

Principles and practice of editing Ottoman texts in historical perspective

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In 1729 the first Turkish book was printed in Istanbul in Ibrahim Müteferrika's newly established printing press. It was a Turkish translation of an Arabic dictionary. Soon other books followed. Most of them were historical works that before had been distributed in hand-written copies only. The replacement of the hand-written by the printed copy was a slow process that took about a century and a half to reach the stage where books were written to be printed. This must have to do with the relatively high cost of printing in comparison with the hand-written book. For poetry and light literature the breakthrough came with a technical innovation introduced in Turkey in the late 1830s that lowered the costs of the printed copy drastically: the lithograph which replaces typesetting by handwriting. Only in the second half of the 19th century private enterprise and the growing demand of the reading public was able to spark a wave of publications of the older classical works that could until then only be consulted in the *waqf* libraries or purchased as expensive manuscripts of rare 18th-century printed copies. These 19th-century publications were on the same level as those of Ibrahim Müteferrika: they were not editions in any sense only perhaps in the sense that some passages were cut out by the censor or, for some reason, by the publisher himself. The publisher would procure a hand-written copy of the work to the typesetter, possibly with certain passages crossed out or marked as not to be included. The rest was the work of the typesetter. How was the hand-written copy selected? What happened to it afterward, was it destroyed or did it survive the procedure? Although these printed publications still fill our libraries and are certainly more often used than the manuscript copies in not always accessible libraries, no one has as yet to my knowledge been able to identify the manuscripts on which these late 19th and early 20th century publications were based. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that these printings have served several generations of scholars as extremely useful tools and furthermore, of course, have also been widely read by the general Ottoman public and by the older generations of republican Turks. With the revolutionary change of the Turkish writing system we come upon a new situation. Before entering into its discussion we have to cast a

brief glance on the development of the technique of text edition in Europe.

From the start I want to exclude the edition of documents — documents are basically (of course, there are exceptions) individual items and their edition is based on a single copy, therefore they do not share all the problems of the literary texts (when dealing with works of the older periods historical texts are but a subgroup of literary texts). The history of text edition, like the history of the theater and of other institutions of sacral origin, starts with a deep bow: it requires an attitude of reverence vis-a-vis the text the scholar deals with. The long series of the *Acta Sanctorum* of the Bollandists is a good example or the editions of the classical works of Roman and Greek antiquity or even the *Acta Germaniae Historica* of a glorified Medieval past. The two dominant principles evolved from these experiences were:

A. Reproduce everything that can be found in the sources so that the user of the printed edition never needs consult the manuscripts; and

B. Reconstruct the original version as best you can by combining all the sources and selecting always the best reading. The combination of these two principles necessitates a dichotomy: on the one hand the reconstructed *édition critique* of the current text, on the other hand an often very extensive apparatus of added notes to satisfy the first requirement. These notes, usually arranged at the foot of the page, fall into two categories: the first, usually referred to by letters, are textual notes reproducing the various readings found in the manuscripts (including also the manuscripts whose readings are conform with the lemma). The second category, usually referred to by numbers, offers other notes, grammatical or lexicographical remarks, etc. If the text edition was accompanied by a translation, remarks on the content of the narration are arranged in footnotes below the translation. This was, and still is, essentially the system. To this must be added an introduction on author and work, a description of extant manuscripts, a stemma of the manuscripts, and other necessary information, as e.g., previous work, the history of the edition itself, remarks on the language of the work or (if it is a work of historiographic nature) on its importance for our

knowledge of a certain period. There are often photographic specimens of typical pages and indexes of personal and geographical names.

As ambitions and achievements of Orientalist scholarship began to match the standards of Classical and Medieval editions, the principles and techniques of European scholarship were applied to the edition of Oriental texts. As an example I can refer to the editions of the *Bibliotheca Islamica* series. They show that a rigorous application of the same standards is possible also when the classical works of the Islamic past are published. Most of these works are in Arabic, some in Persian, but since my topic is only Ottoman Turkish, the relevant question for me will be the application of the system to Ottoman Turkish sources.

As an example of a critical edition of a larger coherent Ottoman-Turkish text let me point to Friedrich Giese's *Altosmanische anonyme Chroniken*, Part 1 (Text und Variantenverzeichnis), Breslau 1922, although this book appeared under extremely unfavorable conditions soon after the end of World War I at a time of unrest and economic catastrophe. Giese had to bear the costs of publication himself. Its important introduction had to appear as a separate article in the newly founded *Mitteilungen zur osmanischen Geschichte* (vol. 1, issue 1, 1921-22, pp. 49-75) and the translation of the text had to wait until 1925 to be published as part one of vol. 17 of the *Abhandlungen für die Kunde des Morgenlandes*, a series put out by the Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschaft. Giese's text edition itself, consisting of the text plus an index of names, together 174 pp., and a 421-page 'Variantenverzeichnis', is all written by hand by himself and then lithographically reproduced. It is therefore not as elegant as, e.g., Rudolf Dvorák's edition of Bāqī's *Dīwān* which was printed at Brill's in 1908. But it is a monument to the courage and perseverance of a scholar who recognized the necessity of applying the highest standards to the edition of Ottoman texts. He fared better in his later edition of 'Āṣiqpāṣā's Chronicle (1929) with its very satisfactory and typographically pleasing lay-out.

In the meantime, in the 1920s, also in Turkey the need of scholarly documented editions of the old texts was felt. Notes appear at the foot of the page in text editions, as e.g. in volumes 7 and 8 of Evliyâ Çelebî's *Seyâhatnâme* (printed in 1928), a far cry from the appearance of the earlier volumes. The two strands of development, the popular — or rather 'national' — editions and the rigorous scholarly editions, seemed to be on the point of fusing, but the actual development did not take such a smooth course — in 1927 Turkey decided to give up the Arabic script and to adopt a new writing system based on the Latin alphabet. To make this drastic change effective, the public use of the Arabic script was outlawed. This radical measure had a number of effects also on the edition of Ottoman texts.

In Turkey itself it first slowed down the work on editing and, as time passed, made it into a concern of specialists. Specialists for this job have to be educated and trained, and today, after more than fifty years, we can say that the work done by them has become far more competent than it was before. It has become a specialists' work for specialists. The driving force in this development were individuals and institutions, Adnan Adıvar's *İslâm ansiklopedisi* for instance, the *Tarih Kurumu*, the *Dil Kurumu* with its historical dictionary (the *Tarama sözlüğü*), and so on. However, in addition to the *a priori* existing difficulties, new problems had arisen from the fact that the new writing system was not simply a transliteration of the old system into a new set of symbols; it was, on the contrary, based on the living language itself. When applying it to texts of an older period it had therefore become imperative to know much more of the history and the metamorphoses of the Ottoman language than had been needed at the time when the Ottoman writing system was still used. This is a requirement beyond the classical principle of critical edition which was that the edition should contain everything that was in the sources. Now things are required which are definitely not in the sources. Today we have a relatively clear picture of Old Ottoman; but as the study and periodization of Middle Ottoman, the linguistic stage in which the majority of yet unpublished materials are, is only in the very beginning, every scholar who now publishes such texts is constantly in danger of making mistakes.

European scholars were confronted with the same problem, if they felt it necessary or convenient to add a romanized transliteration to the edition of the text in its original graphy. Such an addition was important especially when the text was of an archaic character and posed questions in the domain of Ottoman linguistic history. Already the earlier editions of texts in Old Ottoman, as e.g. in Hermann Vambéry's *Alt-osmanische Sprachstudien* (Leiden 1901), had given texts in both Arabic and romanized form, some — as, e.g. Ananiasz Zajaczkowski in his *Studia nad językiem staro-osmańskim* (Cracow, 1934 and 1937) — omitting the reproduction of the Arabic text, but reflecting all its details in the exact Latin transliteration. The system of transliteration was essentially based on the system used for transliterating Arabic (secondarily also Persian), with certain modifications needed for Ottoman. It was convenient to use a uniform system for the three classical languages of Islam, however there were differences pertaining to the different language areas of the scholars using it. In modifying the common system the addition of symbols for the Turkish vowels posed less of a problem than the change of specific Arabic consonants to the form they were actually pronounced, as e.g. the *dād* to *z* or the *thā'* to *s*. I don't know when exactly Western scholars started to transcribe the *dād* with the *z* with the dot on top in Persian and Ottoman

words. In much more recent years also Western scholars began to abandon their traditional system and instead to adopt the Modern Turkish alphabet as the base, often with modifications (sometimes taken from the system applied by the Turkish edition of the *Encyclopedia of Islam*). Maybe I should here say something on my own system: it is also based on the writing system today used in Turkey (in my opinion, a nation has the right to see its past literature through the medium of its present writing system and thus to be able to read it with ease) but I introduce symbols for the phonemes not existing today, i.e. for Middle Ottoman the phonemes *ñ*, *q* and *x*. The Arabic letter *ā* in Turkish words with back vowels I regard as undifferentiated as to sonorization (similar to the *kāf* that can be read as *g* or as *k*) and I transcribe it arbitrarily, or rather in accordance with the modern pronunciation of the word, by *d* or *t* with dot underneath. The specific Arabic sound symbols I regard as graphic variants and indicate them by the usual diacritical dots or lines under or over the letter.

One additional burden, but at the same time an important measuring-stick of quality, that the non-Turkish editor of an Ottoman text has to face is the task of translation. For Turkish-speaking readers a faithful reproduction of the text may seem enough, but only an annotated translation can insure the correct understanding of it by the reader and will, by the way, also reveal whether the editor himself really understood what he was reproducing. In this respect the non-Turkish editor is more vulnerable to criticism than the Turkish editor.

Let us now return to the situation as it was thirty or forty years ago. It was at that time, already during and certainly after World War II, that type-setting of Arabic texts in Europe became prohibitive. The *Bibliotheca Islamica* was able to continue its editions by having the type-setting done in Istanbul — until the last compositor who still knew how to do it died — and in Beirut. The question arose how to produce a critical edition without type-setting. It was, of course, much cheaper to produce a text photomechanically. This had been done also before whenever there was only a single manuscript in existence, as e.g. when I.H. Mordtmann published the *Süheyl u Nevbahār* manuscript of the Preussische Staatsbibliothek (Hannover 1925). Since then the technique had been markedly perfectionated as well as the costs lowered. Technical possibilities and economic constraints combined and suggested new solutions. Several solutions were tried.

A. The text could be reproduced photomechanically from the best or the most legible manuscript, not unlike what before had been done with unique manuscripts. This procedure meant abandoning the principles of critical edition, but in some cases such a substitute might be regarded as good enough, and anyway better than leaving the text unpublished because of lack of funds. A nice early example of such

a procedure is the 1935 Istanbul edition of Piri Re'is's *Kitāb-i bahriye*. Many more examples could be given. When Hans Joachim Kissling published Uşâqîzâde's *Zeyl-i Şaqā'iq* in this way (Wiesbaden 1965) he excused himself in a footnote (p. XV): 'Wir betonen ausdrücklich, dass wir uns vollständig darüber im Klaren sind, dass Facsimile-Ausgaben, besonders wenn mehrere Handschriften eines Werkes existieren, keineswegs die ideale Form einer Ausgabe sind. Indes hätten für eine textkritische Ausgabe unseres *Zeyl üz-Zeyl* sich unüberwindliche Schwierigkeiten äusserer Art erhoben. Andererseits durfte ein so wichtiges Quellenwerk nicht länger der wissenschaftlichen Öffentlichkeit vorenthalten werden ...'

B. A rather unusual way of making up for the loss of the critical apparatus was the method, sometimes advantageous, to reproduce not one but several versions of a text, leaving the task of comparing them to the reader. This was done by Taeschner in his edition of Neshri's *Cihānnumâ* (Leipzig 1951 and 1955). Even if all relevant manuscripts could have been reproduced in this way, this would not have been an acceptable substitute of a critical edition.

C. Another approach is to collect the notes, for which there is no place at the foot of the photographic tables, in a special section at the end of the work, as already Giese had done in his edition of the Anonymus. This solution has been adopted, e.g., by Meredith-Owens in his edition of the *Tezkere* of 'Aşik Çelebi (London 1971) or by Petra Kappert in her edition of Koca Nişancı's Chronicle (Wiesbaden 1981). It necessitates a lot of leafing back and forth. To avoid such irritating and often unnecessary commotion, the always resourceful Sir Gerard Clauson in his photomechanical reproduction of the *Sanglax* (London, 1960) introduced little marks along the edges of the pages which alert the reader or user to look into the section of notes for further information.

D. The most commonly adopted way (both in Turkey and in the Western countries) was to separate the critical apparatus from the reproduction of the text in its original graphy and to shift it to the romanized translation which in this manner became the focal point of the edition. Under these circumstances, the photomechanical reproduction of one of the manuscripts served as a palaeographic sample without other functional importance. This method could also be applied when the manuscript was a unique one and no other textual footnotes but corrections of scribal errors were required, as, e.g. in Barbara Flemming's edition of Fakhri's *Khusrev u Shirin* (Wiesbaden 1974).

E. From here the next step was to content oneself with the transliteration, connected with the critical apparatus, and to reduce the reproduction of one or several manuscripts to a few sample pages, or, finally, to omit them altogether. If we had at least gained something esthetically and palaeographically by abandoning the denaturalized printed Arabic characters and

shifting to the photograph, we now lose all contact with the manuscript but we are left with an artificial but good, reliable substitute. Furthermore, such an edition is accessible to everyone who reads the Latin script, whereas texts in Arabic graphy become increasingly enigmatic to younger readers, both in Turkey and even among our students.

I have described five methods that have been tried out in order to adjust the format of text edition to the technical innovations and the economic limitations of our time. I can think of a sixth method. When I was working on the edition of the Turkish *Ferec ba'de ş-*

şidde, around the year 1950, I figured out a complicated system that would combine the photomechanical reproduction of a text with a true critical edition. It had the critical apparatus at the foot of the page and showed the accepted and rejected *variae lectiones* by a system of brackets of various shapes. How ingenious it was you can infer from the fact that it was never used. I cannot even show you a sketch of how it was conceived. Later I gave up the idea and followed the general trend that I have described under D. I had become less interested in the format of editions than in the contents and the poetic structure of the texts.

