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Notes on the Urum (Greek-Tatar) Language

Urum is one of the least known Turkic languages. It is spoken by Greeks living in a few villages in the Donetsk *oblast'* of the Ukrainian SSR as well as in some places in the Caucasus, mainly in Georgia. The number of Urum speakers is unknown since only some part of Greeks living in the Soviet Union speak this language, the other part speaking the so-called *ruméka*, or Crimean Greek, which is closely related to, but still distinct from Modern Greek¹. Both groups originally inhabited the Crimean Peninsula whence they moved to their new habitat in 1778. According to a 1970 census there were 337 thousand Greeks in the USSR of whom only 39,3% claimed their mother-tongue Greek, without specifying whether they meant Greek proper (*ruméka*) or Greek-Tatar (*Urum*).

Very little has been known about the Urum language. The first publication dealing with it² was based not on the spoken language but on texts written in Greek letters. Later some material was published in a paper by S. I. M a r k o v³. In 1963 the Leningrad Turcologist S. N. M u r a t o v published 4 short texts with Russian translation and a few observations on Urum phonetics⁴. Finally, in 1970 a dissertation on the Trialeti (Georgia) dialect of Urum was written by a native speaker of this dialect⁵. Unfortunately, it has remained unpublished and is practically unknown

¹ See A. A. B e l e t s k i ĭ, *Grečeskie dialekt̄y yugo-vostoka Ukrain̄y i problema ikh yaz̄yka i pismennosti* [Greek dialects of the south-east Ukraine and the question of their language and writing], "Balkanskaya Filologiya", Leningrad University Press 1970.

² O. B l a u, *Griechisch-türkische Sprachproben aus Mariupoler Handschriften*, ZDMG XXVIII, 1874, pp. 562–575.

³ S. I. M a r k o v, *Zametki o byte grekov g. Mariupol'a* [Notes on the way of life of Mariupol Greeks], in: *Mariupol' i jego okrestnosti*.

⁴ S. N. M u r a t o v, *Material̄y po govoram t'urkoyazyčn̄ykh grekov (urumov) Doneckoĭ oblasti USRR* [Materials on the dialects of Turkophone Greeks-Urums of the Donetsk oblast', Ukraine], "Kratkie soobščeniya Instituta narodov Azii (KSINA)" 72, Moscow 1963, pp. 178–191.

⁵ I. A. K o r e l o v, *Yaz̄yk trialetsikh urumov i jego specifičeskie osobennosti*

and unavailable outside the Soviet Union⁶.

Our material was collected in 1969 in the village of Ulakly, Novoselkovsky region, Donetsk *oblast'*. The material consists of a number of texts, a lexicon of about 1000 words and a few verbal and nominal paradigms. Thus our description is by no means exhaustive and is restricted to the dialect of Ulakly, though features of other dialects are sometimes drawn for comparison.

Phonetics

As in many other Turkic languages, in Urum there is an 8 vowel system:

i ü ĭ u
e ö a o

a is long in some words, usually before a sonorant: *xāmur* 'dough', *ālma* 'apple', *ġārĭp* 'poor'. It is also lengthened when the following *ġ* disappears, especially in infinitives: *basmaġa* ~ *basmā* 'to press'.

e, *ö*, *ü* are very narrow, close vowels [e, ø, y].

The high vowels *i*, *ĭ*, *ü*, *u* are usually very short and may disappear altogether: *pčax* 'knife' (Turkish *bıçak*), *stemed'e* 'to want' (T. *istemek*), *xvat* ~ *xūvat* 'force, strength' (T. *kuvvet* < Ar. *quwwat*), *tfek* ~ *tüfek* 'rifle' (T. *tüfek*). In some villages *üy* is heard where this dialect has *ev*: *süymed'e* = *sevméd'e* 'to love' (cf. T. *sevmek* ~ Kazakh, Kirghiz *süy-*).

Vowel harmony is sometimes violated: *kördum* 'I saw', *turkü* ~ *t'ürkü* 'song'.
Consonants:

| | | | | | |
|----------|--------------|-----------|--------------|--------------|----------|
| <i>p</i> | <i>t</i> | <i>t'</i> | [<i>c</i>] | <i>č</i> | <i>k</i> |
| <i>b</i> | <i>d</i> | <i>d'</i> | | <i>j</i> | <i>g</i> |
| <i>f</i> | <i>s</i> | | | <i>š</i> | <i>x</i> |
| <i>v</i> | <i>z</i> | | | [<i>ž</i>] | <i>ġ</i> |
| <i>m</i> | <i>n</i> | <i>n'</i> | | | <i>ŋ</i> |
| | <i>l</i> | <i>l</i> | | | |
| | <i>r</i> | <i>r'</i> | | | |
| | [<i>w</i>] | | | <i>y</i> | |

ž and *c* are restricted to Russian and Ukrainian loan-words only, the former appearing in the word *roġožka* '(bast) mat', whereas the latter was found to be in free variation with *s* in *c/seberka* 'bucket' and *c/siġar* 'cigarette'. Besides, *c* (alternating

[The language of Trialeti Urums and its specific features]. Ph. Candidate dissertation, Azerbaijan State University, Baku 1970.

⁶ Although spoken in an easily accessible area by an intelligent and eagerly cooperating population, Urum has been strangely neglected by linguists: even in such publications as Baskakov's *Vvedenie v izučenie t'urkskikh yazыkov* [Introduction to the study of Turkic languages], Moscow 1962 and in *Yazyki narodov SSSR* [Languages of the peoples of the USSR], vol. 2— *Turkic languages*, Urum is but mentioned in a few words.

with *č*) appears in the (originally Russian) suffix in *daskalc/ča* 'school-mistress', fem. of *daskáli* 'teacher'⁷.

w seems to be a (very rare) allophone of postvocalic *v*: *suw* ~ *suw* 'water', *paravik* ~ *parawik* 'mill' (from the Russian *parovik* 'steam-engine').

The relations between *k*, *x* and *t'* (and their voiced counterparts *g*, *ġ* and *d'*) can be roughly presented as follows: *x*, *ġ* are found in words with back vowels; *k*, *g* appear with front rounded *ö*, *ü*, and strongly palatalized *t'*, *d'* (in some dialects *k'* and *g'*) are found before *i*, *e*: *xîrx* 'forty', *boğaz* 'throat', *köz* 'eye', *gögürjen* 'pigeon' (T. güvercin), *t'im* 'who', *ölmed'e* 'to die'.

Still, there are quite a number of exceptions to this rule: *karga* 'crow', *kişi* 'man', *guvalan* 'sunflower', *tut'an* 'shop', (T. dükkân), *t'ağat* 'paper, book' (T. kâğıt).

The *l-l* distribution corresponds in general with the frontness-backness of the word. Nevertheless, here too we find a number of exceptions. First of all, there is a minor rule stating that after *y* only *l* can appear: *boylar* 'rivers', *yazaylar* 'they write', *baylamağa* 'to tie a knot'. Besides, there are a few words in which *l* appears with back vowels, like the cited above *guvalan*, *daskalca*, or *skola* 'school'.

n' was found in the word *dun'a* 'world' (T. dünya < Ar. dunyā).

r' was heard in *aṅgur'a* 'cucumber', phonetically very distinct from *ry* as in *baryam* 'holiday'.

ġ is rather weak and tends to disappear intervocalically: *almağa* ~ *almā* 'to take'.

Unlike Modern Turkish, the Urum language has preserved the velar nasal *ŋ*: *aṅlamağa* 'to understand'—T. anlamak, but cf. Turkmen aňlamak; *deñiz* 'sea'—T. deniz, but Turkmen deňiz.

In some dialects of Urum words like *var*, *vermed'e* have *v* in the initial position. In the dialect of Ulakly these words begin with *b*: *bar* 'there is', *bermed'e* 'to give', *v* occurring word-initially only in the interjection *vay* 'oh' and in the noun *vaxt* 'time' (from Arabic *waqt*).

n is omitted in *isan* 'person' (< Ar. insān), *sora* ~ *sonra* 'after'; *l* disappears in forms of the conditional mood of the verb *olmağa* 'to be' used as an auxiliary: *sen maña yazğan-osa-edîñ men t'eliredim* 'if you had written to me I would have come'.

The 1st sg. pronoun was pronounced by some informants with *b*: *ben*, *baña*, by in others with *m*: *men*, *maña*.

Comparison with Turkish reveals some cases of irregular correspondences, e.g. *n* for *l*: *nezet* 'taste' (T. lezzet of Ar. origin), *l* for *n* in *zildan* 'jail' (T. zindan, from Pers.); Turkish gece 'night' appears as *yeje* in our dialect, but as regular *t'eje* in other dialects. Cf. also *toxuz* 'nine', but *doxsan* 'ninety'.

Although the voiced consonants *b*, *d*, *j* are quite common in word-initial position, *g* and *ġ* are rare and *d'* is impossible in this dialect: *t'erek* 'necessary', *t'elmed'e* 'to come'⁸.

⁷ Interestingly enough, this Greek word (Mod. Greek δάσκαλος is also used is another Turkic language spoken by Orthodox Christians, viz. Gagauz (*daskal* 'sexton, teacher'). On the other hand, both Urum and Gagauz use the Arabic word for God: *Alla(x)*, *allā* resp.

⁸ See M u r a t o v, p. 181.

After a nasal the *l-l* of the plural or of the comitative suffix becomes *n*: *adamnar* 'people', *xojam-nen* 'with my husband'.

Morphology

Our data on Urum morphology are rather fragmentary, but we hope they nevertheless will be of interest to specialists in Turkic languages.

Declension

| | | | | | | |
|------|---------------|--------------|---------------|-------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Nom. | <i>ata</i> | <i>ev</i> | <i>atam</i> | <i>evi</i> | <i>atalar</i> | <i>evler</i> |
| Gen. | <i>atanin</i> | <i>evin</i> | <i>atamin</i> | <i>evin</i> | <i>atalarin</i> | <i>evlerin</i> |
| Dat. | <i>atağa</i> | <i>evd'e</i> | <i>atama</i> | <i>evne</i> | <i>atalarğa</i> | <i>evlerd'e</i> |
| Acc. | <i>atanı</i> | <i>evni</i> | <i>atamı</i> | <i>evni</i> | <i>atalarnı</i> | <i>evlerni</i> |

| | | | | | | |
|-------|---------------|--------------|----------------|----------------|------------------|-----------------|
| Loc.1 | <i>atada</i> | <i>evde</i> | <i>atamda</i> | <i>evinde</i> | <i>atalarda</i> | <i>evlerde</i> |
| Abl.1 | <i>atadan</i> | <i>evden</i> | <i>atamdan</i> | <i>evinden</i> | <i>atalardan</i> | <i>evlerden</i> |
| Loc.2 | <i>atače</i> | <i>evče</i> | <i>atamče</i> | <i>eviče</i> | <i>atalarče</i> | <i>evlerče</i> |
| Abl.2 | <i>atačen</i> | <i>evčen</i> | <i>atamčen</i> | <i>evičen</i> | <i>atalarčen</i> | <i>evlerčen</i> |

(*atačinden*) (*evčinden*)

Comit. *atalen* *evlen* *atammen* *evilen* *atalarlen* *evlerlen*

ata 'father', *ev* 'house', *atam* 'my father', *evi* 'his house', *atalar* 'fathers', *evler* 'houses'.

The meaning of Loc. 2 is 'inside' (cf. the noun *ič* = T. *iç* 'inside'), of Abl. 2, 'out of, from within'.

The possessive pronominal suffixes are:

after a vowel

after a consonant

| | | | | | | |
|-------|---------|------------------------------|------|----------------|------|----------------|
| 1 sg. | -m: | <i>atam</i> , <i>xojam</i> | -im: | <i>evim</i> , | -um: | <i>čubugum</i> |
| 2 | -ŋ: | <i>ataŋ</i> , <i>xojaŋ</i> , | -iŋ: | <i>eviŋ</i> , | -uŋ: | <i>čubuguŋ</i> |
| 3 | -sı: | <i>atası</i> , <i>xojası</i> | -i: | <i>evi</i> , | -u: | <i>ōubuğu</i> |
| 1 pl. | -miz: | <i>atamiz</i> | | <i>evmiz</i> | | |
| 2 | -siŋiz: | <i>atasıŋiz</i> | | <i>evsiŋiz</i> | | |
| 3 | -ları: | <i>ataları</i> | | <i>evleri</i> | | |

The vowel *i* of the sing. suffixes is very short and tends to disappear when it occurs in an open unstressed syllable: *evmin* 'of my house', *evŋe* 'to your house', etc., but not in Loc. 2 or Abl. 2 where the vowel is retained: *eviče* 'in his house' vs. *evče* 'in (the) house'.

Of the derivational suffixes the following are widely used:

- l̥ix/-lik — abstract and collective nouns,
- max/-mek — nomen actionis, masdar
- č̣i — nomen agentis
- l̥i/li — adjectives derived from nouns.

Pronouns: *men/ben* 'I', *sen* 'you' sg., *o* 'he, she, it', *biz* 'we', *siz* 'you' pl., *olar* 'they'; *bu* 'this'; *t'im* 'who', *ne* 'what', *xaysi* 'which'.

Numerals: *bir* 1, *et'i* 2, *üç* 3, *dört* 4, *beş* 5, *altı* 6, *yedi* 7, *set'iz* 8, *toxuz* 9, *on* 10, *yirīm(i)* 20, *otuz* 30, *xırx* 40, *elli* 50, *altmış* 60, *yetmiş* 70, *seksen* 80, *doxsan* 90, *yüz* 100, *bin* 1000.

Ordinal numerals are built with the help of the suffix *-inji/-inji/-unju/-ünjü*.

Urum, just like other Turkic languages, possesses a well developed verbal system with a variety of finite and non-finite forms.

The infinitive ends in *-mağa/-med'e*: *yazmağa* 'to write', *bilmed'e* 'to know'. The participle—in *-ğan/-d'en*: *yazğan*, *bild'en*. The gerund—in *-ip/p/-up*: *yazıp*, *bilip*.

Verbal conjugation

Present

| | | | | | |
|-------------|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|--------------------|------------------|
| <i>men</i> | <i>yazam</i> | <i>oxum</i> | <i>bilim</i> | <i>körem</i> | <i>yázmam</i> |
| <i>sen</i> | <i>yazas</i> | <i>oxus</i> | <i>bilis</i> | <i>köres</i> | <i>yázmas</i> |
| <i>o</i> | <i>yazay</i> | <i>oxuy</i> | <i>biliy</i> | <i>körey</i> | <i>yázmay</i> |
| <i>biz</i> | <i>yazaymiz</i> | <i>oxuymuz</i> | <i>biliymiz</i> | <i>köreymiz</i> | <i>yázmaymiz</i> |
| <i>siz</i> | <i>yazayñiz</i> | <i>oxuyñuz</i> | <i>biliyñiz</i> | <i>köreyniz</i> | <i>yázmayñiz</i> |
| <i>olar</i> | <i>yazaylar</i> | <i>oxuylar</i> | <i>biliyler</i> | <i>köreyleyler</i> | <i>yázmaylar</i> |

Future I

| | | | | | |
|-------------|--------------------------|---------------|---------------|----------------|----------------|
| <i>men</i> | <i>yazarim</i> | <i>alirim</i> | <i>oxurum</i> | <i>bilirim</i> | <i>körerim</i> |
| <i>sen</i> | <i>yazarsı</i> | | | | |
| <i>o</i> | <i>yazar</i> | | | | |
| <i>biz</i> | <i>yazarix/yazarimiz</i> | | | | |
| <i>siz</i> | <i>yazarıñiz</i> | | | | |
| <i>olar</i> | <i>yazarlar</i> | | | | |

Future II

| | |
|-------------------|-------------------|
| <i>yazajam</i> | <i>bilejem</i> |
| <i>yazajas</i> | <i>bilejes</i> |
| <i>yazajax</i> | <i>bilejek</i> |
| <i>yazajamiz</i> | <i>bilejémiz</i> |
| <i>yazajáñiz</i> | <i>bilejéñiz</i> |
| <i>yazajáxlar</i> | <i>bilejékler</i> |

Past I

| | | | |
|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| <i>yazdim</i> | <i>oxudum</i> | <i>bildim</i> | <i>kördum</i> |
| <i>yazdin</i> | <i>oxudun</i> | <i>bildin</i> | <i>kördun</i> |
| <i>yazdi</i> | <i>oxudu</i> | <i>bildi</i> | <i>kördu</i> |
| <i>yazdix</i> | <i>oxudux</i> | <i>bildik</i> | <i>körduk</i> |
| <i>yazdıniz</i> | <i>oxudunuz</i> | <i>bildiniz</i> | <i>kördunuz</i> |
| <i>yazdlar</i> | <i>oxudlar</i> | <i>bidler</i> | <i>kördler</i> |

Past II (inferential indirect evidence)

yazğanım oxuğanım bild'enim körd'enim

yazğanıñ

yazğan

yazğanımız

yazğanıñız

yazğanlar

This tense is used when the fact is known from any source other than personal experience.

Imperative and Jussive

(*men*) *yazayım* (*biz*) *yazayıx*

(*sen*) *yaz* (*siz*) *yazıñ*

(*o*) *yazsın* (*olar*) *yazsınlar*

Past subordinate: *yazğan-edim* 'that I wrote'.

Past sub. (doubt): *yazğan-et'enim* 'as if I had written'.

Real condition: *yazsam* 'if I write'.

Condition referring to the past: *yazğan-osam* 'if I had written'.

Irreal condition: *yazğan-osa-edim* 'if I had written' (but I hadn't).

Id. in subordinate clause: *yazğan-osa-et'enim* 'that if I had written'.

Past imperfective and subjunctive: *yazar-edim* 'I would write'. Id. (doubt): *yazar-et'enim* 'as if I would write'. Example: *men ayttım, sen maña yazğanosaet'enıñ, meñ t'eliredim* 'I said that if you had written to me I would have come'.

Future conditional imperfective: *yazajax-osam* 'if I am going to write'.

Resultative: *yazgayım* 'in order that I write'.

Simultaneous action: *yazğanda* 'when...writing', *yazğanček* 'while writing'.

Preceding action: *yazajaxta* 'before writing, while going to write'.

The vocabulary of Urum is primarily Oghuz, with quite a few Qypchaq elements; it contains also a lot of Arabic and Persian words. The number of Greek words is insignificant. One of our informants used the Greek *trapez* 'table' parallel with the more regular *sofra*. Interestingly enough, this informant's father's name was Konstandin, with *nd* characteristic of Modern Greek. Evidently, this family was originally Greek-speaking and switched to Urum after it settled among Urum-speaking Greeks. This may account for the idiosyncratic use of occasional Greek words in this informant's speech.

Both lexicon and especially syntax are heavily influenced by Russian.

Sample texts

No. 1

*Siya saçım örmezler,
beni saña bermezler.*

They won't plait^{a)} my black^{b)} hair,
They won't give me to you.

*T'el alayim xačayim,
xaranixka^{c)} körmezler.*

*Xaranix yejesine
bardim penjeresine.*

*Uzun čubux uzattim,
beñ yariği^{d)} uyattim.*

^{a)} Plaiting the bride's hair is a part of wedding ritual.

^{b)} *siya* actually means 'dark-blue', the word for 'black' being *xara*.

^{c)} Dat. is frequently used instead of Loc. 1 with the meaning 'in, at'. After *x* the *ğ/x* of the case-ending is dissimilated into *k*.

^{d)} Or *yariška*—cf. preceding note.

No. 2

Bizim xoranda beş jan:

*xojam, men, et'i xiz,
bir ulan. Xojam šley*

*oğorotxa^{a)}, kolxozğa^{a)},
atlarlen. Men slem*

tut'anğa, tut'anji.

Ala, xizim, otruy

Don'eckiyd'e, šley

d'etsad'ikt'e^{a)}.

L'ida öğreniy skol'ağa

altinji klasxa^{a)}

Saša bitirdi set'iz klas,

ögrenejek skolağa

m'exan'izatorov^{b)}.

Xojam doğdu Ulaxilğa,

epti otruy Ulaxilğa.

^{a)} Russian borrowings.

^{b)} A Russian term the first element of which was translated (*skola*—Rus. *škola*) and put in an appropriate case (Dat.), whereas the second word remained unchanged (Rus. Gen. pl.).

No. 3—a sample of literary text⁹.

Osmančix taxtadan bir čana yasağan,

bayirğa tirmaşırp kačolnmā başlağan.

Tik bayir, šay buzlu, čanalar bek izli.

Balalar-çalalar kačolnup oynaylar.

Come, let me take (you) and run away,
In darkness they won't see.

On a dark night

I went to her window.

I reached out a long rod,

Early at dawn I woke (her).

Our family (consists of) 5 persons:

my husband, I, two daughters,

one son. My husband works

at the vegetable garden, in the kolkhoz,
with horses. I work

at a shop, (as a) saleswoman.

My daughter Alla lives (lit. sits, stays)

in Donetsk, works

at a kindergarten.

Lida learns at school,

in the sixth grade.

Alexander has finished 8 grades (at
school), he will learn at the school of
agricultural mechanics.

My husband was born in Ulakly,

has always lived in Ulakly.

⁹ In the '20s, the Urum language was reduced to writing and used in elementary education. At least one primer *Yanī yol* "New path" was published. In the late '30s, however, all activity in Urum was cut short and books destroyed. The text was recited to us by a former teacher, who pointed out that *osmančix*, *bayir* and *šay* are literary words not used in the dialect of Ulakly, which has *ulan(čix)*, *jap* and *buz* respectively.

'A boy made a sleigh out of a plank,
having climbed up a hill he began to toboggan.
The hill is steep, the ice slippery, the sleighs are very slipping.
Children are playing while tobogganing'.

No. 4 — a song.

Xara deñiz üstiine
ax yulumamanaman
xara suw xaynatïylar.
ax...

Baxčisaray^{a)} içine ax...
Dülber xız oynatïylar ax...
Noğaylïğın čölünče^{b)} ax...
çal atımın izi bar. ax...
Yetmiş yedi yar sardim (?) ax.
t'ene közü baña bar. ax...

On the Black sea
ax yulumamanaman
they are boiling black water.
ax...
In Bakhchisaray *ax...*
Daughters of Dülber are playing. *ax...*
In the steppe of Noghays *ax...*
there are footprints of my white horse.
won over seventy seven beloved
still her eye is turned to me. *ax...*

^{a)} Bakhchisaray was the capital of Crimean khans.

^{b)} The Tatars of the North Crimean steppes used to call themselves *Noğay(lar)*, *Noğaylïq* (collective)—not to be confused with the Noghay people of the Northern Caucasus.