

THE MARSIGLI COLLECTION OF TURKISH MANUSCRIPTS AND THE OTTOMAN DOCUMENTS IN BOLOGNA UNIVERSITY LIBRARY¹

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0. First of all let me express my gratitude to the Academic authorities of the Center for inviting me to have this brief speech here; namely to Professor Cornell Fleischer who stubbornly supported my application thus enabling me to come to Chicago taking advantage of an exchanging program between our Universities. I hope today's presentation will prove nothing more than the first step in the field of further work together.

1. The aim of this conversation is a brief introduction to the different documents of Turkish/Turkic interest and importance that are housed in the library of the University of Bologna. They are, broadly speaking, more or less indexed and, so, potentially object of consultation; however not in a completely satisfactory shape, and this is particularly true from the point of view of an "Orientalist".

Their character is twofold: first, a rich collection of Turkish manuscripts which covers several different aspects of the ottoman "*Schriftum*"; moreover "Turkish documents", which include many city maps and reports of military and strategic importance. Some of them at least may be considered as examples of "intelligence" documentation (drafts of treatises, agreements dealing with war prisoners, agreements on borders); finally a number of documents written in Italian, Latin as well as in other languages are first hand reports of various aspects of ottoman life from 1680 to 1730.

2. The Turkish manuscripts, however, are only a part, possibly the most significant one, of a vast collection of Islamic manuscripts (i.e. in Arabic, Persian and Turkish) which had been gathered by one of this city's native sons, Luigi Ferdinando Marsigli, who lived from 1658 to 1730. Marsigli was a versatile personality of scholar, actually a sort of combination of military-man/scientist/diplomat/traveller and writer. There are actually two spellings of his family name, i.e. Marsigli and Marsili: the second being the contemporary form; (by the way a street in the centre of Bologna is actually named after this spelling). Still I prefer the form "Marsigli" on the authority of his own autographs). The most recent research on him is represented by a remarkable monograph in English on his life and work which has recently

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been published by the British scholar J. Stoye: *Marsigli's Europe, 1680-1730*, (Yale, Yale University Press, 1994); however no references are to be found there to his "oriental" connections.

2.1 The story of his life is a too rich one to be sketched here; in short he went to Istanbul in 1679 as a secretary of Pietro Civran (the "Bailo" i.e. the Venetian envoy to the Sultan); in 1781, back in Italy, he began his career as a scientist with a book *Osservazioni sul Bosforo tracio* ("Remarks on the Bosphorus' stream movements"). Next year he entered the Austrian army as a simple *moschettiere* ("rifle holder"); in 1683 he was captured by the Ottomans in what is presently Hungary; as a prisoner he witnessed the siege of Vienna (1684) and the defeat of the Turkish army. Two years later, having found his way to freedom, he took part with the Austrian army to the military campaign that ended with the liberation of Buda; in the following years he acted as a diplomat in charge to discuss with the Ottoman authorities the conditions of peace treaties of Karlowitz and Passarowitz. He visited Istanbul again in 1689. We have no time to follow his further adventures as military man, scientist and writer. Despite some unlucky events he became quite famous: the importance of his diplomatic negotiations was recognized by Louis XIV; and his scientific works have been praised by Newton, to whom Marsigli paid a visit in London, and later by Voltaire; he passed away in Bologna in 1730. A significant part of his writings is still unpublished.

3. Marsigli gathered his Islamic manuscripts in 1686 in Buda, in the very days when the city was re-taken by the Christian armies; later he added other manuscripts, also of Balkan provenance, after the siege of Belgrade in 1688. This means that a significant feature of this collection, in my opinion at least, is the unity of its origin. It represents an example of what had been conserved in centres like Buda and Beograd at the end of the 17th century (1600's). In a letter-preface written in 1704 and edited (by Albano Sorbelli) in 1930 Marsigli described how this Collection came to be:

Proseguendo la guerra in Ungheria ottenni la permissione d'andare in Buda, dove tutto era ancora in fiamme non per rintracciare prede d'oro e d'argento ma per raccogliere libri Turchi che comprovassero falsa la mentovata opinione di noi Cristiani che li Turchi fossero senza letteratura.

[“During the war in Hungary I obtained the permission to visit Buda, which was still on fire not to trace anything of material value, but to collect Turkish books so as to disprove the erroneous opinion of the Christians, namely that the Turks have no literature of their own”].

Besides some knowledge of Ottoman Turkish, Marsigli had a deep and genuine interest in the Turkish/ottoman world as a whole; not only in its military or political aspects, but even in its literature, art, and even in the metrical rules of Turkish poetry. There is ample documented proof of this: his own works, for the most part unpublished, are also housed, as we have seen, in the Library of Bologna University; some of them contain many notes, comments and reflections on numerous aspects of Turkish culture of which he had been a direct observer. However, interesting as the man is, Marsigli “the Orientalist” is a subject we cannot deal with here, and which probably deserves a complete, separate study. It is enough here to mention that his contribution to oriental history - that is Ottoman history - is mostly recognized for his well-known work *Stato Militare dell’Império Ottomano* “The Military Organization of the Ottoman Empire” published in 1732 in Amsterdam two years after his death. I’ll say some words on this work later on. With reference to this aspect, I’m glad to mention a work in progress which is presently carried on by a Hungarian-Italian-Turkish team: its target is to have some of Marsigli’s works (and scattered notes) published, and so to throw more light on his “Turkish connection”, and on the Turkish collection as well. Doctor Molnár Mónika, of Budapest, one of the specialists in charge from the Hungarian side, has already published some preliminary articles. Her Hungarian translation of “Stato Militare”, with introduction and commentary notes, appeared in 2005.

4. The exact extent of this collection can only be estimated, because some of the manuscripts are somewhat difficult to classify due to their miscellaneous character from the linguistic point of view; but they total more than 400 examples.

Buda had become an important centre of learning after a century of Ottoman presence in Hungary, and although it was situated at the Western limit of the Empire, it was rich in artistic monuments, military and religious architecture and libraries. Of course, today’s Buda has but scanty traces of its rich Muslim, that is to say Ottoman, past. I take this opportunity to mention that a complete drawing of Ottoman Buda produced in a large Turkish map, painted on canvas, is housed in the small adjacent Marsigli Museum **Image 1** (roll no. 14). It depicts the siege of Buda, although it was (and it is) mistakenly registered as Vienna (“carta topografica di Vienna”). The importance of the Oriental manuscript collection as a whole, to say nothing of the value of the individual codices, lies in the richness of its contents. In fact, the Library of Bologna University is surpassed only by the Vatican Library in Rome, and the Ambrosiana Library in Milan in terms of number of Islamic manuscripts; its Turkish collection is second only to the Vatican’s. In spite of this, until recent years, neither the Turkish manuscripts nor Marsigli, “the Orientalist” appear to have been well-known to the academic community. As a matter of fact I remember that his work on ottoman military organization had been translated in Russian already in 1737. This precious book is

interesting, from a linguistic point of view, as an example of “diplomatic Russian” of Peter the Great’s epoch (**image 2**).

5. But now, some words on the collection itself.

5.1. During the last ten years the Turkish manuscripts have been the object of a carefully examination carried on by Doctor Orazgozel Machaeva, a specialist of the Academy of what was formerly Soviet Turkmenistan. She had the opportunity to examine all of them; so the work is now completed: the manuscripts have been checked thoroughly and are fully described from both a technical and literary point of view. Her precious catalogue, actually the result a painstaking work, is at the moment in manuscript form; it should appear in the future in a more proper shape.

The entire Catalogue of Turkish Collection totals 205 codices, many of them presenting a miscellaneous character: they are written in more than one language, that is Turkish, Arabic and Persian. Most of them date from the 16th and 17th centuries. In addition to the dating of a particular work, she has tried to identify, on the basis of internal evidence, the place and circumstance of their production, which has been possible in only a few cases. We see, however, that the majority of the classified manuscripts seem to come from the Balkan area (Belgrade, Sarajevo, Skopie, Podgorica, Buda itself).

6. I can indicate the type of material these manuscripts deal with, nonetheless classification according to subject is always somewhat provisional. The great majority of the codices are of a literary character, both poetry and prose. In addition to these there are philological works, consisting mainly of Glossaries in Arabic, Persian, and Turkish, for example *Tuhfa-yi Shàhidi* (1470-1550), grammatical and poetic treatises (*risàla-yi ‘arùz*); a few manuscripts contain works on medicine. A section which is widely represented is that of occult sciences: astrology (*ta‘li-nàme*), physiognomy (*qiyafat-name*), dreams and divination (*ta‘bir-name, fal-name*): this kind of writings gives us the impression that the occult sciences and related subjects most likely played a significant role in everyday life of ottoman Buda at that time. Moreover there are some examples of official documents, including several interesting letters of which one was actually issued in the name of Marsigli himself. They are in Ottoman Turkish with Latin translation: n. 65 has actually 7 Turkish documents (Frati’s Catalogue listed 8 in 1928).

The *insha’* genre is also well represented in the Collection.

Another genre of writing that is well represented in Ottoman literature, and thus, also in this collection, is that of the commentary (*sharh*), in the form of free translations of Arabic and Persian classics into Turkish. The Persian works are for the most part *Gulistàn* by Sa’di,

Bahàristàn by Jàmi and *Pandnàme* by ‘Attàr; whereas those translated from Arabic are of scientific or theological content and tend to be more faithful to the original.

7. As the Turkish manuscripts are certainly the least known part of the Marsigli collection, I wish to mention now a few of the most significant examples.

7.1 Of the dated manuscripts, the oldest is n. 3583, the *Tarvih al-arvâh*, a medical treatise in poetry (masnavi), written by Tâj ad-Din Ibrâhim Ahmedi, the well-known Ottoman author, who was both poet and physician, born in Kutahiya in 1334 and died in Amasiya in 1413. The manuscript’s colophon (folio 359r) shows the date 816/1413-14 and the copyist’s name ‘Abdurrahim bin Mahmud bin ‘Abd ul-Jabbar Shâqe‘i (or possibly Shâfe‘i). The calligraphy is naskh with shekastè elements; an indication of the vowels is provided. It contains 359 pages, 24 by 17 centimetres in dimension. The archaic oriental paper is not laid. The black leather binding is original and there is an ornamental medallion in the center with the binder’s name, but it is not legible. Just above this is Marsigli’s coat of arms. This manuscript, which was so far unknown, seems to be the most ancient manuscript not only in the Marsigli Collection, but of all the Turkish dated manuscripts kept in Italy. Moreover, to my knowledge, this manuscript is probably the most ancient copy of all the poems of Ahmedi known so far. The ancient style of writing of this text might provide us with the possibility of observations in the field of the Ottoman language; as for the subject, it contains interesting material for the study of both traditional (practical) and classical (theoretical) Ottoman medicine; finally, it presents interesting paleographical features.

7.2 Manuscript no. 3582 is a valuable copy of the *Gharibnàme* by Ashiq Pashà (733/1333), dated 890/1485 (**images 4 and 5**). The copyist is Safâ Ibn Mustafa Ibn Maskid Hâjji. The calligraphy naskh is clear. It contains 206 pages, it measures 25 by 17 centimeters. Examination of the manuscript reveals that a few pages (4 to 10, 81 to 84 and 91 to 96) have been lost. In 1057/1647 the missing verses were replaced by the manuscript's owner, Sheikh 'Abdarrahman bin Mahmud. The inserted pages are clearly evident however: the original is printed on smooth, oriental, yellowish paper and its watermark is also different.

The *Gharibnàme* is a famous didactic religious poem, copies of which can be found in several Asian and European libraries. The copy in Bologna does not seem ever have been cited; strangely enough, it escaped the attention of the distinguished Italian scholar Ettore Rossi who, from 1949 to 1951, performed a thorough study of the copies of this poem in Italian libraries. He did, however, refer to another copy of the *Gharibnàme* in the Bologna library, ms. no. 3627, which is incomplete and lacks a title page. Code’s internal data suggest a possible 16th century date.

7.3 Another interesting manuscript is n. 3370 dated 989/1581, as you can see from the colophon (**image 6**); it contains the text of *Tavàrikh-i Mulùk-i ‘Ajam* of ‘Alishir Navà’i with

an introduction of two pages by Jàmi written in Persian. It's worthwhile to observe that the original "turki" text, as the copyist has pointed out in his preface (f.5), was translated from Chagatay into the "Rùmì" language, in other words, into Ottoman Turkish. This manuscript too has, until now, not been noted to my knowledge. The handwriting is minute, but clear (**image 7**). Its second part contains a Mathnavi, whose author is unidentified at the moment.

7.4 There are few well conserved manuscripts containing the *Shàh-u Gedà* as well as other poems of Dukajinzàde Yahyà Bey (died in 1575.), the XVIth century Ottoman mystical poet of Albanian origin; a few other codices have some poems of Yunùs Emre that could be collected and compared with those published: this might, perhaps, lead us to the discovery of new verses which are ascribed to this author.

7.5 The ms. no. 3613 is an exemplar of the famous *Portolano* "Sea Map" of Piri Reis (**images 8,9,10,11**). There are actually two versions of the texts, 1521 and 1526: the second one, to which belong these images describing the Italian shores from Naples to Toscana, is supposed to hide some interesting Turkish transcriptions of "local" names, at least according to a research which was recently carried on.

7.6/7 Two manuscripts are remarkable for their artistic and documentary value (nos. 3358 and 3359). The first is relatively known due to the fact that some of the illustrations were reproduced in printed works; it is a catalogue of banners of the Janissaries; 56 page long containing 163 drawings and watercolors; it is oblong in shape and measures 9 by 25 centimeters. The original leather binding has an ornamental medallion impressed "a secco".

The second one, ms. no. 3359, is almost identical in size. It is also of historical interest but it is probably more significant due to its uncommon iconographic quality (**images**). It can be entitled "Catalogue of the turbans and hair styles found in various classes of Turkish society": its 81 pages (9 by 24 centimeters, oblong in shape) contain 218 colored pen drawings, with each page described in Turkish and the verso in Italian. The leather, oriental binding holds a golden medallion. The manuscript is a portrait gallery exhibiting 218 lively faces of the different people one was likely to encounter in the Ottoman Empire. The images represent characteristics relevant to the figures' social class, their political or administrative position or their national-ethnic identity. This album of Ottoman portraiture is, as far as I know, a significant example of its genre. The reason is that it actually contains three kind of inscriptions: i.e. the ottoman text, the Italian translation and - last but not least - a sort of transcription in Latin alphabet which somehow reflects the pronunciation according to what was possibly an Italian hear (Marsigli's hear?). A possible example of comparison can be provided, as far as I know (but I'm no specialist of Turkish studies at all...) by a precious album actually in Warsaw, Poland: there we have no ottoman texts (i.e. no "Turkish" characters); *but* Latin transcriptions only, (according to Polish phonetic) and translations in French.

To conclude with this point, it is interesting to mention with reference to these drawings the reaction of the polyglot Cardinal Giuseppe Gaspare Mezzofanti, who compiled at the beginning of eighteenth century an unpublished hand-list of this collection (ms. no. 4111, fold 164 r.):

I busti che portano i diversi turbanti, benchè eseguiti senza disegno esprimono però nella bizzarria de' ceffi il carattere delle persone indicate dalle iscrizioni.

[“The mug-shot-like quality of the turbaned heads, although they were drawn without any preliminary sketch, expresses the subjects' characters as indicated in the inscriptions”].

Marsigli's own words are more specific and reveal his acute power of observation coupled with a reference to Venice:

Più di venti Giurvassi, cioè capitani de' Gianizeri con una beretta poco disimile al corno del Dogio di Venezia, ma di più avevano un alto piumon come di scarzi ...

[“More than twenty Giurvassi, who were the Janissary's captains, had a cap not unlike that of a Venetian Doge, but they also had a tall, gray heron feather ..].

8. A short mention now of the contents of some manuscripts in Italian language:

n. 51 has (cc. 48-49) a description of “Turkish-Persian prosody, with a list of the different meters and types of syllables”; Turkish miscellanea (348-360)

n. 52 is rich as well with notations on various aspects of Ottoman life

n. 57 contains various maps and plans of towns (cc. 300-301, Belgrad) as well as drawings of military buildings and bridges (cc. 385-389). Cc. 400-404 contain the “Handlist of the Ottoman buildings existing in Buda at the moment of the Christian conquest”. Cc. 407-446 contain a “History of Vienna’s siege”, actually a translation from a Turkish chronicle which was made by Talmann.

n. 96 (ff. 147-305) is the manuscript text of the *Stato militare dell’império ottomanno*. The dependence of this work from Hüseyin Efendi Hezarfenn is actually sure; the text, which

Marsigli named “Kanunname” has been successfully identified by I.E. Petrosjan in a section of *Telhis al-beyan fi qavanin-I Al-I Osman*.²

N. 112 deals with “Ottoman military organization”

² The terms and the circumstances of the translation have been actually not completely clear for a long time (F. Babinger *Die Geschichtsschreiber der Osmanen und ihre Werke*, Leipzig, 1927, pp. 127 ff.); But see now the conclusions of Petrosian (1979)

Conclusion. Needless to say, it would be possible to talk much more about this remarkable collection and the somewhat adventurous story of its origin; The purpose here was nothing more but to give you a general presentation of its most significant texts. The hope is to have Catalogue of the Turkish manuscripts published in the near future. Thank you for your attention.

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