INTRODUCTION

NOTE ON THE TERM "GARSHUNOGRAPHY"

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The current issue of *Hugoye* contains papers from a conference titled *Garshunography in the Syriac Tradition*. This brief note summarizes the argument, published elsewhere,[1] for coining the term *garshunography*.

The term Garshuni, whose origin is unknown, is mostly used to describe Arabic texts written in the Syriac alphabet. It has also been expanded to apply to other languages that are written in the Syriac alphabet. The phenomenon itself, viz. using the script of one language to write utterances of another language which already has a script associated with it socioliguistically, does not have linguistic technical term.

Two technical terms have already been used for this phenomenon. Recently, a book was published on the topic and using the term *allography*.[2] Note that the prefix *allo-* denotes *variation* or *departure from the norm* which indeed seems applicable here. Allography, however, means something totally different in writing

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[1] George A. Kiraz, 'Garshunography: Terminology and Some Formal Properties of Writing One Language in the Script of Another' in J. den Heijer, A. Schmidt, and T. Pataridze (eds.), *Scripts beyond Borders. A Survey of Allographic Traditions in the Euro-Mediterranean World* (Louvain: Peeters, 2014) 65–74.

[2] See note 1.

systems:[3] a) to describe a diachronic graphical variant of writing such as the interchangeable use of <u> and <v> in the Latin script, or the writing of Dutch <ÿ> for <ij>; b) to designate realized variants of a grapheme such as Greek <σ> and <ς> or Syriac <ܣ> and <ܝ>; c) to denote instances of one grapheme in different fonts such as <a a *a*> (Arial, Garamond, Lucidia);[4] d) with the term *allograph recognition*[5] to describe the recognition of variations of the same grapheme from different hands. All of the above usages have something in common: an *allograph* describes a variation of a grapheme (the same way an *allophone* is an instance of a phoneme and an *allomorph* is an instance of a morpheme). Earlier, the term *heterography* was used for this purpose.[6] Here too, the term has a different meaning in the field of writing systems: "a differentiation in spelling which distinguishes different meanings of homophonous words or phrase"[7] such as English *right*, *rite*, *write*, and *wright*. Both *allography* and *heterography*, while applicable, have already attained different technical meanings in writing systems for quite some time. The same can be said for the term *transliteration*. Using any of them for something that is quite different from their original meaning would overlead them and cause ambiguity in the technical terminology of writing systems.

I advocated in the paper mentioned earlier that the existing term Garšūnī be used as a source to coin a term for the phenomenon itself; hence, *garšunography* (or simply *garshunography*). To those who might object that the term sounds 'foreign' as it has no Latin-Greek root, I pointed out other linguistic terms that are now ubiquitous: *schwa* from the Semitic grammatical tradition, *sandhi* from Sanskrit, *abjad* from the Arabic mnemonic for 'alphabet', *kashida* from Persian, and *taṭwīl* from Arabic to name a

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[3] F. Coulmas, *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Writing Systems* (1999) 9.

[4] G. Sampson, *Writing Systems* (1985) 25.

[5] H. Teulings, L. Schomaker, J. Gerritsen, H. Drexler and M. Alberts, 'An on-line handwriting-recognition system based on unreliable modules', in R. Plamondon and C. G. Leedham, *Computer Processing of Handwriting* (1990) 167-85.

[6] A. Mengozzi, 'The History of Garshuni as a Writing System' 297; A. Mengozzi, 'Garshuni', in S. Brock, A. Butts, G. Kiraz, and L. Van Rompay, *Gorgias Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Syriac Heritage* (2011) 172.

[7] Coulmas 202.

few. To those who may object that Garšūnī is an ethnolexeme, I pointed out that the utterance /garšūnī/ is used in many languages such as Arabic, Turkish, Malayalam, and all sorts of European languages within the Syriac diaspora. The term already appears in the *Oxford English Dictionary* with a citation from as early as 1856[8] and in *Webster's Third*.[9] The fact that the etymology, origin, and basic meaning of the word is unknown remove any possibility of ambiguity.

I then used the term *garšūnography* productively and defined the following terms:

garšūnographeme (adj. *garšūnographemic*) An adaptation of a grapheme from the target script to represent a grapheme or phoneme from the source language; e.g., <ܓ> from Syriac <ܓ> for Arabic <ج>.

allogaršūnographs Allographs of a garšūnographeme.

allogaršūnography (adj. *allogaršūnographic*) The realization of variants of a *garšūnographic* text; e.g., Syriac text written in both the Arabic and Latin scripts.

hetero-garšūnographeme (adj. *hetero-garšūnographemic*) A borrowing of a grapheme from the script of the source language to be used in the target script; e.g., Malayalam graphemes used in Syro-Malayalam garšūnography.

When using the term Garšūnī unmodified, one understands that the source language is Arabic and the target script is Syriac. As the term *garshunography* here knowns no source or target language (it describes a writing phenomenon), the existing tradition of compounding the target script with the source language can be used. Hence, one can speak of Judeo-Arabic garshunography, Armeno-Turkish, garshunography, etc. For details on the argument, see the reference in footnote 1.

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[8] J. Simpson and E. Weiner (eds.), *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed., 20 vols. (2009).

[9] 'karshuni.' *Webster's Third New International Dictionary, Unabridged* (2002). http://unabridged.merriam-webster.com (25 Oct. 2011).