

BEYOND CONFESSIONAL BOUNDARIES

*Cultural and Intellectual Currents
among the Ottoman Subjects*

Edited by
EVANGELIA BALTA

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Introduction

The Topic

Historians have long portrayed the Ottoman Empire through the prism of confessional pluralism, emphasizing the separate but coexisting worlds of Muslims, Christians, and Jews under the *millet* system. Yet beneath these administrative distinctions lay a dense web of cultural, linguistic, and intellectual interactions that consistently transcended such boundaries. From shared everyday life to the circulation of manuscripts and print materials across linguistic and religious lines, Ottoman subjects participated in a cosmopolitan milieu that defies rigid confessional categories.

This collective volume examines those zones of contact and exchange, arguing that Ottoman intellectual life was shaped as much by cross-confessional entanglement as by religious difference. It explores the Ottoman Empire and its post-Ottoman afterlives through the lens of language and textual production, foregrounding communities whose voices have long been marginalized within nationalist and monolingual historiographies. Taken together, the contributions argue that linguistic practice in the Ottoman world was not a fixed marker of identity but a dynamic medium through which faith, power, belonging, and memory were continually negotiated in a multilingual and mobile imperial setting. The Ottoman Mediterranean and Anatolia emerge as interconnected zones shaped by movement, encounter, and translation rather than rigid cultural or confessional boundaries. Travel writing, geographic naming, and symbolic mapping appear as formative practices through which both imperial subjects and outsiders interpreted difference, coexistence, and universal human order.

At the heart of the collection lies a sustained engagement with Karamanlidika textual culture and the intellectual life of Turkish-speaking Orthodox Christians from the late Ottoman period through the interwar years. Manuscripts, newspapers, schoolbooks, poetry, legal texts, and refugee journalism are treated as central sites of cultural production that mediated education, religious practice, reform politics, and public opinion. These sources illuminate how non-Muslim intellectuals, teachers, clerics, journalists, and bureaucrats actively participated in imperial reform, constitutionalism, legal modernization, and transnational debates—an aspect of Ottoman culture that has remained largely unknown.

The essays further demonstrate that multilingualism permeated all dimensions

of everyday Ottoman life, from commerce and education to administration, literature, and performance. Collectively they reveal language as a form of social capital, a strategy of survival, and a repository of communal memory. They challenge retrospective assumptions that neatly equate language with nation, religion, or ethnicity, instead exposing a world in which linguistic hybridity was an everyday, functional, and often unremarked phenomenon.

Finally, the collection traces the historical shift from an Ottoman confessional order—where religion rather than language structured difference—to nationalist regimes that rigidly aligned language with ethnic and national identity. Literary and intellectual responses to this transformation reveal how previously unproblematic forms of hybridity were rendered visible, contested, and ultimately excluded. By recovering texts and experiences that resist monolingual and nationalist categorization, the collection calls for a rethinking of Ottoman and post-Ottoman cultural history—one that recognizes multilingualism as a constitutive feature of imperial modernity and a key to understanding the lived complexities of belonging, loss, and coexistence.

Outline of the Book

I. The Politics of Perception

The collection starts with a section that underscores how mobility, observation, and naming intersect to shape both external perceptions and self-conceptions of communities in the Ottoman Mediterranean and Anatolia. Two essays reveal the multifaceted ways in which human encounters, linguistic practice, and symbolic geographies mediated understandings of cultural difference and global human harmony. Mediterranean and Anatolia were central to Ottoman imperial life, functioning not as fixed borders but as interconnected spaces shaped by movement and exchange. Recent scholarship emphasizes the Ottoman Mediterranean as a shared zone of interaction rather than a simple frontier between Islam and Christendom. The early modern Mediterranean and Anatolian worlds were spaces of complex cultural, religious, and linguistic encounters, where travel, naming, and cross-cultural interaction profoundly shaped perceptions of identity and difference. Filip Malešević emphasizes that Guillaume Postel's 1560 work *La République des Turcs* exemplifies how travel could serve as a lens for understanding empire, religion, and universal human unity. Unlike later Orientalist representations, which often cast the Ottoman

world as an exotic “Other,” Postel’s writing presents a nuanced ethnographic and theological reflection that highlights the integration of different communities, including Greek and Armenian Christians, and the potential for interfaith and intercultural understanding. Travel, in this framework, was not merely a diplomatic or commercial endeavor but a conduit for intellectual, spiritual, and ethical inquiry.

Complementing this perspective, Ayça Baydar and Ümit Eser’s *Karamania Reimagined* demonstrates how geography, language, and naming operate as tools of social and cultural demarcation. The term “Karamania,” initially a neutral geographic designation, evolved into a marker of alterity used by European travelers and Greek Orthodox elites to define Turcophone Orthodox Christians, known as Karamanlis, as culturally and linguistically distinct from mainstream Greek society. The Karamanlis occupied an “in-between” space: Orthodox in religion but Turcophone, geographically and culturally peripheral. Over time, particularly during the late Ottoman period, this label was reclaimed as a positive marker of local pride, cultural heritage, and Anatolian identity, illustrating the capacity of marginalized communities to transform outsider-imposed identities into symbols of belonging.

II. Between Empire and Nation

The second section, entitled “Karamanlidika Voices, Ottoman Reforms, and the Politics of Print (1860s–1930s),” brings together eight studies that explore the textual production, intellectual activity, and political engagement of Turkish-speaking Orthodox Christians from the late Ottoman period through the early decades of the twentieth century. Focusing on both published and unpublished Karamanlidika sources, the contributions illuminate how this distinctive textual tradition functioned as a dynamic medium for negotiating faith, education, communal identity, and political belonging within a multilingual and multi-confessional imperial environment. Collectively, the studies underscore the centrality of Karamanlidika manuscripts, journalism, and intellectual labor to broader debates on reform, authority, and public opinion in the late Ottoman and post-Ottoman worlds.

Two studies in this section draw on Karamanlidika manuscripts preserved at the Centre for Asia Minor Studies, offering rare insight into the cultural, educational, and religious life of Turkish-speaking Orthodox communities in late Ottoman Anatolia. Together, they demonstrate how manuscript culture

served as a key site for articulating moral values, historical continuity, and communal cohesion.

Enver Akova examines a Karamanlidika adaptation of Sophocles' *Antigone*, contained in a late nineteenth- to early twentieth-century notebook belonging to Anargyros Christidis, a Greek Orthodox teacher in Ürgüp (Cappadocia). Through selective appropriation of classical antiquity, Christidis reworked Greek tragedy for a Turcophone Orthodox audience embedded within the educational networks of Ottoman Cappadocia. Akova situates the notebook within the broader infrastructure of Greek education in the region, emphasizing the role of teachers as cultural mediators who bridged classical heritage, vernacular language, and local social realities. The adaptation's hybrid linguistic register—combining Karamanlidika with Ottoman political terminology, Islamic religious vocabulary, and contemporary military imagery—reveals how Hellenic identity could be articulated under imperial rule without recourse to philological purity. In contrast to canonical Greek editions of *Antigone*, Christidis' version functioned as a locally grounded, performative, and pedagogical text. Akova further situates this adaptation within the broader nineteenth-century revival of ancient drama in Europe and the Greek world, noting that performances within Greek communities, both inside and outside the Ottoman Empire, were closely tied to processes of national and communal identity formation. "Sophocles' *Antigone* is one of the enduring and canonic acts in the history of our philosophic literacy, political consciousness", noted Georges Steiner. Christidis' *Antigone* thus emerges as a rare early Turkish-language engagement with Greek tragedy, predating modern Turkish translations and exemplifying the mobilization of classical texts within non-Muslim educational contexts.

Complementing this focus on education and classical reception, Stavros Anestidis explores the religious, social, and cultural significance of pilgrimage (*hadjiliki*) to the Holy Land among the Karamanlides in the late Ottoman period. Drawing on the 1906 diary of Hadji Agathagelos Hadjiagasoglou, Anestidis demonstrates that pilgrimage to Jerusalem functioned as a deeply embedded communal institution rather than merely an expression of individual piety. The attainment of Hadji status conferred social prestige, moral authority, and heightened responsibility, reinforcing hierarchies of respect and collective belonging within Karamanli communities. The diary documents established pilgrimage routes, often via Cyprus, and records key ritual practices such as baptism in the Jordan River and participation in the Holy Fire ceremony in Jerusalem. The collection of sacred objects, participation in collective rites, and public celebrations upon return underscore the performative and communal

dimensions of pilgrimage. As a historical source, the diary provides rare insight into the everyday religiosity, ritual life, linguistic practices, and social experiences of Turkish-speaking Orthodox Christians at the turn of the twentieth century.

Akova's and Anestidis's essays reveal the richness of Karamanlidika manuscript culture as a vehicle for negotiating faith, education, and identity in late Ottoman Asia Minor. Whether through the pedagogical reworking of classical tragedy or the ritualized practice of pilgrimage, Karamanli texts emerge as crucial sites in which communal values were preserved, reinterpreted, and publicly enacted within a complex imperial setting.

A second cluster of studies examines journalism and intellectual activity as arenas in which communal relations, political authority, and emerging notions of public opinion were contested. Stefo Benlisoy analyzes the polemic between the Ottoman newspapers *Anatoli* and *Vatan* during the height of the Cretan Crisis (1866–67), situating the debate within the broader tensions the uprising generated between Muslim and Christian communities across Anatolia. Through a close reading of *Anatoli*'s issues from September 1866 to April 1867, Benlisoy shows how Evangelinos Misailidis' newspaper sought to articulate the concerns of Anatolian Orthodox populations while mediating between provincial grievances and the central authorities. The Cretan revolt intensified communal anxieties and heightened the state's sensitivity to foreign intervention, leading to stricter censorship and increased press surveillance. In this context, *Anatoli*'s reporting on violence against Christians and the insistence on the press's duty to inform and admonish the state provoked accusations from *Vatan* of slander and incitement. The polemic reveals divergent conceptions of journalism: while *Vatan* emphasized protecting state dignity and suppressing destabilizing narratives, *Anatoli* framed the press as a public service grounded in Tanzimat ideals of legality, equality, and accountability. The confrontation exemplifies how the expanding Ottoman press became a contested arena for negotiating communal relations, state authority, and public opinion during one of the most volatile episodes of the late Tanzimat era.

In parallel, Ibrahim H. Kalkan and Owen R. Miller examine the life, political thought, and imprisonment of Teodor Kasap, a key yet often overlooked figure of the Young Ottoman movement. An Ottoman Greek, freemason, multilingual publisher, disciple of Alexandre Dumas, and close collaborator of leading reformers such as Namık Kemal, Kasap played a central role in disseminating liberal ideals—constitutionalism, parliamentary governance, press freedom, and equality between Muslims and non-Muslims—through journalism, satire, political

commentary, and theater. His arrest in 1877 marked a decisive turning point in Ottoman politics, symbolizing the abrupt shift from constitutional reform to authoritarian rule under Sultan Abdülhamid II. Sentenced to three years' imprisonment for publishing a satirical cartoon criticizing censorship, Kasap became emblematic of the suppression of early Ottoman liberalism and the emergence of a modern police state. His career and downfall illuminate both the aspirations of the Young Ottoman movement and the increasingly narrow limits of dissent in the Hamidian era.

Together, these studies underscore how late Ottoman newspapers and intellectuals operated at the intersection of communal politics, state authority, and emerging public opinion. From the debates surrounding *Anatoli* and *Vatan* during the Cretan Crisis to the persecution of Young Ottoman figures like Kasap, the press emerged as both a site of negotiation and confrontation, reflecting broader struggles over reform, equality, and the limits of dissent in a rapidly changing empire.

Extending the analysis of the Karamanlidika press into the post-Ottoman period, Meryem Orakçı investigates the newspaper *Muhacir Sedası* as a key source for understanding how Turkish-speaking Orthodox refugees in Greece interpreted developments in early Republican Turkey following the 1923 Population Exchange. Orakçı argues that the newspaper functioned as a practical guide for resettlement and as a politicized platform that articulated nostalgia, resentment, and aspirations for return to Anatolia. Through hostile portrayals of Mustafa Kemal and the nascent Turkish Republic, pessimistic assessments of reforms and economic conditions, and its framing of events such as the Kurdish uprising led by Sheikh Said, *Muhacir Sedası* constructed a narrative in which instability in Turkey both justified refugee suffering and sustained hopes of repatriation. The study highlights how refugee media shaped collective memory, political identity, and perceptions of the lost homeland during a period of forced migration and national reconfiguration.

Two complementary studies –Evangelia Balta's examination of Athonite Karamanlidika publications and Antony Shin's contextualization of an elegiac poem for Ecumenical Patriarch Joachim III– together illuminate how language, confessional identity, and ecclesiastical authority were articulated and defended within Anatolian Orthodox communities from the early nineteenth to the early twentieth century.

Evangelia Balta's study focuses on two Karamanlidika works dated 1806 and 1901, situating them at the intersection of Athonite monastic scholarship, Ottoman legal culture, and the evolving "Privilege Question" that structured

relations between the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the Ottoman state. The first text, the *Proskynitarion of Mount Athos* (1806), was translated and published by Athonite hieromonk Zacharias the Hagiorite, a pivotal figure in Karamanlidika religious publishing and a pioneering author of a Turkish-Greek dictionary. His association with the Dionysiou Monastery further situates him within the *Kollyvades* and *Philokalia* movements, underscoring the role of Athonite spiritual renewal and textual transmission in sustaining Orthodox identity among Turcophone Rums. The second work analyzed by Balta, the *History of Mount Athos* (1901), served a markedly different function. Published on the occasion of the re-election of Ecumenical Patriarch Joachim III, the book mobilized Athonite history and Ottoman documentary evidence to defend the antiquity and legitimacy of Orthodox ecclesiastical privileges at a moment of acute political and legal contestation. By reproducing Ottoman and Islamic documents in Karamanlidika, the text directly addressed the Turkish-speaking Orthodox public, enlisting them in support of Joachim III's ecumenical and ethnarchic vision amid Ottoman centralization, legal reform, and nationalist fragmentation within the Orthodox world following the Bulgarian Schism. A significant contribution of this study lies in the reassessment of the controversial firman attributed to Sultan Selim I, which granted privileges to the Xeropotamou Monastery. Through systematic comparison of Karamanlidika, Greek, and Ottoman archival versions, Balta confirms the document's authenticity, overturning earlier claims of forgery. This finding underscores the indispensability of Ottoman archival research for evaluating Athonite documentary traditions and cautions against conclusions based solely on monastic copies detached from their broader legal and administrative contexts.

Antony Shin's study complements this institutional and documentary perspective by turning to a literary response to Joachim III's death in 1912: an elegiac poem composed by Papa Neophytos of Talas (Moutalaski). Shin situates the poem within the broader historical landscape of Joachim III's patriarchate, marked by efforts to restore the authority of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, to balance Greek national aspirations with the multi-ethnic character of the Orthodox *millet*, to promote education independent of the Greek state, and to mediate intensifying national conflicts in the Balkans. Against this backdrop, Papa Neophytos' elegy emerges as more than a local priest's act of mourning. Its self-effacing dedication, likening the poem to the widow's small offering, expresses both reverence for Joachim III and fidelity to the linguistic and cultural universe of Anatolian Turcophone Orthodoxy. Written in Karamanlidika, the poem stands as a vernacular testament to

Joachim's enduring legacy and as a rare literary witness to the lived experience, emotional world, and ecclesiastical loyalties of central Anatolian Orthodox communities on the eve of their dissolution.

Balta's and Shin's studies demonstrate that Karamanlidika texts –whether devotional, historical, legal, or poetic– were instruments through which Turkish-speaking Orthodox Christians negotiated faith, authority, and belonging in a rapidly changing Ottoman world.

The section concludes with Eleftheria Zei's reassessment of Konstantinos (Kostaki) Anthopoulos Paşa, a prominent yet largely underrepresented figure in late Ottoman governance and legal reform. Drawing on newly examined sources, Zei reconstructs Anthopoulos' career as that of a central practitioner of judicial modernization and a key intermediary between palace politics, reformist bureaucratic circles, and the Orthodox millet. Trained in law, Anthopoulos entered the Tanzimat reform apparatus early and joined the codification committee led by Ahmet Cevdet Paşa in 1868, contributing to the establishment of the legal foundations of the *Nizamiye* court system. His subsequent ascent through the reformed judiciary was marked by service in the Grand Council of Justice, the Court of Cassation, and the Council of State, as well as by authorship of key regulations governing legal and municipal administration. As governor of Crete (1886–88), Anthopoulos sought to strengthen judicial institutions, professionalize legal personnel, and promote administrative integrity amid fiscal crisis and heightened communal tensions following the Convention of Halepa. His efforts to standardize legal language, documentation, and statistical reporting contributed to the emergence of a shared public legal culture. Later, as Ottoman ambassador to London (1895–1902), he engaged directly with major imperial questions, including the Armenian crisis and the Cretan Question. Zei's study challenges the marginalization of Anthopoulos in existing historiography and underscores the central role of Ottoman Orthodox elites in the everyday production of reform and public modernity.

The eight studies in this section highlight Karamanlidika texts, journalism, and intellectual activity as key fields for examining issues of education, faith, authority, and political change from the late Ottoman period to the interwar years. By foregrounding the voices and practices of Turkish-speaking Orthodox Christians, the essays bring to light the multiple actors who shaped the empire's evolving public sphere.

III. At the Crossroads of Tongues

The works in following section demonstrate that language in the Ottoman Empire cannot be understood as a neutral instrument of communication. Rather, it functioned as a marker of social status, a conduit to power, a means of negotiating identity, and a repository of collective memory. From merchants' phrasebooks and Phanariote linguistic hierarchies to Kurdish folk songs written in Greek letters, multiconfessional and multilingual practices reveal the profound entanglement of everyday life with imperial structures, and cultural self-understanding.

Kudret Emiroğlu argues that the history of foreign language learning in the late Ottoman Empire, particularly Greek, has been largely overlooked and inadequately theorized, despite clear evidence that multilingualism played a significant role in everyday, commercial, and social life. It contends that serious, institutionalized language learning did not meaningfully emerge until the 19th century and developed in three identifiable phases: (1) traditional verse dictionaries rooted in Islamic pedagogical culture, (2) practical conversation guides aimed at artisans and merchants, and (3) modern dictionaries and grammar books shaped by print culture and formal education. By examining Greek-Turkish dictionaries and multilingual guides, the author demonstrates that language learning evolved from memorization-based, manuscript traditions toward functional, communicative, and modern pedagogical approaches, driven primarily by practical social and economic needs rather than elite intellectual or diplomatic imperatives. The essay ultimately calls for systematic bibliographical and archival research to establish language learning as a distinct field of Ottoman historical inquiry, emphasizing its importance for understanding modernization, public sphere communication, and the transformation of linguistic consciousness in the late Ottoman period.

Alexandra Sfoini's study focuses on how multilingualism functioned as a source of power and self-definition among the Phanariote Greek elite. For figures such as Dimitrios Katartzis, mastery of Ottoman Turkish was indispensable for participation in imperial administration, while French opened access to Enlightenment thought and European intellectual networks. Yet Katartzis conceptualized language learning not merely as a technical skill, but as a moral and political project tied to the "progress of the nation." He insisted on a strict hierarchy and regulation of languages: Turkish was necessary but instrumental, French enriching but potentially dangerous, and modern Greek—the living language of the community—the true foundation of national cohesion. Excessive

immersion in foreign literary cultures, he warned, risked alienation and the erosion of collective identity. Sfoini thus reveals how language functioned simultaneously as a tool of imperial service, social mobility, and national self-fashioning within, rather than against, the Ottoman order. Central to Katartzis's thought was the cultivation of the nation's "natural language," modern Greek, which he regarded as the primary foundation of cultural identity and civic cohesion. While he revered ancient Greek as a source of intellectual authority and moral exemplarity, he rejected excessive archaism and argued that national education should prioritize the living language spoken by the community. Only through the systematic cultivation of this language, alongside a carefully regulated engagement with foreign languages, could the *Romioi* achieve genuine cultural progress and recognition. Ultimately, the essay shows that Katartzis articulated a non-revolutionary, Enlightenment-inspired vision of national development within the Ottoman order. He framed the Greek Orthodox community as a legitimate political and cultural entity—captive yet coherent, subordinate yet participatory—whose advancement depended on education, linguistic discipline, and cultural self-awareness rather than on the overthrow of imperial authority. This perspective reflects the broader Phanariote strategy of reconciling Ottoman service, European intellectual exchange, and Greek Orthodox identity, laying important ideological groundwork for the emergence of modern Greek national consciousness.

The study by Evangelia Balta and Ayhan Tek examines a unique corpus of seventeen Kurdish-language folk songs preserved in a manuscript by Petros Georgopoulos, an Orthodox Rum from the village of Bakos in the vilayet of Diyarbekir, written in Kurdish using the Greek alphabet. Situating these songs within the broader ethnographic, historical, and autobiographical writings of Georgopoulos, as well as refugee testimonies from the Archive of Oral History of the Centre for Asia Minor Studies, the article illuminates the cultural world of the largely overlooked Kurdish-speaking Orthodox Rum community of southeastern Anatolia. What renders Georgopoulos's account particularly significant is its emphasis on the shared fate of diverse ethno-religious groups whose suffering has often been unevenly represented in historical scholarship. His testimony does not merely recount isolated acts of brutality but offers a sustained narrative of systematic destruction directed against multiple Christian communities, including Armenians, Syriacs, Chaldeans, and Orthodox Rums. Equally striking is the way Georgopoulos interweaves personal experience with collective trauma. The loss of family members, the devastation of villages such as Bakos, and the transformation of Diyarbekir into a city crowded with refugees

are narrated not as abstract historical processes but as lived realities. Through detailed contextualization, the study reconstructs the multiethnic and multireligious landscape of late Ottoman Diyarbekir. It traces the profound disruptions caused by Ottoman centralization, the Young Turk era, the massacres of 1895 and 1915, war, famine, and forced displacement, following the fate of the Kurdish-speaking Orthodox Christians of the Diyarbekir region up to the population exchange and their settlement in Greece. The songs, encompassing wedding rituals, love, conscription, religious devotion, and lamentation, function as vehicles of collective memory and historical testimony. They encode experiences of coexistence, violence, loss, and exile, transforming personal grief and local destruction into communal narratives of trauma and remembrance. By presenting the Kurdish poems/songs alongside modern transcriptions and English translations, the study contributes to Kurdish literary studies, genocide and memory studies, and Ottoman social history, while preserving the intangible heritage of a excluded community whose voice has largely vanished from the historical record.

Collectively, the studies of this section underscore the need for a more systematic investigation of language learning and linguistic practices in the multiethnic empire –not only to better understand modernization and education, but also to recover the voices, strategies, and memories of communities that coexisted in the Ottoman world.

IV. Jewish Figures in Ottoman and Greek Shadow Theatre

The Jewish presence in the Ottoman Empire is explored through Peri Efe's study on Jewish figures in Ottoman and Greek Shadow Theatre. It advocates for a re-examination of shadow theatre history that moves beyond nationalist frameworks, emphasizing the shared, hybrid, and pluralistic character of this art form. Recognizing Jewish participation and representation enriches our understanding of the sociocultural dynamics of Ottoman and post-Ottoman performance traditions, providing a more inclusive and transnational perspective on Karagöz and Karagiozis. Nationalist narratives in both Turkish and Greek histories sought to assert exclusive cultural ownership. Jewish characters appear as recurring stock figures in both traditions, often portrayed with stereotypical traits (stingy, cowardly, cunning). In Ottoman Karagöz, the Jewish figure frequently displayed wit and verbal dexterity, whereas in Greek Karagiozis, the portrayal became more one-dimensional, reflecting changing social and moral contexts. Acknowledging Jewish participation and

representation deepens our understanding of Ottoman and post-Ottoman performance traditions and offers a more inclusive, transnational perspective on Karagöz and Karagiozis.

V. Writing Turkish in Armenian Script

The fifth section is dedicated to Armeno-Turkish literature produced by and for the Turkish-speaking Armenians of the Ottoman Empire. Armeno-Turkish texts, encompassing schoolbooks, literary works, and administrative accounts, constitute a crucial yet understudied component of 19th and 20th century Ottoman cultural and linguistic heritage. These materials, written in Ottoman Turkish using the Armenian script, reveal the complex interplay of language, education, and social identity in the Ottoman empire, shedding light on aspects of intercultural exchanges.

Hülya Çelik and Ani Sargsyan highlight the historiographical neglect of Armeno-Turkish schoolbooks, which have been largely excluded from research due to the peripheral position of Turkish-speaking Armenians and scarce bibliographical sources. These textbooks exemplify linguistic hybridity and cultural adaptation, merging Armenian script with Ottoman Turkish and incorporating Islamic or Ottoman pedagogical models tailored for a Christian readership. Beyond their linguistic significance, these schoolbooks shed light on the role of religious institutions –such as the Armenian Apostolic Church, Protestant missions, and the Mekhitarist Congregation– in education, knowledge dissemination, and the modernization of Ottoman schooling. The authors advocate for the creation of a systematic, searchable corpus of these texts to enable digital analysis of language contact and hybridity, ultimately enriching the study of Ottoman sociolinguistics and the history of knowledge production.

Semanur Selçuk's examination of Hovhannes Balıkcıyan's *Kayseriye'nin Atık Kocabaşılığı* further underscores the socio-cultural value of Armeno-Turkish works. Serialized in the weekly *Felek* between 1882 and 1887, Balıkcıyan's booklet documents the life and authority of the *kocabaşı*, the leaders of non-Muslim communities, in early 19th-century Kayseri. Through accounts of clothing, education, administration, and public order, the study illuminates the social hierarchy, justice practices, and everyday life of the Armenian community. Balıkcıyan's narrative, likely informed by firsthand experience as Registrar of the Commercial Court, provides both historical documentation and linguistic evidence, demonstrating how Armeno-Turkish texts functioned as repositories of community memory and local governance.

Aram Ghoogasian extends the discussion to Armeno-Turkish literary production, with particular emphasis on the novel. He argues that the boundaries of both “Turkish” and “the novel” are historically fluid, since in the Ottoman context Turkish functioned as a multiethnic *lingua franca* rather than as a marker of national identity. Non-Muslim writers, including Armenians, played a central role in the development of modern Ottoman prose; however, their contributions have been largely excluded from literary historiography due to the dominance of a narrow nationalist framework. Ghoogasian underscores the need for a systematic bibliography of Armeno-Turkish novels, while drawing attention to methodological challenges such as unstable genre classifications, blurred distinctions between original works and translations, and incomplete or inconsistent bibliographic data. Establishing such a catalogue would illuminate the multilingual and multiethnic dimensions of Ottoman literary modernity and help rectify the historical marginalization of Armenian and other non-Muslim contributions.

Taken together, the three studies demonstrate that Armeno-Turkish texts—whether educational, literary, or administrative—offer a unique window into the linguistic, cultural, and social dynamics of the Ottoman Empire. Systematic study, including corpus creation, digital analysis, and bibliographic cataloguing, promises to enrich our understanding of Ottoman education, multilingualism, Christian Turkish literature, and cross-cultural knowledge networks, thereby bridging longstanding gaps in both historical and literary scholarship.

VI. Language, Faith, and the Limits of National Belonging in Ottoman and Greek Literature

The sixth, and last, section of the volume trace a historical shift from an Ottoman confessional order in which language was socially insignificant to nationalist paradigms that rigidly aligned language with religion and ethnicity. Lemos’s analysis of Karamanlides and Dalakoura and Balta’s study of interwar Greek refugee prose interrogate the shifting relationship between language, religion, and national belonging in the late Ottoman and early twentieth-century Greece and Turkey.

Anastasia Aglaia Lemos shows that the Empire’s confessional system structurally produced the relative invisibility of Turkish-speaking Orthodox Christians in Ottoman intellectual discourse. In the Ottoman order, communal difference was articulated primarily through religion rather than language; consequently, the widespread use of Turkish among Orthodox Christians elicited

little commentary or theoretical concern. Turkish texts written in Greek script (Karamanlidika) circulated as an unremarkable feature of social life. Late Ottoman fiction reflects this linguistic indifference: in works such as *Karabibik*, Muslims and Christians speak the same Turkish without narrative emphasis, while moral and religious distinctions remain the dominant interpretive focus. Intellectuals such as Nâmık Kemal and Ahmet Mithat Efendi, committed to imperial cohesion, did not mobilize Turkish-speaking Christians as evidence of linguistic integration. This epistemic framework shifted decisively in the late nineteenth century with the rise of linguistic nationalism. Figures such as Şemsettin Sami increasingly equated language with nationhood, reclassifying Turkish-speaking Orthodox populations as “Christian Turks.” In the Republican era, this logic hardened into an exclusionary literary historiography that expelled Karamanlidika from the canon of Turkish literature. The Karamanlidika textual production was extinguished with the exodus of the Turkish-speaking Orthodox population during the Population Exchange. It also remained outside the corpus of Turkish literature until around 2000, as it did not align with the Kemalist ideology of the “Turkish nation” that defined this long period of the Turkish Republican state.

Evangelia Balta and Veroniki Dalakoura’s study argues that interwar Greek refugee prose constitutes a crucial archive for understanding the cultural and ideological consequences of the Asia Minor Catastrophe and the 1923 Population Exchange. Forced migration operates not merely as a theme but as a structuring principle that reshapes narrative form, linguistic representation, and conceptions of national identity. These texts register the collapse of the *Megali Idea* and foreground displacement, loss, and fractured belonging. Within this corpus, language emerges as both a marker of identity and a site of conflict. Literary representations of Turkish-speaking Orthodox refugees destabilize language as a reliable criterion of national belonging, exposing tensions between nationalist ideology and lived experience. While official discourse unequivocally framed Anatolian Orthodox populations as Greek, interwar prose records suspicion, and ambivalence toward refugees in Greece. Through writers such as Prokopiou, Venezis, Doukas, Alexiou, and others, Dalakoura and Balta show how literature reproduces, negotiates, and occasionally subverts stereotypes, enabling moments of empathy that transcend national antagonisms. Concurrently, they underscore significant representational asymmetries, with Greek-speaking Muslims remaining conspicuously underrepresented.

These two studies highlight the capacity of literary texts to serve as microhistorical testimony, mediating between individual experiences and

collective history. Read together, they illuminate how linguistic practices that complicate nationalist taxonomies were alternately normalized, rendered invisible, or actively excluded as political and ideological frameworks changed.

In lieu of a conclusion

The nineteen studies presented above attempted to map a dense and often overlooked landscape of Ottoman and post-Ottoman cultural life, in which language, script, religion, and power intersect in ways that resist nationalist simplification. Drawing on sources in Ottoman Turkish, Karamanlidika, Armeno-Turkish, Kurdish written in Greek script, as well as Greek and Western languages, the studies collected here demonstrate that linguistic practice in the Ottoman world was not merely a vehicle of communication but a constitutive element of social belonging, moral authority, educational aspiration, political negotiation, and collective memory.

What emerges most clearly is the inadequacy of retrospective, nation-centered frameworks for understanding the lived realities of Ottoman subjects. For much of the empire's history, language did not function as the primary marker of communal difference. Confession, rather than speech, structured the identities of the Ottoman subjects. Turkish-speaking Orthodox Christians, Kurdish-speaking Rums, Armenian authors writing Ottoman Turkish in Greek and Armenian script, and Greek-speaking Muslims using Arabic-Ottoman script, were not marginal but integral participants in a shared imperial order. Their texts circulated without anxiety, serving pedagogical, devotional, administrative, and literary purposes within communities whose identities were relational, layered, and situational. The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, however, marked a decisive rupture, as nationalism gained force. The press, literature, education, and historiography aligned language with nation, recoding multilingualism as a sign of deficiency, disloyalty, or confusion. Karamanlidika and Armeno-Turkish corpora were pushed to the margins of literary canons; refugee voices were filtered through ideologies that demanded linguistic and cultural conformity; and memories of shared worlds were fractured by reform, war, and forced migration.

The materials examined in this volume—diaries, schoolbooks, newspapers, elegies, folk songs, Ottoman legal treatises, and novels—reveal communities actively interpreting their circumstances, defending institutional authority, sustaining ritual life, educating future generations, and articulating grief, critique, and hope. Far from being passive remnants of a vanished past, these

texts show the non-Muslim populations of the Empire as producers of knowledge and as participants in the formation of public spheres, legal cultures, and intellectual debates.

Methodologically, the volume privileges bibliographic reconstruction, the cross-reading of archival sources, and the creation of digital text corpora, not as mere exercises in database building, but as critical interventions into the ways Ottoman and post-Ottoman history are conceptualized, while simultaneously delineating the limits of “Turkish,” “Greek,” “Jewish” and “Armenian” cultures within the broader Ottoman whole. The studies presented here encourage us to shift our perspective: they ask us to listen to voices formed where empire, religion, and language meet, and to understand hybridity not as a rare exception in history, but as one of its most persistent and fundamental features.

E. B.