

Turkish Transcription Texts

The focus of this project is a so-called Karmanlidic codex in Turkish with Greek letters from the end of the 18th century. The codex is handwritten and belongs to a collection of books from Sumela Monastery close to Trabzon, but is now in the National Library in Ankara.

About the project

In Turcology, the vague designation "transcription texts" is used to characterize texts written in other alphabets than the Arabic one during the period when Arabic script was the predominant one (i.e. up to 1928).

There were different reasons why some texts were written with Greek, Latin, Armenian, and Hebrew script; some were textbooks written for foreigners, others were intelligence reports, but most were religious texts written by and for non-Muslim communities. This kind of texts are especially interesting from a linguistic point of view because they show the actual pronunciation of Turkish at the time when they were written, much better than texts in Arabic script do. Some even reflect dialect variation.

The focus of this project is on a so-called Karmanlidic codex in Greek letters from the end of the 18th century. It is hand-written and comes originally from the Sumela Monastery close to Trabzon, but is now in the National Library in Ankara. The designation Karamanli is used for Turkish-speaking Greek Orthodox groups in Anatolia and Istanbul. By the end of the 18th century most phonological features had reached the state of development found in Standard Turkish today, but this particular manuscript is especially interesting from a syntactical point of view, as constructions are frequently used which are very marginal in Standard Turkish, but which may reflect a certain vernacular in the 18th century, perhaps also influence from Greek. The contents is mostly religious (Christian) popular texts, which also represent a tradition which has disappeared today, as Christians having Turkish as their mother tongue were sent to Greece during the population exchange between the two countries, which started in 1923.

Objectives

The project aims at preparing an edition of parts of the codex and to make a linguistic and cultural study of the text by 2018.

The project is informally connected to an initiative taken by Dr. Matthias Kappler and Dr. Evangelia Balta at The University of Cyprus, Nicosia, which resulted in a symposium in 2008 and a large documentation project from 2010 onwards.

Cf. further Bernt Brendemoen: An Eighteenth-Century Karamanlidika Codex from Soumela Monastery n Trabzon. In: Balta, Evangeia & Kappler, Matthias (red.): Cries and Whispers in Karamanoidika Books. (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz 2010)