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Rumiyülibare

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RUMIYÜLIBARE: OTTOMAN VISUALS AND GREEK CONTENT IN THE ORDERS OF THE KAPUDAN PASHA

Elias Kolovos

Abstract: The article is based on the study of a series of bilingual (in Ottoman Turkish and Greek) documents from the Archive of the Monastery of Saint John Theologos on the island of Patmos. Supposedly translations from Ottoman Turkish into Greek made by the dragoman of the Imperial Fleet, these documents, in reality, were the result of a complicated process that involved a more creative procedure than rendering an order in another language. Moreover, the Ottoman script was used in these documents to identify and legitimise the imperial order in the eyes of their subjects; for "translating" the Ottoman imperial orders, however, the Greek language was used in order to convey the message to the local communities. This article argues that the study of these texts reflects a cultural dialogue and interaction between languages and scripts of the Ottoman elite and of their Greek subjects that has been forgotten since the advent of nationalism.

The aim of this preliminary article is to present and discuss a special category of written documents from the Archive of the Monastery of Saint John Theologos on the island of Patmos. The author of this article has been assigned the task of cataloguing these documents, in continuation of the work conducted in two earlier publications on the Ottoman documents in the Patmos archive, by Nicolas Vatin, Gilles Veinstein and Elizabeth Zachariadou[1] and Michael Ursinus.[2] As I started working on the assigned dossiers 81–85 of the Ottoman part of the archive, it became clear that they contained a special category of documents, dating from the eighteenth and the early nineteenth century. These were supposedly translations in Greek of the orders of the kapudan pashas, the Ottoman grand admirals, by the dragomans of the Imperial Fleet. However,

* The author would like to express his gratitude to the hegumen and the monks of the monastery, as well as to its librarian, Ioannis Mellianos, for his invaluable help during the research. He is also grateful to his colleagues Nicolas Vatin and Michael Ursinus for their comments on this article.

[1] Nicolas Vatin, Gilles Veinstein and Elizabeth Zachariadou, *Catalogue du Fonds Ottoman des Archives du Monastère de Saint-Jean à Patmos: Les vingt-deux premiers dossiers* (Athens: NHRF, 2011).

[2] Michael Ursinus, *Catalogue of the Ottoman Holdings of St John's Monastery in Patmos*, part 2, *Dossiers 21–38* (Paris: Peeters, 2019).

when I started reading the documents in question, a much more complex reality emerged. The content in Greek of these documents, which are usually referred to in the Ottoman Turkish text as "*Rümiyülibare buyuruldu*", that is, orders in Greek, was in some cases much longer and richer in information than the text in Ottoman Turkish. Moreover, the Greek text was placed in the centre part of the page, below an impressive, usually calligraphic, inscription of the name and title of the kapudan pasha in Greek, presumably drawn by the Phanariot dragomans of the fleet, whereas the Ottoman Turkish text and the big round seal of the kapudan pasha were placed diagonally on the upper part, as if they were an addition at a later stage or a ratification of the Greek content of the text (see figs. 1–3). Actually, as we will show below, in some but not all cases, the Greek text bears a date earlier than the date in the text in Ottoman Turkish.

Vasilis Sfyroeras, who studied these kind of documents in a pioneering study published in 1965, remarked: "We can argue beyond any doubt that the islands [of the Aegean] were administered by the dragoman of the fleet, as evident from hundreds of documents. The kapudan pasha was not aware of the content of those documents. He was the governor of the islands in name only."[3] Well, there is certainly a point in that remark, which, however, was aimed at enforcing the conventional historiographical image of a "pure" Greek nation administrating itself without any interaction with the "alien" Ottomans.[4] Quite the opposite, these documents, and especially as regards their predominantly Greek content and hybrid bilingual character, show the constant interaction concerning the administration of the Greek islands between the Ottoman admiralty[5] and the Greek communities, via the institution of the dragoman of the fleet, which was occupied, as we know, by Phanariot families.[6]

[3] Vasilis Sfyroeras, *Οι δραγομάνοι του στόλου: Ο θεσμός και οι φορείς* (Athens: s.n., 1965), 61.

[4] For a revision of this historiographical image concerning Ottoman rule in Greece, see my recent *Στους καιρούς των σουλτάνων: Οι κοινωνίες της ελληνικής χερσονήσου υπό οθωμανική κυριαρχία (14ος–19ος αιώνας)* (Athens: Asini, 2023).

[5] For the kapudan pasha, see İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı devletinin merkez ve bahriye teşkilâtı* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1948), 414–25; İdris Bostan, *Osmanlı bahriye teşkilatı: XVII. yüzyılda Tersâne-i Âmire* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1992); Elizabeth Zachariadou, ed., *The Kapudan Pasha: His Office and His Domain* (Rethymno: Crete University Press, 2002). Cf. as well, for the Aegean islands, Nicolas Vatin and Gilles Veinstein, eds., *Insularités ottomanes* (Paris: Maisonneuve & Larose, 2004).

[6] For the dragoman of the sea or the fleet (*derya tercümanı* or *donanma tercümanı*) in the kapudan pasha's administration, see Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Devletinin Merkez ve Bahriye Teşkilâtı*, 417.

According to Natalie Rothman,

> the institution of the dragoman (Italian *dragomanno*; Greek *dragoumanos*; French *drogman/truchement*; Spanish *trujamán/dragomán*), an official state or diplomatic interpreter, developed in the context of premodern Mediterranean statecraft from antiquity onward. A staple of diplomatic practice, dragomans were crucial actors in many of the political and commercial arenas of the region, where *their role far exceeded rendering a speaker's message in another language*. Dragomans' social background, as well as the institutional parameters of their work, evolved over the centuries *thanks to their sustained interactions across linguistic and juridical boundaries.*[7]

In the case of the dragomans of the Ottoman fleet (Ottoman Turkish *donanma-ı hümayun tercümanı*, Greek *δραγομάνος* or Ottoman Turkish *tercüman bey* [*τερτζημάν βεγής*]), they were especially "Phanariots". Instead of describing the Phanariots as simple Greek nationals, modern scholarship has started to study them in their Ottoman context. According to Christine Philliou,

> Within our own terminology we might refer to Phanariots as transnational, but this was an age before nation-states. At the top echelons of the Phanariot network, as in the official bureaucracy of the Orthodox Church, Greek was the dominant language, and yet it would be inaccurate at best to call them Greek "nationals". Christians of several linguistic groups were brought into the Phanariot fold, including those raised as speakers of Bulgarian, Albanian, Romanian, and Armenian. In order to be translators, proficiency was required in European languages (usually Italian and French) in addition to the *elsine-i selase*, or the Three Languages – Arabic, Persian, and Turkish – that constituted Ottoman Turkish.[8]

It was exactly these people who rose to the highest echelons of the Ottoman administration that become indispensable to crucial operations of Ottoman governance, especially in the strategic provincial governance of the Danubian Principalities and the Aegean Sea.

The documents under study here were issued, as usually shown with a big inscription at the bottom of the page in Greek, by the divan (council) of the Imperial Arsenal (*Βασιλικός ταρσανάς*, which corresponds to *Tersane-i Âmire* in Ottoman Turkish), or, in the event the fleet was on the high seas, by the divan

[7] E. Natalie Rothman, *The Dragoman Renaissance: Diplomatic Interpreters and the Routes of Orientalism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2021), 4 (emphasis in the last two sentences mine).

[8] Christine Philliou, "Communities on the Verge: Unraveling the Phanariot Ascendancy in Ottoman Governance," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 51, no. 1 (2009): 156–57.

of the Imperial Fleet (*Βασιλικός δονανμάς*, which corresponds to *Donanma-yı Hümayun* in Ottoman Turkish). The contents of these documents reflect the deliberations in the meetings of the council, which, when the case concerned the Greek islands, included the dragoman of the fleet.[9] It was during these deliberations that decisions were made, and they were later written down, in many cases first in Greek, by the dragoman of the fleet, later to be ratified with a shorter text in Ottoman Turkish by the scribe of the kapudan pasha. On the other hand, there are cases when the Ottoman Turkish text has an earlier date, and the Greek text follows; in some of these cases, however, the Ottoman Turkish content is minimal, and the addressees are referred to the Greek content. Let us provide some examples to illustrate the case, starting with a more conventional example of a document with a date in Ottoman Turkish which precedes the date in Greek.

During his first term in the High Admiralty (between 12 April 1805 until November 1806),[10] Hacı Mehmed Paşa issued an order (*Rûmiyü'l-'ibâre buyuruldumuz*/*ἡγεμονικόν ὁρισμόν*), ratified with his big round seal (stating *'abduhu Elhâc Mehmed 24 M(uharrem) 1220* [His slave, Hacı Mehmed Paşa, 12 April 1805) and with a calligraphic inscription of his name and title in Greek: *Χατζῆ Μεχμέτ βαϱᾶς καὶ ἐλέῳ θεοῦ βεζήρης καὶ καβουδᾶν βαϱᾶς* (Hacı Mehmed Paşa, by the grace of God vizier and kapudan pasha). The dragoman of the fleet at the time, who had presumably designed the inscription, was Panagiotis Mourouzis (December 1803–7 December 1806).[11] The order was issued by the council of the Imperial Arsenal (*ἐξεδόθη ἀπὸ τοῦ διβανίου τοῦ βασιλικοῦ τερσανέ*).

The order was addressed to the notables and the representatives of the island of Patmos (*Batınoz adası kocabaşıları*/*προεστῶτες καὶ ἐπίτροποι τῆς νήσου Πάτμου*), asking them to send as soon as possible ten experienced sailors (*mellâhları fen-i deryâda mâhir ve sâdık ve kârgüzâr olarak*) from their island to serve in the Imperial Fleet, which was in need of a total of 800 sailors, according to an imperial edict. The Ottoman Turkish text, written diagonally on the upper part of the document, bears the date *fî 19 (Şevva)l 1220* (29 December 1805).

The Greek text, in the other hand, which occupies the central part of the document, was dated *ασκ Ἰαννουαρίου η* (8 January 1220 [1806]). The order was presumably written first in Ottoman Turkish and later in Greek. The Greek text, being a general adaptation of the same meaning, has some more practical

[9] For the possible members in this council, see the list of the officers of the Admiralty in Bostan, *Osmanlı Bahriye Teşkilatı*, 31–47.

[10] For his biographical information, see Mehmed Süreyya, *Sicill-i Osmani* (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı, 1996), 1053 (Mehmed Paşa [Hacı]). He originated in Smyrna. His second term was between 26 May 1809 and January 1810.

[11] For his biographical information, see Sfyroeras, *Οι δραγομάνοι του στόλου*, 148–53.

information (emphasised in italics below) for the addressees: The notables should send *during February* ten experienced, and good sailors, originating from Patmos (*ναύτας ἐμπείρους καὶ πρακτικοὺς γνησίους Πατμίους*) to serve in the Imperial Fleet (*διὰ νὰ παρουσιασθοῦν εἰς τὸ δονάνισμα τοῦ βασιλικοῦ ἀκαταμαχήτου στόλου*), which was in need of a total of 800 sailors according to an imperial edict.[12] *They should be sent in the company of the kapudan pasha's emissary Ahmed Kavas.*

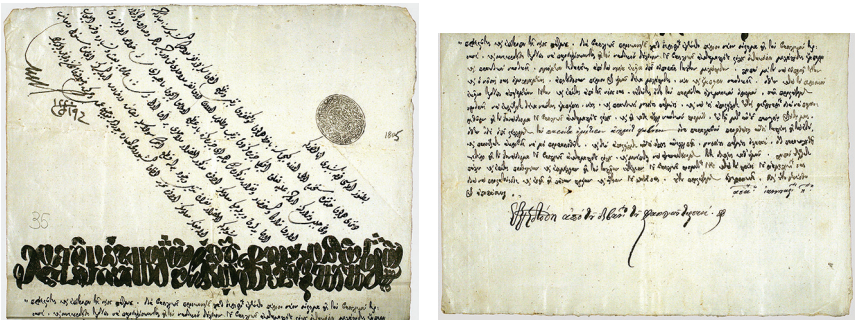

Figure 1. Left: Upper part of the document (Ottoman Turkish text). Right: Lower part of the document (Greek text). Monastery of Saint John, Patmos, Library, Archive, folder no. 81, doc. no. 5.

We will continue with another, slightly earlier, example of a document which has the same date in both the Ottoman Turkish and the Greek texts (*fî 7 (Ramaza) n sene (1)214* [22 January 1800]/*1800 Ἰαν(ουαρίου) 22* [22 January 1800]). The order (identified in Ottoman Turkish as *Rûmiyü'l-'ibâre buyuruldumuz*) was issued by the council of the Imperial Arsenal of Grand Admiral Gazi Hüseyin Paşa (2 February 1792–26 November 1803):[13] the document is ratified with his big round seal, which includes his name and the Hijri year 1209. Above the Greek text, there is a calligraphic inscription with his name and title: *Γαζὴ Χουσεΐν βαϱᾶς ἐλέῳ θεοῦ βεζήρης και καβουδᾶν Βαϱᾶς* [Gazi Hüseyin Paşa, by the grace of God vizier and kapudan pasha]. The dragoman of the fleet at that time was Ioannis Nikolaou Karatzas (2 March 1799–December 1800).

[12] Cf. the similar order in Greek sent to the island of Hydra on 8 January 1806, asking for 110 sailors, in Antonios Lignos, *Αρχείον της Κοινότητος Ύδρας 1778–1832*, vol. 2, *1803–1806* (Piraeus: Typ. Sfairas, 1921), 335.

[13] For the biographical info of Gazi Hüseyin Paşa, see Mehmed Süreyya, *Sicill-i Osmani*, 724 (Küçük Hüseyin Paşa). He is credited with the reorganisation of the Ottoman fleet during his long term in office.

In the Ottoman Turkish text, the notables of Patmos are just ordered to act according to the order of the grand admiral in Greek (*Rûmîyü'l-'ibâre buyuruldumuz mûcebince*) and send immediately 20 sailors (*mellâh*), through the grand admiral's emissaries Kara Mustafa Çavuş and Kiryako Reis, for the needs of the Imperial Fleet. The Greek text contains much more – both essential and practical – information for the addressees: in summary, the notables of the island of Patmos should send as soon as possible, through the grand admiral's emissaries Kara Mustafa Çavuş and Kiryako Reis, a team of 20 young and competent sailors (*ναύτας*) with their leader from their island to serve in the Imperial Fleet, which will sail to Egypt in the spring to fight against the French (*διὰ νὰ δονατισθῇ ὁ βασιλικός ἀκαταμάχητος δονανμάς ὁποῦ ἔχει νὰ ἐκπλεύσει εἰς Αἴγυπτον τὴν πρώτην ἄνοιξιν κατὰ τῶν θεομάχων Φραντζέζων*). They will be paid 46 guruş each in total for their services. Half of the total sum (365 guruş) is being sent with Kara Mustafa Çavuş, so that every sailor will now receive 23 guruş as an advance.[14]

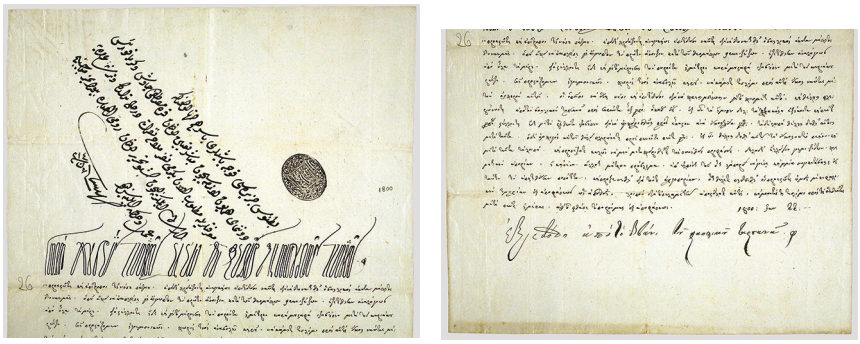

Figure 2. Left: Upper part of the document (Ottoman Turkish text); Right: Lower part of the document (Greek text). Monastery of Saint John, Patmos, Library, Archive, folder no. 81, doc. no. 7.

A final example we will present in this article is an order (*Rûmiyü'l-'ibâre buyuruldumuz*/*τόν παρόντα ἡμέτερον ὑψηλόν καί ἡγεμονικόν ὁρισμόν*) of the aforementioned Grand Admiral Gazi Hüseyin Paşa, bearing the same big round seal and a similar calligraphic inscription, this time designed during the term of Ioannis Alex. Kallimachis (December 1800–December 1803) as dragoman of the fleet: *Γαζή Χουσεΐν παῤῥᾶς ἐλέῳ θεοῦ βεζήρης καί καπουδάν*

[14] Cf. a similar order in Greek sent to the island of Hydra, asking for 250 sailors, which must be paid 86 guruş in total each, in Antonios Lignos, *Αρχείον της Κοινότητος Ύδρας 1778–1832*, vol. 1, *1778–1802* (Piraeus: Typ. Sfairas, 1921), 216 (order dated 29 December 1799).

παṣᾶς [Gazi Hüseyin Paşa, by the grace of God vizier and kapudan pasha]. The order was issued by the council of the Imperial Arsenal (*ἐξεδόθη ἀπὸ τὸ ὑψηλὸν Διβάνι τοῦ βασιλικοῦ τερσανέ*) on *fī 25 Z(ilk)a(de) sene (1)217* (7 March 1803) and on *αωγ: Μαρτίου: ε΄* (5 March 1803). The order, presumably, was written first in Greek on 5 March, and two days later (7 March) was ratified by the kapudan pasha.

In this last case, with a very short text in Ottoman Turkish of just three lines, the notables of Patmos are just instructed to act according to the following order of the kapudan pasha in Greek. This is simply a ratification of the order, which is given in a much longer Greek text: according to this text, in summary, the islands were ordered to send sailors (*μελλάχιδες* < [OttTur] *mellah*/μαρινέροι < [It] *marinero*) to work for the departure of the Imperial Fleet. However, since the kapudan pasha knew that the islands could not provide these men, he found sailors in Constantinople. The islands should pay for their wages (*οὐλουφέδες*/*ʿulûfe*); Patmos should pay 1,500 guruş (the amount of money was filled in later) to the Admiralty treasury.

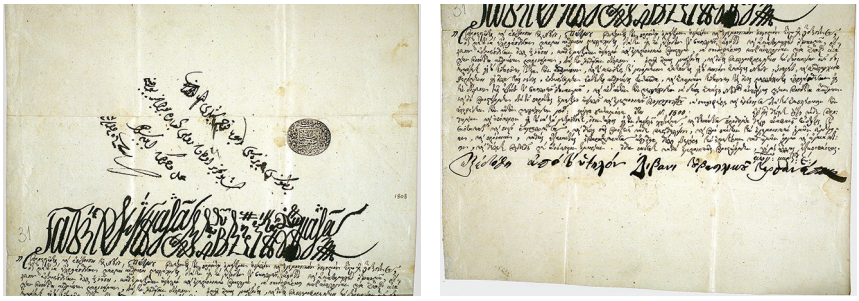

Figure 3. Left: Upper part of the document (Ottoman Turkish text); Right: Lower part of the document (Greek text). Monastery of Saint John, Patmos, Library, Archive, folder no. 81, doc. no. 10.

In all the cases above, the Ottoman grand admirals requested Greek islands, in this case Patmos, to send specialised sailors to serve in the Imperial Fleet or, like in the last case, where the islands could not deliver these men, to provide money to pay for the wages of sailors that they had recruited in Istanbul. Manning the Imperial Fleet, especially during the turbulent years after the French invasion of Egypt in 1798,[15] was an important issue for the Ottoman imperial and naval

[15] For a general context of these years, see Virginia H. Aksan, *Ottoman Wars, 1700–1870: An Empire Besieged* ([London]: Routledge 2007. For the Greek crews in the Ottoman fleet,

administration, and the Greek islands, with their maritime tradition, were an essential source of manpower. In August 1821, when the Greek islands rebelled against the empire, the Ottomans were obliged to make a call to arms to Arab sailors from Acre, Jaffa, Sidon and elsewhere; in reply, Abdullah Pasha of Sidon explained that the local Arab caique sailors or just peasants (*fellah*) were not in a position to serve in the Imperial Fleet as the Greeks had done.[16]

Broadening the conventional "Greek" approach to the dragomans of the fleet as "[Greek] protectors and saviours of the [Greek] subjects",[17] I suggest that the study of these Ottoman/Greek imperial aristocrats and their texts, in their Ottoman context, reflects a cultural dialogue and interaction between languages and scripts of the Ottoman elite and of their Greek subjects that has been forgotten since the advent of nationalism. Ottoman Turkish was more or less an incomprehensible language for the common people, both Turkish and Greek speakers (some, however, from the elites, maybe some of the monks as well, could read Ottoman). In the case of our documents, I argue that the Ottoman Turkish part had in most cases a strictly "visual" role, in order to provide legitimation for the orders of the kapudan pasha. In the case of the Karamanlis, the Greek script was used in order to identify the Turkish speakers with their confessional identity (a bottom-up approach).[18] In the case of the islands of the Archipelago, the Ottoman script was used in order to identify and legitimise the Ottoman imperial order in the eyes of their subjects (a top-down

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see Vassilis Sfyroeras, *Τα ελληνικά πληρώματα του τουρκικού στόλου* (Athens: s.n., 1968). See, also, Elizabeth Zachariadou, "Monks and Sailors under the Ottoman Sultans," *Oriente Moderno* 20 (2001): 139–47.

[16] See Elias Kolovos, Şükrü Ilıcak and Mohammed Shariat-Panahi, *Η οργή του σουλτάνου: Αυτόγραφα διατάγματα του Μαχμούτ Β΄ το 1821* (Athens: Hellenic Open University Press, 2021), 273–75.

[17] Sfyroeras, *Οι δραγομάνοι του στόλου*, 4.

[18] The case of the Karamanlidika/Karamanlıca has been studied in the broader context of the so-called "metagrammatisme" by Xavier Luffin, "Le phénomène de metagrammatisme dans le monde musulman: approche d'une étude comparative," *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 54 (2001): 339–60. According to Luffin, "métagrammatisme" (transliteration) is a "néologisme dont nous donnerons la définition suivante: adoption d'un alphabet allogène par les locuteurs d'une langue déjà pourvue d'un alphabet communément accepté … Les cultures ayant recours au métagrammatisme semblent donc se trouver dans un contexte politique et culturel assez similaire, et ont des lors recours à un même reflexe culturel, même si chaque situation n'est pas identique." See also Evangelia Balta and Mehmet Ölmez, eds., *Between Religion and Language: Turkish-Speaking Christians, Jews and Greek-Speaking Muslims and Catholics in the Ottoman Empire* (Istanbul: Eren, 2011).

approach). In order to "translate" the Ottoman imperial orders, however, Greek was used in order to convey the message.[19]

The forthcoming publication by the Institute of Historical Research of the National Hellenic Research Foundation of the catalogue of the documents from the Archive of the Monastery of Saint John on Patmos, of which a small sample is presented above, and their full publication will certainly advance research concerning the complex history of the Aegean islands under Ottoman rule.[20]

Institute of Historical Research / NHRF

[19] Nicolas Vatin, "L'emploi du grec comme langue diplomatique par les Ottomans (fin du XVe–début XVIe siècle)," in *Istanbul et les langues orientales*, ed. Frédéric Hitzel (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1997), 41–47, has concluded that in the fifteenth century Greek was used as a reference language by the Ottomans.

[20] See, more general, Elias Kolovos, *Across the Aegean: Islands, Monasteries and Rural Societies in the Ottoman Greek Lands* (Istanbul: Isis Press, 2018), introduction; for Patmos in particular, based on the Greek and Ottoman archives, see Efthimios Maheras' recent thesis, "Το νοτιοανατολικό Αιγαίο στο οθωμανικό πλαίσιο: δίκτυα και νησιωτισμοί με άξονα το αρχείο της μονής Αγίου Ιωάννη Θεολόγου Πάτμου" (PhD diss., University of Crete, 2024).