

TURCO-SLAVICA

Victor A. Friedman

I

On the Role of Verbal Abuse in the Struggle against the Phanariot Constantinople Patriarchate in Macedonia during the Nineteenth Century

During the middle of the last century, Slavic-speaking Christians in the Ottoman Empire were attempting to free themselves from Greek influence and to obtain education in some sort of Slavic language. This movement was actively opposed by the Greek Church and the Turkish State. Documentary evidence of the verbal violence of this opposition is to be found in a letter written by the Macedonian educator Jordan Hadži Konstantinov-Dzinot, dated Skopje, April 23, 1856. In this letter he quotes the words of the Bishop of Veles and the local Turkish official, Ali-beğ Körü, when they ordered that he be prevented from teaching in Veles. Their words are given in a Latin transliteration of the Cyrillic. A normalized Turkish transcription is given for Ali-beğ's statement. It is interesting to note that the Greek bishop was not satisfied with such Hellenisms as *eretig* 'heretic', *farmazon* 'freemason', *gavolos* 'devil' and *anatema nemu* 'cursed be he' for purposes of abuse. He thus turned to Turkisms:

Vladikata: Da go ispudite toj čapkān učitel, toj Jordan kopil sefi pušt! – The Bishop: "Kick that skirt-chasing teacher out, that Jordan whoreson pimp faggot!"

Ali-beg Koro: Dišari pušt! Sefi pezeveng, hān zār kāfir! kalkasān mehtupten zere šejtana seni verārām! kujunus bapsi o ženabeti! (Balkan Turkish).

Ali-beğ Körü: Dışarı pušt! Safa pezevengi, hınzır kāfir! Kalkasın mehtupten zere şeytana veririm! Koyunuz bapsi o cenabeti! (Literary or Standard Turkish) – Ali Bey the One-eyed: "Get out, faggot! Pimp, infidel swine! Leave the school, or else I'll send you to the Devil! Throw him in jail, the abomination!"

It is interesting to note that in some dialects the verb *ispudi* can mean 'fuck', as well as a number of other things. The term *sefi (safa)* is normally translated as 'pleasure', but in this context the word denotes one who does business with pleasure.

SOURCES: Blaže Koneski and Olivera Jašar-Nasteva. 1966. *Makedonski tekstovi od 10-20 vek*. Skopje: Sojuzot na društva za makedonski jazik i literatura (p. 89). — Victor A. Friedman (forthcoming). *Macedonian language and nationalism in the nineteenth century*.

II

On the Fate of Turkish Verbal Abuse in Macedonia

In my preceding note, I mentioned the penetration of Turkish obscenity into the speech of a Greek bishop residing in Macedonia. While many Turkish obscenities entered literary Macedonian relatively unhindered, e.g. *pušt (pušt)* 'faggot', *pezeveng (pezevenk)* 'pimp', others did not go unaltered. Thus Turkish *siktir* 'get fucked' becomes *sikter* 'scram' in Macedonian, with a derived verb *sikterdisuva* 'throw out.'

A most interesting development in this process of semantic change can be seen in the term for the last bit of food or drink, usually coffee, served to a guest to indicate that it is time for him or her to terminate the visit. This item is called *siktermandža* in Macedonian. The term is considered merely colloquial and no longer carries the strength of its historical meaning, i.e. 'fuck-off food.'

III

Notes on Turkish Interlingual Taboo

A particularly interesting example of interlingual taboo is cited by Sir Gerard Clauson in his *Etymological Dictionary of Pre-Thirteenth-Century Turkish* (Oxford, 1972; 155, 818). Mahmūd al-Kāšgarī in his Turkish-Arabic dictionary *Dīwān luġāt at-turk* (MS, 1073 A.D.), as cited by Clauson, states that the Oġuz, i.e. Turks, when reciting the Koran aloud, omit verses containing the Arabic conjunction *ʔam* 'or', because this word means 'cunt' in Turkish. In fact, any Arabic word containing

the syllables *am, sik* (Turkish 'prick'), or *tilāk* (Turkish 'clit', also occurring as *dīlak* and *dilçik*—all diminutives of *dil* 'tongue') was omitted from public Koran readings before Turkish audiences for fear of provoking ribald ejaculations.

In a similar vein, an incident is cited by John R. Krueger (*Journal of American Folklore* 77, no. 303 [1964], pp. 78-79): An organization called the American Military Government of Occupied Territories was going to be acronymed AMGOT, until someone pointed out that *am göt* in Turkish means 'cunt ass (asshole).'

Considering the sensitivities to Turkish taboos, it is all the more curious that they had so little impact on the Slavic-speakers of Macedonia, a Turkish province for 500 years. In my preceding note, I observed that Turkish *siktir* 'get fucked' had become merely 'scram' in Macedonian. In fact, the reaction of the average South Slav to being told that Slavic *siktermandža* 'the last cup of coffee before leaving' is Turkish for 'fuck-off food' is one of indignant incredulity. Another example of the desemanticization of *sik* in Macedonian is the "meaningless" expression shouted by children playing in the streets of Bitola, viz. *sikānani sikim*. This has as much semantic content for a Macedonian as *bibbidy hobbidy boo* has for an American. In Turkish, however, *sik anam* (or *anneni*) means 'fuck your mother!', while *sikim* is most likely a contraction of the optative *sikeyim* 'let me fuck' (cf. West Anatolian *sikem*). So perhaps the original meaning of the expression was something like 'fuck your mother and let me fuck her too.'

For further examples of these problems, see Mary R. Haas, 1951. "Interlingual Word Taboos," *American Anthropologist* 53.338-344. Reprinted in *Language in Culture and Society*, ed. Dell Hymes (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), pp. 489-494.

IV

On the Problems of False Cognates in Slavic

The phenomenon of semantic reinterpretation can result in a number of difficulties for someone who tries to work with a Slavic language other than one he already knows. Most of these problems are of no particular interest to the scatolinguist or

pornolinguist, but a few are worthy of note.

The Slavic **kurъ* 'chicken' and its derivatives retained the original meaning in Russian, but came to be used as the obscene word for 'penis' in South Slavic. (Admittedly, chicken-like words based on **kurъ* survive in South Slavic, but they are not widespread.) For example, a Russian-speaking relative of the author married a Bulgarian whose father was a chicken farmer. When the newlyweds went to visit the Bulgarian family, the young bride endeavored to make a good impression by using her Russianized Bulgarian to ask her new father-in-law about his occupation. The result was that she asked the old man a number of embarrassing questions about how he raised *kury*, and how many did he have, and where did he keep them, and could she see them.

The root meaning 'moisture', **mok-*, has also suffered a number of vicissitudes. Those who delight in ethnophaulic witticisms directed against the Lekhitic group of the West Slavs would do well to take note of the fact that to many Slavic speakers *močenje* means 'urination', but in Polish *moczenie* means 'foot-bath.'

It should be noted that the phonetic similarity of the Russian *spička* 'match' and the Serbo-Croatian and Macedonian *pička* 'cunt', a source of much discomfort to inadequately prepared travelers, is the result of mere coincidence, not semantic reinterpretation.



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REINHOLD AMAN
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