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SLAVIC LANGUAGES IN CONTACT, 7: TURKISH *Ķ*, *Ĝ* > SERBIAN, CROATIAN *Ć*, *Đ*

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Abstract

The fact that Turkish palatalized consonants *Ķ* and *Ĝ* are rendered *ć* and *đ* = *ǰ*, respectively, in Croatian and Serbian was not discussed in detail thus far. This author is trying to settle the source(s), the mechanism, the time and the place of the change.

1. A transcriptional note

Turkish consonants *Ķ* and *Ĝ* are palatalized if followed and/or preceded by a palatal vowel (*e*, *i*, *ö*, *ü*). The palatality¹ is regular and need not, thus, be marked in writing. For instance, Turkish *Ķ* = *Ķestane* ‘chestnut’, *Ĝ* = *Ĝemi* ‘ship’. Besides, by and large, one can say Turkish *Ķ* = *ǰ* and *Ĝ* = *ǰ* are pronounced very similarly to Serbian² and Croatian (= SC) *đ* = *ǰ* and *ć* = *ć*, respectively.

¹ There is no compelling reason to distinguish between “palatal(ity)” and “palatalized(ness)” in our context, as the two realizations are not contrastive.

² “Serbian” is understood pluricentrically here, that is, the term encompasses Shtokavian in Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as in Montenegro. Upon reflection, I have decided to not use the term BCMS (= Bosnian, Croatian, Montenegrin, Serbian) which was kindly suggested to me by Marc L. Greenberg (Lawrence, Kansas). There are two reasons for this. First, speaking of Bosnian and Montenegrin as separate languages in the 15th, 16th, and so on, centuries would be anachronistic. Secondly, the situation with reflexes of Turkish *Ķ*, *Ĝ* in Bosnian is not quite clear to me, as is shown further below, and I am not absolutely sure whether or not a uniform solution can be accepted in all parts of the SC area.

2. The problem

A well-known rule says that Turkish *k* and *g* are almost always rendered *ć* and *đ* in Serbian and Croatian, as is, for instance, the case with Turkish *kitap* ‘book’ > SC *ćitap* 1759 id., Turkish *gemi* ‘ship’ > SC *đemija* 1759 id. (Stachowski 1973: 14, 144), and so on. Even this simple formulation raises two questions: why does this *almost* always occur, rather than always? And why does it occur at all? The limitation (“almost always”) is necessary both in chronological and geographical respect but the question “why at all?” is more important.

The oldest example of this change seems to be SC *đumruk* 1480 ‘duty’ < Turkish *gümruk* id. (Stachowski 1967: 34).³ Its appearance is somewhat mysterious because a further example of the change only turns up about eighty years later, and moreover, only once and as an alternative form: SC *kihaja* 1557 ~ *ćehaja* 1558 ‘head butler, majordomo’ < Turkish *kehaya* id. (Stachowski 1967: 28; 1973: 141).

The situation was dynamic. First, Turkish *k* and *g* were rendered as *k* and *g*, respectively, in all the Balkan Slavic languages. Apart from both surprisingly early attestations mentioned above (*đumruk* ~ *ćumruk*; *ćehaja*) the *ć* and *đ* reflexes only became more frequent in the second half of the seventeenth century and regular only in the eighteenth. And even then some words remained unpalatalized, e.g. SC *eski* 1681 ‘old’ < Turkish *eski* id. (Stachowski 1967: 35), SC *begenisati* 1772 ‘to enjoy, admire’ < older Turkish *begen-* id. (Stachowski 1973: 156).

The palatalization process can transpire in any position in the word. However, its frequency is not identical: it can most commonly be observed in word-initial position and least often in the word-final one. Examples like SC *temesuć* 1634 ‘bill, receipt’ < Turkish *temessük* id. (Stachowski 1967: 64) are very rare.

I could not find any specific limitation but the single one that the palatalization change should not occur more than once in a word. Thus, *đuvegija* (no **đuveđija*) 1782 ‘bridegroom’ < older Turkish *güvegi* id. (Stachowski 1973: 157) as well as *đumruk* (no **đumruć*) ‘duty’ (see above). The fact that the Croatian and Serbian reflexes are *đuvegija* and *đumruk*, not **guveđija* and **gumruć* is probably due to the frequency domination of the change in the word-initial syllable. – But cf. also *keške* ~ *ćeške(t)* in section 5.

The same principle of avoidance of multiple palatalization reveals itself in reflexes of Turkish words containing *ç* or *ş*, for instance in SC *keče* ~ *keča* (no **ćeča*) ‘a sort of Albanian hut’ < Turkish *keçe* ‘felt’; SC *kešiš* (no **ćešiš*) ‘friar, monk’ < Turkish *keşiş* id.; SC *kepčija* ~ *kevčija* (no **ćepčija* ~ *ćevčija*) ‘ladle, dipper’ < Turkish *kepçe* id.; SC *čepken* (no **ćepćen*) ‘bolero jacket; open loose sleeve’ < Turkish *çepken* ‘bolero jacket’; SC *ičkija* (no **iččija*) ‘liquor, alcoholic beverage’ < Turkish *içki* id.; SC *čiček* (no **čićeć*) ‘flower’ < Turkish *çiçek* id. (Stachowski 1973: 142).

³ The variant *ćumruk* 1481 id. (loc. cit.) reflects a Turkish form **kümrük* whose etymological character is not perfectly clear to me. It can result: [a] from a Turkish dialectal *g*- ~ *k*- alternation (see İgci 2010: 75sq.), possibly triggered by Kipchak influence; [b] from a distant assimilation *g* - *k* > *k* - *k*; [c] from the influence of the Greek etymon *κουμέρκι*.

But why did those who spoke Croatian or Serbian change their pronunciation habits and started to say, for instance, *ćehaja* instead of *kihaja* (see above) or *većil* 1674 ‘deputy’ instead of *vekil* 1412 id., and so on? Why indeed?

And why in Serbia, but not really in Northern and Western Bosnia where the old pronunciation survived (Škaljić 1966: 30) or in Macedonia⁴ where the new pronunciation never occurred?

However, Bosnian Turkish is generally a very special case:

[...] it developed on the basis of an Old Ottoman substratum [I would rather prefer to call it “older Anatolian Turkish” – M.S.] brought to Bosnia by the Ottomans. Bosnians did not replace their native (Bosnian) language with a dialect of Turkish and impose non-Turkish characteristics on it [...]. WRT [= West Rumelian Turkish] is the native language of Turkish immigrants in western Bulgaria, Macedonia and Kosovo, while the Bosnian variety, which came into being as a result of [...] contacts between the local South Slavic population and native speakers of Turkish had to be learned as a foreign language. Aside from that, Bosnians did not use Bosnian Turkish when communicating with one another in public [...] or within the family. (Čaušević 2014: 105q.)

The situation should probably be understood to the effect that Bosnians had no contact to speakers of the *ć, ž* variety of Turkish, that is, they did not use any form of Turkish when speaking with Serbs (which is more than obvious) and their Turkish teachers (who were inevitable, even if only because of religion) clearly spoke *k* and *ğ*-Turkish. This simple picture seems to perfectly clarify the situation. However, one becomes perplexed if one reads the phonetic comments in Blau’s (1868: 28–32) monograph where examples for very different readings of the character *kâf* (ك) are given, such as *ć, k* (not *k*), *g, j* as well as *ʃ* and *đ*, so that *kâf* is sometimes also used to render Slavic *ć*, for instance in Bosnian words like *كوك* = *ćuk* ‘owl’, *مأهه* = *maćeha* ‘stepmother’ (loc. cit. 30), and so on. The situation certainly deserves further inspection.

3. A Slavic clue

The proportion between Turkish *k, ğ* and SC *ć, đ* appears much like that between Macedonian *k, ğ* and SC *ć, đ*. One is tempted to ask whether the problem is solved if one assumes that Turkish *k, ğ* were identified by Serbs with Macedonian *k, ğ* and, thus, “correct Serbian” equivalents with *ć* and *đ* were introduced. Unfortunately, this solution cannot explain why the mental identification ensued only about two or three hundred years after Turkish had appeared in Macedonia following its incorporation into the Ottoman Empire as a result of the conquest of Skopje in 1392. Or, why the old variants with *k* and *g* were still in use, even in newer times, as is the case with SC *ćesa* 1728 ~ *kesa* 1790 ‘bag, sachet’ < Turkish *kese* ‘moneybag’ (Stachowski 1973: 141), and so on.

⁴ Cf. Maced. Turkish *köpri* ‘bridge’, *düğün* ‘wedding’, and so on (Stachowski 1998: 256).

4. A Turkish clue

Turkish dialects in Kosovo are in one respect markedly different from other Rumelian Turkish dialects, namely, their consonants *k* and *g* are, in all positions, pronounced in the same way as those written <ç> and <ç> in the modern Turkish orthography, for instance, Standard Turkish *kim* ‘who?’, *ilk* ‘first’, *iki* ‘two’, *ger-* ‘to stretch, tighten’, *hangi* ‘which?’ are pronounced *çim*, *ilç*, *içi*, *cer-* and *hanci*, respectively (İgci 2010: 74).

There is no need to assume Slavic impact on Kosovo Turkish, leading to replacement of original Turkish *k*, *g* by *č*, *ž*. In actual fact, that phenomenon is also known from Anatolia. Its source lies in Turkish Black Sea dialects, esp. the Trabzon – Rize area (Başdaş 1999: 2). Moreover, our change also appears in Erzurum and Malatya, where immigrants from the Black Sea coast were settled.

5. A proposal

Below an attempt at a solution is given, seeking in particular to unite different factors into an evolutionary picture as coherently as possible:

Phase I begins with the Ottoman conquest of the Southern Balkans by the middle of the fifteenth century. Persons speaking Anatolian Turkish dialects who were settled in the Balkans in that early period must have pronounced *k* and *g* as such, and thus, the first loanwords in Serbian displayed *k* and *g*, just as those in Bulgarian.

Phase II probably begins about the end of the 15th and the beginning of the 16th century. In that time, the first migrants from north-east Anatolia presumably came to the southern Balkans. Apart from the hapax *đumruk* 1480, the *č* and *đ* words could have been more often heard in the south-west Serbian from the early 16th century on, and they seem to have come from the dialects of newcomers from the Black Sea coast.

Phase III ensues in the early 18th century when the principle of the regular rendering of Turkish *k* and *g* as *č* and *đ* in Serbian becomes stabilized, presumably in line with the proportion: Macedonian *k*, *g* = Serbian *č*, *đ*. In that period, *k*, *g* reflexes of Tksh *k*, *g* are rare and they (at least, partially) continue older loanwords from Phase I or the early Phase II.

The regular stability of reflexes, typical of modern Serbian and Croatian equivalents of Turkish *k* and *g* words originated both from the Slavic contact with Turkish *č*, *ž* dialects brought over from north-east Anatolia to south-west Rumelia (Kosovo) in the late 15th century and from the Slavic awareness of Serbian *č*, *đ* being constant equivalents of Macedonian *k*, *g*.

A proposed scenario is somewhat blurred today due to some irregular phenomena like inter-Slavic word borrowing. For instance, Bulg. *čerhana* ‘sheepfold, pen’ (Miklosich 1884: 4)⁵ can best be explained as a loan from Serbian **čerhana* (> *čerana*)

⁵ My thanks go to Hristina Deykova (Sofia) who was so kind as to inform me that the word *čerhana* has not been etymologized so far in the archives of the Bulgarian Etymological Dictionary (BER).

< Turkish dial. **kerhane* = Turkish liter. <*kârhane*> = *karhane* ‘workshop’ (not to be confused with Turkish *kârhane* ~ *kerhane* ‘brothel’) although also a contamination of the first syllable of Turkish dial. **kerhane* with that of Turkish *çeragâh* ~ *çerahar* ‘pasture’ is imaginable. Similarly, Serbian *keške* (unlike *ćeške* ~ *ćešket* ‘Art Speise, geschrotete Gerste oder Korn mit Brühe’ [Miklosich 1884: 8]) can be either an archaism (< Turkish <*keşkek*> = *keşkek*), all the more so as Turkish -ş- could have hampered secondary palatalization of Turkish *k*, or possibly a loan from Bulgarian *keške* < (?) **kešket* < Turkish *keşkek*.

6. A problem

If the *ć, đ* pronunciation is only known from Kosovan Turkish in Southern Rumelia⁶ one might wonder whether all *ć, đ* words in Croatian actually were borrowed directly from Turkish. Such an intense influence of Kosovan Turkish upon Croatian does not appear possible, all the more so as it did not really encompass Northern and Western Bosnia. On the other hand, the only non-Kosovan source of such words can be Serbian (~ eastern Shtokavian) and one would certainly hesitate to venture a claim that all the Croatian *ć, đ* loanwords from Turkish were, as a matter of fact, borrowed via Serbian and should therefore be classified as Serbisms rather than Turkisms. In other words, the origin of the so-called *ć, đ* Turkisms in Croatian still remains to be explored.

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⁶ For examples from Anatolian Turkish and the non-Anatolian Turkic languages see Doğan (2013 *passim*).

