

Unveiling the Turkish manuscripts at the BnF

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MELCom International, Moscow, 27-29 May 2013




1 On me présente

Unveiling the Turkish manuscripts at the BnF

Dévoiler les manuscrits turcs à la BnF

- Part I
 - Introduction
 - General information on the collection
 - Catalogues
 - Access to the holdings
 - Other services
- Part II



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2 Outline : Expliquer titre et part II

Explain the title : To unveil manuscripts takes removing several layers and that the ultimate veil which involves the study of the content is left for Part II, which I will not deal with here but hopefully later, in a future conference.

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3 Introduction : Comment and quand je suis arrivée à traiter les mss

Last year in Paris, I gave a paper about name authorities for Ottoman authors where I mentioned why and how I approached this issue. To repeat myself briefly, two years ago my colleague Annie Berthier who had been in charge of the Turkish manuscripts at the BnF for many years, indeed decades, retired and she was not replaced. So I volunteered to « help » and learn about this collection. As those of you who are manuscript experts know, this takes longer than two years and I am still at the stage of acquiring some expertise.

Nevertheless today I hope to provide some useful information on the collections, just enough to trigger the curiosity of the floor to come and listen to the second part.

General information on the collection

- Origins and building of the collection
- Some figures
- Content



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4 En quoi consiste « General information » les trois points

Origins and building of the collection

17th C : First Turkish books join the collections of the Bibliothèque du Roy;
Beginning of an « acquisition policy »

18th C : Commissioned emissaries collect books in Constantinople
The French Revolution

19th C : Orientalists
Books from the NA colonies

20th C : Occasional purchases
Turcologues

Last pièce to join the collection : an autographe poem by Yaşar Kemal

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5 Origins and building of the collection

Before the second half of the seventeenth century, the Royal library of France did not yet have Turkish books in its collections (there seem to have been a few codices in Arabic though). The first Turkish manuscripts enter the Bibliothèque du Roy precisely in 1668-69 through the acquisition of two private libraries, that of Cardinal Mazarin, an important statesman, which included 51 volumes and that of Gilbert Gaulmin, a man of law and science, who had collected more than one hundred volumes, hundred and thirteen to be exact. This period coincides with the beginning of what we

would call today « acquisition policy » : For oriental books, it was the King's order to have books collected in the Ottoman Empire, in Turkish of course but also in other oriental languages.

This policy was pursued in the 18th C. Officials were sent on assignment to the Levant for this purpose. Promising young men were trained to master Turkish. Libraries of erudites having Turkish volumes were added to the Bibliothèque, erudites some of whom never even travelled to Turkey, such as Thévenot (keeper of the library at one point of his career) or Colbert himself. Even if these two major figures belong to the previous century, their libraries were acquired years after their death. For instance Colbert dies in 1683 but his library is added to the royal collections more than fifty years later, in 1732. The first catalogue of oriental books is compiled in 1739 with 396 Turkish entries. These holdings will be referred to « Ancien fonds turc ».

Similarly, following the French Revolution, when private libraries are confiscated, more than one hundred Turkish books are transferred from the Abbaye de Saint Germain, a complex in the heart of Paris whose monastery had a very rich library. In fact the hundred or so Turkish manuscripts kept there belonged previously to Seguier, the erudite statesman, whose impressive collection included a number of « manuscrits arabes » some of which were in fact in Turkish !

Then arrives the 19th C when interest for the Orient turns into a field of study, when Orientalists are scholars. The considerable increase of Oriental material including naturally Turkish is thus thanks to such figures as Charles Schefer or Decordemanche, to mention only two. Another interesting source of enrichment was books collected officially from the North African colonies. In 1832 for instance, a huge trunk containing only books is sent from Algeria to the Bibliothèque by royal order.

During the 20th century, individual purchases are quite frequent. After the publication of the two volume Blochet catalogue we will mention again later, a major collection is added, namely that bought from the Turcologue Jean Deny. At the turn of this century, the late Turkish folklorist Pertev Naili Boratav's private library is donated to the BnF, including some of the most recent productions in popular literature, a set of *cönk*.

The only manuscript that was acquired recently was an autograph poem by the famous novelist Yasar Kemal published in the 1940s.

Some figures

- « Ancien fonds » : Turc 1 to 396 (1668-1739)
- Supplément turc 1 to 1419 (1740-1935)
 - Both of which make up Blochet's catalogue
- Supplément turc 1420-[1641]....= « Nouvelles acquisitions » (1946-....)
- 2037 volumes (e.g., Turc 357 = 61 booklets ; Turc 356 = 11 volumes)

6 Some figures

Not all the books' provenances have been determined though : more than 600 of them remain of unknown origins.

Since we tackle some figures, let's go on with the numbers :

The « Ancien fonds » as we saw previously, include 396 « call numbers » whereas « Supplément turc », manuscripts acquired between roughly 1740 and 1930, that is from the second half of the eighteenth century to the first quarter of the twentieth century sum up to one thousand and nineteen items.


An additional holding referred to as « Nouvelles acquisitions turques » as of 1946 include, to this day, two hundred and twenty one items.

Thus the whole collection gathered under « Fonds turc » includes in fact more than 2037 volumes, that is more than the sum of the above mentioned sets of holdings, for there entries are such as « Turc 357 » that includes 61 booklets of various *kiraathane* recitations. Another example is the better known « Turc 356 », the Turkish translation of *A Thousand and one nights* that belonged to Galland, with its 11 volumes.

There are also some « stray » pieces that are identified and bound with French manuscripts, mostly official documents, not part of the “Fonds turc”. One such piece that our colleague Annie Berthier « discovered » is the first letter Suleyman the Great sends to François I in 1521.

Content

- **Periods**
Oldest : 13th C
Mostly 15th through 19th C copies
Most recent : 20th C
- **Subjects**
History, Theology, Poetry,
Special topics : music, natural sciences, calligraphy, astrology, maths
Some archival documents
A bilingual collection of translations by Jeunes des Langues (early 18th C)
- **Languages**
- **Illustrations**
- **Copists**



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7 Content

Periods : Annie Berthier writes that the oldest manuscript in the Turkish collection dates from the 13th C but I must admit I have not been able to identify it, not yet! But mostly there are copies from the 15th through the 19th centuries . And as I said previously, the latest piece from Yasar Kemal's hand can be dated to late nineteen eighties although he composed it some forty years earlier.

Script & Language : All, except this piece and nine notebooks filled by an obscure but highly interesting poet by the name of Ilhan Şevket Aykut are in Arabic script. Annie Berthier has depicted around 35 volumes in various Turkic languages other than Turkish, such as Cagatay, Tatar, Kipçak...

She also identified approximately 300 manuscripts authored or copied by Europeans, not surprisingly dealing with linguistic issues, such as dictionaries, grammars, idioms, while some relate to the history of the Western world.

There is indeed a whole lot of translation volumes, bilingual French and Turkish, exercise notebooks of Jeunes de Langues, the young men trained in Turkish way back during early 18th century.

Subjects : Primarily the content deals with history, theology, and poetry ; there are quite a number of literary works, both classical and popular compilations. A scholar from Turkey is expected to identify the poetry mecmua during a three month study period beginning next mid June.

There are also books on law, music, biology, astrology, etc. ; a great amount of archival material still deserves to be « discovered » as I am told by a young historian who recently went through Supplément turc 1195 and 1196 whose hook fell upon another unknown letter by Suleyman the Great whom Blochet mistakenly took for Suleyman II (or was it a typo mistake?)

Less than fifty volumes out of the total number mentioned above contain paintings. Most of these books have been digitized and those who remain are on the waiting list to go online on Gallica.

An important work remains to be done on the copists, watermarks and seals.

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 - Introduction
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 - **Catalogues**
 - Access to the holdings in situ and remote
 - Other services



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8 Catalogues (reminder of outline) Which brings us to the catalogues

Catalogues

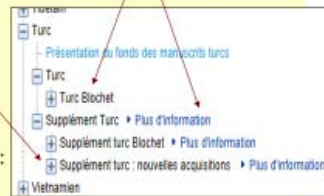
- Blochet, E. *Catalogue des manuscrits turcs*, Paris, 1932-1933 (2 vol.)

<http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k2094652.r=bloch+turcs.langFR>

<http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k209466f.r=bloch+turcs.langFR>

- « Nouvelles acquisitions »
Handwritten catalogue in the reading room

- BnF Archives et manuscrits (BAM) :
<http://archivesetmanuscrits.bnf.fr/>



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9 Catalogues : information

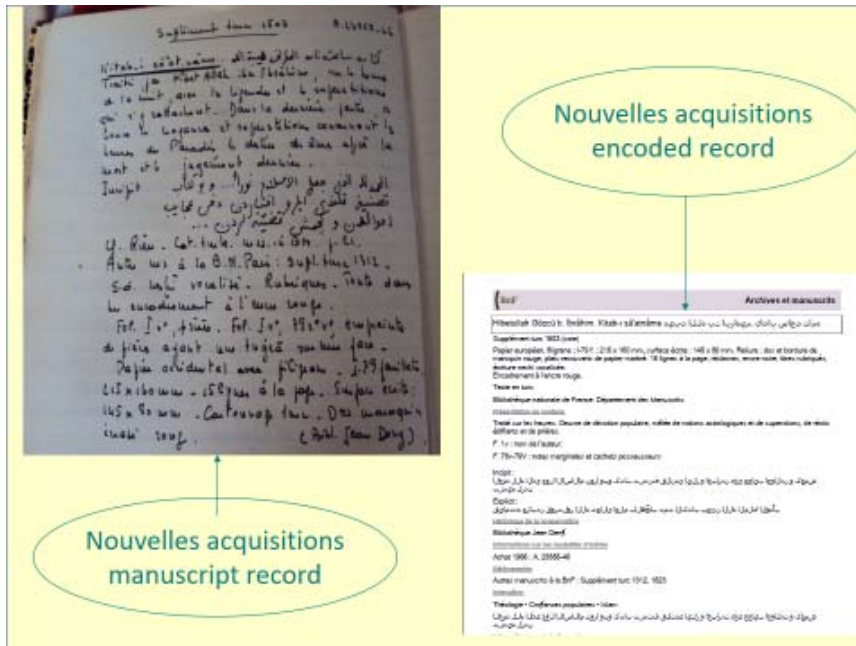
There is, as mentioned briefly above, the two volume catalogue by Blochet dedicated to the Turkish collection. It was published in 1932-33 and includes the records listed in the first handwritten inventory compiled in 1739. These two volumes have been digitised and may be seen on Gallica in pdf format. However, in order to improve access to all the descriptions, the records have also been encoded in the online catalogue BnF Archives et manuscrits, better known as « BAM ». Slight editing has been done to Blochet's prose in the process of transfer, so that there is no loss of significant information. Whenever corrections are made, they are mentioned as modifications.

10 ici montrer les deux versions d'une notice Blochet

Revenir sur 9

The manuscripts that were acquired after the publication of Blochet are briefly described and sometimes only identified in a notebook available only in the BnF Manuscripts reading room. They are gradually encoded in BAM. In order to accelerate their reporting, incipits and explicits as well as the bibliography are left for a later stage. On the other hand, they all include authorised

names and full codicological description in EAD format on an XML basis.



Ici montrer les deux versions d'une notice « Nouvelles acquisitions turques »

Revenir sur 9

To sum up, all the Turkish manuscripts will be available on BAM, some of which will require improved records!

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 - General information on the collection
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 - Access to the holdings in situ and remotely
 - ❖ Address, working hours
 - ❖ Conditions
 - Other services



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12 Access to the holdings (outline)


Now a few words about actual access to the material, this holds for all the manuscripts at the BnF

Access to the holdings

- **Adress, working hours**
 - 5, rue Vivienne, Paris
 - Monday-Friday 10 am-6 pm ; Saturday 10 am-5 pm

OR

- **Online**
 - Gallica : <http://gallica.bnf.fr> &
 - Mandragore : <http://mandragore.bnf.fr/html/accueil.html>



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13 Access to the holdings :

First of all, the manuscript holdings remain in the historical premises of the BnF called « Richelieu ».


Richelieu is presently undergoing a series of liftings, important renovation works are going on but the institution prefers to remain open even if this means it will take much longer to complete the projet.

Access to the site is by the back entry ; opening hours are kept as before.

Some material has been digitised and can be accessed online via Gallica and Mandragore but as far as the Turkish collection is concerned unfortunately only very little is digitally available.

Access to the holdings

- **Conditions**
 - Reader's card ; research project, etc.
 - Originals & « Réserve »
 - Duplication
 - Appointments



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14 Conditions de consultations

In theory original copies may be seen if they have not been microfilmed or digitised. Part, not all, of the Turkish collection has been microfilmed in the past and most of the microfilms are white and black which is not satisfactory in many cases. If one has already seen the microfilm and requires, for further in-depth study the original, permission must be asked for.

Only certain codices classified as « Réserve » require the agreement of the department director. Again, a very small number of Turkish manuscripts are in this case. And by policy, these volumes have been digitised.

The best thing for those coming from outside Paris to see manuscripts is to get in touch with myself or one of my colleagues and make an appointment.

Photocopy from microfilms are possible on the spot ; in many cases (where digital copies do not exist for instance) photos may be taken.

Remote services



- Copies : reproduction@bnf.fr
- Inquiries : « Sindbad »
- « Signets » : bookmarks

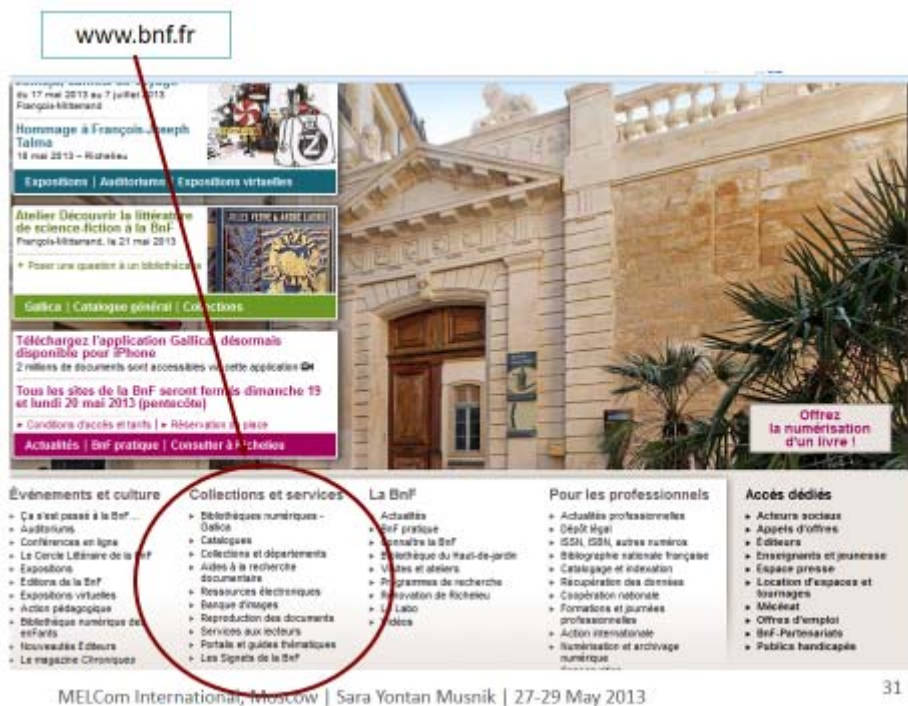
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15 Services

Otherwise, duplication may be requested via the special service called Reproduction. Prices, formats and delivery details are detailed on our website.

Inquiries concerning the Turkish manuscripts may be put through Sindbad, a question-answer system similar to « Ask a Librarian ».



16 Où trouver ces informations sur le site de la BnF

All this information and more may be found on the website of the library. The homepage being extremely loaded with links, I suggest you take a look at the « Collections et Services » column circled on this slide.

(Censure!)

17 Conclusion : La pub !

This is as far as I can unveil the Turkish manuscripts.

An that was a France-wide reference in the nineteen eighties pictured a charming young woman in a bikini saying, « On September 2nd I take the top off ». Everyone waited breathless for a week, and we indeed saw her topless picture where she now promised to take the bottom off ...two days later, and there we all held our breaths. Indeed she kept her promise but the picture showed her nude only turning her back to us!

Likely, I will unveil the rest of the manuscripts in a future presentation. I hope you will wait with the same impatience.