

-Tercüme Odası

İPŞİRLİ,

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equal opportunities for Christians and Muslims and in 1856 further reforms were implemented. These inspired the new ideology of Ottomanism (*Osmanlılık*), that is, of a common Ottoman citizenship and allegiance as the basis of political identity. It also opened up new opportunities to the Greeks in the Ottoman Empire. Their monopoly in negotiations with foreign powers had come to an end. But a great many Ottoman diplomats appointed at that time (even in Athens) were again Greeks.<sup>67</sup> Some of them had been banished after 1821. Alexander Callimachi (*Kalimaki Bey*; 1802–86), for example, had spent nine years of his childhood in Bolu where his father was exiled. This exile had, however, also had beneficial effects: it had allowed him to study thoroughly the *elsine-i selâse*, so that he later gained the reputation of being more proficient in Ottoman Turkish than any other Phanariot diplomat.<sup>68</sup>

#### The "Translation Chamber" (*Terceme Odası*)

The need to train Muslims in foreign languages, especially French had led in 1832 to the creation of the Translation Chamber (*Terceme Odası* or *Tercüman kalemî*).<sup>69</sup> This institution was headed by a more learned man than the dragoman Yahya Naci Efendi. But once more its director was a (perhaps Jewish) convert, İshak Efendi (1774–1834), born in Arta in Epirus. The *Terceme Odası* steadily grew in importance. Furthermore, it became an important training ground for a large number of relatively Westernized Ottoman statesmen and *hommes de lettres* in the nineteenth century.<sup>70</sup> How-

<sup>67</sup> On these diplomats see A. Alexandris, "Οι Έλληνες", (cited n. 1); Sinan Kuneralp, "Les Grecs en stamboulîne", in Semih Vaner (ed.), *Le différend turco-grec* 1988, pp. 41–46.

<sup>68</sup> Kuneralp, "Les Grecs", p. 43.

<sup>69</sup> On this institution, which maintained its existence until the end of the Empire, cf. Orhonlu, "Tercüman", p. 178; its development is described in some detail in two works by Carter V. Findley, *Bureaucratic Reform in the Ottoman Empire. The Sublime Porte, 1789–1922*, Princeton 1980 (esp. pp. 132–36; p. 402); *Ottoman Civil Officialdom. A Social History*, Princeton 1989 (esp. pp. 262ff.).

<sup>70</sup> Cf. Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar, *19uncu Asır Türk Edebiyatı Tarihi*, 6th ed., Istanbul 1985, pp. 142–43; Niyazi Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey*, Montreal 1964, p. 128. Findley calls it a "seedbed of the Tanzimat Elite" (*Ottoman Civil Officialdom*, p. 263).

ever, among its "apprentices" (*hulefa*) there were also several Ottoman Greeks who later gained no little reputation thanks to their lexicographical works or their writings in Ottoman Turkish (K. Adossidis, A.Th. Phardys, A. Constantinidis).

But by then the Greeks had already lost their privileged position of go-betweens. Linguistic skills, such as a knowledge of French, had by now become more widespread among Muslim government officials, too. Furthermore, the Greeks—much to their chagrin—now had to contend with stiff competition from another *millet*: the Ottoman government was to rely increasingly on members of the Armenian community (whose reputation as a loyal *millet* [*millet-i sadıka*] was still untainted at that time).<sup>71</sup> Since bilingualism was a common feature among them, the Armenians were always much more familiar with the Turkish language than Greeks were, and Turkish books in Armenian script (far more numerous than those in *Karamanli*) found a wide readership. Those who had mastered the difficulties of the more elaborate variety of the Ottoman literary language, like the *tersane tercümanı* Vartan Pasha (an Armenian Catholic; 1815–79), also published books in Arabic script.<sup>72</sup> Ultimately, the *Terceme Odası* seems to have attracted relatively few Greeks,<sup>73</sup> many of the Greek applicants lacking the necessary qualifications.<sup>74</sup>

<sup>71</sup> On the reactions of the Greek community, cf. Alexander Constantinidis' allusive remarks in the Greek preface to his *Chrestomathy* (see note 124), p. 10. He refers to a nation which "settled in Byzantium only two hundred years ago, learnt Turkish, established relations with the ruling element and has become so close to it that it has not only gained the favour but also the confidence of the rulers . . .". See also n. 132.

<sup>72</sup> Vartan Pasha [Osep Vartanian], who was also a member of the *Encümen-i Daniş* (vide *infra*), is the author of a "History of Napoleon Bonaparte" (*Napolyon Tarihi*), which was published both in Arabic and Armenian script.

<sup>73</sup> Cf. the statistics in Findley, *Ottoman Civil Officialdom*, p. 265.

<sup>74</sup> This was the complaint of Alexander Constantinidis: Many Greek applicants held the erroneous view that the *Terceme Odası* was a school meant to train them in the Turkish language. Constantinidis therefore suggested to the Oriental scholars (*Asiatisat*) among his Greek compatriots that they create a special "Association of Translators" (*Σύλλογος τῶν Μεταφραστῶν*) for the training of candidates for the *Terceme Odası*. This project did not, however, materialise (see the remarks in his *Θεωρητικὴ καὶ πρακτικὴ μέθοδος πρὸς ἐκμάθησιν τῆς Ὀθωμανικῆς Γλώσσης* (Turkish title: *Usul-i tahsil-i lisan-ı 'osmani*), Istanbul, I.A. Vretos 1873, pp. 13–14).

## Divan-ı Hümâyûn Tercümanları

Osmanlı Devleti kuruluş döneminden, özellikle Fatih Sultan Mehmet (1451-1481) devrinden başlayarak Batı'lı devletlerle ilişkiye geçti. Bunlar sırasıyla Doğu-Batı karışımı fakat Hristiyan bir devlet olan Bizans, Karadeniz, Akdeniz ve Ege Denizi'nde kolonilere ve bir takım adalara sahip Venedik ve Cenevizliler ve Balkan ülkeleriydi. Osmanlılar'ın giderek güçlenip büyük bir imparatorluk haline gelmesi üzerine Avusturya, Rusya, İtalya kent devletleri, İspanya, Portekiz, Fransa, İngiltere, Lehistan, Danimarka, Hollanda, İsveç v.s. gibi ülkelerde ticaret ve diplomasi ilişkileri kuruldu. Ayrıca ticaret gemilerinin 1797'de İzmir'e gelmesi, 1830'da bir dostluk ve ticaret anlaşmasının imzalanmasıyla A.B.D. ile de ilişkiye geçildi.<sup>1</sup>

İlamdan kaynaklanan Osmanlı geleneğinde Avrupa dillerini öğrenmek söz konusu bile değildi. Çünkü İslam devletleri ile Hristiyan devletleri eşit sayılmazlar, Avrupa ülkeleri "Dar ül-cihad" veya "Diyar-ı küfr" olarak nitelendirilir, hatta bir Müslüman'ın buralarda uzun süre oturması bile hoş karşılanmazdı. Ayrıca üstünlük duygusuyla padişahlar ve sadrazamlar yabancı elçileri küçümserlerdi.<sup>2</sup> Bu nedenle XIX y.y. sonlarına kadar hiç bir Batı başkentinde Osmanlı elçiliği kurulmamıştı. Oysa daha İstanbul'un fethiyle (1453) birlikte Venedikliler Osmanlı başkentine Bartelcini Marsello'yu elçi olarak göndermişler ve bunu diğerleri izlemişti.<sup>3</sup>

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1 Akdes Himet Kurat, *Türk Amerikan Münasebetlerine Kısa Bir Bakış*, Ankara, 1953, s.14-17; aynı yazar, "Türkiye ile Amerika Birleşik Devletleri Arasındaki Münasebetlere Ait Arşiv Vesikaları", *Tarih Araştırmalar Dergisi*, V (1967), s.287 v.d.

2 Encümeud Kuran, *Avrupa'da Osmanlı İkamet Elçiliklerinin Kuruluşu ve İlk Elçilerin Siyasi Faaliyetleri 1793-1821*, Ankara 1968, s.11. Elçilere iyi davramıldığı konusu ile ilgili olarak bkz., İ. Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Devleti'nin Merkez ve Bahriye Teşkilatı*, Ankara, 1984, s. 273.

3 Bu ilk elçilere balyos veya baylos adı verilir. Bkz. Uzunçarşılı, s.269.

OTAM (An.Ü. Osmanlı Tarihi Araştırma ve Uygulama  
Merkezi Dergisi), yıl: I, sayı: 1 (Haziran-1990)  
Ankara, s. 29-43.

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non-Arabophone Mamlūks freshly arrived from the Kıpçak steppe or Circassia (how the Çerkes newly-brought from the Caucasus, and who may not have known any Turkish, coped, is unknown).

Interpreters were an indispensable class of officials at seaports, such as Alexandria, which were accessible to foreign trade and where the European traders had *funduks* [q.v.] or factories. Nearly all commercial transactions necessarily took place through their intermediacy, for which they received fees, whose high level was at times a source of complaint. They seem to have been appointed by the local port authorities, and might be Muslims, Jews or Christians. In certain places, a special interpreter was appointed to oversee the interests of a particular foreign power. There were also interpreters to be found in such centres of Christian pilgrimage as Jerusalem. See, on the procedures at e.g. the Egyptian and Syrian ports, W. Heyd, *Histoire du commerce du Levant au Moyen-Âge*, Leipzig 1885, I, 429 ff.

*Bibliography:* Given in the article.

## 2. In the Ottoman empire.

Under the Ottomans, the rôle and functions of official interpreters at the Mediterranean and Black Sea ports remained broadly the same as in earlier times, except that the Ottoman empire, through its conquests in the Balkans and its moves against Italy, was now in much closer contact, whether through war, diplomacy or trade, with the European powers than had been the case in Ayyūbid and Mamlūk times. Hence there is now much more reference in the sources to interpreters and translators (Ital. *drogman*, *drogoman*, Fr. *truchement*).

These may have existed as aides to the sultans from the time of Mehemmed II the Conqueror, but are attested definitely in the 10th/16th century as part of the *diwān-i hümayūn* [q.v.]. They formed part of the staff of the Chief Secretary, the *re'is ül-kuttāb*, responsible, within the department of the Grand Vizier, for dealing with foreign powers. From this century onwards, we have fairly full lists of interpreters (cf. von Hammer, *GOR*<sup>1</sup>, vii, 627), the earliest of these all being converts to Islam, mostly from Europe and including Austrians, Hungarians, Poles and Greeks. A dragoman, the *su bashī* 'Alī Beg, brought the peace treaty of 908-9/1502-3 from Bāyezīd II to Venice. The Greek Yūnus Beg (d. 948/1541-2) was often sent as an emissary to Venice, and was the founder of a mosque in Istanbul, the Durughmān Mesdjidi (*Sidjill-i 'Othmānī*, iv, 677; Hüseyin Aywansarāyī, *Hadikat ul-djeweāmī*, no. 226); his successor Ahmed was originally a Viennese called Heinz Tulman. Another interpreter about whom we have information is the Hungarian Murād Beg, who was captured by the Turks at Mohács [q.v.] when he was 17, became a convert and an interpreter, wrote an apologetical treatise for Islam and a trilingual hymn in Turkish, Latin and Magyar (published by F. Babinger, *Der Pfortendolmetsch Murad und seine Schriften*, in Babinger et alii (eds.), *Literaturdenkmäler aus Ungarns Türkenzeit*, Berlin and Leipzig 1927, 33-54), and translated Cicero's *De Senectute* into Turkish for presentation to Süleymān the Magnificent. Only occasionally do we hear of native-born Muslims who voluntarily learnt European languages, as opposed to learning them by mischance or misfortune or as captives. This was the case in the 11th/17th century with a Turkish cavalryman from Temeshwar in Ottoman Hungary, 'Othmān Agha, who spent eleven years as a prisoner of the Austrians and learnt German in addition to the Serbian and Magyar which he already knew; after escaping, he served as interpreter to the Pasha of

Temeshwar in his dealings with the Habsburgs and others (see the Ger. tr. of his memoirs by R.F. Kreutel and O. Spies, *Leben und Abenteuer des Dolmetschers 'Osman Ağa*, Bonn 1954, and Kreutel, *Zwischen Paschas und Generalen*, Graz 1966). In the mid-17th century, in the Grand Vizierate of Ahmed Pasha Köprülü, two Greeks had been appointed as Chief Dragoman to the Imperial *Diwān* (*terdjümān-i diwān-i hümayūn*), and after this, the office became the special preserve of Christian Greek families from the Phanar/Fener quarter of Istanbul (the Phanariots), such as the Mavrogordatos, Kallimachis, Ghikas and Hypsilantis. In the course of the 18th century the function acquired a staff of several translators, whose head, the *terdjümān bashī*, often rose to appointment as Voivode or governor of one of the Transdanubian principalities [see BOGHĀN; EFLĀK]. It still remained rare for Turks to have any knowledge of a Western language. The first mention which we have of a Turkish diplomat with such skills seems to be that of Sa'īd Efendi, who had accompanied his father Mehmed Efendi when the latter went as ambassador to Paris in 1721 and who apparently acquired a good facility in spoken French. Only in the early 19th century did it become reasonably common to know a European language, usually French; a forward-looking statesman like Muṣṭafā Reshīd Pasha [q.v.], who had served as ambassador in Paris and London before becoming Grand Vizier, would certainly be conversant with the Western languages used there. Hence the Porte's dependence on its Phanariot Greek dragomans for the greater part of its knowledge of the Western world continued into the early 19th century, until the outbreak of the Greek Revolt in 1821 made Maḥmūd II doubt the loyalty of the Greek Chief Dragoman, Constantine Mourouzi, so that he was dismissed and executed. His successor, Stavrakī Aristarchī, was likewise dismissed in 1822, but was fortunate enough only to suffer exile; never again would a Greek translator serve in the Imperial *Diwān*. When reports and other documents from Europe then began to pile up, the sultan had recourse (and even then still to converts, what Carter Findley has called "marginal men") to the teachers of foreign languages in the Army Engineering School, the first of these being Yahyā Efendi (d. 1823 or 1824), followed by Ishāk Efendi. A formal Translation Bureau was now set up, the *Bāb-i 'Alī Terdjüme Odası*. From the 1830s, the Translation Office grew in size and prestige, as Turkey became inexorably entangled in warfare and diplomacy with Muḥammad 'Alī on the one hand, and the European Powers on the other, making a high level of competence in French and, later, English, vital, e.g. for the correct drawing up of treaties and agreements in parallel versions in different languages. By 1841 it had a staff of thirty, and outward-looking Muslim Turks now saw it as a path to preferment, so that such notable statesmen of the *Tanzimat* [q.v.] period as Mehmed Emīn 'Alī Pasha (d. 1871 [see 'ALĪ PASHA MUHAMMAD AMĪN]) and Keçedjizāde 'Izzet Fu'ād Pasha (d. 1869 [see FU'AD PASHA]) served in it; by the mid-century it was a vital component of the Foreign Ministry (*Khārijīyye Nezāreti*) which had been formally set up in 1836. Under 'Abd ül-Hamīd II, the Grand Vizier acquired a special translator of his own, the *terdjümān-i şadāret-i 'uzmā*. See C.V. Findley, *Bureaucratic reform in the Ottoman empire. The Sublime Porte, 1789-1922*, Princeton 1980, 91-3, 132-5, 139, 186, 243-4 and index; B. Lewis, *The Muslim discovery of Europe*, London 1982, 77 ff., 86-7; Findley, *Ottoman civil officialdom. A social history*, Princeton 1989, 133-4, 262-3 and index.

onnement le régime constitutionnel. Ce qui est plus grave, ce sont des pratiques politiques qui existaient parfois auparavant dans la tradition ottomane, mais qui ont été renforcées à l'époque de Abdülhamid, et qui ont pu laisser des traces dans la culture politique. Par exemple, le recours à la délation comme système de gouvernement, destiné moins à produire du renseignement qu'à maintenir la population dans un état de crainte et d'insécurité vis-à-vis du pouvoir. Ou encore la censure de la presse et de l'édition, considérablement aggravée après 1878; là encore l'objectif étant sans doute moins d'interdire certaines informations que de créer, chez les écrivains et les journalistes, des réflexes d'autocensure. Autre pratique mise à l'honneur par Abdülhamid dans les premières années de son règne, les grands procès truqués, avec parodie de justice, qui sont montés pour se défaire de rivaux dangereux comme Midhat paşa ou Süleyman paşa. D'une manière générale, le sultan a essayé d'imposer à ses sujets une vérité d'État, en leur masquant les réalités de l'Empire, les défaites, les erreurs, les retards, etc.

Sultan autocratique? Souverain paternaliste? Despote éclairé? Dictateur moderne? Quel est le véritable Abdülhamid? Il faudra encore de longues recherches avant de pouvoir porter un jugement fondé sur l'homme, sur le régime et sur l'œuvre. Ce qui domine pour l'instant, pour les caractériser, c'est l'impression d'un curieux mélange de traditions ottomanes réinventées et de traits avancés de modernité. A l'image de ce palais de Yıldız, "son" palais, qui est un composé de kiosques à la façon de Topkapı et de pavillons venus tout droit des Expositions universelles.

Tercüman Odası

## L'ADMINISTRATION OTTOMANE ET LE PROBLÈME DES INTERPRÈTES (\*\*)

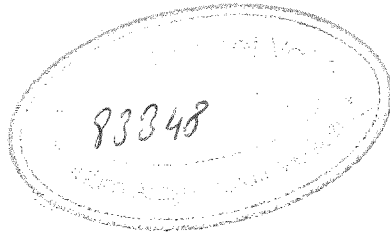
Gilles VEINSTEIN\*

La question des interprètes dans l'Empire ottoman (*tercüman*, *tercemân*, *drogmans*, *dragomans*), n'est pas un sujet nouveau, mais il ne me paraît pas excessif de dire qu'il a généralement été abordé de façon trop partielle. Les auteurs se sont limités le plus souvent à des catégories d'interprètes particulières: ceux qui, employés par les ambassades et consulats étrangers, plus précisément occidentaux, ou, d'autre part, par le divan ottoman, étaient rendus nécessaires par les relations extérieures de l'empire, ses échanges diplomatiques et commerciaux avec l'étranger. Ce n'est là pourtant qu'un des aspects de la question: l'administration interne de l'empire se heurtait elle aussi aux problèmes posés par la pluralité des langues, compte tenu de la multiplicité de celles pratiquées par les diverses composantes de ce vaste ensemble pluri-ethnique. Je voudrais donc commencer par rappeler les différentes catégories d'interprètes existant dans l'empire, distinctes par leurs missions comme par leurs conditions, en me limitant toutefois aux employés de l'État ottoman, à l'exclusion des *drogmans* au service des résidents étrangers.<sup>1</sup> Ce bref panorama ne sera d'ailleurs

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(1) Ces derniers qui ont donné lieu à une abondante littérature, ont fait récemment l'objet d'un ensemble d'études réunies dans HITZEL, Frédéric, 1997, *Istanbul et les langues orientales*. Actes du colloque organisé par l'IFEA et l'INALCO à l'occasion du bicentenaire de l'École des Langues Orientales, Istanbul, 29-31 mai 1995, L'Harmattan, Paris.



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