

## Baklava for the Effendi! The linguistic heritage of the Ottoman Empire in Serbia and in Egypt in comparison

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The Ottoman Empire originated in one of the Turkish-ruled petty kingdoms that existed in Anatolia around 1300 A.D.; it derives its name from its first ruler, Osman ('Othman) the First. Within a few centuries it expanded its territory to large areas in the Middle East, the Mediterranean coasts, and the Balkans. From the vitality of the Central Asiatic newcomers, and the momentum of the new and dynamic Islamic religion on the one hand, and the highly refined Byzantine way of life on the other, it developed into a rich civilization, splendid in all its aspects, including administration, sciences, arts, architecture, military, fashion, and—last, but not least—cuisine. In fact, the Ottoman Empire was the great Near Eastern counterpart of the Western civilization, in particular of the Holy Roman Empire. Even though the Ottoman world has perished one hundred years ago, its traces are still to be seen in our days. In the following, the linguistic legacy of two different areas shall be presented that were formerly part of the Ottoman Empire, namely Serbia and Egypt.

### **Serbia and Egypt under Ottoman rule**

The Ottoman Empire succeeded already in the 14<sup>th</sup> century in conquering the main part of what is today the state of Serbia. The rule over the country was at various times disturbed and interrupted by revolts, including the First and Second Serbian uprisings, in 1804–1813 and 1815–1817, respectively; from then on, Serbia was de facto independent, as Principality of Serbia, under Ottoman suzerainty.

Egypt was ruled by the Ayyubids from 1174 until 1252, when they were overthrown by their bodyguards, known as the Mamluks, who ruled under the suzerainty of Abbasid Caliphs in Baghdad until 1517. In consequence of the exit of the Ottoman–Mamluk War (1516–17), Egypt became part of the Ottoman Empire. Its rule was interrupted only in 1798 when Napoleon conquered the country (being subsequently defeated by England). In 1805 Mohammed (Mehmet) Ali Pasha, a commander of the Ottoman army of Albanian descent, established his rule of Egypt and the Sudan by approval of the Ottoman ruler. He founded a dynasty that kept ruling Egypt until the Egyptian Revolution of 1952, led by Muhammad Naguib and Gamal Abdel Nasser. It was till then that Ottoman traditions persisted in Egypt to a certain measure.

Three languages are involved in our story: the source language is those varieties of Turkish that were in use in the Ottoman Empire. The radiance of Ottoman culture caused the non-Turkish peoples of their empire to borrow large parts of its lexicon into their languages, that is in the case under review Serbian and Egyptian Arabic. However, since the end of the Ottoman period the material culture has changed so drastically in some fields, that the pertinent lexicon has almost completely been replaced by new terms and expressions; typical examples are fashion, and military. Among the fields that have preserved the old expressions are, among others, foodstuffs and cuisine.

Ottoman Turkish itself was strongly influenced by Persian and Classical Arabic. Arabic and Persian words in the Turkish language of the Ottoman Empire amounted up to 88 percent of its vocabulary,<sup>1</sup> whereby the Arabic words were obviously not, as a rule, taken over directly, but rather via Persian. This can be clearly seen from the fact that many Turkish-Arabic words resemble more their Persian-Arabic counterparts in phonetics and in semantics, than the Arabic original. They may have entered Turkish already before the Turks established themselves in Anatolia. Apart from Persian and (Persian-)Arabic words, there are also not few loans from other languages, including Greek and Venetian.

An educated person of the Ottoman Empire was proud to praise himself to be an *üçlisanlı*, that is a three (*üç*) language (*lisan*) person: he had also to master Persian and Arabic, apart from a high competence in Turkish. Arabic was the language of religion and of science; Persian was the medium of poetry and epics; whereas Turkish was used in fields like administration, military, historiography, and poetry. Besides this most formal idiom, also called *Fasih Türkçe* (Eloquent Turkish; *فَسِيح* *fasih* is an Arabic word), there were other varieties in use, like *Orta Türkçe* (Middle Turkish), the language of higher classes and of trade, and *Kaba Türkçe* (Rough Turkish), the language of lower classes. Modern Turkish has developed from this latter variety. It is written in a Latin alphabet with newly developed diacritical marks. The number of Persian and Arabic loans has been reduced in the modern language. New technical terms were typically taken from French (like *otobüs* = French *autobus*, ‘bus,’ *jeoloji* = French *géologie*, ‘geology,’ *pavilyon* = French *pavillon*, ‘pavilion’). The convention of the Turkish Latin alphabet (for which see below) of using *j* for [ʒ] is also based on French.

### Ottoman Turkish

Classification (Dolgopolsky<sup>2</sup>): Altaic—Turkic—Narrow Turkic—Oghuz (= Southwest Turkic)—Turkish

Turkish is but one of the numerous Turkic languages, though the one with the highest number of speakers by far (61,5 mio. as compared approximately 140 to 160 mio. speakers of other Turkic languages taken together, of which the major ones number about 24).<sup>3</sup>

Turkish is rich in vowels, grouped in front vowels (e, i, ö [ø], ü [y]) and back vowels (a, ı [u], o, u). Similar to the vowels of Hungarian, they underlie the laws of vowel harmony. In a chameleon-like way, the vowels of suffixes change, in order to harmonize with the vowel(s) of the preceding syllable or word. Within a root, all vowels are usually of either the front or the back set. According to the changeable vowel, there are two patterns:

- 1) *e* and *a* harmonize with each other. In this way, the locative ending *-de*<sub>2</sub> (the index indicates the double form of this ending) is *-de* after front vowels, as in *evde* ‘in the house,’ *şehirde* ‘in the town,’ but *-da* after back vowels, as in *sarayda* ‘in the palace,’ *pavilyonda* ‘in the pavilion.’
- 2) *i*, *ü*, *ı*, and *u* harmonize both in respect to the front-back quality and to the contrast of rounded vs. unrounded vowels. Thus, the genitive marker, in its modern form *-in*<sub>4</sub> (the index indicates the quadruple form of the ending), is so after syllables with *i* or *e* (as in *evin* ‘of the house,’ *denizin*

<sup>1</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ottoman\\_Turkish\\_language](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ottoman_Turkish_language).

<sup>2</sup> Dolgopolsky, Aharon (2008). Nostratic Dictionary. Third Edition. <http://www.dspace.cam.ac.uk/handle/1810/244080>.

<sup>3</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Turkic\\_peoples](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Turkic_peoples).

‘of the sea’), it is *-ün* after syllables with *ö* or *ü* (as in *köyün* ‘of the village,’ *gülün* ‘of the rose’), *-in* after syllables with *a* or *ı* (as in *sarayın* ‘of the palace,’ *ışkın* ‘of the light’), and *-un* after syllables with *o* or *u* (as in *sucukun* ‘of the sausage,’ *topun* ‘of the canon’).

Turkish is rich in sibilants and palatal consonants, including *s*, *z*, *ş* [ʃ], *j* [ʒ], *ç* [ç], *c* [j]. The velar stops *k* and *g* are palatalized in pronunciation (but not in spelling, neither in Arabic nor in Latin script) before front vowels: *köşk* [kʰøʃk] ‘kiosk’ (the word is of Turkish origin), *göz* [gʰøz] ‘eye,’ *gül* [gʰyl] ‘rose.’

Word-final voiced stops (*b*, *d*, *c*, *g*) are pronounced as unvoiced consonants. This was not reflected in the spelling in Arabic script, but is now so in the Latin script: *yoğurt* (but in the dative case: *yoğurda*), *kebab* (but in the dative case: *kebaba*; from Arabic كَبَابٌ *kabāb<sup>um</sup>*).

Turkish does not dispose of a voiceless velar fricative, [x], Arabic and Persian *ḥ* is therefore rendered as *h*; cf. *hoca*, below.

### Egyptian Arabic

Classification: Afro-Asiatic—Semitic—Central—Arabic.

The idiom “Egyptian Arabic” should rather be termed Cairene Arabic; large parts of Egypt, including the Eastern Delta and Upper Egypt, have different Neo-Arabic idioms.<sup>4</sup> Arabic in general is poor in vowels: it has but three vocalic phonemes, namely *a*, *i*, and *u*. They are, however, realised in great variation, partly conditioned phonetically, partly regionally, partly individually. The most conspicuous phenomena of Cairene Arabic are the realisations of general Arabic ج *j* and ق *q*, as [g] and [ʔ], respectively: جَبَلٌ *jabal* ‘mountain’ is pronounced [gæbæɫ]; قَمَرٌ *qamar* ‘moon’ is pronounced [ʔamar]. Arabic in general is characterised by its emphatic consonants, that is alveolar and dental stops and fricatives with a laryngeal secondary articulation: ص *ṣ* [sʕ], ض *ḍ* [dʕ] (so in Cairo; elsewhere also [ðʕ]), ط *ṭ* [tʕ], ظ *ẓ* [zʕ] (so in Cairo; elsewhere [ðʕ], like ض *ḍ*).

These sounds, which trigger a change in the colour of adjacent vowels, are not found in Turkish (nor in Serbian). Yet they are found used in Arabic in loan words, obviously in order to trigger an o-like pronunciation of an u-vowel, or an e-like pronunciation of an i-vowel: Turkish *oda* ‘room’ was written as أُودَه *ūda*, and is so in Arabic, pronounced [ʔoːdɑ]. If written as \*أودَه, it would be pronounced [ʔuːdæ].

Classical Arabic possesses a series of dental fricatives. A number of modern idioms, including Cairene Arabic, have changed their articulation to alveolar stops: ث *θ* [θ] became *t*, ذ *ḏ* [ð] became *d*, ظ *ẓ* [ðʕ] became *d* [dʕ]. However, when words with one of these phonemes were taken over by Persian, and in consequence by Turkish, they were pronounced as alveolar fricatives: [s], [z], and again [z]. Arabic has also other phonetic categories that are rarely found in other languages. This applies to the laryngeal fricatives ح *ḥ* (voiceless) and ع *ʕ* (voiced). In words taken over by Persian, and in consequence by Turkish, all these phonemes are pronounced as non-laryngeal sounds: *ḥ* > *h*, *ʕ* > *ʔ*, *ṣ* > *s*, *ḍ* and *ẓ* > *z*, *ṭ* > *t*. Nevertheless, both Persian and Turkish render words that contain one of these phonemes in most cases in the original way, that is, with the letters mentioned above.

<sup>4</sup> Peter, Behnstedt; Manfred Woidich (1985). Die ägyptisch-arabischen Dialekte, vols. I, II. Wiesbaden: L. Reichert.

As a rule, it may be said that most Egyptian Arabic words where the original dental fricatives  $\theta$ ,  $\delta$ , and  $\vartheta$  are pronounced as alveolar fricatives, that is  $s$ ,  $z$ , and  $ʒ$ , are reimported from Persian or Turkish. The phoneme  $ʒ$  [ʒ] in Egyptian Arabic owes its existence to these loans.

Arabic >	Persian >	Turkish
ح $h$ >	ح $h$ >	$h$
ح $h$ >	ح $h$ >	$h$
ح $h$ >	ح $h$ >	$h$

## Serbian

Classification: Indo-European—Slavic—South—Serbo-Croatian—Serbian

The modern idiom of Serbian is a very young language as it is due to the political development after the desintegration of the Yugoslavian state, beginning in 1990. It is the variety of Serbo-Croatian that is spoken by Serbs. Serbo-Croatian was a pluricentric language with several standard varieties that were mutually intelligible, namely Serbian, Croatian, Bosnian, and Montenegrin. With the emergence of independent successor states of Yugoslavia, these varieties were regarded as separate languages. Most of what will be said here about Serbian also applies to the other languages.

Serbian has only five vowel phonemes: a, ε, i, ə, u; no closed vowels e and o, and of course none of the typical Turkish vowels ö, ü, ı.

Like Slavic in general, Serbian is rich in sibilants: s, z, c; š, ž, č; in contrast to other Slavic languages, it has also a phoneme dž [dʒ], in Cyrillic ђ: it owes its existence to the numerous (Persian-)Turkish loans, like ђеп *džep* ‘pocket,’ Turkish *cep* (and serves also for English loans, like ђем *džem* ‘jam,’ ђез *džez* ‘jazz’). In contrast to many other Slavic languages, there are also phonemic palatalised stops: ć [tj], đ [dj]: the creator of the Serbian variety of the Cyrillic script, Vuk Stefanović Karadžić (1787–1864), had to invent specific signs for them, namely ģ and ģ̣, respectively.

In contrast to the other varieties of former Serbo-Croatian, Serbian has the tendency to reduce the pronunciation of  $h$  [x] to zero; and *uh-* [ux-] will become *uv-* (e.g., ‘ear’ is *uho* [uxə] in Croatian, *uvo* in Serbian; ‘tobacco,’ Arabic دُخَان *duḥān*, is *duhan* [duxan] in Croatian, *duvan* in Serbian).

## Phonetics contrasted

These are consonantic phonemes which Turkish does not share with Serbian: ģ ģ̣; ڭ ڭ̣ (Ottoman Turkish only); Turkish lacks [x], Serbian has  $h$  [x], but tends to alide it in pronunciation; vocalic phonemes: ı, ö, ü.

Consonantic phonemes which Serbian does not share with Turkish: ɟ c [ts], ɟ̣ ḷj [λ], ɟ̣ ṇj [ɲ]. ģ ć, ģ̣ đ̣ are not phonemes in Turkish, but Turkish k, g before front vowels have a comparable articulation; vowels: none.

Phonemes which Turkish does not share with Arabic, consonants: پ p; ف v; گ g (except Cairene Arabic); چ ç [c]; ج c [j] (except Cairene Arabic); ڙ j [ʒ]; ڭ ģ [ŋ] (Ottoman Turkish only); vowels: e, o, ı, ö, ü.

Phonemes which Arabic does not share with Turkish, consonants: ح ģ; خ ģ̣; ع ʕ; غ ɣ; ق q; ص s; ض ʒ; ط t; ظ z; ث θ, ذ ð, ظ ð̣ (lacking also in Cairene Arabic); vowels: none.

## Accent

Turkish words have, as a general rule, the accent on their last syllable; exceptions are, inter alia, place-names.

Serbian (as also the other ex-Yugoslavian national language standards) has a complex pitch accent. Stressed vowels carry one of the two basic tones, falling and rising, each being either short or long: short falling ⟨*ǒ*⟩, short rising ⟨*ǒ̇*⟩, long falling ⟨*ǒ̄*⟩, and long rising ⟨*ǒ̇̄*⟩. Accent alternations in one and the same word, conditioned by inflection, occur frequently. The stress is often on the first syllable, at any rate never on the last.

*Nisam ga vīdela kàda sam bila u Beògradu* ‘I (fem.) did not see him when I was in Belgrade’: *nisam* ‘I am not’ and *bila* ‘been (fem.)’ have long rising tone, *kàda* ‘when’ has short rising tone, *vīdela* ‘seen (fem.)’ has short falling tone. An example for long falling tone is *zlâto* ‘gold.’

In Arabic words, the accent is on the last long syllable (cf. place-names like Gīza, Saqqâra, Iskandarīyya, Armánt, Kalábsha). If the third-last syllable is long and the second-last is short, Cairene Arabic puts the stress on the second-last; other idioms put it on the long syllable (cf. place-names like Cairene *دندرة* Dandára, *ملقطة* Mal’áṭa versus Dándara, Múlgaṭa, which is the Upper Egyptian pronunciation).

## Script

Ottoman Turkish was written in a variety of the Arabic script which was nearly identical with the variety that was used for Persian. Several signs had to be invented that rendered phonemes alien to Arabic. On the other hand, the Arabic script had many signs for phonemes that neither Persian nor Turkish possess (see above). But these signs were preserved for the numerous Arabic loan words which were rendered in their correct form (although pronounced in the Persian or Turkish way). This may be accounted for by the fact that the Islamic religion did not translate the Holy Book: also in areas with another language than Arabic, it was read and recited in its original Arabic form. In this way many Arabic religious terms entered the other languages: although pronounced according to the laws of the individual language, they were written in the original Arabic way.

After the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire, it was continued in Asia Minor by the Turkish Republic, a development intimately connected with the name of Kemal Pasha. His endeavour was to link his new country with Western civilization. It was part of this programme that the Turkish language be rendered in Latin script, rather than in Osmanli Arabic script. An independent solution was found for rendering phonemes that were not covered by the letters of the Latin script, including *ş* [ʃ], *ç* [dʒ], *ç* [tʃ].

It was of course the old Ottoman Turkish language, written in Persian-Turkish script, from where Serbian and Egyptian Arabic took words, and not the modern language, written in Turkish-Latin script.

The Serbian language does not have a long tradition of literacy. Being subjects of the Ottoman Empire, its speakers were not in a position to develop their language into a literary form before the nineteenth century. For religious purposes, for inscriptions in churches and on tombs, the Church Slavonic language and script were used (this being the oldest variety of the Cyrillic script). It was only towards the middle of the 19th century that the ingenious autodidactic linguist Vuk Stefanović

Karadžić, who had developed and propagated a literary standard for the Serbian language, also created a variety of the Cyrillic script that was suitable for it.

When after WWI the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, the archetype of Yugoslavia (i. e. ‘South Slavic country’) was formed, it had to take into account that the Croatian tradition was exclusively in Latin script. However, a system was developed of a complete convertibility of the two scripts, and both varieties were taught in all parts of the country already in elementary school. Today, all official announcements in Serbia, including banknotes, road signs, etc., are given in both scripts; in metropolitan Belgrade many shop inscriptions are in Cyrillic script, but equally many use the Latin script.

Cairene Arabic is in principle a spoken language, although it can also be written. This is the case in the dialogues in modern literary novels, like those by Naguib Mahfouz (نَجِيبَ مَحْفُوظَ), or direct speech in cartoons, but also in poetry and the lyrics of songs. The language of private letters of Egyptians usually employs numerous words and phrases of the vernacular, the Cairene Arabic. Of course, the idiom is written in Arabic script, and there has quite naturally developed a certain spelling standard. In linguistics, however, one of the usual transcription systems are used, as is also done here: they allow a much more precise phonological and phonetical rendering.

#### A Selection of Ottoman Turkish words in living Serbian and Egyptian Arabic

Modern Turkish	Serbian	Egn. Arabic	English + Remarks
<i>börek</i>	<i>burek</i>	<i>burēk</i>	A sort of pie
<i>köfte</i>	<i>ćufte</i>	<i>kufta</i>	Fried minced meat in sticks
<i>musaka</i>	<i>mùsaka</i>	<i>musaqqa'a</i>	An oven dish with eggplants (aubergines). Originally from the Arabic.
<i>kebab</i>	<i>ćevap</i>	<i>kabāb</i>	Kebab. Originally from the Arabic.
<i>kebabçı</i>	<i>ćevapdžija</i>	<i>kabābgi</i>	kebab seller
<i>turşu</i>	<i>turšija</i>	<i>tuṛši</i>	Pickles. Originally from Persian <i>tuṛši</i> .
<i>pilav</i>	<i>pilav</i>	<i>filāw</i>	Pilaf. Originally from Persian.
<i>çorba</i>	<i>čorba</i>	<i>šurba</i>	Soup
<i>meze</i>	<i>meze</i>	<i>mazza</i>	Appetizer
<i>baklava</i>	<i>baklava</i>	<i>baqlāwa</i>	Baklava. Not from Arabic.
<i>helva</i>	<i>alva</i>	<i>ḥalwā</i>	Helvah. Arabic <i>ḥilw</i> means ‘sweet.’
<i>rahat lokum</i>	<i>rahat lokum</i> <i>(ratluk)</i>	<i>rāḥit il-ḥulqūm</i>	‘Turkish delight.’
<i>karanfil</i>	<i>karanfil</i>	<i>qurunfil</i>	Carnation; clove (in Serbian <i>karanfilić</i> )
<i>kahve</i>	<i>kafa</i>	<i>qahwa</i>	Coffee. Originally from Arabic
<i>cezve</i>	<i>džezva</i>	—	Turkish coffee pot. Egyptian Arabic uses <i>kánaka</i> , which is originally from Persian <i>tan(a)ka</i> ‘tank.’



<i>çay</i>	<i>čaj</i>	<i>šāy</i>	Tea. Originally from Northern Chinese.
<i>fincan</i>	<i>fildžan</i>	<i>fingān</i>	Mocca cup. Persian <i>fingān</i> ; Literary Arab. <i>fingāl</i> .
<i>sofra</i>	<i>sofra</i>	<i>şufra</i>	Dining table
<i>şerbet</i>	<i>šerbet</i>	<i>šarbāt, šarāb</i>	Sherbet, sorbet, caudle. Arabic <i>šariba</i> ‘he drank’
<i>taze</i>	<i>tàze</i>	<i>ṭāza, tāza</i>	fresh. Originally from Persian.
<i>patliçan</i>	<i>patlidžan</i>	<b>But:</b> <i>bidingān</i>	Egg plant. Literary Arabic: <i>bāḍingān</i>
<i>salata</i>	<i>salata</i> [sa'la:ta]	<i>sálaṭa, šálaṭa</i>	Salad. Originally from Venetian <i>salata</i> .
<i>furun</i>	<i>furuna</i>	<i>furn</i>	Oven. Originally from Ital./Venet. <i>forno</i>
<i>papuc, papuş</i>	<i>papuče</i>	<i>babūg</i>	Slippers.
<i>kaftan</i>	<i>kaftan</i>	<i>quftān</i>	Kaftan. Originally from Persian.
<i>defter</i>	<i>tefter</i>	<i>daftar</i>	Copybook.
<i>boya</i>	<i>boja</i>	<i>buyā</i>	Paint.
<i>boyacı</i>	<i>bojadžija</i>	<i>buyagi</i>	painter
<i>köprü</i>	<i>ćuprija</i>	<i>kubri</i>	Bridge
<i>tamam, taman</i>	<i>taman</i>	<i>tamām</i>	Perfect, full, o.k. Originally from Arabic.
<i>zembil</i>	<i>zembilj</i>	<i>zanbīl</i>	Basket. Originally from Persian.
<i>kilim</i>	<i>ćilim</i>	<i>kiīm</i>	Kelim. Originally from Persian.
<i>pekmez</i> ‘molasses’	<i>pekmez</i> ‘jam’	<i>bikmīz</i> , a sweet dish (of grape juice)	
<i>burma</i> ‘circle’	<i>burma</i> ‘finger ring’	<i>burmā</i> ‘(female) screw’	An Arabic root: <i>barama</i> ‘he went around’

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