Armenia, Caucaso e Asia Centrale

Ricerche 2022

Carlo Frappi, Daniele Artoni, Paolo Sorbello

Edizioni Ca'Foscari

Eurasiatica Quaderni di studi su Balcani, Anatolia, Iran, Caucaso e Asia Centrale 19

e-ISSN 2610-9433 ISSN 2610-8879

Armenia, Caucaso e Asia Centrale. Ricerche 2022

Eurasiatica

Serie diretta da
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19

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Eurasiatica
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30125 Venezia
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e-ISSN 2610-9433
ISSN 2610-8879

URL http://edizionicafoscari.unive.it/it/edizioni/collane/eurasiatica/

Armenia, Caucaso e Asia Centrale
Ricerche 2022

a cura di
Daniele Artoni, Carlo Frappi, Paolo Sorbello

Venezia
Edizioni Ca' Foscari - Venice University Press
2023

Armenia, Caucaso e Asia Centrale. Ricerche 2022
a cura di Daniele Artoni, Carlo Frappi, Paolo Sorbello

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Scientific certification of the works published by Edizioni Ca' Foscari: all essays published in this volume have received a favourable evaluation by subject-matter experts, through a double-blind peer review process under the responsibility of the Advisory board of the series. The evaluations were conducted in adherence to the scientific and editorial criteria established by Edizioni Ca' Foscari, using a dedicated platform.

Edizioni Ca' Foscari
Fondazione Università Ca' Foscari | Dorsoduro 3246 | 30123 Venezia
https://edizionicafoscari.unive.it | ecf@unive.it

1a edizione aprile 2023
ISBN 978-88-6969-667-1 [ebook]

Armenia, Caucaso e Asia Centrale. Ricerche 2022 / a cura di Daniele Artoni, Carlo Frappi, Paolo Sorbello — 1. ed. — Venezia: Edizioni Ca' Foscari, 2023. — xii + 212 p.; 23 cm. — (Eurasiatica; 19).

URL http://edizionicafoscari.unive.it/it/edizioni/libri/978-88-6969-667-1/
DOI http://doi.org/10.30687/978-88-6969-667-1

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Abstract

Consistently with a consolidated tradition within the series *Eurasiatica*, the volume aims to intercept and represent the main research trends in the academic debate about the region across the Caucasus and Central Asia unfolding in the Italian academic environment and involving both national and international scholars. In this perspective, the volume presents a series of essays that draw inspiration from papers presented in the context of the main annual conferences and conventions focused on Caucasian and Central Asian studies. Accordingly, the volume hosts contributions shaped by different disciplinary matrices, ranging from historical and philological to linguistic, literary and political studies.

Keywords Caucasus. Central Asia. Area studies. Interdisciplinarity. Eurasian studies.

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Introduzione

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Il volume *Armenia, Caucaso e Asia Centrale. Ricerche 2022*, come da tradizione, raccoglie contributi italiani e internazionali sugli studi d'area delle regioni del Caucaso e dell'Asia Centrale. Le ricerche qui presentate sono state principalmente raccolte a seguito degli interventi effettuati durante il Convegno Annuale dell'Associazione per lo Studio in Italia dell'Asia centrale e del Caucaso (ASIAC), organizzato in collaborazione con Sapienza Università di Roma dal 25 al 27 ottobre 2021, e nell'ambito della XV Giornata di Studi Armeni e Caucasici, co-organizzato da ASIAC e dal Dipartimento di Studi sull'Asia e sull'Africa Mediterranea dell'Università Ca' Foscari Venezia il 13 maggio 2022.

Trattandosi di un volume che raccoglie ricerche sull'area caucasica e centroasiatica eterogenee e provenienti da discipline diverse – tra cui linguistica, filologia, storia, giurisprudenza, politologia e studi culturali – i saggi non presentano un ordine né cronologico né tematico.

Il primo contributo è di Viacheslav Chirikba, che espone la storia degli alfabeti a base latina creati negli anni Venti del Novecento – soppiantati dagli alfabeti cirillico prima e georgiano poi a metà anni Trenta – per la lingua abcasa. In particolare, il saggio si concentra sulle vicissitudini del primo alfabeto cosiddetto 'analitico"

proposto da Nikolaj Marr nel 1926 e dell'alfabeto definito 'unificato' che lo ha sostituito. Chirikba propone che la paternità di quest'ultimo alfabeto sia da attribuire non solo a Nikolaj Jakovlev, bensì anche a Evgenij Polivanov, Samson Čanba e Mušni Chašba; poiché Polivanov e Čanba sono stati vittime delle purghe in epoca stalinista, probabilmente la *damnatio memoriae* conseguente è stata applicata anche ai loro lavori sull'alfabeto abcaso a base latina.

Il saggio di Paolo Ognibene analizza come la Scizia e gli Sciti sono rappresentati nell'opera di Erodoto. Oltre a mettere in luce come la visione degli sciti si sia evoluta nel mondo greco nel tempo, Ognibene mostra come questo etnonimo rappresenti un termine collettivo per indicare popoli diversi accomunati da stili di vita simili e come una grande eterogeneità etnica nella regione fosse compatibile con l'avvicendamento di varie dominazioni e l'inglobamento graduale di questi in contesti nomadici plurietnici.

Il contributo di Carlo Alessandro Bonifacio guarda ai rapporti tra il regno armeno di Cilicia e l'Occidente latino nel XIV secolo, allorquando in quest'ultimo venivano riposte le residue speranze di salvezza del Regno, bastione della difesa dei Cristiani in Oriente oramai circondato su più fronti. Il contesto delle relazioni tra Armeni e Latini è ricostruito nel contributo attraverso l'analisi codicologica di alcuni passaggi della lettera prefatoria alla *Visione di san Nersēs*, testo profetico armeno tradotto in latino nella prima metà del secolo. Il testo mette in luce i significativi legami tra Armeni di Cilicia, regno di Cipro, Ordine degli Ospitalieri e Papato, ipotizzando l'intento propagandistico della traduzione latina dell'opera, redatta a sostegno di un progetto di crociata in aiuto del Regno.

Lo studio di Laura Massetti analizza il collegamento tra il *fændyr* (uno strumento musicale ossetico) e l'eroe Syrdon confrontando otto versioni delle saghe dei Narti. Grazie a un'analisi testuale puntuale, Massetti individua somiglianze e differenze tra queste versioni, dimostrando come – al di là delle variazioni – l'episodio della creazione del *fændyr* e l'episodio del furto di bestiame siano collegati dal tema della morte dei figli di Syrdon.

Il saggio storiografico di Andrii Danylenko si interroga sulle molteplici denominazioni del Mar Nero nelle fonti antiche arabo-islamiche e cristiane. Se le prime designazioni arabo-islamiche spesso risentono della tradizione geografica bizantina, verso la fine del XIII secolo le denominazioni sono legate agli etnonimi e ai toponimi adiacenti. Lo studio riflette anche sull'origine complessa e interconnessa della componente 'geo-cromatica' nella denominazione del Mar Nero.

Attraverso l'esame di documenti inediti, tratti dai registri dei tribunali della Sharī'a di Aleppo e risalenti al XVII secolo, il contributo di Marco Salati esamina come il sistema legale ottomano-ḥanafita fece fronte al problema della condizione della donna sposata in stato di solitudine e abbandono affettivo/sessuale ed economico in ra-

gione della prolungata assenza del marito. Il saggio dimostra come il sistema legale ottomano seppe far ricorso alle più flessibili norme dalla scuola shāfi'ita per affrontare una problematica dalle forti implicazioni sia pubbliche che private.

Il saggio di Ana Cheishvili analizza le fotografie dell'archeologo francese Joseph Berthelot Baron de Baye e il ruolo che queste hanno avuto per la conoscenza del Caucaso in Francia, e da qui in tutta Europa, a partire dalla fine dell'Ottocento. Cheishvili presenta un lavoro archivistico di riordino e catalogazione delle numerose testimonianze fotografiche di de Baye presenti nelle collezioni francesi riflettendo inoltre sul valore del trasferimento culturale connesso a queste fotografie e sulla risemantizzazione successiva, sia sul piano privato che politico.

Al centro del saggio di Nairi Mercadanti c'è il concetto di patria (*homeland*) e come questo sia declinato dai tre gruppi di diaspora armena in Libano tra il 1946 e il 1947. Nel suo saggio, Mercadanti dà prominenza al contesto storico nel quale i tre movimenti per il rimpatrio della diaspora si sono mossi. L'articolo si sofferma in particolare sull'uso propagandistico del rimpatrio come collegamento tra la diaspora e la Repubblica socialista sovietica armena e come giustificazione per l'annessione di territori turchi da parte di Mosca. L'analisi delle pubblicazioni in tre periodici portò infatti alla creazione di due 'campi' di dibattito politico all'interno della diaspora armena.

Nel suo saggio, Frank Maracchione si concentra su un'analisi quantitativa della politica estera dell'Uzbekistan del XXI secolo, vista attraverso la lente degli interventi diplomatici presso le Nazioni Unite. Maracchione analizza 417 documenti presentati dalla diplomazia uzbeka all'Onu tra il 2001 e il 2021 attraverso lo *Structural Topic Model*, un metodo di ricerca che impiega l'intelligenza artificiale per misurare l'effetto che alcune variabili hanno sui temi sollevati nei documenti. Attraverso l'analisi, Maracchione dimostra la dipendenza di alcuni temi di politica estera sul periodo storico e le dinamiche interne e internazionali, piuttosto che dalla leadership del Paese. Coadiuvato da una vasta quantità di dati, Maracchione sottolinea aspetti importanti di continuità e cambiamento tra i due presidenti Islam Karimov e Shavkat Mirziyoyev.

Nell'ultimo articolo della collana, Rustam Burnashev utilizza il concetto di 'dispositivo di sicurezza' di Michel Foucault per spiegare come gli 'stati deboli' dell'Asia centrale si sostengano. Secondo Burnashev, i cosiddetti *weak states* centroasiatici sono tali perché privi di istituzioni efficienti, di un monopolio sull'uso della violenza e di un consenso sull'idea di stato. Grazie all'enfasi che questi stati pongono sul tema della sicurezza, tuttavia, riescono a massimizzare il controllo sulla popolazione e creare una 'stabilità di regime' autoreferenziale.

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From the History of Abkhaz Romanized Alphabets

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Abstract The article discusses the vicissitudes around the adoption of two versions of the Abkhaz alphabet based on the Latin script – the 'analytical' alphabet, proposed by Academician Nikolai Marr (adopted in 1926 and used until 1928), and the 'unified alphabet', which replaced Marr's alphabet. Marr's system was, in fact, nothing more than a phonetic transcription, complex and inconvenient even for linguists, and unfit for school and literary purposes, which motivated the Abkhaz authorities to opt for its radical reform. The new Romanized alphabet was introduced into school practice in 1929 and functioned until 1938. There is some controversy as to the authorship of this script. In later literature it was attributed to N. Yakovlev, but in reality those who were directly involved in the creation of the new alphabetical system were Y. Polivanov, S. Chanba and M. Khashba, though the latter two did consult with Yakovlev. The fact that both Polivanov and Chanba were executed during Stalinist purges may explain the silencing of their names. By the mid-1930s, the Soviet government had started replacing Latin scripts with Cyrillic-based ones, but with two notable exceptions: in 1938, the alphabets of the Abkhazians and South Ossetians were transferred into a Georgian graphic basis. It was only in 1954, after the death of Stalin, that the Abkhazians returned to their erstwhile Cyrillic alphabet.

Keywords Abkhaz Language. Abkhaz Alphabet. Romanized Script. Analytical Alphabet. Nikolai Marr. Yevgeny Polivanov.

Summary 1 Introduction. – 2 The Soviet Policy of Latinization. – 3 The 'Analytical' Alphabet and Attempts of Its Reform.– 4 The 'Unified' Abkhaz Alphabet. – 5 Features of the New Latin Alphabet. – 6 The End of the Policy of 'Latinization'.

Edizioni Ca'Foscari

Eurasiatica 19
e-ISSN 2610-9433 | ISSN 2610-8879
ISBN [ebook] 978-88-6969-667-1

Peer review | Open access
Submitted 2022-04-13 | Accepted 2022-06-13 | Published 2023-04-26
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DOI 10.30687/978-88-6969-667-1/001

1 Introduction

The first known records in the Abkhaz language were made in the middle of the 17th century by the Turkish traveller Evliya Çelebi in the Arabic-Ottoman script.[1] Until 1919, all the Abkhaz alphabets – designed by Petr Uslar,[2] Ivan Bartolomei,[3] Konstantin Machavariani and Dmitry Gulia[4] and Andrey Chochua,[5] were based on the Cyrillic graphic system. In the Abkhaz diaspora in Turkey, Mustafa Butba[6] developed the Romanized Abkhaz alphabet, which was published in 1919 in Istanbul, remarkably, seven years before the Abkhaz Romanized alphabet designed by Nikolai Marr and nine years before Turkey switched to the Roman-based alphabet. Butba's alphabet was one of the first attempts at creating a writing system for a Caucasian language based on a Latin graphic system. However, soon in the Caucasus, including Abkhazia, they too started to think about transferring the existing Cyrillic alphabets into the Latin graphics.

1 Himself of half-Turkish and half-Abkhazian origin, Evliya Çelebi (1611-1682) had a keen interest in recording the words and phrases of the curious languages he encountered during his numerous travels, among them Abkhaz, Ubykh and Circassian, which appeared in his ten-volume work named *Seyahatname* (Travelogue), cf. Gippert 1992, 12-21.

2 Baron Peter von Uslar (1816-1875) was a Russian general and a self-taught linguist, famous for his outstanding work on languages and ethnography of the peoples of the Caucasus. He is the author of the first Abkhaz grammar (lithographic edition in 1862; printed edition in 1887) and of the first grammatical sketch of the now extinct Ubykh.

3 Ivan Alekseyevich Bartolomei (1813-1870) was a Russian military officer, a well-known numismatist, archaeologist and writer, corresponding member of the St. Petersburg Academy of Sciences. He directed the creation of the first Abkhaz and Chechen primers (both in 1866), based on the alphabet designed and used by Uslar in his grammars of the Caucasian languages.

4 Konstantin Machavariani (1857-1926), together with his young pupil Dmitry Gulia (later to become the national poet of Abkhazia; 1874-1960), compiled and published in 1892 an Abkhaz primer using Cyrillic alphabet, drawing on the system designed by Petr Uslar.

5 Andrei Maksimovich Chochua (1879-1965) was a pedagogue and children's writer, who served as Commissar of Public Education of the ASSR of Abkhazia and later as Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Abkhaz ASSR. He was the author of the Cyrillic-based Abkhaz Primer which appeared in 1909 and of a number of primary school textbooks.

6 The pedagogue and educator Mustafa Butba (1883-1946), descendent of emigrants from the mountainous C'abal region of Abkhazia, was a member of the Alphabet Commission, which was formed under the chairmanship of the *emigré* Circassian public figure Met Yusuf Izzet Pasha in Istanbul. He is also the author of the *Caucasus Memories* (Kafkasya Hatıraları) published posthumously in 1990 (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu).

2 The Soviet Policy of Latinization

To understand why in the mid-1920s there emerged a need to transfer the existing Abkhaz graphic system from Russian-based to the Latin one, it is necessary to understand the era when Romanized alphabets were created for the peoples of the USSR. The young Soviet state lived by the expectations of the coming world revolution, and Latin script was seen as an instrument of internationalism and the unity of the world proletariat. The Romanization of the alphabets of ethnic minorities of the former Russian Empire was considered by Soviet leadership as a progressive phenomenon with a global perspective. Furthermore, in the Muslim regions of the former empire, the transfer to the Latin alphabet was additionally encouraged in order to weaken and eliminate the Islamic religious and cultural influence closely associated with Islamic Quranic education based on the Arabic language and script.

There were serious plans to transfer even the Russian script into the Latin base. The idea was not entirely new. In 1833 a project by anonymous author proposed a partial Latinization of the Russian graphic system (cf. [Anonymous] 1833). This was followed by Romanized alphabets proposed by K. Kodinsky (1842) and V. Belinsky (1845). The change to Latin script was apparently one of the topics discussed in Russia's intellectual circles, as reflected in Dostoyevsky's novel *Demons*: "They talked about the abolition of censorship and the letter ъ, *about replacing Russian letters with Latin ones*…" (italics added).

In 1919, the Scientific Department of the People's Commissariat for Education of the RSFSR (Narkompros) declared

> the desirability of introducing the Latin script for all the nationalities inhabiting the territory of the Republic […] which is a logical step along the path on which Russia has already embarked by adopting a new calendar style and metric system of weights and measures.

In 1930, the People's Commissar for Education, Anatoly Lunacharsky, in the newspaper *Red Star* dated 6 and 7 January, proposed the Romanization of the Russian script, claiming that Lenin himself had told him about the need for such a reform (Lunacharsky 1930, 39). In 1929, the Narkompros formed a commission to look into the question of the Romanization of the Russian alphabet, headed by the famous linguist and Caucasian scholar, Professor Nikolai Feofanovich Yakovlev, with participation of linguists, bibliologists and polygraphists. In the article "For the Latinization of the Russian alphabet" Yakovlev wrote:

> At the stage of building socialism, the existence of the Russian alphabet in the USSR is an obvious anachronism, a kind of graphic

> barrier that divides the most numerous group of peoples of the Union both from the revolutionary East and from the working masses and proletariat of the West. (Yakovlev (1930, 35)

Another prominent Caucasian scholar, Anatoly Nestorovich Genko, emphasizing the ideological orientation of the choice of the alphabet, also believed that "after the October uprising" it was the Latin alphabet that "became the main factor in the cultural revolution" for the unwritten and young-written languages of the Caucasus.[7]

However, the situation was complicated by the fact that, sharing the general idea of the need for universal Romanization of the alphabets of the peoples of the USSR, two competing schools of Latinists clashed here – Marr and his followers (*the Marrists*) and the groups opposing them, including Nikolai Yakovlev, Yevgeny Polivanov and like-minded people.

Nikolai Marr proposed to use his so-called 'analytical' Latin-based alphabet which he developed for scientific recordings of the Abkhaz language as the basis for creating Latinized scripts for other peoples of the USSR. As he explained,

> The Abkhaz alphabet is so convenient at first for the approximate presentation of japhetidological transcription that, being integral in itself, that is, the alphabet of one language, it contains signs which express such a variety of sounds that they can more than satisfy the needs for the representation of sounds of most languages, even Japhetic languages, and quantitatively always surpass them, so there is no need in three-digit letters, such as e.g. ṫ°, for almost any of the other Japhetic languages. (Marr 1936, 39)

Given the authority, influence and energetic character of the academician, one can understand how these plans seriously alarmed those in the national republics, and in the centre, who had other ideas about traditional or newly created alphabets.

Academician Marr, although he was born and raised in Georgia and was half Georgian, was not very much liked in his homeland because of his emphasized internationalism.[8] At the same time, he developed excellent relations with the intelligentsia and the leadership of Abkhazia. Marr studied the Abkhaz language enthusiastically and extensively, and published a number of valuable works, including the first, in fact, dialectal dictionary of the Abkhaz language. Naturally,

7 Genko's manuscript in the Archive of the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts of the Russian Academy of Sciences (St. Petersburg), Fund 74, A.N. Genko's Archiv.

8 Cf. Mikhankova 1948, 75-6, 143, 239-40, *passim*; cf. also Cherchi, Manning 2002; Tuite 2011.

it was Abkhazia that was destined to become a springboard for the introduction of Marr's 'analytical' alphabet, which, in fact, was nothing more than a scientific phonetic transcription, complex and inconvenient even for linguists.

For Marr himself, the adoption in Abkhazia of the created by him Latinized alphabet was of great importance: after its successful introduction in the small republic, a victorious march of the analytical alphabet was planned throughout the Soviet Union, and, who knows, maybe even around the globe. In his article "The New Abkhaz Alphabet", published in 1924 in the newspaper *Voice of Working Abkhazia* (in the issues of 18, 19 and 20 September), Marr wrote:

> In general, of course, *we cannot but look at such an alphabet as intended to be pan-Caucasian and further*, i.e. it provides for covering the gaps existing between peoples in the letter, for *uniting all in the script*. (Marr 1938, 263; italics in the original)

The academician wrote to the pedagogue Andrei Chochua on 25 May 1927:

> with one foot […] the Abkhazians have already entered […] a new common ground for the further progress of all mankind, taking into account the possibilities of the inevitable unification of the writing of all mankind in the future. (Chochua 1976, 257)

One of Marr's followers, S.A. Vrubel explained:

> what is needed is an alphabet that is world-wide, that is, that it can reflect the sounds on a world scale […] This is how the Japhetic theory formulates the problem. N.Y. Marr created an alphabet for the Abkhaz language; thus, he laid the foundation for the world alphabet; it's a specialist's business […] to use this alphabet and add signs to it, thereby enriching the main table of the world alphabet. (Vrubel 1931, 128)

A.M. Chochua was also aware of Marr's global plans:

> Marr had long been planning to replace the Abkhaz alphabet with his analytical-Japhetic alphabet. His intention was, apparently, to test scientifically and practically his alphabet on the Abkhaz language, and then, if possible, to spread it beyond Abkhazia. (Chochua 1987, 100)

As the pupil and ardent supporter of Marr, the Abkhaz philologist Arseny Khashba emphasized,

> N.Y. Marr paid great attention to the creation and introduction of the Abkhaz new alphabet, he went to Abkhazia more than once, he wrote to comrade Chochua of the People's Commissariat for Education. The available to us correspondence between N.Y. Marr and A.M. Chochua and Marr's statements in general speak of this exceptional attention. […] To introduce a new alphabet and streamline the work and simplify it for writing, N.Y. [Marr] came to Abkhazia twice during 1924 and made several reports. On both of his visits, N.Y. Marr takes part in the work of the commission of People's Commissariat for Education of Abkhazia on the development and refinement of the draft of the new alphabet submitted by him. (Khashba 1936, 47-8)

The decision-making process to change the Abkhaz alphabet was not easy, and was conducted in the atmosphere of heated debates and discussions. The idea of Romanizing the Abkhaz alphabet was negatively viewed by the well-known Abkhaz public figure Semyon Ashkhatsava, which is obvious from his paper "Ways of the Development of Abkhazia's History", read on 12 September 1924 at the All-Union Congress of Local History held in Abkhazia (see Ashkhatsava 1925, 38). Ashkhatsava argued that the Latin alphabet contained even fewer characters than the Russian one, and therefore could not be considered as a better alternative to the current Cyrillic script based on Uslar's alphabet.

A sharply negative attitude to the proposed by academician Marr replacement of Uslar's Cyrillic alphabet by his Latinized script was taken by the enlightener and co-author of the third (after Uslar and Bartolomei) Abkhaz Cyrillic alphabet Dmitry Gulia. This is how it is described in Gulia's biography written by his son Georgy:

> Since the proposal [on a new alphabet] was sanctified by the name of Marr, it met with no objection in leading circles, especially since the analytical alphabet was adopted in some North Caucasian republics. This reckless and unjustified event did not go smoothly. Gulia literally rebelled against it. He was supported by a large group of intellectuals, especially the teachership. The poet tirelessly argued that the alphabet is difficult, and practically inapplicable. (Gulia 1965, 169-70)

Yet, at the meeting of a special commission held on 30 June 1924, consisting of the People's Commissar for Education S. Chanba,[9] his dep-

[9] Samson Yakovlevich Chanba (1886-1937), Abkhaz writer, playwright, educator and statesman, in 1921-25 and in 1930-32 – head of the Commissariat of Education, in 1923-30 – head of the Central Executive Committee of the Abkhaz SSR; lost his life in Stalinist repressions in 1937.

uty A. Chochua, as well as D. Gulia, N. Pateipa, S. Basariya and others, as well as N. Marr himself, it was decided

> unanimously […] to adopt the Latin script as a basis, and for this purpose to approve the 'Abkhaz Analytical Alphabet' compiled by academician Marr. To ask him to revise the script, simplifying the written style from the point of view of both simplicity and artistry. (Marr 1938, 264)

In his letter to Abkhazia's leader Nestor Lakoba, speaking about his Latin script for the Abkhaz language adopted on 30 June, Marr informs Lakoba that he was busy adapting the alphabet to handwritten use and was preparing a brief note on this to be read at the Local History Congress in Sukhum.[10]

A year later, on 11 October 1925, at a meeting at the Narkompros of Abkhazia in the presence of N. Marr, N. Lakoba, as well as S. Ashkhatsava, S. Basariya, A. Chukbar, S. Pateypa, K. Dzidzariya and others, after a discussion, it was again decided to switch to a new writing system, taking as a basis the alphabet designed by Marr and at the same time creating a commission to simplify this alphabet (Chochua 1976, 300).

It is no coincidence that both cited rulings contained a clause on the need to simplify Marr's alphabet. Even Marr-loyalist Chochua (1987, 210) wrote openly to the academician that the alphabet received from him "made an unfavourable impression on all of us by its complexity, the difficulty of drawing letters and their ambiguity". Chochua later recalled:

> Although Marr's alphabet was adopted by the college, but not unanimously: many members of the college were not satisfied with the large number of letters (76) in the new alphabet, as well as the similarity and difficulty of drawing many of them. There was also a reasonable fear that the replacement of the old alphabet with a new one could slow down the development of the Abkhaz language and literature for many years. (Chochua 1987, 100)

Yet, not without hesitation and controversy, Marr's alphabet had to be adopted. The thing is that the transition to Latin alphabets in the national republics was encouraged from Moscow, which was essentially a directive. The introduction of Latinized graphics for the Kabardian language, authored by B. Khuranov, began in 1923. In the same year, the Latin alphabet for the Ingush language was approved

10 Cf. Archives of the Russian Academy of Sciences (St. Petersburg), N.Y. Marr's Fund, No. 30, Sheets 17-18.

and adopted. The Adyghe script was transferred from Arabic to Latin in 1927. In Azerbaijan, the transition to the Latin script occurred as early as in 1922. Lenin called the transition of Oriental peoples to the Latin writing system "the Great Revolution in the East" (cf. Agamali-ogly 1928, 5, 8).

On the other hand, in the USSR Marr was considered the main specialist on the Caucasian languages and philology, his influence was enormous. These important circumstances, coupled with Marr's personal charisma, academicism, being one from the 'centre', and, admittedly, the assertiveness of the academician, who personally and quite ardently participated in lobbying for his alphabet at meetings in Sukhum, all convinced the leadership of Abkhazia and a part of the intelligentsia of the need to accept his alphabet as the basis for the new Abkhaz script. As Mikhail Delba wrote in his pamphlet, "N.Y. Marr literally imposed on us his artificial 'Abkhaz analytical alphabet'" (1951, 7).

The situation with the introduction of a new alphabet is eloquently described by Georgy Gulia:

> In a word, a new alphabet is introduced. Teachers are retrained, journalists are retrained, writers are retrained. Students diligently derive intricate hieroglyphics. If you forget to put a small circle on the side – you'll get a completely new sign. If you missed a 'tick' from above – again you'll get a new sign. Dots, quotation marks, ticks, circles around the branchy letters! (Gulia 1965, 172)

According to N.F. Yakovlev (Yakovlev 1931, 49), Marr's alphabet was adopted in Abkhazia in 1924 (see above about the meeting of the commission under the Narkompros of Abkhazia on 30 June 1924) and was in practice introduced into schools and the press in 1925. However, judging by the date of the above-mentioned meeting – October 1925, it should be assumed that in fact the introduction of the alphabet was carried out only the following year, as indeed A. Khashba writes (Khashba 1936, 50): "The new Abkhaz analytical alphabet began to operate in practice from 1926"; see also Bgazhba 1967, 58.

Yet, in the article dated 1926, A. Chochua writes:

> In the near future, the reform of the Abkhaz alphabet will be carried out by switching to the Latin script. The scientific development of both the new alphabet and its artistic decoration is already coming to an end. (Chochua 1987, 142)

If the article was written in 1926, which is likely, it means that at the time of its writing the alphabet had yet to be introduced. See also the following clause by A. Khashba (1936, 53): "When after the introduction of the Abkhaz analytical alphabet in 1927".

Indeed, as reported by D. Gulia in his note to the Council of People's Commissars of Abkhazia of January 1928, the script for the new Abkhaz primer was made in 1927 and in the same year it was printed (see Gulia 2003, 408), which should also be considered as the indication of the year of practical implementation of Marr's alphabet. On the other hand, D. Gulia himself, in a letter to N. Marr dated 27 October 1925, mentions the Abkhaz alphabet already printed in the new script. But, apparently, this alphabet was published in such a limited edition, that when Dmitry Gulia requested it from A.M. Chochua, the latter, as it turned out, had only one copy (see Gulia 2003, 448).

A.N. Genko in his apparently unpublished 1933 essay "The Abkhaz Language" for the planned *North Caucasian Encyclopedia*, informs us:

> Attempts to use after 1926 during the last three years (1926-29) the Abkhaz analytical alphabet by Acad. Marr, built on a Roman basis, did, however, encounter considerable practical difficulties in everyday use. Therefore, since the beginning of 1929, a new Latin alphabet has been introduced and is still being used in Abkhazia, developed on the basis of the so-called New Turkic alphabet.[11]

In the above-mentioned pamphlet, M. Delba writes:

> Abkhaz analytical alphabet by N.Y. Marr […] was only with great difficulty maintained merely for two years and then was replaced. (Delba 1951, 8)

If we consider that the new Latin alphabet was adopted in 1929, then minus two years, apparently, might mean 1927 as the year of the practical introduction of Marr's alphabet.

3 The 'Analytical' Alphabet and Attempts of Its Reform

The Abkhaz analytical alphabet of N.Y. Marr consisted of 67 main letters based on the Latin script, as well as 9 additional characters to convey specific phonemes of the archaic Bzyp dialect, a total of 76 graphic symbols. Of these, 6 characters were used to convey vowels (a, e, ı, o, u, ə), and the rest for the consonants.

A serious systemic drawback of Marr's alphabet was the use of different basic signs for simple phonemes and for their derivatives by timbre (non-palatalized – palatalized) or laryngeal features (non-

11 Manuscript in the Archive of the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts of the Russian Academy of Sciences (St. Petersburg), Fund 74, Archive of A.N. Genko.

aspirated – aspirated), which deprived close phonemes of a graphic connection between them.

Another significant practical drawback was the use of diacritics where appropriate letters could be found, or combinations of them. See Polivanov's remark on this subject:

> If the use of dots ˙ and ¸ in a number of dental consonants (for sounds such as c and č) can be justified theoretically, as a kind of analytical technique, then technically it is a murderous technique (comments, I think, are superfluous: why confuse such a thing in practical writing, when it is possible to find special letters for sounds of these types?). (Polivanov 1927; cf. Andronov, Simonato, Tomelleri 2017, 234)

In general, the Abkhaz analytical alphabet of academician N.Y. Marr, with all its 'scientific character', in practice turned out to be a perfect monster, the introduction of which, at the first experience of its use, showed its complete unsuitability for the purposes of school education, literary and office work. Immediately after its introduction into usage, it became clear that Marr's 'Abkhaz experiment' had failed. Teachers, as well as parts of the intelligentsia, including the influential Dimitri Gulia, started to complain about the extreme complexity and impracticality of the alphabet proposed by the academician.

As the Abkhaz pedagogue Kondraty Dzidzariya described this situation in his report at the Second Plenum of the All-Union Central Committee of the New Turkic Alphabet in 1928 in Tashkent:

> When the idea arose among the Abkhaz workers about the transition to the Latin alphabet, they naturally turned to Acad. N.Y. Marr with a request to compile an alphabet for practical work in school and for writing. In response to this, Academician Marr suggested […] to use in schools his scientific transcription almost unchanged. Academician Marr justified the practical convenience of his transcription by virtue of the fact that it was built on purely scientific grounds and therefore was the best for schooling purposes. The transcription of Academician Marr was discussed many times by Abkhaz workers and they asked him to simplify this transcription. Academician Marr commissioned artists to redraw the shapes of the letters without changing the very system, and in this form the alphabet was adopted in the autumn of 1925. Articles written in the new alphabet caused massive responses from the locals about its practical difficulty. Then, courses organized in August 1927 in the city of Sukhum for masses of teachers and village secretaries, organized to familiarize themselves with the new alphabet and to study it, clearly showed the negative attitude of the cadets to the new alphabet, due to its great difficulties, even in comparison with the old alphabet. (Yakovlev 1931, 48-9)

Such major Caucasus scholars as N.F. Yakovlev and A.N. Genko also took a negative position on Marr's analytical alphabet. As V. Bobrovnikov writes,

> His [Marr's] reform of the introduction of the 'analytical' alphabet in Abkhazia failed, which A.N. Genko opposed in 1928 together with the famous linguists Y.D. Polivanov and N.F. Yakovlev. (Bobrovnikov 2012)

In his polemical article "Analytical or New Alphabet?" N.F. Yakovlev wrote:

> Let us just say that the Abkhaz analytical alphabet, which was a major scientific achievement for its time, is now significantly outdated and requires revision along with the japhetidological transcription based on it. It seems to me that we were entitled to classify such an alphabet as a phonetic transcription 'with many sometimes very complex randomly selected signs' […]. Equally great are the shortcomings of the Abkhaz analytical alphabet from the practical point of view – pedagogical and productional. Due to the abundance of identical core letters, AAA [Abkhaz analytical alphabet] is extremely difficult to remember. (Yakovlev 1931, 50)

A sharply negative opinion on the alphabet came from a major orientalist Yevgeny Polivanov,[12] who was well acquainted with this problem. As he ironically noted in his 1927 report "The Abkhaz Analytical Alphabet", published only recently:[13]

12 Yevgeny Dmitrievich Polivanov (1881-1938) was a polyglot linguist, a specialist in Japanese and other oriental languages and in theoretical linguistics. Although we know little about his studies on Abkhaz, one of the obvious results of his interest was his article "Abkhaz Literature" in the *Literary Encyclopedia* (Polivanov 1930). Besides, he wrote an essay that has not come down to us, "Phonetic characteristics of the Abkhaz language" (cf. Andronov, Simonato, Tomelleri 2017, 201). More importantly, in the archival fund of academician N.Y. Marr in the St. Petersburg branch of the Archive of the Academy of Sciences of Russia, Polivanov's 1927 critical report "The Abkhaz Analytical Alphabet" has been preserved (Polivanov 1927). Apparently, it is this work that A. Chochua mentions in his letter to Marr cited above. The fate of Polivanov, whom some contemporaries considered a genius, is tragic. In 1938, he shared the sad fate of the first Abkhaz linguists and Marr's students A. Khashba and V. Kukba, as well as of many thousands of other innocent victims of Stalinist repressions.

13 Cf. Andronov, Simonato, Tomelleri 2017. The text of the report was sent by the author to the Commissariat for Public Education of the Abkhaz SSR in November 1927. Even before this date, the report was read by him in Moscow, and then repeated on 9 March 1928 at a meeting of the language and literature section within the framework of the collective topic "Problems of Applied Linguistics" of the Research Institute of Ethnic and National Cultures of Peoples of the Soviet East of the Russian Association of scientific-research institutes for humanitarian studies; see on this Andronov, Simonato, Tomelleri 2017, 197-8.

> One might think that N.Y. Marr deliberately set among his tasks not simplicity, but on the contrary – the complexity of the letters of his alphabet. (Polivanov 1927, f. 21)

Having subjected Marr's alphabet to a detailed critical analysis, Polivanov reproached its author in the uselessness of 'scientificity' for practical writing and in a conspicuous unwillingness to reckon with the interests of school and practice. He noted that the abundance of dots above and below the letters makes it extremely difficult for the writer and reader – it is necessary to continuously raise the pen from the page, and the system of dots and other signs

> is remembered with great difficulty and requires tremendous efforts on the part of both students and the teacher. (Polivanov 1927, f. 23)

Polivanov draws devastating conclusions:

> Thus, the AAA does not meet either the requirements that can be imposed on the theoretical system of phonetic transcription, or, especially, those that school and life impose on practical writing. What's the conclusion? And the conclusion is that the sooner this attempt with the AAA in Abkhazia is eliminated, the better it is for Abkhazia, which has become the object of this japhetidological experiment, and for other nationalities facing the reform of their writing: the elimination of the Abkhaz precedent will give them the opportunity to avoid dangerous recipes of the 'japhetidological transcription'. (cf. Andronov, Simonato, Tomelleri 2017, 236)

In his article on Marr as a scholar of Abkhaz, Arseny Khashba rather emotionally writes about Polivanov's participation in the criticism of Marr's alphabet:

> In Abkhazia during this period, from the Indo-Europeanists' side Prof. Polivanov acted on the sly, and in every way hindered the work promoting a new analytical alphabet. (Khashba 1936, 54)

In a letter to Marr dated 5 April 1928, Chochua informed him:

> The Abkhaz primer in the new alphabet was published […]. The new alphabet occasioned a lot of noise. Prof. Y.D. Polivanov and Prof. N.F. Yakovlev were against the new Abkhaz alphabet. Prof. Polivanov wrote a whole critical piece about the new Abkhaz alphabet, but did not give his own. Prof. Yakovlev too. In Turkestan, at the Turkological Congress, in January of this year, where Polivanov and Yakovlev were present, the representative of Abkha-

> zia – Kondraty Dzidzariya, at the insistence, apparently, of these professors, criticized the new alphabet. At the congress, the chairman of the CEC [Central Executive Committee] of Azerbaijan, Comrade Agamaly-oglu, also spoke with a sharp criticism of the Abkhaz alphabet. At the end of February, one of the capital's newspapers published his article under the headline "The Great Revolution in the East". This article devotes enough space to the criticism of the new Abkhaz alphabet. (Chochua 1976, 262, 125, 221-2)[14]

Debates about the newly adopted alphabet did not stop, as can be seen from the report of the Academy of the Abkhaz Language and Literature for 1925-28. In 1926, the Academy members listened to the reports by K. Dzidzariya and S. Bzhaniya on the degree of mastering by Abkhaz pupils of Marr's new alphabet. In 1927,

> in order to simplify the new Abkhaz alphabet, the considerations of several comrades were heard and worked out, including the lecture of Professor Yakovlev and the thoughts of some comrades on this issue, which required several meetings. (Gulia 2003, 393, 403)

Yakovlev also writes on this in the letter to R.O. Shor dated 14 September 1927:

> In Abkhazia I read a grammar course, and Abkhaz teachers gave me a written greeting in which, incidentally, they asked me to talk to Nick. Yakovl. [Marr] on the need to simplify his Abkhaz alphabet. What an assignment!?[15]

In 1928,

> together with Academician Marr, the issue of a possible simplification of the new Abkhaz analytical alphabet was discussed. N.Y. Marr's agreement in principle on the simplification of the new alphabet has been reached. (Gulia 2003, 394, 403-4)

14 Incidentally, the texts of this letter to Marr in the editions of 1976 and 1987 do not quite match.

15 Archive of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Fund 677, Registration 3, File 107, Sheet 114 (reverse), cited in Andronov, Simonato, Tomelleri 2017, 204.

4 The 'Unified' Abkhaz Alphabet

In order to simplify Marr's alphabet, the People's Commissariat of Abkhazia created a special commission, which found it expedient to slightly simplify the forms of some letters, and remove signs depicting specific Bzyp phonemes (Bgazhba 1967, 58). But this could not solve the problem. The dissatisfaction with the new alphabet being almost universal, the authorities started to seriously prepare for its radical reform. Here is how A. Khashba describes the situation:

> In Abkhazia, the 'opposition' against the analytical alphabet was increasingly advancing, and by the end of 1928 the question of replacing the Japhetidological script with a new script based on the 'Ian Alifa' was raised in practice.[16] Various 'projects' of alphabets began to pour in from different sides, and the so-called Indo-Europeanists in the person of Polivanov et al. or of the type of temporary fellow travellers of the Japhetic theory (Yakovlev N.F., Genko A.N., et al.) openly spoke out. (Khashba 1936, 55)

Both Yakovlev and Genko took part in the discussion of the reform of the Abkhaz script. From Genko's report on the summer expedition to the Caucasus, it is clear that upon his arrival in Sukhum in June 1928, he was involved in the work of the Commission for the Reform of the Abkhaz Alphabet, where he read at the suggestion of the Chairman of the CEC (Central Executive Commission) of the SSR of Abkhazia Samson Chanba two reports – "On the current Abkhaz alphabets" and "On the principles of linguistic analysis of the sound system of the language" (cf. Volkova, Sergeeva 1999, 123). Upon his return to Sukhum from the field-work expedition, he continued to participate in the work of the commission for the reform of the alphabet (cf. Report 1928).

In a letter to the orientalist F.A. Rosenberg dated 19 June 1928, A.N. Genko writes that, having arrived in Sukhum, he found himself

> in an extremely ambiguous position – it was the Abkhaz educators who attacked me in terms of reforming the Abkhaz script proposed by Nik.[olai] Yak.[ovlevich] Marr. Having no way, without prejudice to my intended enterprise, to completely evade this matter, I had to give them various advice that tended to change the system of

16 *Ian Alifa* (New alphabet, in Turkic), the 'unified' Latin alphabet adopted for the Turkic peoples. On the Second plenum of the All-Union Central Committee of the New Turkic Alphabet held in Tashkent in January 1928, the Abkhaz representative K. Dzidzariya expressed Abkhazia's desire to join the alphabetical reform along the lines of the new Turkic alphabet. Following this, the working out of the design of the Abkhaz alphabet was included in the working plan of the Central Committee and the Scientific Council attached to it.

> N.Y. [Marr]. I fear an explosion of rage towards me, but there is absolutely nothing that can be done.[17]

There is still uncertainty as to the authorship of the new Abkhaz 'unified' Latin alphabet, which replaced Marr's 'analytical alphabet'. As Khukhut Bgazhba (Bgazhba 1967, 58-9) writes, in 1928 the Narkompros of Abkhazia commissioned Professor N.F. Yakovlev to compile a new Latinized Abkhaz alphabet. In the summary table of Abkhaz alphabets in Bgazhba's book (65), the alphabet number 5 is called 'the Latinized alphabet of N.F. Yakovlev'. However, according to Arseny Khashba, a contemporary and participant in the events, the new alphabet was developed by Y.D. Polivanov. As he writes,

> The leadership of the People's Commissariat of Education of Abkhazia in the person of S.Y. Chanba surrendered their positions and embarked on the path of reforming the writing. A draft of a new script proposed by Polivanov was adopted, corrected by Chanba S. and Khashba M.[18] with the participation of N.F. Yakovlev. (Khashba 1936, 55)

It is interesting that Bgazhba (Bgazhba 1967, 59) himself mentions some Yakovlev's criticisms of the new alphabet; if it were indeed his creation, such criticism would look strange. On the other hand, there is no mention of Polivanov's name in the interesting memoirs of Mushni Khashba (Ahashba 1977, 306-75), a participant in those events, that tell about the main vicissitudes associated with the creation of a new Latinized alphabet and about the role of N.F. Yakovlev. This is apparently explained by the fact that in 1938 Polivanov was arrested and executed on trumped-up charges of espionage in favour of Japan and for some time there was a taboo on mentioning his name.[19]

It is thus Polivanov, not Yakovlev, who has been commissioned in 1928 by Abkhazia's authorities to compile a new alphabet (see below). According to Bekir Choban-Zade,[20]

> After the 2nd plenum, prof. Polivanov, member of Scientific Council of the All-Union Central Committee of the New Turkic Alpha-

17 Archive of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Manuscripts Fund, f. 850, op. 3, d. 34, l. 4, cited from Volkova, Sergeeva 1999, 107.

18 Mushni Lavrentievich Khashba (1903-1992), writer and newspaper editor.

19 In 1963, the Plenum of the Supreme Court of the USSR overturned the verdict and the case against Polivanov for lack of *corpus delicti*.

20 Bekir Vaap oğlu Çoban-zade (1893-1937), a Crimean Tatar poet and professor of Turkic languages at Baku State university. He was an active member of the Central Committee of the New Turkic Alphabet. Arrested and executed by Stalinist authorities in 1937.

> bet, made a report on this issue at the Research Institute of the Peoples of the East, after which the professor presented his views to the All-Union Central Committee of the New Turkic Alphabet. (Choban-Zade 1928, 30)

But the parallel work on the alphabet was being conducting in Sukhum as well. As Choban-Zade notes:

> At the same time, some Abkhaz comrades [Samson Chanba and Mushni Khashba] themselves took plied for compiling an alphabet for their language. As a result, an alphabet was developed that has a much smaller number of characters and a more simplified look. (Choban-Zade 1928, 30)

The active involvement of Samson Chanba, a prominent Abkhaz writer and statesman, in the compilation of the new Latin alphabet is evidenced by the note made by the hand of A. Genko on the typewritten text of V. Kukba's report "Prof. N. Yakovlev and N. [*sic*] Genko as researchers of the mountain languages of the Caucasus". Kukba writes:

> In the sphere of compiling an alphabet for the mountainous languages, Yakovlev is an ardent opponent of the use of the japhetidological transcription, reworked in relation to practical writing, and together with Polivanov he compromised the alphabet where it was used, replacing it with his alphabet.

Above the phrase "replacing it with his alphabet" there is a pencil corrective note with Genko's hand: "Chanba".[21]

Choban-Zade called Samson Chanba "the main initiator of the new unified Abkhaz alphabet", who

> coordinated this project with the North Caucasian peoples at the Congress, convened specifically for the purpose of unifying the national alphabets of the North Caucasian Territory.[22] At the end of October Comrades Chanba and Khashba came to Baku to carry out their project through the All-Union Central Committee of the New Turkic Alphabet. On a broad united meeting of Scientific Council and the relevant sections of the Society for the Study and Survey of Azerbaijan, after a detailed discussion of the reports of the above-mentioned comrades, the draft drawn up by them was approved in full. Thus, Abkhazia also received an alphabet that,

21 Archive of the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts of the Russian Academy of Sciences (St. Petersburg), Fund 74, A.N. Genko's Archive.

22 In 1928 a North Caucasian Regional Committee of the New Alphabet was created.

> while not inferior in phonetics to the analytical alphabet, is undoubtedly more convenient in social and pedagogical terms. (Choban-Zade 1928, 30)

The official involvement of Polivanov was met with some irritation by Nikolai Yakovlev, who was directly involved in the creation of alphabets for the peoples of the North Caucasus and who felt circumvented despite being a major specialist on the issue and on the North Caucasian languages. The point was raised at the Third Plenum of the All-Union Central Committee of the New Turkic Alphabet (1928). The Caucasian scholar and Iranologist L.I. Zhirkov, who spoke at the plenum, reproached the Scientific Council of the Committee on the grounds that the opinion of specialists on the Abkhaz alphabet was not requested, and that

> only Polivanov's experience was used, but in this area there are works of other specialists that cannot be bypassed, for example, those of Professor Yakovlev. (Стенографический отчет, 12)

Yakovlev himself in his speech also regretted that

> The request was sent to Prof. Polivanov, who is a specialist on the Far Eastern and Uzbek languages and for some reason he was made a specialist on Abkhaz, and for some reason they did not bother to find out who of the scientists of the RSFSR is now an expert on this issue. (Стенографический отчет, 126-7)

In his response to these reproaches, Polivanov stated:

> Here they said that I was instructed to make two projects of alphabets – the Dungan and the Abkhaz ones, but I declare that I personally did not undertake such a task, because sitting in Moscow and having contact with only two Abkhazians,[23] it is not possible to make a good alphabet, because it is necessary to take into account both the mood of the masses and all those controversial issues of the newly introduced outlines, which arise mainly in the local teachers' environment. All this can be solved only by knowing the mood of the local school staff, so I limited myself to very long notes, but with a modest purpose, with the task of figuring out the principles on the basis of which this alphabet can be created. To

23 In the 1927 report, Polivanov gives the surnames of his two informants – Kobakhiya (Кәабахьиа) and Bogapsh (*recte* Bagapsh, Багаԥшь); cf. Andronov, Simonato, Tomelleri 2017, 232; judging from their surnames, the first of these was the speaker of the Bzyp dialect of Abkhaz, and the other – of the Abzhywa dialect.

> draw up a draft alphabet from 'a' to 'z', to send it to the field with the recommendation of the Scientific Council so that the next day life would overturn this project that was drawn up far from the masses – I never dared to do this. (Стенографический отчет, 133)

His own version of the story of the creation of a new Abkhaz alphabet was recounted by Bekir Choban-Zade:

> The next issue that we dealt with was the working out of the Abkhaz alphabet. The Abkhaz alphabet is more complex in its sounds than the languages of Dagestan, which I have just mentioned. In Abkhazia, as the Plenum knows, there was an analytical alphabet of Acad. N.Y. Marr. This alphabet has about 70 sounds and even more, but it was declared unsuitable for practical – school and state – purposes. We developed a practical school alphabet and it meets all the requirements. Prof. Polivanov also came to the conclusion that this alphabet can be adopted, although Prof. Polivanov planned the creation of another project of an Abkhaz alphabet. We forwarded this draft to the Abkhazian Committee for consideration. The final elaboration of the Abkhaz alphabet was carried out by local workers, especially comrades Chanba and Khashba. They, with the help of cultural activists, with the help of scientists, have compiled a project that from the graphic side meets all the requirements and is the simplest of the projects that have been available so far. This project was thus approved by us. (Стенографический отчет, 110)

Given all this, it can be summarized that after reading Polivanov's detailed report of 1927 with criticism of Marr's alphabet, the Abkhaz leadership and the Commission for the Reform of the Abkhaz Alphabet, having become assured of his competences as a specialist, officially asked the Scientific Council of the All-Union Central Committee of the New Turkic Alphabet to commission Yevgeny Polivanov in the creation of a new version of the Abkhaz Latin alphabet. As Polivanov said (see above), in response he sent detailed recommendations to Sukhum on an updated script, although quoted above Arseny Khashba speaks rather of a draft of the alphabet sent by Polivanov. Be that as it may, Samson Chanba and Mushni Khashba, relying on recommendations, proposals or even the draft made by Polivanov, and/or on the project created by the Central Committee of the New Turkic Alphabet, made the final design of a new Abkhaz alphabet, while taking into account the advice of both A.N. Genko (see above) and the recognized authority in creating alphabets for the languages of the North Caucasus, N.F. Yakovlev, whose participation in this process, however, to the obvious displeasure of Yakovlev himself, was only informal.

In the report to the 3rd Plenum of the All-Union Central Committee of the New Turkic Alphabet D. Kamchin-Bek, in connection with the situation around the alphabet adopted in Abkhazia, wrote:

> In 1925, the Latinized analytical alphabet proposed by Acad. N.Y. Marr, with 62 signs, was adopted. The bulkiness of this analytical alphabet in terms of the number of characters and the difficulty of depicting signs forced the Republic of Abkhazia to treat its use with great caution. The alphabet proposed by Acad. Marr was tested for three years, and as a result it had to be abandoned, because not only pupils, but, perhaps, the teachers themselves could not master and retain in memory 62 signs, which were, moreover, difficult to depict. Therefore, the Republic of Abkhazia again faced the question of adopting a simpler and easier to master alphabet for its language, and this alphabet turned out to be a new alphabet generally accepted by the Turkic-Tatar peoples. Now a new Abkhaz alphabet built on the basis of a general unified one with the addition of a number of approximate signs has been finally resolved and adopted to denote certain peculiar sounds of the Abkhaz language. This alphabet will be the guiding star for the familiarization of also the Abkhaz people with proletarian culture. It remains to wish success to the Abkhaz people, who have long been looking for ways to resolve the alphabet-issue. (Kamchin-Bek 1928, 63)

The new Latinized alphabet was introduced into school practice in 1929 and functioned until 1938. However, there was no consensus among the Abkhaz intellectuals about this alphabet. Its adoption seems to have earned a positive response from Dmitry Gulia, although he proposed some measures to improve it.[24] And yet, judging by Georgy Gulia's book, the idea of an updated alphabet on a Latin graphic basis was not accepted by his father. Here is what Georgy Gulia writes on this occasion:

> The alphabet [of Marr] was no longer there, but there was a colossal and moral damage. A series of reckless experiments began: instead of immediately returning to the old alphabet, tested by time, they have started with an alphabet on a Latin basis. Why on a Latin basis? – [Dmitry] Gulia was asking. It was explained to him that this one was not like Marr's. That was really bad. And this one, on a Latin basis, is good. […] And again, a familiar argument was given: many republics switched to the Latin alphabet. Will the Abkhazians fall behind the others? (Gulia 1965, 173)

24 See newspaper notes by Gulia 1929a and 1929b, as well as Gulia's letter to A.M. Chochua, 19 September 1928 (published in Gulia 2003, 386-7).

The linguist Arseny Khashba was no less critical. He wrote:

> The new 'script', compiled on the basis of the Latinized alphabet used for the Turkic-Tatar languages, was adopted without taking into account the system and specifics of the sounds of the Abkhaz-Adyghe group of languages, in particular, of Abkhaz. This alphabet, as is now recognized, lacks a consistency in its system and some now even raise the question whether it is not better to switch back to the old Russian alphabet? (Khashba 1936, 55)

5 Features of the New Latin Alphabet

The new Abkhaz alphabet contained 63 letters (as opposed to Marr's 67). Of these, 11 were letter combinations, namely, a combination of the base sign and an auxiliary sign indicating the labialized (letter + sign u) or palatalized (letter + ı) nature of the consonant. The rest were separate signs. This is the difference between the new alphabet and Marr's graphic system, where there were no letter combinations at all. Noticeably more moderate than Marr's graphic system was the use of diacritics: 16 letters having different diacritics, versus 45 letters with diacritics in Marr's alphabet.

The accusations by Arseny Khashba of a lack of consistency in the rendition of Abkhaz phonemes in the new Latin-based alphabet were fair. Indeed, the new alphabet was devoid of consistency in its use of the means for denoting labialization, palatalization, aspiration and glottalization, which were displayed in a variety of ways. Although, in general, this alphabet made a better impression thanks to its simplicity than Marr's, yet it contained idiosyncratic signs, the memorization of which was also a difficult task in the schooling process.

In 1933, in order to simplify the alphabet, capital letters were removed (Bgazhba 1967, 59). Beside the aim at simplification, one might see a possible influence of the Georgian script, in which capital letters are absent. There were no capital letters in the Latinized alphabet of the Adyghe language either (used in 1927-38).

6 The End of the Policy of 'Latinization'

By the mid-1930s, the Soviet government had finished experimenting with Romanization of alphabets, apparently abandoning the illusion of an imminent world proletarian revolution, the victory of which would justify the introduction of a single 'world' alphabet. Another important reason for the abolition of the Latin alphabet was that the introduction of the latter successfully fulfilled the task of changing the alphabets of those Muslim peoples who were originally orientat-

ed towards the Arabic script. The task of excommunicating the Muslim masses of the atheist Soviet state from Islam and from their traditional orientation to the Arab and Middle Eastern cultural world was realized rather successfully. Speaking on the situation in Dagestan, A.N. Genko wrote in 1933,

> The victory over Arabism was achieved before our eyes by the revolution: the last and decisive blow was dealt to Arabism by the transfer of the Dagestani alphabets to the Latin basis in 1927-28.[25]

Interestingly, the temporal and tactical nature of the Romanization of the writing systems of the Muslim peoples of the USSR was predicted by the outstanding Russian philologist Nikolai Trubetskoy, who in one of the articles in the collection of his works published in Paris in 1927, wrote:

> It is very likely that the transition from the Arabic alphabet to Latin, caused by psychological reasons of a purely temporary nature, will be inconclusive and will serve only as a springboard for the final transition of the Muslims of Eurasia to the national alphabets built on the basis of the civic Cyrillic alphabet. (Trubetskoy 1995, 206)

The founder and ideologist of Eurasianism, Nikolai Trubetskoy was strongly negative towards the Latin alphabet, considering it a symbol of the

> depersonalizing imperialism of the Romano-Germanic civilization and the militant common Romano-Germanic chauvinism, hypocritically hiding behind the guise of 'internationality' and 'universality'. (206)

Noting the merits of the Georgian alphabet, perfectly adapted to the Georgian language, Trubetskoy believed that it should become the basis for written systems in the Megrelian and Svan languages, related to Georgian. However, as he emphasized,

> but the Georgian alphabet is not applicable to the Abkhaz language, although the ancient cultural connection between Abkhazia and Georgia would suggest the adaptation of the Georgian alphabet to this language. (203)

25 Cf. A.N. Genko, "The Fate of the National Script in the Languages of the North. [ern] Caucasus" (manuscript in the Archive of the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts of the Russian Academy of Sciences (St. Petersburg), Fund. 74, A.N. Genko's Archive.

Having fulfilled their 'transitional' role, the Latin alphabets were no longer needed, and since the mid-1930s the USSR had started replacing Romanized scripts with Cyrillic-based ones. First in 1936 the Kabardian alphabet was changed, and then in 1938 the Abaza and Dagestanian alphabets were transferred to the Russian basis.

However, there were two notable exceptions: in 1938, the alphabets of the Abkhazians and South Ossetians were transferred not into Russian, but into a Georgian graphic basis. The replacement of the Abkhaz Latinized system by the Georgian one was one of the measures in preparation for the upcoming abolition of the Abkhaz language in schools. Indeed, in 1945, education in Abkhaz was abolished, and the only language of instruction for Abkhaz children became the Georgian language, which they in their masses did not understand. It was only after the death of Stalin that Abkhaz schools were reopened and in 1954 the Abkhazians returned to their erstwhile Cyrillic alphabet.

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Armenia, Caucaso e Asia Centrale
Ricerche 2022
a cura di Daniele Artoni, Carlo Frappi, Paolo Sorbello

Considerazioni sulla diversità etnica nella Scizia erodotea e nella regione a nord del Caucaso

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Abstract Herodotus was the first to try to present in an organic way the ethnic situation in the region north of the Black Sea and to define what is Scythian and what is not. The picture that emerges from his story remains very complex, as evidently the real ethnic situation was. From the second half of the nineteenth century, it has been discussed for a long time whether the peoples that Herodotus presents as Scythians, despite the attempt at systematization, do not actually represent an inhomogeneous group and whether this definition is therefore too general or at least as broad as that of the ancient Persian Sakā.

Keywords Scythians. Greeks. Herodotean Scythia. Caucasus. Pontus.

La situazione etnica nei territori a nord del mar Nero ai tempi della spedizione militare di Dario era profondamente diversa da quanto possiamo osservare oggi. La maggior parte dei popoli che ora abitano le coste occidentali, meridionali e settentrionali del bacino del mar Nero non abitava lì. Sulle coste orientali si osserva senza dubbio una maggiore conservatività, sebbene anche in quell'area vi siano stati spostamenti di popoli da e verso l'interno. Le popolazioni che abitavano i territori a nord del mare erano per la maggior parte nomadi. Non costruivano città, non utilizzavano la scrittura. I Greci quando iniziarono a frequentare la regione e a costruire colonie sulle sue rive settentrionali chiamarono i popoli con cui vennero in contatto

Edizioni Ca'Foscari

Eurasiatica 19
e-ISSN 2610-9433 | ISSN 2610-8879
ISBN [ebook] 978-88-6969-667-1

Peer review | Open access
Submitted 2022-04-19 | Accepted 2022-07-19 | Published 2023-04-26
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DOI 10.30687/978-88-6969-667-1/002

'Sciti' (Σκύθαι). Questo termine svolge una funzione del tutto analoga a quello utilizzato dagli Achemenidi per indicare le popolazioni nomadiche a nord dei loro territori, *Sakā*. Il termine antico persiano indicava sia le popolazioni nomadiche dell'Asia Centrale, sia quelle a nord del mar Nero.

Il mondo greco mutò più volte opinione riguardo agli Sciti, non solo nella definizione di cosa fosse scitico e cosa non lo fosse. Inizialmente i Greci pensavano che gli Sciti fossero un popolo mite, allevatori nomadi che vivevano a contatto con la natura, dotati di una società giusta. Abitavano territori sconfinati sui quali periodicamente si spostavano in lande che di buona ragione potevano essere considerate desolate. Non a caso Eschilo scriveva: «Eccoci in Scizia, ai confini del mondo. Una terra desolata: in giro non c'è anima viva»,[1] e scriveva anche «gli Sciti che hanno un buon governo e mangiano formaggio di cavallo».[2] Quest'idea della popolazione pacifica che mangia formaggio e beve latte di cavalla, confermata anche da Esiodo, finiva per avvicinare gli Sciti agli Ippemolghi di Omero.[3] In realtà gli Sciti non erano affatto pacifici e bere latte di cavalla non li rendeva certo tali, così come non rese tali diciotto secoli più tardi i Mongoli di Genghis khan.[4]

I Greci appena iniziarono a conoscerli un po' meglio, furono costretti a modificare diametralmente la loro visione. Non era affatto vero che gli Sciti non avessero schiavi (Biondi 2020): gli schiavi erano presenti, una parte di loro veniva accecata ed adibita al lavoro, altri venivano periodicamente sacrificati al dio della guerra rappresentato da una spada conficcata su una catasta di legna, per la gioia degli studiosi del ciclo arturiano (Hdt. 4.62; Littleton, Malcor 2000).[5] Gli schiavi però non erano Sciti, ma prigionieri di altri popoli: per questo motivo l'idea di libertà associata al mondo scitico rimase abbastanza a lungo ed è ancora chiaramente distinguibile in Erodoto nelle parole che gli Sciti rivolgono agli Ioni che sono a difesa del ponte di barche sull'Istro: «Uomini della Ionia, siamo venuti a portarvi la

1 Aesch. *PV*: «Χθονὸς μὲν ἐς τηλουρὸν ἥκομεν πέδον, Σκύθην ἐς οἶμον, ἄβροτον εἰς ἐρημίαν»; Cf. anche Ar. *Ach.* 704: «… τῇ Σκυθῶν ἐρημίᾳ»; Hippoc. *Aer.* 18.5-7: «ἡ δὲ Σκυθέων ἐρημίη καλευμένη πεδιάς ἐστι καὶ λειμακώδης καὶ ψιλὴ καὶ ἔνυδρος μετρίως».

2 Aesch. Fr. 198: «ἀλλ' ἱππάκης βρωτῆρες εὔνομοι Σκύθαι».

3 Hes. fr. 150 (Merkelbach-West = 98 Most): «τε ἰδὲ Σκύ[θ]ας ὕππημο[λγούς]»; Hom. *Il.* 13.5: «καὶ ἀγαυῶν Ἱππημολγῶν γλακτοφάγων».

4 Cf. *Carmen miserabile super destructione regni Hungariae per tartaros facta*. MGH 1892, 547-67.

5 Anche presso gli Alani il dio della guerra era rappresentato da una spada. Si veda Amm. Marc. 31.3.23: «Nec templum apud eos visitur aut delubrum, ne tugurium quidem culmo tectum cerni usquam potest, sed gladius barbarico ritu humi figitur nudus, eumque ut Martem, regionum quas circumcolunt praesulem, verecundius colunt».

libertà, se almeno volete ascoltarci».[6] Una società senza profonde differenze fra gli uomini liberi che avevano costumi e modi di vita che si conservarono a lungo ed erano comuni anche ad altri gruppi: non a caso c'è chi ha visto nella società scitica, egualitaria, un modello per il mazdakismo che si diffonderà nell'Iran sasanide alla fine del V secolo (Crone 2012, 444). Questa visione del mondo scitico subì ancora una trasformazione che portò a considerare gli Sciti una popolazione invincibile: si sviluppò una tradizione inventata, ben studiata da Askol'd Ivančik (Ivančik 1999, 3-37), secondo la quale gli Sciti sarebbero stati sconfitti in tutto il corso della loro storia solamente dagli Egizi al tempo del faraone Sesostris. Per quanto possa sembrare strano questa idea dell'invincibilità scitica[7] si è conservata a lungo e forse ha contribuito a creare la base di movimenti politico-letterari come lo scitismo nella letteratura russa di fine Ottocento-inizi Novecento (Ognibene 2017, 11-29; 2014, 581-4). Si ritrova ancora negli scritti dello scrittore ceco Škvorecký che identifica l'Armata rossa che libera la Cecoslovacchia con gli Sciti ricordati da Blok.[8]

Ma la questione più importante non è tanto definire quale visione del mondo scitico pervenutaci attraverso la trasmissione greca sia più 'genuina', rifletta al meglio la società scitica, quanto capire chi si nasconda a tutti gli effetti dietro l'etichetta 'Sciti'. Erodoto è di fatto il primo scrittore greco che cerca di sistematizzare dal punto di vista etnico la situazione a nord del mar Nero: egli definisce nel quarto libro delle sue *Storie* 'cosa e chi' è scitico e chi non lo è. Si tratta di un enorme passo avanti, tuttavia resta il dubbio che la conoscenza della regione da parte dello storico greco ed anche le fonti di cui si è servito non siano state completamente accurate. Non si tratta qui di discutere se Erodoto sia veramente stato nel sud di quelle che oggi sono Ucraina e Russia oppure no, come fece Miščenko in un bel lavoro di fine Ottocento (Miščenko 1884, 349-55), ma di capire se le sue fonti siano state abbastanza precise da potere garantire una reale comprensione della differenza etnico-linguistica nella regione. Alcuni popoli sono definiti da Erodoto non scitici: si tratta principalmente di popolazioni che abitavano al di là del quadrilatero scitico che si definisce dal suo racconto. Fra queste vanno considerati, ad esempio, i Neuri ed altre, probabili antenati di popolazioni ugro-finniche. Un contatto fra Sciti e popolazioni ugro-finniche servirebbe senza dub-

6 Hdt. 4.133: «ἄνδρες Ἴωνες, ἐλευθερίην ἥκομεν ὑμῖν φέροντες, ἢν πέρ γε ἐθέλητε ἐσακούειν·».

7 Thuc. 2.97: «Ταύτῃ δὲ ἀδύνατα ἐξισοῦσθαι οὐχ ὅτι τὰ ἐν τῇ Εὐρώπῃ ἀλλ' οὐδ' ἐν τῇ Ἀσίᾳ ἔθνος ἓν πρὸς ἓν οὐκ ἔστιν ὅ τι δυνατὸν Σκύθαις ὁμογνωμονοῦσι πᾶσιν ἀντιστῆναι».

8 Škvorecký 1964, 336: «Tak tohle byla Rudá armáda, hnala se vpřed, zaprášená, divoká bez zastavení, zpocená, barbarská jako Skythové, a já si zase vzpomně na Bloka, kterého mi za války někdo půjčil, a nevěděl jsem, jestli tady opravdu něco nezačíná, nějaká revoluce, a jestli tohle má co dělat se mnou a s mým světem».

bio a spiegare con più facilità anche la presenza nel lessico osseto di termini ugro-finnici specifici legati ad esempio ai nomi di metallo, uccelli ed animali attraverso i quali Miller nella terza parte dei suoi *Studi osseti* cercava di dimostrare il percorso settentrionale seguito dagli Alani, 'antenati' degli Osseti, per raggiungere il Caucaso (Miller 1887, 11; Ognibene 2020, 196-215). Alcune popolazioni vengono poi definite da Erodoto di costume scitico, ma non scitiche. Questo punto è molto importante, perché originariamente 'Sciti' era probabilmente un termine collettivo utilizzato per indicare popoli diversi che condividevano però lo stesso modo di vita. Se esistevano popolazioni di costume scitico, ma non scitiche ciò significa che Erodoto distingueva ad un altro livello il concetto di 'scita' a differenza del primo approccio del mondo greco verso la regione. Appare però evidente che pur rimanendo nella 'sciticità ortodossa', ovvero all'interno di quei gruppi che vengono definiti da Erodoto scitici, esistono delle differenze significative che rendono difficile accomunarli sotto la stessa etichetta. Sono differenze che saltano letteralmente agli occhi e che sono servite nel corso dell'Ottocento ad attaccare l'unità etnica del mondo scitico e a separare una parte degli sciti dagli altri ipotizzando popolazioni differenti per etnia in base al differente modo di vita. Gli Sciti reali, nomadi per eccellenza sarebbero stati una popolazione mongolica, mentre gli Sciti agricoltori, aratori e tutti quelli che vivevano in prossimità delle città greche sarebbero stati iranici. La rilettura delle ragioni in base alle quali veniva sostenuta questa differenza oggi ci fa sorridere: gli Sciti nomadi sarebbero stati mongolici perché maggiormente feroci rispetto agli altri Sciti.[9] La prerogativa della ferocia come tratto distintivo delle popolazioni mongoliche era probabilmente un riflesso delle barbarie perpetrate dai Mongoli in Asia Centrale, ben attestate dalle fonti arabe e persiane, e anche in quelle della Rus' antica. È interessante però notare che proprio l'idea che gli Sciti fossero altaici, in opposizione all'ipotesi iranica, è dominante soprattutto rispetto alle tante altre ipotesi fatte sulla loro provenienza etnica fra le quali va ricordata anche quella

9 Già Miller (1887, 118-19) sottolinea che il criterio della rozzezza per determinare l'appartenenza etnica degli Sciti è assurdo: «Ѳ.Г. Мищенко, отдѣлия въ этническомъ отношеніи скифовъ номадовъ и царскихъ отъ скифовъ земледѣльцевъ и пахарей, считаетъ первыхъ урало-алтайской ордою, повторяя для подтвержденія своего мнѣнія всѣ тѣ доказательства, котопыя были приводимы Нибургомъ, Нейманомъ и другими учеными въ пользу монголизма скифовъ. Эти доказательства исчерпываются указаніем на грубость и жестокость скифовъ… Что касается до доказателствъ, основанныхъ на грубости скифскихъ нравовъ, то мы опять должны повторить, что было заявлемо и всѣми, доказывавшими иранство скифовъ, именно, что примѣры неменьшей жестокости и грубости нравовъ можно указать и у народовъ индоевропейскихъ». Il testo di Miller è tradotto in italiano in Ognibene 2019, 177-91. Il riferimento a Miščenko è al suo lavoro Къ вопросу о царскихъ скифахъ (Miščenko 1884, 55-76).

germanica, celtica, slava etc. (Vasmer 1971, 123-4). In un certo senso è alla base dell'idea di una Russia profondamente diversa dall'Europa perché dotata di radici asiatiche e dunque non solo territorialmente erede della cultura scitica, ma anche culturalmente e geneticamente altra rispetto agli europei: questa lettura del mondo scitico veniva utilizzata soprattutto dagli slavofili che ritenevano che il cammino che la Russia doveva percorrere non fosse nella scia dei paesi europei, ma dovesse essere una via propria profondamente diversa. Paradossalmente è facile notare che la storia si ripete e che ancora oggi si discute su temi simili, sebbene nessuno utilizzi più eredità etniche del mondo antico per giustificare la scelta o la necessità di 'vie diverse'. Dalla seconda metà dell'Ottocento quando prese forza la questione scitica studiosi di svariati paesi si confrontarono proponendo di identificare un'etnia e una lingua per gli Sciti, nel fare ciò tralasciarono la complessità etnico-linguistica della regione che invece emerge a forza anche dal racconto erodoteo. Sebbene Erodoto esordisca nel quarto libro con le leggende scitiche sull'origine di questo popolo e nella prima si dichiari che quando gli Sciti giunsero a nord del Ponto questa terra era deserta è difficile ammettere che le cose fossero proprio così.[10] Si trattava di una terra troppo ricca per essere completamente deserta, forse era solo, data la vastità, poco densamente popolata. Ma accanto a questa leggenda Erodoto ci propone anche la versione dell'arrivo degli Sciti da oriente e della fuga dei Cimmeri che abitavano la regione a nord del mar d'Azov verso sud lungo la costa del mar Nero orientale.[11] La prima cosa sulla quale sarebbe bene soffermarci riflettendo sulla situazione etnica di questa regione è che nel mondo nomadico non esisteva il concetto di pulizia etnica. Ogni popolo che si radicava nella regione non sostituiva quello precedente, ma si sovrapponeva: l'unica cosa che realmente cambiava era l'*élite* militare che governava. L'arrivo dei Sarmati non significò lo sterminio degli Sciti, quello degli Alani non rappresentò lo sterminio dei Sarmati. Era dominante invece la logica dell'inglobamento che è alla base della formazione dei grandi imperi nomadici, dagli Unni fino ai Mongoli e oltre. Questa complessità etnica traspare ancora dalle cronache russe che attestano la presenza di Alani in

10 Hdt. 4.5: «ἄνδρα γενέσθαι πρῶτον ἐν τῇ γῇ ταύτῃ ἐούσῃ ἐρήμῳ».

11 Secondo il racconto di Erodoto gli Sciti inseguendo i Cimmeri si scontrarono con i Medi sottomettendoli (Hdt. 4.1): «τῆς γὰρ ἄνω Ἀσίης ἦρξαν, ὡς καὶ πρότερόν μοι εἴρηται, Σκύθαι ἔτεα δυῶν δέοντα τριήκοντα. Κιμμερίους γὰρ ἐπιδιώκοντες ἐσέβαλον ἐς τὴν Ἀσίην, καταπαύοντες τῆς ἀρχῆς Μήδους· οὗτοι γὰρ πρὶν ἢ Σκύθας ἀπικέσθαι ἦρχον τῆς Ἀσίης»; Hdt. 4.12: «φαίνονται δὲ οἱ Κιμμέριοι φεύγοντες ἐς τὴν Ἀσίην τοὺς Σκύθας καὶ τὴν χερσόνησον κτίσαντες, ἐν τῇ νῦν Σινώπη πόλις Ἑλλὰς οἴκισται. φανεροὶ δὲ εἰσι καὶ οἱ Σκύθαι διώξαντες αὐτοὺς καὶ ἐσβαλόντες ἐς γῆν τὴν Μηδικήν, ἁμαρτόντες τῆς ὁδοῦ. οἱ μὲν γὰρ Κιμμέριοι αἰεὶ τὴν παρὰ θάλασσαν ἔφευγον, οἱ δὲ Σκύθαι ἐν δεξιῇ τὸν Καύκασον ἔχοντες, ἐς οὗ ἐσέβαλον ἐς γῆν τὴν Μηδικήν, ἐς μεσόγαιαν τῆς ὁδοῦ τραφθέντες».

un villaggio cumano nel XII secolo.[12] Queste considerazioni non sarebbero ancora sufficienti a dimostrare la complessità etnica della regione se non tenessimo conto anche di un altro fattore, quello linguistico che sebbene abbia rappresentato la sfida per definire l'identità scitica gioca un ruolo importante. Non si tratta di sottolineare come Erodoto stesso ci dica che per giungere al territorio degli uomini calvi partendo dalla Scizia siano necessari interpreti di sette lingue diverse,[13] ma da considerazioni che arrivano dall'onomastica scitica riportata dagli autori classici e soprattutto dalle iscrizioni delle città greche sul mar Nero (Latyšev 1885-1901; Zgusta 1955; Miller 1886, 232-83; Jurgevič 1872, 5-38). Se appare evidente che molti dei nomi scitici si interpretano abbastanza bene partendo dall'iranico resta il problema che altri sono privi di etimologia iranica. A questo si può obiettare che anche nell'antichità si potevano portare nomi stranieri, ma il problema resta nella quantità. Se circa il 25% dei nomi barbarici attestati nelle iscrizioni delle città greche non si interpreta partendo dall'iranico è difficile pensare che ciò sia dovuto esclusivamente alla presenza nei centri di scambi greci sulla costa di postazioni commerciali di altri paesi. Prima di tutto perché questi nomi restano al momento profondamente oscuri e non siamo in grado di attribuirli a popoli concreti. Forse è più probabile ipotizzare che gli Sciti abbiano conquistato territori che già ospitavano popolazioni probabilmente a loro volta nomadiche e che la distribuzione etnica fosse a macchia di leopardo sebbene il potere fosse nelle mani degli Sciti e poi successivamente dei Sarmati e degli Alani. Questa idea non semplifica le cose, anzi le rende indubbiamente più complesse, ma spiega meglio la presenza di nomi non scitici nella regione. I popoli non scitici ricordati da Erodoto potrebbero essere dunque alla base di questa varietà linguistica che troviamo riflessa nelle iscrizioni greche, ma questa varietà potrebbe essere stata anche 'interna', ovvero su quel territorio che viene chiamato Scizia erodotea potevano probabilmente vivere anche altre popolazioni soggette politicamente agli Sciti, ma non scitiche.

12 *Lavrent'evskaja letopis'*, 6624: «В лѣто 6624 Ярополкъ Владимировичъ… ходи на Половьчскую землю, к рѣчѣ зовомьй Донъ, и ту вся полонъ многъ, и 3 городы вся Половечскым Галинъ, Чешюевъ и Сугровъ, и приведе с собою Ясы, и жену полони ясыню»; Ipat'evskaja letopis', 6624: «Въ се же лѣто посла Володимеръ сына своего Ярополка, и Давыдъ сына своего Всеволода на Донъ, и всяша три грады Сугровъ, Шаруканъ, Балинъ. Тогда же Ярополкъ приведе собѣ жену, красну вельми, Ясьскаго князя дщерь, полонивъ».

13 Hdt. 4.24: «Σκυθέων δὲ οἳ ἂν ἔλθωσι ἐς αὐτούς, δι' ἑπτὰ ἑρμηνέων καὶ δι' ἑπτὰ γλωσσέων διαπρήσσονται».

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Armenia, Caucaso e Asia Centrale
Ricerche 2022
a cura di Daniele Artoni, Carlo Frappi, Paolo Sorbello

«Mixti cum Francis et Latinis»: Ulteriori tasselli nella definizione dei rapporti tra Armeni e Latini agli inizi del XIV secolo

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Abstract During the 14th century, in the aftermath of the end of the Mongol-Armenian alliance, the ties between Armenians and Latins tighten and strengthen. On one hand Cilician Armenians placed their last hope of defence in Latin aid, while on the other the Latin West, after the fall of Acre (1291) and the loss of the Crusader States of *Outremer*, saw the last Christian strongholds in the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia and in the Kingdom of Cyprus. In this context, the Armenian *Vision of St. Nersēs*, a widespread political apocalypse, was translated into Latin. This essay provides an analysis of the prefatory letter attached to the Latin *Vision of St. Nersēs* in the manuscript Linz, Oberösterreichische Landesbibliothek, MS 447, based on textual and codicological data. By considering the letter in a broader historical framework, it is possible to shed further light on Armeno-Latin relations in the early 14th century.

Keywords Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia. Kingdom of Cyprus. Vision of St. Nersēs. Armeno-Latin Relations in the 14th Century. Codicology. Linz, Oberösterreichische Landesbibliothek, MS 447.

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Edizioni Ca'Foscari

Eurasiatica 19
e-ISSN 2610-9433 | ISSN 2610-8879
ISBN [ebook] 978-88-6969-667-1

Peer review | Open access
Submitted 2022-04-18 | Accepted 2022-07-12 | Published 2023-04-26
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DOI 10.30687/978-88-6969-667-1/003

1 Introduzione

«Mixti cum Francis et Latinis»: vi sarà un tempo in cui gli Armeni, uniti ai Latini, riconquisteranno le terre perdute, restaureranno i propri domini, e instaureranno un tempo di pace e prosperità su tutta la terra. Questa attesa è espressa da diversi testi, non solo profetici e apocalittici, prodotti o rielaborati a partire dalla fine dell'XI secolo nell'Armenia di Cilicia.[1] Nella prima metà del XIV secolo, in un frangente in cui i legami tra Armeni e Latini si stringono e rafforzano, questa attesa, in realtà mai venuta del tutto meno durante il periodo ciliciano, sembra riemergere con forza. Tramontata ormai l'alleanza con l'Īlkhānato mongolo, gli Armeni di Cilicia, circondati su tutti i fronti, riponevano ormai nell'aiuto latino un'ultima speranza di difesa, e forse di contrattacco, mentre l'Occidente latino, in seguito alla caduta di San Giovanni d'Acri (1291) e alla perdita degli Stati crociati d'*Outremer*, vedeva nel regno armeno di Cilicia e nel regno di Cipro gli ultimi bastioni di difesa cristiani in Oriente.

In questo contesto fu tradotto in latino un importante testo profetico armeno: la *Visione di san Nersēs* (d'ora in poi *VN*), da cui è tratta la citazione d'apertura del presente contributo. Comprendere le motivazioni sottostanti alla produzione della versione latina può costituire un importante tassello nella definizione dei rapporti tra Armeni e Latini nella prima metà del XIV secolo. Pertanto, dopo una breve presentazione del testo, saranno presi in considerazione l'occasione e il quadro storico in cui la traduzione fu redatta, prendendo in particolar modo in esame alcuni passaggi della lettera prefatoria presente nel ms Linz, Oberösterreichische Landesbibliothek, 447, unico testimone finora noto che la riporti, di cui sarà proposta una breve analisi codicologica. Questi dati, considerati sullo sfondo di un contesto più ampio, rivelano significativi legami tra regno armeno di Cilicia, regno di Cipro, Ordine degli Ospitalieri e Papato.

2 La *Visione di San Nersēs*

La *VN* armena[2] consiste in un vaticinio, attribuito al patriarca Nersēs il Grande (in carica dal 353 circa al 373), originariamente incapsulato nella *Vita di san Nersēs*, ascritta a un altrimenti sconosciuto Mesrop di Vayots' Dzor, e datata al 967, i cui materiali testuali risalgono

1 A riguardo si veda Pogossian 2014b.

2 Il presente paragrafo riprende in parte quanto pubblicato in Bonifacio 2019. Per una ricognizione storiografica degli studi sulla *VN* latina e sulla *VN* armena cf. Bonifacio 2019, 400-4, e bibliografia lì presente. Per un inquadramento generale sulla *VN* cf. invece Pogossian, in corso di stampa.

tuttavia sino al V secolo: una prima sezione profetica, che precede la *Visione* vera e propria, predice infatti la caduta della casa Arsaciде (428) e l'estinzione della stirpe di Gregorio l'Illuminatore a guida della Chiesa Armena (438). Nella sua tradizione armena si tratta un testo fortemente stratificato, oggetto di continue rielaborazioni e riletture con il variare del contesto storico-politico: allo stato attuale sono state infatti individuate molteplici redazioni, caratterizzate da numerose divergenze, sulle quali sta attualmente lavorando Zaroui Pogossian[3] (in corso di stampa). Nel suo nucleo comune, esso profetizza l'avvento e le devastazioni di un 'popolo degli arcieri' (*azg agheghnaworats'*) o 'popolo di tiratori di frecce' (*azg netoghats'*) proveniente da Oriente, le sue incursioni nell'Armenia storica, la sua sconfitta ad opera dei 'Romani' (*ormank'*), e infine l'instaurazione di un periodo di pace e di ricostruzione. Uno degli elementi su cui si esercitarono le riletture della profezia fu proprio l'identificazione di questo 'popolo degli arcieri': la denominazione, usata originariamente per indicare le tribù guidate dalla dinastia Selgiuchide, venne ad indicare i Mongoli dalla metà del XIII secolo, a partire dall'interpretazione della *VN* fornita da Vardan Arewelts'i (Garsoïan 1994, 139; Pogossian 2014a). Occorre infine sottolineare che la Visione ebbe una vastissima diffusione, come attestato dalla tradizione manoscritta: come segnalato da Pogossian (2016, 153 nota 18), Tēr-Vardanean, curatore di una recente edizione critica della *Vita di san Nersēs*, ha identificato centoundici testimoni della *Vita*, copiati non solo negli *scriptoria* monastici dell'Armenia storica, ma anche nei centri della diaspora armena. Ad essi sono da aggiungersi i codici che tramandano la sola *VN*, dei quali manca ancora un elenco completo (Pogossian 2014b, 471-9; 2016, 153-9). Si tratta quindi di un testo che godette di ampia fortuna nel corso dei secoli.

Lo stesso non può dirsi della sua traduzione latina, una versione abbreviata e riadattata per un pubblico occidentale di una tarda redazione armena, recentemente identificata da Z. Pogossian (in corso di stampa), che nella sua struttura narrativa segue fedelmente il testo armeno. Allo stato attuale essa risulta infatti tràdita da soli quattro codici, che attestano quindi una scarsa diffusione dello scritto. Vi sono però indizi di una sua circolazione carsica, quantomeno interna all'Ordine dei Predicatori, per ora non testimoniata da evidenze manoscritte. Il testo fu infatti ripreso in riferimento alla caduta di Costantinopoli dai domenicani Leonardo di Chio, arcivescovo di Mitilene, e Annio di Viterbo, che propose una vera e propria rilettura del testo.[4]

3 Si ringrazia la professoressa Pogossian per aver fornito un'anteprima dello studio.

4 A riguardo cf. Pertusi 1976, 120-3; 1988, 16-18; Schnapp 2017, 92-129; Bonifacio 2019, 417-19.

In questa sede non è possibile dare conto nel dettaglio del contenuto della profezia. Si propone tuttavia di seguire da vicino il testo della lettera prefatoria che accompagna la *VN* nell'unico testimone in cui è conservata, il ms Linz, Oberösterreichische Landesbibliothek, 447, f. [97]*r*b: nonostante la sua brevità, essa offre infatti, come accennato, importanti indizi su contesto e occasione della traduzione latina della *VN*.

3 Il Codice Linz, Oberösterreichische Landesbibliothek, 447

Appare tuttavia opportuno fornire innanzitutto alcuni dati codicologici sul ms Linz, Oberösterreichische Landesbibliothek, 447. Esso è parte di una serie di quattro codici (Linz, Oberösterreichische Landesbibliothek, 446-449), i quali tramandano la *Catena aurea super quattuor evangelistas* di Tommaso d'Aquino, donati entro il 1331 dall'abate Ottone di Garsten alla biblioteca dell'abbazia insieme ad altri ventidue manoscritti.[5] In particolare, per i codici 447, 448, 449 è stato persuasivamente ipotizzato si tratti di manoscritti peciati prodotti a Parigi tra fine XIII e inizio XIV secolo (Murano 2003, 782-4; 2005, 103-4; Rischpler 2018). Diversi elementi portano S. Rischpler a ritenere di produzione parigina anche il ms 446, nonostante l'assenza delle notazioni delle pecie: segnatamente, la conformità dell'ornamentazione interna in stile *fleuronné* a quella degli altri codici; il contenuto stesso del manoscritto, che ai ff. 1*r*a-266*v*b tramanda la *Catena aurea in Mattheum* di Tommaso d'Aquino; infine, la presenza del codice nel novero dei manoscritti donati da Ottone di Garsten all'abbazia costituiscono solidi indizi in questo senso (Rischpler 2018). L'ornamentazione della legatura, dei piatti e del taglio dei quattro manoscritti, opera di una sola mano, risulta invece di area austriaca e riflette influenze dell'area culturale tra l'alto Reno e il lago di Costanza (Rischpler 2018). Il documento di approvazione della donazione permette di ipotizzare che tale ornamentazione sia stata prodotta presso l'abbazia di Garsten stessa: in esso si legge infatti che l'abate Ottone arricchì la biblioteca del monastero di ventisei volumi, tra i quali i quattro presi in considerazione in questa sede, «sollicitudine et industria fratris Iohannis dicti monasterii professi elaboratorum». Poiché, come si è visto, i mss 446-449 furono con ogni probabilità prodotti a Parigi, si possono formulare

5 Tale informazione si ricava dal documento Oberösterreichisches Landesarchiv Urkunden Garsten (1082-1778) 1331 X 01, datato 1 ottobre 1331, in cui il vescovo Alberto di Passau approva e conferma la donazione dei manoscritti all'abbazia di Garsten. La data del 1 ottobre 1331 viene pertanto a costituire un *terminus ante quem* per la produzione dei codici. Il documento è consultabile al seguente URL: `https://www.monasterium.net/mom/AT-OOeLA/GarstenOSB/1331_X_01/charter`.

due ipotesi riguardo questo «frater Iohannes»: da un lato è possibile si sia trattato della figura che si è occupata di procurare i volumi a Ottone; dall'altro è plausibile che egli possa essere stato l'autore delle decorazioni di legatura, piatti e taglio dei manoscritti. Dato il significato più frequente del participio perfetto del verbo «elaboro», vale a dire «studiose et cum labore aliquid conficere» (*Lexicon totius Latinitatis* 1965, 2: 244c), la seconda congettura sembra essere maggiormente verosimile.

Passando a trattare nello specifico del ms 447, esso contiene ai ff. 1*r*a-95*r*b la *Catena aurea in Marcum* di Tommaso d'Aquino, vergata da un'unica mano, seguita ai ff. 95*v*a-[97]*r*a dalla *Sibilla Erithea Babilonica*, secondo la recensione L1 individuata da Jostmann (2006, 431-93; 465-6), opera di una seconda mano del XIV secolo (Rischpler 2018). All'interno del testo della *Sibilla Erithea*, al f. 96*v*a è interpolata una sezione della *VN* latina, che prende avvio *ex abrupto* dalle parole «ab eis fortitudo hominis et equi»: una nota marginale segnala che l'interpolazione è stata causata da un errore del copista e che essa è posta «infra duas cruces» (Jostmann 2006, 465; Bonifacio 2019, 422). La caduta dell'originario f. 97, di cui non rimane che un tallone, comporta lo stato incompleto di entrambi i testi, che si concludono all'attuale f. [97]*r*a-b, costituito dal risguardo del piatto posteriore. In particolare, una prima mano, la medesima dei ff. 95*v*a-96*v*b, porta a termine la *Sibilla Erithea* nella prima colonna del foglio, mentre una seconda mano, anch'essa del XIV secolo, copia senza soluzione di continuità altre due sezioni della *VN*, che costituiscono un'integrazione al brano centrale incapsulato nella *Sibilla Erithea*, precedute dalla lettera prefatoria (Rischpler 2018; Bonifacio 2019, 422).

È inoltre interessante notare come quest'ultima mano sembri coincidere con quella che trascrive l'*Apocalisse dello Pseudo-Metodio*[6] e la *Responsio Petri archiepiscopi de Tartaris*[7] ai ff. 267*r*a-267*v*b del ms 446.[8] Questo elemento, insieme a una serie di altri dati codicologici

6 La redazione dell'*Apocalisse dello Pseudo-Metodio* tramandata dal codice di Linz corrisponde alla versione aggiornata del testo di autore anonimo, di poco successiva alla traduzione dal greco di Pietro Monaco, redatta entro il 710 e il 720. Tale versione aggiornata è stata edita da Prinz 1985, 6-17 sulla base di cinque manoscritti in precedenza individuati da D. Verhelst (cf. Verhelst 1973, 95-6; 233). L'edizione di Prinz non tiene tuttavia conto del codice di Linz. Sulle differenze tra queste due redazioni cf. Potestà 2014, 61-71.

7 Testo presumibilmente redatto in occasione del IV Concilio di Lione (1245), che riporta una relazione sul popolo mongolo dell'arcivescovo russo Pietro. La sua figura rimane tuttora sfuggente, così come il suo reale grado ecclesiastico. Nella redazione dello scritto tràdita dal codice Linz, Oberösterreichische Landesbibliothek, 446, f. 267*v*b egli è chiamato arcivescovo di «Belgrab», città interpretata come l'attuale Belgorod (Russia) da Ruotsala 2001, 154. Sulla figura di Pietro cf. Dörrie 1956, 182-7; Ruotsala 2001, 153-5 e bibliografia lì presente.

8 In questo senso Rischpler 2018 nella sezione dedicata alla descrizione del codice.

sinora emersi consente di avanzare in via ipotetica la proposta che la *VN* e la lettera prefatoria siano state copiate presso l'abbazia di Garsten, a seguito dell'acquisizione dei codici da parte dell'insediamento benedettino, insieme a un nucleo di altri testi riguardanti i Mongoli, o, come si vedrà a breve, ad essi riferibili. Certo, nulla vieta di pensare che tali scritti siano stati copiati precedentemente, o in occasione dell'allestimento dei codici, o nei passaggi che hanno portato i manoscritti da Parigi a Garsten.[9] Se però si tiene in considerazione che questi testi sono collocati a conclusione dei due codici, rispettivamente ai ff. 267*r*a-267*v*b del ms 446, e ai ff. 95*v*a-[97]*r*b del ms 447, fino a giungere al risguardo in quest'ultimo caso; che essi segnano un netto stacco contenutistico e di genere rispetto alle opere di Tommaso d'Aquino tràdite dal corpo centrale dei codici; che le mani che li trascrivono differiscono da quelle che rispettivamente vergano la *Catena aurea in Mattheum* nel ms 446 e la *Catena aurea in Marcum* nel ms 447; infine, che, come ricordato, il copista che trascrive i testi al f. [97]*r*b del ms 447 è con ogni probabilità lo stesso che copia l'*Apocalisse dello Pseudo-Metodio* e la *Responsio Petri archiepiscopi de Tartaris* nel ms 446, l'ipotesi che tali testi siano stati inseriti nei codici presso l'abbazia di Garsten pare essere la più prudente. In particolare, fattore di estremo interesse è la compresenza dell'*Apocalisse dello Pseudo-Metodio* e della *Responsio archiepiscopi de Tartaris* nel ms 446: a partire dagli anni Quaranta del XIII secolo, infatti, numerosi autori occidentali interpretano i Mongoli come uno dei popoli preconizzati dallo Pseudo-Metodio (Schmieder 1994, 258-85; Jackson 2014, 142-7); allo stesso tempo, alcuni passi della relazione sui Tartari di Pietro tràdita dal codice di Linz fanno indubbiamente riferimento all'*Apocalisse dello Pseudo-Metodio* (Ruotsala 2001, 154-5).[10]

In conclusione, è dunque ragionevole ritenere che un nucleo di testi messi in relazione con i Mongoli sia stato copiato da almeno due monaci presso l'abbazia di Garsten successivamente al 1331, data di acquisizione dei quattro codici gemelli da parte dell'insediamento monastico, che viene pertanto a costituire un *terminus post quem* per la trascrizione di tali testi.

9 Su tali passaggi si rinvia a Rischpler 2018.

10 A partire dagli anni Venti del XIII secolo, anche in ambito armeno i Mongoli furono oggetto di speculazioni apocalittiche. Tali speculazioni si riflettono nelle reinterpretazioni e rielaborazioni della VN, come del resto reso evidente dalla lettera prefatoria alla traduzione latina. A riguardo cf. Pogossian 2012.

4 La lettera prefatoria: testo, destinatario ed estensore

Prima di prenderne in esame il testo, si ripropone la trascrizione della lettera prefatoria alla versione latina della *VN*, come ricordato conservata dal solo codice Linz, Oberösterreichische Landesbibliothek, 447, f. [97]*r*b, e già anteriormente edita (Bonifacio 2019, 434). In questa sede sono presentate diverse variazioni e integrazioni rispetto alla precedente edizione. In particolare, è stata in primo luogo ripristinata la lezione «militem prouincialem», in luogo di «militem preceptorem»; in seconda battuta è stata reintegrata la datazione posta alla fine della lettera («datum die sancti Sebastiani»), non inserita nell'edizione di Bonifacio.

Essendo di fronte a un *codex unicus*, si è optato di restituire fedelmente il testo tràdito dal codice: gli interventi editoriali sono pertanto limitati allo scioglimento delle abbreviature secondo gli usi correnti nel tardo Medio Evo, all'integrazione dei segni di interpunzione, e alla resa con iniziale maiuscola dei nomi propri.

> Dilecto sibi fratri A., nuncio domini pape, et sociis eius frater P. Ordinis Predicatorum minimus salutem. Propheciam, que apud Armenos dicitur de Tartaris dicta, sicut mandastis mihi, uobis in latinum interpretatus sum, fideliter prout potui. Verumtamen, quia alicubi multiplicantur idem significancia, breuibus uerbis illa posui et predicacionem longam, quam auctor interserit hortando eos quibus loquebatur, intermisi. Quod tamdiu distuli, indulgete mihi, quia a secunda ebdomada aduentus infirmatus sum, nec adhuc plene conualui. Si in aliquo alio uobis possum seruire, iubete et libenter parebo. Orate pro nobis. Salutate mihi militem prouincialem.[11] Datum die sancti Sebastiani.

La lettera fu scritta da un *frater P.* dell'Ordine dei Predicatori a un suo confratello *frater A.*, *nuncius domini pape*. *Frater P.* afferma di aver tradotto, per quanto ha potuto, una profezia che presso gli Armeni è detta 'dei Tartari', inviatagli da *frater A.*, e di averla abbreviata tralasciando una *predicacionem longam* che l'autore del testo aveva inserito ad esortazione di coloro per i quali scriveva. Si scusa quindi di aver tardato tanto a dedicarsi al lavoro a causa di una malattia, dalla quale, al momento in cui scrive, non è ancora guarito. Afferma poi di rimanere al suo servizio; in conclusione, nelle formule di chiusura, chiede di salutare un *militem prouincialem*.

11 Cf. Rm 16,3-16.

Frater P. e *frater A.* sono due figure identificabili con buona approssimazione.[12] Il primo risponde al nome di Pietro d'Aragona, attivo tra il 1331 e il 1347 presso il monastero di Kṙna nell'odierno Nakhichevan, centro principale della congregazione dei *Fratres Unitores*, che in seguito sarebbe divenuta l'*Ordo Fratrum Unitorum Sancti Gregorii Illuminatoris*.[13] Pietro fu autore di opere per lo più a carattere compilativo, conservatesi in sola traduzione armena, atte alla familiarizzazione dei monaci di Kṙna con la cultura latina medievale e alla formazione dei novizi. Come dimostrato da Agnese Panicale (2019, 48-50), che si è recentemente occupata della figura di Pietro d'Aragona, per la traduzione dei suoi scritti egli si avvaleva dell'aiuto del *vardapet* Yakob K'ṙnec'i, soprannominato appunto *t'argman* (traduttore): sarebbe quindi verosimile supporre che il frate non conoscesse la lingua armena, o non ne avesse una conoscenza tale da poter redigere le sue opere direttamente in armeno. Risulta quindi alquanto plausibile quanto suggerito da Panicale riguardo una possibile collaborazione tra i due anche in senso contrario, quindi dall'armeno al latino.[14] Non è difficile pensare che Yakob, il quale doveva avere una buona familiarità con la *VN*, si fosse occupato degli aspetti linguistici più complessi relativi al testo originario, mentre Pietro d'Aragona ne avrebbe operato un riadattamento per renderlo maggiormente comprensibile e interessante a un pubblico occidentale. Alla luce della richiesta di traduzione del testo profetico rivolta dal *frater A.* a Pietro d'Aragona, sembra comunque verosimile ipotizzare una conoscenza almeno basilare dell'armeno da parte di quest'ultimo.

Per quanto riguarda il *frater A.*, egli può essere identificato nel Predicatore Arnaldo *de Fabricis*, designato nunzio della Sede Apostolica *in partibus transmarinis* insieme a Pietro *de Manso*, cantore della chiesa di Burgos, per un periodo che va dal luglio 1327 almeno fino al novembre 1332 (Richard 1962, 33-58). Durante la sua missione, Arnaldo risiedette presso il convento domenicano di Nicosia, dove poté conoscere un *Petrus de Aragonia*, la cui identità corrisponde con buona probabilità a quella di Pietro d'Aragona. Il contatto tra i due è testimoniato per il dicembre 1329 dal documento Archivio Apostolico Vaticano, *Instrumenta Miscellanea* 4588.[15] Appare tuttavia

12 Per una trattazione più approfondita sulle figure di *frater P.* e *frater A.* si rinvia a Bonifacio 2019, 412-17.

13 Sull'*Ordo Fratrum Unitorum* cf. van den Oudenrijn 1956; 1961; 1962; Lucca 2016, 135-42. Sulla figura di Pietro d'Aragona e la sua produzione scritta cf. Panicale 2019.

14 Si ringrazia la dottoressa Panicale per il suggerimento in questo senso.

15 Non è stato possibile consultare personalmente la fonte d'archivio. Si tratta di un documento notarile in cui sono registrati gli atti e le testimonianze relativi all'indagine, condotta da due giudici delegati dalla Sede Apostolica, nei confronti delle azioni del vicario generale della provincia domenicana di Terra Santa, parzialmente edito in Richard 1962, 51-8.

plausibile che i due, risiedendo nello stesso convento, si conoscessero da più tempo di quanto indichino le testimonianze documentarie, tenendo anche conto che erano entrambi presumibilmente originari della Corona d'Aragona.

Sulla base di questi dati, è stata ipotizzata come data di stesura della *VN* latina un periodo compreso tra la seconda metà del 1330 e gli inizi del 1331 (Bonifacio 2019, 413-14): da un lato, Pietro d'Aragona è attestato a Kṙna proprio a partire dal 1331 (van den Oudenrijn 1960, 24-7); dall'altro, a quell'altezza Arnaldo è senza dubbio un *nuntius* della Sede Apostolica, incarico che mantenne presumibilmente fino al 1333, anno della morte del suo collega Pietro *de Manso*, allora ancora in carica (Richard 1962, 33), e della sua elezione a vescovo di Segni.[16] Il fatto che la lettera sia stata consegnata il giorno di San Sebastiano, quindi il 20 gennaio, e che Pietro affermi di essersi ammalato durante la seconda settimana d'Avvento, porta a precisare ulteriormente il periodo di stesura tra il dicembre 1330 e il gennaio 1331.

Non è però da escludere che la traduzione possa essere stata prodotta in anni successivi: se tuttavia si accettano le proposte di identificazione di *frater A.* e *frater P.*, appare evidente come non si possa andare oltre il 1333. Collocando la lettera in un quadro storico più ampio, il terzo decennio del XIV secolo appare infatti essere il momento maggiormente favorevole per un'operazione di traduzione di questo genere.

5 Un contesto più ampio

Due elementi testuali forniscono in particolare un valido appiglio nel prendere in esame questo quadro di più ampio respiro: il primo è il fatto che a richiedere la traduzione sia un nunzio della Sede Apostolica, il secondo è il cenno al *militem prouincialem*.

Non deve infatti sorprendere che un inviato del papa si fosse interessato a un testo simile. La corte avignonese era infatti divenuta un centro privilegiato per gli scambi intellettuali armeno-latini nella prima metà del XIV secolo, periodo in cui erano ripresi i dibattiti sulla crociata (La Porta 2015; Bueno 2016; 2019). Come sottolineato da I. Bueno, il riemergere di questi dibattiti negli anni precedenti il Concilio di Vienne (1311-12) favorì presso la sede papale una maggiore attenzione verso «le notizie portate da viaggiatori […] provenien-

16 La notizia si apprende da una lettera di Giovanni XXII, datata 30 ottobre 1333, a Arnaldo *de Fabricis*, qui definito *professor et sacerdos*, e non più nunzio papale, in cui il pontefice lo nomina *episcopus Signin. eccl.* (Cf. Mollat 1933, 50, nr. 61982). Mollat, curatore della raccolta delle lettere di Giovanni XXII, interpreta l'abbreviazione *Signin.* come *Signini*, pertanto 'di Segni' (Mollat 1947, 1065); tuttavia, rimane incerto che la *Signin. eccl.* possa essere identificata con la diocesi di Segni.

ti dalle regioni asiatiche», sempre più interessate dall'attività missionaria, segnatamente «nelle regioni sottoposte alla dominazione mongola» (Bueno 2016, 158). La prospettiva di una crociata era stata in effetti rilanciata presso la corte di Clemente V pochi anni prima da Het'um di Korykos, nipote del re armeno Het'um I, cugino di re Lewon II, signore di Korykos e conestabile d'Armenia dal 1308-09. Nel suo *Flor des estoires de la terre d'Orient*, che godette immediatamente di immensa fortuna, anche grazie alla duplice redazione francese e latina, avanzava la possibilità di una crociata volta al recupero della Terra Santa. Il regno armeno di Cilicia vi avrebbe avuto un ruolo fondamentale come mediatore nel forgiare un'alleanza tra latini, cristiani d'Oriente e Īlkhānato mongolo. La proliferazione dei trattati *de recuperatione Terrae Sanctae* negli anni successivi mostra come l'orizzonte della crociata non fosse venuto meno durante il pontificato di Giovanni XXII.[17] Quest'ultimo si impegnò a promuovere la difesa del regno di Cilicia, e inviò aiuti finanziari in risposta all'attacco mamelucco del 1322, che aveva portato alla conquista e devastazione del porto di Laiazzo, restituito l'anno successivo a seguito della stipula di un accordo, per cui gli Armeni si impegnavano a pagare tributi al sultanato d'Egitto per quindici anni (Edbury 1991, 135).[18] Uno degli obiettivi della missione di Arnaldo *de Fabricis* e di Pietro *de Manso* era proprio quella di verificare come il fondo di soccorso, che era stato affidato a Géraud de Veyrines, loro predecessore fino all'elevazione a vescovo di Paphos, fosse stato effettivamente utilizzato (Richard 1962, 36-49). Non solo, il papa aveva conferito loro la gestione dei fondi non ancora spesi, con l'indicazione di «prudenter expendere» per la ricostruzione e la fortificazione di Laiazzo e la difesa del regno d'Armenia (Mollat 1924, 46, nrr. 43135, 43136). Occorre inoltre sottolineare che, secondo la testimonianza del documento vaticano citato precedentemente, Arnaldo avesse come ulteriore compito quello di mantenere i contatti con gli inviati di re Lewon IV, e che dovesse avere un rapporto di conoscenza personale con re Enrico II di Cipro, e con gli Ospitalieri di Nicosia, presso la cui casa aveva risieduto per qualche tempo (Richard 1962, 53-7).

Si giunge così al secondo elemento di interesse della lettera: il *militem prouincialem*. A riguardo occorre fare un breve excursus di carattere filologico. Nella precedente edizione della lettera prefatoria si è ritenuto opportuno correggere la lezione *militem prouincialem* in *militem preceptorem*, in quanto nelle fonti coeve non si dà attestazione del titolo di *militem prouincialem*, mentre presso l'Ordine del Tempio e l'Ordine dell'Ospedale il *preceptor* poteva indicare il capo

17 A riguardo si rinvia a Bueno 2016.

18 A riguardo cf. anche la lettera di papa Giovanni XXII a Géraud de Veyrines, vescovo di Paphos, datata 15 ottobre 1328, in Mollat 1924, 46, nr. 43135.

di una precettoria (Bonifacio 2019, 425-6).[19] Tuttavia, come evidenziato da Riley-Smith gli Ospitalieri «seem to have avoided a clear-cut hierarchy of official titles», tanto che ad esempio i comandanti delle case minori «were referred to most commonly as commanders or preceptors, but they were also called priors, masters and procurators» (Riley-Smith 1967, 341). Le fonti stesse risultano tutt'altro che precise sui titoli dei membri dell'Ordine. Dati questi elementi, e in assenza di valide ragioni paleografiche che possano dare ragione di un errore del copista, appare ragionevole ripristinare la lezione *militem prouincialem*. In ogni caso, è alquanto plausibile che la lettera faccia riferimento a un membro dell'Ospedale: non solo perché, come ricordato in precedenza, Arnaldo *de Fabricis* aveva risieduto presso la casa dell'Ordine in Nicosia, ma anche in quanto l'Ospedale costituiva l'Ordine Militare maggiormente diffuso in Cipro a seguito della caduta dell'Ordine del Tempio (Luttrell 1986; 1989). Tale figura rimane comunque sfuggente. Una prima ipotesi è che possa trattarsi del *preceptor* della precettoria di Cipro, che nel 1330 risulta essere Giraud de Pins (Luttrell 1986, 161), molto probabilmente conoscenza comune a Pietro d'Aragona e Arnaldo *de Fabricis*. Altra ipotesi possibile è che si tratti del «prior hospitalis Sancti Johannis Jerosolimitani in Nicosia», la cui identità non si è stati in grado di identificare all'altezza del 1330/1331.[20] Ad ogni modo, non stupisce il coinvolgimento di un membro dell'Ordine dell'Ospedale.

Occorre a questo punto ripercorrere brevemente i rapporti tra gli Ospitalieri e il regno armeno di Cilicia.[21] Nonostante due importanti spedizioni condotte agli inizi del secolo,[22] le relazioni tra l'Ordine e il regno armeno non furono sempre positive – ad esempio, re Ošin, predecessore di Lewon IV,[23] aveva confiscato le proprietà dell'Ordine e nel settembre 1320 Giovanni XXII aveva scritto a Lewon IV affinché esse fossero restituite all'Ospedale, con la garanzia che

19 Sulla struttura e l'organizzazione dell'Ordine dell'Ospedale rimane fondamentale Riley-Smith 1967, 229-371.

20 Luttrell 1986, 156 nota 9 fa riferimento alla testimonianza di un Ospitaliere al processo contro i Templari, datata 4 giugno 1310, chiamato «Frater Symon de Sarezariis prior hospitalis Sancti Johannis Jerosolimitani in Nicosia». Appare dunque plausibile che un priore della casa dell'Ospedale in Nicosia vi fosse anche nel 1330.

21 Per una panoramica generale si veda Luttrell 1978; Chevalier 2014.

22 Cf. Luttrell 1978, 123; Coureas 1995, 45-8.

23 Lewon IV è talvolta indicato nella storiografia come Lewon V. Come notato da Mutafian, vi sono due differenti concezioni nella codifica della numerazione dei re dell'Armenia di Cilicia: l'una, dallo studioso definita «étatique», non vede soluzione di continuità tra il principato rupenide e l'effettiva fondazione del regno; l'altra, definita «royale», separa il principato dal regno e comincia una nuova numerazione con l'incoronazione di Lewon I nel 1198 (Mutafian 2012, 427-8). In questa sede si è deciso di seguire quest'ultima opzione, in quanto, come dimostrato da Mutafian, maggiormente concorde con le fonti. A riguardo si veda Mutafian 2012, 420-31.

Maurice de Pagnac, precettore generale di Armenia, vi avrebbe risieduto e si sarebbe impegnato a difenderle (Luttrell 1978, 126-7).[24] La situazione non sembrava ancora essersi risolta all'altezza del 1328. Tuttavia, una precettoria armena esisteva ancora formalmente, anche in considerazione del fatto che nel marzo 1319 il pontefice aveva concesso a Maurice de Pagnac i beni che erano appartenuti ai Templari nel regno di Cilicia, seppure come grazia speciale.[25] Quest'ultimo, a seguito dell'attacco mamelucco prima ricordato, era intervenuto in soccorso degli Armeni con una piccola forza composta di cavalleria e fanteria, che aveva poi mantenuto sul territorio ciliciano a sue spese (Luttrell 1978, 126-7). Risulta inoltre che entro il 1332 Lewon IV aveva chiesto a Giovanni XXII di convincere gli Ospitalieri ad accettare in dono perpetuo due fortezze che gli Armeni non erano più in grado di difendere, in questo caso dagli attacchi turchi. Il papa scrisse loro il 22 agosto 1332 esortandoli ad accettare (Mollat 1959, 242, nr. 57909; Luttrell 1978, 128). Questi brevi cenni mostrano come nella prima metà del XIV secolo il papato continuasse a fare affidamento sugli Ospitalieri per la difesa del regno ciliciano d'Armenia, e allo stesso tempo l'Ordine avesse forti interessi nel mantenere i propri possedimenti e punti d'appoggio in Cilicia.

In sintesi, è possibile tentare questa ricostruzione: Arnaldo *de Fabricis*, nel corso della sua missione come nunzio a Cipro, venne a conoscenza della *VN*, probabilmente tramite le comunità armene che vivevano nell'isola,[26] o grazie agli inviati di re Lewon IV. Il testo dovette attirare la sua attenzione, e forse anche quella dell'Ordine dell'Ospedale. Lo inviò quindi a un suo confratello, Pietro d'Aragona, che sapeva tradurlo e adattarlo a un pubblico occidentale. Il fine doveva con ogni probabilità essere quello di propagandare e sostenere il rilancio di un progetto di crociata di più ampio respiro in aiuto del regno armeno di Cilicia, con l'obiettivo a lungo termine del recupero della Terra Santa: la Cilicia armena era infatti l'ultima base d'appoggio cristiana in Medio Oriente, e il porto di Laiazzo rivestiva un ruolo strategico ed economico fondamentale. Da parte armena, tramontata l'alleanza con l'Īlkhānato mongolo,[27] l'aiuto latino costituiva ormai un'ultima speranza di resistenza: gli Armeni avevano a quel punto interesse a delegittimare i Mongoli come possibile alleato militare, anche alla luce del permanere presso la corte avignonese dell'idea di una cooperazione con loro. Tentare di diffondere in Occidente un testo quale la *VN* avrebbe potuto giocare un ruolo determinante

24 Testo della lettera in Luttrell 1978, 135-7.

25 Testo della lettera di Giovanni XXII a Maurice de Pagnac, datata 1 marzo 1319 in Richard 1962, 115-17.

26 A riguardo cf. Coureas 2014 e bibliografia lì presente.

27 A riguardo si veda Dashdondog 2010, 193-218.

in questo senso. Occorre infine evidenziare come la prima metà del XIV secolo aveva visto un aumento dell'influenza latina, ulteriormente accentuata durante il regno di Lewon IV (Mutafian 1993, 81-5).

Il momento era del resto propizio per una simile operazione.[28] Come è stato notato, la prospettiva della crociata non era scomparsa dall'orizzonte del papato. Non solo, l'attacco a Laiazzo del 1322 aveva acceso l'entusiasmo crociato di Carlo IV di Francia, successore di Filippo V, che già aveva cercato finanziamenti per una nuova impresa crociata: Carlo IV aveva proposto una prima spedizione in aiuto del regno di Cilicia, come parte di un piano più ampio. Giovanni XXII autorizzò la predicazione della crociata, ma il progetto fallì a causa della mancanza di finanziamenti e delle crescenti tensioni tra Francia e Inghilterra.[29] Nel 1331 esso fu ripreso da Filippo VI, che ne fece la sua principale ambizione. Il re di Francia inviò anche aiuti finanziari all'Armenia (Mutafian 1993, 83). Inoltre, nel gennaio 1330 il primogenito di Ugo IV di Lusignano sposò Maria, figlia di Luigi di Clermont duca di Borbone, figura centrale nei piani di crociata francesi, che avrebbe dovuto guidare un *passagium particulare* in aiuto dell'Armenia di Cilicia: la prospettiva della crociata non doveva pertanto essere estranea nemmeno al re di Cipro.[30] Infine, come si è visto, l'Ordine dell'Ospedale era ancora coinvolto nella difesa delle roccaforti armene.

Questi dati, rapidamente passati in rassegna, fanno propendere per una datazione della traduzione entro la prima metà degli anni Trenta del XIV secolo. A partire dal 1335 la situazione era infatti drasticamente mutata. In quell'anno l'Armenia di Cilicia aveva subito una nuova invasione mamelucca, e nel 1337 Laiazzo era caduta definitivamente (Luttrell 1978, 128-9). Già agli inizi del 1336, gli attacchi mamelucchi e la situazione politica europea avevano spinto il papa, allora Benedetto XII, a ordinare la sospensione della predicazione della crociata a Cipro, e successivamente ad arrestare qualsiasi progetto di *passagium*. Il piano francese era del resto destinato a naufragare di lì a breve, a causa della situazione internazionale non favorevole: i fondi raccolti e la flotta radunata dal re di Francia furono reimpiegati contro l'Inghilterra nella prima fase della Guerra dei Cent'anni (Tyerman 1985, 44-52; 2017, 846-7). A loro volta gli Ospitalieri erano sempre più impegnati sul fronte Egeo contro i Turchi (Luttrell 1978, 128).

28 Per un quadro generale sulle prospettive di crociata nel tardo Medioevo si veda Tyerman 2017, 841-90.

29 A riguardo cf. Tyerman 1984; Shnorhokian 2015, 101 e bibliografia lì presente.

30 A riguardo cf. Tyerman 1985; Edbury 1991, 143-4.

6 Conclusioni

L'opera di propaganda per cui si è ipotizzato che la *VN* fu tradotta non sortì gli effetti sperati, come attestato anche dalla scarsa circolazione del testo, e l'attesa di un periodo di pace instaurato da Armeni e Latini non trovò quindi realizzazione: il regno Armeno di Cilicia era ormai giunto al suo crepuscolo, ed era destinato a capitolare definitivamente con la caduta di Sis nel 1375, di fronte a un Occidente latino sempre più sordo alle richieste di aiuto.

La traduzione di un testo significativo nella cultura armena si situa tuttavia in un momento in cui una cooperazione armeno-latina su ampia scala sembrava ancora realizzabile, venendo così a costituire un ulteriore tassello nella definizione dei rapporti tra Armeni e Latini.

Una disamina più approfondita delle fonti documentarie armene e latine, purtroppo in parte ancora inedite,[31] potrebbe gettare maggiore luce sulla fitta rete di contatti e legami tra questi due mondi, così come un'esplorazione dei manoscritti contenenti antologie profetiche potrebbe svelare altri testimoni della *VN* latina e fornire nuove notizie sulla diffusione del testo.

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31 Molto è stato edito in relazione a trattati commerciali tra regno armeno di Cilicia e potenze occidentali, segnatamente italiane, in particolar modo Venezia e Genova, e ad atti notarili redatti da notai genovesi e veneziani presso Laiazzo e Cipro, i quali consentono di rintracciare i rapporti commerciali armeno-latini nel corso dei secoli XIII-XV. A riguardo si veda Balletto 1999 e bibliografia lì presente.

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Armenia, Caucaso e Asia Centrale
Ricerche 2022
a cura di Daniele Artoni, Carlo Frappi, Paolo Sorbello

Syrdon e il *fændyr*: temi, varianti e variazioni

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Abstract In this paper I focus on the Nartic story concerning the invention of the *fændyr* by Syrdon. I present eight versions of the same story, pointing out their similarities and dissimilarities. The comparative analysis of different narrative sequences shows us that the *fændyr* story entails a compact narrative nucleus, comprising three core events, the death of Syrdon's sons, the performance of a domestic funeral offer by Syrdon and a final part in which Syrdon shared his invention with the Narts. This story came to frequently be built on another narrative nucleus, which concerned a cattle raid performed by Syrdon. Variants and variations on common themes connected to the *fændyr*-story thus reveal the fluid workings of the Nartic oral tradition.

Keywords Narts. Syrdon. Oral tradition. Fændyr. Cattle-raid.

Sommario 1 Introduzione. – 2 Studio di una tradizione orale e limiti dell'indagine. – 3 Una storia, tre varianti. – 4 Variazioni su temi. – 5 Punti di sutura narrativi.

Edizioni Ca'Foscari

Eurasiatica 19
e-ISSN 2610-9433 | ISSN 2610-8879
ISBN [ebook] 978-88-6969-667-1

Peer review | Open access
Submitted 2022-04-26 | Accepted 2022-06-29 | Published 2023-04-26
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DOI 10.30687/978-88-6969-667-1/004

1 Introduzione

L'epopea dei Narti[1] comprende racconti relativi all'invenzione del *fændyr* (iron фæндыр, uno strumento musicale ossetico impiegato anche nell'ambito di performance narrative), raggruppati sulla base di temi condivisi. Le storie collegano il *fændyr* a Syrdon/Sirdon (iron Сырдон, digor Сирдон), il *trickster* della tradizione osseta[2] e, in linea di massima, si articolano come segue.

Per qualche ragione Syrdon decide di rubare una grassa mucca appartenente a un altro Narte. La conduce in una casa sconosciuta al resto dei Narti[3] dove risiede la sua famiglia, la fa poi a pezzi e festeggia con i suoi. Il Narte derubato riesce a scovare la tana del ladro grazie alla cagna di Syrdon: fatta irruzione mentre il capofamiglia non c'è, uccide la famiglia di Syrdon e sostituisce le carni della vacca rubata, che cuocevano in un calderone, con quelle delle vittime umane. Quando Syrdon trova i pezzi dei suoi familiari li usa per costruire il *fændyr* che poi dona ai Narti, i quali accolgono Syrdon benevolmente come uno di loro.

Le differenze documentate in varie versioni del racconto riguardano dettagli narrativi minori, come il numero dei figli di Syrdon, o maggiori, per esempio l'inclusione di antefatti narrativi sul perché Syrdon rubi la vacca. Osservare come i particolari di questi racconti si distribuiscono e combinano all'interno delle storie del *fændyr* è l'obiettivo principale del presente lavoro.

Il presente articolo è collegato alle ricerche da me condotte nell'ambito del progetto *Hermes – God of Fire. Reconstructing the Indo-European Background of an Olympian God*, finanziato dalla Carlsberg Foundation. Ho presentato il materiale qui raccolto in un intervento tenuto in occasione del convegno ASIAC 2021 (Roma, 26 ottobre 2021). L'argomento del mio contributo nasce da spunti di approfondimento fornitimi a voce da Vittorio Springfield Tomelleri (nel 2020) che ringrazio per avermi incoraggiato nell'analisi delle diverse versioni relative alla storia del *fændyr*.

1 Per 'epopea dei Narti' si intende la collezione di racconti relativi ai Narti, eroi leggendari del Caucaso. Queste storie sono state tramandate in lingua osseta, cioè in dialetto iron (osseto dell'est) e digor (osseto dell'ovest), ma spesso anche in altre lingue caucasiche. Il presente studio si limita all'analisi di storie in lingua osseta.

2 Nell'ambito dello studio mitologico si definisce *trickster* ('briccone' per antonomasia) un personaggio che segue regole non convenzionali provocando cambiamenti spesso irreversibili dello *status quo*; si veda, come riferimento 'classico', Radin, Jung, Kéreniy 1956; per studi più recenti sull'argomento Miceli 2000, Hype 2010 oltre che Eleova, Sausverde 2015, la cui indagine tipologico-comparativa fa riferimento a Syrdon. Sulla figura di Syrdon fondamentale è lo studio di Dumézil 1948, che confronta Syrdon e Loki.

3 In alcune storie sembra che Syrdon abbia due case: una, isolata dal resto dei Narti, in cui vive solo, e un'altra segreta in cui risiede la sua famiglia (cioè i suoi figli o sua moglie e i suoi figli). Occasionalmente i racconti specificano che la casa segreta di Syrdon è situata sotto un ponte, cf., e.g., *NK* 54 Бакодта дуар, раласта хъуг æмæ йæ аласта хидыхъус зæххыбын хæдзармæ «Aprì la porta [*sc.* della stalla], portò via la vacca (*sc.* di Xæmyc) e la portò nella sua casa sotterranea, sotto un ponte» (ove non diversamente indicato, le traduzioni sono dell'Autrice).

Dopo alcune note di metodo (§ 2) riassumerò otto versioni della storia, soffermandomi sulle loro somiglianze e dissomiglianze. Mi concentrerò inizialmente su tre storie in cui Syrdon inventa o possiede il *fændyr* (§ 3). Sposterò poi l'attenzione su episodi che, pur non includendo l'invenzione del *fændyr*, sono interpretabili come variazioni connesse all'episodio riguardante la morte della famiglia di Syrdon che, come si è detto, è a sua volta legato alla storia del *fændyr* (§ 4). Comparando questi racconti, proverò a individuare i 'punti di sutura' fra le diverse sequenze narrative attestate nelle otto versioni, al fine di spiegare possibili rapporti esistenti fra differenti varianti e variazioni su temi simili (§ 5): la mia analisi rivelerà che la storia del *fændyr* funge da finale 'positivo' unibile all'episodio di furto di bestiame, che si concludeva in maniera tragica.

2 Studio di una tradizione orale e limiti dell'indagine

Due *caveat* devono precedere l'analisi portata avanti nei paragrafi a seguire:

1. le saghe dei Narti che leggiamo sono trascrizioni di narrazioni fatte a voce da singoli cantori, cioè creazioni di carattere estemporaneo derivanti da una tradizione orale.[4] Non ci si aspetterà allora semplicemente che versioni della stessa storia, raccontata da persone diverse in luoghi e tempi diversi, differiscano tra loro. Si dovrà anche realisticamente immaginare che uno stesso narratore non raccontasse mai la stessa identica storia due volte. Piuttosto, la versione scritta di un racconto orale assomiglia a un'istantanea: essa cattura una singola performance eseguita in una certa occasione da un narratore che ha appreso la storia da qualcuno che gliel'ha raccontata in precedenza una o più volte. La storia in questione non viene perciò inventata dal narratore, ma pur sempre raccontata con voce e parole sue, molto probabilmente modificando qualcosa rispetto a ciò che egli ha appreso, anche solo a livello formale, cioè cambiando poche parole. Non solo: nel raccontare una storia in una data occasione, il nostro narratore potrebbe (in)volontariamente modificare qualcosa rispetto a un'altra volta in cui ha già esposto lo stesso contenuto. Verosimilmente, egli cambierà ancora qualcosa se e quando racconterà quella storia in futuro per lo stesso pubblico o uno diverso. È giusto perciò pensare che i narratori delle saghe dei Narti dispongano di abbondante materiale narrati-

4 Sull'approccio alle tradizioni orali si vedano i fondamentali studi di Lord 2000 (specialmente, 13-29) e Foley 1988.

vo non originale, con il quale interagiscono in maniera piuttosto creativa e decisamente fluida. Ogni performance è infatti interessata da una serie di variabili: occasionalità (luogo, pubblico e rapporto con esso), tempo a disposizione del narratore, creatività e persino forma fisica e/o mentale del performer.[5] La forma in cui le 'storie sul *fændyr*' sono a noi pervenute riflette tutto questo. Abbiamo a che fare con pezzi di un patchwork-narrativo: le raccolte in nostro possesso radunano spesso episodi combinabili tra loro in base a una logica interna alla narrazione stessa, che opera con nessi di causa-effetto: un evento A causa un evento B, il quale a sua volta causa un evento C etc.

2. Il presente studio non può e non vuole essere esaustivo: come già accennato, le raccolte dell'epopea dei Narti raggruppano *alcune* versioni della storia del *fændyr* raccontate da *alcuni* narratori in determinate occasioni. I testi qui presi in esame non sono quindi tutte le versioni esistenti di quella storia, dato il carattere limitato del mio accesso alle fonti: la presente analisi si basa solo su edizioni contenenti versioni della storia del *fændyr* o riassunti di essa che sono riuscita a reperire e consultare, impresa non sempre agevole. In questo senso, si auspica che il presente contributo possa costituire il punto di partenza per indagini future relative ad altre varianti e variazioni della medesima storia, quando queste ultime saranno disponibili.

5 A questo proposito si veda il resoconto di Lord (1936, 108-10) relativo alle circostanze in cui i cantori dell'epica slava meridionale portano avanti la narrazione e sono/possono essere interrotti.

3 Una storia, tre varianti

Alcune versioni della storia del *fændyr* possono essere considerate varianti dello stesso racconto che si articolano in: (A) un antefatto che specifica perché Syrdon decide di rubare la vacca; (B) un episodio centrale del furto della vacca e della sua complicata ricerca da parte del Narte derubato; (C) una coda che comprende l'episodio dello sterminio della famiglia di Syrdon, l'invenzione del *fændyr* e l'offerta funebre ai figli di Syrdon; e (D) un finale riguardante la condivisione del *fændyr* con i Narti.

3.1 Versione 1

Prosa in iron raccolta in *ONS* (204-10) (cf. anche Dumézil 1948, 149; Colarusso 2016, 215-19, nr. 42).

(A) I Narti costruiscono una casa comune per le loro assemblee e, per essere certi che la costruzione non abbia difetti, mandano a chiamare Syrdon.[6] Soslan si reca da lui una prima volta, Хæмус una seconda. In entrambi i casi, osservata la costruzione, Syrdon si mostra inizialmente reticente (хорз у, фæлæ ма… зæгъгæ, загъта Сырдон æмæ сыстад æмæ рацыди «[la casa] è ok, però… disse Syrdon, ma s'interruppe e se ne andò»), confondendo poi i Narti con risposte enigmatiche che, una volta interpretate, rivelano i difetti della casa: nella nuova dimora mancano il pæхыс, una catena posta al centro del focolare,[7] e una sposa seduta nell'angolo est della casa.[8] Quando Хæмус si reca da Syrdon per la terza volta, Syrdon si rifiuta di andare dai Narti (Хæрд æмæ ностыл куы фæбадут, уæд мæм-иу цæуылнæ фæдзурут? Æз нал ацæудзынæн « – Quando si radunano a mangiare e bere forse mi mandano mai a chiamare? Non ci vengo!»); Хæмус, che aveva promesso ai Narti di portar loro Syrdon a ogni costo, gli dà un buffetto e lo costringe ad andare. Syrdon se ne risente: riconosce che la casa è ora completa e se ne va via triste, ruminando su come farla pagare a Хæмус. Decide di rubare la sua grassa vacca.

6 L'episodio dell'antefatto sottolinea che Syrdon vive in un posto separato dal resto dei Narti. Il frequente impiego di verbi di movimento rende evidente che la sua casa si trova lontano da tutti. Questo dettaglio appare chiaro anche dal fatto che nessun Narte vuole andare a chiamare Syrdon per la terza volta (Фæстаг хатт ма фæцæуын хъæуы Сырдонмæ! Фæлæ йæм ничиуалгомау комы « – Bisogna andare ancora un'ultima volta da Syrdon! – [dissero i Narti.] Ma nessuno vuole andare da lui»).

7 Syrdon dice: Хæдзар хорз у, фæлæ дзы астæуæй ницы ис, æмæ гъе уымæн (« – La casa è ok, però non c'è niente al centro»).

8 Syrdon dice: Хæдзар хорз у, фæлæ Хурыскæсæны 'рдыгæй къуымы ницы ис (« – La casa è ok, però non c'è niente nell'angolo est»).

(B) Il furto della vacca di Xæmyc (cf. § 1) è arricchito da due episodi connessi con la ricerca della vacca: Xæmyc è convinto che Syrdon sia il ladro, ma non ne ha le prove. Consulta quindi una strega (къулбадæг ус) che non è in grado di svelare dove sia la casa segreta di Syrdon, ma gli consiglia di seguire la cagna di Syrdon. Xæmyc cattura quindi l'animale e, dopo aver legato una corda alla sua zampa, riesce a rintracciare la casa segreta del ladro.[9]

(C) Xæmyc uccide i tre figli di Syrdon (cf. § 1), il quale userà poi le loro ossa per costruire il *fændyr*[10] e fare un'offerta funebre domestica per loro. Le componenti dell'offerta funebre sono infatti collegate ai nomi dei figli di Syrdon: 'Focolare' (K'onagæ), 'Ginocchio' (Uæragæ) e 'Soffio' (Fuagæ).

(D) Syrdon si reca poi con il *fændyr* dai Narti e dona loro lo strumento musicale (Нарт, ай уын мæ лæвар, «Narti, questo è il mio dono per voi»). Entusiasta di questo tesoro, Uyryzmæg accoglie Syrdon fra i Narti (нæ хæдзæрттæм дын фæндаг уæд æфсымæрау, «sei accolto nelle nostre case come un fratello»).

Particolari:

- nell'antefatto (identico a quello di vers. 7) e nel finale del racconto (cf. vers. 2-3) Syrdon è associato all'elemento del fuoco: la casa costruita dai Narti manca della catena del focolare, mentre i figli di Syrdon hanno nomi associati al focolare;
- Xæmyc è vittima del furto (cf. vers. 3, 5-8, diversamente da vers. 2 e 4).
- La ricerca di Xæmyc si articola in due momenti: la consultazione della strega (come in vers. 5-8, diversamente da vers. 2-4) e l'escamotage della cagna, presente in tutte le varianti. Si noti tuttavia che qui, come in tutte le versioni che includono l'episodio della strega, il consulto non è risolutivo: la strega non è infatti in grado di rivelare a Xæmyc dove si trovi il nascondiglio di Syrdon, ma lo aiuta. Il motivo della ricerca della casa segreta di Syrdon è inoltre associato a una cagna altrove. In un episodio che fa parte di *IGE* 57, Syrdon ruba la cagna di Soslan mentre Soslan è al *balc*.[11] Così la cagna prende l'abitudine di

9 Come già notato da Abaev (*IGE* III *ad* 61), questo *escamotage* riflette il motivo del 'filo d'Arianna', mentre la casa di Syrdon ricorda il labirinto del Minotauro.

10 йæ хистæр фырты цонджы æстджытæй фæндыр сарæзта, иннæ лæппуты зæрдæйы тæгтæй фæндырæн скодта дыуудæс тæны … («costruì il *fændyr* dall'osso del polso del primogenito, fece poi le dodici corde dalle fibre del cuore del secondogenito…»).

11 Il *balc* si può descrivere come una spedizione esplorativa e di caccia/razzia, spesso di più giorni, a cui partecipano Narti esperti accompagnati da giovani scudieri.

vagare per le vie dei Narti e tornare di sera a casa di Syrdon. Proprio come Хæмус in questa storia, Soslan e i Narti capiscono che Syrdon ha rubato la cagna, ma non riescono a trovare la sua casa segreta (Бафиппайтой, уый Сырдон адавта, уый, фæлæ нæ зыдтой, кæм цард, уый, «[*sc.* i Narti] avevano capito che era stato Syrdon a rubarla [*sc.* la cagna di Soslan], ma non sapevano dove egli vivesse»).

- Non si fa menzione della moglie di Syrdon (cf. vers. 3-5, 8, diversamente da vers. 2, 6-7). I figli di Syrdon sono tre e si chiamano K'onagæ, Uæragæ e Fuagæ (cf. vers. 3, diversamente da vers. 5, 7-8).[12]
- La storia ha un lieto fine: Syrdon 'compra' il proprio ingresso nella comunità dei Narti offrendo loro la sua invenzione musicale. Da questo punto di vista il finale della storia è comparabile ad altre storie in cui un outsider, che è anche un ladro di bestiame, fa ammenda per il suo furto attraverso un dono musicale.[13]

3.2 Versione 2

Poema in iron conservato in *NK* VI 52.

(A) I Narti soffrono per una terribile carestia: la terra non dà frutto, non c'è più bestiame eccezion fatta per la mucca di Uyryzmæg (иунæг сау ыстур, Уырызмæджы хъуг, «rimaneva solo la vacca di Uyryzmæg»), situata in un pascolo solitario e sorvegliata da Sozyryqo con un complicato sistema di allarme.[14]

(B) Alcuni giovani Narti decidono di rubare la vacca, ma Syrdon li precede. Di notte mette fuori gioco il sistema di allarme di Sozyryqo, poi sostituisce la vacca con una mula, che viene a sua volta rubata dai giovani ladri. Sozyryqo si lamenta della perdita all'assemblea dei Narti e Syrdon lo provoca davanti a tutti, esponendosi così al suo sospetto. Incapace di trovare il nascondiglio di Syrdon, Sozyryqo decide di seguire la sua cagna.

12 I tre nomi si basano su къона 'focolare, camino', уæрæг 'ginocchio' e фу, onomatopea per 'soffio'. Gli stessi nomi sono attribuiti ai figli di Syrdon in *IGE* 57, che contiene spiegazioni paretimologiche per essi.

13 Come ho esposto in una mia presentazione (Massetti [non pubblicato]), questa è anche la trama dell'*Inno Omerico a Hermes*: Hermes 'compra' il proprio ingresso nell'Olimpo regalando ad Apollo la χέλυς (lira) che ha inventato prima di rubare le vacche del dio. Il poema greco presenta una serie di somiglianze con la storia del *fændyr* (vers. 1-3), sulle quali prometto di ritornare in un'altra sede.

14 Sozyryqo è un nome alternativo di Soslan.

(C) Trovata la casa segreta, Sozyryqo uccide la moglie e i tre figli di Syrdon (Дæлтъур, Фу, Ærтыскæн), con i resti dei quali Syrdon costruisce il *fændyr*.

(D) Dopo che Syrdon esegue un'offerta funebre che commuove tutto l'universo,[15] egli dona il *fændyr* ai Narti che lo accolgono tra loro.

Particolari:

- l'antefatto include sia la carestia sia l'episodio del doppio inganno ai danni di Sozyryqo e dei giovani ladri rivali. Il motivo della possibile rivalità con altri ladri Narti ritorna in vers. 8. La strategia di sostituzione ricorda vagamente il trucco usato da Syrdon per rubare il bestiame dei Narti in vers. 6.
- Sozyryqo, non Xæmyc (vers. 1, 3, 5-8), è la vittima del furto, ma la vacca rubata appartiene a Uyryzmæg (cf. vers. 4).
- Nella ricerca della vacca, Sozyryqo non consulta la strega (analogamente a vers. 3-4, diversamente da vers. 1, 5-8).
- Sozyryqo uccide la moglie (analogamente a vers. 6 e 7) e i tre figli di Syrdon (come in vers. 1, 3, 6), ma apprendiamo solo il nome di questi ultimi: Dælt'ur 'Posto-presso-il-fuoco',[16] Fu 'Soffio', Ærtyskæn 'Pinze-da-carbone'.[17] Anche questi nomi collegano Syrdon al fuoco (cf. vers. 1, 3).

15 Questo motivo somiglia al motivo del canto di Orfeo, cf. e.g. Ov. *Met.* 11.1-2.

16 Abaev 1958, 355: «posto presso il fuoco [...] probabilmente <da> **dæl-dūr* pietra in basso».

17 Abaev 1958, 184: «pinze per i carboni [...] probabilmente dall'iranico **āθr-us-kana-* 'ciò con cui si scava nel terreno'».

3.3 Versione 3

Prosa in iron conservata in *NK* IV 57 (= *IGE* 61),[18] trascrizione del racconto fatto a Tskhinvali il 30 marzo 1925 dal settantaduenne Ǵusojty Kuʒa, originario di Con,[19] il quale, apprendiamo, aveva imparato le storie dei Narti da suo zio.

(A) Il diavolo femmina (хæйрæг уыдис, ус-хæйрæг, «c'era una volta un diavolo, un diavolo femmina») attacca i Narti durante le loro riunioni, provocandone la morte. Хæмус decide quindi di contrattaccare. Un giorno, quando il diavolo si ripalesa, Хæмус manca il colpo, ma gli lancia un insulto (уый йæ фæстæйæ ралгъыста. Хæйрæг уымæй басывæрджын, æмæ йын райгырд Сырдон, «[sc. Хæмус] gli bestemmiò dietro. Il diavolo ne rimase incinta e ne nacque Syrdon»). Da grande Syrdon si reca da Хæмус e gli rivela di essere suo figlio; Хæмус lo accetta tra i Narti ma gli impone di non rivelare chi sia suo padre. Più avanti Syrdon si adira con Хæмус (Сырдон смæсти Хæмышмæ, «Syrdon si arrabbiò con Хæмус»).

(B) Il furto di Syrdon è trattato in grande brevità (Сырдон… уышы хъуг адавта, «Syrdon rubò quella vacca»). Хæмус sospetta di Syrdon che, inoltre, si beffa di lui davanti a tutta l'assemblea dei Narti. Ma l'identificazione del nascondiglio di Syrdon avviene solo grazie alla cagna di Syrdon.

(C) Хæмус uccide i tre figli di Syrdon, K'onagæ, Uæragæ e Fuagæ. In questa versione della storia, però, Syrdon non costruisce il *fændyr* con le loro ossa, ma sembra esserne già in possesso (йæхæдæг баздæхт йæ къуыммæ, дыууадæстæнон фæндыр райста æмæ æм къæлæтджунул æрбадти, «lui stesso andò in un angolo [*sc.* di casa sua], prese il *fændyr* a dodici corde e sedette a cantare»). Come nelle versioni precedenti, Syrdon fa poi un'offerta funebre ispirata ai suoi figli.

18 Le due edizioni adottano diverse convenzioni grafiche, che riflettono alcune varietà diatopiche della lingua ossetica: сс (*NK*): с (*IGE*), e.g. фæкуысси (*NK*) = фæкуыси; шт (*IGE*): ст (*NK*), e.g. мæштæй vs мæстæй (*NK*); дж (*NK*): ж (*IGE*), e.g. джы = жы; в (*NK*): ф (*IGE*), e.g. алыварс = алыфарс.

Le edizioni inoltre esibiscono una serie di differenze minime che riguardano la capitalizzazione delle parole e la punteggiatura, e.g. *IGE* 233 дæхишæй ралъыстай: *NK* 160 ралъыстай дæхишæй || *IGE* 234 Къонагæ. Къонагæ, марды: *NK* 161 Къонагæ от. || *IGE* 234 йемæй фæнфырæй: *NK* 161 фæнфырæн йемæй || *IGE* 235 не 'гасæн: *NK* 161 негасæн | *IGE* иуыл: *NK* ииуыл.

19 Si vedano anche le seguenti caratteristiche dialettali del testo: ш corrisponde a ц and ж (*NK*, *IGE*), e.g. æршыдис = æрцыдис, Хæмыш = Хæмыц; ж: дз (*NK*, *IGE*), e.g. хæжар = хæдзар; каша = гадза (*NK*, *IGE*).

(D) Infine si reca dai Narti e dona loro il *fændyr*, diventando così uno di loro.

Dettagli notevoli della versione 3 sono:

- l'antefatto è diverso da quelli di vers. 1 (= vers. 7) e vers. 2, a loro volta diversi tra loro.
- Xæmyc è vittima del furto come in vers. 1, 5-8 (diversamente da vers. 2 e 4).
- L'elemento della provocazione verbale che rivela il ladro è comune alla vers. 2.
- Come in vers. 2 e 4 l'episodio della ricerca di Xæmyc non include la consultazione della strega.
- Non viene menzionata la moglie di Syrdon (presente in vers. 2, 6, 7): Xæmyc uccide i tre figli di Syrdon (vers. 1-3, 6), che portano gli stessi nomi attestati in vers. 1.
- Il finale della storia somiglia a quello di vers. 1 e 2, tuttavia Syrdon non costruisce il *fændyr*.

4 Variazioni su temi

A differenza di quanto illustrato in precedenza, alcuni racconti non includono necessariamente (A) l'antefatto, né la coda (C) né il finale (D) come li conosciamo. Includono (B) un episodio che riguarda il furto della vacca da parte di Syrdon e/o la ricerca di essa da parte del Narte derubato e (C) un finale in cui la famiglia di Syrdon viene sterminata a cui, a volte, seguono altri eventi (D). È dunque possibile considerare le versioni in questione come variazioni sul tema della morte dei figli di Syrdon, connessa al furto di bestiame o, se si preferisce, come varianti della storia in cui un Narte derubato da Syrdon puniva il ladro con l'uccisione della sua famiglia.

4.1 Versione 4

Testo conservato in PNTO I 18 (*non vidi*) e riassunto da Dumézil (1948, 148).

(B) Syrdon ruba la vacca di Uyryzmæg conducendola nella sua casa segreta. Uyryzmæg rintraccia il nascondiglio di Syrdon legando una corda alla zampa della cagna del ladro. Arrivato a casa di Syrdon, Uyryzmæg lo accusa apertamente di averlo derubato, mentre Syrdon dice di essere innocente. Uyryzmæg mangia poi della carne che Syrdon gli serve e se ne va.

(C) In seguito Uyryzmæg ritorna della casa di Syrdon e uccide i suoi figli. Syrdon li trova e si dispera.

Particolari:
- l'antefatto (A) manca (cf. vers. 5 e 8).
- Uyryzmæg è vittima del furto (diversamente da vers. 1, 3, 5-8). A questo proposito si noti che in vers. 2, la mucca sorvegliata da Sozyryqo apparteneva in realtà a Uyryzmæg.
- Il dialogo in cui Syrdon nega di essere il ladro della mucca può vagamente ricordare l'elemento della provocazione verbale che rivela il ladro (comune alle vers. 2 e 3).
- Come in vers. 2 e 3 nella sua ricerca della vacca Uyryzmæg si serve solo della cagna di Syrdon.
- Il riassunto di Dumézil non menziona la moglie di Syrdon tra le vittime di Uyryzmæg, né i nomi e il numero dei figli di Syrdon.

4.2 Versione 5

Prosa in iron raccontata ad Ardon (Œrdon) nel 1921 da Quylaty Ǵega e conservata in *NK* IV 53 (= *IGE* 62).[20]

(B) Xæmyc, non riuscendo a rintracciare il luogo in cui Syrdon ha nascosto la vacca rubata, si reca da una strega che gli consiglia di seguire la cagna di Syrdon.

(C) Giunto in casa del ladro, Xæmyc uccide uno dei sette figli di Syrdon (Уæларт аг фыцы, аджы алыфарс Сырдоны авд фырты кафынц сивыры фыд æфсæстæй […] Иу дзы бафтыд йæ къухы, æмæ йæ уыцы ран амардта, «sul fuoco c'era un calderone pieno di carne, i sette figli di Syrdon danzano attorno al calderone, ben pasciuti di carne […] prese uno di loro [*sc.* dei sette figli] per mano e lì lo uccise»).

Particolari:
- in questa versione non è solo assente l'antefatto (A), come in vers. 4 e 8 (diversamente da vers. 1-3, 6-7), ma anche l'episodio del furto (cf. vers. 1-4, 6-8).
- Xæmyc è vittima del furto (analogamente a vers. 1, 3, 6-8 e diversamente da vers. 2, 4).

20 Anche in questo caso le due edizioni adottano diverse convenzioni grafiche, come *IGE* 235 нæй: *NK* 151 нæу || *IGE* 236 'рхуыдта: *NK* 151 æрхуыдта || *IGE* 236 стæй йæ Сырдоны хæдзармæ 'рхуыдта. Хæныц бацыди Сырдоны хæдзармæ, уæдæ вы уыдаид: *NK* 151 Хæныц бацыди Сырдоны хæдзармæ ом.

- Come in vers. 1, 6-8 (e diversamente da vers. 2-4) la ricerca della vacca si articola in due momenti: la consultazione della strega e lo stratagemma della cagna.
- Tra le vittime di Xæmyc non si fa menzione della moglie di Syrdon (cf. vers. 1, 3, 4, diversamente da vers. 2, 6-7), inoltre i figli di Syrdon sono sette (come in vers. 8, diversamente da vers. 1-3, 6-7).

4.3 Versione 6

Prosa in digor raccontata da Ræmonty Cæraj a Styr-Dyruga il 14 febbraio 1941 e preservata in *NK* IV 56.

(A) Sirdon aveva una cagna e una mucca pezzata. Dopo aver divorato le carni della propria mucca, Sirdon ne conserva la pelle che usa per camuffare e portar via le vacche degli altri Narti: vedendo la pelle pezzata essi scambiano le proprie vacche per quella di Sirdon.

(B) In questa maniera Sirdon deruba anche Xæmic che, sospettando di lui, si reca da una strega. Questa gli consiglia di servirsi della cagna di Sirdon per arrivare al nascondiglio del ladro.

(C) Xæmic vi trova la moglie e i tre figli di Sirdon addormentati (Сирдонæн æ уосæ æма йе ’ртæ фурти ба фид хуæрдтунæй хустæнцæ, «La moglie e i tre figli di Sirdon, sazi di carne, stavano dormendo»), li uccide e se ne va. Sirdon torna a casa, trova i resti della sua famiglia e pensa «Sirdon venne a sapere che Xæmic gli aveva fatto questo» (Базудта Сирдон, еци куст ин Хæмиц ке бакодта, уой).

Particolari:

- questa versione contiene un breve antefatto che però non spiega perché Sirdon rubi proprio la vacca di Xæmic. (A) ci rivela tuttavia che Sirdon compie ruberie ai danni di tutti i Narti. Il trucco di Sirdon ricorda vagamente il trucco della sostituzione esposto in vers. 2.
- Xæmic è vittima del furto (come in vers. 1, 3, 5, 7-8 e diversamente da vers. 2 e 4).
- Come in vers. 1, 5-8 (diversamente da vers. 2-4) la ricerca della vacca si articola in due momenti: il consulto della strega e lo stratagemma della cagna.
- Xæmic uccide la moglie (cf. vers. 2, 7), e i figli di Syrdon che sono tre (come in vers. 1-3, diversamente da 5, 7-8) e hanno nomi diversi da vers. 1-3: Dæuæn ‘Tu’, Ğæjn ‘Qui’, Kæmidæ ‘Da qualche parte’.

4.4 Versione 7

Prosa in iron raccontata da Biræğty Dris a Rassvet, il 5 febbraio 1941, raccolta in *NK* IV 54 (153 = *IGE* 63).[21]

(A) Identico ad (A) in vers. 1 (cf. § 3.1)

(B) Syrdon ruba la vacca di Xæmyc intrufolandosi nella stalla di giorno e aspettando la notte per poi aprire la porta della stalla dall'interno. Xæmyc cerca la vacca in ogni dove. Disperato, si rivolge alla strega che gli consiglia di usare la cagna di Syrdon per arrivare a lui.

(C) Xæmyc uccide Mari, la moglie di Syrdon e i suoi due figli, Ќykk e Koki.

(D) Una volta scoperti i resti della sua famiglia, Syrdon si reca nell'assemblea dei Narti e riferisce loro quanto accaduto, ma nessuno gli crede (Нæ уырныдта уæддæр Нарты мидæг адæмы, ома, Хæмыць хъуыддаг афтæ уыдаид, уый, «nessuno tra il popolo Narte credette che Xæmyc avesse fatto ciò»).

Particolari:
- (A) è identico a vers. 1.
- Xæmyc è vittima del furto (come in vers. 1, 3, 5-6, 8 e diversamente da vers. 2 e 4).
- Come in vers. 1, 5-6 (diversamente da vers. 2-4) Xæmyc si rivolge a una strega.
- Xæmyc uccide la moglie di Syrdon (cf. vers. 2, 5) a cui è straordinariamente dato un nome insieme ai suoi figli che sono due (differentemente da vers. 1-3, 5-6, 8) ed hanno nomi diversi da quelli documentati altrove (vers. 1-3, 6).

21 *IGE* 63 comprende solo l'antefatto.

4.5 Versione 8

Prosa in iron raccontata dal quarantenne Ǵinoty Gu'be a K'ostaj il 21 gennaio 1941 e conservata in *NK* IV 55.

(B) La vacca di Xæmyc sparisce misteriosamente e così ha inizio la ricerca da parte del suo padrone, il quale dopo aver consultato una strega, si serve della cagna di Syrdon per giungere al covo del ladro.

(C) Xæmyc uccide «i sette figli di Syrdon» (Сырдоны авд фырты).

(D) Segue quindi un discorso diretto di Syrdon, da immaginare probabilmente davanti ai Narti: «– Voglio raccontarvi un fatto prodigioso, buona gente! Stavo preparando le parti di un animale, le avevo messe in un calderone… Ma quando si sono cotte, ne ho estratto con il forchettone sette colli, sette teste!».[22] Segue poi un ulteriore aneddoto su come Syrdon riesce a ottenere un ricco raccolto, mentre quello di Xæmyc va in rovina.

Particolari:

- la storia non possiede un vero antefatto (A); tuttavia, si accenna al fatto che molti Narti vogliono rubare la vacca di Xæmyc (Хъуг уыдис тынг нард, æмæ йæм давынмæ хъавыдысты Нартæй бирæтæ, фæлæ сæ къухы кæм æфтыдис, «La vacca era così grassa che molti Narti volevano rubarla, ma come fare?»). Questa situazione ricorda vagamente l'antefatto della vers. 2, in cui i giovani Narti vogliono rubare la vacca di Uyryzmæg.
- Xæmyc è vittima del furto (come in vers. 1, 3, 5-7 e diversamente da vers. 2 e 4).
- Come in vers. 1, 5-7 (e diversamente da vers. 2-4) Xæmyc consulta la strega e poi usa la cagna di Syrdon per arrivare a lui.
- Xæmyc uccide i figli di Syrdon, non la moglie (come in vers. 2, 6-7). Essi sono sette in numero (come in vers. 5, differentemente da vers. 1-3, 6 e 7).
- Il finale alternativo è simile a quello della vers. 7, poiché Syrdon si rivolge ai Narti.

22 – Диссаг уын радзурдзынæн, хорз адæм, байхъусут-ма! Иу кусарт акодтон, аджы й сæвæрдтон, æмæ фых куы фесты, уæд дзы авд сæрды æмæ авд бæрзæйы фыдисæй систон.

Le somiglianze e differenze su cui ci si è soffermati possono essere ricapitolate nella seguente tabella:

Vers.	antefatto	furto			sterminio della famiglia di Syrdon e finale			
		vittima furto	episodio strega	episodio cagna	morte famiglia		coda	
					moglie	nr. figli	condivisione fændyr	altro (aperto o diverso)
1	Casa	Xæmyc	X	X	—	3	X	—
2	Carestia	Sozyryqo/ Uyryzmæg	—	X	X	3	X	—
3	Nascita	Xæmyc	—	X	—	3	X	—
4	—	Uyryzmæg	—	X	—	—	—	Syrdon si dispera
5	—	Xæmyc	X	X	—	7	—	—
6	Ruberie	Xæmic	X	X	X	3	—	Sirdon sa che è stato Xæmyc
7	Casa	Xæmyc	X	X	Mari	2	—	Syrdon parla ai Narti
8	—	Xæmyc	X	X	—	7	—	Syrdon parla ai Narti

5 Punti di sutura narrativi

Il confronto fra le versioni presentate permette di individuare alcuni 'punti di sutura' in cui episodi diversi si incatenano l'uno all'altro. Si pensi, in particolare, alle storie riassunte nel § 4, ad esempio vers. 4-6, che si interrompono prima che Syrdon/Sirdon possa inventare il *fændyr*. Non è impossibile immaginare che tali storie potessero anche continuare con l'invenzione dello strumento musicale. In questo scenario, le versioni in questione si configurerebbero quindi come variazioni sul 'prequel' della storia del *fændyr*. Ma procediamo con ordine. Alla luce della comparazione effettuata propongo la seguente ricostruzione, senza implicare, con questo termine, alcun riferimento cronologico, ma solo tipologico-narratologico.

Partiamo da una seguente considerazione generale: è possibile isolare una serie di caratteristiche che sembrano più 'stabili' di altre: alcuni elementi sono presenti in tutte le versioni riassunte, altri no. Come già osservato (cf. § 3), le storie relative all'invenzione del *fændyr* sembrano articolate in quattro parti: (A) antefatto, (B) furto e ricerca della vacca, (C) morte della famiglia di Syrdon e (D) invenzione/condivisione del *fændyr*. Se però teniamo conto dei nessi di causa-effetto che cuciono insieme i vari pezzi delle storie, la quadruplice architettura si rivela in ultima analisi costituita da due nuclei narrativi: uno relativo alla genesi del *fændyr*, l'altro concernente un furto di bestiame.

A sua volta, il nucleo narrativo del *fændyr* si compone di tre eventi principali, cioè sequenze narrative attestate da *tutte* le versioni 'complete' della vicenda:

- la famiglia di Syrdon viene sterminata e Syrdon trova i resti dei propri familiari.
- Syrdon inventa o usa il *fændyr* per fare un'offerta funebre ai suoi figli.
- Syrdon condivide il *fændyr* con i Narti che lo accolgono come un fratello.

Queste tre sequenze narrative sono coerentemente connesse tra loro in vers. 1-3: l'episodio del *fændyr* è dunque legato all'eziologia dell'offerta funeraria fatta da Syrdon ai suoi tre figli. A questo proposito, è significativo che, nelle tre versioni complete della storia (vers. 1-3), Syrdon abbia sempre tre figli, i cui nomi sono in qualche modo associati con l'elemento del fuoco e il focolare. È possibile che questo nucleo narrativo si fosse stabilizzato come a sé stante e che venisse occasionalmente connesso con un secondo nucleo narrativo, relativo al tema del furto di bestiame, ricostruibile come tale sulla base di una seconda serie di caratteristiche 'stabili'. All'interno di questa storia riconosciamo tre sequenze principali:

- il furto/nascondimento della vacca in un luogo segreto.
- L'episodio in cui il Narte derubato cerca la casa di Syrdon e la trova seguendo la cagna del ladro.
- L'uccisione dei figli di Syrdon.

Questi tre eventi principali formano il solido nucleo di una storia che include Syrdon nel ruolo di ladro-protagonista e un Narte di 'primo piano' come antagonista. La storia del furto e della ricerca della vacca, allo stesso tempo, si presta ad essere arricchita con una serie di episodi e antefatti. A questo riguardo, un secondo episodio si configura come piuttosto stabilmente connesso con il nucleo narrativo principale, ovvero la consultazione della strega. È il tema stesso della ricerca lunga e tortuosa della vacca che si presta a essere allargato attraverso questo episodio. Esso sottolinea quanto sia difficile la ricerca della vacca. La strega, infatti, aiuta ma non risolve definitivamente il problema del Narte derubato: si dà quindi rilievo al fatto che *neanche* la strega sa dove si trovi la casa di Syrdon. L'episodio si configura quindi come una sorta di variante del tema della ricerca della vacca. Non a caso, esso è documentato in molte delle versioni 'brevi' della storia, cioè quelle che non sono precedute da lunghi antefatti narrativi né seguite da code. La variante contenente il motivo della strega, infatti, interessava il nucleo relativo al furto di bestiame.

Veniamo ora alla possibile aggiunta degli antefatti: a parte l'antefatto relativo alle ruberie di Sirdon (vers. 6, digor), che è di natura generica, poiché Syrdon è il ladro per antonomasia, tre antefat-

ti principali sono attestati: 'una volta i Narti costruivano una casa comune' (vers. 1 e 7), 'la nascita di Syrdon' (vers. 3) e l'episodio della grave carestia (vers. 2). Tutti e tre gli episodi sembrano legati al furto della mucca da un nesso di causa, seppur talora debole: essi in qualche modo ci rivelano perché Syrdon abbia deciso di rubare proprio quella vacca. Come già accennato, il collegamento causa-effetto non risulta sempre dei più convincenti: nell'episodio della casa, Syrdon serba rancore a Xæmyc per 'un buffetto'; in quello della nascita di Syrdon, il narratore ci dice solo che «Syrdon si arrabbiò con Xæmyc». Questo genere di lacuna informativa, unita alla varietà dei differenti antefatti, suggerisce che gli antefatti esistessero come storie a sé stanti e fossero occasionalmente aggiunti come ampliamenti del nucleo narrativo concernente il furto di bestiame. Si può persino immaginare che i 'nostri antefatti' venissero occasionalmente uniti ad altre storie in cui Syrdon causava problemi agli altri Narti, in modo simile a cui il racconto in cui Syrdon uccide Soslan è a volte preceduto da una sequenza che ci parla della nascita di Syrdon e Soslan.

Come finiva, dunque, la storia relativa al furto della vacca? È verosimile che l'atroce ritrovamento di Syrdon fosse seguito da una sequenza in cui l'eroe si disperava (vedi vers. 4) o in cui rimaneva inizialmente senza parole. Occasionalmente questo momento offriva un punto di partenza per la storia riguardante l'invenzione e/o la condivisione del *fændyr* con il resto dei Narti.

Per concludere, l'analisi portata avanti in questo studio mostra che il tema della morte dei figli di Syrdon funge da finale alla storia del furto di bestiame e da antefatto alla storia del *fændyr*, perciò è verosimile individuare questo evento narrativo tragico come il punto in cui due vicende combinabili si innestavano nell'ambito di una narrazione orale. Un narratore poteva scegliere di terminare la storia del furto della vacca in maniera tragica o, al contrario, cucendola con un'altra, quella della *fændyr*, che comprendeva un finale di riconciliazione fra Syrdon e i Narti.

Abbreviazioni

IGE = Abaev V.I. (1989-91). *Nartæ. Iron geroikon epos./Narty. Osetinskij geroičeskij epos*. 3 voll. Moskva: Akademija Nauk SSSR.

NK = Tamaræ, X. (2007-11). *Narty Kaǧǧytæ. Iron adæmy epos*. Ǵæuǵyqæu: Gassity Viktory nomyl rauǧdadon-poligrafion kuystuat.

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ORS = Abaev, V.I. (1970). *Osetinsko-russkij slovar'*. 3a ed. Moskva: Knižaja tipografija po pečati pri Sovete Ministrov SO ASSR.

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Armenia, Caucaso e Asia Centrale
Ricerche 2022
a cura di Daniele Artoni, Carlo Frappi, Paolo Sorbello

The Naming of the Black Sea in Arabic-Islamic and Christian Sources

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Abstract The paper deals with the naming of the Black Sea in Arabic-Islamic and Christian sources. Based on a purview of major designations of the Black Sea in the Arabic-Islamic and Christian geographical traditions, the author questions the geo-chromatic explanation of the name of the Black Sea. Instead, the author outlines a multi-layered naming structure in the system of the designations of the Black Sea. Historical names of the Black Sea in both Arabic-Islamic and Christian geographical traditions demonstrate independent trends in the naming of this sea which went through a convoluted process of semantic transformations as reflected in the extant records.

Keywords The Black Sea. The Arabic-Islamic geographical tradition. The Christian geographical tradition. The descriptive geography. The geo-chromatic designation.

Summary 1 Introduction. – 2 Contextualizing the Greek Tradition. – 3 Diversification: From Constantinople to Georgia. – 4 Reducing the Scope. – 5 The Geo-Chromatic Impasse. – 6 From Scandinavia to Ruthenia. – 7 Conclusions.

1 Introduction

The proposed study is primarily historiographic. It deals with the naming of the Black Sea in both Arabic-Islamic and Christian, primarily Latin-Christian, sources viewed in the light of the cultural and sociopolitical dominance of the Greeks, Arabs, and the Turks in the Pontic region. I pursue a modest objective in this study. Based on a survey of available attestations, I intend to explore major designa-

Edizioni Ca'Foscari

Eurasiatica 19
e-ISSN 2610-9433 | ISSN 2610-8879
ISBN [ebook] 978-88-6969-667-1

Peer review | Open access
Submitted 2022-04-13 | Accepted 2022-07-28 | Published 2023-04-26
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DOI 10.30687/978-88-6969-667-1/005

tions (transcriptions) of the Black Sea in Arabic records in comparison with their Turkic and Latin-Christian equivalents. While assessing the geo-chromatic explanation of the name of the Black Sea as reflected in the Turkish descriptive geographical tradition, I take into consideration a parallel Latin-Christian way of the naming of the Black Sea which indicates an independent trend influenced by the Greek (Byzantine) geographical tradition.

The proposed study is structured in the following way. First, I discuss the oldest layers of Arabic-Islamic attestations (section 2 through section 4). In section 5, I home in on the geo-chromatic etymology of the name of the Black Sea, commonly accepted in Slavic and Turkic studies. To assess possible shortcomings in the traditional etymology, I compare various (parallel) names of the Black Sea in different geographical traditions (section 6), which allows me to posit parallelism in the naming of the Black Sea as reflected in Arabic-Islamic and Latin-Christian records (section 7).

2 Contextualizing the Greek Tradition

The Arabic-Islamic authors began describing the Black and Azov Seas comparatively late (Bejlis 1962, 22). Leaving aside the very dubious designation *Baḥr al-Khazar* in Ibn Khurdādhbih (١٠٣, ١٠٤, ١٠٥), the available source material suggests that they knew practically nothing about the above seas. Under Greek influence (Gk Πόντος from IE **pent*; see Pokorny 1959-69, 3: 808-9), the early Arab-Muslim geographers called the Black Sea *Baḥr Bunṭus* (بحر بنطس) as attested, for instance, in Ibn Rusteh (٨٥); the latter author relied on al-Battānī (d. 929) who improved Ptolomey's astronomical calculations and used his geographical information in regard to the Black and the Azov Seas (Kračkovskij 2004, 100-3; Bejlis 1962, 24). Ibn Rusteh, Qudāmah Ibn Jaʿfar al-Kātib (d. between 922 and 948), al-Masʿūdī and other geographers just followed in his steps.[1]

A separate position is taken by al-Masʿūdī who in his *Kitāb al-tanbīh wa-al-ishrāf* (Liber commonitionis et recognitionis, ca. 956) identified *Baḥr Bunṭus* as the Sea of the *Burghar* (Bulghār), the Rus' and other peoples living at the side of the town of Lāziqah right behind Constantinople; he wrote in particular that this sea is connected with the lake (or sea) of *Māyuṭis* (*Baḥr Māyuṭis*); among the rivers which flow into it are the *Ṭanāis* (Don) and the Danube; from *Baḥr Bunṭus* issues *Khalīj al-Qusṭantīniyyah* (Strait of Constantinople), i.e. Bos-

1 Abbreviations: Ar (Arabic), Av (Avestan), ESl (East Slavic), Fr (French), Gk (Greek), IE (Indo-European), It (Italian), OPe (Old Persian), OUk (Old Ukrainian), Tk (Turkish), Tu (Turkic).

porus, Sea of Marmora and Dardanelles which issues in the Mediterranean Sea (*Baḥr al-Rūm*) (al-Masʿūdī, *Kitāb al-tanbīh*, ٦٧-٦٦; see al-Masʿūdī-Tanbīh, 98; Dunlop, "Baḥr Bunṭus"). As Bejlis (1962) noted, this description was heavily influenced by the respective attestation in al-Battānī and Ibn Rusteh (see Kračkovskij 2004, 103; Kalinina 1988, 144).

In his *Murūj al-dhahab wa-maʿādin al-jauhar* (Venae auri et fodinae gemmarum, ca. 947), al-Masʿūdī mentions *Baḥr Nīṭas* in reference to the Black Sea in the following passage:

> In the upper reaches of the Khazar river [i.e. the Volga] there is an outflow which joins a gulf of the Pontos Sea [بحر نيطس], which is the *Rūs* Sea, for no one except them [i.e. the *Rūs*] navigates it, and they are established on some of its coasts. (al-Masʿūdī ii, 15; al-Masʿūdī-Pellat 1, ٢١٦-٢١٥)[2]

The designation *Baḥr Nīṭas* (بحر نيطس) is commonly treated today as a stereotyped error (same *ductus* of letters with different pointing and vocalization; see Dunlop, "Baḥr Bunṭus") of the original name *Baḥr Bunṭus* (see al-Masʿūdī-Pellat 1, ٢١٦). Keeping in mind al-Masʿūdī's description of the Rusian people living allegedly in the Pontic region, one can cite here a striking parallel in the Rusian Primary Chronicle (mid-12th century):

> [But] the Dnieper flows through various mouths into the Pontus [*Ponetьskoe more*]. This sea, beside which taught St. Andrew, Peter's brother, is called the Rus[s]ian Sea [*more Ruskoe*]. (Cross, Sherbowitz-Wetzor 1973, 53; PVL, 7)

Yet despite this parallel, such transcriptions as *Nīṭas*, *Nīṭaš* are attested by other Arab-Muslim geographers (Nedkov 1960, 144; Konovalova 2006, 129-30). For example, the form *Nīṭas* is used consistently in most of the codices of al-Idrīsī's *Kitāb Rujār* (al-Idrīsī), while its editors left this form only in the introduction of al-Idrīsī's *Kitāb Rujār* (al-Idrīsī 1, 12). In all other cases, the editors introduced the conjecture البحر البنطسي (*Baḥr Bunṭus*) as, for instance, at the very beginning of Section 6 of Climate 6 (al-Idrīsī 8, 914; see Konovalova 2013, 236-7).

According to some Arab-Muslim authors, the above passage refers to the Azov Sea inasmuch as in another place al-Masʿūdī says that the Black Sea and the Azov Sea (*Baḥr Māyuṭis*) are one and the same (al-Masʿūdī-Pellat, ١٤٦; al-Masʿūdī, *Les Prairies d'Or*, 164; see Marquart 1903, 335). According to Minorsky (see *Ḥudūd*, 181-2), this is confirmed by al-Idrīsī who makes the *Nahr al-Rūsiyyah*, as he calls

2 If not otherwise stated, all translations from Arabic are by the Author.

the *Ṭanāis* (Don), flow into the *Baḥr Rūsiyyah*, i.e. the Azov Sea (al-Idrīsī 8, 910-11; see Tuulio(-Tallgren) 1936, 171).

Among those geographers who used the Greek borrowing *Baḥr Bunṭus*, the description offered by the Persian polymath Abū Rayḥān Bīrūni/Bērōnī (973-1048) and recorded by Yāqūt al-Hamawī (d. 1229) in his *Muʿjam al-buldān* (Lexicon geographicum), seems to be the most concise, though rather brief (see Bejlis 1962, 28):

> And right in the middle of this part, in the land of the Slavs (*al-Ṣaqālibah*) and the Rus' (*al-Rūs*) there is a sea known as *Bunṭus* among the Greeks and *Baḥr Ṭarābazundah* among us. (Yāqūt 1, ٥٠٠-٤٩٩)

3 Diversification: From Constantinople to Georgia

In addition to *Baḥr Bunṭus* influenced clearly by the respective Greek (Byzantine) designation, the Arab-Muslim authors also used parallel forms derived from the names of the adjacent peoples or countries. Among those forms, which nevertheless can have multiple referential meanings, we can name the following:

Baḥr al-Khazar (Sea of the Khazars)
Baḥr al-Rūs (Rusian Sea)
Baḥr al-Rūm (Sea of Byzantium)
Baḥr al-Burghar / *Baḥr al-Burghaz* (Sea of the Bulghārs)
Baḥr Ṭarābazundah (Sea of Trebizond)
Baḥr Nīṭash al-Armanī (Armenian Pontus)
Baḥr al-Qusṭantīniyyah (Sea of Constantinople)
Daryā-yi Gurziyān (Sea of the Georgians)

Several comments are in order here.

First of all, we concur with Bejlis (1962, 22) that the original Arabic designation of the Black Sea was *Baḥr al-Khazar* going back to the lost work authored by al-Jarmī (9th century). Unlike some early medieval Arab-Muslim geographers, such as al-Iṣṭakhri and Ibn Ḥawqal, belonging to the Balkhī tradition, who called the Caspian Sea *Baḥr al-Khazar* (بحرالخزر) 'Sea of the Khazars' (see Ibn Ḥawqal-Kramers 1, ٧; Ibn Ḥawqal-Kramers, Wiet 388), Ibn Khurdādhbih (١٠٣,١٠٤,١٠٥) transferred this form to the Black Sea because allegedly the Khazars held in their possession the eastern and southeastern parts of the Crimea. The reading of *Baḥr al-Khazar* as the Sea of the Khazars in Ibn Khurdādhbih, who nevertheless was not sure of the exact location of the Black Sea and its connection with the Caspian Sea (Bejlis 1962, 22), is supported by the anonymous author of the *Ḥudūd al-ʿĀlam* (Regionis mundi, 982-3, see *Ḥudūd*, 420).

Second, the name *Baḥr al-Rūs* was used later, from the 10th to the 14th century, as attested, for instance, in al-Dimashqī's *Kitāb nukhbat al-dahr fī ʿajāʾib al-barr wa-al-baôr* (Delectus temporis de rebus mirandis terrae marisque, early 14th century). According to Soloviev (1959), this designation was commonly used in the Latin West, Byzantium, and the Islamic World. Soloviev counted 11 records containing the name "Rusian Sea". Soloviev (1959, 6-7, 9-11) counted 11 records containing the name "Rusian Sea": *Mare Rusciae* in *Historia Hierosolymitana* and Annalista Saxo (ca. 1139); *Rucenum mare* in Helmold of Bosau's *Chronica Slavorum* (*Chronicle of the Slavs*, mid-12th century; see Helmold, 13 and Helmold-Tschan, 46); *la mer de Rosie* in Geoffroy de Villehardouin's *Conquête de Constantinople*, an eyewitness account of the Fourth Crusade (1199-1204); *more Ruskoe* as attested under the year 1093 in the Rusian Primarily Chronicle (Cross, Sherbowitz-Wetzor 1973, 53; PVL, 7) and other similar forms, recorded in particular by al-Masʿūdī and al-Dimashqī.

Third, the author of the Persian treatise *Ḥudūd al-ʿĀlam* identifies the Sea of the Georgians (*Gurziyān*) as the Black Sea (*Bonṭos*) (*Ḥudūd*, 53). Minorsky argues that the alternative name of the Pontos, *Daryā-yi Gurziyān* (or *Gurz* 'Georgians'), was passed on to the latter precisely from the Azov Sea which the author omitted to describe; the designation of the Black Sea as *Daryā-yi Gurziyān* is entirely without a parallel, and it is astonishing to see the Pontos baptized after a people never known as navigators (*Ḥudūd*, 182). This part of information may be due to a confusion of ورنك **Warank* (the Varangian Rus') and كرز *Gurz, not impossible in Arabic script (*Ḥudūd*, 422), especially if the position of some of the letters is changed. It is worth mentioning that the form *Warank* was attested in Muslim sources relatively late. Since Frähn (1823, 177-8), it has been generally accepted (see Kunik 1875, 250) that al-Bīrūni/Bērōnī (973-1048) was the first author to mention in his *Kitāb al-tafhīm* (Liber de elementis astronomicae artis, ca. 1030) *baôr warank* (بحر ورنك), the Varangian Sea, together with the people living on its coast (Yāqūt 1, ٣٤ ,٢٠). Remarkably, al-Dimashqī called the people *warank* 'the most true *Ṣaqālibah* (وهم صقلب الصقالبة); these people lived in its farthest limits of Rus', that is, near the Ladoga lake which is close to the Sea of the *Warank* and *Ṣaqālibah* (بحر ورنك والصقالبة) (al-Dimashqī, ١٣٣, see also ١٤٦ ,٢٣ ,٢٢; Mišin 2002, 98; Danylenko 2004, 190-1).

4 Reducing the Scope

A new period in the naming of the Black Sea is marked by new designations based on a smaller number of new ethnic and place names (see Dunlop, "Baḥr Bunṭus") such as:

Baḥr Sūdāq (Sea of *Sūdāq*)
Baḥr Sinūb (Sea of Sinope)
Baḥr al-Qirim (Sea of *Qirim*)
Al-Baḥr al-Armanī (The Armenian Sea)

The first two designations are found in Ibn Saʿīd al-Maghribī's *Basṭ al-arḍ fī al-ṭūl wa-al-ʿarḍ* (Extensio terrae per longtidunem suam et latitudinem, late 13th century). Derived after the name of the town of *Sūdāq* (Gk Σουγδαία) in the northern part of the Pontic region, the form *Baḥr Sūdāq* (سوداق بحر) clearly refers to the Black Sea (Ibn Saʿīd al-Maghribī, ١٣٩). The designation *Baḥr Sinūb* (Ibn Saʿīd al-Maghribī, ١٢٨) can be associated with the name of the former Greek town, *Sinūb* (سنوب; Gk Σινώπη), located exactly across the town of *Sūdāq*, that is, on the southern cost of the Black Sea. Konovalova (2013, 257) treats these two designations as commonly used names of the Black Sea at the time of Ibn Saʿīd al-Maghribī'.

In Abū al-Fidā'ʾs *Taqwīm al-buldān* (Ratio terrarum, early 14th c.), one comes across two more forms, *Baḥr al-Qirim* and *al-Baḥr al-ʾAswad*, which seemed to be in use in the Arabic descriptive geography as early as the very beginning of the 14th century. These two forms are attested in the following excerpt (together with its French translation) dealing with *Baḥr Nīṭash* (the Black Sea):

> And *Buḥairat Mānīṭash* [بحيرة مانيطش] (Azov Sea) is connected with *Baḥr Nīṭash* [بحر نيطش] (Black Sea) and is known today as *Baḥr al-Azaq* [بحر الازق] (Azov Sea) [named] after the town which is situated on its northern coast and is a trade harbor. *Baḥr Nīṭash* is known in our days also as *Baḥr al-Qirim* [بحر القرم] and *al-Baḥr al-ʾAswad* [البحر الاسود]. (Abū al-Fidā', ٣١)

> Le Palus-Méotide (Bohayré-Matytesch or lac Matytesch) est une suite du Pont-Euxin. Le Palus-Méotide porte aujourd'hui le nom de mer d'Azof (Bahr-Alazof), du nom d'une ville situé sur le côte septentrionale, et où affluent les marchands. Quant au Pont-Euxin, on le nomme à présent mer de Crimée (Bahr-alkirim) et mer Noire (Albahr-alasouad). (Abū al-Fidāʾ-Reinaud 2, pt. 1, 38)

Unlike other places in this work replete with citations from other sources, Abū al-Fidāʾ relied in this case most likely on reports of different informants. This is why, perhaps, Abū al-Fidāʾ's description of

the northern coast of the Black Sea is more detailed than its southern part, not to mention scanty evidence about the eastern and western coasts of the Black Sea (Konovalova 2009, 131). Furthermore, the author treats the above two forms as contemporaneous, though obviously prefers the older one – *Baḥr Nīṭash* (see Konovalova 2009, 130). Leaving the 'geo-chromatic' designation for a moment aside, the name *Baḥr al-Qirim* is based on the name of the administrative center of the Golden Horde in the Crimea, known also as *Ṣulghāt* (Abū al-Fidāʾ, ٢١٤, ٢٠٠; Abū al-Fidāʾ-Reinaud 1, 320). The translation of this name as the Sea of the Crimea suggested by Mordtmann (Mordtmann, "Ḳara Deniz", 730) is, in fact, misleading.

In the same chapter, dealing with *Baḥr Nīṭash* (Black Sea), Abū al-Fidāʾ introduces another designation, *al-Baḥr al-Armanī* (Abū al-Fidāʾ, ٣٤; Abū al-Fidāʾ-Reinaud 1, 41). Quite obviously, this term was excerpted by the geographer from some older sources. By adding in his narrative the common phrase *Allahu ʿalam*, literally 'Allah knew', Abū al-Fidāʾ shows that he is not sure in the reliability of this name which might seem to him obsolete (see Konovalova 2003, 53):

> And *Nīṭash* (Black Sea) […] is the name of this sea [found] in old books and it is also called *al-Baḥr al-Armanī* [البحر الارمني], however, Allah knows this better. (Abū al-Fidāʾ, ٣٤, Abū al-Fidāʾ-Reinaud 1, 41)

5 The Geo-Chromatic Impasse

What is remarkable is that Abū al-Fidāʾ uses for the first time in the descriptive Arabic geography (Kračkovskij 2004, 18-19) the color name *al-Baḥr al-ʾAswad*, purportedly under the influence of the Turkish designation *Karadeniz*/*Ḳara Deniz* (see Konovalova 2003, 52; Mordtmann, "Ḳara Deniz", 730). Incidentally, al-Dimashqī also resorts to the term *al-Baḥr al-ʾAswad* in his description of the Strait of Istanbul in Section 4 of Chapter 5 of his work, where we also come across the designations *Baḥr Ṭarābazundah* (Sea of Trebizond) and *Baḥr al-Rūs* (the Rusian Sea) which belong to the older layer in the naming of the Black Sea (al-Dimashqī, ١٤٣).

The introduction of the designation *al-Baḥr al-ʾAswad* into the descriptive Arabic geography raises many questions. Stachowski (2010, 541, fn. 10) recently called this form a result of the "European-Asiatic semantic interweavement", thus reviving the old "geo-chromatic" theory of this form. According to the commonly accepted theory, the old Greek name of the Black Sea is Πόντος ἄξεινος 'inhospitable sea' (secondarily changed into Πόντος εὔξε(ι)νος 'hospitable sea'), where the second element reflects allegedly the Iranian stem **axšaina-* 'dark colored' (Vasmer 1921), also Av *axšaēna* 'dark colored,' OPe *axšaina-* 'color of turquoise' (Schmitt 1996; also 1990, 310). The primary color-

based model seems to have survived with its original meaning in the Near East, until the Turks borrowed and propagated it anew. The Persian term was allegedly translated into Turkish as *Ḳara Deniz*, which could have been understood as 'black sea' or 'dangerous sea.' Following this trend, the Europeans must have taken over the literal meaning of the Turkish name and thus the semantic variant 'black sea' became usual in Europe (Stachowski 2010, 541 fn. 10). One can hypothesize here that the Arab-Muslim authors also appropriated this semantic model as demonstrated by al-Dimashqī (al-Dimashqī, ١٤٣) in his description of the Black Sea and the coasts of the Crimea, including the town name *al-Maṣṭikī* (< *Maṭrakhā*) / ESl *Tъmutorokanь*.

Aware of some shortcomings in the geo-chromatic explanation, Dan (2008) argued that the ancient name of the Black Sea (Πόντος ἄξεινος / Πόντος εὔξε(ι)νος) could be explained by the Greek word Πόντος denoting the sea as seen by far-off mariners unlike πέλαγος meaning the sea as seen by the inhabitants of its shores (see Soloviev 1959, 10). As the Hellespontos and the Propontis, the εὔξε(ι)νος kept its name of 'difficult passage' and even became the "Pontos" in the 5th century. The qualifier ἄξεινος, according to Dan (2008, 177-8, 180), probably changed by antiphrasis or euphemism into εὔξε(ι)νος, is a phonetic calque from the Indo-Iranian name of a northern, 'black' sea, opposed to a southern, 'red' sea (used by the Phoenicians, Egyptians, Cypriots, and Greeks). Even if the Black Sea became 'black' again only through Turkish dialects, several 'black' hydronyms and toponyms of the Thraco-Sythian region as well as the association, since the 6th century BC, of the Black Sea with the internal world, probably encouraged the preservation of these adjectives, unusual in maritime designations.

Although the color-inspired explication might satisfy some authors, we are not ready to argue the case from slender evidence. Yet, when discussing the appearance of *al-Baḥr al-ʾAswad* in the Arabic geographical tradition, some authors pinpoint very substantial shortcomings in the color-based model purportedly borrowed from the Turks. Suffice it to mention here Constantine Pophyrogenitus who, when describing two Croatias, that is, the Dalmatian or 'baptized' Croatia, as opposed to the 'unbaptized' (Great or White) Croatia together with the Serbs, wrote about a 'sea' to which the latter 'come down after the 30 days' and which is called 'dark' (Θάλασσα σκοτεινή) (DAI, 152-3; see Abū al-Fidāʾ-Reinaud 2, pt. 1, 41; Planhol, "Ḳarā Deniz"; Karatay 2009, 66-7).[3] The geo-chromatic interpretation of Tu *ḳara* appears less con-

3 Although speaking mutually intelligible languages (or variants of a single language), Croats and Serbs were divided by religion and borders. This fact, according to Wexler (2021, 158-9), may reflect the confederative Irano-Slavic origins of the White Croats in southeastern Poland, where 'Iranian White Croat' speech was replaced by 'Slavic Croat' shortly before the emigration of some of the speakers to the northern Balkans.

vincing if one recalls a wide array of other (mostly, metaphoric) meanings of this stem such as 'ordinary [people]' (as opposed to aristocracy), 'common [people],' even 'slave' (see Laude-Cirtautas 1961, 32), 'vegetable poison' and some others (Clauson 1972, 643-4; see Nadeljaev et al. 1969, 422-4); cf. *kara baš* referring to the Armenian Bishop, later any Christian priest (Radloff 2: 133; see Laude-Cirtautas 1961, 20). By comparing the meanings of Tu *ḳara* and Gk ἄξεινος, Buxarin (2013, 465) recently concluded that the Turkic designation of the Black Sea had nothing to do with "color-coding", while the western European color terms might have been based on the secondary chromatic interpretation of the Turkic stem *ḳara* (see also Laude-Cirtautas 1961, 33-4). It is not coincidental that the stem *ḳara* in many personal, ethnic, and dynastic names demonstrates the meaning 'great, powerful' such as (in Pritsak's notation) the title *qara chaqan* 'chief, upper ruler,' *qara ordu* 'black (< 'main, great') army,' *Qara qum*, today the name of a desert in Central Asia, primarily meaning 'the northern abode, habitation' and other expressions (see Pritsak 1954, 377). In this respect, deserving of attention is a similar distinction between the 'black' and 'white' Khazars in al-Iṣṭakhri's *Kitāb masālik al-mamālik* (Viae regnorum, ca. 951) (*al-Iṣṭakhrī*, ٢٢٣).

However, the larger concerns of the common color-based hypothesis of the origin of the Arabic term *al-Baḥr al-ʾAswad* (and *Ḳara Deniz*), next to the respective Greek and Latin forms in the European tradition, can be missed if we come at this puzzle from the 'geo-chromatic' end. In this respect, one should bear in mind both historiographic (Schmitt 1996) and linguistic counter arguments, advanced, for instance, by Moorhouse (1940). According to this author, there is no direct evidence of the Avestan adjective ever being applied to the naming of the Black Sea; also, in historical times, Avestan is a long way from Greek and in prehistorical times it is doubtful whether the speakers of Avestan had any close connection with the Black Sea; assuming Πόντος to denote 'way', 'the dark way' would be a fantastic name for any sea (see Allen 1947).

The earliest Greek 'geo-chromatic' designation of the Black Sea is recorded in the treaty concluded in 1265 between Michael VIII Palaeologus and the Venetian doge Raynerio Geno (dominus Raynerius Geno). In the above treaty, the Greek Μαύρη Θάλασσα is rendered in the Latin-language version of the treaty as *Mauritalassae videlicet Mare Nigro* (Tafel, Thomas 1857, 70, 66-77, 82). According to Buxarin (2013, 469), the use of these forms proves a 'geo-chromatic' adaptation of the name of the Black Sea in Byzantium. However, since the vocabulary of this treaty largely reflected the local vernacular standard, we can assume that the form Μαύρη Θάλασσα had been part of the plain vocabulary long before it was employed in this treaty.

Examples of the 'geo-chromatic' naming of the Black Sea are also found in the anonymous *Gesta Hungarorum*, most probably com-

posed in the early 13th century. The chronicle purports to be an account of the background, circumstances and immediate aftermath of the Hungarian conquest of Pannonia in the late 9th century (Rady 2009, 681). The first 'geo-chromatic' attestation is recorded in Chapter 1, entitled "De Scythia":

> Scithia igitur maxima terra est que dentumoger dicitur; uersus orientem finis cuius ab aquilonali parte extenditur usque ad nigrum pontum. (*Gesta Hungarorum*, 2)

> Scythia then is a very great land, called Dentumoger, over towards the east, the end of which reaches westwards to the Black Sea [nigrum pontum]. (Rady 2009, 686)

The second 'geo-chromatic' form is recorded in Chapter 44, entitled "De insula danubii":

> […] et insuper legatos suos miserunt, ut eis licentiam daret in greciam eundi, ut totam macedoniam sibi subiugarent, a Danubio usque ad nigrum mare. (*Gesta Hungarorum*, 38)

> And they sent […] their envoys to him so that he might give them leave to go to Greece that they might conquer the whole of Macedonia from the Danube to the Black Sea [nigrum mare]. (Rady 2009, 716)

The identity of the author of this chronicle, King Béla III's notary, is uncertain. His style is of a French school, probably Paris (La Sorbonne?) or Orleans. He has some knowledge of Hungarian that he uses to support his etymologies. What is more important, though, is that he is possibly the first European writer to call the Black Sea as such, which (along with several other indicators) may suggest, according to Rady (2009, 684), an understanding of a Turkic language. I believe, however, that the anonymous's designation of the Black Sea as such proves that the 'geo-chromatic' interpretation of the Black Sea was quite common in West Europe in the early 13th century (see Bukharin 2013, 470).

Karatay (2011) recently rejected the colour-based origin of Tk *Karadeniz*. He argued that Turkish or Turkic has no clear usage of colors for geographical directions, and, moreover, the Turks were among the last to use the name 'Black Sea' – this name had been firmly established in the north among the Khazars, Magyars, and the Norsemen well before the Ottomans, who had been able to extend their power much farther around the sea than had their Byzantine predecessors, came to use it. Second, the source of the puzzle seems to be hidden in the semantic connection between the words 'great' and

'black' (Karatay 2011, 10-11). One of the proofs of the northern origin of the term 'great' (> 'black') is found, for example, in the anonymous Khazarian letter extant from the 10th century:

> [Our country, Khazar] is to the right of the sea which comes from [yo]ur land, by which came your messengers to Constantinople. It appears to me the Great Sea does it extend [ה׳ם הגדול מושר]. Our city is distant from the sea by two thousand one hundred and sixty *rīs*. (Golb, Pritsak 1982, 118-19)

By mere calculations and other textual evidence, Karatay (2011, 4) concluded that it is the Black Sea that is being referred to here. It is not surprising that to a new influx of sailors and traders coming from the city-states of medieval Italy, who found small remnants of the Khazars, or perhaps Jewish communities associated with the Khazars, especially in *Tьmutorokanь* (see Danylenko 2022), it was simply *il mare Maggiore* 'the Great Sea' (King 2004, 82; see Karatay 2011, 5). William of Rubruck writes in his 13th-century account of Mongols that entered:

> Pontus seu Pontus Euxinus seu Mare Maius seu Maurum pro mari Nigro apud antiquos inveniuntur (*Sinica Franciscana*, 164)

> Sea of Pontus which is commonly called [by the ancients] Mare Maius, or the Greater Sea, [for the Black Sea] […] (Rubruck, 41)

It is tempting, therefore, to assume that the Khazar tradition, including some lexical nomenclature, was alive in those days, notwithstanding the process of Cumanization and the subsequent Mongol invasions (see Karatay 2011, 6). To support this line of argumentation, one can also mention here that the initial meaning of *ḳarā* in *Ḳarā Deniz* / *Ḳara Deniz* / *Karadeniz* frequently has the meaning of 'great, powerful, terrible' in Turkish, particularly in personal names. According to Planhol ("Ḳarā Deniz"), the contamination of the two meanings seems probable, but the explanation appears inadequate: the existence of the double *Ḳarā Deniz – Aḳ Deniz* (the 'White Sea,' or the Mediterranean) does not plead in its favor (Abū al-Fidāʾ-Reinaud 2, pt. 1, 38 fn. 3; Mordtmann, "Ḳara Deniz", 730).

In fact, as Schmitt (1990, 310) reiterated, the name 'Black Sea' could hardly be derived from the color of the water or from any climatic particulars. It must be viewed in the context of a cosmographic system in which colour names indicated the cardinal points (e.g., black [or dark] for north, red for south, white for west, and green or light blue for east): the name 'Red Sea' (known since Herodotus) thus designated the Indian Ocean, together with the adjoining Red Sea and Persian Gulf (see Saussure 1924, 25; Pritsak 1954, 377).

Black would then be a natural designation for the northern antipodal sea, although Schmitt (1990, 310) believes that the name 'Black Sea' cannot have been given to it by the Scythians – the name must come from a people that knew both the northern Black and the southern Red Seas.

We are not ready, however, to state definitely that this people were Achaemenids, as Schmitt (1990, 310) assumed, or some Turkic people(s) who adopted the cosmographic conceptions of Far East (Saussure 1924; see Mordtmann, "Ḳara Deniz", 730). Nevertheless, full coverage of the relationship between the meaning 'great, powerful, terrible' and 'black' becomes possible if compared with parallel semantic shifts in other languages. Thus, It/Fr *Mare Maggiore* / *Mer Majeur*, used down to the first half of the 17th century, could have sprung up in parallel with the 'geo-chromatic' designation already in the antiquity. Henceforth, as was noted by Mordtmann (Mordtmann, "Ḳara Deniz", 730), we find the name 'Black Sea' throughout geographical literature; the older reproduction of *Ḳarā Deniz* (in another notation, *Ḳara Deniz*) by 'Great Sea' shows that *Ḳarā* in this connection does not refer to the color but means, as often in proper names, 'great, powerful, terrible,' in keeping with the dangers of the voyage, particularly in bad weather, upon the sea so liable to storms of such extent.

A similar meaning is reconstructed for the adjective *ʾaswad* 'black' in the Arabic name of the Black Sea. Thus, *ʾaswad* could be employed as an epithet describing a particularly powerful wind; also, under the ʿAbbāsids, one of their governors (or his military commanders) was called *musayyidah* (see Dozy, 1: 700). Considering the parallelism between Ar *ʾaswad* and Tu *ḳarā*, Saussure (1924, 31) concluded that both forms have a "double meaning" of (1) 'great, powerful, terrible' and (2) 'black.' To be sure, this parallelism is remarkable. Yet it is not clear whether we are dealing here with the independent development in each of these languages or with what is called in areal-typological linguistics 'polysemy copying'. In the latter case we speak about replication of a polysemy pattern (see the 'double meaning' above) and not of mere calquing or loan translation (Heine, Kuteva 2005, 100). What is clear, however, is that the 'geo-chromatic' interpretation of this term was secondary and, for an extended period of time, local (Buxarin 2013, 472).

Operating within the limits of historical geography, it is easy to notice shortcomings in the argumentation of Karatay (2009; 2011), especially in what regards the process of the borrowing of the Khazarian semantic model 'great' > 'black' by the Turks (and the Arabs). Leaving certain details aside, the Turkish designation *Ḳarā Deniz* (*Ḳara Deniz* / *Karadeniz*) can be treated as an intermediate term synthesizing (channeling) several independent developmental clines in the naming of the Black Sea. The term *Ḳarā* could hardly trigger the 'geo-chromatic' interpretation of the designation of the Black Sea. We

rather deal here, to use Stachowski's expression, with the "European-Asiatic semantic interweavement" of different geographical traditions overlapping in the Pontic region. Hence it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between a donor and a true receptor tradition. Moreover, the list of such local traditions can be expanded, for instance, by the Old Scandinavian and East Slavic (Ruthenian or, Ukrainian) geographical traditions (Saussure 1924, 33; see Buxarin 2013, 470-5).

6 From Scandinavia to Ruthenia

It is worth mentioning here data on *Svíþjóð in mikla eða kalda*, or "Sweden the Great or Cold," found in *Heimskringla, Yinliga saga*, the best-known saga (early 13th century) of the Old Norse kings' sagas. According to the author of this saga, Sweden the Great or Cold was located to the north of the *Svartahaf*, or the Black Sea. It was a large territory, comparable in size to *Serkland in mikla* (Saracen land) or *Bláland in mikla* (Africa); its northern part was peopled with giants and dwarfs and was uncultivated because of frost and cold; through its southern part ran the river Tanais (the Don River), which was called *Tana-* (*Vana-*) *kvísl* ('Tana / Vana Fork') by the Norsemen, and which had its mouth at *Svartahaf*. The land was divided from other countries by a great mountain chain which ran north-east and then south-west. To the west of the river *Tana-* was Europe; to its east was Asia (see Pritsak 1981, 244, 662, 671).

Remarkably, *Svartahaf* does not just mean the Black Sea; the term also covers the Sea of Azov, an overlap also found in some Arabic-Islamic sources, for instance, in al-Masʿūdī (al-Masʿūdī-Pellat, ١٤٦) and al-Idrīsī (8, 910-1). The use of the 'geo-chromatic' term *Svartahaf* in the Old Scandinavian geographical tradition is quite revealing. Tentatively, due to the long-standing relations between Byzantium and the Old Scandinavians (Varangians), the form *Svartahaf* might reflect the Byzantine and Latin-Christian tradition(s) rather than the Turkish one (see Buxarin 2013, 472).

To give an example of the later confusion of different geographical traditions in the Latin West, it is worth mentioning Johannes Schiltberger's *Hie vahet an d'Schildberger der vil wunders erfaren hatt in der heydenschafft und in d'türckey*, published for the first time in 1476 in Augsburg by Anton Sorg (Planhol, "Ḳarā Deniz", 575).[4] Having been taken prisoner and subsequently enslaved by the Turks and, later,

4 This work produces a portrayal of the East in order to inform a German-speaking and Christian audience, refracting the ideas, customs, values and interest of this culture in narrating the encounter with another world (Wolpert 2016, 266, 271). One can expect, therefore, that, being aware of the *Türkenfurcht*, Schiltberger would be precise in citing names, dates, and other facts related to his 30-year captivity.

the Mongols, from 1396 to 1427, this German nobleman kept a travel book (*Reisebuch*), describing his journeys within the Pontic region, including the southern coast of Crime (Schiltberger). Of particular interest is Chapter 57, dealing with the description of Constantinople; Schiltberger uses in one page side by side two designations of the Black Sea which seem to reflect different geographical traditions:

> The great Alexander […] caused two seas to flow into each other; and that which flows is called and is the Great Sea, and it is also called the Black Sea. (Schiltberger, 79)

> Es hat auch der groß Alexander XV […] und hat zwai mer in ainander lassen; und das do fleust das ist das groß mere, man hayst es auch das schwartz mere. (*Reisebuch*, 46)

The name *groß mere* 'Great Sea' seems to reflect the older Western European geographical tradition. In the case of the term *schwartz mere* 'Black Sea,' one can only guess whether the German traveler made use of a Greek or Turkish term since the travel book was completed upon return to Germany in 1427 after a long journey through southern Rus', in fact Ruthenia (modern Ukraine). There is also a possibility that the designation *schwartz mere*, although covering the events witnessed by Schiltberger in Turkey, including Crimea, can reflect in fact not the Russian but rather the Ruthenian (Ukrainian) local tradition. At any rate, this 'geo-chromatic' term became known in Germany as late as the second part of the 15th century.

7 Conclusions

The foregoing survey of Arabic-Islamic and Christian (Western European) designations of the Black Sea allows to safely deduce the following.

When describing the Black Sea, the bulk of early Arab-Muslim authors were largely influenced by the Greek (Byzantine) geographical tradition (section 2). Yet some of them used parallel designations based on the names of the adjacent peoples and cities (section 3). By the end of the 13th century the naming of the Black Sea became more oriented toward the local ethnic and geographical names. Thus, at the time of the compilation of their geographical works, Ibn Saʿīd al-Maghribī and especially Abū al-Fidāʾ and al-Dimashqī, the two Syrian authors who were active in the early 14th century, demonstrated a transition to a new stage in the descriptive perception of the Black Sea and its major coastal cities, including Ar *Maṭrakhā* (مطرخا) / Gk τό Ταμάταρχα (τὰ Μάταρχα) / ESl / OUk *Тъmutorokanь* (see Marquart 1903, 163; Mošin 1925; Abū al-Fidāʾ-Reinaud 2, pt. 1, 289).

Abū al-Fidāʾ and al-Dimashqī began using new (or corrupted) transcriptions. Moreover, since these Arab-Muslim authors belonged to the same Arabic-Islamic sphere as the Turko-Tatar inhabitants of the medieval Pontic region, they could borrow the respective 'geo-chromatic' term from their Turkish neighbors rather than from Latin-Christian geographical literature. What, unfortunately, is impossible to determine right now is whether (and when) the Turkish neighbors would have borrowed the respective 'geo-chromatic' term or its semantic variation 'northern'; at any rate, all this does not refute the fact that the Arab-Muslim authors might have loaned the term from them rather than from the Christians.

One should also be recalled that by that time the world of Arabic-Islamic scholarship, including the descriptive geography, largely failed to invest much intellectual energy into the acquisition of Latin-Christian knowledge (see König 2015, 80-1); all this can partially explain why Ibn Saʿīd al-Maghribī, Abū al-Fidāʾ and al-Dimashqī switched at the turn of the 14th century to the Turksh-Islamic scholarly paradigm, instead.

At the same time, largely based on the Greek tradition, the Latin-Christian designations demonstrate a striking parallelism in the 'geo-chromatic' designation(s) of the Black Sea, a fact which tentatively testify to the independent, though extremely 'interwoven' with the Arabic-Islamic tradition, naming of the Black Sea in the Latin West.

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Armenia, Caucaso e Asia Centrale
Ricerche 2022
a cura di Daniele Artoni, Carlo Frappi, Paolo Sorbello

Mariti assenti e casalinghe disperate? Un rimedio legale dalla scuola shāfiʿita nella Aleppo ottomana ḥanafita, ovvero una lezione sulla flessibilità della Legge islamica (non musulmani inclusi)

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Abstract This short essay presents a number of unpublished 17th century documents from the Sharīʿa court records of Aleppo pertaining to the rather sensitive, both morally and socially, issue of how to deal with cases of legally married women permanently deserted and abandoned by their absent husbands. In Aleppo, as elsewhere in the Ottoman realm, this frequently occurring phenomenon had its causes in widespread regional and interregional mobility patterns. For once, the Ottoman judiciary found itself incapable to come up with a practical solution and had to look for answers outside of the officially recognized Ḥanafite school. The Shāfiʿite *madhhab*, the leading juridical school in Syria up until the arrival of the Ottomans in early 16th century, could and did in fact offer a much more pragmatic way out to the predicament of a relevant number of married women (including non-Muslim ones) who were allegedly experiencing hardship and privation.

Keywords Marriage. Divorce. Ottoman Aleppo. Court records.

Adottato fin dalle origini dal Casato di ʻUthmān quale proprio sistema legale di preferenza, l'hanafismo fu senza sforzo esteso in tutti i domini ottomani quale scuola giuridica ufficiale. Di conseguenza, il *muftī* ḥanafita di Istanbul si pose e fu riconosciuto quale suprema au-

Edizioni Ca'Foscari

Eurasiatica 19
e-ISSN 2610-9433 | ISSN 2610-8879
ISBN [ebook] 978-88-6969-667-1

Peer review | Open access
Submitted 2022-05-09 | Accepted 2022-05-19 | Published 2023-04-26
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DOI 10.30687/978-88-6969-667-1/000

torità religiosa dell'Impero con il titolo di Shaykh al-Islām.[1] Tale egemonia, tuttavia, non determinò l'esclusione o l'eliminazione delle altre tre correnti giuridiche dell'Islām sunnita, vale a dire shāfi'ismo, mālikismo e ḥanbalismo. Seguite da una larga parte della popolazione ottomana, in particolare nelle province arabofone, esse erano riconosciute e accettate, pur se in una posizione gerarchica subordinata, da un sistema di potere impegnato a presentarsi come campione, difensore e unificatore del sunnismo quale 'unico' e 'autentico' Islām.[2] Gli ottomani, così, preservarono e trovarono un spazio di legittimità per le scuole non ḥanafite all'interno di un ideale e di un modello dottrinario e istituzionale frutto della abile combinazione di *pietas* islamica, sovranità imperiale e pragmatismo politico. Con l'eccezione delle aree corrispondenti all'attuale Tunisia e Algeria che rimasero largamente ancorate al tradizionale mālikismo, il patrocinio e il sostegno imperiale dato alla scuola hanafita determinarono, nel lungo periodo, una riduzione graduale nel numero degli affiliati alle altre scuole; queste, tuttavia, non scomparvero e continuarono a operare.

Sicuramente, questo è il caso della Siria (*bilād al-Shām*),[3] dove l'arrivo degli ottomani del sultano Selīm I (r. 1512-20) nel 1516-17 diede il via a una riorganizzazione amministrativa e sistemica che modificò, inevitabilmente, secolari gerarchie e posizioni delle scuole giuridiche. L'ḥanafismo, associato al nuovo potere dominante, attrasse gradualmente un crescente numero di '*ulamā*' e, conseguentemente, di comuni fedeli, fino ad allora, in maggioranza, tradizionalmente seguaci dello shāfi'ismo.[4] Ciò nonostante, nelle principali città come Damasco, Aleppo, Cairo, lo shāfi'ismo poté contare su un proprio tribunale (*maḥkama*), presieduto da un vice (*nā'ib*) del giudice (*qāḍī*)

1 Per cui cf. Repp 1997, 400-2; 1986; Gerber 1999, in particolare 60-4.

2 Seppur presenti, le altre versioni di Islām quali lo sciismo (duodecimano e zaydita) e khārijismo/ibāḍismo, non furono mai riconosciute ufficialmente.

3 Con 'Siria' (*Bilād al-Shām*) si intendeva, sia geograficamente che amministrativamente, tutta l'area comprendente gli attuali Libano, Siria, Giordania e Israele/Palestina,

4 L'ḥanbalismo rimase attivo nella Siria meridionale e in alcune aree della Palestina. Il mālikismo, mai veramente popolare, continuò a essere marginale e ininfluente, con la sola, ma importante, eccezione di Gerusalemme. L'importanza del numero di seguaci delle varie scuole è ben illustrata da Dror Ze'evi. Il riferimento è a Gerusalemme ma lo si può estendere anche ad altre realtà come Aleppo e Damasco: «Dato che la religione considerava la politica come parte delle sue responsabilità, gli ulema consideravano l'amministrazione giornaliera nella città come facente parte dei loro doveri. Gli ulema erano il solo elemento di coesione all'interno della città e sbrigavano i propri affari tramite varie reti clientelari [...]. Le reti più efficienti erano quelle che univano la popolazione a seconda della loro adesione ad una delle Quattro Scuole giuridiche islamiche (*madhhab*s)» (Ze'evi 1996, 16, citando l'opinione dello studioso Ira Lapidus). Ove non diversamente specificato, tutte le traduzioni sono dell'Autore.

ḥanafita.[5] Lungi dall'essere un simulacro del passato, tenuto in piedi da un certo *penchant* conservativo cui gli ottomani non furono certamente estranei, esso trovò un proprio spazio nel quale agire con efficacia, un ambito importante dello statuto personale quale il matrimonio, in particolare la procedura di annullamento dello stesso.

Quest'articolo, infatti, si propone di mostrare come, grazie al ricorso a una regola più pratica e ragionevole prevista dalla scuola shāfiʿita, il sistema legale ottomano-ḥanafita fu in grado di far fronte a un problema dalle forti implicazioni sia pubbliche che private, vale a dire quello della precaria e complicata condizione della donna sposata in stato di solitudine e abbandono – sia affettivo/sessuale che economico – a causa della prolungata assenza del marito, che, come prescritto da regole legali ben stabilite, era obbligatoriamente tenuto al supporto materiale della propria moglie e degli eventuali figli.[6]

I registri (*sijillāt*) dei tribunali della Sharīʿa di Aleppo[7] offrono ampia documentazione di questa situazione e un piccolo campione di essi, risalente al XVII secolo, è stato qui utilizzato per provare che, al bisogno, la macchina legale ottomana, ben lungi dall'essere un sistema rigido e astratto, si prestava consapevolmente a un calcolato grado di flessibilità quando in gioco vi fossero gli imperativi interessi della comunità nel suo insieme, inclusiva, in questo FotoFotFotocaso, anche dei non musulmani.

Dato il suo forte impatto sul piano morale, sessuale, sociale ed economico, l'importanza del matrimonio nell'Islām è ovvia e non richiede ulteriori valutazioni.[8] Così come precise e puntuali erano le regole per la stipula del contratto matrimoniale (*ʿaqd al-nikāḥ*), altrettanto lo erano quelle per il suo scioglimento, tramite ripudio unilate-

5 Sul rapporto tra ḥanafismo ottomano e le altre scuole cf. Gerber 1999, 67-70.

6 In un ormai lontano saggio su innovazione e tradizione nella pratica legale ottomana (Salati 2008), avevo affrontato la questione brevemente e a titolo informativo. In questa sede essa viene ripresa con maggiore attenzione e con il supporto di documentazione inedita presentata qui per la prima volta.

7 Sui registri dei tribunali ottomani in generale e sul loro uso come strumento di ricerca e studio della società ottomana cf., tra gli altri, Faroqhi 1997; Akgündüz 2009; Ze'evi 1998. Per la Siria (Damasco e Aleppo in particolare) cf. Rafeq 1976; Marino 2000; Marcus 1989, in particolare 8-9 e *passim*. Sui poteri del giudice e sulla struttura e funzioni del tribunale sciaraitico (*maḥkama* o *majlis al-shar*ʿ) in epoca ottomana cf. Inalcik 1991; Jennings 1978; Marcus 1989, in particolare 10-11, 79-80, 106-7; Ergene 2003; Fitzgerald 2009. Sulla Aleppo ottomana in generale cf., tra gli altri, Masters 1988; Marcus 1989; Watenpaugh 2004; Wilkins 2010.

8 Tra gli altri cf. Tucker 1998, 37-77; 2008, 38-83; Sonbol 1996. Per Aleppo cf. Marcus 1989, 31-2, 202-7, 255-6.

rale (*ṭalāq*),[9] separazione consensuale (*khul'*/*mubārāt*),[10] o rescissione giudiziaria (*faskh*).[11]

A quest'ultima situazione si arrivava qualora si riscontrassero fatti tali da impedire il regolare e ordinato svolgimento della vita coniugale. Accanto alle imperfezioni nel contratto stesso che portavano alla sua nullità o invalidità, a seconda della gravità dell'irregolarità riscontrata,[12] e ai casi di inadempienza per motivi legati a malattie o difetti che rendevano impossibili i rapporti sessuali,[13] le scuole giuridiche generalmente concordavano sulla facoltà di intervento del giudice qualora il marito mancasse di provvedere al mantenimento (*nafaqa*) che le norme dottrinarie gli imponevano. Più precisamente, al marito dotato di beni veniva chiesto di ripristinare il mantenimento oppure di pronunciare la formula di ripudio. Al marito indigente, invece, era concessa una proroga, a discrezione del giudice, che gli consentisse di trovare i mezzi necessari al versamento del mantenimento; una volta scaduta la proroga senza che fosse occorso un cambiamento nella situazione del marito, il giudice sentenziava la separazione dei coniugi e lo scioglimento del matrimonio. Le regole suddette si applicavano quando il marito era presente e viveva insieme alla moglie.

Le cose cambiavano in caso di assenza, temporanea, del marito. Il giudice, preso atto della mancanza di mantenimento, concedeva alla donna di avvalersi direttamente dei beni del marito o di contrarre debiti a nome suo cui egli avrebbe fatto fronte in seguito.[14]

Nei casi esaminati in questo articolo, siamo di fronte ad una situazione ancora più grave, nella quale si combinavano due fattori: la prolungata e assoluta assenza del marito e la sua certificata indigenza.

Per i giuristi, l'assente assoluto era «la persona di cui non si hanno più notizie, ma che si spera di poter rintracciare»,[15] cioè di cui non era noto se fosse vivo o morto, in quale località abitasse o fosse passato o scappato, per utilizzare formule ricorrenti nei documenti dei tribunali. La moglie abbandonata si veniva a trovare in un limbo insostenibile. La solitudine e la mancanza di sostegno economico

9 Al solo marito, colui che 'stringe' il contratto, è consentito di sciogliere il vincolo, indipendentemente dalla volontà della moglie. Cf., ad esempio, Tucker 1998, 78-112. Per Aleppo cf. Marcus 1989, 196-206.

10 Molto frequente nei registri sciaraitici, questa procedura richiedeva comunque l'assenso del marito alla proposta di scioglimento chiesta dalla moglie.

11 Sulla definizione di *faskh* in generale (annullamento, dissoluzione, rescissione di un contratto) cf. Chehata 1991.

12 Cf. Santillana 1938-43, 1: 223-6.

13 Cf. Santillana 1938-43, 1: 280-2; Tucker 1998, 813.

14 I casi di questo tipo sono molto frequenti nei registri di Aleppo.

15 Santillana 1938-43, 1: 283.

innescavano, infatti, una serie di problematiche di natura etica e sociale che investivano la cerchia di parenti, vicini e, più in generale, il quartiere e i suoi rappresentanti (*shaykh*, *imām*). Da un lato, una donna sposata ma sola e senza mezzi era esposta a potenziali comportamenti capaci, di suscitare 'disordine' (morale); dall'altro, la sua situazione era un chiaro esempio di 'ingiustizia' (sociale), il tutto non in linea con il decoro, la rettitudine e l'integrità richiesta dalla società.

Tali circostanze imponevano, dunque, una soluzione adeguata e per quanto possibile, veloce. In questo frangente, come si è detto, l'ḥanafismo dominante mostrava una rigidità che gli impediva di essere efficace: la dottrina di questa scuola, infatti, continuava a ritenere il matrimonio vigente e in atto anche in queste condizioni estreme. Solo con il raggiungimento dell'età di novanta anni, la moglie, se ancora viva, avrebbe potuto rivolgersi al giudice e chieder di essere sciolta e liberata dal vincolo matrimoniale. Insomma, una non soluzione. Il giudice ḥanafita, il supremo esecutore della visione ottomano-islamica di giustizia, era di fatto vincolato alle opinioni della propria scuola e impossibilitato ad agire altrimenti. Tuttavia, e qui entra in gioco il flessibile pragmatismo della Legge, egli poteva delegare il caso a quello dei suoi vice in grado di garantire la via d'uscita all'*impasse* giuridico, vale a dire il rappresentante della dottrina shāfiʿita. Questa scuola, infatti, sosteneva che, stabilite l'esistenza del matrimonio, l'assenza totale del marito e l'indigenza di entrambi, un congruo ma ragionevole numero di anni di attesa da parte della donna fossero più che sufficienti per chiedere al giudice di terminare il contratto.[16]

Calato nella realtà della procedura, questo processo di autorizzazione e di delega, con le sue rilevanti conseguenze, costituiva, dunque, l'asse portante della narrazione giuridica prodotta nei registri. Dal formalismo di questa narrazione emerge, evidente, che la causa che portava molte donne sposate in uno stato di abbandono e sten-

16 Nei testi fondanti del pensiero shāfiʿita e, in questo caso, anche mālikita è così riportato: «Avverandosi la scomparsa, la moglie deve denunciare il fatto al giudice o altra autorità legittima (*imām*), il quale deve anzitutto prescriverle di provare: a) l'esistenza del matrimonio; b) il fatto della scomparsa. Ed avuta la prova di tutto ciò, scrive alle autorità del luogo ove si crede possa trovarsi lo scomparso, chiedendo loro di farne ricerca. La scomparsa non è di per se stessa causa della risoluzione del vincolo coniugale. La moglie dello scomparso può chiedere subito lo scioglimento del matrimonio solo se il marito non le abbia lasciato quanto occorre al suo mantenimento» (Santillana 1938-43, 1: 162-5). Come si vedrà, nei documenti qui presentati il tempo di attesa dichiarato dalle parti coinvolte è variabile, dai due, quattro, fino a dieci anni. Queste differenze si spiegano più con le specificità del singolo caso piuttosto che con eventuali diversità di opinioni nella dottrina. Cf. anche Marcus 1989, 103; Tucker puntualizza che nella maggior parte dei casi le sentenze di *faskh* nei tribunali ḥanafiti non erano in accordo con la giurisprudenza di quella scuola, bensì con le regole della scuole shāfiʿita e ḥanbalita, quest'ultima relativamente attiva in Palestina (cf. Tucker 1998, 82-3),

ti a rivolgersi al tribunale[17] era il diffuso fenomeno di forte mobilità e migrazione che investiva Aleppo e la sua provincia. In entrata come in uscita, questa città, meta e snodo del traffico regionale, interregionale e internazionale e importante stazione della carovana del pellegrinaggio a Mecca,[18] dimostrava che

> molti degli abitanti di Aleppo provenivano dalla regione circostante e molti altri erano arrivati per sistemarsi nei vari quartieri della città. Questa migrazione, parte di un modello regionale di mobilità, confermava in modo tangibile il carattere poroso della città […]. Nel corso del Seicento e del Settecento, attratti da periodi di prosperità, gli immigrati aggiunsero molti nuovi quartieri al paesaggio urbano […]. Al tempo stesso, diverse migliaia di residenti se ne andarono per sempre per cercare fortuna altrove […]. In tutta la regione, uomini e donne inquieti, troppo ambiziosi o svantaggiati per essere trattenuti da legami locali, si misero in cammino alla ricerca di fuga, avventura, o un nuovo futuro.[19]

Questo concorre a spiegare il perché i casi di richiesta di annullamento di matrimonio si ripetevano con una frequenza tale da richiedere risposte efficaci.[20]

Nell'affidarsi all'opinione giuridica shāfiʿita, accomodata all'interno di una rodata fraseologia procedurale, il sistema legale ottomano trovava, da un lato, il modo di arrivare a una sintesi armonica di tradizionali diversità tra le scuole; dall'altro, si garantiva per tutti – musulmani e non e senza distinzioni di genere o classe – la fruizione della possibilità di giustizia che tale sistema dispensava, a seconda dei propri interessi e convenienze. Grazie anche all'azione dei giurisperiti (*muftī*) la Sharīʿa si dimostrava, così, permeabile a modifiche, aggiustamenti e anche rotture con abitudini consolidate.

Last but not least, anche da questo campione di pochi ma, crediamo, rappresentativi esempi, emerge e si conferma un dato osservato da numerosi studiosi delle varie realtà che configuravano l'Impero ottomano: le donne di Aleppo, come di altre città, sapevano ed erano in grado di difendere i propri interessi e non esitavano a farlo, muovendosi entro quei limiti che secolari codici comportamentali e culturali stabilivano e affidandosi a quegli strumenti di cui la società del

17 Ma cf. il documento nr. 8 e il relativo commento.

18 Lo studio di Masters 1988 resta ancora il riferimento per una efficace analisi del ruolo commerciale di Aleppo tra il XVII e il XVIII secolo.

19 Marcus 1989, 30.

20 Oltre a Marcus 1989, 103, cf. Wilkins 2010, 184-5 e nota 266. Per casi analoghi a Gerusalemme cf. Ze'evi 1996, 232 nota 33; per la Siria/Palestina cf. Tucker 1998, 47, 79, 83-7, 110-11.

tempo disponeva. Una dimensione di *agency*, per dirla con un termine già un po' frusto ma alla moda, che stride con la generica e superficiale ancorché diffusa rappresentazione e idea del femminile nelle società islamiche 'premoderne' e 'tradizionali' cui siamo abituati e che insiste sulla condizione di totale passività e mancanza di diritti della donna.[21] Recenti studi, anzi, tendono a mettere in rilievo che se, da un lato, «si dà per scontato che [solo] le moderne riforme legali, con l'introduzione dei codici secolari e 'razionali' modellati su quelli europei e applicati nelle varie nazioni, abbiano portato cambiamenti positivi», dall'altro, l'intrusione diretta delle politiche nazionali nelle tematiche legate alla famiglia e allo statuto personale «ha avuto un effetto regressivo sulle donne e sulla società nel suo insieme».[22]

In realtà, come osserva giustamente Abraham Marcus, quello che è definito «tradizionale e premoderno non dovrebbe essere inteso come primitivo, semplice o irrazionale [...]. La vita premoderna aveva la sua parte di sofferenza, privazione, violenza, sfruttamento e incertezza»[23] ma la Aleppo ottomana, «considerata la sua complessità di strutture e condizioni, deve essere riconosciuta come una società altamente civilizzata».[24]

21 Cf. Tucker 1998; Zarinebaf-Shahr 1996; Zarinebaf-Shahr 1997. Per Aleppo cf. Marcus 1989, 53-62, 226-36 e *passim*.

22 Sonbol 1996, 2, 7.

23 Marcus 1989, 335.

24 Marcus 1989, 334.

I DOCUMENTI

1) RTA, XIV: 254

Sulla base della testimonianza di
ḥājj[25] Muḥammad b. *ḥājj* Aḥmad,
ḥājj Ibrāhīm b. Aḥmad,
ḥājj Qāsim b. ʿAlī,
ḥājj Aḥmad b. ʿAbdallāh,
shaykh[26] ʿUthmān b. *ḥājj* ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn,

tutti residenti del quartiere al-Zāwiya in Aleppo la Ben Protetta[27] e a seguito della richiesta di testimonianza e di azione legale proveniente dalla rispettabile donna Maryam figlia di *ḥājj* Ṣadr al-Dīn del suddetto quartiere, è stato legalmente stabilito che la suddetta [Maryam] è la moglie dell'indiano Mūsā b. ʿAbdallāh in virtù di un matrimonio legale e legittimo; che egli l'ha lasciata ed è partito per un viaggio da due anni e che la sua è una assenza completa e assoluta al punto da non essere noto se egli sia vivo o meno. Ciò è avvenuto dopo che lei gli si era offerta ma egli si era rifiutato di avere rapporti sessuali con lei.

Egli è povero, non possiede denaro o beni che possano essere venduti per provvedere alle sue [di lei] spese. Ora lei è indigente, non è in grado di badare a se stessa, vive nello stesso luogo in cui egli la lasciò e in nessun modo si è ribellata o ha commesso atti d'insubordinazione nei suoi confronti.[28]

25 Titolo di merito e di virtù religiosa per chi aveva compiuto il pellegrinaggio a Mecca.

26 Gli usi del termine *shaykh* ('anziano', 'persona matura e saggia', 'autorità religiosa') sono molteplici. Il riferimento qui potrebbe essere a un leader di una confraternita mistica, al capo di una corporazione di mestieri o al responsabile di un quartiere (*shaykh al-maḥalla*), anche se, in quest'ultimo caso, ad Aleppo si preferiva l'uso di *imām* (cf. Marcus 1989, 384 nota 27) Le grandi città dell'Impero ottomano erano definite 'ben difese' (*maḥrūsa*) e 'ben protette' (*maḥmiyya*) per rimarcare i doveri e i meriti della dinastia nell'assicurare sicurezza e stabilità.

27 Con questo nome non viene citato un quartiere di Aleppo nelle fonti consultate. Generalmente, *zāwiya* indica una struttura di residenza per una confraternita mistica.

28 Sulla base di *Corano*, IV, 34, capitolo *al-Nisā* (Le Donne), la giurisprudenza islamica ha elaborato il complesso di regole da adottare nei confronti della moglie 'indocile' o 'disubbidiente' (*nāshiza*, *ʿāṣiya*) nei confronti dell'autorità maritale, autorizzando la sospensione del mantenimento e una serie di comportamenti coercitivi da parte del marito, fino all'uso, molto discusso in epoca contemporanea, di percosse definite 'leggere'. Sulla 'indocilità' (*nushūz*) della moglie e in che cosa esattamente consistesse cf. Tucker 1998, 63-5.

A questo fatto legalmente provato è unito il giuramento legale da lei proferito in nome di Dio Onnipotente, il Perdonatore e il Misericordioso, sulla conformità e bontà della sua causa legale.

A quel punto, il nostro signore e autorità, il giudice shāfiʿita della Sharīʿa ha decretato con sentenza l'annullamento del matrimonio della suddetta [Maryam], l'ha liberata dal vincolo maritale e ha ordinato che i due siano separati, secondo la regola della scuola dell'Imām al-Shāfiʿī, l'illustre ed eccellente maestro Muḥammad b. Idrīs – che Dio sia soddisfatto di lui.

Annullamento e separazione legali, di cui è stata fatta richiesta dopo che il caso era stato presentato al Vanto delle Nobili Autorità, il Più Eminente degli Eccelsi Signori, il Primo tra le Autorevoli Guide dell'Islām […] Muḥammad *afandī*, il cui nobile lignaggio è famoso con il nome di Ḥusām-zāde, l'allora giudice di Aleppo[29] […]. Questi glielo aveva assegnato dopo che la causa era stata legalmente istruita presso di lui nei modi descritti all'inizio di questo documento. Incarico assegnato e approvato legalmente.

Quanto avvenuto è stato scritto e registrato su richiesta il giorno ventiquattro del mese di Safar al-Khayr dell'anno 1035 [/23 novembre 1625].

Commento

Nella sua schematica e tipicamente asettica formulazione, questo documento segue il modello standard di narrazione della causa legale e della sua risoluzione. La menzione dei testimoni, la identificazione dell'attore ridotta all'essenziale[30] e la presentazione dei fatti (status matrimoniale, in questo caso non consumato, scomparsa e stato di indigenza del coniuge, impossibilità per la moglie di provvedere a se stessa) sono gli elementi fondamentali e necessari affinché si arrivi al verdetto, che puntualmente arriva sulla scorta di una precisa trasmissione di autorità concessa dal gran giudice ḥanafita di Aleppo al suo subordinato e rappresentante della dottrina shāfiʿita. La richiesta di giuramento, un elemento comune a tutti i documenti di questo tipo, fatta alla donna si rende necessario al fine di corroborare alcuni fatti della causa, quali il rifiuto da parte del coniuge di avere rapporti sessuali, la condizione di indigenza di entrambi e la docilità di carattere di lei.

29 Nella lista dei giudici ottomani di Aleppo fornita dallo storico aleppino Kāmil al-Ghazzī nel suo *Nahr al-dhahab fī taʾrīkh Ḥalab*, il giudice in carica al momento della registrazione del documento è Ḥusām, il cui nome, tuttavia, è Muṣṭafā e non Muḥammad (cf. al-Ghazzī 1999, 1: 305).

30 L'attore (*muddaʿī*) è colui che istruisce la causa, «colui che afferma l'esistenza di un fatto» (Santillana 1938-43, 2: 580).

La provenienza geografica del marito, un membro della comunità di commercianti/mercanti indiani tradizionalmente presenti ad Aleppo, sempre di sola fede islamica, potrebbe spiegare il perché dell'assenza e scomparsa di individui abituati a spostarsi, e sposarsi, con frequenza. Presenti in un numero definito «non necessariamente grande ma persistente», i mercanti indiani «operavano come venditori su piccola scala. Restavano ad Aleppo per periodi anche di qualche anno, per poi dirigersi in altri luoghi. Ironicamente, è la loro mobilità che ci avverte della loro presenza, poiché ne abbiamo notizie in gran parte tramite le occasionali cause di divorzio per abbandono istruite dalle loro mogli ad Aleppo».[31]

2) RTA, XIV: 347

Sulla base della testimonianza di
sayyid[32] Abū Bakr b. *sayyid* ʿUthmān,
ḥājj Maʿtūq b. *ḥājj* Aḥmad,

[entrambi residenti] del quartiere Ẓāhir Bāb al-Naṣr nella città di Aleppo la Ben Protetta,[33] facente seguito alla richiesta di testimonianza e azione legale proveniente dal cristiano T-w-r-ta (?) figlio (*walad*)[34] di T-slī (?), l'agente legale per conto della rispettabile donna cristiana Zayn al-Tujjār figlia di Manṣūr Shāh […], è stato stabilito che la suddetta mandante è la moglie del cristiano Sarkīs figlio di ʿAbdallāh al-Diyārbakrī,[35] in virtù di un matrimonio legale e legittimo, e che egli la lasciò e scomparve da lei abbandonandola per un periodo di dieci anni di totale e assoluta assenza. Egli è povero, non possiede denaro o beni che possano essere venduti per provvedere alle sue [di lei] spese. Molte volte lei si era offerta a lui ma egli si era rifiutato di avere rapporti sessuali con lei: lei vive nello stesso luogo in cui egli la lasciò e in nessun modo si è ribellata o ha commesso atti d'insubordinazione nei suoi confronti.

31 Masters 1988, 81. Il commercio con l'India era principalmente incentrato su tessuti e indaco naturale per le tinture (cf. Masters 1988, 62-4).

32 Titolo spettante a chi poteva vantare una discendenza dal profeta Muḥammad.

33 Ẓāhir, o più comunemente Khārij, Bāb al-Naṣr si riferiva a un agglomerato di rioni esterni alla Porta della Vittoria Bāb al-Naṣr), uno dei punti di entrata nella Aleppo *intra muros*, nel quadrante nord-occidentale (cf. Marcus 1989, 316, 325)

34 Nell'onomastica araba, il termine *walad*, in contrasto con *ibn*/*b.*, era usato per distinguere cristiani ed ebrei dai musulmani.

35 Vale a dire originario o residente di Diyarbakir nell'Anatolia orientale, città con la quale Aleppo intratteneva rapporti commerciali e da cui provenivano numerosi immigrati di varia condizione sociale e professione (cf. Marcus 1989, 146-8).

A questo fatto legalmente provato si è unito il giuramento legale da lei proferito in nome di Dio Onnipotente, il Perdonatore e il Misericordioso, Colui che fece scendere il Vangelo sul profeta Gesù (ʿĪsā) – sul nostro profeta Muḥammad e su di lui la migliore delle preghiere – sulla conformità e bontà della sua causa legale

A quel punto, il nostro signore e autorità, il giudice shāfiʿita della Sharīʿa ha decretato con sentenza l'annullamento del matrimonio della suddetta mandante [Maryam], l'ha liberata dal vincolo maritale e ha ordinato che i due siano separati, secondo la regola della scuola dell'Imām al-Shāfiʿī, l'illustre ed eccellente maestro Muḥammad b. Idrīs – che Dio sia soddisfatto di lui.

Annullamento e separazione legali, di cui gli è stata fatta richiesta dopo che il caso era stato presentato al Vanto delle Nobili Autorità, il Più Eminente degli Eccelsi Signori, il Primo tra le autorevoli guide dell'Islām, il detentore del nobile lignaggio e la pura genealogia, la Crema dei Grandi della Famiglia del Profeta, il Prescelto tra i figli di Fāṭima la Pura Vergine[36] […], il verificatore del suo tempo e della sua epoca […] Muḥammad *afandī*, il cui nobile lignaggio è noto con il nome di Fanārī-zāde, l'allora giudice di Aleppo[37] […]. Egli glielo aveva assegnato dopo che la causa era stata legalmente istruita presso di lui nei modi descritti all'inizio di questo documento. Incarico assegnato e approvato legalmente.

Quanto avvenuto è stato scritto e registrato su richiesta il giorno sedici del mese di Dhū l-Qaʿda al-Ḥarām dell'anno 1035 [/9 agosto 1626].

Commento

Lungi dall'essere un caso isolato o eccezionale, questo documento concorre a provare che il Tribunale della Legge islamica, come osservato nella nostra introduzione, era aperto ad accogliere le istanze e a risolvere eventuali conflitti tra appartenenti a quelle comunità non musulmane (cristiani e ebrei) che formavano una cospicua porzione della popolazione di Aleppo. Per tradizione e per rimarcare i rispettivi confini, sin dagli inizi dell'epoca islamica i non musulmani monoteisti (*dhimmī*) godevano di una certa autonomia giuridica

36 Intorno alla figura di Fāṭima (m. 632), figlia del profeta Muḥammad, moglie del quarto califfo ʿAlī (m. 661) e madre di Ḥasan (m. 669) e Ḥusayn (m. 680), si è nel tempo sviluppato una sorta di processo di santificazione che, più o meno consapevolmente, l'ha avvicinata a Maria madre di Gesù (cf. McAuliffe 2002, 192-3).

37 Con il nome Fanārī-zāde è nota una famiglia di eruditi religiosi ottomani istanbulioti risalente al XIV secolo (cf. Walsh 1991). Questo Muḥammad dovrebbe corrispondere al Muḥammad b. Muṣṭafā al- Fanārī già giudice di Mecca intorno al 1616 e morto intorno al 1640 (cf. al-Ghazzī 1999, 1: 305; Öztuna 2005, 659; al-Muʿallimī 2000, 169).

e amministrativa che consentiva loro di regolare al proprio interno i rapporti interpersonali affidandosi ai capi religiosi della comunità. La frequenza con cui i *dhimmī* facevano appello al giudice della Sharīʿa della città sembra indicare un'aspettativa di maggiore imparzialità e rapidità di giudizio che caratterizzava la procedura islamica rispetto alle usuali modalità comunitarie.[38]

Nel caso in esame la coppia potrebbe appartenere, a giudicare dal nome del marito assente, alla comunità armena o siriana (giacobita),[39] entrambe presenti nella regione di Diyarbakir dell'Anatolia nord-orientale. Considerando che Diyarbakir vantava una piccola produzione locale di tessuti in cotone destinata a essere lavorata e smerciata ad Aleppo, si può ipotizzare che il nostro Sarkīs fosse in qualche modo impegnato in questo business che, per sua natura, implicava la necessità di spostamenti frequenti.[40] Il nome personale della donna, Zayn al-Tujjār (l'Ornamento dei Mercanti) autorizza a ipotizzare l'appartenenza a una agiata famiglia mercantile.[41] La presenza di un agente/mandatario (*wakīl*) era un fatto molto frequente quando fossero coinvolte, infatti, donne altolocate.[42]

La islamicità dei testimoni anche in cause legali riguardanti solo non musulmani, si spiega con il fatto che la testimonianza di quest'ultimi era ammessa solo in casi limitati. Da notare, infine, che il giuramento da lei pronunciato include la menzione di Gesù, cui subito dopo viene collegato, potremmo dire inevitabilmente, il profeta dell'Islām.[43]

38 Cf. Marcus 1989, 106-8; Jennings 2011; Ze'evi 1996.

39 I cristiani di Aleppo erano suddivisi in Melkiti/Greci ortodossi, Armeni, Siriani/Giacobiti, Maroniti (cf. Marcus 1989, 40). Il nome dell'agente della donna non offre, per il modo in cui è scritto, indicazioni sulla comunità cristiana di appartenenza. Mentre i siriani/giacobiti era particolarmente attivi nei traffici con l'Egitto (cf. Masters 1988, 66, 96-9), gli Armeni, sia della regione anatolica che di provenienza iranica, gravitavano intorno ad Aleppo monopolizzando di fatto il commercio della seta (cf. Masters 1988, 83-6, 91-9).

40 Cf. Masters 1988, 206-7.

41 Con Fakhr al-Tujjār (Il Vanto dei Mercanti) si indicavano, infatti, i mercanti più in vista, sia musulmani che cristiani (cf., ad esempio, Masters 1988, 48-9).

42 Sulla pratica del mandato si veda, tra gli altri, Jennings 1975; Tucker 1998, 50-3, 157-8.

43 Cf. anche Santillana 1938-43, 2: 629.

3) RTA, XVII: 32

Sulla base della testimonianza di
shaykh Muḥammad b. *shaykh* Yūsuf the *imām*,[44]
ḥājj ʿAlī b. ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn,
Sulaymān b. Jumʿa,

tutti residenti del quartiere al-Dallālīn, fuori la città di Aleppo la Ben Protetta,[45] facente seguito alla richiesta di testimonianza e azione legale proveniente dalla rispettabile donna Shaqra figlia di ʿĪsā, residente nello stesso quartiere, è stato stabilito che la suddetta attrice è la moglie di Muḥammad b. ʿAbdallāh al-Baghdādī in virtù di un di un matrimonio legale e legittimo. Egli ebbe rapporti sessuali con lei, poi andò via e scomparve alla sua (di lei) vista abbandonandola per un periodo di tre anni di totale e assoluta assenza, al punto da non essere noto se egli sia vivo o morto. Egli non le ha lasciato alimenti o vestiario e non le ha mandato nulla. Egli è assolutamente povero, senza mezzi o altri beni che possano essere venduti per provvedere alle sue [di lei] spese. Lei è indigente, bisognosa e incapace di badare a se stessa; vive nello stesso luogo in cui egli la lasciò e in nessun modo si è ribellata o ha commesso atti d'insubordinazione nei suoi confronti.

A questo fatto legalmente provato si è unito il giuramento legale da lei proferito in nome di Dio Onnipotente, il Perdonatore e il Misericordioso sulla conformità e bontà della sua causa legale.

A quel punto, il nostro signore e autorità, il giudice shāfiʿita della Sharīʿa ha decretato con sentenza l'annullamento del matrimonio della suddetta attrice [Shaqra], l'ha liberata dal vincolo maritale e ha ordinato che i due siano separati, secondo la regola della scuola dell'Imām al-Shāfiʿī, l'illustre ed eccellente maestro Muḥammad b. Idrīs – che Dio sia soddisfatto di lui.

Annullamento e separazione legali, di cui gli è stata fatta richiesta dopo che il caso era stato presentato al Vanto delle Nobili Autorità, il Più Eminente degli Eccelsi Signori, Bāyazīd *afandī*,[46] il giudice sostituto all'Alta Corte [di Aleppo]. Questi glielo aveva assegnato dopo che la causa era stata legalmente istruita presso di lui nei modi descritti all'inizio di questo documento. Incarico assegnato e approvato legalmente.

44 Come osservato precedentemente, nella Aleppo ottomana il titolo di *imām* era collegabile al responsabile di un quartiere o un distretto abitativo.

45 Situato all'interno del grosso agglomerato di Bānqūsā, nell'estrema periferia a nord-est delle mura, al-Dallālīn prendeva nome dal fatto di ospitare le guide carovaniere (*dallāl*) (cf. Marcus 1989, 318; al-Ghazzī 1999, 1: 326-7; al-Qalʿajī 1989, 174-5).

46 Non identificato nelle fonti consultate. Nella lista in al-Ghazzī 1999, 1: 305, il giudice in carica nell'anno islamico 1040 è ʿUshshāq ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz.

Quanto avvenuto è stato scritto e registrato su richiesta il giorno diciannove del mese di Rabīʿ I dell'anno 1040 [/26 ottobre 1630].

Commento

Il caso è simile al precedente, con la differenza qui che il coniuge è originario di Baghdad, città con la quale Aleppo manteneva stretti rapporti commerciali e alla quale era collegata da una importante rotta carovaniera.[47]

4) RTA, XVII: 410

Sulla base della testimonianza di
ḥājj Khalīl b. Muḥammad,
Muḥammad b. *ḥājj* Aḥmad,

Ibrāhīm b. Jumʿa, tutti abitanti del villaggio di al-Fūʿa,[48] che fa parte del distretto giudiziario di Maʿarra Maṣrīn,[49] facente seguito alla richiesta di testimonianza e azione legale proveniente dalla [rispettabile] donna Sitt al-Dār figlia di Ḥusayn, dello stesso villaggio, è stato stabilito che la suddetta attrice è la moglie di Muḥyī al-Dīn b. *ḥājj* Qāsim, abitante del villaggio di Maʿarra Maṣrīn, in virtù di un matrimonio legale e legittimo.

Egli ebbe rapporti sessuali con lei, poi andò via e scomparve alla sua (di lei) vista abbandonandola per un periodo di quattro anni di totale e assoluta assenza al punto da non essere noto se egli sia vivo o meno, dove risieda o dove si possa trovare.

Egli non le ha lasciato alimenti o vestiario e non le ha mandato nulla. Egli è assolutamente povero, e non possiede nulla che possa essere venduto per provvedere alle sue [di lei] spese. Lei è indigente e bisognosa, incapace di badare a se stessa e vive nello stesso luogo in cui egli la lasciò e in nessun modo si è ribellata o ha commesso atti d'insubordinazione nei suoi confronti.

47 Come indice dell'importanza del traffico Aleppo-Baghdad, Masters segnala che tra il 1610 e il 1640 le carovane nelle due direzioni, nonostante le difficoltà legate al clima pesante e all'attraversamento del duro deserto iracheno, potevano arrivare a includere tra i mille e i duemila cammelli (cf. Masters 1988, 111-12).

48 Per cui cf. più sotto nel commento al documento.

49 Antico insediamento agricolo e di transito carovaniero a una cinquantina di chilometri a sud-ovest di Aleppo, in epoca ottomana la sua importanza si ridusse a favore della vicina Idlib (cf. Elisséef 1986, 921-2).

[A questo fatto legalmente provato è unito il giuramento legale da lei proferito in nome di Dio Onnipotente, il Perdonatore e il Misericordioso, sulla conformità e bontà della sua causa legale].[50]

A quel punto, il nostro signore e autorità, il giudice shāfiʿita della Sharīʿa ha decretato con sentenza l'annullamento del matrimonio della suddetta attrice [Shaqra], l'ha liberata dal vincolo maritale e ha ordinato che i due siano separati, secondo la regola della scuola dell'Imām al-Shāfiʿī, l'illustre ed eccellente maestro Muḥammad b. Idrīs – che Dio sia soddisfatto di lui. Annullamento legale. Egli le ha anche ordinato di osservare un periodo di attesa (*tarabbuṣ*) [prima di potersi risposare], fino al completamento del ritiro legale (*ʿidda*) .[51]

Tutto questo [è avvenuto] dopo che il caso era stato esaminato dal Vanto degli Studiosi e delle Autorità […] ʿAlī *afandī*, il giudice sostituto all'Alta Corte [di Aleppo].[52] Questi glielo aveva assegnato dopo che la causa legale era stata legalmente istruita presso di lui nei modi descritti all'inizio di questo documento. Incarico assegnato e approvato legalmente.

Quanto avvenuto è stato scritto e registrato su richiesta il giorno tre del mese di Dhū l-Qaʿda dell'anno 1043 [/1 maggio 1634].

Commento

Al centro di una vasta e in gran parte florida e popolosa provincia, Aleppo era l'inevitabile centro di attrazione per quelle comunità agricole che, direttamente o per tramite di mediatori, arrivavano nei mercati cittadini per vendere i loro prodotti. Per casi importanti e non facili da risolvere in loco, il giudice di Aleppo e i suoi vice ascoltavano quotidianamente le lagnanze e le richieste di giustizia da parte degli abitanti dei paesi e villaggi che punteggiavano in particolare la parte settentrionale e occidentale della provincia.

L'interesse di questo documento sta nella provenienza dei testimoni e della donna da un villaggio, al-Fūʿa, dove si concentrava, insieme a un quartiere della vicina Maʿarra Maṣrīn, a pochi km a est di Idlib, e a due piccoli centri a nord di Aleppo (Nubbul e Nughāwla/

50 Nel testo del documento manca questo passaggio ma ci è sembrato opportuno inserirlo per uniformarlo agli altri.

51 In caso di scioglimento del matrimonio, e prima di passare eventualmente a nuove nozze, la Legge islamica impone alla donna di osservare un ritiro legale denominato *ʿidda* (lett. 'computo', 'calcolo'), della durata di tre cicli mestruali, al fine di verificare se sia incinta o meno. Nel caso lo sia, il nascituro è considerato legittimo ed è attribuito all'ex-marito. Per tutta la durata della *ʿidda* la donna non può contrarre matrimonio con altri.

52 Non identificato nelle fonti consultate. Nella lista in al-Ghazzī 1999, 1: 305, il giudice ufficialmente in carica nell'anno 1043/1634 è Gharīb Muḥammad.

al-Zahrā'), il grosso della antica comunità sciita duodecimana della Siria settentrionale.[53] Mai legittimato dalle autorità ottomane, lo sciismo duodecimano, era prudentemente tollerato per la sua periferica marginalità e l'atteggiamento inoffensivo dei suoi aderenti.[54]

5) RTA, II: 381

La rispettabile donna sposata Ṣāliḥa figlia di ʿAbdallāh, nobilitata dalla [conversione alla] religione dell'Islām e legalmente identificata da ʿAbd al-Bāqī b. *ḥājj* Ḥasan e *shaykh* Muṣṭafā b. Ḥasan del quartiere Sūq al-Naḥḥāsīn di Aleppo,[55] è comparsa davanti al giudice e ha dichiarato di essersi convertita all'Islām sessanta giorni prima della data di cui sotto. [Ha inoltre affermato] che suo marito di nome Bayān figlio di ʿAbdallāh al-K-bāmkī (?), assente da questa città, ebbe rapporti sessuali con lei, la deflorò e poi se ne andò via, abbandonandola da quattro mesi, una totale e assoluta assenza al punto da non sapere se anche lui si sia convertito oppure sia rimasto nel suo stato di miscredenza.

Lei ha fatto richiesta del verdetto sulla base della regola della scuola dell'Imām al-Shāfiʿī, l'illustre ed eccellente maestro Muḥammad b. Idrīs – che Dio sia soddisfatto di lui. Ha anche esibito una nobile *fatwā* che recita così:

«Una donna Cristiana si converte all'Islām mentre il suo marito cristiano è assente. Una volta completati i tre periodi mestruali, quando cioè il tempo del suo ritiro legale è terminato, se lei sottopone il suo caso al giudice ḥanafita autorizzato, quest'ultimo ha il diritto di rimandarla al giudice shāfiʿita affinché questi sciolga il matrimonio fra loro? E se il giudice shāfiʿita autorizzato sentenzia l'annullamento, questo verdetto è legalmente valido e operativo ed è possibile per lei risposarsi in seguito?

Abbiamo dato una formale opinione legale e siamo stati compensati per questo. La risposta è: Dio è il Più Sapiente. Sì, il verdetto del giudice è valido e operativo. Se ha avuto rapporti sessuali [con il marito], lei completerà il ritiro legale di tre periodi mestruali dopo la sua conversione all'Islām e le sarà permesso di contrarre matri-

53 Cf. Scarcia Amoretti 1984; Salati 1990.

54 Sulla presenza dello sciismo duodecimano ad Aleppo nel corso del XVII secolo cf. Salati 1992.

55 Il 'Mercato dei Ramai' (Sūq al-Naḥḥāsīn) è indicato a lato del quartiere *extra muros* Juqūr Qasṭal/al-ʿAryān, nella zona settentrionale della città (cf. al-Ghazzi 1999, 2: 434-5; al-Qalʿaji 1989, 144, 212, 242); tuttavia, con Khān al-Naḥḥāsīn e Sūq al-Naḥḥāsīn si intendono delle strutture commerciali *all'interno* della cinta muraria, nei pressi del Gran Tribunale (cf. Watenpaugh 2004, 79-80; Wolf 2005, 236-50).

monio. Questo sulla base dell'opinione dell'Imām al-Shāfiʿī – che Dio abbia Misericordia per lui.

Lo ha scritto l'umile Muḥammad al-Kawākibī, il *muftī* of Aleppo – che Dio lo perdoni».[56]

Poi, lei ha esibito una seconda opinione legale che recita così:

«Una donna *dhimmī* [della Gente del Libro] si converte all'Islām mentre suo marito, anch'egli *dhimmī*, è assente. Il suo ritiro legale è terminato dal momento della sua conversione all'Islām e non si sa se suo marito si sia convertito all'Islām durante il ritiro legale di lei. È lecito o no per lei sposare un musulmano in accordo con la semplice presunzione di permanenza del marito nella condizione di miscredenza?

Abbiamo dato una formale opinione legale e siamo stati compensati per questo. La risposta è: Dio è il più Sapiente. Sì, le è permesso di fare ciò in accordo con la regola della presunzione di continuità di quanto è certo (*istiṣḥāb*).[57]

Sull'autorità di al-Shāfiʿī – che Dio lo approvi – al-Bayhaqī riporta nel *Mabsūṭ*[58] quanto segue:

Il marito infedele[59] fugge, sua moglie completa il ritiro legale ed egli ritorna da musulmano asserendo che la sua conversione all'Islām è avvenuta un mese prima del suo arrivo, che quello era il periodo del ritiro legale di lei e che il ritiro legale era poi terminato. Lei nega che egli si sia convertito all'Islām se non dopo il completamento del ritiro legale. L'opinione di lei fa fede e le viene richiesto il giuramento, mentre egli deve produrre la prova legale (*bayyina*).[60]

Registrato e trascritto dall'umile ʿUmar, lo studente di al-ʿUrḍī – che Dio perdoni entrambi».[61]

56 Membro di una delle grandi e longeve famiglie di notabili locali, i Kawākibī-zāde, Muḥammad b. al-Kawākibī (m. 1096/1685) fu giurista, letterato e *muftī* di Aleppo (cf. al-Ṭabbākh 1988, 6: 356-64).

57 Come osserva de Bellefonds 1997, si tratta del «principio per cui una data situazione giuridica che era esistita precedentemente veniva considerata ancora in atto fino a quando non si fosse dimostrato che aveva cessato di esistere o fosse stata modificata […]. Tuttavia, l'*istiṣḥāb* non è una fonte di legge oggettiva; inoltre, nella misura in cui è un mezzo per preservare diritti già acquisiti, esso è accettato dagli Ḥanafiti e Mālikiti oltre che dagli Shāfiʿīti e Imāmīti».

58 Aḥmad b. al-Ḥusayn al-Bayhaqī (d. 458/1066) fu un famoso giurista e tradizionista shāfiʿita. *Al-Mabsūṭ*, opera condotta sui testi attribuiti a al-Shāfiʿī, è uno dei suoi lavori più noti.

59 Nel testo si usa il termine *murtadd* che, più precisamente, descrive l'apostata, cioè chi ha rinnegato l'Islām, piuttosto che l'infedele (*kāfir*). L'antichità della tradizione riportata fa pensare a una fase in cui il termine poteva includere diverse sfumature di miscredenza.

60 In linea generale, con *bayyina* (lett. 'prova evidente') si intende la testimonianza di almeno due uomini giusti richiesta a chi afferma, mentre il giuramento spetta a chi nega (cf. Santillana 1938-43, 2: 409, 570, 591-4).

61 Se lo studente ʿUmar rimane nell'anonimato, al-ʿUrḍī è identificabile con Abū l-Wafāʾ b. ʿUmar al-ʿUrḍī (m. 1660), celebre erudito e *muftī* shāfiʿita di Aleppo, per cui cf. al-Ṭabbākh 1988, 6: 289-99; Masters 1988, 158-9.

Il giudice shāfiʿita ha autorizzato l'allora eminente giudice di Aleppo a separare i due sposi.[62] Egli li ha informati che lei è da adesso separata per sempre da lui in virtù di un singolo e irrevocabile ripudio[63] e che lei è autorizzata a sposarsi con qualsiasi musulmano desideri. Ciò dopo che lei ha giurato in nome di Dio Onnipotente, il Clemente e il Misericordioso di aver visto tre periodi mestruali dal giorno della sua conversione fino a oggi. Giuramento legalmente pronunciato, sulla sola base del quale è stato stabilito che il suo ritiro legale è terminato.

Verdetto e notifica legalmente dati, dei quali è stata fatta richiesta. Registrato il giorno nove del mese di Ṣafar dell'anno 1075 [/1 settembre 1664].

Commento

Che questo caso sia più complesso rispetto ai precedenti è evidenziato dal ricorso a due responsi giuridici (*fatwā*) a sostegno del verdetto del giudice, uno per mano del *muftī* ḥanafita di Aleppo, l'altro proveniente dall'entourage del *muftī* shāfiʿita della città.[64] La complessità risiede essenzialmente nell'intrecciarsi di due ordini di questioni: la conversione all'Islām di una donna cristiana coniugata e l'assenza del coniuge senza che di lui si abbiano notizie. Prese separatamente le due situazioni non presentano grossi problemi: la conversione all'Islām, un fenomeno non di grosse proporzioni ma costante e regolare nel corso del Seicento,[65] rende in questo caso invalido e nullo il contratto di matrimonio a meno che anche il coniuge non si converta, in quanto la musulmana neo-convertita non può essere sposata a un non-musulmano;[66] nel caso della totale assenza del coniuge, come abbiamo visto, i documenti esaminati in precedenza espongono una procedura tutto sommato rodata e semplice.

62 Il giudice in carica per quell'anno è ʿUthmān Fayḍallāh (cf. al-Ghazzī 1999, 1: 306).

63 La formula singola di ripudio (*ṭalāq*) comportava lo scioglimento definitivo del contratto matrimoniale una volta terminato il ritiro legale della donna. La dottrina sunnita ammetteva, giudicandolo però negativamente, il ripudio triplice (*ṭalāq thulāthī*) mediante il quale il matrimonio era sciolto immediatamente.

64 Sul rapporto tra giudici e *muftī* cf., tra gli altri, Tucker 1998, 20-2, 35-6.

65 Sul fenomeno della conversione all'Islām ad Aleppo si veda Marcus 1989, 44. Egli lo ritiene un fenomeno trascurabile nel contesto cittadino, capace di coinvolgere solo persone di bassa estrazione sociale. Per una analisi di questo fenomeno nel panorama ottomano più generale cf. Baer 2001.

66 Com'è noto, la Legge ammette il matrimonio tra un musulmano e una donna ebrea o cristiana ma non viceversa, anche se, a dire il vero, nel *Corano* questo divieto non è specificamente indicato.

Il sovrapporsi di questi elementi, invece, fa sì che si debba procedere con cautela, cercando di stabilire se il marito si sia convertito e, qualora lo abbia fatto, quando la conversione sia avvenuta, prima, durante o dopo il ritiro legale della donna. La presunzione di diritto (*istiṣḥāb*), un tratto tipico della scuola shāfiʿita, unitamente al giuramento fatto dalla donna, consentono di risolvere la questione.

È interessante notare che, subito dopo la conclusione di quest'azione legale, troviamo, nella stessa pagina del registro, il documento del contratto di matrimonio tra la neo-convertita Ṣāliḥa – probabilmente non il suo nome proprio prima della conversione – e un certo Muḥammad b. Ḥusayn. Preceduto da un'enfatica introduzione sui meriti del matrimonio quale antidoto alla immorale fornicazione, buona pratica (*sunna*) dei profeti e vessillo (*shiʿār*) dei pii e santi, il documento include anche qui una *fatwā* di conferma delle affermazioni della donna.[67]

6) RTA, XXXV: 108

Sulla base della testimonianza di
sayyid Ṭaha b. *sayyid* Yūsuf
ḥājj Maḥmūd b. ʿUthmān
shaykh Ṣāliḥ b. Nāṣir al-Dīn l'*imām*,

tutti residenti del quartiere Sāḥa Bizza di Aleppo la Ben Protetta,[68] la cui testimonianza è legalmente accettata, e facendo seguito alla richiesta legale di testimonianza preceduta dall'azione legale istruita dalla giovane pubere e vergine Asīkhān figlia di Muḥammad, residente nel suddetto quartiere, è stato stabilito che la suddetta attrice è la moglie di *sayyid* Muḥammad b. *sayyid* Ramaḍān in virtù di un matrimonio legale e legittimo. Egli non ebbe rapporti sessuali con lei, di modo che l'impedimento è di sua responsabilità. Poi, egli se ne andò e scomparve alla sua vista, abbandonandola per i passati cinque anni rispetto alla data di cui sotto; una totale e assoluta assenza al punto che non è noto se egli sia vivo o morto, dove abiti, dove sia fuggito o passato e dove si possa trovare. Non le ha lasciato alimenti né vestiario e non le ha mandato nulla di entrambi. Egli è povero, non ha proprietà, beni o altro che possa essere venduto per

67 Wilkins 2010, 184 nota 216, cita altri casi anali del periodo 1664-65 e osserva: «La conversione può essere stata una opzione attraente per donne che cercavano di sottrarsi a matrimoni nei quali erano state abbandonate».

68 Ampio e residenziale quartiere *intra muros* a sud della Cittadella di Aleppo (cf. al-Ghazzī 1999, 2: 107-11; al-Qalʿajī 1989, 182-3).

provvedere alle sue [di lei] necessità. Lei è bisognosa e povera, incapace di badare a se stessa e vive nello stesso luogo in cui egli la lasciò e in nessun modo si è ribellata o ha commesso atti d'insubordinazione nei suoi confronti.

A questo fatto legalmente provato è unito il giuramento legale da lei proferito in nome di Dio Onnipotente, il Perdonatore e il Misericordioso, sulla conformità e bontà della sua causa legale.

Il suddetto vice-giudice shāfiʿita ha decretato con sentenza l'annullamento del matrimonio della suddetta attrice, l'ha liberata dal vincolo maritale e ha ordinato che i due siano separati, secondo la regola della scuola dell'Imām al-Shāfiʿī, l'illustre ed eccellente maestro Muḥammad b. Idrīs – che Dio sia soddisfatto di lui. Annullamento e verdetto legali di cui gli è stata fatta richiesta.

Tutto questo dopo che il caso era stato presentato al Modello dei Nobili Eruditi e Insegnanti Muḥammad *afandī*, il vice-giudice ḥanafita in questo nobile tribunale ed egli glielo aveva assegnato dopo che la causa era stata legalmente istruita presso di lui nei modi descritti all'inizio di questo documento. Incarico assegnato legalmente.[69]

Quanto avvenuto è stato scritto e registrato su richiesta il giorno ventisei del mese di Shaʿbān dell'anno 1095 [/8 agosto 1684].

Commento

A differenza dei documenti finora presi in esame, due sono gli elementi che ci sembra opportuno evidenziare: in primo luogo, l'assenza di indicazioni di provenienza fa ritenere che il marito scomparso sia di origine locale; in secondo luogo, la residenza della donna in un quartiere residenziale è indicatore di una condizione sociale media. Ci troviamo, così, di fronte a un caso di mobilità solo in uscita da Aleppo, le cui precise motivazioni, naturalmente, restano ignote.

69 Nella lista in al-Ghazzī 1999, 1: 306 non figura il nome del giudice in carica per l'anno islamico 1095. Per l'anno 1096/1685, troviamo *imām* ʿAbdallāh.

7) RTA, XXXV: 138

Sulla base della testimonianza di
ḥājj ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Khalīl, l'*imām*,
Maḥmūd b. Yūsuf,
shaykh Muḥammad b. *ḥājj* Sāliḥ,

Yāsīn b. Khalīl, tutti residenti del quartiere Khān al-Sabīl, all'esterno della città di Aleppo la Ben Protetta,[70] e la cui testimonianza è stata accettata legalmente in seguito alla richiesta legale di rendere testimonianza – richiesta preceduta dall'azione legale proveniente dalla donna cristiana Almās figlia di Mānūk, abitante del suddetto quartiere – è stato certificato legalmente che la suddetta attrice è la moglie dell'uomo chiamato Juwān figlio di Juwān l'europeo (*ifranjī*)[71] in virtù di un matrimonio legale e legittimo. Egli ebbe rapporti sessuali con lei e la deflorò; poi, egli se ne andò e scomparve alla sua vista, abbandonandola per i passati dieci anni rispetto alla data di cui sotto; una totale e assoluta assenza al punto che non è noto se egli sia vivo o morto, dove sia fuggito o passato e in quale luogo si possa trovare. Non le ha lasciato alimenti né vestiario e non le ha mandato nulla di entrambi. Egli è povero e indigente, non ha proprietà, beni o altro che possa essere venduto per provvedere alle sue [di lei] necessità. Lei è bisognosa e povera, incapace di badare a se stessa, vive nello stesso luogo in cui egli la lasciò e in nessun modo si è ribellata o ha commesso atti d'insubordinazione nei suoi confronti.

A questo fatto legalmente provato è unito il giuramento legale da lei proferito in nome di Dio Onnipotente, il Perdonatore e il Misericordioso, sulla conformità e bontà della sua causa legale suddetta.

A questo punto, il vice-giudice shāfiʿita ha decretato con sentenza l'annullamento del matrimonio della suddetta attrice, l'ha liberata dal vincolo maritale e ha ordinato che i due siano separati, secondo la regola della scuola del grande e magnifico Imām al-Shāfiʿī, l'illustre ed eccellente maestro Muḥammad b. Idrīs – che Dio sia soddisfatto di lui. Annullamento e verdetto legali di cui gli è stata fatta richiesta.

Tutto questo dopo che il caso era stato presentato al Modello dei Nobili Eruditi e Insegnanti Muḥammad *afandī*, il vice-giudice ḥanafita in questo nobile tribunale ed egli glielo aveva assegnato dopo che la causa legale era stata legalmente istruita presso di lui

70 A ridosso delle mura orientali, questo quartiere di piccole dimensioni vantava strutture commerciali (*khān*), fontane pubbliche, un hammam e svariate moschee (cf. al-Ghazzī 1999, 2: 333-40; al-Qalʿajī 1989, 162).

71 Con *Ifranj*/*Firanj* (sing. *ifranjī*/*firanjī*) il mondo dell'Islām, per un tramite probabilmente bizantino, chiamava i Franchi e, per estensione, gli europei, esclusi i cristiani spagnoli e gli slavi (cf. Lewis 1986).

nei modi descritti all'inizio di questo documento. Incarico assegnato legalmente.

Quanto avvenuto è stato scritto e registrato su richiesta il giorno tredici del mese di Shawwāl dell'anno 1095 [/23 settembre 1684].

Commento

Questo ulteriore esempio di coppia cristiana al cospetto del giudice islamico è particolarmente interessante. La donna, appartenente alla consistente popolazione armena della città,[72] risulta coniugata a un europeo (*ifranjī*, lett. 'Franco'), Juwān figlio di Juwān, traducibile con un Giovanni figlio di Giovanni, nel qual caso avremmo a che fare con un membro di quella comunità veneziana che vantava ad Aleppo una antica e robusta presenza.[73]

Le unioni tra europei/Franchi e donne locali non erano molto frequenti, o perlomeno, dato che il contratto matrimoniale era di natura privata, senza obbligo di registrazione al tribunale, nei registri non ne troviamo che tracce sporadiche. Questa sembra essere, dunque, un'interessante eccezione, sebbene l'unione non sembra essere durata molto. I dieci anni di attesa prima di esporre la causa in tribunale sono un tempo molto lungo rispetto ai casi presi qui in esame ma il documento non ne rende noti i motivi.

8) RTA, XXXV: 151

Al Consesso della Nobile Legge, al cospetto del Nostro Signore e Autorità, il vice-giudice shāfiʿita, la cui firma è apposta in alto nel documento, sulla base della testimonianza di

il Vanto dei Pii della Via mistica, Nostro Signore Ṣibyān b. Sulaymān,
il Vanto dei suoi Pari, *ḥājj* Muṣṭafā b. *ḥājj* Darwīsh Qasūḥī-zāde,
il Vanto dei Pii e dei Maestri mistici, *shaykh* Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Qādirī,
il Vanto dei suoi Pari, Ḥasan *jalabī*[74] b. Muḥammad,

72 Il nome Almās è di origine persiana e significa 'diamante'. Mānūk è un tipico nome proprio armeno.

73 Cf. Masters 1988, 14-15, 34 nota 16; Marcus 1989, 23, 146, 148, 338; Costantini 2001.

74 Grafia araba per il turco *çelebi*, titolo onorifico per funzionari e mercanti di medio rango.

Muṣṭafā *bey*[75] b. Mūsā,
sayyid Darwīsh b. *sayyid* Muḥammad,

shaykh Farḥāt b. Muṣṭafā […], la cui testimonianza è stata accettata legalmente in seguito alla richiesta legale di rendere testimonianza – richiesta preceduta dall'azione legale proveniente da Farḥāt *beshe*[76] b. Nāṣir, il rappresentante legale del Vanto delle Nobildonne Velate,[77] la Casta Signora e Perla Nascosta, ʿĀ'isha *khānum*[78] figlia del Capo dei Nobili Condottieri, il Grande tra i Gloriosi Grandi, Sua Eccellenza Muḥammad Pasha[79] […] – è stato certificato secondo i modi legali che la mandante suddetta è la moglie di Ḥasan *āghā*[80] b. Ḥamza. Egli ebbe rapporti sessuali con lei e la deflorò. Poi, egli se ne andò e scomparve alla sua [di lei] vista, abbandonandola per i passati tre anni rispetto alla data di cui sotto; una totale e assoluta assenza al punto che non è noto se egli sia vivo o morto, dove sia fuggito o passato e in quale luogo si possa trovare. Egli non le ha lasciato alimenti né vestiario, non le ha mandato nulla di entrambi, è povero e indigente e non ha proprietà, beni o altro che possa essere venduto per provvedere alle sue [di lei] necessità. Lei è bisognosa e povera, incapace di badare a se stessa, vive nello stesso luogo in cui egli la lasciò e in nessun modo si è ribellata o ha commesso atti d'insubordinazione nei suoi confronti. Poi, accompagnato dal Vanto dei suoi Pari Ḥasan *beshe*, il segretario del nobile tribunale, il vicegiudice shāfiʿita summenzionato si è recato alla casa della suddetta mandante, nel quartiere Jallūm al-Ṣughrā di Aleppo la Ben Protetta, e le ha chiesto di dare giuramento.

75 Titolo onorifico *bīk*/*bek*/*bey* riservato in origine a membri della classe militare, divenuto col tempo trasmissibile anche ai discendenti.

76 Il termine *beshe* era usato per ufficiali di grado inferiore (Marino 1997, 150 note 50-1).

77 Questo epiteto, in arabo *Fakhr al-Mukhaddarāt*, era riservato alle donne di alto rango a simboleggiare il modello di vita virtuosa e casta, al riparo dal contatto quotidiano e dagli sguardi di estranei (cf. Marcus 1989, 54). La donna così qualificata non ha bisogno di uscire di casa e in una causa legale le è permesso di farsi rappresentare da un mandatario e, nel caso debba prestare giuramento, lo può fare nella propria residenza, come in questo caso (cf. Santillana 1938-43, 2: 629).

78 Lett. 'signora, lady', titolo riservato alle donne di rango medio-alto.

79 Ipotizzando che si tratti di un ex-governatore di Aleppo – le espressioni elogiative nel documento non lasciano dubbi sul fatto che lo sia stato – nel periodo preso in esame troviamo due possibili candidati: Muḥammad Pasha, in carica nel 1071/1660, e il più famoso Qarā Muḥammad Pasha, in carica dal 1089/1678 al 1093/1682 e probabile costruttore del Khān al-Wazīr, una delle ultime grandi strutture commerciali erette da alti funzionari ottomani ad Aleppo (al-Ṭabbākh 1988, 3: 233; al-Ghazzī 1999, 2: 150; 3: 225, 227; Watenpaugh 2004, 188-210). Il celebre Gran Visir Merzifonlu Qarā Muṣṭafā (m. 1683), che non fu mai governatore di Aleppo, è considerato da alcuni studiosi il fondatore del Khān (cf. Watenpaugh 2004, 188-90).

80 Titolo di ufficiali militari, mercanti, funzionari dell'amministrazione.

La suddetta mandante ha proferito il giuramento in nome di Dio Onnipotente, il Perdonatore e il Misericordioso, sulla conformità e bontà della sua causa legale suddetta.

Sulla base di questo giuramento fatto secondo la Legge, il succitato vice-giudice shāfiʿita ha decretato con sentenza l'annullamento del matrimonio della suddetta mandante, l'ha sciolta dal vincolo maritale e ha ordinato che i due siano separati, secondo la regola della scuola del grande e magnifico Imām al-Shāfiʿī, l'illustre ed eccellente maestro Muḥammad b. Idrīs – che Dio sia soddisfatto di lui. Le ha, poi, ordinato di attendere, conformemente alla Legge, fino al termine del suo ritiro legale. Annullamento e verdetto legali di cui gli è stata fatta richiesta.

Questo sulla base della nobile *fatwā* da lei prodotta che così recita:

«Domanda: Zayd si assenta da sua moglie in modo totale e assoluto, senza lasciarle nulla come mantenimento. Se lei sottopone la questione a un giudice autorizzato a rinviarla al giudice shāfiʿita affinché giudichi secondo la dottrina shāfiʿita ed egli (il giudice autorizzato) la rinvia al giudice shāfiʿita e questi, riguardo ai due [coniugi], pronuncia un verdetto di annullamento del matrimonio in seguito alla testimonianza di uomini giusti e retti sul fatto che lei è priva di mantenimento, questo suo verdetto è operativo? Lei ha il diritto, stante questa situazione, di sposare un altro dopo la conclusione del suo ritiro legale come prescrive la Legge?

Abbiamo dato un responso legale per il quale siamo compensati. Risposta: Dio è il Più Sapiente! Sì, stante così le cose lei ha il diritto di farlo.

Lo ha scritto l'umile Muḥammad, il *muftī* della città di Aleppo».

Il caso era stato istruito presso il Più Sapiente dei Nobili Dotti, la Crema delle Eccelse Autorità, colui che registra i casi giudiziari e le sentenze, che dipana i difficili problemi degli uomini e distingue e separa il lecito dall'illecito, colui che è la grazia delle notti e dei giorni e che cancella l'abominevole innovazione, il servitore del tappeto della comunità mohammadica, Sua Eccellenza ʿAbd al-Laṭīf *afandī*, il giudice della città di Aleppo.[81] Egli l'aveva assegnato [al vice-giudice shāfiʿita], dopo che la causa era stata da lui legalmente certificato nei modi descritti all'inizio di questo documento. Incarico assegnato legalmente.

Quanto avvenuto è stato scritto e registrato su richiesta il giorno diciannove del mese di Shawwāl dell'anno 1095 [/29 settembre 1684].

81 Non figura nella lista dei giudici ottomani data dallo storico al-Ghazzī.

Commento

Riesce difficile credere che la figlia di un Pasha, cioè di un membro della élite ottomana, residente in uno dei quartieri più agiati della città, possa dichiararsi bisognosa, povera e senza mezzi di sussistenza. C'è, tuttavia, un fatto da tenere in considerazione: affinché si arrivi all'esito richiesto dalla parte lesa, il caso deve essere istruito secondo una rigida e consolidata formulazione, una procedura uniformata che ammette solo eventuali variazioni marginali, come, per esempio in questo caso, l'inserimento di retoriche espressioni elogiative in omaggio e rispetto per personaggi di classe sociali elevate. Sempre per lo stesso motivo, infatti, la presenza del gran giudice di Aleppo è salutata con altrettanta enfasi retorica.

Capace di incanalare contenziosi e controversie verso rapide conclusioni, questa stessa standardizzazione rende difficile arrivare alla 'realtà fattuale', cioè a una narrazione sganciata dalle gabbie del formalismo giuridico-giudiziale, un problema, a dire il vero, che investe tutta la documentazione presente nei registri.

A questo proposito, infatti, è bene ricordare che, da un lato, i registri dei tribunali ottomani sono ineludibili per qualsiasi tipo di studio della società ottomana e costituiscono un «incomparabile deposito di informazioni [...] e sono straordinariamente preziosi come fonte storica [in quanto] forniscono un vivido senso di come la società effettivamente funzionasse, degli obiettivi, pratiche, strategie, conflitti e incidenti che tessevano la trama della vita quotidiana»;[82] dall'altro, «i registri sono narrazioni costruite con cura nelle quali l'aspetto legale, sebbene invisibile al lettore, rappresenta l'essenza del documento [...]. Il documento discute il caso non come si è effettivamente svolto ma, piuttosto, in termini consistenti con la dottrina e la pratica legali».[83]

Queste condivisibili riflessioni, che interessano lo studioso e il ricercatore, non devono certamente sminuire il valore di quanto è arrivato sino a noi di questa ricca documentazione. Con un linguaggio e forma propri, essa, infatti, riflette le modalità di richiesta di giustizia da parte della popolazione di Aleppo e della sua provincia nelle sue variegate componenti, una giustizia che evidentemente, e con un certo grado di ottimismo, ci si aspettava di ottenere rapidamente e in modo soddisfacente facendo ricorso a chi era deputato, per consolidata tradizione dottrinaria, a rendere operativa la volontà divina in terra, il *qāḍī*, nel 'Consesso della Nobile Legge' (*majlis al-shar'*). È soprattutto per mezzo di questa venerata istituzione che la società di Aleppo, come di altre realtà dell'Impero ottomano, poteva spera-

82 Marcus 1989, 8-9.

83 Ze'evi 1998, 37.

re di procedere a quella virtuosa composizione di conflitti e storture così ben presente nell'idea di Comunità di Giusti (Umma) fin dalle sue origini.

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Armenia, Caucaso e Asia Centrale
Ricerche 2022
a cura di Daniele Artoni, Carlo Frappi, Paolo Sorbello

Iconographic Heritage of the Caucasus
The Photographic Collections of Baron de Baye

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Abstract Famous archaeologist and ethnographer Joseph Berthelot Baron de Baye (1853-1931) travelled to the Caucasus in 1897-1904. The photographs taken during his travels are kept in museums, archives and private collections in France. We have developed an integrated database for the consolidation of these photo collections, which allowed us to specify the place, the date of the shots, as well as to identify the people and architectural monuments. The article analyses the importance of these photographs in terms of the development of the history of photography and also discusses their role in cultural transfer between the Caucasus and Europe.

Keywords Baron de Baye. Photography. Caucasus. Collections. Cultural transfer.

Summary 1 Introduction. – 1.1 Baron de Baye in the Caucasus. – 2 Sources and Methodology. – 3 Baron de Baye as a Photographer. – 3.1 Eastman Kodak Photo Camera. – 3.2 Cinematic Impression. – 3.3 Multi-Plane Photos. – 3.4 Presence of Shadow. – 3.5 How to Show the Presence of Other Photographers. – 4 Photographs as a Vector of Cultural Transfer. – 4.1 From Scientific Expeditions to Personal Diaries. – 4.3 Contemporary Studies. – 5 Conclusion.

1 Introduction

Photographs taken by French archaeologist Joseph Berthelot Baron de Baye (1853-1931) in the Russian Empire during 1897-1910 are stored in museums, archives and private collections in France. Baron de Baye is well known both to the researchers of the prehistory

Edizioni Ca'Foscari

Eurasiatica 19
e-ISSN 2610-9433 | ISSN 2610-8879
ISBN [ebook] 978-88-6969-667-1

Peer review | Open access
Submitted 2022-04-18 | Accepted 2022-10-20 | Published 2023-04-26
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DOI 10.30687/978-88-6969-667-1/007

of France and to those who study the history of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries of the Russian Empire and its cultural relations with France. De Baye's scientific expeditions and travels have been the subject of a number of researches and publications; however, the photographs taken by him during his trips have not been studied duly or published before.

This research project originated in 2008 when I was offered at the *Musée du quai Branly – Jacques Chirac* to have a look at Baron de Baye's photographic albums. The albums had been acquired by the museum not long before and they had not been digitized yet. I found the collection very interesting and worthy of extensive research. An agreement was concluded between the *Embassy of Georgia to the Republic of France* and the MQB to enable the initial joint study of the afore-mentioned collection by me and Carine Peltier, the Head of the Museum's *Iconothèque* Department. This study was carried out during October-November 2009, and in December of the same year, I transferred to the MQB the data obtained during the initial phase of the research: the first results of the identification of people and places shown in the photographs. The initial stage of the research had demonstrated the significance of these photographs for the study of the history and cultural heritage of Georgia and the Caucasus region; therefore, this project was continued at the initiative of *the Embassy of Georgia to the Republic of France*: on June 22, 2011, an agreement on scientific and cultural cooperation was signed between the *Musée du quai Branly – Jacques Chirac* and the *Georgian National Centre of Manuscripts*. Based on this agreement, the MQB transferred to the GNCM digital copies of the photographs for further study. I was able to continue the research of the photo collection as part of this project. Unfortunately, the exhibition in Georgia envisaged under the cooperation agreement did not take place due to certain reasons.

As part of my PhD work at the *École des hautes études en sciences sociales*, from 2014 I resumed the study of Baron de Baye's photographs preserved at various institutions and private collections in France. As a result, I created a database comprised of all the photographs taken by Baron de Baye in the Caucasus during his scientific expeditions over the period of 1897-1904.

The present article offers the results of the research of the aforementioned photos; furthermore, it presents Baron de Baye's photographic activities and reviews this collection using the cultural transfer example.[1]

1 The study of de Baye's photo collection allowed us to explore series of important issues that will be discussed and given in subsequent publications.

1.1 Baron de Baye in the Caucasus

Baron de Baye was a self-educated archaeologist who performed first archaeological excavations at the age of 19 and discovered Neolithic graves carved in chalk rocks, of a type completely unknown to the nineteenth-century archaeology. In his article, Philippe Roux provides details of the scientific context in which young de Baye entered archaeology: initially, French scientists showed great interest towards his discoveries, although many begrudged de Baye later (Roux 2011, 4-12). Young self-educated archaeologist struggles to gain a foot in the field of science in France, and becomes interested in research outside France from the 1880s.

In 1890, de Baye takes part in the 8th International Congress of Archaeology in Moscow (Ènciklopedičeskij 1890, 228). De Baye soon gets close to the Russian aristocracy. He has a particularly close friendship with Count Sergey Sheremetev[2] and also attends the coronation ceremony of Emperor Nicholas II in 1896 in the capacity of an official representative of the French delegation (Koronacionnyj 1899, 330). During 1895-1913, he makes annual scientific business trips to the Russian Empire under the French Ministry of National Education. Evidently, due to his shattered reputation in France, research in the Russian Empire opens to de Baye an opportunity of professional rehabilitation. During 1897-1904, he travels to the Caucasus annually for two-three months to conduct ethnographic expeditions. Often, he first stays in Tiflis, where his circle of friends grows year by year, and next he travels to the South and North Caucasus. De Baye's initial goal is to carry out archaeological excavations, although he is unable to pursue it due to the law passed in the Russian Empire in 1889 that mandated a special permit – the *Otkrytij list* – for archaeological excavations on state lands (Sorokina 2011, 453). The permit was issued by the Russian Imperial Archaeological Commission, and due to strict conditions, obtaining permit was hard for archaeologists of the Russian Empire, leave alone foreign archaeologists. This is the primary reason why de Baye gets interested in the ethnography of the Caucasus. In 1899 he notes in a business trip report[3] addressed to the Minister of National Education that he had followed his friends' advice to introduce himself as an ethnographer to everyone in the Caucasus and this has enabled him to purchase ethnographic as well as archaeological collections.

De Baye conducts expeditions at his own expense and sends the purchased collections to the French Ministry of National Education.

2 Sergey Sheremetev (1844-1918) – Russian historian, public figure and collector. When he travelled to the Russian Empire, Baron de Baye mostly stayed at Sheremetev's place in Moscow or their various estates.

3 ANF. F/17/2936/B.

Upon return to France, after each scientific business trip, de Baye organizes exhibitions and conferences to present the results and photos taken during the trips. Furthermore, he organizes exhibitions using archaeological and ethnographic materials purchased during business trips, and after the exhibitions are over, he donates these collections to French museums. His articles are published in various scientific publications. He also annually publishes brochures illustrated with his own photos, providing a detailed narrative about his every scientific business trips.

In 1914, at the beginning of the World War I, de Baye is in Russia, being unable to return to France due to the circumstances. After the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution he is in a precarious situation and finds shelter in the Museum of History of Moscow; some of his friends have died and others have been detained. He manages to return to France only in 1920 (Roux 2011, 19). Weakened by illness, de Baye is no longer able to engage in scientific activities. Disappointed by the fact that his scientific studies have not been properly appreciated by scientists and curators (Baye 1964), he sorts his archives and photographs and donates them to various societies and institutions – supposedly, his last attempt to attend to his own scientific heritage.

2 Sources and Methodology

Baron de Baye's archives have been put out for bids in France numerous times over the past 15 years. These lots included various archive materials of de Baye and his family (including de Baye's correspondence with friends and colleagues), books written by him, family photo albums, and photographs taken during scientific expeditions. The collections of many museums and archives of France have been replenished as a result of these auctions. I have been able to fully examine these collections; however, this article will focus solely on the collections that include photographs taken by Baron de Baye in the Caucasus.

Baron de Baye's 14 photo albums preserved at the *Musée du quai Branly – Jacques Chirac* were purchased[4] at an auction in 2006 (Artcurial 2006). Kodak red-covered albums contain photographs taken by Baron de Baye in the Russian Empire during 1897-1910. This includes a total of 1,319 photos, 752 of which have been taken during the trip to the Caucasus in 1897-1903. Some albums contain postcards. All photos are taken by Baron de Baye, except for 5 stereo photos with cuts in the middle that must be authored by the photogra-

4 Along with the albums, this lot contained Baron de Baye's brochures compiled as a book, with the name of one of the brochures used as a common title: *En Petite Russie*.

pher Dimitri Ermakov,[5] based on the numbering and captions. There are 4 photos on every page of the album. The photos are often accompanied by Baron de Baye's hand-written captions. The photographs are printed on aristotype paper.

Baron de Baye's family albums are also stored at the *Archives départementales de la Marne*. Among them, there is only one album that depicts de Baye's travels: this is a blue-covered album with two photos per page with the inscription "Album" in Russian on the outer cover.[6] Out of 64 photos, 63 were taken in Caucasus in 1897, 1903 and 1904.

The fund of the *Société de Géographie* housed at the National Library of France contains about 470 photographs which had been donated by de Baye to the SG over the years (Fierro 1986) – some of the photographs were donated after returning from expeditions, while others in 1927. This collection also contains photos printed on glossy paper that were supposedly intended for a dummy copy. Only 99 of these photographs were taken by de Baye in the Caucasus.

The collection preserved at the *Institut d'études slaves*[7] is for the first time briefly mentioned by Éliane Fouchard in her article (1992, 337), according to which "de Baye's small collection of photographs is stored without an inventory code". Indeed, this is a fairly sizeable fund: several hundreds of photographs taken by various photographers, including Baron de Baye, are distributed in 17 boxes along with his other archives. According to a rather superficial description posted online in 2014 (Ybert 2014), these archives, or major part of these archives, were originally intended for the opening of the Museum of *Podvor'e de Saint-Serge* projected during the Baron's lifetime, in the 1920's. However, the museum was never opened and these archives were forgotten. 10 of the 17 boxes contain documents and photographs related to de Baye's trip to the Caucasus, among them 195 photos taken by the Baron.

Most of Baron de Baye's archives, as well as his brochures, are preserved in a private collection, which I was able to view thanks to Jean-Jacques Charpy, an archaeologist and a curator. Only few photos taken in the Caucasus were found here. De Baye's album previously owned by another collector is now stored at the *Musée du vin de Champagne et d'Archéologie régionale*.

I have developed an integrated database for the consolidation of these photo collections. The following fields have been specified: 1.

5 Dimitri Ermakov (1846-1916) – famous photographer of the Russian Empire. Ermakov learned photography in the army, as a topographer. In 1866 he opened a studio in Tiflis, where he made portraits and sold the photos he brought back from his travels. He is particularly famous for his photographs of the landscapes, monuments and populations of the Caucasus.

6 ADM. 43 J 62.

7 IES. Baron de Baye's Archives.

Index number of the photo, 2. Inventory number (according to an institution where a photo is kept), 3. A title given by de Baye, 4. Year taken, 5. Location of a shot, 6. Title assigned by me in case of an untitled photo, 7. Description of a photo, 8. Location where a photo is stored, 9. The place of publishing, 10. Comment, 11. Keywords.

At the same time, I have scrutinized de Baye's archives, personal diaries, correspondence, and the printed press in France, Switzerland, and the Russian Empire of that period where I have found multiple reports about his expeditions. Furthermore, the memories of Baron's contemporaries and fellow travellers have also been studied. Based on the combination of these materials and photographs I have been able to specify location, date of a number of photos, as well as identify the individuals depicted in photos. As for the architectural monuments, I have compared the photos to the same monuments taken by other nineteenth-century photographers, and later, to their present condition.

Combining the photos into a single database has enabled me to find duplicates. I have compared the inscriptions made by de Baye on the duplicates. Based on this, I have identified errors in the captions of the photographs in the portion of the collection stored at the National Library of France that de Baye had transferred to the SG in 1927. De Baye suffered from arthritis close to the end of his life; hence, his handwriting had changed considerably from the 1920s. I have made this observation thanks to the personal diaries kept by de Baye for 40 years in a private collection. The captions on the photos donated in 1927 should have been made in the 1920s. Perhaps this explains errors in indicated locations on some of the photos in the collection.

Out of the total of 1,825 known photos taken by de Baye during his travels to the Russian Empire during 1897-1910, about 1,140 have been taken in the Caucasus. This number implies the same shots printed several times. This number is presumably going to increase in the future, for the location of the originals of some of the photos published in de Baye's brochures is still unknown.

3 Baron de Baye as a Photographer

The photos taken by Baron de Baye in the Caucasus differ significantly from the ones taken by his other contemporary travellers. De Baye is not interested in shooting indoors, he takes everything *en plein air*. His photographs depict landscapes, architecture, daily life of cities and villages, various religious holidays, etc. He aims to discover new, unfamiliar places with his own camera and therefore, upon arrival to each new city or village, he goes to a market to take portraits of the locals. Such setting enables him to discover a great variety of

'types' of people in a day. Throughout his travels, de Baye also concentrates on a variety of topics; for example, he shoots Jewish settlements scattered in the regions of the Caucasus, or attends religious holidays in order to depict them. One of de Baye's favourite themes is showing the crossroads of Europe and Asia at the example of everyday life in the Caucasus. To achieve this, he takes a series of portraits on the streets of Tiflis throughout years. He demonstrates the fusion of Europe and Asia using European and Caucasian costumes in a single shot in these photos.

When reading de Baye's texts a kind of hasty style common to his narration strikes the eye – he attempts to squeeze several stories in a small book and enrich it with legends and oral traditions. One gets the same impression after an initial glance at the photos: it looks like there is some haste, impatience and the author tries to take as many shots as possible. Moreover, it should be noted that such haste in no way means superficial approach to a story, for each shot is well thought out in advance. De Baye's wish to provide as much information as possible in his texts and photographs must be due to the idea he mentions in one of his texts: he says that one should hurry when researching the peoples of the Caucasus, as they are doomed to extinction and loss of originality due to the Russian invasion of this region and assimilation with them (Baye 1899a, 5).

3.1 Eastman Kodak Photo Camera

During the study of photo collections one should first determine a camera a photographer uses, since camera model and technical features are the determinants of a photographer's working style. In her study of various types of photo cameras, Marie-Sophie Corcy stresses that the production of small portable cameras has developed significantly from the 1880s (Corcy 1995, 20). These cameras have played a major role in the spread of photography: these lightweight, practical, and convenient cameras have proven to be particularly attractive to novice photographers. George Eastman's Kodak is worthy of particular mention; it was put in commercial use in 1889 (Corcy 1995, 21). This small camera became very popular as soon as it appeared on the market. This popularity was due to the fact the Kodak camera used cellulose nitrate photo film. This camera was lightweight and convenient to carry, eliminating the risk of the breakage of glass negatives while travelling. Perhaps this is why Baron de Baye got interested in Kodak's camera; he starts his photographic career with this camera brand. The date of de Baye's first photographs is 1897, when he travelled to the Caucasus. When examining his publications and archives one cannot see that he had used any other camera during his scientific expeditions before this date.

The camera brand can be established using several sources. In a postcard[8] sent from Paris to Tiflis on October 31, 1901, Tedo Sakhokia,[9] a Georgian ethnographer tells Baron de Baye about sending him a camera.

> J'attends votre retour avec impatience. Aujourd'hui, M. Gogobéridzé part pour Tiflis. Il vous apportera votre "Codak" [*sic*]. Bien des chauses [*sic*] aimables.
>
> I look forward to your return impatiently. Today Mr. Gogobéridzé[10] is travelling to Tiflis. He will deliver your Codak [*sic*] to you. Best wishes.[11]

It is unclear from the postcard whether de Baye had left this photo camera behind in Paris, or whether he had asked for a new camera, although, irrespective of the spelling mistake, it is about a Kodak brand camera.

Reels of flexible cellulose nitrate film were placed in the Kodak's camera. One film fit 12 exposures. The size of each exposure and, hence, of a printed photo was 9 × 9 cm. Cardboard boxes of the film, with Baron's inscriptions, are stored at the IES[12] as well as in a private collection. Several negatives of the film are kept in the same private collection. No corroborated source has survived to indicate whether it was de Baye himself who developed and printed the photos.

3.2 Cinematic Impression

Static shots are rare among de Baye's photos. Most of the photos show people in motion, which attaches special life and rhythm to these shots. This is firstly owing to the technical specifications of the camera: the Kodak camera used by the Baron has short exposure time, allowing

8 GNCM. 1035.

9 Tedo Sakhokia (1868-1956) – a Georgian ethnographer, lexicologist, translator, Correspondent Member of the *Académie de Reims* and Foreign Correspondent Member of the *Society of Anthropology of Paris* – was friends with de Baye and accompanied him during the Abkhazia trip in 1903.

10 Nikoloz Gogoberidze (1838-1911), a Georgian publicist, entrepreneur and teacher. He supposedly had good relations with Baron de Baye. In 1900 the exhibition of de Baye's collections from the Caucasus was opened in Paris, at the *Musée Guimet;* signatures of Nikoloz Gogoberidze and Tedo Sakhokia are found in a Book of Impressions stored in a private collection.

11 Unless otherwise specified, the translations are from the Author.

12 IES. Box 16.

Figure 1 Joseph de Baye, *Station Samtredi entre Batoum et Tiflis, photographie prise, le train en marche* (Samtredia station between Batumi and Tiflis, the photograph taken from the moving train). October 29, 1897. Aristotype paper, 9 × 9 cm. ADM, 43 J 62. © ADM

Figure 2 Joseph de Baye, *Route militaire géorgienne. Dans les neiges au point le plus élevé* (Georgian Military Road. In the snows at the highest point). November 7, 1897. Joseph de Baye, *En Géorgie*, 1898, 16

a photographer to obtain a high quality image and flawlessly capture fast motion on a tape. De Baye manages to take photos from a moving train **[fig. 1]** and a carriage **[fig. 2]** thanks to this characteristic. Such an obvious technical advantage[13] over his contemporary photographers enables de Baye to delve more extensively into the daily life and customs of the locals and to deepen his research into ethnography. He takes a series of photos during various religious and official celebrations, as well as dances, wrestling competitions, grape harvests, etc. When the photos of each series are arranged in order, a full picture of an event opens before our eyes – photos are like movie shots enabling us to fully revive the scenes. This is especially impressive in case of dances, since such photos enable to restore dance techniques. Owing to his camera, de Baye was able to capture and fit significant content in 5-7 exposures and create an illusion of a film show using the succession of these photos at his conferences in France. It is hard to say whether de Baye's use of this cinematic effect was deliberate. Could he had been influenced by the films of the Lumiere Brothers who held their initial shows in Paris in 1895? Or perhaps he arrived at the idea

13 During this period the Kodak camera has not entered the Caucasus market yet. First advertisements of Kodak appear in the newspapers of Tiflis from 1900.

of taking such serial photos independently? The only thing I can say definitively is that the technical parameters of the camera enable him to achieve this effect. Thus, from the very first travel to the Caucasus, and thanks to his photo camera, de Baye turns into a photographer and an ethnographer, leaving his original profession of a prehistoric archaeologist behind, in the past.

3.3 Multi-Plane Photos

The examination of the photos shows that de Baye usually divides photographs into several planes. Every frame is well thought out, even though these are not pre-staged scenes. Following careful inspection of a seemingly insignificant photo one can find information hidden in the background – items or people whose identification and explanation grant particular importance to these photos.

On the photo taken in Golovinsky Avenue **[fig. 3]**, main street of Tiflis of that period, first thing that meets the eye is two men sitting on a wooden bench on the frontal plane – one is in the centre; as for the other man, only his arm is visible. At a glance, one would be surprised about why a photographer would shoot such an insignificant frame. However, after careful observation one can notice the sign plate of the photo studio of Eduard Klar,[14] a famous photographer, in the background, across the street. During his travels, de Baye often takes photos of signboards of local photo studios. The series of these photos include an exposure taken in Sokhumi showing the signboard of the studio of photographer Leonid Pimenidis[15] along with a group of men **[fig. 4]**. Apparently, de Baye tries to follow the development of photography in the Caucasus. He also had a large collection of photographs by local photographers, including Dimitri Ermakov, which is presently stored at the IES.[16]

I would like to bring another interesting example of multi-plane photos. This is a photo taken in 1897, in Kardanakhi village, Kakheti, at Sergey Sheremetev's vineyard **[fig. 5]**. A Georgian gardener of the vineyard is in the centre, Sheremetev and Sergey Jemchoujnikov[17] are barely visible on the left, behind the vine leaves (they can be identified by referring to other photos taken on the same day). Such puzzle-photos are characteristic of de Baye during his trip to the Caucasus.

14 Eduard Klar (1861-1922) – a photographer, was born in Ukraine, in Poltava – moved to Tiflis in 1893 and opened his photo studio in Golovinsky Avenue, city centre. He was famous for photo portraits.

15 Leonid Pimenidis – a photographer of Greek origin, who had his studio in Sokhumi. Few details of his life are known.

16 IES. Box 14.

17 Sergey Jemchoujnikov (1863-1919) – Sergey Sheremetev's family physician and friend – travelled to Georgia together with Sheremetev and Baron de Baye in 1897.

Figure 3
Joseph de Baye, *Tiflis*. 1900. Aristotype paper, 9 × 9 cm. MQB, 70.2006.26.6. © Joseph Berthelot de Baye (c) musée du quai Branly - Jacques Chirac

3.4 Presence of Shadow

De Baye's shadow is often seen in photos. Shadow in a frame is not by accident; it is a signature prevalent during the period when photo cameras did not yet have a delay function and photographer would capture themselves in photos they took. Baron de Baye uses this very signature in the scores of his photos whenever his shadow can be seen. He tries this way to capture himself in photographs. Naturally, the position of the sun is crucial for the photos taken *en plein air* and the sun should always be behind a photographer to achieve a good exposure. And this means that the likelihood that the author will appear in a frame is high. However, based on the observation of Baron de Baye's photographs it is evident that the distance between the lens and an object is always deliberate to achieve a shadow in the exposure. He had been using this signature method throughout the years. He places his shadow near the signboard of the photographer Pimenidis in the photo taken in Sokhumi **[fig. 4]**, thus entering in a kind of dialogue with his colleague. He places his shadow near Sergey Sheremetev in the photo taken on the Georgian military road, to emphasize his presence on this road **[fig. 6]**. The baron's inscription made in ink next to the shadow further accentuates the author's presence in the exposure.

Figure 4
Joseph de Baye, *Sokhumi*. 1903. Aristotype paper, 9 × 9 cm. MQB, 70.2006.26.12. © Joseph Berthelot de Baye (c) musée du quai Branly - Jacques Chirac

3.5 How to Show the Presence of other Photographers

De Baye's photos have another characteristic – showing his fellow traveller photographers in the photos. Tripod is not needed for a Kodak camera, therefore, it seems particularly strange that photos often show a tripod. Following research, I have established that this tripod belonged to other photographers who accompanied him during his travels. This is another technical feature the Baron uses as his signature, in addition to a shadow. What might such a hint mean? Did de Baye want to demonstrate through his photos his technical advantage over his fellow travellers enabled by the Kodak camera? Or was his only intention to leave an imprint of other photographers in his photos, just like his own shadow? No precise answers can perhaps be found to these questions; nevertheless, these features have enabled me to reproduce the moments of taking photos, find his fellow travellers, and thus to perform a more thorough study of the history of their travels.

Photographer's hand and a tripod can be seen on the left in the photo taken in 1897 in Kardanakhi village **[fig. 7]**. I have noticed that his book, which Baron published after his return from this trip, also includes two photographs taken by Jemchoujnikov in the same village (Baye 1898, 27-8). The fact that Jemchoujnikov travelled with de Baye is also confirmed by the latter's diaries, kept in a private

Figure 5
Joseph de Baye, *Les vignes du comte Chéréméteff et le jardinier en chef* (The vines of Count Cheremetev and the head gardener). 1897. Aristotype paper, 9 × 9 cm. MQB, 70.2006.26.1. © Joseph Berthelot de Baye (c) musée du quai Branly - Jacques Chirac

collection. This was the primary information based on which I have considered that the tripod belonged to Jemchoujnikov. Similarly, I have presumed that it is Jemchoujnikov who is depicted as a photographer with a photo camera attached to a tripod on a photo taken on the military road of Georgia at the beginning of the same trip **[fig. 6]**. The examination of the archives kept at the IES has corroborated my presumption. Jemchoujnikov wrote in a letter[18] sent to de Baye from Moscow to Paris on January 23, 1898:

> Mon cher monsieur le Baron! Je vous envoie les photographies faites par moi et copiées par mr Ermakoff à Tiflis – ces mêmes que vous avez vues déjà.
>
> My dear monsieur Baron! I am sending you the photos taken by me and copied by Mr. Ermakov in Tiflis – these are the ones you have already seen.

This letter is interesting for two reasons. Firstly, one of the photos stored in the same archives[19] shows exactly the same exposure, the

18 IES. Box 3.

19 IES. Box 14.

Figure 6
Joseph de Baye, *Près du village Sioni sur la route militaire géorgienne* (Near the village Sioni on the Georgian Military Road). 1897. Aristotype paper, 9 × 9 cm. MQB, 70.2006.26.1. © Joseph Berthelot de Baye (c) musée du quai Branly - Jacques Chirac

same group of women as in the afore-mentioned photo. The only difference is the format of the photo, as well as the focus is more towards the left, compared to the Baron's photo. Consequently, my assumption that the tripod belonged to Jemchoujnikov was confirmed. Secondly, this letter confirms a prevalent opinion among nineteenth-century researchers of photography according to which Ermakov made copies of the photos taken by other photographers and posted them for sale in his catalogue.

It is noteworthy that de Baye published this photo taken in Kakheti in his brochure, which depicts his first trip to Georgia (Baye 1898, 29). Both Jemchoujnikov's hand and tripod are clearly visible in the published photo; this proves that the presence of this photographer in the frame was deliberate. Otherwise, de Baye would have cut off the left edge prior to publishing this photo.

I would like to offer another similar example. On October 6, 1898 (Kavkaz Кавказ, 24 September 1898), Baron de Baye and his friend Hugues Krafft[20] left Tiflis for a visit to Yerevan and Echmiadzin (Baye 1899b, 22). During the trip they are taking photos: landscapes, cit-

20 Hugues Krafft (1853-1935) – a French philanthropist, traveller and photographer. Travelled to the Caucasus in 1896 and 1898-99.

Figure 7
Joseph de Baye, *Khardanakhi*. 1897. Aristotype paper, 9 × 9 cm. MQB, 70.2006.26.1. © Joseph Berthelot de Baye (c) musée du quai Branly - Jacques Chirac

ies and villages, mosques and churches, markets and passers-by. The photos of two French friends have such resemblance that it would be impossible to even identify the author, if not for their different format. They stop near Yerevan to take photos of the camped Kurds. In de Baye's photo series taken at this location a tripod is seen on the right side of a girl's portrait **[fig. 8]**. Although, this tripod may not be Hugues Krafft's, since Krafft used a photo binocular for this photo shoot, and it did not require a tripod (Cheishvili 2017, 33). While studying Dimitri Ermakov's collections, a portrait of the same girl has caught my attention (Masters 2014, 172). The title of the photo is: "9916. Yerevan. Tatar gypsy woman. 885". According to the report sent by the Baron de Baye to the National Ministry of France,[21] he was accompanied by Dimitri Ermakov on a trip to Georgia in 1897. Ermakov often served as a guide for foreign researchers visiting the Caucasus. This photo by Ermakov that pictures the same person as that in the photos of de Baye and Krafft, confirms that he accompanied French travellers in October 1898 in Armenia. The comparison of the works of the three photographers listed here has enabled to date Ermak-

21 ANF. F/17/2936/B.

ov's photograph as well, which is important because he never referenced a date of photographs in the catalogues.

4 Photographs as a Vector of Cultural Transfer

According to the concept of cultural transfer developed by Michel Espagne, transfer of any cultural object from one context to another results in the transformation and resemanticization of the content of that object (Espagne 2013, 1). This transformation can be fully recognized only by taking into account the historical vectors of that transfer.[22] Baron de Baye's photo collection is a clear testament of this concept of cultural transfer – the content of the photographs taken in the Caucasus has undergone many transformations over 120 years.

4.1 From Scientific Expeditions to Personal Diaries

These photographs, with their original purpose and content, depict de Baye's trip and show his first steps in ethnographic and anthropological photography. However, it should be pointed out here that de Baye does not consider himself a photographer; He perceives this valuable collection, accumulated over the years as merely auxiliary material for ethnographic research – illustrations he shows to the audience during scientific presentations and then publishes in his brochures.

The entire pool of de Baye's photographs can be divided into two parts: on the one hand, there are photos which he donated after returning from the trip, as well as in the 1920s, to various French societies and organizations, and, on the other hand, there are photos that he kept for himself and arranged in albums. The research has showcased that the photos inserted in the albums acquire a personal emotional importance for Baron. Emotional inscriptions on the photos and the edges of the album clearly show that these photos change their original content, turning from the illustrations of travel into the source of personal emotions. Over years, the more proficient he becomes, the more de Baye uses photography to convey his personal emotions. Like a page of a diary, the pages of the album reflect the author's mood along with the memories: "Tout seul !", "Encore tout seul !" – he writes such captions on self-portraits taken in Russia.[23]

22 The purpose of the article is not to analyse the concept of Michel Espagne, I just want to indicate that photographs taken in the Caucasus during the nineteenth century are less studied as an example of cultural transfer. About early photography in the Caucasus, see Gorshenina, Sonntag 2018.

23 MQB. 70.2006.6.12.

Figure 8
Joseph de Baye, *Kurdes près d'Erivan* (Kurds near Erivan). October 12, 1898. Aristotype paper, 9 × 9 cm. MQB, 70.2006.26.14.
© Joseph Berthelot de Baye (c) musée du quai Branly - Jacques Chirac

Figure 9
Aleksandre Matatashvili, *Guests: Inspired by Daft Punk and Vintage Georgian Traditional Street Style Fashion*. 2021. Digital photo.
© Aleksandre Matatashvili

4.2 Photographs as a Way in the Fight for Independence

The albums do not represent an end point of resemanticization. Against the backdrop of the historical and political changes in early twentieth century, these photographs change their content once again and become a tool for political struggle in a new historical context. De Baye's publications and photographs have acquired a new meaning in France during the 1920s – the Government of the Republic of Georgia in Exile showed interest towards this material. Following the annexation of the Democratic Republic of Georgia by Soviet Russia in 1921, the Georgian government moved to France into political emigration, where the members of the government continued their political struggle by organizing conferences and various events. Along with political matters, conferences were used as a venue to introduce to Europe the life and culture of the Caucasus. Archive materials show that for this very purpose, at meetings, receptions and other events organized for supporting Georgia's independence they used the photos de Baye had taken in Georgia and brochures published by him. The Baron's diaries show that Georgians living in France were on friendly terms with him and often visited him. Two notes in the 1929 diary have caught my attention:

> Le 12 mai 1929. Visite de M. Takaïchvili à 5h1/2, emporté brochures.
>
> May 12, 1929. At half past five, Mr. Takaishvili[24] visited me and took away the brochures.
>
> Le 17 mai 1929. Ai reçu une lettre d'invitation du Président de l'Association des Amis de la Géorgie, sans doute les nombreux géorgiens que j'ai connus au Caucase.
>
> May 17, 1929. I received an invitation letter from the President of the Association of Friends of Georgia. These are perhaps those many Georgians whom I have met in the Caucasus.

Undoubtedly, the brochures Takaishvili took away were intended for the events organized in support of the independence of Georgia. Georgians in emigration in France who had known de Baye since his visit to Georgia regarded him the best cognizant scholar and a sup-

24 Ekvtime Takaishvili (1862-1953) – a Georgian archaeologist, historian, public figure, one of the members of the Constituent Assembly of Georgia – was in political emigration in France during 1921-45. He was on close terms with Baron de Baye which is evident from the memories and publications of both scientists.

porter of the Caucasus. The same is evidenced by a letter dated February 15, 1930, in which Nino Nicoladzé-Coquet (1881-1972) writes to Baron that in Europe he is the best person to promote and support Georgia.[25] Nicoladzé-Coquet goes on to thank de Baye for sending photos of the Caucasus that they had used during the presentation about Georgia. Some traces of this correspondence can also be found in the Baron's diary for January 1930, although those letters have not survived.

Consequently, the photos taken in the Caucasus become a kind of tool to continue the political fight – these photos are not mere illustrations; rather, along with the author's inscriptions in the brochures they represent a vector that should convey to the audience Georgian culture not only from ethnographic perspective but also from the perspective of the fight for Georgia's liberation.

4.3 Contemporary Studies

If the transfer through the photos was directed from the Caucasus to France, in modern studies it has changed direction towards the Caucasus. Since 2010, several TV channels of Georgia have dedicated several programs to the collection preserved at the MQB, giving rise to the first wave of great interest towards these photographs. Digitized and online uploaded MQB photo collection, to which photos posted on the website of the National Library of France were added later, became very popular in Russian-language and Georgian-language blogs and social networks. Since these digitized photos are now available to everyone, I can assume that they have already virtually returned to the shooting location. This time, from France to the Caucasus, these photos have transferred and brought back to the Caucasus the tangible and intangible cultural heritage that was destroyed or forgotten during the twentieth century. Furthermore, these photos have even acquired a new life. Aleksandre Matatashvili, Georgian architect and digital collage artist, has offered his own interpretation of one of the photos taken by de Baye in Tiflis and published it on his Instragram profile on January 21, 2021 **[fig. 9]**. De Baye took this photo in 1900 at Golovinsky Avenue, and it is part of the series in which the photographer presents Tiflis as a crossroad of Europe and Asia, using the example of the outfits of passers-by: two men in the foreground are wearing Caucasian "Chokha" (National Suit) while a man in a European outfit is seen in the background. An inventory number assigned by the National Library of France is inscribed in the upper right corner of the photo, and Matatashvili has

25 IES. Box 2.

placed his signature opposite this number, in the lower right corner. The artist first coloured this photo and later added various elements: flying saucers in the sky, and painted helmets like the famous French electronic music duo *Daft Punk* on the heads of two men. The title of the work is *Guests: Inspired by Daft Punk and vintage Georgian traditional street style fashion*. According to Matatashvili, main elements of this work are intercultural synthesis and time travel; the aim of the collage is to try to preserve old historical and cultural elements in a new way and to take beyond the stereotypical perception of time (Matatashvili, pers. comm.).

5 Conclusion

Baron de Baye's photographs are the largest iconographic collection preserved in France that depict the Caucasus in late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In the present article, I have endeavoured to show the initial results of my multi-year study. The above mentioned content clearly shows the material and cultural heritage of the Caucasus, part of which was destroyed during the twentieth century, and part of which has survived in a modified form. Moreover, this is the first time we have got serial story-driven photos that offers unique opportunity for the exploration and restoration of intangible cultural heritage.

The photo collection has enabled me to study the photographic activities of Baron de Baye and identify his style of work. De Baye takes utmost use of technical capabilities of a photo camera to achieve versatile and interesting photos, however, he does not refer about himself as a photographer anywhere in the brochures and diaries. Hence my view expressed above that the Baron considers the photographs as auxiliary illustrative material for his ethnographic research. From the present perspective, in my opinion, de Baye's photographs are more important than his publications – this material has got a much deeper content for the study of the Caucasus as compared to de Baye's texts. Baron de Baye was awarded Molteni Prize in France in 1903 for the photographs taken in the Russian Empire (Trésors 2006); although, presently his name is not associated with photography. He is better known as an archaeologist, ethnographer and a traveller. That is why one of the goals of my research, along with the study of the photographs, is to establish de Baye as a photographer in the field of science.

De Baye's photo collection, as an iconographic heritage of the Caucasus, is a particularly interesting example of cultural transfer; especially that this transfer is two-way, first from the Caucasus to France, and from France to the Caucasus a century later. As mentioned above, the photographs have been resemanticized several times: loaded with

ethnographic information, it has become a tool for expressing personal memories and emotions, on the one hand, and a means for political fight, on the other. Given valuable and rich content of the material, I believe that it is even more important to continue their study. Baron de Baye's photographs will offer more interesting discoveries and will continue to be a source for research for the specialists of various fields for years to come.

List of Abbreviations

ADM = Archives départementales de la Marne.
ANF = Archives nationales de France.
GNCM = Georgian National Centre of Manuscripts.
IES = Institut d'études slaves.
MQB = Musée du quai Branly – Jacques Chirac.
SG = Société de Géographie.

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Armenia, Caucaso e Asia Centrale
Ricerche 2022
a cura di Daniele Artoni, Carlo Frappi, Paolo Sorbello

Nerkaght and the Concept of Homeland
The Armenian Community in Beirut and the Repatriation Movement 1946-48

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Abstract This paper discusses the issue of Armenian repatriation in the years '46-'47, challenging the role played by the concept of Armenian homeland on the identities developed and propagated by various Armenian entities in Lebanon. The three main diasporic Armenian parties, Dashnak, Ramgavar, and Hunchak, as well as the three newspapers affiliated with them, *Aztag*, *Zartonk*, and *Ararad*, clash in the Armenian-Lebanese political arena over differing conceptions of homeland and what it means to be an Armenian patriot, developing increasingly two sets of ideological references to draw on from time to time during intra-Armenian confrontation.

Keywords Armenian repatriation. Diaspora. Homeland. Lebanon. Soviet Armenia.

Summary 1 Introduction. – 2 Nergakht and Imagined Homeland. – 3 Contrasting Narratives. – 4 Conclusion.

1 Introduction

The Council of People's Commissars of the USSR issued Decree No. 2947 on November 21, 1945, allowing the Council of People's Commissars of the Soviet Socialist Republic of Armenia to coordinate the repatriation of Armenians residing abroad (Yousefian 2011, 1-3). The great enthusiasm and subsequent support for the initiative on the

Edizioni Ca'Foscari

Eurasiatica 19
e-ISSN 2610-9433 | ISSN 2610-8879
ISBN [ebook] 978-88-6969-667-1

Peer review | Open access
Submitted 2022-04-16 | Accepted 2022-06-13 | Published 2023-04-26
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DOI 10.30687/978-88-6969-667-1/008

part of the constituent bodies of the Armenian Apostolic Church[1] as well as the diaspora is also closely related to the international pressure applied by the Soviet government at the expense of Turkey for the return of two districts in Eastern Anatolia: Kars and Ardahan (Mouradian 1990, 325-7).[2]

Such a movement cannot be properly understood unless it is contextualised within the backdrop of the Second World War and on the eve of the Cold War, as well as within the broader framework of boundary redefinition, forced or voluntary population movements (Wolff 2011). In the Armenian instance, an example of voluntary population movement is commonly referred to with the word repatriation, *Nerkaght*, which is not unambiguous, as many of those targeted by the programme do not appear to be natives of the area to which they are supposed to return. The origins of these people may be tracked in the districts of eastern Anatolia that were once part of the Ottoman Empire.

Repatriation is thus applied to the Armenian case in a propagandistic manner, both to certify the link between the Armenian diaspora and the Soviet Socialist Republic of Armenia (Laycock 2009a), and to demonstrate that the Turkish territories claimed by Moscow during the 1940s were part of historical Armenia and, as such, should have been reunited with Soviet Armenia.

The repatriation initiative and territorial claim aroused great enthusiasm among Armenian communities throughout the world, prompting diaspora Armenian parties to become active participants in arranging what was dubbed the pivotal moment in Armenian history since the massacre of 1915.

The significance of Soviet Armenia's position as a legal homeland, then, lies at the heart of the repatriation question (Laycock 2009b).

The generalization of the concept of homeland in reference to Armenian-Soviet territory introduces an element that complicates the dialogue between Armenian diasporic political parties, as seen in the pages of newspapers affiliated with those, since 1946, especially since September of the same year. The Soviet power itself is a source of division, because it produces a definition that splits the diaspora as

1 In June 1945 the newly elected Kevork VI Catholicos of All Armenians delivered a plea to Stalin on behalf of the Armenian nation to intervene in resolving the Armenian national crisis during the first all-Armenian Church Council in years (Lehmann 2011, 486-7; Melkonyan 2010).

2 In March 1945 the Soviet foreign minister Vyacheslav Molotov informed the Turkish ambassador in Moscow that the Treaty of Friendship and Non-Aggression signed in 1925 would have to be renegotiated. During the June 1945 discussions in Moscow, the USSR listed among its demands the return of the Armenian districts of Kars and Ardahan, which the 1921 agreement had handed to Turkey. In 1947 the Soviet Ambassador Vyshinskii demands the return of these two districts to Georgia. After the death of Stalin, Molotov withdraws claims (Suny 1997, 368).

a whole, which is then categorized into progressive entities allowed to have contact and collaborate with the Soviet-Armenian commissions, and reactionary and nationalist actors, who are barred from interacting with the Soviet Republic.

The social-democrat Hunchak with its organ *Ararad* and the liberal Ramgavar with its newspaper *Zartonk*, are thus part of the progressive panorama, as the Armenian Communist Party's branch in Lebanon and independent organizations such as Veratznunt are.[3] Similar political players attempt to legitimize Soviet Armenia as a homeland. Despite the right-wing Dashnak's and its affiliate *Aztag* desire to cooperate, the party is considered a political enemy and fierce opponent of the Soviet Union and hence of the Armenian Soviet Republic itself, as a consequence, it is instantly selected as the focus of Ramgavar and Hunchak's criticism.[4]

Political competition within the Armenian community in Lebanon has fertile ground because of the political system of power sharing that characterizes the Lebanese nation. The inclusion of Armenians as a recognized community in the Lebanese confessional balance system provides a juridical and political recognition, inflaming the conflict between the parties (Migliorino 2008, 94-5; Attié 2004, 25-9).

2 Nergakht and Imagined Homeland

On June 23, 1946, the first ship, the Transylvania, departs from Beirut for Batum, carrying the first caravan of 1806 Armenian immigrants (Eghiazaryan 2017, 131). The two progressive newspapers devotes an entire issue to the event, including photographs of the ship docked in Qarantina with the repatriated immigrants on board, emphasizing throughout the articles how repatriation is a watershed moment for the Armenian that considers himself a true patriot, a hayrenaser.[5]

The approval of the repatriation decree together with the Soviet claims to the provinces of Kars and Ardahan becomes the subject of

3 *Ararad*, the Hunchak party's official organ, was originally published on November 7, 1937, by Amenak Eloyan, and was later edited by Onnig Djamboulian. The Ramgavar party's official organ, which first published on September 26, 1937, was heavily sponsored by Vahan Tekeyan, a well-known Armenian poet who was interested in the party becoming a prominent force within Lebanon's Armenian community. The journal was published under the supervision of Barakun Tovmassian (Vardjabedyan 1983, 71-3).

4 *Aztag*, a Dashnak-affiliated newspaper, is published for the first time on March 5, 1927. It is printed biweekly until 1930, then three times a week until 1932, when it becomes a daily newspaper. The journal is privately published by Haig Balian while enjoying the moral backing, authority, and supervision of the Revolutionary Armenian Federation; it will legally become the official organ of the Dashnak's central committee in Lebanon in June 1965 (Vardjabedyan 1983, 67-70).

5 *Zartonk*, 24 June 1946; *Ararad*, 24 June 1946.

a narration, whose main features can be summarised in a desire for legitimisation of the diaspora as part of a specific homeland and of the ASSR (Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic) as the political government leading the Armenian people.

In such a scenario, where political events appear to be moving in the direction of a solution to the Armenian Cause, those who are classified as progressive entities bring together the Armenian political circle in Lebanon. In such political ambience, the Armenian Revolutionary Federation does not take stances that contradict Moscow's directions via Yerevan. The Armenian representatives are mainly concerned about the community's socioeconomic problems. The threat of integration represents the politicians' main focus. The stakeholders are concerned about the fragile balance that is the result of internal community conflicts.

Repatriation answers all these questions, changing the political prospects of an entire people and putting an end to the centuries-long Armenian epic. The unfair conditions determined by the Treaty of Sèvres could finally be changed: Stalin at the helm of the victorious Soviet Union would lead the Armenian people towards the conquest of a homeland. The Armenian press in Lebanon played the same symphony, a new discourse built around the possibility of forming a united nation capable of overturning the condition of exile.

During the first months of this year, it becomes clear that the definition of an Armenian nation in the socio-political landscape is changing, as it overcomes diasporic transience by structuring itself around a geographically and politically recognised national entity capable of pursuing its upward path towards a united Armenia and welcoming all Armenians.

The Soviet Armenia government clearly expresses its desire to shape Armenian history in the years ahead, a self-representation that is not limited to the past but extends to the present and aims to realize an epic future. In the Armenian-Lebanese community, this process of representation is manifested by Armenian political elites claiming membership in that faraway country, but also recognising the need to identify and represent it to the Lebanese-Armenians. In order to achieve this goal, each Armenian newspaper creates a personal narrative discourse based on a set of reflections that are peculiar to a particular journalistic output. The progressive newspapers *Ararad* and *Zartonk* communicate their messages in different ways, but they both attempt to re-semanticize the nation in order to develop a new sense of the national Armenian. The viewpoints of the two Armenian newspapers on the subject of repatriation reveal a complementarity that emerges from the structuring of an indivisible link between repatriation, the nation, and Soviet Armenia in the columns of the newspapers

> the homeland of a nation is the home, just as a family can rest in its home, so the individuals of a nation can rest in their homeland. ("Հայրենիքը" [Homeland]. *Ararad*, 12 February 1946)

What emerges is an Armenia celebrated in his role of defender of the Armenian people, guarantor for the safeness of all its children, now

> no longer exiled and without a homeland, subject to all the dangers that might occur, transforming its members into joyful citizens of their own state. ("Կամաց բայց հաստատուն" [Slow but Steady]. *Ararad*, 23 January 1946)

That homeland, now Soviet Armenia, never ceased to worry about its kinsmen in the diaspora; it fought for them, made efforts, and "finally obtained the opportunity to reunite its flock".[6]

To make Soviet Armenia a true homeland, it is necessary to immerse the whole Armenian people in a state-building project, an activity, in *Zartonk*'s words, necessary for the Armenian diaspora that experienced the most heinous episodes of Armenia's bloody past, but the history eventually rewards the Armenian by giving him back life and hope, reminding him that there is a part of that homeland that has been rescued and is ready to host him.[7]

Territory has a mystical meaning in this process, and it is not a mere symbol of Armenian patriotism: it is a physical reality that has to be inhabited; the long-awaited oneness of the Armenian people may be reached with the actual presence on that specific land.[8] Thanks to the Soviet Socialist Republic of Armenia's vision, diasporic Armenians have the opportunity to emancipate themselves as a nation. This can only be done through Armenia, with which they have a spiritual, cultural, and historical bonds. In this sense, the diaspora can only be viewed as a land of passage through which the construction of an Armenian state has come to reality, implying a renewed sense of national belonging and the necessity of emigration, and thus admitting the Republic's primacy as the solution to the Armenian problem.

Ararad is one of the first publications to describe the event of repatriation as a good occurrence, together with the Soviet Republic's policies and practices in general. On January 23 1946, *Ararad* publishes the closing conclusions of the Hunchak Party's 8th World Con-

6 "Ներգաղթի համար: Արձանագրութիւնները սկսան" (For Repatriation: The Procedures Began). *Zartonk*, 3 February 1946.

7 *Zartonk*, 24 January 1946; "Ներգաղթի համար: Արձանագրութիւնները սկսան" (For Repatriation: The Procedures Began). *Zartonk*, 3 February 1946.

8 "Հայրենիքը" (Homeland). *Ararad*, 12 February 1946.

gress, held in 1925 as a confirmation of the Hunchak Party's and its newspaper's unwavering support.[9] Once the political line has been reaffirmed, the focus can be shifted back to the primary subject i.e. Armenia, which will be presented as a state recognized by the entire community. At the same time the international struggle to reclaim the Armenian lands occupied by the current Turkish state is not to be set aside, so that the community can return to live in the places of its ancient homeland.[10]

The relationship between repatriation, Armenian territorial claim, and the development of a united homeland with no defined borders appears to be inextricably linked. A similar relationship appears in *Zartonk*'s columns, where the newspaper declines the topic in a romantic key, concentrating less on the political aspect, since in principle its ideology in principle opposes communism. In order to legitimize its support for a Soviet administration, the Ramgavar party publication devotes greater space to defining a 'romantic landscape', which would allow the diaspora to be familiar with that unknown and never inhabited region. The incorporation of lyrical images allows *Zartonk*'s journalists to characterize repatriation as a natural phenomenon, the only way a correction of national history could have been accomplished.[11]

The building of the nation-object takes place through the depiction of a duality between the real state – ASSR – and the imagined one – a great Armenia restored to its splendour through the merging of Soviet territory and Turkish Armenia's geographical area. The rhetoric of the myth of return is expressed in its dual form, attracting the reader's attention with an artificial poetics, where the fiction of a geographical space alternates with modulation of geopolitical reality, aiming to reinforce the picture of a utopic nation where the hierarchy of history is minimized. Both progressive newspapers invite the reader to rediscover a shared feeling of belonging, addressing emigration to ASSR as a phenomenon to be explored in connection to 'the other Armenian national area', Turkish Armenia.[12]

9 "Հայաստան և Հնչակյան կուսակցություն" (Armenia and the Hunchak Party). *Ararad*, 23 January 1946.

10 "Ընկեր Գրիգոր Հարութիւնեան պատմական հոյակապ ճառը: 'Արդարացի պահանջ է որ թուրքիոյ կողմէ վտարուած արտասահմանի հայութիւնը վերադառնայ Հայրենիք եւ տիրանայ իր պատմական իրաւունքներին'" (A Fantastic Historical Speech of Comrade Krikor Haruthunian: 'armenians Exiled by Turkey and Living in Diaspora Have a Right to Return to their Homeland and Reclaim their Historical Rights'). *Ararad*, 5 February 1946.

11 "Արարատ" (Ararad). *Zartonk*, 7 May 1946.

12 "Հայաստան ինչպէս որ է" (Armenia as It is). *Ararad*, 10 March 1946; Baboian, K. (1946). "Խորհ. Հայաստանի մէջ" (In Soviet Armenia). *Ararad*, 3 April 1946; "Հայաստան այսպէս ինչպէս որ է" (Armenia as It is). *Ararad*, 23 April 1946; Ghilian,

Mount Ararat, which is not geographically part of the Armenian-Soviet territory, is widely invoked as a symbol of the entire homeland.[13] It appears to be an attempt to create a reality by fusing the two parts, rather than two antithetical realms that are distinct and remote. The land bridges the gap between the past and the future.

The organizing principle of reality can be disrupted in a lyrical dimensions, in the portrait on an Armenia crossing geographical boundary.

Such a process entails a constant symbolic re-signification of a shared mythical-historical substratum that feeds a subtext of numerous identities, that embodies various levels of identities and tends to standardize the moment of the identity production through the process of simplifying diverse kinds of impulses.

While appealing to several components, this simplifying operation is what leads the aim of the *Ararad* journalistic team in the cultural, social, and political metamorphosis of the diasporic Armenian into an Armenian-Soviet citizen.

Ararad entrusts some articles to popularize the Soviet system; through them, it educates the future repatriate by providing him with information on every aspect of the Armenian-Soviet reality, emphasizing the possibility of finally receiving a true Armenian education, that gives him the opportunity of completely immersing himself in the Armenian world.[14]

The decision to leave would result in a resurgence of cultural consciousness, particularly in a linguistic, cultural, and historical awareness.[15] The language issue is crucial to the political debate and an integral component of Armenian identity. The progressive press does its utmost to bridge the two language realities, overcoming regional linguistic distinctions and therefore emphasizing an image of oneness.

Despite emphasizing how little linguistic uniformity existed within the same community in the 1940s, *Ararad* advocates for a greater emphasis on recognizing oneself as an Armenian and, above all, recognizing the ASSR as the official Armenian nation. The diaspora Armenian

K. (1946). "Ներգաղթի նշանակութեան շուրջ" (About the Repatriation's Meaning). *Zartonk*, 22 May 1946.

13 "Արարատ" (Ararad). *Zartonk*, 7 May 1946.

14 Krikorian, M. (1946). "Սովետ. Հայաստանի մայրաքաղաքը" (The Capital of Soviet Armenia). *Ararad*, 27 April 1946. Many articles about the Soviet world focus on Yerevan, which has an iconic function that, as Ter Minassian notes, makes it an Armenian Jerusalem (Ter Minassian 2007a, 89-93; 2007b, 261).

15 Nazar, N. (1946). "Սովիէթ Միութեան որոշումը հայկական ներգաղթի համար" (The Soviet Union's Decision to Repatriate Armenians). *Zartonk*, 27 January 1946.

> whether Turkish-speaking or Armenian-speaking, is an Armenian. Only in Armenia, the immortal homeland of our grandparents, can we guarantee our national physical existence, only in our homeland are our language, tradition, culture, progress and civilisation guaranteed. ("Բաց խօսք Լիբանանի եւ Սուրիոյ հայ ունեւորներուն" (Open speech to the rich Armenians of Lebanon and Syria. *Ararad*, 22 June 1946)

Thus, another barrier to the manifestation of the Armenian identity is so removed, because only in the homeland the Armenian subject will be able to recover its full dimension as a nation, only in ASSR Armenian will be the language of national reality. This perspective emphasizes Armenian history, territoriality, customs, and shared cultural values (Payaslyan 2010, 107). The desire to create a uniform and united community goes beyond the reality of the Armenian people's conditions, an obstacle that will reveal itself insuperable when diasporic Armenians are actually transferred to ASSR: as a matter of fact the language will be one of the many hindrances that make communication and integration difficult between the two communities (Laycock 2015, 113; Lehmann 2012, 198-200).

By addressing such issues, the newspaper becomes a sounding board for Soviet propaganda themes, taking up the official version point by point, with the actual Armenia at the core. Within the column of the newspaper, these descriptions are components of a coherent narrative that depicts the socialist world. In this scenario, the decision of returning removes a slew of impediments and issues that life in the diaspora had not been able to overcome.

Parallel to similar themes, particularly in the years 1946-47 *Ararad* and with less emphasis *Zartonk* develop another topic that gives a new impetus to the idea of national unity: the progressive side united in propagating that sense of betrayal, of injustice perpetrated not only by the Ottoman Empire and then the Turkish Republic, but also by the Great Powers as a whole, appears in stark contrast to the Soviet Union's positive image. Thanks to the Soviet people's support and protection, thanks to his leader, Stalin, the Armenian people have survived and are undergoing a process of rebirth.[16] The di-

16 Gharib, A. (1946). "1946-ի սեմէն յետադարձ ակնարկմը 1945-ին վրայ" (A Retrospective Overview of 1945 from the Threshold of 1946). *Ararad*, 5 January; Eldjianian, A. (1946). "ներգաղթի Առաջին կարաւանը դէպի Աւետեաց երկիր"(The First Repatriation Caravan to the Promised Land). *Ararad*, 4 June; Gharib, A. (1946). "ներգաղթը և Հնչակյան կուսակցությունը" (Repatriation and the Hunchak Party). *Ararad*, 18 September; Temirdjian, T. (1946). "Հայութեան ներգաղթը: նրանք հայրենիք են վերադարնում" (Armenian Repatriation. They Return to their Homeland). *Zartonk*, 24 January; A.B. (1946). "Ձայն մը եւս Հայրենիքէն" (Another Voice from Homeland). *Zartonk*, 6 February; "ներգաղթը և հայ դատը" (Repatriation and the Armenian Cause). *Zartonk*, 7 February; "Ստեղծում պետականութեան" (Creating Statehood). *Zartonk*,

aspora has a specific responsibility to assist "our homeland and its flock",[17] inhabiting the Soviet territory. The organizations of the diasporic system, thanks to their characteristic nature, are entrusted with the function of mediator between the motherland and the Armenian communities. The support provided to the ASSR throughout the last 25 years has enabled the Armenian state to become stronger. At the same time, the diaspora was empowered by forging an unbreakable tie with their homeland.[18] *Ararad* points out how only ASSR provides a safe haven, and offers a political, social, economic, and geographical solution to the Armenian Cause.

As Nalbantian wrote (Nalbantian 2019, 96-7) "Newspapers [...] evoked Armenian suffering and loss and Armenian bravery". Commenting on the Communist Party of Armenia's repatriation initiative, *Zartonk* celebrates the political choice of Eastern Armenians by recalling their participation in the World War II and emphasizing the Armenian people's military capabilities, qualities that have distinguished them over the centuries and are now reinvigorated by their love to their homeland.[19] The integration of the Armenian national community into the winners' camp by diasporic progressive entities enables a more favorable reading of Armenian historical events.[20]

As American Armenian historian Ara Sanjian noted in his lecture, the Armenian Revolutionary Federation tempered the tone of the political confrontation that juxtaposed the USSR and the Dashnak before the outbreak of World War II and in the immediate aftermath (Sanjian 2018, unpublished).

Dashnak and *Aztag* assert that the repatriation decision would renew the Armenian feeling of belonging and globally accelerate all the processes that had previously obstructed the realization of a unified Armenia. At the same time, *Aztag* questions if repatriation is a sufficient requirement for the restitution of Turkish provinces to the Armenian republic.

It seems to be two issues on which the newspaper is not willing to renounce: the idea of a free, independent, and unified Armenia, and the Party's political autonomy, which at this moment does not entail dismissing partnership with progressive forces. The publication promotes the Armenian repatriation program while supporting

14 April; Ghilian, K. (1946). "Ծնորհավոր Ներգաղթը" (Happy Repatriation). *Zartonk*, 24 June.

17 Dahyian (1946). "Մեր ուղին" (Our Path). *Ararad*, 8 June 1946.

18 Dahyian (1946). "Մեր ուղին" (Our Path). *Ararad*, 8 June 1946.

19 "Սովիէթ վարչաձեիը" (Soviet Administration). *Zartonk*, 3 February 1946.

20 Baykar (1946). "Ներգաղթը կը սկսի" (Repatriation Begins). *Zartonk*, 25 January; prof. Bashindjan (1946). "Դաշնակները Հիթլէրեան ծառայութեան մէջ" (ARF at Hitler's Disposal). *Zartonk*, 11 January 1946.

membership in the federation's political agenda, that includes territorial claims beyond the provinces of Kars and Ardahan to Bitlis, Erzeroum, and Van.[21] This goal is embedded in the Party's and its allied publications' fundamentalist view of the Armenian Cause.[22] The paper's fervour on the Armenian question indicates the prominence it maintains in the notion of an Armenian homeland.

In contrast to Ramgavar, the acknowledgment of Soviet Armenia as a homeland and legitimate country to whom the responsibilities of the Armenian Cause are eventually delegated is not discussed. At this point the necessity to theorize a legal foundation and an institutional form for historical Armenian rights, in line with party policy, at this juncture damaged the Revolutionary Federation's cohesiveness while also weakened *Aztag*'s journalists' dialogical firmness to weaken.

The new international structures that emerged in the years after the end of World War II convinced the Dashnak protagonists that an intervention in favour of repatriation was both essential and vital in order to reinforce and sanction the Federation's position within the Armenian nation. *Aztag* opens the year 1946 with an editorial devoted to the new determination to face the issue of the Turkish government's seizure and control of Armenian territories. *Aztag*'s point of view is marked above all by its steadfastness in claiming Turkish Armenia, not competing with USSR for the monopoly over the Armenian Cause and recognizing in some way the Soviet government as protector of the oppressed, while attaching its reliance to the resolution of the Armenian problem. This is also reflected in the way repatriation news are reported. In fact, they are often limited to official information about the progress of the organization's repatriation programme. This newspaper's dispassionate account of repatriation action distinguishes it from the progressive press, that sometimes favours an elegiac intensity, sometimes a description characterized by ideological rhetoric. According to *Ararad* and *Zartonk*, this contradiction is the evidence of the Armenian Federation's and the *Aztag* newspaper's poor reliability and antagonism to the Nerkaght phenomenon.

According to *Aztag*'s inclusive vision, following the demands of patriotism, the Armenian,, should depart for the motherland, Armenia, which is not simply defined as ASSR. In articles replying to allegations made by the Armenian Communist newspaper, *Joghovourti Tzain*, *Aztag* emphasizes the need of seeing the unity of Armenian

21 *Aztag*, 1 January 1946; "Տօքթ. Հ. Չաղլասեան տեղեկութիւններ կուտայ Սուրիոյ եւ Լիբանանի հայերու մասին" (Dr. Č'ałlasean Provides Information About Armenians of Syria and Lebanon). *Aztag*, 19 January 1946; "Ռուսերը Էրզրումն ալ կուզեն" (Russians Also Want Erzeroum). *Aztag*, 20 March 1946; "Ռուսիա պահանջեց Կարս ու Արտահանը" (Armenia Demands Kars and Ardahan). *Aztag*, 10 April 1946.

22 "Հայիկ. Դատը" (Armenian Cause). *Aztag*, 4 July 1946.

ancestral territories come to fruition, because only at that point the Armenian dream can be achieved, for which heroes have fought and noble sons have died.[23]

The newspaper's stance changes in July, when *Aztag* begins to express its dissatisfaction with the ASSR's national identifications. *Aztag*'s team thinks that Moscow had no intention of reclaiming the provinces of Kars and Ardahan, just as it had no intention of resolving the Armenian Cause. Simultaneously, rumours of the program's shortcomings circulated, and criticism against the newspaper and the party persisted, prompting the Dashnak to change its former stance on repatriation. On September 1, 1946 the journalist Sassun writes an important editorial devoted to the Dardanelles question, which would mark the beginning of a break from the previously sought political equilibrium, an opportunity to discuss Soviet political action as well as that of the Armenian-Lebanese parties.[24]

The publication appeals for a reinterpretation of the Armenian-Soviet state's policy, proving the viability of other pathways more suitable to reaching the same goal. *Aztag* invites the reader to take note of the insufficient political action that has been so far undertaken in international circles thus far, and to concretize a unity of purpose for which the Dashnak is the flag bearer. The Armenian Revolutionary Federation's call for political superiority, whose primary goal at this point appears to be the resolution of the Armenian Cause, highlights the superficiality of Armenian-Soviet organisations and government officials' political actions.

Repatriation, as well as the controversy it provokes, increases prejudice and divisiveness. National unity around the Armenian cause, the motherland, has been subordinated to political objectives, blocking action and legitimizing Dashnak's skepticism by those political groups who claimed to be champions of the Armenian question but turned out to be political vassals of the USSR.

3 Contrasting Narratives

The first Lebanese parliamentary election after the independence, held in 1947, takes place in a burning electoral climate. Bishara el-Khoury, the first President of independent Lebanon, and the politically dominant coalition the Constitutional Bloc intend to maintain their power by winning these elections, in order to secure a majority

23 "Հայաստան եւ ոչ թէ Մատակասքար" (Armenia and not Madagascar). *Aztag*, 12 May 1946.

24 Sassun (1946). "Տարտանէլի խնդիրը եւ հայկական հարցը" (The Dardanelles Problem and the Armenian Question). *Aztag*, 1 September 1946s.

that would ensure el-Khoury' re-election as president (Chaitani 2007; Traboulsi 2012; Migliorino 2008, 94-5; Attié 2004, 25-9).

In the Armenian community, the battle for the appointment of two Armenian political representatives rekindles the never-ending fight between the parties and widens the community's schism.

At the same time it determinates a re-focus on the needs of the community on Lebanese space. In a way, repatriation and the so discussed Homeland become the frame of reference within which Armenian-Lebanese issues are discussed, but with a language that has been altered by the Cold War dynamics and, as a consequence has produced two conflicting narratives i.e. communist/fascist, patriot/homeland's enemy (Sahakyan 2015).[25] Discrediting the counterpart as homeland's enemy, a carrier of corruption and immorality becomes functional in the electoral context to the assumption of the power in Parliament. The relationship with Lebanese political groups is increasingly being emphasized in order to demonstrate their commitment to the Lebanese population, which has embraced the displaced Armenians since the 1920s. In this case, election preference for one list or another is also a demonstration of friendship and loyalty to the Lebanese people. Voting proves how the Armenian community has been integrated into the Lebanese world, accepted, and walks alongside its Lebanese brothers. Since the Armenian parties belong to two opposing camps in the Lebanese political spectrum, *Aztag*'s criticism of repatriation and the ASSR, *Ararad* and *Zartonk*'s references to the ARF's past and present alliances, including contacts with the Young Turks, Turkey's US ally, reinforce an ideological reference framework that is functional to the definition of the Lebanese camp to which the Armenian parties belong. The ARF supports an alliance with Lebanese pro-government and pro-Western forces, while the Ramgavar and Hunchaks announce the foundation of the Armenian Democratic Front, which will be a component of the Lebanese Democratic List (Messerlian 2014, 89-91).

The Armenian political ideologies mirror those of the Lebanese coalition to which the party participates. By alluding to matters concerning the Armenian world, the newspapers define who is a real Armenian patriot and a loyal Lebanese.

Aztag's editors employ the rhetorical appeal to people's cohesion as a means of demonstrating to the reader the treachery perpetrated by their adversaries. Through repatriation, Soviet Armenia operated as a separating factor, igniting a dispute centered mostly on the notion of what being an Armenian means, what values must be adopt, and what region must be recognized as one's own homeland.[26]

25 *Aztag*, 25 May 1947.

26 "Պոլշեւիկեան: դաւերն ու ոճիրները" (Bolsheviks. Conspiracies and Crimes). *Aztag*, 18 June 1947; "Տարբերութիւնը մեր եւ անոնց միջեւ" (The Difference Between Us

Through its media the Dashnak, denounces Hunchak and Ramgavar camouflaged's Bolshevism, depicting itself as a real Armenian, while the opponents are branded as traitors, conspirators, and communist operatives without principles, a danger to the Armenian diaspora and its host nation.

The label of enemy of the Armenian homeland here also serves as a warning to Armenians living in Lebanon, since it undermines the body of the Lebanese nation itself.

The display of what a newspaper deems to be homeland is also a chance to offer an identity-political reflection. What and where the homeland is differs depending on which political movement we are speaking of. It positions itself as the sole source of Armenianness, having developed a set of moral and political norms over time.

Aztag discusses how the Armenian people have always been exposed to mass movements, whether bloody or not; yet, at this moment, repatriation, as decreed by the Soviet Union, is hard to endorse precisely because it tacitly contradicts the Armenian cause in its current conditions. Acknowledging the way repatriation occurred would imply to accept Armenia's geographical immutability. Simultaneously, siding with Ramgavar and Hunchak would mean to support a political party that permitted the Bolsheviks, Stalin, to enter the diaspora, exploiting and eroding its spiritual harmony.[27]

The Armenian Federation portrayed itself as the sole organization capable of caring for the Armenian people, while the ASSR proved to be Stalin's puppet. No promise was fulfilled.

Repatriation did take place to some extent, but it was only one step in a wider process that should have been concluded in the settlement of the Armenian Cause.

According to *Zartonk*, the Federation's national ambition for a free, independent, and unified Armenia, conditioned by the anti-communist world's triumph, displays its irrationality by being out of context with the worldwide situation.[28] According to *Zartonk*, blind faith in an inevitable victory, which was based on the moralistic myth of the final triumph of justice leads to the ARF's dissociation from the historical context, and reveals how its representation focuses more on a project of diasporic identity construction more than on homeland, a self-perception susceptible to multiple readjustments in the last thirty years.

Ararad responds to the Armenian Revolutionary Federation's claims with in-depth essays about the party's history. Articles ex-

and Them). *Aztag*, 19 June 1947.

27 Housaper (1947). "Ի՞նչ ընենք" (What Should We Do?). *Aztag*, 23 January 1947.

28 "Եւ անոնց պատգմ. ժողովը" (And their Parliamentary Assembly). *Zartonk*, 10 September 1947.

amining the link between Hunchak and the Armenian revolution,[29] the Armenian cause yesterday and today,[30] together with the successes obtained in the years serve only to demonstrate Hunchak's historical continuity to the reader.[31] The desire to establish not only a political but also an ethical model originates primarily from the need, first and foremost, to challenge representations of reality that were considered bearers of falsehood and moral corruption;[32] secondarily, from the determination to transform every Armenian into a 'vigilant observer' of reality, aware of his rights as a citizen and as a member of a nation.

The strong identifications that defined the two camps' split institutionalized the factions. There is a rising number of publications that investigate the ARF's journey as a political institution, founded at the end of the nineteenth century, and its potential to become the unchallenged leader of the Armenian political sphere. In the past, the goals of the repatriation phenomenon and how it was organized were criticized; now, its social and, above all, symbolic value is being called into doubt.

If the first point has been called into question since May 1947, when the newspaper took an increasingly contradictory stance in defining what cannot be Armenia according to a logic that equates the regime's and the ARF's political actions, and inserted in the discussion a different image of the party as the bearer of harmony and Armenianness into the discussion, the second appears more complex.

4 Conclusion

The new year highlights the novelty of repatriation as the subject of polemical literature, the most important element that gave origin to the conditions of the Armenian debate and political crisis.

It's no surprise that *Aztag* burst into the scene more aggressively than the previous year. As the peculiarities of the Lebanese system allow local chapters of Armenian parties to engage in the political

29 Gidour (1947). "Հայ յեղափոխութեան ծագումն ու զարգացումը եւ Հնչակեան կուսակցութիւնը" (The Origin and Development of the Armenian Revolution and the Hunchak Party). *Ararad*, 3-4 April 1947.

30 Gidour (1947). "Հայ Հարցի, երեկ և այսօր" (Armenian Cause, Yesterday and Today). *Ararad*, 10 May 1947.

31 "Հաղթանակներ" (Victories). *Ararad*, 15 May 1947.

32 Nayiri, J. (1947). "Բարոյականութեան և սիրո ըմբռնումը խորհրդահայ գրականութեան մեջ" (The Understanding of Morality and Love in Soviet Armenian Literature). *Ararad*, 16 December 1947. The presentation of Armenian-Soviet literature provides an opportunity to show how morality, friendship, brotherhood, fundamental traits of the Armenian people, are free to express themselves on Soviet soil.

process and place themselves within the parliamentary spectrum, no effort is spared in inundating the population with political propaganda. In order to achieve the goal, i.e. the two Armenian-Orthodox seats in the Lebanese parliament, a sharpening of words is generated, which in the long run is useful to 'undermine' the opponent's ideological roots. Moments of disagreement appear to precipitate the conflict that will eventually devolve into an 'Armenian war'. Attempts to capture power throughout this decade result in a radicalization of the identification process, allowing the recovery of leitmotifs linked to certain parties and forcing a reinterpretation of them in the present.

Too frequently, the newspaper does not succeed to give voice to the popular sentiment; this is no longer possible, now that the party claims to be the leader of the next generation, leading by thought, example, and action. The journalistic team understands the current fears and passions. The necessary confrontation with repatriation, which the newspaper considers critical at this time, will serve as the foundation for a broader formulation in the coming years: the vision of Armenia as a homeland illegitimately occupied by a hostile force, and the Armenian identity structured around the struggle for its liberation.

Propaganda work in the diaspora for the salvation of the Armenian people is the means that confers importance to knowledge and mobilisation, which are as worthy as the return of the homeland, since it aims to restore a common sense of national belonging, whose aspiration is the recognition of the right of Armenians to have an autonomous national centre. It is proposed to live in diaspora as citizens of their host societies, while recovering its self-awareness as a nation, without giving up the consciousness of being members of a homeland.

To defeat the progressive camp, Armenians must first consider themselves as people seeking freedom and independence, first and foremost from a cultural and political perspective. Opponents would come to understand that repatriation is not viewed as a migratory movement of a population deprived of their country, but rather as an identity path that must lead Armenians to their motherland.

At the end of 1948, the possibility of an agreement between the various Armenian political entities was still a long way off. The language of confrontation, used retroactively at every opportunity, complicates the Armenian political landscape by targeting the Soviet Armenia, repatriation, Stalin, and the USSR on the one hand, and the Dashnaktsutsiun, its ruling allies, its history of dubious morality, and US foreign policies on the other. Divided viewpoints based on national ethos exhibit a proclivity for diverse interpretations in subjects of Armenian interest. The initial excitement produced by the authorization to a return for the Armenians living in the diaspora has been eclipsed by considerations primarily related to the Lebanese Armenian society.

The journalistic developments in 1946-47 follow two tracks: the first one, about the ASSR, repatriation, and the many definitions of the Armenian people, is incorporated into the second, about the political action of Armenian parties inside the framework of the Lebanese system. The issue of the Armenian homeland and the resolution of the Armenian cause are introduced and debated in direct relation to the changes and transformations affecting Lebanese society. Let us consider the May 1947 legislative elections: the notion of the Armenian homeland is utilized to counter the opposing national building in Lebanon.

The battle between Armenian publications in Lebanon, which are expression of the political parties, is mostly about the authority to represent Armenians in Lebanese power structures. As a consequence, the national question becomes the framework where multiple discussions of issues closely related to community life are articulated, and, borrowing language from the Cold War context, introduces the question of self-determination in relation to the definition of what being a nation means. Between 1946 and 1947, the building of the image of a specific homeland of reference is carried to extremes, favouring polarization of political stances through a process of juxtaposition of the single vision with the one created by the opposing faction. Armenia as a nation is represented through a process of idealisation and abstraction. The attributes of the authentic Armenian, the patriot, as represented by *Zartonk*, *Ararad*, and *Aztag*, are proposed in a polemical debate with the Other, defining and synthesising the characteristic features of the anti-Armenian, and favouring an exclusive identifying paradigm.

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Armenia, Caucaso e Asia Centrale
Ricerche 2022
a cura di Daniele Artoni, Carlo Frappi, Paolo Sorbello

Multivectoral? A Quantitative Analysis of Uzbekistan's Foreign Policy Communication at the United Nations

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Abstract The objective of this article is to assess Uzbekistan's foreign policy against old and new trends after the election of President Shavkat Mirziyoyev. By criticising the validity of the concept of multivectorism, this article supports the hypothesis of Uzbekistani foreign policy and interests being reimagined and reshaped by engagement with domestic, and external actors. After a reflection on the role of language and ideas in political analysis, I will employ a Structural Topic Model to test the hypothesis empirically. The findings will support the hypothesis and the use of big data to provide a less biased analysis of foreign policy trends.

Keywords Uzbekistan. Central Asia. Foreign policy. Language. Ideas. Multivectorism. Self-reliance. Constructivism. Document analysis. Structural topic model. Quantitative methods. United Nations.

Summary 1 Introduction. – 2 Multivectoral? Uzbek Foreign Policy in the 21st Century. – 2.1 The Uzbekistani Exception: Islam Karimov's Foreign Policy. – 2.2 Change and Continuities: Shavkat Mirziyoyev (2016-2021). – 2.3 Discussion and Research Questions. – 3 Ideas and Identity: Political Communication as Data. – 3.1 Communication as Data: Theory, Ideas, and Methodology. – 3.2 Data. – 3.3 The Structural Topic Model. – 4 Uzbekistan's Communication at the United Nations (2001-2021). – 4.1 Topics of Communication: An Overview. – 4.2 Human Rights and Judicial System: Uzbekistan and the Un Committees. – 4.3 International and Domestic Politics and Security: Framing of Political Opposition, Terrorism, and Crime. – 4.4 Isolation and Adaptation: Economic Transition, Resilience, Reform and Sustainability. – 5 Conclusions and Discussion. – 5.1 Results of Empirical Tests. – 5.2 The Methodological Question: Strengths and Limitations of the Research Design. – 5.3 Discussion: Areas for Further Research.

Edizioni Ca'Foscari

Eurasiatica 19
e-ISSN 2610-9433 | ISSN 2610-8879
ISBN [ebook] 978-88-6969-667-1

Peer review | Open access
Submitted 2022-04-18 | Accepted 2022-09-21 | Published 2023-04-26
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DOI 10.30687/978-88-6969-667-1/009

1 Introduction

Foreign policy in Islam Karimov's Uzbekistan is a very debated subject in the field of Eurasian studies due to its many peculiarities, such as the fluctuations between the Russian and Western spheres of influence or its protectionist economic policies. The election of a new President in Uzbekistan, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, allows us for the first time to review Karimov's foreign policy from a comparative point of view. The objective of this article is to review the literature on Uzbekistani foreign policy and to assess it empirically against old and new trends and developments in Uzbekistan. This project is part of the preliminary research for a larger PhD project on China's relations with Uzbekistan, hence the questions discussed in the article arise from enhancing the relevance of the Asian vector in Uzbekistani foreign policy, and therefore the research attempts to critique the existing literature in hindsight considering new developments. The analysis will start from drawing a timeline of events in Uzbekistani foreign policy, to then underline the main analytical concepts used in the literature to explain them, such as 'multivectorism', discussed in two of its conceptualisations, as balancing and as co-alignment (Contessi 2015), and defensive self-reliance as theorised by Fazendeiro (2015a; 2015b; 2017). This research investigates whether these concepts are useful to explain Uzbekistani foreign policy throughout the years by testing them against the country's reaction to changing international, regional and domestic environments in the context of the United Nations.

Taking from Fazendeiro's (2015b) conception of a set of 'rules' that would characterise the country's spirit of self-reliance, and that are "out in the open, whether in speeches, public works, laws or practices, and are either formal or informal 'models' that shape action" (Fazendeiro 2015b, 486), I focused on political communication and I operationalised a list of themes that could represent the concepts of self-reliance and multivectorism and looked for examples of them in the documents produced by Uzbekistan at the United Nations. The objective is to assess the ability of these concepts to explain the totality of Uzbekistan's foreign policy, by supporting empirically a constructivist logic in Uzbekistani foreign policy in which interests are reimagined and reshaped by engagement with domestic, regional and international actors (Dadabaev 2016). The findings underline the instances that led to the theorisation of the two concepts, such as Uzbekistan's assertive language in terms of human rights or terrorism but find clear instances of change in discourse over time, relegating many of these aspects to specific contexts and timeframes such as the participation of the country to the War on Terror or the aftermath of the Andijan incident. This research advocates for attention and further in-depth research on the processes that led to the outcomes analysed in the timeline and document analysis.

Finally, the research also provides a reflection on the role of language and ideas in political analysis as a function of identity building, a very relevant theme in the literature on Uzbekistan's foreign policy. The second enquiry in this article questions whether and how Uzbekistan's self-representation in multilateral fora can measure and account for change in the 'rules' of Uzbekistani foreign policy making, which raises a further methodological question on whether an analysis of political communication can provide valid empirical tests to political concepts. The strategy to answer the substantial and methodological questions is to employ an innovative machine learning method, the Structural Topic Model, to analyse Uzbekistan's political communication at the United Nations between the War on Terror and the Global Pandemic (2001-2021). The findings will support the use of big (textual) data to provide a less biased analysis of foreign policy trends. However, the source of documents, the United Nations, seems to skew the findings of this research in that it does not give a complete image of Uzbekistan's foreign communication with lack of bilateral political and trade relations, it depicts a very UN-centred communication in terms of multilateral cooperation and gives an exaggerated attention to UN-related topics such as torture or human rights violations. Hence, the findings call for further research using a different source of documents coming from domestic foreign policy institutions.

2 Multivectoral? Uzbek Foreign Policy in the 21st Century

I will start by detailing a timeline of Uzbekistani foreign policy and related events that will be used as a temporal guide for the document analysis. I will then review related analyses in the literature on Uzbekistani foreign policy during Karimov. Furthermore, the review of scholarly literature will be completed by analysing views on change and continuities in Uzbekistani foreign policy under President Mirziyoyev. The findings from the literature review will lead to my research questions, which will be discussed in the final section.

2.1 The Uzbekistani Exception: Islam Karimov's Foreign Policy

When the USSR was dissolved at the end of 1991, the former president of the Uzbek Socialist Republic, Islam Karimov, remained as head of the state and started a process of nation-building and consolidation of power (Ruiz-Ramas, Morales Hernández 2021). In the early years of independence, the country maintained a diverse set of relations with foreign powers. Uzbekistan in 1992 joined the Commonwealth

of Independent States and signed the Russian-led Collective Security Treaty (CSTO) – which will become an organisation (CSTO 2022). Another important vector centred mainly on South Korea, one of the few foreign investors in the 1990s (Hanks 2000) and an important source of inspiration in terms of economic policy (Spechler 2000). Finally, the Western vector saw the country joining NATO Partnership for Peace in 1994 (Ahmad 2008; Cottey 2012; Tolipov 2006). However, this balanced approach would not last long.

The core of geopolitical repositioning happened after 1996 when the Taliban seized control of Afghanistan, becoming a direct threat to the secular majority-Muslim Central Asian republics (Primbetov, Mukashev 2016) with important global implications, such as the US or China enhancing their presence in the region (Nichol 2010; Zhao 2006). Focusing on the latter, Afghanistan led the Shanghai Five border settlement framework to evolve into the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) in 2001, a multilateral institution that originally included China, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Russia and Uzbekistan (India and Pakistan joined in 2017). China and the US represent new directions of Uzbekistan's foreign policy, at a time in which Uzbekistan had left the Russian-led CSTO in 1999 as an attempt to decouple from Russia as a security provider (Jardine, Lemon 2020).

9/11 and the war in Afghanistan represented another big change. Uzbekistan, together with Kyrgyzstan, offered a military base at the Karshi-Khanabad airport to the US-led alliance during the War on Terror (Pikalov 2014). The US-Uzbekistan Strategic Partnership (Purnell 2005) and Uzbekistani support of the war in Iraq in 2003, an outlier in the region (Najibullah 2003), supported the view of Uzbekistan joining the Western sphere of influence. Yet, the colour revolutions throughout Eurasia and the shift in US security policy to human rights and the Freedom Agenda (see Hassan, Hammond 2011) contributed to a further shift in Uzbekistani foreign policy. In May 2005, political demonstrations in Andijan led to state intervention causing the death of hundreds of people (Kendzior 2015). The Uzbekistani government framed it as an organised coup attempt by terrorists and criminals (Megoran 2008), while independent researchers depicted it as repression (Kendzior 2015). In any case, Andijan gave the last blow to US-Uzbekistan cooperation. The US had already started to criticise Uzbekistan's human rights record in 2004, when it cut aid to the country (D.R. Spechler, M.C. Spechler 2010), and critiques became even stronger after Andijan (Sullivan 2019).

The new US behaviour led to the expulsion of US troops from the country, and redirection towards Russia through re-joining the CSTO. At the time, analysts were stressing the Russo-Chinese role in pushing Uzbekistan and its neighbours further away from Western partners (Rothacher 2008). The role of the SCO was hyped as it was used as a platform for asking US military to leave Central Asia,

even if the inauguration of the Tashkent-based SCO Regional Anti-terrorist Structure already in 2003 signals that Uzbekistan had never really left that vector of regional cooperation, even during its honeymoon period with the US.

Yet again change was behind the corner. In 2008 the Obama administration rekindled relations with Uzbekistan, due to the necessity of supporting a Northern Distribution Network for sending supplies to Afghanistan (Cooley 2012; Ziegler 2013). In parallel, in 2011 the US State Department presented a new Central Asia strategy, the 'New Silk Road' (Laruelle 2015), to connect Central Asia and South Asia through Afghanistan to spread stability in the country and to diversify Central Asian trade routes. Symbolic of the rapprochement are the visits by Secretary of State Clinton to Uzbekistan in December 2010 and October 2011 (US Department of State 2022) and the US lifting the ban on FMF[1] (Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty 2012).

While relations with the US were improving, the Russian vector proved to be unsustainable for the country that ended its participation to the CSTO in 2012 (Laruelle 2012) and rekindled its military neutrality in its New Foreign Policy Concept. A central development at the time was the importance the Asian vector, as China's rise as a global power and its announcement of China's pivot to Eurasia, the Belt and Road Initiative from Kazakhstan in 2013, changed the regional geoeconomic system permanently.

2.1.1 Domestic Drivers: Gradual Liberalisation, Self-reliance, and Identity

The domestic side of the literature on Uzbekistan's foreign policy focuses on national identity-building (Carlisle 1991; Olcott 1994; Fumagalli 2017), economic self-reliance (Fazendeiro 2015a) and regime survival (Anceschi 2010; Cooley 2012; Collins 2014). The early literature focuses on the nationalistic character of the creation of its external image, collocating the birth of nationalism amongst the native intelligentsia of the Uzbek Socialist Republic in the 1980s (Olcott 1994; Carlisle 1991). Also, Olcott (1994) characterised the early foreign policy of Central Asian countries along three ethno-cultural lines: Turkic/Persian heritage, Islam and Asianness.

The first steps of economic reforms in Uzbekistan seemed to take inspiration from the Asian ethnic line (Olcott 1994; Spechler 2000). Uzbekistan's economic policy after independence was gradual and avoided any shock therapy towards free market, maintaining a pivotal role of the state (Gidadhubli 2005; Paramonov et al. 2006; Ru-

1 Foreign Military Financing.

ziev, Ghosh, Dow 2007). Yusupov provided a bleak overall assessment of Karimov's economic policy, which led to "extremely low level of economic efficiency and economic growth rates, high unemployment and external labour migration, and rampant corruption" (2020, 53).

A more elite-centred narrative still speaks of issues of state identity or economy but sees the latter as tools for regime survival (Anceschi 2010). The discussion here focuses on existence threats for the Uzbekistani regime by elevating domestic elite structures and competitions to a fundamental role to shape and reshape relations with foreign powers (Anceschi 2010; Cooley 2012; Collins 2014). This programme of research directly feeds into the literature on the neopatrimonial character of Central Asian regime.

2.1.2 International Drivers: Multivectoral Pragmatism and Political Independence

A larger chunk of the literature focuses on international drivers of Uzbekistani foreign policy, which can be divided in political and relational. As apparent from Fumagalli's (2017) review, at an international level Karimov's political driver seems to be national independence. The latter is characterised as 'non-alignment' and is designed around either an ideological sense of 'self-reliance', *mustaqillik* (Anceschi, Paramonov 2020; Fazendeiro 2015a), or as a function of pragmatic national interest to maximise gains (Karrar 2009; Pikalov 2014). The concept of (defensive) self-reliance is described by Fazendeiro (2017) as a recognition of an autonomous role in the international arena, very much connected to international prestige and equality (*tenglik*). The concept was opposed by the author to interest-driven rational analyses that only account for stable rational objectives as a guide for foreign policy (see above discussions on regime survival or economic development) based on a zero-sum logic of consequences. To this logic, Fazendeiro opposes a logic of appropriateness, the compatibility with some rules that are "general prescriptions for action" (2015b, 487), such as mercantilism, the promotion of the manufacturing sector, self-sufficiency and control in the economic side or pursuit of equality, focus on bilateral relations, assertive defence of the country's image and reluctance to embrace expansionist agendas from a more political side (Fazendeiro 2017).

The relational side of the picture is linked to Karimov's fluctuant foreign relations (expulsion of US troops and joining/leaving Russian-led initiatives; Fazendeiro 2015b). Dadabaev proposes a constructivist explanation for Uzbekistani foreign policy focused on the "constraints of the international environment that shaped the Uzbekistani state's identity and thus led to it constructing internal and foreign policy responses to it" (2019, 901). Asiryan (2019) instead character-

ises this proclivity to change as part of the 'multivectoral' essence of Karimov's policy, a predisposition often attributed to Central Asian leaders. Contessi (2015) provides an excellent discussion of the concept of multivectorism and characterises it as 'co-alignment'. After critiquing the ideas of multivectorism as simple balancing between different foreign powers, the author starts from Blank's (2010) definition of the concept as aiming "explicitly to play major powers against one another and raise the price of cooperation" (Contessi 2015, 301) and expands it into four different policy areas: autonomy from great powers, mitigating normative postures, diversifying route for natural resources and integration into global markets. Finally, another interest-driven approach follows from similar instances analysed in the domestic drivers and proposes to atomise both the state and its interests, refocussing on a plurality of transnational elites that negotiate their power dynamics in competition and collaboration with each other with a focus on foreign elites (Izquierdo-Brichs 2021).

2.2 Change and Continuities: Shavkat Mirziyoyev (2016-21)

After Karimov's death in 2016, Uzbekistani Prime Minister, Shavkat Mirziyoyev became President. His leadership has been characterised by reforms in many aspects of the Uzbekistani state and economy. I will not describe the reforms in detail, but these included economic liberalisation with a loosening of the role of the state in the economy, with privatisations and relaxation of state monopolies (Bodio 2020; Hug 2020; Kangas 2018). At the same time, reforms tackled social issues like forced labour, media freedom, corruption and judicial independence (Asiryan 2019; Hug 2020). Even if many problems remain such as limits on freedom of speech (Radio Azattyq 2022), LGBTQ+ and women rights (Gordeyeva 2021; Hug 2020), or repression of political demonstrations (Lillis 2022), some improvement has been recognised even by long-term critics of the Uzbekistani government (see Cotton Campaign 2022).

The debate on Uzbekistan's post-2016 foreign policy presents very diverse positions. Starting from change, an interesting new addition in the literature is Mirziyoyev's focus on soft power. Fazendeiro writes that the new President has "prioritised dialogue over confrontation in the region, spoken of connectivity" (2018), and compares his approach with Karimov's reliance on a more traditional idea of hard power. In this context, geopolitical considerations leave the stage to economic cooperation in Mirziyoyev's foreign policy (Dadabaev 2019). Regional cooperation, resolution of decennial conflicts with other Central Asian countries, and prominent involvement in the debate on Afghanistan's security are also quoted as new foreign policy trends (Anceschi, Paramonov 2020; Hug 2020), together with the im-

provement of relations with external powers. Yet, there is no agreement on whether the main beneficiaries are Russia, China (Anceschi, Paramonov 2020) or any foreign partner (Hug 2020; Weitz 2018).

Yet, if Fazendeiro (2018) sees soft power as a novel approach, he agrees with Weitz (2018) in arguing that it is more a change of tactics than of substance. For example, Central Asia and Afghanistan had already been relevant topics in Karimov's foreign policy (Fazendeiro 2018; Toktogulov 2022; Weitz 2018). Toktogulov (2022) and Weitz (2018) also underline how Mirziyoyev's foreign policy is based on Karimov's and particularly on his 2012 Foreign Policy Concept, whose regional focus and military neutrality represent central pillars of new President's external policies.

2.3 Discussion and Research Questions

In order to critique the literature on Uzbekistani foreign policy, I will focus on the concepts of defensive self-reliance and multivectorism, which both provide pertinent explanations for the development of Uzbekistan foreign policy. This subsection will discuss the analytical strengths and weaknesses of both approaches to then build my research questions. Starting from multivectorism, if we define the concept as mere balancing relations between great powers, the latter struggles at describing Karimov's foreign policy shifts. A pragmatic characterisation works much better for other Central Asian republics. Its fluctuant foreign policy make Uzbekistan stand out at least amongst SCO member states, as Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan followed a more linear path in their security dependence on Russia through stable participation in the CSTO, amicable relations with the United States and economic dependence on both Russia and China. Uzbekistan's fluctuations between the US and Russia hardly looked like pragmatic balancing, where supposedly multivectoral Uzbekistan kept losing vectors (USA and Russia as the best examples). Yet, if we define multivectorism in the way Contessi (2015) conceptualised it, then these fluctuations might be part of the strategy to play great powers against each other in a bid to pursue Uzbekistan's own set of interests.

Fazendeiro's (2015b; 2017) discussion on self-reliance follows up from an economic-centred vision connected to Islam Karimov's early policies of self-sufficiency to avoid overreliance on foreign partners. At the same time Karimov's reluctance to accept universalist/expansionist discourses is described as an important political instance of political self-reliance (Fazendeiro 2017). Both these examples fit very well with some part of Karimov's practice and discourse and particularly with the early protectionism and the uneasiness with participation to alliances (see CSTO) or relations with normative powers (US).

At the same time, as admitted by the same author, some policies do not match with the so-called 'rules' of self-reliance. The decision to join (twice) the CSTO even if short-lived does imply the decision of joining a military alliance, and the acceptance of the military presence of the United States and therefore the political and logistical support of a series of military actions in Afghanistan and Iraq, mostly conducted in the name of exporting 'freedom' (see G.W. Bush 'freedom agenda', The White House 2008), weakens the ideational side of the concept and seems more to support the interest-driven discussions connected to regime survival.

At the same time, both analyses fail to account for one aspect, namely the Asian vector of Uzbekistan's foreign policy and particularly bilateral and multilateral relations with China. Relations with South Korea and China did not present the same characteristics as relations with other foreign powers. If Seoul has been a close partner since independence, China grew from being a peripheral actor to becoming Uzbekistan's main trade and strategic partner (Dadabaev 2018). Also, in a context of extreme changes in Karimov's foreign policy, China managed to secure Uzbekistan's continued participation to the SCO and for the country to host its Regional Antiterrorist Structure. If these developments act as counterarguments for the bilateral focus of self-reliance, the characteristics of relations at both multilateral and bilateral level with China seem to support the importance of contextual facts in Uzbekistan's relations with great powers, where China's approach seems to lead to a partnership more stable than others. Interest-driven discussions such as those connected to survival of elite networks and multivectorism are not well equipped to capture the variety of contexts and process that produce actions and reactions in Uzbekistan's policy.

The introduction of a comparative term, given by the President Mirziyoyev's foreign policy, provides a test for the strength of these two concepts trying to avoid the selective biases that produced the shortcomings analysed above. Starting from these reflections and specifically from the inability of one characterisation to describe the entire timeframe of Uzbekistan's foreign policy, the article will adopt a more constructivist position. In particular, I support the hypothesis of Uzbekistani foreign policy being reimagined and reshaped by engagement with domestic, regional and international actors (Dadabaev 2016). As will be described in the next section, I take from the concept or 'rules' exposed by Fazendeiro (2015b) and focus on the processes of construction and reconstruction of the latter in discussion with other alternative dispositions such as multivectorism and their focus on rational interests.

The questions I want to answer are substantive and methodological. The substantive question (Q1) investigates empirically whether multivectorism or self-reliance are consistently able to explain Uz-

bekistani foreign policy throughout the years by testing the country's reaction to a changes international environment focusing on the timeline above. The methodological question (Q2) inquires whether the innovative quantitative analysis methods described in the next paragraph can offer good empirical tests for ideational change in Uzbekistan's foreign policy.

3 Ideas and Identity: Political Communication as Data

This section will outline the methodological strategy for this research. I will start by discussing my ontological and epistemological positioning, which falls into the realm of constructivism, whose focus is on change and adaptation of actors' interests, values, and ideas in the international system. Actors in this analysis will mostly be states in both their unitary and pluralist depictions. Furthermore, starting by the theoretical collocation of this research, I will describe my attempt to provide a less biased analysis of political ideas. Finally, I will outline my data collection strategy and methods.

3.1 Communication as Data: Theory, Ideas, and Methodology

This research is based on a constructivist position that considers interests and values as socially constructed, "expressed, acted upon and revised" (Hay 2002, 20), where ideas acquire a causal role independent from material interests, in a dialectical relation with the latter (Hay 2002). I start by employing the concept of 'rules' as building bricks of what Fazendeiro (2015b) calls the 'spirit' of self-reliance (see above). The latter are considered to be "out in the open, whether in speeches, public works, laws or practices, and are either formal or informal 'models' that shape action" (Fazendeiro 2015b, 486), as opposed to the individual preferences of elites that shape interests which tend to be private and not accessible. Yet, although flexible in theory, these rules seem to be considered constant driving forces in Uzbekistani discourse and practice coming from local preferences of elite members.

Starting from Fazendeiro's precious theorisation, I take Dadabaev's constructivist focus on change, instead of continuity, as a base for this research, which states that interests and values need to be situated in space and time as they are not fixed. The attention to social construction elevates ideas to a central role, assigning them a causal role independent from material interests (Hay 2002; Parsons 2010). This by itself does not mean that material issues should be left out of the picture, but that there is a dialectical relation between the role of ideas and the role of material interests as one influences the

other (Hay 2002). Specifically, ideas can have material outcomes, while the material situation can help shape ideas about the environment actor find themselves into. This research also takes from the focus on identity, very much present in the literature on Uzbekistan's foreign policy and focuses on how Uzbekistan's self-representation in multilateral fora can measure and account for change in 'rules' of Uzbekistani foreign policy making.

A quantitative analysis offers the possibility to work on a larger number of sources and to obtain a less biased selection of moments of change, tackling some limitations of qualitative inquiry, namely researchers' prejudices in coding (Barusch, Gringeri, George 2011) and data collection/sampling (Frost 1989; Hu et al. 2019). I will start by identifying a set of thematic variables coming from the literature supporting the concepts of multivectorism and self-reliance and try to find evidence for them in Uzbekistani communication at the United Nations. Communication at the UN is consistently utilised in studies on political communication and foreign policy (see Baturo, Dasandi, Mikhaylov 2017; Hill and Smith 2000; Jordaan 2017; Mushtaq et al. 2021), particularly after the introduction of innovative quantitative methods like the one I am using in this paper, that allow to overcome many of the criticisms connected with the analysis of content through frequentist measures.

Table 1 synthesizes a set of variables that I will be looking at to measure to what extent the concepts underlying multivectorism and self-sufficiency can be found in Uzbekistani multilateral self-representation at the United Nations **[tab. 1]**. As multivectorism was theorised by Contessi (2015) in a relational sense, issues such as sovereignty or regime survival can be accounted for in terms of the variation of relevance of foreign powers in political communication or the importance and tone of discussions on human rights and related issues (e.g. torture or judicial reforms). The economic side of the typical characteristics of multivectorism can be accounted for in terms of mention of infrastructure projects, energy cooperation, connectivity and international economic cooperation.

I operationalised self-sufficiency through both its political and economic characteristics which will be measured through the relevance of discussions on non-alignment, antimilitarism, mercantilism and focus on technology transfer. At the same time another couple of instances that Fazendeiro (2017) lists as characteristics of Uzbekistan's foreign policy are used as instances of self-reliance to be found in Uzbekistan's communication. The first is the predominance of bilateral relations which will be accounted for positively in terms with the relevance of bilateral partners in discourse and negatively with the relevance of multilateral platforms. Finally, the resistance to expansionism will be connected to issues of human rights, religion, panturkism and Eurasianism.

Table 1 Variables operationalised from the literature

Multivectorism (Contessi 2015)		Self-sufficiency (Fazendeiro 2015b; 2017)	
Variables	**Example measures**	**Variables**	**Example measures**
Autonomy/sovereignty	Relations with great powers	Economic self-sufficiency	Mercantilism, support for the manufacturing sector
Regime Survival	Human rights discourse	Political self-sufficiency	Non-alignment, illiberal policies, control, stability
Natural resources trade	Infrastructure projects, energy cooperation	Bilateral relations	Relevance of partners/ multilateral organisation
Economic integration	Connectivity, trade agreements	Reluctance for expansionism	Universalism, religion, panturkism, Eurasianism

3.2 Data

The data for the research consists in 417 documents representing all Uzbekistan's contributions at the United Nations between 2001 and 2021 (War on Terror to Global Pandemic). The documents have been manually scraped from the United Nations Digital Library by searching the word 'Uzbekistan' in the search box and selecting those documents that represented direct Uzbekistani communications such as letters, speeches, and selected reports. Multinational resolutions, legal documents, and periodic reports to UN committees have been excluded due to their lack of direct ideological content or their excessive length that reduced comparability.

3.3 The Structural Topic Model

The Structural Topic Model (STM) is a machine learning method whose scope is to find latent topics from texts (Roberts et al. 2014). It is an unsupervised method in that it infers topics (themes) from correlation between words rather than having the researcher assuming them at the beginning (Roberts et al. 2014; Roberts, Stewart, Tingley 2019; Pinto 2019). The peculiarity of the STM is that it gives the possibility to include a set of covariates that can measure the effect of some circumstances on the prevalence and the content of topics (Combei, Giannetti 2020; Roberts, Stewart, Tingley 2019). Furthermore, it can measure topic proportions in each document to analyse which documents are the most relevant to a topic.

Following Bagozzi and Berliner (2018) the covariates include the day of publication, the source (UN institution), together with a few political variables. The domestic variables are related to who the President was at the time of publication and to whether the document was signed by the President or not. The international variables sig-

nal participation in the War on Terror, the CSTO and log trade with China, Russia and the United States, as measures of the variables described above.

The documents were loaded on the software R, paired with the covariates above, and pre-processed (Combei 2019). A further step was that of model selection, where the important task was choosing the number of topics (Roberts et al. 2014). There is no right number of topics, however a list of statistical and interpretative tests based on semantic cohesion (exclusivity and co-occurrence of words-topics) helped us selecting 20 as the correct number of topics (Combei 2019). After that, I estimated the topics and their content, together with the effect of covariates on topic prevalence and content through a logistic regression (for formulas see Roberts et al. 2014).

4 Uzbekistan's Communication at the United Nations (2001-21)

This empirical section will start with an overview of the topics estimated by the STM. I started by labelling the 20 topics, to then group them in thematic clusters. Furthermore, I divided clusters in three macro categories related to human rights, politics and security, and economics and sustainability. The latter will be analysed in-depth in three related sections through a description of the content of the various topics and the effect of covariates on both their prevalence and content.

4.1 Topics of Communication: An Overview

Following Combei (2019), I analysed the most common words per each topic and read the main documents related to each topic to find their labels **[tab. 2]**. To simplify the analysis, I grouped topics containing similar instances in six qualitative clusters.

Table 2 Topics and labels

Topic 1	Torture and inhumane treatment
Topic 2	Economic development and reforms
Topic 3	Climate change protocols and conventions
Topic 4	International fight against the drying of the Aral Sea
Topic 5	Fight against transnational drug trafficking
Topic 6	Human rights abuses and related justifications
Topic 7	Comments on application of UN conventions on climate, social rights, and health

Topic 8	Andijan: political and religious freedom, terrorism
Topic 9	International Security: anti-nuclear proliferation, WMD, terrorism
Topic 10	Human Rights Committee: Children and Women's rights
Topic 11	Uzbek measures to counter terrorism and support for ISAF mission
Topic 12	Human and children trafficking
Topic 13	Judicial reforms: death penalty, processes, torture
Topic 14	Children and mothers' rights – measures
Topic 15	Peacebuilding, and religious cooperation: peace process in Afghanistan, Islamic cooperation, Israel-Palestine conflict
Topic 16	Elections, communication of procedures and results
Topic 17	Climate change and technology to build capabilities
Topic 18	Human Rights Committee, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, political stability, and ethnic unity
Topic 19	Human Rights: the role of civil society
Topic 20	Liberalisation of judicial sector, judicial reform, abolition of death penalty

Cluster 1 and 2 are related to human rights, where the cluster 1 (topics 1, 6, 13 and 20) relates to respect of human rights in the Uzbek judicial system, and cluster 2 focuses mostly on children and women's rights (10, 12, 14). Moving to security issues, Clusters 3 (topics 8, 16, 18, 19) and 6 (topics 5, 9, 11, 15) relate to domestic and international security respectively. The remaining clusters 4 (topics 2, 17) and 5 (topics 3, 4, 7) relate to economic reform and sustainability. In the next three sections I will discuss the clusters by grouping theme thematically. For an overview of the most important words per each topic please refer the figure to below **[fig. 1]**.

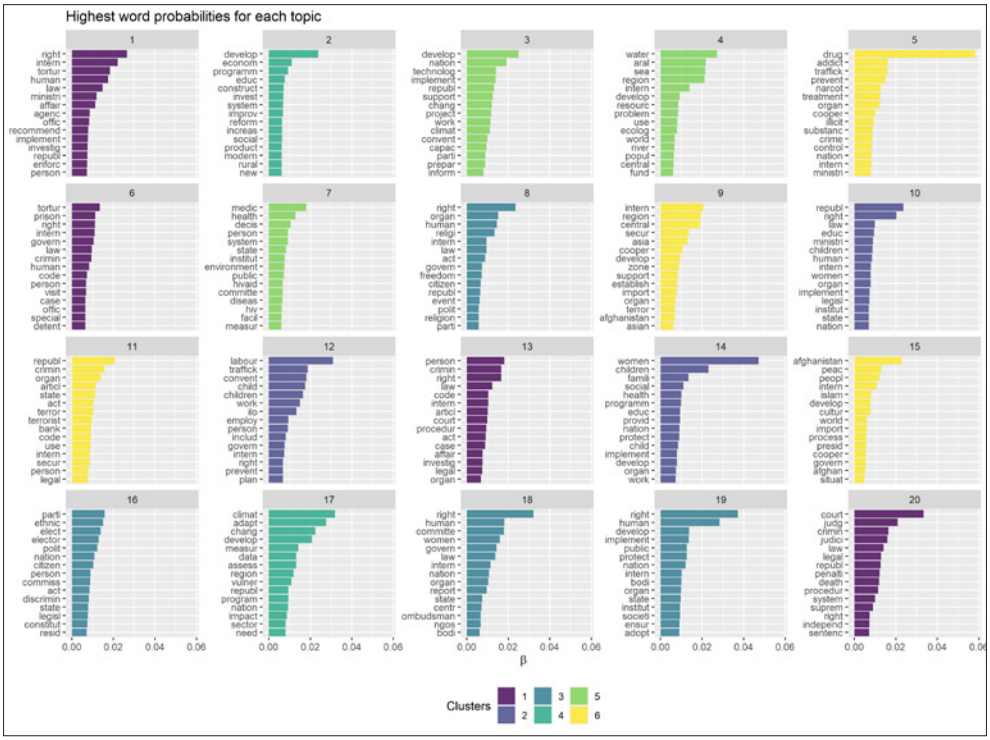

Figure 1 Overview of topics and clusters

4.2 Human Rights and Judicial System: Uzbekistan and the Un Committees

The analysis of the clusters related to human rights is the least relevant in terms of thematic prevalence, as it contains topics related to the most common working areas at the UN. The first cluster contains four topics, two related to torture (topic 1) and generally to human rights abuses (topic 6), and two related to the reform of the judicial sector (topics 13 and 20). Topic 1 on torture, mostly contains documents written in the early 2000s, but spans throughout the timeframe. Examples are descriptions of the 2003 legislation against torture in Uzbekistan, and comments on the visit by UN Rapporteur to the country. A comparison using the variable *karipres* (whether Karimov was President when the article was published) **[fig. 2]** shows that language on torture during Karimov (until 2016) seems to be more focused on state initiative, while during Mirziyoyev the interest is on criminal investigations, in line with a more executive character of Mirziyoyev's Uzbeki-

stan. Topic 6 contains more general comments on human rights abuses at UN committees, more prevalent in the earlier days. The other two topics on judicial reforms contain information and letters to Committees on the topic of judicial reforms. Examples of themes would be the abolition of death penalty or the independence of the judiciary. Both the topics remain stable throughout the timeline.

Figure 2 Effect of content variable *karipres* (whether Karimov was President at publication) on topic 1

The second cluster is related to women and children's rights. Topic 10 contains broad descriptions of the countries policies on the matter that touch a long list of issues like education, human trafficking, child labour, gender equality or forced marriage. Human trafficking is the main theme of topic 12, more relevant in earlier dates. Topic 14 is related to more practical measures to protect women and children's rights such as the declarations, plans of action or symposiums. The last two topics are prevalent throughout.

Even if the prevalence of these topics does not say much about Uzbekistan's interest in raising these issues, as the source of the documents, the UN, skews discourse around these themes, the qualitative side of how the topics are tackled by the Uzbekistani government is still relevant to the analysis. The findings from the analysis of the visualisation in figure 2 support what Fazendeiro (2017) describes as the tendency of the Uzbekistani government to defend actions from the state, specifically in terms of the use of torture in the country **[fig. 2]**. Yet, at the same time, it does show how Mirziyoyev's focus on the same topic is less clear cut and shows some shifting focus in terms of reform

and change, which seems to contradict both the idea of staunch defence of the state (or at least of past behaviour of the Uzbekistani government) and the idea of regime survival as protection from ideologies that can promote change and instability. Furthermore, the topics on judicial reform seem to underline a reference to reforms and change also during Karimov's times as the topics are relevant throughout. Finally, although the topic of human rights is present after the election of Mirziyoyev, the expectation would be that it would become much more relevant during a more liberal government, but this is not the case.

4.3 International and Domestic Politics and Security: Framing of Political Opposition, Terrorism, and Crime

I will now move to discuss political and security topics. As for domestic topics, topic 8 on Andijan, religious freedom and terrorism allows us to discuss empirically the most controversial moment of Uzbekistan's history. The topic as expected contains very strong wording in response to reports and debates at the UN on the country's handling on the Andijan protests. Firstly, two of the prevalence variables, which measure whether Uzbekistan was hosting US military in its own territory (*wot*) or was part of the CSTO (*csto*) when the document was published have statistically significant effects depicting the enhanced probability of Uzbekistan discussing this during the time of its alliance with Russia (2005-2012) **[fig. 3]**.

Furthermore, we find that the language used here represents a strong denunciation of ill will from Western countries as exemplified by these remarks at the General Assembly: "Various of the comments made by the United Kingdom (on behalf of the European Union), the United States of America and Canada were based on allegations and rumours, in an attempt to manipulate human rights standards for their own ends" (Vohidov 2005). The latter does not only represent a different interpretation of what happens, but a depiction of Western countries as voluntarily using the human rights discourse for their own ends. This characterisation is less than pragmatic and surely detrimental to a relevant foreign policy vector for the country. Again, Karimov's reaction seems not to fall into a strategic calculation, but towards a confrontational ideological positioning.

This last finding emphasises the lack of relevance of multivectorism conceived as a balanced relation with great powers to bargain better deals but supports both the idea of regime survival in the way that Contessi (2015) conceptualises it and the reluctance to accept universal concepts as connected to self-reliance. However, the fact that this more assertive topic, which does not only contain documents on Andijan, but also on issues that were at stake during those protests (rights to protest, extremism, religious freedom), is very much

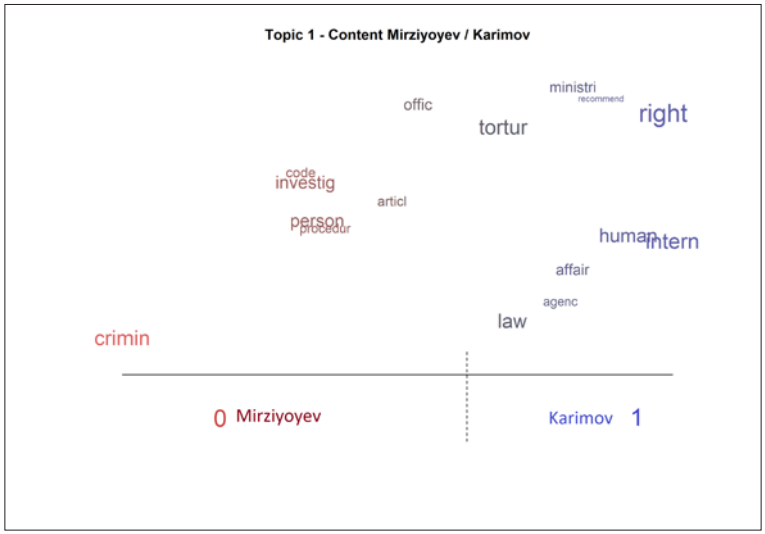

Figure 3 Effect of prevalence variables wot (US military in Uzbekistan) and csto (member of CSTO). The number 0 indicates that when the document was published Uzbekistan was not hosting US military or was not part of the CSTO respectively. Number 1 indicates that it was hosting US troops or that it was a member of the CSTO

prevalent at times in which Uzbekistan is part of the CSTO and less during the country's honeymoon with the US **[fig. 3]** shows that the assertive tone was not consistently relevant over time.

The other three topics are related to elections (topic 16, prevalent at every electoral round), human rights and ethnic issues (topic 18) and civil society, corruption (topic 19). Topic 19 stands out here as it is characterised by a more reformist language and is more prevalent during the late 2010s (late Karimov, early Mirziyoyev) and includes several contributions at the General Assembly. The topic shows the willingness of the government to engage in these discussions at the UN, which implies an enhanced interest by Uzbekistan to work in multilateral forums. The importance of multilateral forums for Uzbekistan can also be proved by the country's joining the UN Human Rights Council for the first time in history in 2021 (Uzbekistan's mission to the UN 2020). If Fazendeiro (2018) refers to change during Mirziyoyev as cosmetic, we need to add that the environment in which Uzbekistan acts has changed towards a stronger multilateral engagement.

Moving to international security, topic 5 on the international fight against drug trafficking is the only pretty stable item of discussion in Uzbekistani communication at the UN. On the contrary, topic 9, a

general topic on international security, has a very significant change of prevalence over time. Figure 4 shows how the topic becomes more relevant over time **[fig. 4]**. The significance during Mirziyoyev's tenure supports the idea of enhanced Uzbekistani regional and international leadership in security issues after 2016.

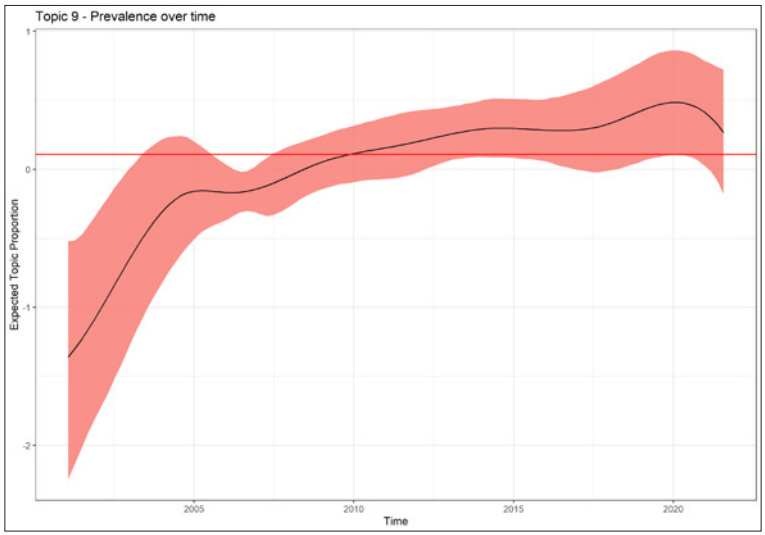

Figure 4 Prevalence for topic 9 – international security – over time

The last two topics are related to Afghanistan and show a difference between Karimov's and Mirziyoyev's approach to the issue. Topic 11, counterterrorism and the ISAF mission, reacts very well to the selected variables. The topic contains reports and legislation on counterterrorism at domestic level, and comments around 9/11 and its consequences. The variable *karipres* produces an interesting effect at content level **[fig. 5]**, where Karimov's language is more focused on terrorism, crime and the role of the state, and Mirziyoyev's on international cooperation (OIC, Palestinian, council, resolution are common words). As is clear from figure 5, there is not much content overlap **[fig. 5]**.

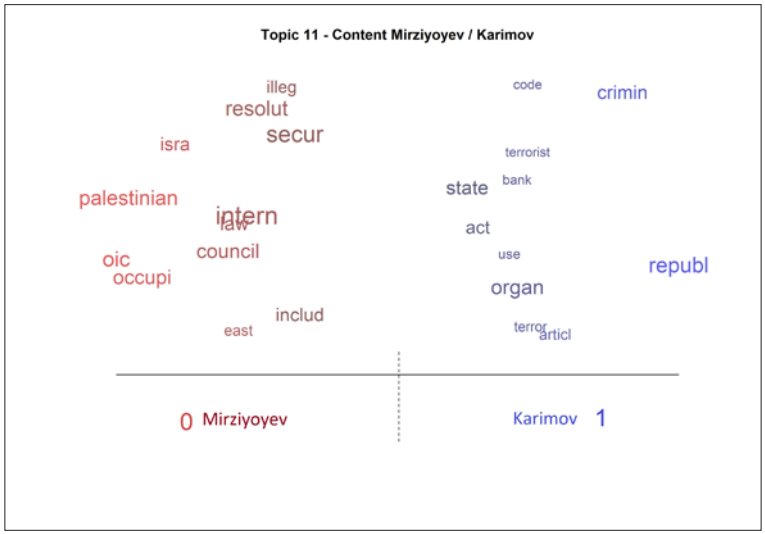

Figure 5 Effect of content variable *karipres* (whether Karimov was President at publication) on topic 11

The last security related topic, topic 15 shows a soft approach to international security, Afghanistan, and the issue of religion extremism. The focus is on peacebuilding, religious cooperation, the peace process in Afghanistan, Islamic cooperation, and the Israel-Palestine conflict. The topic contains mostly documents published during Mirziyoyev's tenure and represent the new face of Uzbekistan in the security domain. It is to be noted that many documents come from the UN Security Council, again supporting stronger Uzbekistani international involvement.

These findings connect with the discussion on Fazendeiro's theorisation in terms of the preference of Uzbekistan's elites for avoiding universalising concepts such as Islamism, panturkism or Eurasianism. If the theorisation holds for Karimov's discourse, it does not during Mirziyoyev as the focus on the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation as a forum for conflict resolution contradicts it. Finally, Uzbekistan's participation to the UN Security Council is another instance of multilateral engagement.

4.4 Isolation and Adaptation: Economic Transition, Resilience, Reform and Sustainability

The last section will focus on the clusters on economic and environmental themes. Cluster 4 contains a topic on economic reforms and one on the social aspects of measures to fight climate change. Notwithstanding the narrative of Uzbekistan's illiberal economic policies during Karimov and the wave of liberal reforms after 2016, topic 2 on economic reforms does not particularly vary in prevalence during Mirziyoyev's presidency. Also, differently from the Afghan issue, the model does not produce two separate topics for Karimov's and Mirziyoyev's economic discourse, signalling some continuity in the country' economic language. However, an analysis of the effect of the variable *karipres* at content level shows some differences in the wording used by the two Presidents. As visible from figure 6, some words are in common, but many are further away such as 'reform', much more relevant for Mirziyoyev, or 'bank', 'product[ion]', 'sport' and 'educ[ation]', more relevant for Karimov **[fig. 6]**. A qualitative review found that the related documents during Karimov times are already focused on reforms and were published mostly during the early 2010s, when Uzbekistan was opening up after a period of isolation. However, while documents under Karimov still depict a positive image of economic development in the 1990s and 2000s, the discourse under Mirziyoyev is mostly focused on change, symbolised by the word 'reform'. The main finding is that discussions on economic reform and connectivity were already present during Karimov, which move the country away from self-sufficiency, at least in terms of discourse. Topic 17 belongs to this cluster mostly for its economic relevance but does not share the prevalence of topic 2. It is mostly related to climate-change related reforms and measures in response to international agreements.

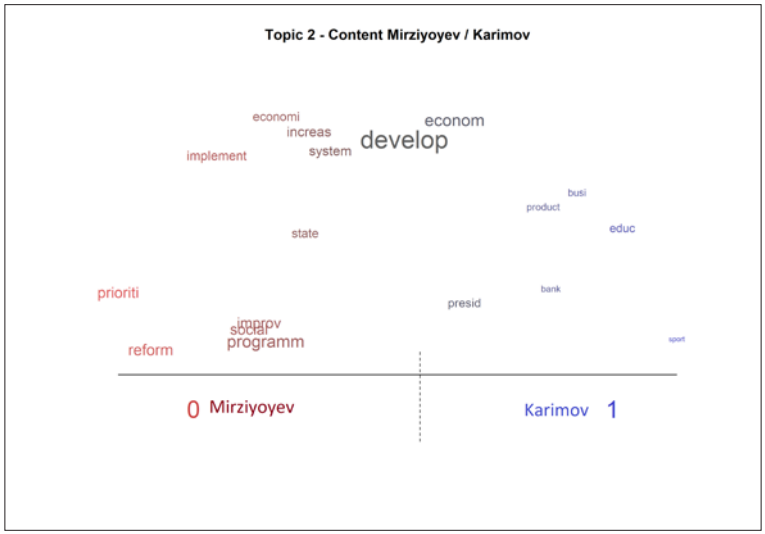

Figure 6 Effect of content variable *karipres* (whether Karimov was President at publication) on topic 2

The last cluster deals with climate change and sustainability. While topic one contains discussions and reactions to climate change protocols such as the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), topics 4 and 7 have a stronger thematic connotation. Topic 4 stands out as it contains comments and declarations on cooperation for the fight against the drying of the Aral Sea, interestingly more prevalent during Karimov representing an aspect of his regional engagement. Topic 7 mostly deals with environmental discussions and health-related reports. This last topic intervenes in the debate on change between Karimov's and Mirziyoyev's approach to regional cooperation by supporting the idea of Uzbekistan's regional engagement as predating the death of Islam Karimov.

5 Conclusions and Discussion

The empirical findings support several of my substantial reasonings from the literature review: changing patterns in foreign policy already during Karimov and some qualitative change between Karimov and Mirziyoyev, and my critique of multivectorism and self-reliance. Yet, the shortcomings of the research design call for more research on a series of issues such as bilateral relations with foreign partners, which were an important part of how I operationalised concepts in table 1. I will now focus on each of these issues and provide an assessment of the methodological limitations of this research and areas for further inquiry.

5.1 Results of Empirical Tests

Much of the findings revolve around change and therefore the test that this research provides regards the robustness of concepts in the literature to explain aspects of Uzbekistani foreign policy over time. A first important theme that came to the fore in different forms is that of human rights. As reported above, it is not particularly relevant to discuss the prevalence of the topic over time as the source of the documents (the UN) skews the result. Yet, the tone of discussions around themes related to human rights is relevant to test the importance of regime survival as depicted in the literature on multivectorism, and the reluctance towards expansionist policies and strong defence of the country's image in self-reliance. Topic 8 on Andijan, religious freedom and terrorism is particularly relevant in the discussion. A qualitative analysis of the topic supports the literature as the tone used by the Uzbekistani representative at the UN in the documents contained in the topic and published in the aftermath of Andijan show a strong defence of the country's reputation and a hard stance against the use of universal human rights by Western power for their own aims.

At the same time however, the quantitative analysis shows that the topic became much more relevant when Uzbekistan was a member of the CSTO and less when it was engaged in the War on Terror. The strong language on human rights seemed therefore a characteristic of a very specific moment in time. This finding is supported by the different tone on the topics 13 and 20 on judicial reform, which shows to an extent Uzbekistan's compliance with human rights discourse and connected reforms to review the standards of the Uzbekistani judiciary system. Another instance that weakens the concepts from the literature is related to Karimov's supposed preference for bilateral cooperation. The topics on sustainability and environmental challenges act as an important reminder of the relevance of context in the construction of policy and discourse around specific topics and the regional multilateral focus in terms of possible solutions.

The relative importance of the bilateral and multilateral sides of Uzbekistan's foreign policy are also an important subject of the second dimension of change underlined by my findings, which is connected to the evolution of discourse between Mirziyoyev's and Karimov's foreign policy. Starting from multilateralism, topic 11 and topic 15 on security and Afghanistan show that the language used by Mirziyoyev is more connected to international cooperation to deal with security issues than it was in the past. The presence of 'OIC' in the most relevant words for topic 11 during Mirziyoyev is particularly relevant to counter the argument on the bilateral focus of Uzbekistan's spirit of self-reliance underlined by Fazendeiro (2017). Moreover, connected to the other theme of the previous paragraph, another challenging

dimension for the concepts connected to Uzbekistan's assertiveness in human-rights-related issues is represented by topic 1 on torture. If during the times of Karimov the language connected to the theme seemed to be focused on the role of the state and the law, during Mirziyoyev it seems to shift towards the failures of institutions, with words such as 'investigation' coming to the fore.

Two substantive findings originate from these discussions. Firstly, starting from findings from the vast literature on elites in Uzbekistan, we can assume that Uzbekistani elites have not changed dramatically throughout the years and that many elite members during Mirziyoyev, including Mirziyoyev himself, have been part of the country elites before the death of the first President. Hence, the numerous instances of change in foreign policy discourse challenge the stability of some of the concepts that have been described as underlying bricks of Uzbekistan's interests in the case of multivectorism and of Uzbekistan's spirit of (defensive) self-reliance in Fazendeiro's seminal work. The first concept, based on ontological and epistemological concepts close to realism is intrinsically challenged by change, which is embraced by this research following Dadabaev's theoretical contribution. The concept of self-reliance instead lacks a focus on the processes and contexts that produced the very many aspects of Uzbekistani foreign policy underlined in the characterisation of defensive self-reliance. Finally, if change between Karimov's and Mirziyoyev's international discourse can be better justified as both research agendas were taking place before the death of President Karimov, findings internal to Karimov's regime as more impacting. Yet, as we will see in the limitations of this research, some important aspects of both concepts need further qualitative and quantitative research to produce a better test.

5.2 The Methodological Question: Strengths and Limitations of the Research Design

When employing innovative methods and hence an innovative design, it is always necessary to discuss its positive and negative implications. The covariates utilised in this STM model, which worked in many other instances in the literature, did not produce strong effects in this specific model, particularly on the prevalence side. This is not to say that the result was not interesting all the same. The lack of statistical significance of the time-related variables in most topics can be attributed to a limitation coming from the source of the documents, the United Nations, whose themes are very standardised. Furthermore, the relatively small sample size of 417 documents and the scarcity of documents in the earlier years (2001-2004) have also impacted statistical significance. The reason for this is Uzbekistan's

smaller involvement to the UN in the earlier dates as compared to later years. The small sample is an issue only for the effect of prevalence variables, but not much in terms of topics and content. The effect of the covariates such as *karipres* and *wto/csto* at content level were interesting for my analysis and the themes showed a promising way of sourcing unsupervised, less biased empirical evidence for analysis on foreign policy.

As briefly mentioned above and underlined throughout the article, the source of the documents, the United Nations, renders overall thematic prevalence less interesting (see importance of human rights). This is true also for what is missing. In particular, bilateral issues and hence the relevance of bilateral meetings, agreement, trade cannot be well measured through discourses at the UN. At the same time, the context of publication of the documents misses out some multilateral and regional focus of Uzbekistan's foreign policy (the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and other aspects of regional cooperation). Hence, the limitations of this research are not very much connected to the choice of method per se, but mostly to the data selection. Also, we will see in the discussion how tackling the issues described in this section can lead us to improving analytical strength and to produce new and less biased research on Uzbekistan's foreign relations through better data selection, engagement through fieldwork and focus on specific instances lacking in previous research.

5.3 Discussion: Areas for Further Research

The first methodological teaching is that sourcing data only from the UN can skew the thematic connotation of political communication. Hence, I took the hint and planned further analysis on communication from domestic foreign affairs institutions, which provided an excellent source to complement the still very relevant findings in this article. Just as a reference, in the same timeframe, the Uzbekistani Ministry of Foreign Affairs has produced around 30,000 documents, compared to the 417 at the UN, with a normal distribution over the years.

As for the substantial findings, there are two issues that are left to further research. Firstly, a data collection based on different sources could help us to expand my inquiry on the concept of self-reliance by giving more information on Uzbekistani bilateral and multilateral relation. Secondly, change in thematic connotations need to be analysed in-depth through engagement with the elites that produced the documents. This is true particularly for those vectors of Uzbekistani foreign policy that received less attention in the past, such as the Asian vector and particularly relations with China and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, whose exceptionality was not captured

by previous research, and was not accounted for by this analysis. Relations between China, the SCO and Uzbekistan are the subject of a further qualitative research project that was conducted in Uzbekistan in spring 2022.

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Armenia, Caucaso e Asia Centrale
Ricerche 2022
a cura di Daniele Artoni, Carlo Frappi, Paolo Sorbello

Michel Foucault's Concept of 'Dispositif of Security': Central Asian Weak States

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Abstract The paper focuses on the issue of how and through which apparatuses the sustainability of Central Asian weak states and their regimes are provided. Using Foucault's concept of 'dispositif of security' allows to argue that Central Asian regimes put an emphasis not on security but on the disciplinary mechanism, positioning them as a transcendent power relative to the population. At the same time, they use the security terminology and techniques of securitization, which makes it possible to maximize control over all spheres of population life through a reduction of personal and social space, as well as public policy.

Keywords Foucault. Dispositif (apparatus) of security. Disciplinary mechanism. Weak States. Securitization. Central Asia.

Summary 1 Introduction. – 2 Methodology. – 3 State Ideology and Identity Politics. – 4 Securitization. – 5 Codification of Norms and Oversight Procedures. – 6 The 'Body of Knowledge' About Security. – 7 Discussion. – 8 Conclusion.

1 Introduction

Despite different approaches to defining the characteristics and criteria of a weak state,[1] it is generally accepted that weak states lack such fundamental qualities as "effective institutions, monopoly on

1 Singer 1972; Krasner 1978; Jackson, Rosberg 1982; Buzan 1983; Migdal 1988; Thomas 1987; Ayoob 1995; Holsti 1996; Sørensen 2007; Allison 2008.

Edizioni Ca'Foscari

Eurasiatica 19
e-ISSN 2610-9433 | ISSN 2610-8879
ISBN [ebook] 978-88-6969-667-1

Peer review | Open access
Submitted 2022-05-11 | Accepted 2022-09-01 | Published 2023-04-26
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DOI 10.30687/978-88-6969-667-1/010

the instruments of violence, and consensus on the idea of the state" (Jackson 2010, 187) and are, therefore, internally anarchic. In weak states there is a plurality of centres of influence, one of which is the government (regime), which compete with each other, pursuing group values and goals external to the state, rather than the state interest. The situation is aggravated if, in addition to a weak state, the country also has a weak society: in such a situation, political fragmentation is not limited to a social collective identity built on some commonly shared values (Migdal 1988; Saikal 2016). It is believed that each social group or interest group (ethnic, religious, group of influence) in weak states with weak societies seeks to increase its security, which is perceived by other groups as a challenge or threat and, accordingly, generates responses from them. In other words, increasing the security of one social group or interest group produces insecurity in the state as a system as a whole. Since in this understanding of the weak state, the government acts here as a regime and, accordingly, represents one of many centres of influence, any attempt on its part to strengthen its security or even to establish effective public administration provokes challenges from other centres of influence, resistance and further erosion of the institutional basis of the state (Jackson 2010, 187). This situation is described as "an insecurity dilemma" (Job 1992).

The above characteristics of weak states determine that both the weak states themselves and, above all, the regimes operating in them must be unstable. However, as practice shows, paradoxically, they can exist for decades without serious political or social upheavals and are usually not "ungoverned spaces" (Krasner, Risse 2014). Governments continue to manage economy and society even if they do not do so in the way external actors expect them to (Akchurina 2019, 274). How and through what apparatuses is the stability of regimes and governance in weak states shaped? I will take the countries of Central Asia as an example. Until 2021, all of these countries were assessed as weak (Fund for Peace 2021), and none of them, except Kyrgyzstan, has recorded a significant political crisis that would result in political regime change over the past 20 years. The so-called 'Andijan events of 2005' in Uzbekistan and the 'January events of 2022' in Kazakhstan can certainly be seen as challenges to the stability of these states, but they did not lead to regime change and, accordingly, these regimes have remained. I will focus on the internal stability of these countries and their regimes, leaving aside the question of how their security is built at the international or regional level.

In the article, I state that using Foucault's concept of 'dispositif of security' allows us to argue that Central Asian weak states put an emphasis not on security but on the disciplinary mechanism, which, unlike dispositif of security, is not built on forms of knowledge associated with ideas of aleatory and statistically permissible deviation

from the norm, but on a rigid codification of allowed and prohibited and the construction of oversight procedures. At the same time, Central Asian regimes use the security terminology and techniques of securitization, which makes it possible to maximize control over all spheres of population life through reduction of personal and social space, as well as public policy. Central Asian countries are characterized by the securitization of 'regime stability', which enshrines the regime as the only referent object. This securitization is reinforced by the formation of specific ideologies that emphasize the significance of regimes. Securitization leads to the fact that in Central Asian weak states discursive practices, the alternative to dominant ones, lose their 'right to vote' and fall into a situation characterized as 'security as silence'. All these factors combined with the positioning of the regimes as a transcendent power relative to the population determine the stability of weak states' regimes.

2 Methodology

In my position, to answer the question "why weak states persist" from the point of view of their internal security, at least two steps must be taken. First, it is necessary to abandon the understanding of the typology of states into strong and weak as a continuous spectrum, where the 'ideal type' of a strong state is at one pole and the 'ideal type' of a weak state is at the other (Buzan, Wæver 2003, 22-4). The situation does not change with the introduction of additional types, such as 'limited statehood' (Krasner, Risse 2014) or 'incomplete state' (Akchurina 2019), because they also presuppose the preservation of this continuous spectrum, although they supplement it with an extremely productive possibility to analyze the zones of state-society interaction. The idea of such a spectrum implies a certain continuity between 'strong' and 'weak' states, the possibility of using universal concepts about them, one of which is 'security', which, if it is correct, requires additional justification. Secondly, it is necessary to abandon the understanding of 'security' as a universal, 'immutable' category. The notion of 'security' has its genealogy and archaeology (in Foucault's sense), which should be studied specifically.

The rejection of the idea of a continuous spectrum of states implies the search for and fixation of a 'break point' between 'strong' and 'weak' states, as which the idea of modernity and, accordingly, the reference to the question of modernization of this or that state can be considered. Thus, Cooper (1996), distinguishing three worlds – premodern, modern, and post-modern, points out that the first includes pre-states, which do not meet Weber's criterion of having a legitimate monopoly on the use of force and have a fragile structure that receives no support either from traditional communities or from the

urban industrialized population. Thus, it is political formations of the pre-modern type that can be called 'weak states'. A clear link between the idea of dividing states into strong and weak and dividing states into postmodern, modern, and premodern is recorded by Buzan and Wæver, who classify as weak states pre-modernist and some modernist states characterized by "low levels of socio-political cohesion and poorly developed structures of government" (2003, 24). Using the idea of modernity allows us to consider the regimes of weak states in terms of the model of governance adopted in them: if for modernist states it will be what Foucault designated by the term 'governmentality', then for pre-modernist states governance will appear rather in the form where governments act as regimes and occupy an exclusive, external and transcendent position about the population and even to their status. The special position of the regime in pre-modern states allows us to question the anarchy of such states since in this case the regime no longer acts as only one of many groups of influence. Within the framework of certain practices of building a system of governance, the regime can occupy a dedicated position and consolidate it.

If we are dealing with the transcendent position of regimes in the Central Asian countries, we should be able to observe here the following phenomena: (1) the construction of some ideologies that consolidate the special status of political regimes and, possibly, some identity politics that complements them; (2) the use of securitization mechanisms, in which the political regime and its stability in various modifications are positioned as an exclusive reference object.

The concept of securitization refers to the idea of security as a response to an emergency (Schmitt 1996). This idea is enshrined in most security studies. However, this reading of security is not the only possible one. Thus, Foucault (2007, 5-6) considers security as one of the mechanisms of governance, along with legal and disciplinary mechanisms. Legal and disciplinary mechanisms refer to norms; their main function is the codification of norms through a binary division into what is allowed and what is forbidden. The legal mechanism focuses on the forbidden, while the disciplinary mechanism focuses on the obligatory. The security mechanism is related to the idea of aleatory and is characterized by three points: (1) the phenomenon is included in a series of probable (random) events; (2) the response to the phenomenon is planned in a costly mode; (3) instead of a binary division into allowed and forbidden, the definition of the optimal average for society and the fixation of the limits of the allowed is introduced. Foucault suggests that these three mechanisms are not a sequence where elements replace one another, but a series of complex systems where, in moving from the previous to the next,

> what above all changes is the dominant characteristics, or more exactly, the system of correlation between juridico-legal mech-

> anisms, disciplinary mechanisms, and mechanisms of security. (Foucault 2007, 8)

In my view, the coexistence and non-linear relationship of these three mechanisms are one of the key explanatory moments of the stability of regimes in at least some weak states, namely those that have an unfinished experience of modernization and are therefore defined by the interaction between tradition and modernity. Central Asian states are among such states (Isaacs 2014). They are characterized by a shift in emphasis from security to discipline. At the same time, they retain the terminology inherent in the security mechanism.

If we are dealing with a focus not on the security mechanism but the disciplinary mechanism in Central Asia, we should be able to observe the following phenomena: (1) the codification of norms through a binary division into permissible and forbidden, the construction of rigid oversight procedures; (2) the lack of attention to the forms of knowledge that allow the introduction of the accidental and, therefore, the concept of security into political discourse.

3 State Ideology and Identity Politics

For regimes in the Central Asian countries, an important mechanism for securing their allocated position is the formation and development of ideological constructs aimed at fixing and consolidating the special status of the acting government (regime). For example, in Uzbekistan under President Islam Karimov, this was the "idea (ideology) of national independence", in the framework of which state independence is viewed as the dominant value, one of the most important components of which is a clear articulation of the special dedicated position of the state ("The state is the main reformer", Karimov 1993). In Turkmenistan, the ideological consolidation of the fundamental model is also fixed both in the concept of independence and neutrality (often reduced to isolationism) and in ethnic ideologemes such as "Ruhnama (Book of the Soul)" (under Saparmurat Niyazov), "The Great Renaissance" and "The Age of Power and Happiness" (under Gurbanguly Berdymukhamedov). The most important element of the ideology is the legally fixed personalization of the state leader, which reached its peak with Turkmen President Saparmurat Niyazov, who received the title of Turkmenbashi and the status of the president for life. A close to this level of personalization of the regime was recorded in Kazakhstan, where Nursultan Nazarbayev received the status of the First President, which allowed him to regularly extend his powers, and the Leader of the Nation (Kazakhstan 2010), which takes him beyond the national law. In Tajikistan, the question of the stability of the state (regime) is largely justified through a reference to the

civil war of 1992-97 and postulating the idea of the inadmissibility of its repetition. Even the introduction of the position of the Leader of the Nation on the Kazakhstani model was made with a reference to the establishment of peace in Tajikistan: in 2015, Tajik President Emomali Rahmon received the status of "Founder of Peace and National Unity – Leader of the Nation" (Tajikistan 2015). In this regard, the regime has the weakest position in Kyrgyzstan, where there is neither a serious ideological basis for the functioning of the regime nor a justification for the personalization of power.

In fact, in all the countries of Central Asia, except Kyrgyzstan, the model of governance built under the president can be characterized as super-presidential. For example, in Kazakhstan, this characteristic of the model of governance is defined by the status of the president as "the head of state, its highest official, who determines the main directions of the domestic and foreign policy of the state", as well as "ensures the coordinated functioning of all branches of state power" (Kazakhstan 1995, art. 40).

In Central Asian countries, regimes and some interest groups, in addition to constructing a state ideology aimed at consolidating the allocated position of the regime, implement the practice of manipulating identity contradictions and conduct identity politics: "the claim to power on the basis of a particular identity" (Kaldor 1999, 6). In Central Asian countries, this identity is ethnic, linked to the concept of the 'titular nation', which has been in use since the Soviet Union. In the Soviet Union, the titular nation was understood as an ethnic group whose name defined the official name of a certain territory or quasi-state formation (union republic, autonomous republic, autonomous oblast). The titular nation was in a privileged position in a given territory relative to other ethnic groups: the language and culture of the titular nation were maintained at the state level, and representatives of the titular nation formed the local nomenclature. Thus, the titular groups established a sense of ownership over certain territories and legitimized a fairly high degree of self-government. Over time, there was the marginalization of other, non-titular, ethnic groups, who were perceived as aliens or immigrants, regardless of their history of settlement in the territory. These attitudes were adopted and codified in the states formed after the collapse of the Soviet Union, which acquire a clear ethnic dimension. Leaders of political regimes in Central Asian countries, as a rule, get additional legitimization exactly as representatives of the 'titular nation' or, on the contrary, are criticized based on non-affiliation with this ethnic group (Drobizheva et al 1996, 282). As Kudaibergenova (2019) shows, modern regimes in Central Asia, using various forms of communication with society, fragment the population, constructing audiences and political communities with their narratives and discourses about the nation, state, and regime, which contributes to

regime stability and legitimization. Identity politics forces societies in Central Asian countries to focus not on issues of state or nation-building, but on the discussion of what is the 'population' of these countries, representatives of which ethnicities can be 'real' citizens of Central Asian countries, and which form the basis for external interference. For example, in Kazakhstan, after the events in Crimea in 2014, there has been a steady discussion regarding the possibility of a repeat of the 'Ukrainian scenario' here and the position that the citizens of Kazakhstan – ethnic Russians – would take in this situation: whether representatives of the 'Russian-speaking society' can act as full-fledged citizens of Kazakhstan or whether they act as carriers of 'colonial codes' and, consequently, the basis of neocolonialism on the part of Russia. Identity politics in Central Asian countries form a space of structural and cultural violence against groups labeled with labels other than 'titular nation'. The political regime in such a situation is seen as the guarantor of "interethnic and interreligious harmony" (Nazarbayev 2012), which, again, strengthens its position.

4 Securitization

Regimes of all Central Asian countries actively use securitization mechanisms, in which 'stability' is positioned as a reference object. This allows, on the one hand, to ensure consolidation of the population to a greater or lesser extent, and, on the other hand, by introducing the idea of a state of emergency, to obtain the right to some extraordinary measures, for example – restriction of freedom of speech or opposition activity, thus consolidating the regime's allocated position.

Since the early 1990s, the securitization of 'stability' in Central Asia has been built through reference to the situation in Tajikistan, where there was a civil war from 1992 to 1997, and its connection with the processes in Afghanistan. Up to the end of the 1990s, this topic was one of the key ones and was connected with the issues of domestic and regional stability. Thus, in the summer of 1996, President of Uzbekistan Islam Karimov notes, "The most dangerous thing is to destabilize the socio-political situation, huge, hard-to-measure losses and deprivations of people, which would set our society back dozens of years […] The example of neighboring Tajikistan […] and some other newly independent states speaks for itself" (Karimov 1997, 118). In 1997, it was noted that the crisis in Afghanistan and instability in Tajikistan cannot but hurt regional stability in Central Asia as a whole and Uzbek national security in particular (Karimov 1998).

In the 2000s, the most revealing year for Central Asian countries in terms of securitization of 'stability' was 2005, when the so-called 'Tulip Revolution' occurred in Kyrgyzstan, which resulted in the res-

ignation of President Askar Akayev. In the rest of Central Asia, these events were seen as a threat to their stability. Under the pressure of this discourse, extraordinary presidential elections were held in Kazakhstan in 2005. As President Nursultan Nazarbayev noted,

> During the pre-election campaign we faced such phenomenon as the concern of Kazakhstani people and in some cases fear because of possible destabilization in the country. (Nazarbayev 2006)

Uzbekistan officials pointed out the direct connection between the processes in Kyrgyzstan and other Central Asian countries with the Andijan events of May 2005, when a mass protest and some extremist actions were harshly suppressed by government forces. President Islam Karimov said that

> the tragic Andijan events were an attempt to recreate everything that happened in Kyrgyzstan in recent years and recently… A long confrontation, civil war or something similar, which is connected with disturbance of stability and which has been taking place for a long time on the territory of one country, one state, will not stay within its borders and will overflow the borders and move into the territory of neighboring countries. (Karimov 2005, 169)

An important component in ensuring the stability of regimes in the countries of Central Asia is the securitization of 'international terrorism', and, since the 2010s, of extremism (sometimes indicated as violent extremism) and radicalization (Lemon 2018).

In general, the securitization of some threats without a certain functional actor (such as a threat to stability or extremism) in Central Asian countries is intended to fulfill a function similar to that of preparing for war in modern states, ensuring the mobilization and consolidation of the population.

5 Codification of Norms and Oversight Procedures

The dominance of disciplinary (permissive and prohibitive) practices as well as the construction of supervisory procedures and the limitation of personal and social space as well as the field of open politics are fixed in the Central Asian countries, as a result of which many discursive practices alternative to the dominant ones lose their 'voice' and fall into the situation characterized as 'security as silence', that is

> when insecurity cannot be voiced, when raising something as a security problem is impossible or might even aggravate the threat being faced. […] a situation where the potential subject of securi-

> ty has no, or limited, possibility of speaking its security problem. (Hansen 2000, 287, 294)

The situation of 'security as silence' in Central Asian countries is primarily formed in the political sphere. For example, in Kazakhstan – through the introduction of the idea of 'countering extremism' without distinguishing between 'extremism in general' and 'violent extremism'. At the legislative level, this approach was established in 2005 in the On Countering Extremism Law (Kazakhstan 2005), which in one list (art. 1) specifies both, on the one hand, "actions aimed at forcible change of the constitutional order", and "forcible seizure of power or keeping it", "participation in sedition", and, on the other hand, "inciting social or estate discord". This approach is also documented in the Criminal Code (Kazakhstan 2014), where the extremist crimes include inciting social, national, tribal, racial, estate, or religious hatred (art. 174). Because of the securitization of 'stability' issues in the Central Asian countries, these legal provisions can also create difficulties for the speaker when articulating problems of a societal (identity) nature. This is greatly facilitated by the fact that there is no clear differentiation at the legislative level between inciting discord and articulating the interests of one's identity group (and sometimes simply the manifestation of identity group features of a cultural nature). Any openly expressed dissatisfaction with the current social or economic situation can be interpreted as "inciting social or estate discord". The situation is exacerbated by the fact that current legislation in the countries of Central Asia (except Kyrgyzstan and, as of 2020, Kazakhstan) provides for permissive rather than notification-based practices in the organization of peaceful assemblies, and, accordingly, the organization of a rally aimed at criticizing the regime can easily be blocked. Legislative changes introduced in Kazakhstan in 2020, suggesting a shift from permissive practices to the practice of coordinating rallies with the authorities, led to a significant increase in the number of such events but preserved the authorities' leverage to limit the public activity of the population.

The situation of 'security as silence' in the countries of Central Asia also affects the social sphere, where the 'right to vote' is lost primarily to vulnerable groups: women, representatives of the LGBT community, children, and ethnic minorities. For example, several Central Asian countries continue to criminalize homosexuality. By art. 120 of the Criminal Code of Uzbekistan, criminal punishment follows for "the satisfaction of a man's sexual need with a man without violence" (Uzbekistan 1994). A similar article (art. 28) is present in the Criminal Code of Turkmenistan (Turkmenistan 2010). Even in Kazakhstan, which has a relatively liberal attitude toward the LGBT community, the pressure on its representatives remains strong. For

example, in 2014, an advertising agency in Almaty was fined for a poster depicting Kazakh musician and composer Kurmangazy kissing poet Alexander Pushkin made for a gay club (Lillis 2014).

Some physical actions are a manifestation of 'security as silence'. For example, the inability to articulate security threats and, consequently, to defend oneself legally, leads to migration from Central Asia by members of the LGBT community. To a large extent, the response of representatives of 'non-titular ethnic groups' to identity politics is also migratory.

In a situation dominated by the concept of the 'titular nation' and the cultural and structural violence associated with it, a consistent defense of the interests of 'non-titular ethnic groups' can lead to a sharp increase in pressure on activists, up to and including physical violence, as shown by the example of Kyrgyzstan, where in June 2010 clashes between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks resulted in at least 420 deaths, mostly Uzbeks, and the majority of those prosecuted were also Uzbeks (Kyrgyzstan Inquiry Commission 2011). The most radical form of non-verbal action in Central Asian countries is a suicide, often in public in the form of self-immolation. As a rule, self-immolation is a reaction of women to some form of domestic violence. However, such reactions are also recorded as a response to pressure from state agencies, such as law enforcement.

Disciplinary practices and 'security as silence' are opposite to securitization, but, on the other hand, complement it, as they significantly reduce the number of speakers, in other words, the number of securitizing actors. The voice of political regimes becomes, if not the only one, then the dominant one, which undoubtedly increases the stability of the regime. At the same time, the 'loss of voice' pushes opposition interest groups to non-verbal actions, such as mass protests, including acts of violence. One form of nonverbal protest can be seen as acts of violence against representatives of the authorities, which the regime portrays as terrorist acts.

However, the space of using the disciplinary mechanism in Central Asian countries is not universal. One can record its fragmentation: zones to which the disciplinary mechanism does not apply, and zones for which randomness is not eliminated. The former includes political regimes themselves, going beyond what is allowed and forbidden, as well as control procedures. For example, Uzbekistan's President Islam Karimov has repeatedly participated in and won presidential elections, even though, according to the Constitution, he could hold office for no more than two terms. Kazakhstan's first president, Nursultan Nazarbayev, was legally guaranteed immunity and the inability to be held accountable for any actions committed during his presidency (Kazakhstan 2000). To the latter are populations. Regimes in weak states rule the law on an ad hoc basis and thus create uncertainty for the population. Despite the proclamation of the rule of law,

Central Asian countries have a model in which the regime manipulates the law and governs through arbitrary rule (the 'arbitrary rule' or 'rule by law' model): the regime stands above the law and applies it selectively (Gel'man 2003; Tulumlu 2016).

6 The 'Body of Knowledge' About Security

For weak states – in particular for Central Asian countries – the problematic field of understanding security is determined by the fact that here, as a rule, there is no developed concept of 'security': in official documents and analytical texts it is defined and linked to a certain set of concepts ('interests', 'threats'), but it is not analyzed in terms of its place in discursive and non-discursive practices. For example, in art. 1 of the On National Security of the Republic of Kazakhstan Law (Kazakhstan 2012) 'national security' is defined through a linkage to the concepts of 'interest' and 'threat': national security is understood here as "the state of protection of national interests… from real and potential threats, ensuring the dynamic development of a person and a citizen, society and the state". It is indicative that the law fixes tautology in the definitions of key concepts, as 'national interests', in turn, are defined through a reference to "the ability of the state to ensure protection", and threats – through a reference to national interests. Thus, the answer to the question 'what is security' is missing here.

The book *Uzbekistan on the Threshold of the Twenty-First Century: Challenges to Stability and Progress*, by President Islam Karimov became definitive for Uzbekistan's security policy, is one of the most illustrative. The book focuses on the threats to stability, sustainable development, and security in Uzbekistan, and what can be done about them:

> Today, the entire logic of the last years encourages us to address three basic issues that will conduction Uzbekistan's future: *how should security be preserved, how should stability be secured, and how can sustainable development on the road to progress be achieved? These simple words – security, stability and sustainability – have deep meanings that we must comprehend*. (Karimov 1998, 3; emphasis in the original)

At the same time, the concepts that make up the triad are taken in the book without special explanation, as intuitively clear.

This situation is largely explained by the fact that the concept of 'security' is not developed in the Central Asian countries, but is taken as a given from discourses that are external to them. Central Asian security discourses, on the one hand, are heirs to the Soviet tradi-

tion of using the term 'security' as life safety ('fire safety', 'road safety') or as state security ('Committee for State Security' or *the KGB*). On the other hand, the Central Asian states adopted as ideological (formal) reference points the settings of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, including the terminology of security in its European reading, where in the late 1980s and early 1990s the logic of security as deterrence of hostile states began to be replaced by the logic of deterring 'adverse' processes, and the problematic of security, having lost its purely military content, included such areas as social, environmental, personal and even cultural

Security in the countries of Central Asia is considered something natural and self-evident, and, acts as an abstraction. There is no analysis of security as a reaction to chance in the Central Asian countries, an indicator of which is the very low attention to the formation of statistical data on the most problematic issues (such as migration or unemployment), as well as to the conduct of sociological research.

7 Discussion

This study leaves several important questions beyond its scope. First of all, it does not address how Central Asian security is constructed on the regional and interregional levels if there are disciplinary rather than security mechanisms in place. An analysis of the regional and interregional levels of security in Central Asia has been presented in many works since the mid-1990s. While initially descriptive approaches and analyses based on the ideas of neorealism dominated here, more recently there are works that consider the region from fundamentally different positions, for example, from the perspective of constructivism (Burnashev 2015; Azizov 2017), the concept of regional fracture (Lewis 2018), or the English school (Costa Buranelli 2021). The question of whether the data obtained in these studies are consistent with Foucault's concept of the 'dispositif of security' remains open and requires additional research.

A related technical aspect is whether the 'regional approach' used in the article is justified, rather than emphasizing the situation in any one Central Asian country. In this case, there was a choice between providing as detailed an analysis as possible of one of the Central Asian countries or showing some universal significance of Foucault's concept. Understanding that each Central Asian country has its approach to security, I nevertheless preferred an approach that emphasized the broad application of Foucault's ideas to the study of security in weak states.

Next, the article examines only those practices that we can cleatify as indicators of the transcendent position of political regimes in Central Asia and that these regimes use disciplinary mechanisms

rather than security mechanisms. There are other practices that ensure the regimes' stability, such as the development of repressive apparatuses; the formation of patronage systems; the manipulation of the democratic process; the establishment of 'strategic partnerships' with significant external actors and the implementation of so-called 'multi-vector' policies; 'quasi integration' formations at the regional level (Jackson 2010, 192-4). This can also include 'bribery' of the population, which is typical for Kazakhstan. Of course, the analysis of these and other similar practices in terms of what mechanism – security or discipline – they correspond to can greatly expand the basis for verifying or falsifying the conclusions presented in the article.

Finally, an important component that is missing from the proposed analysis is the response of the population of weak states to practices that ensure regime stability. The social practices and informal institutions that allow Central Asian societies to be defined as 'weak' or 'strong', as well as their relationship to the state that allows the state to be viewed as a social practice, are not considered. The idea of such analysis is given by Akchurina (2019) and a review of how social groups construct their strategies in Central Asian countries could provide additional verification of the proposed ideas or, on the contrary, falsify them.

8 Conclusion

In Central Asian weak states, the regimes (governments) occupy an exclusive, external, and transcendent position vis-à-vis the population and their state status. Accordingly, one cannot speak here of their 'internal anarchy' and the dilemma of insecurity in the full sense of those words. In these states, anarchy is expressed in a specific form, leaving a place for the regime to act as an arbiter about other social groups. The mechanisms for enshrining such a highlighted position are: (1) the construction of special ideologies and complimentary identity politics, within which the idea of the state is replaced by an idea in which the state is equated with the regime; (2) the use of securitization mechanisms in which the political regime and its 'stability' are positioned as a reference object.

Governance here is constructed not so much based on security mechanisms as through disciplinary practices, the codification of norms through a binary division into permissible and prohibited, and the construction of rigorous oversight procedures. The lack of attention to forms of knowledge that allow for the insertion of the accidental and, therefore, the concept of security into political discourse is fixed. Although Central Asian regimes use a disciplinary mechanism, they actively employ the rhetoric of the security mechanism. And the most common mechanism here is securitization. Se-

curitization is a means used by the regimes to increase control over all spheres of life of the population, which becomes the object of manipulation through maximum codification and control of personal and social – and thus non-politicized and non-securitized – space. Political activity is carried out as non-transparently and non-publicly as possible. To some extent, one could say that in Central Asian countries private and public spaces are reversed: private issues such as ethnicity, religious beliefs, and sexual orientation come to the surface and become subject to state control, while issues that should be public, such as elections and politics, are hidden and become the private business of a small group of people. In the sector designated as 'security', the priority is to ensure the stability ('security') of the regime (protection of the ruling elites from violent change). Questions of state security (ensuring the effective functioning of state structures and institutions regardless of the change of the ruling elites) and national security (ensuring the security of the state as socio-political integrity with its way of life and independent self-government) recede into the background. In fact, as in neoliberal states, the problem of security here undergoes the same change: from the security of processes external to the apparatuses of governance (social, economic, and demographic processes), there is a shift to the security of governance mechanisms (Dean 1999). There is fragmentation in the field of governance. The regime itself is placed in the field of security. The dominant discursive practice gains the right to active securitization. Oppositional discursive practices and the population are placed in the disciplinary field, where security is realized not as an act of articulation, but rather as an act of silence.

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