguistic studies until today (cf. Tekin 1984: 181, Kut 1987: 342; see also Kappler 2002: 76). Last but not least this was also thanks to the edition of the Karamanlidika Bibliography by Salaville and Dalleggio, whose first volume appeared some years after Eckmann's contribution (Salaville & Dalleggio 1958), although they were well aware of the mixed nature of the many varieties used by the Christian Turkophones all over Asia Minor (cf. Anhegger 1979–1980: 166–167). However that may be, Eckmann's study, which still must be considered one of the most significant phonetic analyses of Karamanlidika books, was paradoxically the starting point of a wave of misunderstandings. The only resistance against this misleading evolution of Karamanlidika studies comes, together with Mollova's mentioned article, in 1979–1980 from Robert Anhegger. Anhegger was not a linguist, but a very profound expert on Karamanlidika book production. In his famous and unparalleled article "Hurufumuz Yunanca", he asks (Anhegger 1979–1980: 166):

"Haben nun diese Karamanli's wirklich ein mehr oder minder gleiches Idiom gesprochen mit allen Eigenheiten, die uns für das Karamanische als charakteristisch erscheinen? Das ist unwahrscheinlich. Die Griechen, die zu verschiedenen Zeiten und in weit auseinanderliegenden Gebieten Anatoliens und der Inseln zum Türkischen übergangen, werden die Sprachweise ihrer türkischen Umgebung übernommen haben."

³ Kowalski, in his basic study about dialectology (1934: 996) justly criticizes this approach as not scientific ("Das, was in dieser Hinsicht bisher geleistet worden ist, beruht eher auf Intuition und Phantasie, als auf festgestellten Tatsachen"; and, concretely on Kúnos: "Dieser Einteilungsversuch der kleinasiatischen Dialekte entbehrt jeder wissenschaftlichen Stütze, wenn er auch auf den ersten Blick recht ansprechend erscheint").

This is also corroborated by the self-determination of the language by the Turkophone Christians themselves as "basit / yavan / açık Türkçe", cited by Anhegger without any reference to a certain "dialect". Afterwards in his article, Anhegger criticizes Miller's approach of identifying a "particular dialect" of the Karamanlides, and raises the question (Anhegger 1979–1980: 167):

"Hier sind doch einige Fragezeichen zu setzen. Miller geht von "their spoken language" aus, nimmt also im Gegensatz zu Salaville-Dalleggio und mir ein von allen turkophonen Orthodoxen einheitlich gesprochenes Türkisch kategorisch zur Grundlage seiner Untersuchungen. Es wäre wohl richtiger zu sagen: Im Laufe dieser rund zwei Jahrhunderte karamanischer Literatur entwickelte sich eine karamanische Schriftsprache, die wieder auf die gesprochene Sprache der Gebildeten zurückgewirkt haben dürfte. [...] Ohne Zweifel bot das karamanisch-griechische Alphabet mit seinen diakritischen Punkten die Voraussetzung, türkische, dem Griechischen fremde Laute wiederzugeben, und damit die Möglichkeit „developments in the phonological component of their language“ zu verfolgen. Hat nun die Schriftsprache von dieser Möglichkeit vollständig Gebrauch gemacht oder hat sich nicht etwa auch eine differenzierte Stereotype in der Schreibung entwickelt? In seiner Arbeit kommt Miller auf diese Frage nicht zu sprechen."

By this argumentation, Anhegger leads the discussion back to what is to be considered "Karamanlidika" in origin: a graphic-cultural phenomenon.

It thus seems evident that no "Karamanli variety" has ever existed, and that Karamanlidika texts are the graphic reflection of a relatively large number of spoken and written varieties. It is now interesting to raise the question where these texts can be collocated in the wider corpus of Ottoman texts in non-Arabic script. The current term "transcription texts" / "Transkriptionsdenkmäler" seems to be inappropriate – and has, in this sense, been discussed recently (Gavriel 2010) – because, as has been mentioned, the bulk of the Karamanlidika production is a translation literature. Some "transcription texts" in sensu strictu, do exist, however, for example in the transcription of Ottoman juridical texts, as well as perhaps in other literary forms, an issue which has to be urgently investigated. For the time being, the term "text in non-Arabic script" as proposed, by Hazai (1990) *inter alia* seems to cover the whole corpus, though it implies the problematic premise of something "abnormal" for a substantially "natural" phenomenon from the point of view of cultural history. Another term that comes to mind, borrowed from sociolinguistics, is *regraphization*. It has been used in the framework of Cooper's (1989) theory of renovation in corpus planning, and could, at first sight, appear useful for our purpose, because Karamanlidika was "planned" by a determined social class of cleric-translators, missionaries or urban intellectuals in order to graphize spoken varieties, or regraphize written ones. However, this term is also problematic, since, according to Cooper (1989: 154), *regraphization* is "replacement or reform of an existing writing system", something that cannot be assumed generically for the Karamanlidika printed and

manuscript production, and, even more importantly, it strongly neglects the spontaneous aspect of Karamanlidika writing practices (for example in private manuscript correspondence, in the Ottoman Greek musical tradition of Istanbul, etc.).

The dilemma remains; at the very least future research will have to learn from research history and its misinterpretations, and concentrate on the graphic-cultural side without overstressing a posited linguistic homogeneity. Determining the varieties represented in Karamanlidika texts is, on the other hand, an arduous task which will not be completed in the near future. Many and extensive analyses have to be undertaken, especially in syntax, where diachronic, dialectological, contact linguistic and synchronic approaches will have to overlap each other (for a synchronic approach see Arslan-Kechriotis (2009)). Another very important task for the future, as stressed by Evangelia Balta (2010) in her introduction to the proceedings of the First International Conference of Karamanlidika Studies, held in Nicosia in September 2008, is to examine the links between Karamanlidika texts and the Ottoman Turkish and Turko-Armenian / Daçkeren texts; this also has to be investigated from a linguistic point of view. In all this, it is my firm belief that the research history of Karamanlidika studies has to be recorded in order to tackle new approaches and arguments.

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