The Historical Review/La Revue Historique

Vol 20, No 1 (2023)

The Historical Review / La Revue Historique

The Historical Review
La Revue Historique

VOLUME XX (2023)

Section de Recherches Néohelléniques
Institut de Recherches Historiques / FNRS

Section of Neohellenic Research
Institute of Historical Research / NHRF

Introduction

Dimitris Kousouris

doi: 10.12681/hr.40056

To cite this article:

Kousouris, D. (2025). Introduction. *The Historical Review/La Revue Historique*, *20*(1), 87–94. https://doi.org/10.12681/hr.40056

Special Section II / Section Spéciale II

FRANGOCHIOTIKA

Introduction

Abstract: This introduction examines the historical and cultural context in which Frangochiotika – that is, texts in the Greek vernacular written and/or printed in Latin script – were produced in the Ottoman Levant from the seventeenth to the early twentieth century. These texts served as vital tools for education and religious outreach, and as means of communication for various administrative and societal purposes. By exploring the complex dynamics of digraphia in the multilingual societies of the Eastern Mediterranean, the author traces how these publications reflect broader cultural, political and confessional interactions in the region. Furthermore, after revisiting previous scholarly efforts to catalogue and analyse these materials, he argues that a more systematic study of them will contribute to a deeper understanding of identity formation and linguistic practices in the plural and contested space of the Eastern Mediterranean.

Since the 1990s, when the use of Latin script for everyday communication through emails and text messages expanded exponentially among the younger generation in Greece and Cyprus, conservative linguists and other experts have warned time and again about its alleged corruptive effects on the Greek language.[1] Of course, since voice messages replaced text and the autocorrect

[1] The most emblematic of those public debates was the appeal of 40 members of the Academy of Athens in January 2001, according to which "the attempt to replace the Greek alphabet with the Latin alphabet … would deal a severe blow to Greek thought and all aspects of Greek culture expressed in written texts". Hence, "like under the Venetians, when they tried to replace the Greek characters in Greek texts with Latin characters in the areas they ruled, we shall also resist now, calling on all the Greeks to react for the eradication of these unholy plans." For a critical review of the debate that followed, see Dimitris Koutsogiannis and Bessie Mitsikopoulou, "Greeklish and Greekness: Trends and Discourses of 'Glocalness'," in *The Multilingual Internet: Language, Culture and Communication Online,* ed. Brenda Danet and Susan C. Herring (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 45–63; for an overview of the ideological debates thereafter, see Jannis Androutsopoulos, "'Greeklish': Transliteration Practice and Discourse in the Context of Computer-mediated Digraphia," in *Orthography as Social Action: Scripts, Spelling, Identity and Power*, ed. Alexandra Jaffe, Jannis Androutsopoulos, Mark Sebba and Sally Johnson (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012), 361–65. For a more recent reoccurrence of such debates on the occasion of the English-language terminology used during the Covid-19 pandemic, see Helena Smith, "The Greeks had a word for it … until

function on smartphones made it easier to use the Greek script, limiting thus the resort to Greeklish (alternatively romanised, latinised or Latin-alphabet Greek [LAG]) by children and teenagers, the moral panic has proved unfounded. From a synchronic point of view, this computer-mediated digraphia is one of a great number of instances of the use of the Latin script, commonly associated with English, to represent local languages alongside native scripts.[2] From a diachronic perspective, the use of two or more scripts to write one language, digraphia or polygraphia, has been a common phenomenon throughout the centuries in southeastern Europe, the eastern Mediterranean and beyond. In that sense, the use of Latin or other alternative scripts (for example, Arabic) to write the Greek language has had a long and eventful past since antiquity, as does, in the other direction, the use of the Greek script for writing other languages.[3]

That the use of the written word was most often entirely instrumental in the early modern period, subject to the needs of a quick and functional reading of literary or religious texts, but also contracts, court decisions, wills and other documents of a private character, has been common knowledge among specialists in early modern history. During the last three decades, scholarship focusing on the linguistic, cultural and religious pluralism of the early modern eastern Mediterranean has brought into scrutiny various cases of transliterations in the Ottoman Levant, highlighting the use of alternative scripts as identity markers for writing the language of a (politically or culturally) dominant group.[4] However, despite some sporadic attempts, the task of composing a

now, as language is deluged by English terms," *The Guardian*, 31 January 2021, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jan/31/the-greeks-had-a-word-for-it-until-now-as-language-is-deluged-by-english-terms.

[2] Cf. Androutsopoulos, "Greeklish," and Christopher Lees, Periklis Politis and Dimitris Koutsogiannis, "Roman-alphabeted Greek and Transliteration in the Digital Language Practices of Greek Secondary School Pupils on Facebook," *Journal of Greek Media and Culture* 3, no. 1 (2017): 53–71.

[3] See indicatively: J.N. Adams, *Bilingualism and the Latin Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 40–66; Johannes Den Heijer, Andrea Schmidt and Tamara Pataridze, eds., *Scripts Beyond Borders: A Survey of Allographic Traditions in the Euro-Mediterranean World* (Leuven: Université Catholique de Louvain/Institut Orientaliste Louvain-La-Neuve/Peeters, 2014), 539–602, 609–19 and *passim*; Giuseppe Mandalà and Inmaculada Pérez Martín, eds., *Multilingual and Multigraphic Documents and Manuscripts of East and West* (Piscataway: Gorgias Press, 2018), 79–121, 293–314, 343–58.

[4] See indicatively, among a growing bibliography, the early study of Xavier Luffin exposing the main axes of a comparative approach: "Le phénomène de métagrammatisme dans le monde musulman: Approche d'une étude comparative," *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 54, no. 2–3 (2001): 339–60; as well as the collective volume edited

comprehensive survey of the various forms of digraphia in the early modern Ottoman Balkans and the eastern Mediterranean has not yet been undertaken. Likewise, an extensive corpus of printed books, as well as handwritten sources, that use the Latin script for the Greek language from the seventeenth to the early twentieth century, usually described as Frangochiotika (or Frangolevantinika) has attracted the attention of scholarly research only occasionally. Intending to overcome the linguistic boundaries and to reach a broader public, these religious catechisms, but also dictionaries, grammars and even literary texts, constitute rare and valuable evidence not only of vernacular Greek, its evolution and local variations, but also of the popular piety of the Latin communities in the Ottoman Levant, and offer various insights into the social, economic, political, confessional and cultural exchanges and conflicts in the region.

Eugène Dalleggio was the first to attempt to compose a comprehensive survey of "Religious Greek-language books typed in Latin script", in the journal *Μικρασιατικά Χρονικά* in 1961.[5] Half a century later, Fr Markos Foskolos updated this list with books located and collected over the course of decades in church archives or private collections.[6] Unlike Dalleggio, Foskolos refers to the books included in his bibliography as Frangochiotika, in order to underline the religious purpose of those texts published with the subscription of religious confraternities or on the initiative of Catholic missionaries in the Levant. The term draws its name from the Catholic priests and missionaries from Chios, who first applied the transliteration in a regular and systematic way.

The earliest book listed in both bibliographies is the catechism of Diego de Ledesma, one of the most influential theologians of the early period of the Society of Jesus, translated into the vernacular Greek (Ρωμαίκον/Romaecon) by Vincentio Castagnola (1534/35–1604).[7] Written in the form of a dialogue in

---

by Evangelia Balta and Mehmet Ölmez, *Between Religion and Language: Turkish-Speaking Christians, Jews and Greek-Speaking Muslims and Catholics in the Ottoman Empire* (Istanbul: Eren, 2011). Cf. Eric R. Dursteler, "Speaking In Tongues: Language and Communication in the Early Modern Mediterranean," *Past and Present* 217 (2012): 47–77.

[5] Eugène Dalleggio, "Bibliographie analytique d'ouvrages religieux en grec imprimés avec des caractères latins," *Μικρασιατικά Χρονικά* 9 (1961): 385–499.

[6] Fr Markos Foskolos, *Τα "Φραγκοχιώτικα" βιβλία: Ένα κεφάλαιο από την ιστορία της καθολικής ευσέβειας στον ελληνικό χώρο* (Thessaloniki: Apostolic Vicariate of Thessaloniki, 2012). Cf. his earlier contribution: "Τα 'Φραγκοχιώτικα' Βιβλία: Παράγοντας της Θρησκευτικής και Κοινωνικής Διαμόρφωσης των Καθολικών Κοινοτήτων Κυκλάδων," in *Το βιβλίο στις προβιομηχανικές κοινωνίες: Πρακτικά του Α' Διεθνούς Συμποσίου του Κέντρου Νεοελληνικών Ερευνών* (Athens: National Hellenic Research Foundation, 1982), 209–31.

[7] *Didascalia Christianiki, Is tin opian o Didascalos erota, che o mathitis apilogate. Camomeni apo ton patera Iacobon Ledesma theologou tis syntrofias tou Iisu chie girismeni is*

which "the teacher asks and the disciple responds", this text points to the activity of the first Jesuit missions in the Ottoman Empire and of the graduates of the Pontifical Greek College of Sant'Atanasio in Rome. Castagnola, who came from a prominent Chiot family with origins in Messina, went to Sicily, where he was enrolled and followed a military career in the Spanish navy, having allegedly taken part in the naval Battle of Lepanto, to eventually join the Society of Jesus at the age of 50, becoming henceforth a pivotal figure in their establishment in his native Chios and in Istanbul.[8] His biscriptual Greek edition, as well as the bilingual and biscriptual edition and translation of Bellarmino's short catechism published seven years later by Georgius Perpignani (1555–1621),[9] the Cretan bishop of Tinos, the last remaining outpost of the Serenissima in the Archipelago, reflects the diverse cultural and educational backgrounds of the readership they targeted. While they stress explicitly the choice of the vernacular (*Greco volgare comune*) in order to reach the "uneducated and the children", such editions certainly worked also the other way round, introducing Italian-speaking missionaries to the languages and cultures of the Ottoman Levant. Highly informative examples of the use of Latin script for the transcription of vernacular Greek for the purposes of language learning are the early seventeenth-century Italian-Greek dictionary composed by the Jesuit Girolamo Germano[10] and the late eighteenth-century "Grammar and Dialogues for learning Italian, Vernacular Greek and Turkish", by the Franciscan Bernardino Pianzola, which also proposed a new standardisation of the diverse phonetic transcriptions of the vernacular Greek in a 27-letter Latin alphabet.[11]

The scarcity of publications all through the seventeenth century, from the first edition of Bellarmino's short catechism in 1602 until its reprint in 1695 in Padua,

---

to Romaecon dia mesu tu patros Vincentiu tu Castagniola tis omias syntrofias (Rome: Zannetti, 1595).

[8] Markos Roussos Milidonis, *Έλληνες Ιησουίτες (1560–1773)* (Athens: KEO, 1993), 89–102, and Milidonis, *Ιησουίτες στον ελληνικό χώρο (1560–1915)* (Athens: KEO, 1991), 82–88.

[9] *Dottrina Cristiana Breve, Διδασκαλία Χριστιανική σύντομος ἤγουν εἴσε κοντολογίαν, Dhidhascalia Christianiki Syntomos ighun eisè condologhian* (Rome: Zannetti, 1602). See Foskolos, *Τα "Φραγκοχιώτικα" βιβλία*, 89–90 (no. 2).

[10] Girolamo Germano, *Vocabolario Italiano et Greco, nel quale si contiene come le voci Italiane si dicano in Greco volgare* (Rome: Zannetti, 1622).

[11] Bernardino Pianzola, *Dizionario Grammatiche e Dialoghi per imparare le Lingue italiana, latina, greca-volgare, e turca, il tutto disteso in due tomi, in carattere Latino* (Padua: Dalli Conzatti, 1781). Cf. Caterina Carpinato, "Appunti di lessicografia in greco volgare: Ine calliteri i praxi apo tin taxin," in *Ενθύμησις Νικολάου Μ. Παναγιωτάκη*, ed. Stefanos Kaklamanis, Athanasios Markopoulos and Giannis Mavromatis (Heraklion: Crete University Press, 2000), 107–39.

is probably a byproduct of the rivalries between the ecumenical patriarchate and the post-Tridentine Roman Catholic Church during the times of Cyril Loukaris and the Ottoman-Venetian wars, but also, possibly, of the antagonisms between France and Venice in the region at the time.[12] After the short-lived Venetian occupation of Chios in 1694, the Catholic community of the island faced an unprecedented wave of persecution and devastation from which it would never fully recover.[13] Those events marked not only the fate of Catholicism in the region, but also the future of books in Frangochiotika.

The main period of production and circulation of Frangochiotika books started on the wake of that persecution, in a trend initiated by another Jesuit from Chios, Tommaso Stanislao Velasti, a theologian, poet and translator, and would reach its high point in the next century. After the total suppression of the Society of Jesus in 1773, the publication of Frangochiotika books was undertaken by various missionaries in the Ottoman East. Lazarists, Franciscans, Capuchins and again Jesuits, after the restitution of the order in 1814, would print, reprint or adapt catechisms in Greek composed in Latin script. During the long nineteenth century, the production of printed books in Frangochiotika had its main centres in the Levantine communities of Smyrna and Istanbul, but was also extended to Rome, Ancona, Venice, Paris and Vienna. This geographical distribution suggests the links and networks of those dispersed and heterogeneous Catholic communities in the Ottoman Levant with the world around them, notably the networks of the Holy See, of the Serenissima as well as of the French and Habsburg empires.

As indicated, for instance, by the publication of Catholic refutations of the Enlightenment ideas by members of the (then banned) Society of Jesus in Verona and Ancona during the 1790s, and its reprints during the nineteenth century by the Armenian Order of the Mekhitarists in Vienna,[14] once the region was

[12] Cf. Cesare Santus, *Trasgressioni necessarie: Communicatio in sacris, coesistenza e conflitti tra le comunità cristiane orientali* (Rome: Ecole Française de Rome, 2019), 89–150, 202–6; Molly Greene, "Beyond the Northern Invasion: The Mediterranean in the Seventeenth Century," *Past and Present* 174 (2002): 42–71; Eleni Gara and Ovidiu Olar, "Confession-Building and Authority: The Great Church and the Ottoman State in the First Half of the Seventeenth Century," in *Entangled Confessionalizations? Dialogic Perspectives on the Politics of Piety and Community Building in the Ottoman Empire, 15th–18th Centuries*, ed. Tijana Krstić and Derin Terzioğlu (Piscataway: Gorgias Press, 2022), 159–214.

[13] Philip P. Argenti, ed., *The Occupation of Chios by the Venetians (1694)* (London: John Lane, 1935).

[14] (a) *Alithini Sofia, ighun Meletes parà ofelimes ke anagheotates dhia tin apolavsin tu Aghiu Fovu tu Theù, sinthemenes apo ton P. Joannin Petron Pinamonti ris Sindhrofias tu Jisu* (Verona: Typ. Carattoniana, 1791); and (b) *Filosofia Christianiki, periechusa dhiafora psichofelestata mathimata* (Ancona: Para tis Sintrofias Palmini, 1798); reprints: Vienna: En

caught in the dynamic field of the struggles between revolution and counter-revolution, Enlightenment and Counter-Enlightenment, the production of Frangochiotika books was connected with the fluctuations in the regional, continental and global conjuncture, the oriental politics of the Holy See and the process of confessionalisation in Europe and the Ottoman Empire. Furthermore, tracing the reprints and readaptations informs us about the evolution of the language and the concepts employed in the changing conjunctures of the long nineteenth century.[15]

The greater part of these books appeared in the era of nationalisms, when new frontiers and conflicts fragmented the imperial space, marking thus the withdrawal of an age-old prenational Latin identity and its transformation into a more deterritorialised Levantine one, with its national and local variants.[16] From this viewpoint, Frangochiotika publications reveal the long-disregarded plural and diverse character of the Greek-speaking communities in the vast area that goes from Crimea to Alexandria and from Vienna to Venice, Istanbul and Smyrna, composed by a number of heterogeneous cultural and ethnic groups that were not necessarily part of some "Orthodox Commonwealth".[17]

That diversity counts among the key features of early modern Greek literatures. The printed books were aimed at a public already accustomed to reading and/or writing the vernacular Greek in Latin characters. Manuscripts of seventeenth-

---

ti Tipoghrafia ton Patéron Armenion ton Mechitariston, (a) 1841, (b) 1832 and 1845. S*ee* Foskolos, *Τα "Φραγκοχιώτικα" βιβλία*, 96–96, 102–3, 109. For the adventures of the Armenian Catholic community of Istanbul and their connections with the European diplomacy and the Latin communities of the Levant, see Santus, *Trasgressioni necessarie*, 365–79; Miroslav Šedivý, "Austria's Role in the Cons Armenian Catholics Affair in 1828–31," *Middle Eastern Studies* 48, no. 1 (2012): 51–71.

[15] Dalleggio, for instance ("Bibliographie," 432–33), juxtaposed the preface of the first edition of Velasti's "Anapavsis tis Cardhias" in Rome (1746) with a re-edition of the work in Constantinople in 1843, discerning a linguistic and conceptual shift from a Chiot idiom (*na chiotiso is ta loja*) to a simple Greek (*aplà roméka*), that was also closer to the literary Greek of the nineteenth century.

[16] See, on this subject, Oliver J. Schmitt, *Levantiner. Lebenswelten und Identitíten einer ethnokonfessionellen Gruppe im Osmanischen Reich im "langen 19. Jahrhundert"* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2005); cf. Daniel Foilard, *Dislocating the Orient: British Maps and the Making of the Middle East, 1854–1921* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2017); R. Issa, E. Wigen, "Levantine Chronotopes: Prisms for Entangled Histories," *Contemporary Levant* 5, no. 1 (2020): 1–12.

[17] See for this concept the collections of essays by Paschalis Kitromilides, *An Orthodox Commonwealth: Symbolic Legacies and Cultural Encounters in Southeastern Europe* (New York: Routledge, 2016), a term extensively employed also by Roderick Beaton in his recent *Greece: Biography of a Modern Nation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019).

century Cretan literary works,[18] together with various documents in communal and church archives, private and church correspondence, wills, petitions, various types of contracts and legal judgments using the Latin script to write the vernacular Greek language, constitute a substantial corpus of documentation that lies at the heart of multiple crossroads, between literary and popular language, between religious and secular culture. Tracing the networks of subscription, publication and circulation of Frangochiotika allows us to consider the Ottoman Levant as a liminal space where cultural, religious and political boundaries were for a long time negotiable and moveable, a space at the margins and between distinct entities, in other words a *Sattelraum*.[19] This contact zone between different cultures, scripts and languages forms an intersection in which various disciplines and area studies meet.

The texts of this special section are the first output of a workshop co-organised in December 2023 in Athens by the Institute for Research on the Habsburg Monarchy and the Balkans of the Austrian Academy of Sciences, the Archive of the Jesuit Fathers in Greece and the Institute for Historical Studies of the Hellenic National Research Foundation, which brought together archivists and specialists in modern intellectual, cultural and religious history, literary studies and ethnomusicology. Helene Loukou provides a brief historical overview and a detailed catalogue of the printed materials in Frangochiotika held in the library of the Jesuit Fathers in Greece, as well as some introductory information on the manuscript sources included in their archival collections. Subsequently, Irini Solomonidi conducts a bibliographical study of the books in Frangochiotika from the personal collection Eugène Dalleggio, held in the Gennadius Library of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens. Next are three studies based on records that use allographic practices for religious, educational or administrative purposes. Presenting an inventory of the books held by the Jesuit missions in Athens and Chalkida, Georges Koutzakiotis formulates some working hypotheses on the activity and function of the Jesuits in the Ottoman Empire during the seventeenth century. Elias Kolovos discerns aspects of linguistic and cultural interaction in the insular space through a study of bilingual Ottoman-Greek imperial orders and decrees held in the Archive of Saint John Theologos on the island of Patmos. Scrutinising a bilingual Greek-Romanian manuscript of the Liturgy of Basil the Great from the Metochion of the Holy Sepulchre that uses Cyrillic characters for both languages, Ovidiu Olar sheds light on the use of

[18] Cf. Dalleggio, "Bibliographie," 394–98.

[19] To use this concept recently coined to study the space of another ethnoreligious group, the Jews in the German lands, in analogy to the Koselleckian term *Sattelzeit*: Simone Lässig and Miriam Rürup, "Introduction: What Made a Space "Jewish"? Reconsidering a Category of Modern German History," in *Space and Spatiality in Modern German-Jewish History*, ed. Simone Lässig and Miriam Rürup (New York: Berghahn, 2017), 1–20.

allographic practices in the religious sphere. The last three texts in this thematic dossier focus more closely on printed materials and manuscripts in Frangochiotika, placing them in their historical context and outlining future prospects for academic research. In the longest article contained in this special section, Mara Psalti provides a historical-philological study of the publications of Tommaso Stanislao Velasti in Frangochiotika, in which she also discerns an early precursor of nineteenth-century efforts to standardise the modern Greek vernacular. In his contribution, Fr Markos Foskolos opens up the range of research questions to the wider field of manuscript sources and, by highlighting the prospects for critical editing of legal texts or religious hymnbooks, attempts to detect mutual influences and interconnections with popular Orthodox religiosity, such as the Kollyvades movement.[20] Finally, in the guise of a conclusion, Alexandra Sfoini attempts to summarise the questions raised by the individual contributions, proposing the concepts of acculturation, osmosis, syncretism, hybridisation and/or cultural transfer, in order to study the production and circulation of this religious idiom in a region characterised by confessional and ethnic diversity up until the era of nationalisms.

Dimitris Kousouris

Institute of Historical Research / NHRF

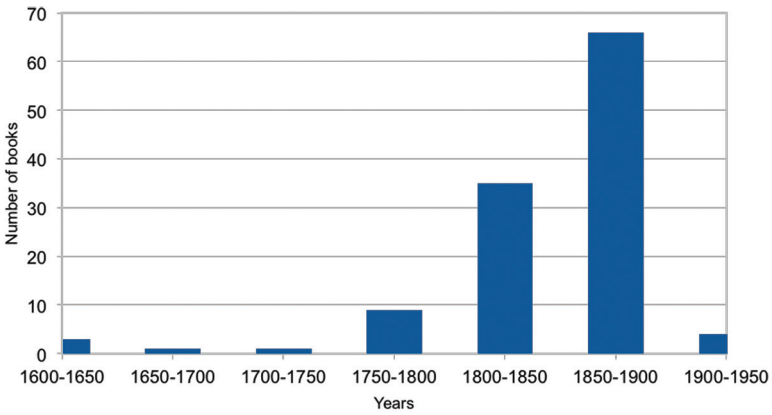

Figure 1. Greek language books printed in Latin characters
(author's work, based on the bibliographies of Foskolos and Dalleggio).

[20] Ioannis Zelepos, *Orthodoxe Eiferer im osmanischen Südosteuropa: Die Kollyvadenbewegung (1750-1820) und ihr Beitrag zu den Auseinandersetzungen um Tradition, Aufklärung und Identität* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2012).