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Armeno-Qïpčaq*

Two important books relating to Armeno-Qïpčaq have recently appeared, Docent Edward Tryjarski's *Dictionnaire Armeno-Kiptchak* (Vol. I, published by the Zakład Orientalistyki), and Dr. Edmond Schütz's *An Armeno-Kipchak Chronicle on the Polish-Turkish Wars in 1620—21* (published as Vol. XI of the *Bibliotheca Orientalis Hungarica*). Both of them are works of great erudition, and between them they give an admirable idea of the nature of the Armeno-Qïpčaq language in the first quarter of the 17th century. By this time the language had been deeply penetrated by Slavonic elements, mainly Polish and Ukrainian, which affected both the vocabulary and the syntax, but the main bulk of the vocabulary and the whole of the accidence (declension and conjugation) are still those of a Turkish, and specifically Qïpčaq language.

So far as I know no specimens of the language have survived from an appreciably earlier date, and this dictionary and text represent a very late stage in its history, not very long before its final disappearance. It is very much to be hoped that earlier and purer specimens of the language may yet be found, perhaps versions of the Christian scriptures or other religious works.

The first question which arises when this language is studied is who exactly, in racial terms, read and wrote it? We know of course that there were a good many Armenians in the Crimea in the 12th and 13th centuries, when the main bulk of the population there was Qïpčaq, and that there was a small community of Armenians still speaking Armenian in Poland and the Ukraine in the 17th century. It is therefore perhaps not surprising that it is commonly believed that the speakers of Armeno-Qïpčaq also were racially Armenians who had lost their own language and adopted the language of the Qïpčaqs among whom they had lived for some centuries. Indeed the late Professor Jean Denny, in the first paragraph of the introduction to his

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book *L'arméno-coman et les «Éphémérides» de Kamieniec* (1604—1613) (Vol. IV of Ural-Altaische Bibliothek, 1957), put the question, "When and how did the Armenians of Podolia come to speak, before they were polonized, a Turkish language different from that of Turkey, although their ancestors and contemporaries had had all the time in the world to learn the latter from their Seljukid and Ottoman neighbours?"

Nevertheless there seem to be good grounds for supposing that the current belief is false. I suggest, with all the deference due to a great scholar and a good friend, that Prof. D e n y asked the wrong question, and that the question which he should have asked is "why did a community of people who were predominantly Qipčaq by race write their language in the Armenian alphabet and come to be taken for Armenians?"

The hypothesis underlying this question may, at first sight, seem to be revolutionary and iconoclastic, but there are, I suggest, good philological reasons for putting it forward; it fits the facts better than the hypothesis that they were racially Armenians. The reasons for putting it forward fall under three heads:

(1) Armeno-Qipčaq is, as Prof. D e n y recognised when he preferred the name "Armeno-Coman", very closely related to the older (13th century) language represented in the *Codex Cumanicus*. It is also basically the same language, apart from a few obvious differences, as the language spoken by the Karaim communities of Troki, Lutsk, Halicz and the Crimea, which is written in Hebrew characters, because the Old Testament is the sacred book of the Karaim and the basis of their religion. This language was brilliantly described by that great Polish Turcologist the late Professor Tadeusz K o w a l s k i in his book, *Karaimische Texte im Dialekt von Troki* (Prace Komisji Orientalistycznej Polskiej Akademii Umiejętności, Nr. 11, 1929). The main difference between the two languages lies in the fact that the technical religious terms in Karaim are Hebrew loan words, while the technical religious terms in Armeno-Qipčaq are Armenian loan words. Everyone is surely agreed that the Karaim who speak this language are predominantly, if not exclusively Turks, that is probably Qipčaq perhaps with a substratum of Khazar, and not racially Jews who have lost whatever language they spoke before they adopted Qipčaq. It does seem rather perverse to take exactly the opposite view about the racial character of the speakers of Armeno-Qipčaq.

(2) We know a great deal about mixed languages and the kind of things which happen when the speakers of one language come under the strong influence or domination of the speakers of another language. Prof. Gerhard D o e r f e r's book, *Türkische Lehnwörter im Tadschikischen* (Abhandlungen für die Kunde des Morgenlandes, XXXVII, 3, 1967), is an admirable study of certain dialects of Tajik, the Iranian language spoken by the inhabitants of Tajikistan, which are saturated with Turkish (Uzbek) elements. In it he shows that although so many of the peripheral parts of the vocabulary are Uzbek, the accidence and the basic vocabulary are still Iranian and represent a language closely akin to modern Persian, although the Tajik and Persian peoples have for centuries been separated from one another by peoples

speaking other languages. Similarly although so much of the peripheral vocabulary of 17th century Armeno-Qĭpčaq is Slavonic (Polish and Ukrainian) the basic vocabulary and accidence are still Qipčaq. The Armenian part of the vocabulary is much smaller than the Slavonic and like it, is confined to the peripheral part of the vocabulary. If the speakers of the language had been Armenians who had been almost completely Qipčaqized, the Armenian elements which survived would have been in the basic and not the peripheral part of the vocabulary.

(3) Although the first, or Christian, names of the Armeno-Qĭpčaq community in Poland were almost exclusively Armenian, or, more precisely, Greek in an Armenian dress, the surnames, or perhaps it would be better to say patronymics, are in a Qipčaq and not an Armenian form. For example, the name of the compiler of the Chronicle of Kamieniec was "Aksent Der Krikor oylu Der Hovannes avakerec tor-nu", "Auxentius son of the Reverend Gregory, grandson of archpriest the Reverend John". Surely if he had been an Armenian by race he would have clung to his national terminology and called himself "Aksent Krikorian".

The case for supposing that the speakers of Armeno-Qĭpčaq were entirely or predominantly Qipčaq by race, therefore, seems to be overwhelming. But we still have to face the question, how it came about that they were generally regarded as Armenians.

I suggest that the reason is to be found in their religion. In the middle ages, apart from a few minor sects, there were in Europe and Western Asia two great branches of the Christian faith, the Catholics, whose religious language was Latin and who owed their allegiance to the Pope in Rome, and are still, at any rate in England, called "Roman Catholics", although only a small proportion of them are racially Roman, or even Italian, and the Orthodox, whose religious language was Greek, and who owed their allegiance to one or other of the Orthodox Patriarchs and are still called Greek Orthodox although many of them are not racially Greeks.

The Armenians were neither Catholic nor Orthodox, and were regarded by both as heretics. They were Gregorians, or Monophysites, and their religious language was Armenian. The fact that it was Armenian did not necessarily imply that they were all Armenians by race, any more than the use of Latin or Greek implied that all those who used them as a religious language were Romans or Greeks. But there was this great difference between the Monophysites and the two major branches of the Christian Church; they were only a small sect and the great majority of them really were racially Armenians. It is, therefore, not surprising that the rest of the Christian world thought that if a man was a Monophysite he must be an Armenian and called him by that name.

I am not by training a historian, least of all a mediaeval historian, and I am not therefore in a position to say how and when some Qipčaq were converted to Monophysitism, but I can suggest by analogy how it is likely to have happened.

There does seem to be a constant pattern of missionary enterprise by all religions and at all periods; it therefore seems reasonable to suppose that events followed much the same course in the Crimea and the Ukraine in the Middle Ages as they did in,

say, Tropical Africa in the 19th and 20th centuries where the history of missionary enterprise is well documented.

The first step has always been to select a pagan population and decide to convert it. This has involved sending missionaries to the selected area to preach the faith and persuade the unbelievers to go through some ceremony which would identify them firmly with their new faith. In the case of Christians this was baptism. If the missionaries had been Moslems or Jews it would have been circumcision.

The next step has always been to translate religious works, initially perhaps prayers, hymns or sermons, later perhaps selected books of the Bible or the whole Bible, into the language of the converts so that they could pray in their own language and study the elements of their new faith.

When, as has usually been the case, the converts were illiterate and spoke a language which had never been reduced to writing, the practice has invariably been for the missionaries to write it in the script which they used to write their own language, with or without minor modifications.

We are fortunate in having in the second part of the *Codex Cumanicus* an example of the kind of texts which missionaries translated into the language of their converts. It was compiled by German Franciscans in much the same area and perhaps at much the same time, as that at which Armenian missionaries started to convert Qipčaq to Monophysitism.

The Karaim religious literature is a great deal more voluminous and must represent the work of several generations of Karaim missionaries translating Karaim religious books into Qipčaq or indeed composing them in that language.

If we accept the hypothesis that when some Armenians reached the Crimea from Asia Minor flying from the oppression of their Orthodox or Moslem neighbours, found themselves among a population of pagan Qipčaq and decided to convert them to their faith, it is difficult to see what they could have done except what the Franciscans did, that is translate religious works into the language of their converts and write them down in their own Armenian alphabet. Indeed it was probably the only alphabet that they knew.

Another characteristic of missionary enterprise is that, although in the early days of the mission the missionaries, who are normally priests, have always been aliens, members of the same race as the religious superiors who have sent them into the mission field, it has always been their practice to endeavour to train some of their converts to become religious teachers and priests themselves. But since it has always been the Christian practice to give converts on Baptism Christian names taken from the Bible or from earlier dignitaries of the church, that is the same kind of Christian names that the missionaries themselves have, it is impossible, unless contemporary records of the history of the mission have been preserved, to find out from their names when native converts themselves became teachers or priests. In the Christian communities of tropical Africa there are thousands of Africans called by Biblical names like James and John and very few called by African personal names, even if they have inherited or assumed African surnames. There is therefore nothing odd

about Christian Qĭpčaq having Armenian Christian names like Aksent, Krikor and Hovannes; indeed it would have been much odder if they had retained purely Qĭpčaq names after being baptized.

Moreover even when the clergy of a missionary church have become overwhelmingly or completely native, this does not mean that their ties to the mother church are loosened; they still owe spiritual allegiance to the higher authorities of that church, the Archbishop, Patriarch or whatever his title may be, and, as a general rule are consecrated as priests by those authorities. So the fact that the Armeno-Qĭpčaq-speaking community of Kamieniec still retained contacts with higher Armenian ecclesiastical authorities as far away perhaps as Etchmiatzin does not prove that they were racially Armenians, it merely proves that they were religiously Monophysites.

At the same time it must be admitted that there was a fundamental difference between Armenian missionary enterprise in the Crimea and European missionary enterprise in tropical Africa. European missionaries go to Africa to work in the mission field, but do not, in so doing, break their ties with their native country. Almost all return home after a shorter or longer period of work in Africa. But the Armenians who went to the Crimea did not go there to convert the heathen; they went there to escape from their enemies and there was no question of their later returning home.

Thus it would be going too far to suggest that the Armeno-Qĭpčaq speaking community of Kamieniec and others like it were racially pure Qĭpčaq, they may well have contained some members who were wholly or partly Armenians by race, but if the major component in the community had been Armenian it would have spoken Armenian, perhaps with a massive Qĭpčaq component in the language. Since this is not the case, it is only fair to assume that the Armenian members were in a minority and probably a small one.

This can be proved by a careful analysis of the language as it is presented in Docent T r y j a r s k i's dictionary. Although it contains many heterogeneous foreign elements the basic vocabulary, and much of the peripheral elements in it are pure Turkish.

In this Turkish part of the vocabulary there are several layers. The earliest, and largest, layer contains words which were already in use 1,200 years ago and are preserved in the surviving remains of the Tŭrkŭ language of the 8th and 9th century (sometimes rather inaccurately called Orkhon Turkish) and in Uyyur of which we have specimens as early as the 8th and as late as the 14th century.

The next layer contains words which are known to have been in use 900 years ago, the period for which our principal authorities are K ā š γ a r ī's *Dīwān Luyāti'l-Turk* and the *Kutadγu: Bilig*. Some of these words may well be older, since our specimens of the earlier stage of the language are rather scanty. It may well be fortuitous that these words do not occur in them. It is well known that K ā š γ a r ī was familiar with several Turkish dialects spoken in his time. The main bulk of his vocabulary contains words in the dialect which we call Xākānī, but he also lists a certain number of words which he describes as specifically Oγuz, one or two as

specifically Qïpčaq, and one or two as both Oγuz and Qïpčaq. He makes it clear that these two languages were much closer to one another than either was to Xākānī. It is interesting to find that a much higher proportion of these Oγuz and Qïpčaq words have survived in Armeno-Qïpčaq than of the Xākānī words.

The third layer contains words which are first noted in the language which we call Xwarazmian, that is broadly speaking the Turkish language used in the dominions of the Golden Horde, as represented in the *Xusrāw wa Šīrīn* of Q u ṭ b, the *Muḥabbat-nāma* of X w ā r a z m ī and the *Nahju'l-Farādīs*, the language on which late Prof. Z a j a c z k o w s k i was our leading authority.

Finally there is a small layer of words which are almost certainly pure Turkish but for which Armeno-Qïpčaq of the 17th century seems to be the earliest authority.

In addition to the four Turkish layers in the language there are at least four foreign components.

The smallest, but in some ways the most significant contains Mongolian words which cannot have entered the language before the 13th century and are unlikely to have entered it later. They have no particular character and all fall in the peripheral part of the vocabulary. They include one bird name, *bedene* 'a quail', and some Mongolian administrative terms, the verb *iasa-* 'to arrange' and its derivatives. Nearly all of them also occur in the *Codex Cumanicus* or Čayataj or both.

The next smallest component contains the Armenian words. The largest group of these, perhaps a quarter of the whole, consists of religious technical terms, 'priest, monk, altar canopy' and the like. The next largest group contains words relating to reading and writing, 'paper, note-book, index' and the like, precisely the kind of terms for which an illiterate people would have had no native words. The rest are a very miscellaneous collection in the peripheral part of the vocabulary.

It is well known that there are in Armenian a great many Iranian loan words. In one or two cases Docent T r y j a r s k i has suggested in his etymological notes that such words reached Armeno-Qïpčaq from Armenian but it seems to me much more probable that they reached Qïpčaq from Persian.

There is a large component of Persian words in the vocabulary, and also some Arabic words; but it is significant that all these Arabic words had become loan words in Persian before they reached Qïpčaq, and it seems reasonable to regard all these words as Persian loan words.

Finally there is a very large component of Slavonic words, mainly Polish or Ukrainian, which are clearly the latest elements in the language.

The general character of the Armeno-Qïpčaq language, as it emerges from this analysis, is therefore clear. If we eliminate from it the Armenian and Slavonic elements, what is left is a typical colloquial Qïpčaq language as it must have been spoken in the 13th and 14th centuries, with the Persian loan words which it had inherited from the literary Xwarazmian language and a sprinkling of Mongolian loan words which entered the language when the Qïpčaqs were within the dominions of the Golden Horde which were still nominally part of the Mongolian Empire, although its rulers were themselves racially Turks.

Perhaps I might add one remark on the reasons for which the Armeno-Qipčaq dictionaries of Armenian which form the basis of Docent Tryjarski's dictionary were compiled. On page 19 of his Introduction Docent Tryjarski suggests that the principal reason was a practical one, to facilitate communications between the Monophysite communities in Poland and the Ukraine who spoke Armenian and those who spoke Armeno-Qipčaq. This may well have been one of the reasons, but it can hardly have been the most important. The dictionaries are very voluminous and, as Docent Tryjarski points out, contain a number of Classical Armenian words which were no longer in colloquial use. I suggest rather that the principal reason for their compilation was to help Monophysite Qipčaq to learn their religious, Armenian, language and to read the scriptures and other religious works in that language. If a Christian missionary in Africa compiles a dictionary of English in some native dialect, it is not in order to help his converts to discuss everyday affairs with him; it is to help them to read religious books in English.