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DRAGOMAN – TRANSLATOR AT THE CROSSROADS OF WEST AND EAST

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Abstract. The paper summarizes a dragoman's range of activities serving at the crossroads of Eastern and Western cultures and knowing their cultural code. Dragomans feasibly contributed to the communication of two civilizations, having a deep cultural knowledge and often a solid academic background. The paper provides a comparative etymological analysis of the term 'dragoman'; the archival documents are presented, confirming the role and significance of the activities of dragomans in international diplomatic missions. The issues regarding training professional dragoman personnel in Turkey, France and Russia are highlighted. The numerous spheres of activities of famous, as well as ordinary, dragomans are covered. Instances describing dragomans' contribution to world culture are provided.

Keywords: dragomans, Eastern and Western cultures, international diplomatic missions, cultural code

INTRODUCTION

Etymology and ways of penetration of the term. The historical term 'dragoman' dates back to the Middle Ages when the word first appeared in European languages. In Middle English, *dragman* is recorded, from the Old French *drugeman* coming from medieval Latin as *dragumannus*, from the Greek *δραγομάνος*, *dragoumanos*. Later European variants include German *trutzelmann*, French *trucheman* or *truchement* (*drogman* in modern French), Italian *turcimanno*, Spanish *trujamán*, *trujimán*, and *truchimán*. These variants indicate the Turkish or Arabic word *turjuman* with different vocalizations. Webster's 1828 Dictionary also gives English versions *drogman* and *truchman*. As a consequence, English plural will be *dragomans*, not *dragomen* (Webster, 1828, I T.). According to Ushakov's Explanatory Dictionary, in the Russian language *dragoman* (from Arabic *targuman*) is a translator at some European embassy in the East (Ushakov 1935-1940). There are some discrepancies in the interpretation of the term, clarifying the place of performance of the dragoman's duties: at diplomatic missions, at the European embassy or consulate, in the countries of the East (Kuznetsov: 1998). In early lexicographic sources, the definition focused on with whom the translation activity was carried out, and the dragoman was spoken of, first of all, as a translator "for speaking with prisoners of eastern origin" (Chudinov 1910) or "when speaking with eastern natives, such as Turks and Persians", (Pavlenkov 1907), as well as for "speaking with the native inhabitants" (Popov, 1907).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Note that the lexicographic sources differ in etymological nuances, arguing that in the Russian language, the term originates from the French *dragoman*, in turn derived from the Arabic *tarjuman*

(translator) (Efremova, 2000, vol. 1). Curiously, although the link is usually given to the French etymon (mediator), in the French language itself there is another term in the dictionaries – the historical *drogman*. In French, in addition to *drogman* which circulates as a historical term and is recorded in dictionaries as obsolete, there is the term *truchement* with the first meaning ‘interpreter’ and the second ‘mediator, exponent’ (Ganshina 1977).

Some early sources refer to medieval Latin and give etymons of different sound design: from Arabic ترجمان, [tarʒ umaː n], [targumaː n] ‘interpreter’ (from *taraga*, ‘hidden, difficult’) to medieval Latin *dragumanus* from Arab *tardshuman* (Michelson 1865, 46). Borrowings of Arabic origin can have graphic and phonetic variants in different languages, depending on the degree of assimilation. It is believed that some Arabs pronounce it as *terjuman*. This phenomenon served as a source of phonetic variation of the Arabic etymon among the compilers of some dictionaries: [tarʒ umaː n / targumaː n / tardshuman / tarjuman] (Epishkin 2010). The named Arabism is no exception in this regard: researchers note that in the dictionaries of foreign words there are frequent discrepancies in the transmission of Arabic prototype words by means of graphics (Al Qadimi Chalub 2010, 7).

According to I.I. Ogienko, Arabisms, depending on the ways of borrowing into the Russian language, are divided into direct borrowings through the Eastern languages – Turkic, Turkish and Persian, as well as indirect borrowings through the European languages (Ogienko 2016, 25). Based on the named classification, the Arabism the author of the present paper is considering entered the Russian language in the third way, through the French language, the traditional language of diplomacy. The reviewed dictionaries adhere to the same opinion, as well as the fact that the term means ‘a translator at diplomatic missions’ mainly in the countries of the East. Notably, in the modern Georgian language the word has acquired a broader semantics and, for obvious reasons, simply means a translator without indicating colleagues from other countries of the East. By its phonetic composition, the word is close to its etymon; in transliteration into Russian it looks like *та̀рджумани*, in the original თარჯუმანო/*tarjimani* (translator).

Let us list the analyzed definitions in Russian language vocabularies, where *dragoman* means the following: 1. Translator at diplomatic missions and consulates, mainly in the countries of the East (Efremova 2000, Vol. 1). 2. An official translator at diplomatic missions and consulates in the East or an interpreter at the embassy in the East for speaking with the native inhabitants (megaslov.ru). 3. Interpreter at the European embassy/consulate in the countries of the East (Evgenieva, 1957: I volume). 4. An interpreter at the embassies in the East, also an interpreter for speaking with prisoners of Eastern origin (Chudinov 1910). 5. An interpreter for speaking with oriental natives (Turks, Persians, etc.) (Pavlenkov 1907). 6. A translator at the embassy in the East for speaking with the native inhabitants (Popov 1907). 7. Translator at the embassies in the East (Michelson, 1865). 8. Responsible translator both at Turkish institutions and at foreign consulates and embassies in the East (Dictionary of Russian synonyms, <https://jeck.ru/tools/SynonymsDictionary/>). 9. Translator at diplomatic missions and consulates, mainly in the countries of the East (Dictionary of historical terms 1998). The Encyclopedic Dictionary by F.A. Brockhaus and I.A. Efron indicates that persons preparing for dragomans at the Russian mission and consulates receive education at the educational department of Oriental languages, which is under the Asian Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Brockhaus and Efron, 1893.11 Vol. 91).

Concise Dictionary of Diplomatic Terms gives additional nuances of the features of the service carried out by a dragoman – the official status in the diplomatic corps and the diplomatic immunity depending on the continent, as well as the relatively rare word usage: “an official translator at diplomatic and consular missions in the countries of the East. By virtue of the custom established in these countries, the dragoman enjoys diplomatic immunity and is part of the diplomatic corps. In the countries of Europe and America, translators at embassies and delegations do not usually enjoy such rights. The term *dragoman* is currently not widely used” (Concise Dictionary of Diplomatic Terms, 2005, <https://politike.ru/search>).

Nowadays the term is out of use, being considered obsolete. Thus, in the Dictionary of Russian Synonyms, the frequency of use of the word *dragoman* is 18 times per \approx 300 million words, while the frequency of use of the word *translator*, its only synonym, is 2,402 times per \approx 300 million words (The Dictionary of Russian synonyms, <https://jeck.ru/tools/SynonymsDictionary/>). The term often appears in the historical context, for instance, archival documentation testifies to its existence, in particular, on the Chinese *Eastern Railway* until 1945, when the Russian language again became dominant (Politekhnik 11-12: 192).

However, today the term received a rethinking and a second life in the form of proper names and toponyms. Currently, Dragoman is a translator or guide, especially in countries where Arabic, Turkish or Persian is spoken. The term has other meanings - Dragoman is a city, community and railway station in Bulgaria, and even a football club. There was also the Dragoman Monastery a medieval architectural complex from which nothing but ruins are left, and the toponym 'Dragoman swamp' refers to a karst formation in Bulgaria. Among other things, a glacier in Antarctica is named Dragoman.

Dragomans, the specifics of their activities and training

The ability to translate from any oriental language into European presupposed thorough language training and required fluency in Turkish, Arabic, and one or more European languages. Moreover, the position of translator and mediator between the Middle Eastern powers and European diplomatic and trade missions, presupposed diplomatic functions along with translation.

The Encyclopedic Dictionary by F.A. Brockhaus and I.A. Efron, in addition to the definition, emphasizes that the position of translator at European missions and consulates in the East became especially widespread in Turkey. In the Turkish tradition, the profession of a dragoman was mentioned in the Ottoman sultanate during the 13th century reign of Kayqubad I under which two dragomans and two translators were appointed (Encyclopædia Britannica 1911: Dragoman). It is known that experienced dragomans served in the administration of the Ottoman Empire and in numerous European diplomatic and trade missions. The authorities decided to train translators in the West, and the Turkic language was taught in Oxford, but the French opened a school for translators in the center of Istanbul. The services of dragomans were highly paid, and the prestige of the profession was indicated by the fact that, according to palace etiquette, during receptions of foreign ambassadors, the dragoman was seated between the foreign diplomat and the sultan.

Dragomans in Turkey were divided into I, II, III, IV, V, VII and VIII classes. In the rest of the Consulates – Smyrna, Ia \square i, Wallachia and Moldavia, Egypt and others, they were divided into Senior (VIII grade) and Junior (IX grade). Dragomans of the Consulates of Trebizond, Erzurum, Thessaloniki and Beirut were ranked as IX class, along with the dragomans of the Consulate General in Tabriz or the Secretary at the Consulate in Gilan. There were also dragomans during the mission in Persia, the Elders and the Younger (VIII-IX grades) and, finally, one dragoman of the X class served in the Dardanelles and Gala \square i (Code of Laws 1844, 34). In the Ottoman Empire, the positions of the great dragoman of the Porte (and the great dragoman of the fleet) from the end of the 17th century were of great importance among the Greek Phanariots; these positions were usually given to the layman of the Orthodox district in the Port. The first great dragoman of the Sublime Porte was the Greek Panayotis Nicosias. The service of dragomans was 'both dangerous and difficult'; an example of this is the tragic fate of the famous Greek dragoman *Hadjigeorgakis* Kornesios. When the Russian-Turkish war began, on March 31, 1809, he was beheaded on false accusation of misappropriating part of the collected taxes. During the Greek uprising against the Ottoman rule, the newspaper *Moskovskie vedomosti* dated June 4, 1821 noted that two Greek dragomans "were perpetrated as victims of suspicion and revenge: one of them had his head chopped off, the other was hanged" (*Moskovskie vedomosti*, 04.06.1821 <http://www.nplg.gov.ge/papereu/en/browse/000317/>).

An example of the civil rights in the duties of a dragoman in another country is data concerning the stay of a French dragoman in Turkey. Back in 1740, "... The Porte agreed to recognize the dragomans' rights which were usually granted to French subjects in the Turkish territory. In the same year, it granted the French consuls and envoys the right to hire whatever dragomans and other servants they liked from Turkish subjects. In the future, they would enjoy all the rights ever recognized for dragomans in the service of any power. However, the 1840 agreement still made a significant difference between dragomans who were French citizens and Turkish dragomans. According to it, since the French dragomans were representatives of consuls and envoys, they could not be persecuted or imprisoned by the Turkish authorities for carrying out the instructions given to them, since only consuls or envoys had the right to supervise and judge them, and misconduct was subject exclusively to the consular court. Moreover, to ensure the personal freedom and property of a French citizen, the Porte proclaimed the principle of the inviolability of the house said citizen occupied. At the same time, no Turkish authority had the right to enter the house of a Frenchman and undertake a search in it without the presence and participation of the consul, or his authorized representative, or envoy (Martens 1873, 227-228).

In the historical district of Istanbul, Beyoğlu, on the narrow street Tarjduman Chikmasi the French founded in the 17th century a school for teaching foreign languages. French translators became a kind of cultural intermediaries between East and West. The territory of the empire stretched from Africa to Central Europe and needed people who spoke different languages. The duties of the dragomans included the translation of diplomatic treaties, commercial and political correspondence and negotiations, mediation in diplomatic missions at the Ottoman court and the resolution of disputes that arose in relations between the Sultan and the Grand Vizier, on the one hand, and the ambassadors of foreign powers at the Ottoman court, on the other. A century later, dragomans were mostly ethnic Greek families living in the Fener quarter. The so-called great dragomans (*humayun tarjimasi*) stood out among them. Ethnic Germans, Italians, Greeks and Venetians versed in diplomatic etiquette and possessing the skills of interpretation got to the positions of dragoman in different ways; they tended to have successful careers at the Ottoman court. This school of translators can be traced back to the founding of the National Institute of Oriental Languages established in Paris in 1795 and still operating today; it was founded to solve the problems of governing the French colonies in Asia and Africa. Even before the French, the Venetians sent young talented youths to Istanbul to study Oriental languages (Diasamidze 2021, 73-81).

Dragomans who spoke Arabic, Turkic and Persian contributed to the growth of interest in Islamic culture in the Western world. French diplomat, orientalist and translator André Du Ryer translated the Quran in 1775 (Du Ryer 2016). Beginning in the 16th century, dragomans were recruited from the Greek elite. In 1661 Panayotis Nicosias, who received a philosophical and medical education, became the Great Dragoman of the Porte. He was endowed with wide powers and was involved in issues of urban improvement and payment of taxes and legal claims. The Great Dragoman of the Porte bore the title of Privy Councilor. Since the 19th century, after the Greeks gained independence, the Ottoman authorities began to train translators from among ethnic Turks or Armenians. However, as practice shows, the tradition of appointing the Greeks as dragomans (who often spoke several Eastern languages from childhood) could not completely disappear. Moreover, the study of European languages at that time was not welcomed in the Muslim environment of the faithful. In fact, the realities dictated their own laws within the framework of which dragomans had to get their daily bread, sometimes in unpredictable and even risky situations. In some places, the spontaneous appointment of dragomans led to mutual displeasure and even disastrous results on both sides. An example of this is the facts mentioned in the archival diplomatic correspondence and the official complaints of the dragomans to the Turkish Foreign Ministry. Either the dragoman complained about the inappropriate treatment on the part of the consul in Batumi, or dragomans who were employees of the consular service were given extremely disapproving characteristics. Acquaintance with the actual documentation and the desire to understand what the responsibilities

and the peculiarities of the activities of these original translators of the East were prompted the author to conduct research. The archival documents of the Turkish Foreign Ministry were provided with the kind permission of the doctoral student of Tbilisi State University, historian Zaur Georgievich Margiev; they will be released as a continuation of the first study (Marguiev, 2008). The present study focused on the philological aspect of the documents. Among the tens of hundreds of archival documents of the Sublime Porte, dragomans are often mentioned as assistants and employees in the work of the Consulates General of Georgia in Tbilisi, Batumi and Poti; as a rule, these are Orthodox ethnic Armenians or Greeks. Often, dragomans are mentioned in case of dissatisfaction with their work, because apart for shortcomings, there is little reason to mention these mission officers in diplomatic correspondence. Notably, complains were few, and the amount of their good work was extensive. However, some documents testify to the difficult and sometimes dangerous conditions of their activities which sometimes take on a tragicomic character. Thus, one of the archival documents provided by the Turkish Foreign Ministry concerns the complaint of a dragoman who suffered from the illegal, as it is now called, actions of the Turkish Consul Effendi Rifki Bey, Consul General of Turkey in Batumi in 1880-1888. This appeal to a superior colleague of his allows a mental transfer to the atmosphere of Batumi at the beginning of the 20th century (translated from French by the author):

“To His Excellency Chakir Pacha – Ambassador of His Imperial Majesty the Sultan in St. Petersburg. Batumi, June 24, 1883. Your Excellency, by telegraphic dispatch I have already had the honor to bring to the attention of Your Excellency the incident between me and Rifki Effendi. This incident took all forms and scale of a crime, one might say, a deliberate one. That is why I hasten to present it to Your Excellency in all the details, without exaggerating in the least and giving you the opportunity to judge the seriousness of what is happening. I am filled with confidence in the fairness of your Excellency's judgment and in that you will consider with the utmost seriousness the complaints from your loyal subject who served for two years in the consulate of Batumi as a dragoman. At the same time, for a year and a half, I acted gratuitously as the head of the office, with complete conscientiousness and diligence, both during the emigration of Muslims and in the interests of Ottoman subjects to receive the necessary certificates as an exculpatory confirmation. On Tuesday, June 22nd, at eleven after breakfast, I went to a Turkish café where beys and famous people from the local population usually gather for a cup of coffee. Le Tavaz from the consulate came to warn me that Rifki Effendi was calling me to the consulate to amend the Act of the Certificate of Inheritance which I had drawn up in the morning and submitted to him for signature. I was in the company of Mahmud Effendi for whom this testimony was drawn up. After being summoned, I invited the named Mahmud Effendi to accompany me in order to complete his document as soon as possible. Arriving together at the entrance of the residential part of the consulate, we met Youssouff Zia Bey, the senior officer for emigrants, who invited me to enter from the residential part since the main door was locked, and at the same time he detained my companion. Thus, entering the house, Youssouff Zia Bey closed the door behind me, himself remaining outside while locking the door with a key. I immediately appeared before Rifki Effendi standing in the courtyard with a hose in his hands from the fire pump of the local police, and three of his servants were ordered to immediately activate the said fire pump. Then Rifki Effendi directed a hose at me and unleashed a powerful stream of water on me. Taken by surprise, amazed, I tried to flee and only then noticed that, to my despair, all the doors were tightly locked, and the fire hose was so positioned that it barred my exit to the kitchen with a hail of water. I was soaked through, as if I fell into the sea in my clothes. The only thing left for me was to pounce on Rifki Effendi and rip the hose out of his hands. However, Rifki Effendi clearly did not like my demarche. He showered me with blows, accompanying these actions with the most terrible verbal abuse. Unable to withstand everything – pain from blows, fatigue and shock from a sudden attack, I collapsed to the ground, losing consciousness. Not content with such outrageous and humiliating behavior, he grabbed a huge stick, while shouting to his wife to bring him a revolver to finish his atrocity. Seeing that his wife refused to bring him a revolver, he himself rushed for the weapon, calling for help and

ordering the servants not to let me flee. During this, by some miracle I cannot fully recollect, I found myself on the street, from where I was escorted home. The poor parents, frightened by my appearance, began to shout loudly. Being beside themselves, they did not even think to help me change my wet clothes.

To prove to Your Excellency the veracity of this outrageous and incredible atrocity, I will not fail to mention that a famous merchant named Josef Bagoeff, who was passing in front of the consulate at that time, saw the consul with a revolver in his hands. Deciding that the consul was in a fit of insanity, he hurriedly jumped out the window to hide under the counter. As a result of such a sudden attack, it is quite possible that there are dire consequences for my health, to which sufficient damage has been inflicted. Rifki Effendi is solely responsible for all these consequences. The eyewitnesses to this horrifying scene which greatly discredits the honor of our consulate in Batumi are a military engineer, Captain Protopopoff, his wife and her sister, Mrs Aphkar, as well as a neighbor of Mahmud Effendi (a merchant from Arhari (Lazistan) and a tailor by trade) – my own sister Lucy. Such is the matter in all the details, which I entrust to Your Excellency with the hope for a benevolent and magnanimous consideration of this by Your Excellency, as well as for the triumph of justice. Please accept, Your Excellency, my assurances of deep gratitude with which I have the honor to remain Your Excellency's lowest and most humble servant. Signed: Mélixan Mighirdich Tantadjian".

Characteristically, the story continued in the form of an accusation of violence brought against the already injured dragoman, accompanied by a medical examination in the spirit of the times: (translated from French by the author): "I, the undersigned doctor of medicine and a surgeon in private practice in Batumi, by order of Mr Rifki Bey, Consul General of Turkey in Batumi, was called to the consulate to visit and discover traces of violence committed against the consul by his subordinate. I certify that I found fingerprints and scratches on the left side of the neck, as well as a small bruise with slight swelling on the same side, caused by the compression of the cells of the adjacent gland tissue under the lower jaw. Several scratches were also noticed on the opposite side of the back of the neck, behind the right ear. The following conclusion was made on the basis of these symptoms. Violence perpetrated against the consul has been confirmed. These symptoms can in no way be caused by any disease. In view of the foregoing, the submitted written opinion may be presented where appropriate. Made in Batumi on June 24, 1882. Dr Adpemian. Signature and oval stamp".

The author of the present study considered it necessary to cite an authentic document in its entirety, since it eloquently testifies to the real powerless position of a dragoman who is completely dependent on the higher authorities. It follows from the document that for about two years, the dragoman combined his work with the duties of the head of the office without payment and at the same time incurred the unjust wrath of his higher authorities – the Consul General.

An extremely disapproving characterization is given to the actions and personality of a dragoman of Greek origin by the Consul General of Turkey in Batumi. The document is presented in its entirety so that the reader can draw own conclusions about the role of the dragoman service in the work of the consulate.

"Imperial Consulate of Turkey. Confidentially. Poti, October 27, 1902. Mr Minister, I consider it my duty to convey confidentially to Your Excellency the information that I have just received from a very reliable source regarding the controversial process on a significant land plot between the Military Governor of Kutaisi and a shipping company... Here I dare, Mr Minister, to draw Your Excellency's serious attention to another matter which, in view of its importance, is the main subject of this report. Your Excellency is well aware that the current dragoman of the Consulate General of Batumi, Konstantin Schoumouloff, who is currently entrusted with supervising the course of the trial, is a Russian citizen. Another name of this individual is Costi Schoumoul Oglou, originally from the Surméné vilayet of Trebizond. He was previously employed by the late Nedjil Bey. He was then recalled from service at the Consulate General by the late Beha Bey and Soubhi Bey due to numerous abuses and outrageous actions directed against the Consulate General. For them, he

was reprimanded, according to my information, at one time in the department of Your Excellency, as well as in front of the Imperial Embassy.

Soubhi Bey, the former Consul General in Batumi, who knows Costi Schoumouloff better than anyone, will be able to confirm the veracity of what I said. To top it off, this subject is in the position of criminal change of citizenship without the prior permission of the Imperial Government and is prohibited from returning to the Ottoman Empire. It is regrettable that Vice-Consul Saadi Bey, being aware of the archives of the consulate and well aware of the bad reputation of Costi Schoumouloff, simultaneously acted against the instructions of the Ministry, the dispatch of Your Excellency's department, categorically prescribing the admission to the service of a dragoman exclusively of Ottoman citizenship, as is usually customary. Moreover, Mr Minister, I consider it my duty to warn Saadi Bey about the great responsibility he has assumed. After all, he leaves in the service of the Consulate General a subject with such a turbulent past in relation to the Consulate General – a person in whom no one has the slightest confidence. Nevertheless, he limited himself to saying in a conversation with me that he was forced to act in this way for lack of a better one, that is, unable to find a more suitable dragoman.

As a natural result of what I have the honor to present to Your Excellency, Schoumoul Oglou is on the eve of a new retirement. As his past shows, he will certainly try to please the Russian authorities on which he depends as a Russian subject rather than us. Hence the fact which deserves great regret it is that such an important matter, from the material point of view for both Mahsoussé and for the Imperial Government, because this case is of a land plot costing no less than 15,000 rubles, is in the hands of such person as Costi Schoumoul Oglou, guilty of a criminal change of citizenship without the special permission of His Majesty, the Most Serene and Almighty Ruler, not to mention other abuses of the above-named subject".

It is clear from the presented document that the fate of an extremely important matter for the Turkish consulate was in the hands of the subordinate dragoman. The successful outcome of the litigation gave great concern due to the extreme distrust of the actions of the dragoman who plays an important role in the trial. There indeed was room for doubt, for Ottoman subjects who knowingly defended the interests of the Sublime Porte were mostly hired as dragomans. The fact of the change of citizenship without the highest permission of the Sultan was added to the previous negligence in official matters. It is safe to assume that the 'above named subject' the dragoman Konstantin Sh. held this position, traditional for Orthodox Greeks, being a forced Turkish citizen. Trebizond, where he came from, was the focus of the Greek population – the so-called Pontic Greeks who were oppressed by the Ottoman Empire, and later underwent the ethnic cleansing of the easternmost of the ancient Greek colonies.

Yet, as the researchers rightly point out, despite their difficult service, the dragomans managed to make a significant contribution to the intensive cultural exchange between the Ottomans and Europe. For example, Ahmed Vefik Pasha translated into Turkish-Ottoman language from French 16 plays of the classic playwright Jean-Baptiste Moliere, and Jean-Baptiste Olderman, the colleague of André Du Ryer, the chief translator of the French ambassador to the Ottoman Empire e, wrote a textbook of the Turkish language. The painstaking work of dragomans who compiled dictionaries and guidebooks and who translated books allowed Europeans to expand their ideas about the East, Islam and Muslims. Although the works often pursued purely utilitarian goals, they undoubtedly represent an integral part of the universal human cultural heritage as a result of the interaction between Europe and the Muslim world (Mukhamedzhanov, <https://islam-today.ru/blogi/ildar-muhamedzanov/mezdu-vostokom-i-zapadom-dragomany-v-osmanskoj-imperii/>).

Given the great role of the so-called Eastern question (uneasy relations between Russia, the Ottoman Empire and Persia who claimed the Transcaucasia, the Caspian coast and the Eastern Black Sea coast) in foreign policy in the second half of the XVIII-XIX centuries, it is not difficult to understand the extreme interest of states in professional dragomans. In the Middle East, Transcaucasia and Central Asia, the geopolitical interests of great empires collided: Great Britain

became one of the main rivals of Russia and in the 19th century concluded treaties with Persia and Afghanistan.

The services of the dragoman as a translator and clerk were required not only by the embassies of the Ottoman Empire. The area of their activity extended to the empire of the Great Army of the Steppe, later in the office work of the Commonwealth, the Army of the Lower *Zaporizhia* and the Russian Empire. Notably, the dragomans serving in the Russian consulates did more than just translation of documents or small work for the consulate. Frequently, in addition to fulfilling their duties at the consulate, they replaced absent members of the consulate and were also entrusted with activities related to travelling throughout the consular district. Dragomans of Russian consulates, according to V.V. Galiev, not only carried out daily diplomatic work in the consulates themselves or during trips to the consulate district – they also had to carry out very unusual assignments, participating in the resolution of major social conflicts in the Russian borderlands (Galiev 2010, <http://jurnal.org/articles/2010/hist14.html>).

Therefore, the main questions arise – where did the future employees of diplomatic missions receive such a versatile training? Indeed, the course of affairs and the implementation of the plans of consulates and embassies sometimes depended on their activities, so why was there such an urgent need for their professional regular formation? What was the situation with their training in the largest Eastern European power? In the Asian department, diplomatic relations with the Ottoman Empire and the countries of the East were formed. The department itself, consisting of 38 employees, included 24 translators (Andreev, 1999: <https://mybook.ru/author/aleksandr-radevich-andreev/>). This means that more than half of the Asian department was made up of dragomans. In 1914, the Middle East, Central Asian and Far Eastern branches were under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The first dealt with the states of the Balkan Peninsula, Egypt and Abyssinia, the second with Persia, the countries of Central Asia and India. The third, the Far East branch, was engaged in tracking the situation in Japan, China, Siam and the Pacific coast. At the listed departments, a special subdivision of oriental languages prepared dragomans for diplomatic missions in the Eastern states (Ocherk ... 1902, 332-333). Oriental languages were studied both by people from noble families and by commoners whose rare languages gave them the opportunity to get into government service and thereby increase their social status. The conditions of diplomatic and consular service in the East were much more difficult and more dangerous than in European countries due to unaccustomed climatic conditions, alien culture and permanently difficult political situation. The local population at times showed latent hostility at best, so not every young man would demonstrate willingness to serve in such unfavorable conditions throughout his career.

In 1823, at the Asian Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a fundamentally new educational institution was opened – the Educational Department of Oriental Languages which in 1835 received the status of a university. In scientific oriental studies and the training of diplomats, an outstanding role was played by the Lazarev Institute (1848–1917) and its Educational Department of the Asian Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in which by 1859 a system for the training of professional translators (dragomans) had already been formed and effectively operated. Dragomans here were called intermediary translators of the Eastern languages, primarily Turkish, Persian and Arabic. Graduates were also obliged to know the customs and mores of the countries of the East; the latter was necessary for the effective implementation of negotiations and upholding the interests of the state. The dragomans were not just ranked among the diplomatic corps – there was a saying that "a good dragoman is worth a whole embassy". Depending on the place of service, the Russians, like the Turkish dragomans, belonged to one or another class or category of employees. For example, in the alphabetical index to the Code of Laws of the Russian Empire, one can find the following information from the Table of Ranks of Dragomans. During missions, dragomans were called I, II, III and IV, from VI to IX grades. At the Consulates, dragomans were the I and II of IX and X classes, which meant they were of a lower rank. In the alphabetical index of the named Code of Laws, dragomans of the Eastern languages of the IX class who were subordinate to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (under the Novorossiysk and Bessarabian

Governor-Generals) belonged to the category of the V-IX classes and were listed under the Asian Department (Code of Laws.. 1844, 34). Notably, the zone of responsibility of the Asian Department included not only the countries of the East but also Greece which was under the yoke of the Ottoman Empire for four centuries. The department had an Educational Department of Oriental Languages and a School of Translators. Researchers point out the fact that during the reorganization of the work of Ministries and departments, Nicholas I retained all translators and dragomans in the Asian Department, along with most of the posts of officials at special assignments (Lebedeva, https://mgimo.ru/science/diss/Lebedeva_diss.pdf: 247). These actions highlight the role of dragomans in carrying out missions overseas.

The Educational Department of the Asian Department taught only six subjects: five foreign languages (Arabic, Persian, Turkish, Modern Greek and French) and Muslim law. Knowledge of the French language was absolutely essential, since the teaching of oriental languages was initially conducted using French teaching aids. However, the first set of students studied only Arabic, Persian and Turkish. Teaching French as an academic subject was introduced in 1825; the number of studied languages increased due to the addition of the New Greek language, the Tatar language since the 1880s and the English language in 1907. All the students of the department were obliged to study five foreign languages, while Islamic traditions forbade devout Muslims to study European languages.

The staff is also interesting – the Arabic literature curriculum presupposed the following material:

- Grammar and reading of light texts (I year, Assistant Professor A.E. Schmidt, I-II semesters);
- Reading historical excerpts and anecdotes (II-III years, Ordinary Professor N.A. Mednikov, III-IV semesters);
- Reading the history of III Abu Hanifah Dinaweri (Ordinary Professor N.A. Mednikov, V-VI semesters);
- Reading and explaining Arabic poems, (IV course, Honored Ordinary Professor Baron V.R. Rosen, VII-VIII semesters);
- Reading and explaining selected chapters from the Quran;
- Reading and explaining grammatical texts;
- History of Arabic Literature;
- Practical lessons in the Arabic language (Lecturer A.F. Hashab) (Scientific Oriental Studies ... 2014, 275).

In addition to traditional teaching materials, students translated diplomatic documents and their copies provided by the St. Petersburg Main Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The selection committee was usually very representative – in 1833, the commission included such well-known statesmen as V.P. Kochubei, Count A.F. Orlov, M.M. Speransky, Count A.Kh. Benckendorff, Admiral I.F. Kruzenshtern and others. According to archival data, from 1823 to 1915, 246 people entered the educational institution, and 211 students successfully graduated from the Educational Department (ibid: 193, 278). Such was the formation of dragomans at the state level in the Russian Empire.

The characteristic features of the dragoman's activities can be illustrated by the example of one of the graduates of the Educational Department of Oriental Languages at the Asian Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, V.O. von Klemm, who represented the interests of the Russian Empire at the court of the Emir of Bukhara. The political agent did not interfere in the internal affairs of the state; his task was to monitor and report to the 'center'. Naturally, the dragoman had to conduct a conversation with informants, translate everything into Russian and systematize the information. In Eastern countries, where observance of etiquette and knowledge of the country's traditions is the right key to successful negotiations, or simply to a trusting relationship, such person

needed to possess deep theoretical knowledge. V.O. von Klemm, having an excellent oriental education, enriched it with knowledge of real life in the emirate.

One of his duties as a dragoman was (informally, in personal conversations) to bring to the attention of the emir some instructions and advice while pretending that nothing was known in the capital about the complaints of the Bukharans. Once in a personal conversation with the emir, von Klemm expressed concern about abuses in the khanate, saying such news "will inevitably shake the confidence of His Majesty" should He know about it. To the question of the emir on whose opinion this was, personal or the government's, and whether Klemm conveyed this opinion to the government, Vasily Oskarovich replied that "out of friendship" he had not yet reported anything to anyone and hoped that the emir would take measures and "spare him this sad necessity". The emir promised to gather the Amlakdars, reprimand them and henceforth watch out for abuses and punish the guilty. In a report about this meeting, Klemm added on his own that the emir knew about the abuses, but did not think that agents who could report the situation to the Emperor knew about it (Zagorodnikova 2020, 115-125).

The Archive of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Empire contains a large array of reports concerning the activities of the dragoman and on what kind of information he had to collect and provide in his reports. First of all, each report was divided into: 1) information about the emir of Bukhara; 2) events in the capital of the principality; 3) events throughout the principality. The first section contained all sorts of information about the health and mood of the emir, about his trips around the principality, about his family, the emir's appearances in public, and the awarding of robes and money were necessarily listed. The second section contained information about the movement of officials, prices at the bazaar, the arrival of caravans, and rumors circulating in the capital. The third section dealt with the movement of troops, uprisings and their suppression, crops and failures, as well as abuses by local officials. All this mass of information came from various sources: familiar traders from the bazaar; local government officials who often 'shared' news (*idem*), etc.

CONCLUSIONS

This summarizes the range of activities of Turkish dragomans who not only served at the crossroads of the cultures of the East and West and who knew their cultural code. They made a feasible contribution to the interference of two civilizations, possessing background cultural knowledge and solid academic training. The involvement of dragomans in political intricacies and commercial and legal issues was an integral part of the routine activities of diplomatic missions on both sides. As shown by the translated archival materials introduced into scientific circulation, a certain professional risk could be represented by their ethnicity and the position of states, independent of dragomans but in some cases endangering not only the professional duties but also the personal well-being.

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