

TURKISH LITERATURE IN ARMENIAN LETTERS AND ARMENIAN-TURKISH LITERARY RELATIONS IN THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE IN THE XIXth CENTURY

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ABSTRACT

There are a great number of manuscripts that are part of rich heritage of Armeno-Turkish manuscripts. These manuscripts relate to the Turkish culture and Armeno-Turkish cultural links. Such manuscripts include the songbooks of mixed (multi-national authors) and Turkish songs and melodies that are covering Turkish lyricist and poetic culture and art of singing. With the help of Armenian and European *khaz* (signs of musical notation), Armenian musicologist have wrote down the works of the well-known Istanbul bards of the 19th century. These works are classified also by genre versions which are peculiar to songbooks of the 19th century and which are of definite value for oriental studies.

The Armenian and Armeno-Turkish manuscript monuments, many of which are unique in their value, are serving as essential sources for the history of the Ottoman Empire. In this sense, the publishing of works of Gevorg Pambukchyan is a nice fill-out of a vital gap, leaving a vast undeveloped area to Turkologists yet to come after him.

The 19th century, the period of 1850-1870 in particular, is considered to be a period of Renaissance in the Ottoman Empire. This is a period of an overall upsurge, a period of development of print-work, arts, school, literature, press, theater and etc., when the power of intelligentsia of the Empire—Turks, Armenians, Greeks, Jews and etc, all have worked together, side-by-side and created values, and put the country onto the road to enlighten and Europeanize. This has been a magnificent period of cooperation that has yielded to the development of a new and independent Turkish literature in translation, language, press, sciences and arts.

Key Words: Turkish literature, Armenian letters, XIXth century.

Turkish literature in Armenian letters (TA) with its handwritten and printed periods makes part of Armenian culture, of Armenian history. It stands among the best monuments of cultural relations.

The western part of the Armenian people, subject to the Ottoman Empire, particularly the part residing in their historical homeland, for centuries had been exposed to forcible conversion into Mohammedanism, to the danger of estrangement, since the first step of Turkization, i. e. forcible conversion into Turkish-speaking people, was crowned with partial success. In the years of existence, Turkish literature in Armenian letters served the solution of the problem of bringing this part of our nation, which had lost their mother tongue, back to their language, religion and culture, as well as to save them from further estrangement.

Turkish literature in Armenian letters was not created for the basic part of the Armenian people, but for those who, having lost their own language, nonetheless preserved their religion, Christian faith, national traditions.

Turkish language in Armenian letters was created by Armenians, as a means of communication for those who did not speak Armenian at all, as well as for those who spoke a little Armenian. The origination and development of the Turkish literature in Armenian letters proceeded in parallel with Armenian literature proper, and made integral part of the latter, with its own expressive means.

The situation was similar in other subject Christian nations, e.g. Greeks. Turkish in Greek letters, however, could not enjoy such popularity and play a historic role in the development of the Ottoman Empire, since Greek did not convey the phonetic structure of Turkish the way the Armenian alphabet did.

Geographically, Turkish in Armenian letters did not confine within the territory of the Ottoman Empire. Outstanding literature in Tartar and Kipchak in Armenian letters, handwritten and printed, was created by those Armenians, who, taking the road of exile, by caravans reached the Ukraine, Poland, other countries of Eastern Europe. Their rituals and everyday custom, as well as their laws were formulated in Kipchak and Tatar in Armenian letters, thereby creating cultural values of great significance. The Grammars of Kipchak, authored by Armenians, only survived in the manuscripts, created here. The famous “Datastanagirq” by Mkhitar Gosh in Kipchak in Armenian letters served a Code of laws, a law for the Armenian communities; all kinds of community and church

registers were also written in the same language and reached us.

Turkish literature in Armenian letters (hereinafter: TA) passed two periods of development: handwritten and printed. The handwritten period embraced close on 600 years (XIVth-XIXth centuries). The length of the printed period was close on 250 years. Each of these periods had its own peculiarities. Before an entire generation in the Ottoman Empire would become Armenian speaking, long decades, up until the mid-XIXth century (when Armenian secular schools were opened), it was imperative that these Armenians be aware of the national awakening and intellectual rise in the language they would understand, in Turkish in Armenian letters, i.e. through publications in Armenian letters, yet in the Turkish language. Such was the situation that accounts for the origination of handwritten and, particularly, printed Turkish literature in Armenian letters, the origination of hundreds of religious, historical, belletristic and other literature and, subsequently, of newspapers and magazines.

Suffice it to mention TA literature of ashugs (poet-singers)-a real treasury of not only Armenian culture, but of the other peoples of the Empire, the Turkish in the first place. In Turkish manuscripts in Armenian letters survived thousands of Armenian, Turkish and oriental songs, diverse in type and style, with the words, author's name, and the music - in Armenian and European notes. In a word, it is a huge, unique and priceless heritage, worth the researchers' attention, with expectations of novel assessment and mutual discoveries.

For various reasons, printed books in Turkish in Armenian letters came out in the cities of the Ottoman Empire and beyond. During over 250 years, the quantity of printed books in Turkish in Armenian letters exceeded 2000. They were published in almost 50 cities in more than 200 printing-houses. Every printing-house, every publishing house had its own face, its own social-political and religious orientation, its own literary and educational goals, its own preferred themes, field of interests. The study of the two and a half century long history of printed Turkish literature in Armenian letters evidences the many-sided life of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire, as well as in the Near East, Europe, America and elsewhere. This is an independent and all-sufficient literature - rich, high quality, never-duplicating - in the name of Western Armenians, and awakening and rise of the national self-consciousness within the Ottoman Empire.

Only in Istanbul, Turkish books in Armenian letters were published in almost 85 Armenian printing houses. Publishing centers also existed in

the Congregation of Mekhitarists on the island of San Lazzaro in Venice, in Trieste, in the monasteries of Vienna with their printing houses, in Jerusalem, and, further- in Beirut, Syria, Egypt, France, America, Bulgaria, the island of Malta, Russia, etc.

Studying Turkish literature in Armenian letters is important for the following basic reasons:

a. TA bibliography is an irreplaceable and unique source, also representing the history of the Ottoman Empire. A great many chronicles about the events and key personalities of a definite period of the Empire are the only written and veracious sources, depicting them. In this respect, important is the Armenian bibliographer and philologist from Istanbul Gevorg Pambukchyan's four-volume scientific publication in Turkish by the Ottoman Qyoqs during the last years. Up to the present, TA bibliography presents an inexhaustible source for studying Turkey's history and different aspects of life.

b. In parallel with the press, TA printed literature exerted enormous influence on the readers, facilitating their intellectual advancement and refinement of their artistic taste, familiarizing them with the attainments of the Western-European progressive thought.

The printed period, as opposed to the handwritten period, went beyond the frames of the initial mission, and began to serve not only the Turkish speaking Armenians, but also all of Western Armenians, other peoples of the Ottoman Empire, Turks in the first place.

This literature was among the motivating forces for Europeanization of the Ottoman Empire, penetration of new ideas, giving rise to the era of general awakening. Into this language were translated and read the classics of world and European literature, as well as the "kings" of dime and adventure literature, popular at the time. In this language mainly acted the Armenian theatre groups to perform their repertoire in Turkish. The Turkish enlighteners, that surrounded the Armenian theatre, wrote, rewrote and translated into Turkish in Armenian letters, thus giving birth to Turkish dramaturgy, modern Turkish literature and literary "Turkish". In this language were printed hundreds of periodicals, which played an unspeakable historic role in the social-political, scientific and cultural, as well as in everyday life of the Ottoman Empire, raising on a new level the culture of journalism, thereby giving birth to the contemporary Turkish journalism.

The rich periodical TA press, both original and translated, particularly French adventure literature, day in and day out, by the force of habit, were read in public places, coffee- and tea-houses, official places, thus enhancing the circles of readers hundredfold.

Vast literature had been created, among others - textbooks for teaching the Ottoman language, unprecedented abundance of dictionaries. Most of all, it facilitated the making of the modern Turkish language, the enrichment of its vocabulary. For decades, Turks studied their own language by the textbooks of Turkish (in Armenian letters), authored by Armenian linguists, and at various newly opened, even military, educational institutions, along with TA literature on their specialty.

Turkish in Armenian letters was used to create literature on science, technology, agriculture, crafts and culture that were being introduced into the Empire and were to serve Turkish speaking Armenians, other nations of the Ottoman Empire, Turks.

TA was a live organism and served the interests of the entire Empire. It was not at all accidental that in the mid-XIX century, within the court discussed was the issue of substituting the Arabic alphabet of the Ottoman language by the Armenian, which viability had already been proved.

The Turkish press in Armenian letters with 150 years of history numbered 54 titles, making more than one half of over 100 titles of Armenian periodicals, issued in 1850-1890 in Istanbul. These periodicals enjoyed great popularity, were issued with a large circulation many long years, had subscribers and lots of correspondents in different provinces and abroad, were read by other nations. The periodicals are an inexhaustible source for studying all the aspects of life in the Ottoman Empire: the social-economic and political situation, national-liberation movements of the peoples living under the Ottoman domination, etc. The Turkish periodical press in Armenian letters was the everyday mirror of the multi-sided life, lead by western Armenians. The articles, together with the impressions of the correspondents and travelers, gave comprehensive information about nature of the provinces, the historical monuments there, national and religious traditions, social-economic hardships, persecutions of Armenians and other residents of the provinces.

The mentioned periodicals were published in the likeness of the French periodicals of the time and presented the only high quality source of information for numerous readers. Articles on history and folklore of

foreign countries, materials about important historic persons, contemporary situation, culture and science in those countries, army and even budget, about the political and economic life were being translated from the European periodicals. In resemblance to same, many periodicals, even those for children, carried a section for feuilletons, where continuously, day after day, published were mostly French popular novels, sometimes works by Armenian, and even by Turkish authors. The prestige of some periodicals in Turkish in Armenian letters was so high that the progressive intelligentsia of other nations, Turkish in particular, did not only contribute to them, but learned the Armenian alphabet and read those newspapers every day, preferring them to those, published

In Ottoman. Several poems by the famous Turk author Mehmed Emin, entitled “Our Poet Governor”, published in TA periodicals of the province when he was a governor, reached us.

Turkish literature in Armenian letters, beyond doubt, exerted a great influence upon the formation and development of the new generation of Turkish writers and public figures. The latter advocated constitutional reforms in the Ottoman Empire and progress of the secular, cultural life among the Turkish society.

In 1850-1870, the relatively favorable years in political life, TA literature greatly contributed to the spiritual rise of the Turkish speaking part of the Armenian people, to the renaissance of its national-liberation aspirations, and, overall, to the awakening of the social thought in the Ottoman Empire. Belletristic literature (original and translated), historical works, educational literature, publicist publications, philosophic treatises, scientific, popular scientific books, textbooks, dictionaries, legal acts, various guidebooks, medical, household books, such as song books, interpretations of dreams, cookbooks, healthcare publications, books for children, etc.

Even in the years of a most severe censorship, exercised at the times of Abdul Ham id’s tyranny, when any book or article, promoting the rise of the national self-consciousness, was strictly banned, when prohibited were even the theatrical performances in Armenian, Turkish literature in Armenian letters proved capable to fulfill its civic duty - the mission of cultural and social-political consolidation.

Translations for theatre make a vast portion of Turkish literature in Armenian letters. Such works amount to 500. The majority of them, naturally, were not published, yet the plays were performed hundreds of times. Even unpublished, this literature played a significant role in the

spiritual evolution of the nations in the Ottoman Empire. Many of those performances were even more important, than some of the published works. One should bear in mind the fact, that in the Empire, the number of illiterates and those who could not read Turkish was immense, while the number of progressive people, who read Turkish, was limited. All of them watched and understood the Turkish language they heard from the stage.

The period, when Hakob Vardovyan cooperated with the “Ottoman Theatre”, was of crucial importance for young Turk intellectuals. Subsequently they seriously involved in literature, particularly in drama. The list of the Turk intellectuals, who had cooperated with Armenian theatre groups, embraces almost all of the classics and enlighteners of modern Turkish literature, such as: Namiq Kemal, Ahmed Midhat, Shamseddin Sami, Ebuzziya Tefiq, Rajaizade Eqrem, Ali Haydar, Hasan Bedrettin, Abdulkhak Hamid, and many others. But for the material aspect, theatre attracted the Turk enlighteners by that through theatre it was possible to express their boldest dreams and the moods of the progressive Turkish intelligentsia.

After the theatre came onto arena, the struggle partly moved on the stage.

Refik Ahmed, a historian of Turkish theatre, justly noted, that Vardovyan’s theatre deserves attention as a centre for formation of Turkish literature. Simultaneously, those are the most popular works of the classics of modern Turkish literature.

The historians of Turkish theatre study this period as that of emergence of Turkish national theatre (Metin And. Ahmed Fehim).

Turkish specialists of drama study, actors, justly notice that, had it not been for Hakob Vardovyan’s, Martiros Mnakyans’, T Fasulachyan’s, A. Penklyan’s and other Armenian theatre groups, for the commissions the Turk playwrights received from them for material remuneration, Turkish dramaturgy would hardly appear.

In the progress of the movement for enlightenment in the Ottoman Empire, significant were the all-country tours. They coincided with the years of “zulum”, when in Constantinople banned were not only performances in Armenian, but also most of the original plays by Turk authors and the translated European plays. For the majority of the population in these eastern provinces, those were their first contacts with what is called theatre. For the first time in their lives they saw actors, heard dramaturgy, works

by classics, by

Armenian and Turk playwrights. Popular oriental love stories, melodramas, vaudevilles and farces were performed.

Women, locked in Turkish harems, watched in the theatre a scene, in which the man on bended knees would beg the woman's love and, rejected, began to suffer. This much was enough for a woman from harem to understand, that her confined and enslaved condition, the fact of being bought and sold and gifted was nothing from above or prophetic. The calls to learn, to develop in order to somehow withstand the blows of fate, not to be a blind tool in someone's hands, were added to all that. Hence the conclusion that everybody should learn - women and men, the rich and the poor. And if, in the years of restoration of the Ottoman constitution, the woman gradually appeared on the social arena, and the movement of women's emancipation started, no doubt, it can be partly attributed to the huge educational impact of Martiros Mnakyan theatre's matinees specially for women. The performances facilitated the enhancement of the social and cultural outlook of women. The theatre proved the best opportunity for them to get in touch with the European civilization. It urged the women from harems, other women spectators to read the numerous novels, translated from French. Love stories and adventure novels were widespread among the rich and medium families, in harems; they could be found under the pillow of every woman and young lady. Turkish women themselves would often admit this with a sense of gratitude.

In this way, in the course of more than 50 years, diverse layers of the Turkish population, Turkish speaking and those having a good command of the language, got in touch with the art of drama.

The period of TA in the XIXth century was favorable for all the progressive, intellectual and educational forces of the Empire, which ended up with the development of modern Turkish original and translated literature and the language, the press, sciences and arts. Such cooperation had already stopped existing at the dawn of the XXth century.

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