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## Karamanlidika

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Along with the terms 'Karamanli texts' or 'Karamanli literature', *Karamanlidika* conventionally refers to Turkish texts written in Greek characters, produced by and for the Turkophone Christian communities in Asia Minor, primarily for religious purpose. During the centuries of its existence (1718–1920s) it evolved into an extensive literature including also many non-religious topics. The first printed book of this kind was published in 1718, however Karamanlidika texts occur also in manuscript form. The bulk of the Karamanlidika book production consists of religious texts, such as prayer books, lives of saints, or liturgical books, while in the 19th century the production of non-religious texts gains significance. The texts are interesting sources also in relation to linguistic studies (language contact, re-graphization, and Turkish dialectology).

### 1. Definition and History of the Term

(NB: the first two sections of this entry are abridged versions of the entry 'Karamanli' in *Encyclopedia of Turkic Languages and Linguistics Online*, General Editor: Lars Johanson. First published online: 2023

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'Karamanlidika' (Καραμανλίδικα *Karamanlīdika*) – called after the homonymous bibliographical work begun by Salaville and Dalleggio –, along with the terms 'Karamanli texts' or 'Karamanli literature', conventionally refers to Turkish texts written in Greek characters, produced by and for the Turkophone Christian communities in Asia Minor, primarily for religious purpose, i.e. in order to provide the flock with liturgical and other religion-related material in their mothertongue, evolving into an extensive literature including also many non-religious topics. The first printed book of this kind was published in 1718. Later on, non-religious topics (such as literature, history, music, geography) were included into the production. About 750 printed titles from the beginning of the 18th century to the first quarter of the 20th century are known.

From the linguistic point of view, the language used in Karamanlidika is not a specific or homogeneous variety of Turkish, since Karamanlidika texts are highly complex in their diatopic and diastratic variation, being written in various Anatolian, or sometimes Balkan dialects, as well as in urban varieties with various forms of standard influence, and even in high-style standard Ottoman. It is therefore preferable to adopt Balta's (1987a:xvi) definition of a Karamanlidika book (referring to printed productions, but valid also for non-printed texts) as "any printing containing a Turkish text in Greek characters". In other words, 'Karamanlidika' refers to a merely graphic phenomenon typical for the so-called 'syncretistic' writing (adoption of a writing system divergent from the main one used for a specific language, due to religious or ideological association of a minority with the language of the adopted writing system).

The related term 'Karamanlı' or 'Karamanli' (in Greek Καραμανλήδες *Karamanlīdes*) is traditionally used to designate the Turkophone (mostly Orthodox) Christian population living in the Ottoman empire until the population exchange in 1924, mainly in Inner Asia Minor (greater Cappadocia; [Cappadocian](#)), Western Anatolia (areas of Kula, Burdur, and Isparta), in some coastal areas of the Black Sea, and around Antalya, as well as in the cities of Izmir and Istanbul. See also [Asia Minor Greek/Anatolian Greek](#).

Orthodox Christian speakers of various Turkish dialects in Asia Minor have been known since the 15th century from European texts: the first attestations, though without mentioning the term 'Karamanlı', seem to occur in a document prepared for the Council of Basel (1431–1438; see Clogg 1999:118), and in the accounts of the Venetian traveler Giovan Maria Angiolello in 1474 (Bellingeri 2010:82–83). The first use of the term 'Karamanlı' appears in the diary written by Hans Dernschwam, who visited Istanbul in 1553–1555 and reports about the presence of 'Caramani' and 'Caramanier' in the neighborhood of Yedikule (Eckmann 1964:820). The use of this term derives from the region of Karaman in Asia Minor, partly overlapping the actual homeland of Turkophone Christians (Cappadocia), and from the fact that the term 'Caramani' was, at that time, still widely used in European, especially Italian sources, because of its association with the former Principality (*beylik*) of the Karamanids (Turk. *Karamanoğulları*) who dominated the area until the supremacy of the Ottomans in the late 15th century. However, the Turkophone Christians never called themselves 'Karamanlı', but rather 'Anatolian (Orthodox) Christians' (Ανατόλ [Ορθόδοξος] Χριστιανλαρή, *Anadol [Ortodoksos] Hristiyanları*), 'Anatolian Christians, who do not know Greek' (Γιουνανί λισανί / Ρουμί λισανηγή πίλμεγιεν Αναδολουδακί Χριστιανλέρ, *Yunani lisanı / Rumi lisanını bilmeyen Anadoludaki Hristiyanler*), or just 'Anatolians' (Ανατολλουλάρ *Anadollular*), using also other terms (Eckmann 1964:820). In the 19th and 20th centuries the term 'Karamanlı' was adopted also for their language. As a consequence, even until recently, inappropriate terms such as 'Karamanli language' or 'Karamanli dialect' can be encountered, although, as mentioned above, there is no homogeneous 'Karamanli Turkish' variety (see Anhegger 1979–1980:166–168; for a discussion of the development of the term in relation to language see Kappler 2016).

## 2. The Printed Corpus

Although Karamanlidika texts are mainly known and studied from printed books, they can occur in both printed and manuscript form. The notoriety of the printed material is due to the bibliographic description of the printed media in the three-volume bibliography *Karamanlidika – Bibliographie analytique d'ouvrages en langue turque imprimés en caractères grecs* by Salaville and Dalleggio (1958, 1966, 1974; with re-edition and complement of the first volume by Salaville, Dalleggio and Balta 2018), which includes the printed Karamanlidika book production until the end of the 19th century, continued by Evangelia Balta with one volume for the 20th century (Balta 1987a), and two volumes of

additions and complements (Balta 1987b; Balta 1997). The preponderance of the printed medium in Karamanlidika studies can also be explained by the extensive printed production itself: according to the *Karamanlidika* bibliography we can assume about 750 titles dating from the beginning of the 18th century to the first quarter of the 20th century (including also grammar books and dictionaries with Turkish word material written in Greek characters). A further group of printed texts, not included in Salaville and Dalleggio's original Karamanlidika bibliography, are periodical publications, first of all the newspaper *Ανατολή Anatolí* (1851–1923), founded by Evangelinós Misailidis (Balta 2010:110–116). Manuscript texts must have been existed already in the 15th century, but consistent manuscript material is available only from the 18th century onwards, first of all in the archive of the Center of Asia Minor Studies in Athens (cf. Anestidis 2010:149, with further bibliography).

The bulk of the Karamanlidika book production consists of religious texts, such as prayer books, lives of saints, liturgical books, psalms, texts referring to the Christian calendar and to the Holy Places, and, starting in the 19th century, bible translations. The first book is the bilingual (Greek-Turkish) 'Anthology of the Christian faith' (*Απάνθισμα της Χριστιανικής Πίστεως Apánthisma tis Xristianikís Písteos – Κιουλζάρι Ιμάνι Μεσιχί Gülzar-ı İman-ı Mesihî*), printed in 1718, probably in Istanbul (Salaville and Dalleggio 1958:nr. 2). In the 19th century, the production of non-religious texts gains significance, including geographical and historical works, literary translations from European languages (mainly French and English), such as the first Turkish translation of Robinson Crusoe (*Ρομπινσών Κρούσος χικιαγεςί Robinsón Krusos hikayesi*, 1853; see Balta 1987a:nr. 33), transcriptions from Ottoman texts, such as the novels by Ahmed Midhat, or popular literature, as well as adaptations/translations from Greek works, first of all *Tamaşa-i Dünya* (1871) by Evangelinós Misailidis (Salaville and Dalleggio 1974:nr. 175), which for many years was considered the first Turkish novel, until it has been found out that it is a (very free) translation from the Greek novel *Πολυπαθής Polipaθís* (1839) by Grigórios Palaiológos (cf. Karra 2010). The Karamanlidika literary productions should be seen also in a wider context of other 'Christian' literatures of the Ottoman empire, first of all in Arabic and Armenian (Strauss 2010). Other text genres of the Karamanlidika production include geographic and historical texts, musical books (cf. Kappler 2002), and language books (grammars, textbooks and dictionaries). The first of these grammars, the *Γραμματική Γραικικο-τουρκική Gramatikí grekiko-turkikí* ('Greek-Turkish grammar') was printed in 1812 in Vienna, and written by Dimítrios Alexandrídís (see Kappler 2021). This book is important not only because it constitutes the first ever printed Greek grammar of Ottoman Turkish, but also due to its introduction of a more systematic use of graphic representation in the context of Karamanlidika writing (see below section 3). The first Turkish-Greek dictionary, *Λεξικόν τουρκικόν και γραικικόν Leksikón turkikón ke grekikón*, compiled by Zacharías Agioreítis, was printed for the first time in Venice in 1805, and reprinted in 1812.

Due to the coercive population exchange between Turkey and Greece in the aftermath of the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923, when Anatolian Turkophone Christians, together with most of the other former Ottoman Greek Orthodox subjects, had to migrate to Greece, the Karamanlidika book production slowly ceased to exist, since the Turkophone Christians were steadily assimilated linguistically to their new Greek-speaking environment. Nevertheless, there was still a considerable Karamanlidika text production in the 1920s in Greece, such as newspapers for the refugees, or epical poems on the exodus.

Most of the Karamanlidika books are translations or adaptations, first of all from Greek. This offers a wide range of possibilities for linguistic investigation in the field of contact linguistics ([Greek and Turkish](#)).

The following sections focus on aspects of Karamanlidika that are relevant for Greek studies. This includes mainly graphical phenomena and loanwords. For Turkological issues concerning language and dialectology, as well as for a more extensive overview on the Karamanlidika book production, see the entry 'Karamanli' in ETL ([Greek Lexicon, Structure and Origin of, 4. Modern Greek; Asia Minor Greek/Anatolian Greek; Asia Minor/Anatolian Sprachbund](#)).

### 3. The Use of the Greek Alphabet in Karamanlidika Texts

It is a universal principle, attested worldwide in many cultures, that a religiously defined community uses the alphabet in which their sacred book is written, even if the script conventionally used for their language by the majority of the cultural élite would be different (for cases of Greek cf. the entries [Aljamiado Greek](#) and [Foreign](#)

scripts and Greek). In this regard, the use of the Greek alphabet for Turkish by Turkophone Orthodox Christians must be considered as a natural part of the cultural process of re-graphization. Beyond the cultural and symbolic dimension, however, such a kind of writing is utterly functional: in the case of Karamanlidika, the Greek alphabet (Alphabet) was the obvious choice to produce texts for the liturgical practice in church and at home, providing, at the same time, an educational contribution to the Hellenization of Turkophone Christians in Anatolia, at first graphically, later on also linguistically. The practical function of writing Turkish in Greek characters naturally never led to a [standardization](#) of Karamanlidika: since the readers were native speakers they did not need an accurate writing system in order to read and understand the texts. The question of graphic representation of those Turkish phonemes that do not appear in the Greek phonological system, e.g. the Turkish vowels /ö/, /ü/, /ı/, or consonants, such as /ş/, /ç/, or /ğ/ was in most cases not yet addressed at the beginning of Karamanlidika book production, e.g. <ο> would refer to both /o/ and /ö/, or any kind of “i”, such as <ι, η, υ, ει> was used for Turkish /i/ and /ı/ alike. In some cases new digraphs were invented, such as <σσ> for /ş/. Very frequent was the use of <ι> to palatalize rounded vowels, <ιο> for /ö/ and <ιου> for /ü/. Only at the beginning of the 19th century, grammar books, such as the aforementioned *Γραμματική γρεκικο-τουρκική* by D. Alexandridis, begun to systematize the use of digraphs and diacritic points, which already had been in use sporadically in the 18th century. Concerning phonemes included in the Modern Greek system lacking an available single grapheme, such as /b/ or /d/, the Modern Greek use of digraphs was applied already during the 18th century, – in this case <μπ> and <ντ> –, whereas the practice adopted in the 19th century would then use accordingly the new graphemes <π̇> and <τ̇>, however not always coherently. It must be stressed that diacritic signs, especially double diacritic points, such as <σ̈>, <ζ̈>, <τ̈ζ̈>, <τ̈>, and <π̈> had been used also in manuscripts of the 18th century, thus it was by no means an invention of the 19th century, but their use was gradually becoming more frequent. The double dotted sigma (<σ̈>) for /ş/ appears, in printed form, for the first time in 1784 (cf. Kappler 2003; Gavriel 2010; Irakleous 2013). The most frequently used dotted grapheme in the 19th century was <π̇> (for /b/), followed by <σ̇> (for /ş/). See also [Orthography, 2. Historical Orthography](#)

An important contribution to the conventionalization of Karamanlidika writing was offered by a series of Bible translations published by the British Bible Society in Athens in the 1830s, further systematizing the use of the dotted graphemes, which corresponds to what has been named ‘Athenian system’ by Deny (1941:122) and Eckmann (1950:30). The ‘Athenian system’ developed further with slight differences in the second half of the 19th century, occurring first of all in the books printed in Misailidis’ printing-house *Anatolí* in Istanbul, and therefore it might be called ‘Misailidis system’. This is actually a variant of the ‘Athenian system’, the main difference being the gradual preference to use undotted <δ> and <δζ> (for Turkish /d/ and /c/) instead of <τ̇> and <τ̇ζ̈> respectively, probably for the sake of saving diacritic dots in typography.

The two systems (‘Misailidis’ and ‘Athenian’ – differing actually only slightly from each other), or a mixture of both, were continued to be used until the beginning of the 20th century by most of the editors. However, some texts are characterized by a return to the original, i.e. 18th-century orthography, where phonematic opposition usually was not graphically represented. This occurs particularly in publications with practical and/or non-religious function: poetry or song anthologies, brochures and small newspaper leaves, e.g. in the 20th century for the use of the Turkophones in Greece after the population exchange in 1924 (e.g. Balta 1997:nr. 104, 105, 107, 108).

In some cases Greek graphic influence can be found (cf. Kappler 2003:329–331), e.g. in the bilingual musical anthology *Πανδώρα Pandóra* (1846, second volume, p. 42) with the writing ἤσμύρ for *İzmir*, reproducing the ‘rough breaking’ of the Greek article ἡ (ἡ Σμύρνη), as well as the maintenance of <υ> for /i/, and of the cluster <σμ> for /zm/ (Kappler 2002:89–90). Generally speaking, rough and smooth breaking <‘, ’> as well as the use of the accents <‘, ` , ^> was maintained in writing Turkish, though obviously without phonological relevance. In some exceptional and completely isolated cases, Greek breathings and accents were used for other purposes, e.g. the ‘smooth breaking’ to denote the Arabic phoneme *‘ayn* (Kappler 2003:334).

## 4. Greek Loanwords in Karamanlidika

From a religious literature mainly translated from Greek it might be expected that the religious terms are borrowed from Greek. However, it has been found that most of the words which can be related to both Christianity and Islam

are Turkish, mostly of Arabic origin (Luffin 2010; Strauss 2014; Kappler 2019). Examples are *Αλλάχ Allah* ‘God’, *ιμάν iman* ‘faith’, *Κιτάπι σερρίφ Kitab-i şerif* ‘The Holy Book’, or *τζεννέτ cennet* ‘paradise’. Some Islamic terms have been completely extrapolated from their religious context, e.g. *kible* ‘direction of Mecca’ > *κιπλέ* ‘South’ (Kappler 2019:359). However, Greek terms are often used, either in a context of **code-switching** or adapted to the Turkish grammatical context. This may include titles (e.g. *μητροπολίτ mitropolít* ‘Metropolitan’), specific parts of the Bible (*Ευαγγέλιος Evangelíios* ‘Gospel’; *Ἐξοδος Éksoðos* ‘Exodus’; 1784, Luffin 2010:282), and morphologically fully adapted words, e.g. *σταυροζούν τὸρτ κιοσεσί stavrozun dört köşesi* ‘the four angles of the cross’ (1718, Kappler 2019:359). The use of specific Greek words might also have a pedagogical dimension, since many Karamanlidika books, especially the bilingual ones which provide both the original Greek and the Turkish text, have also a didactic goal in the framework of Greek language education of the Turkophone communities (and later on, in the 19th century, of their Hellenization). This can be seen by the recurring practice of showing the Greek terms along with their Turkish translation connected by *γιάνι yani* ‘i.e.’.

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