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Η κοιλάδα του Όφι και η έλευση του Ισλάμ: Η περίπτωση των ελληνόφωνων μουσουλμάνων

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THE OF VALLEY AND THE COMING OF ISLAM: THE CASE OF THE GREEK-SPEAKING MUSLIMS

Lying about 60 km. east of the city of Trebizond, the Of valley is but one of the numerous valleys which run parallel to each other dividing laterally the narrow strip of land stretching between the Black Sea and the mountain range of the Pontic Alps. Two rivers, the Solaklı and the Baltacı, as well as their tributaries consist the axes along which the settlements of the region exist. Beginning at sea-level near the town of Of, the valley rises dramatically southwards towards the Soğanlı pass at 2750 m. beyond which the road from the shore continues on to Bayburt and the Anatolian plateau.

Soon after the fall of Trebizond in 1461 the area was conquered by the Ottomans and a short time later became integrated into the timar system. Despite exchanging a Christian emperor for a Muslim Sultan however, the Christian inhabitants of the Of valley remained at the majority for the first 150 years of Ottoman rule.

While the last quarter of the 16th century saw an acceleration in the growth of the number of Muslims, it was during the years of the 17th c. that the region began its transformation into a bastion of Sunni Islam. The case of Of remains unique among all the other conquered areas of the Black Sea simply because many Ofli chose to retain Pontic Greek¹ as their mother tongue rather than adopt Turkish. Even today, the fact that this dialect is spoken in the villages of the upper valley² as well as a vivid memory of their Christian past is probably why the events surrounding their conversion continue to be a favorite local topic of conversation.

1. This paper is not going to deal with the Pontic Greek dialect as it is spoken in Of. Suffice to say that it retains a great number of archaic grammatical features along with the preservation of the ancient Greek negative particle *ou*. For a detailed discussion of the subject, see P. Mackridge, «Greek-Speaking Moslems of North-East Turkey: Prolegomena to a Study of the Ophitic Sub-Dialect of Pontic», *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 11 (1987), pp. 115-137, including a bibliography.

2. For a brief presentation as well as a list of the Greek speaking villages in the Of valley see P. Andrews, *Ethnic Groups in the Republic of Turkey*, Wiesbaden 1989, pp. 145-147, 373-374.

The following presentation of material relating to events in the Of valley during the first Ottoman centuries cannot hope to definitively answer the questions posed by the existence of its Greek speaking Muslim population. Rather, it should be treated as a first step towards outlining the parameters and the sources for a comprehensive study.

This paper will examine two very different sources for information on life in the Of valley, written texts and the oral traditions of both the Muslim and Christian former inhabitants of the region.

On in the 16th-century tahrir defters

Unlike neighboring Maçka, where existing studies allow us to trace the continuity of events from the late Byzantine period on into the early Ottoman,³ the history of the Of valley has not been methodically researched. Most secondary sources exist in Greek and Turkish, and of these, the majority reach rather predictable conclusions regarding the phenomenon of the Greek speakers.

Hasan Umur is the only author who has worked with archival sources. In his *Of Tarihi* and *Of Tarihine Ek*,⁴ he provides partial transliterations of three 16th century tax registers⁵ of the region as well as a number of firmans, a selection from the judicial registers, and other documents containing references to Of, in an attempt to trace developments in the valley during the first centuries following the Ottoman conquest.

According to Umur's data, the defter⁶ of 1515 records 60 settlements⁷ and 2,601 taxable households (hane). Nearly all of these settlements are located in the lower half of the valley and especially in the area between the Solaklı and Baltacı rivers.⁸ From a total of 2,601 hanes, only 51 are recorded as belonging to Muslims (almost

3. See *Continuity and Change in Late Byzantine and Early Ottoman Society* (ed. A. Bryer and H. Lowry), Birmingham 1986 for the following articles: A. Bryer, «Rural Society in Matzouka», pp. 53-95; H. Lowry, «Privilege and Property in Ottoman Maçka in the Opening Decades of the Tourkokratia: 1461-1553», pp. 97-128; R. Jennings, «The Society and Economy of Maçka in the Ottoman Judicial Registers of Trabzon 1560-1640», pp. 129-156.

4. H. Umur, *Of Tarihi-Vesikalar ve Fermanlar*, İstanbul 1951; also *Of Tarihine Ek*, İstanbul 1956.

5. The first two tax registers are TT 52 (921/1515) and MM 288 (961/1553), both located in the Başbakanlık Arşivi in İstanbul. The third, TKGM 43 (991/1583) is located in the Tapu Kadastro Genel Müdürlüğü, Kuyudi-Kadime Arşivi in Ankara. For a description of the defters, see Umur, *Of Tarihi*, pp. 8-10.

6. H. İnalcık, «Ottoman Methods of Conquest», *Studia Islamica* 2 (1954), pp. 110-111 offers a good description of how a tahrir defteri was actually compiled.

7. For a list of settlements, see Appendix 1.

8. See attached map.

2% of the population) while the remaining 2,550 (98%) are Christian. In fact, there are only a handful of villages that record a Muslim presence.

Four decades later, the defter of 1553 records 67 settlements, with a total number of 3,194 hanes. Of these, 365 belong to Muslims (roughly 11% of the population) and the remaining 2,829 to Christians (roughly 88%). Besides the villages already familiar from the previous defter, 7 additional hamlets⁹ appear for the first time under the heading *hariç az defter*.

Nearly all of the seven new villages are located much higher up along the Solaklı dere and in the mountains above the springwaters of the Baltacı. In 6 of them, the number of tax paying hanes range between 5 and 17. While it is always possible that these settlements had earlier enjoyed special tax exempt status, judging from the small number of households recorded,¹⁰ these are most probably newly formed villages.

In the third defter dated 1583, with 75 villages and 4,159 hanes, Muslim settlement has shot up to 991 hearths, or 24% of the population, while the number of Christians has risen more modestly to 3,168 hanes (76%). An additional 8 small settlements¹¹ are listed as '*hariç az defter*', of which half record no Muslims while the rest have between 3 to 8 Muslim households. Of these, 5 are found up valley in the same general area as the '*hariç*' villages of the register of 1553.

In his article on the Black Sea Turks,¹² Michael Meeker analyzed the changes in the valley's demography using the same data from the tax registers provided by Hasan Umur. He noted an overall rise in the population throughout the 16th century (a sharp increase in the case of the Muslims, and a more gradual in the case of the Christians). By comparing data from the three defters in terms of time and geography, he concluded that Christians had begun to retreat to the reclusive forests of the upper valley, and away from the areas showing a dramatic increase in the number of Muslims. Certainly, the flight to higher ground on the part of the Christian re'aya during the 16th century is a phenomenon which has been observed in many regions of the eastern Black Sea as well as the Balkans.¹³

9. Hanlut, Hanlut Yordam Eğridere, Mosariş, Halduzen, İpsil, Okena and Yente.

10. These villages record only one or two Muslims each. The exception to the rule is Hanlut, which first appears in 1553 with 51 households, 5 of which are Muslim.

11. Holo Kolisar, Gökik, Surahite, Devasir Öküzü, Polite Kondi, Likoz Mahurit, Madiryas, Odon Tavla.

12. M. Meeker, «The Black Sea Turks: Some Aspects of their Ethnic and Cultural Background», *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 2 (1971), pp. 318-345.

13. For a similar situation in the Balkans, see A. Vakalopoulos, «La retraite des populations Grecques vers des régions éloignées et montagneuses pendant la domination turque», *Balkan Studies* 4.b (1963), pp. 265-279; for the formation of mountain communities in the Black Sea see Anth. Bryer, «The Tourkokratia in the Pontos: Some Problems and Preliminary Conclusions», *Neo-Hellenica* 1 (1970), pp. 45-47.

Iskender/Alexandros and the flight to the mountains

The existence of the Ofli Muslims whose mother tongue was Pontic Greek preoccupied many local Greek scholars of the 19th century.¹⁴ Their works, imbued with the spirit of the heady years following the Tanzimat, see no reason other than religious oppression as the answer to the 'apostasy' of the Of valley. Also implicit is the sense that the Ofli sacrificed their orthodox faith in order to retain their language and customs.¹⁵

The most popular version of events that is found in nearly all the histories of the period attributes the mass conversions to a quarrel between Alexandros, bishop of Of and the Metropolitan of Trebizond, sometime in the middle of the 17th century. Alexandros took the drastic step of converting to Islam, and as Iskender Bey, 'satrap' of Trabzon, became

'enraged at the Greek population ...and converted many of the churches remaining in their hands into mosques and hamams, mercilessly exacted burdensome taxes... and threatened them with conversion or death. It was in this time that the inhabitants of Of were converted... It is further said that the Trapezuntines, in their desperation, and reeling from the effects of the newly imposed taxes, went outside the city and gave themselves up to drinking and merrymaking.'

Eventually Iskender, 'unable to undo the wrongs he had committed', declared before the ulema his return to the Christian faith and

14. Despite their limitations, these works remain invaluable since their authors had access to the rich monastic libraries of the region which unfortunately have been either destroyed or scattered. A selection includes: T. Evangelidis, *Ίστορία της Τραπεζοῦντος ἀπὸ τῶν ἀρχαιοτάτων χρόνων μέχρι τῶν καθ' ἡμᾶς, 756-1897* (A History of Trebizond from the Earliest Times to the Present 756-1897), Odessa 1896; S. Ioannidis, *Ίστορία καὶ Στατιστικὴ Τραπεζοῦντος καὶ τῆς περὶ αὐτὴν χώρας* (History and Statistics of Trebizond and Surrounding Areas), Constantinople 1870; P. Triandafyllidis, *Ἡ ἐν Πόντῳ Ἑλληνικὴ φυλὴ, ἥτοι τὰ Ποντικὰ* (The Greek Race in the Pontos, or Pontica), Athens 1866 and by the same author, *Οἱ Φυγάδες* (The Fugitives), Athens 1870; I. Kalfoglou, *Σοῦρμενα, ἥτοι γεωγραφία καὶ ἱστορία τῆς περιφερείας Σοῦρμένων* (Sourmena, or the Geography and History of the Region), Batum 1921; from the 20th century the massive «Ἡ Ἐκκλησία Τραπεζοῦντος» (The Church of Trebizond) by Metropolitan Chrysanthos, *Ἀρχεῖον Πόντου* 4-5 (1933) remains unique as a history of the Greek presence in the Black Sea.

15. Unlike the Ofli, the Turkish-speaking Gagauz and Karamanlides maintain the tradition that they sacrificed their Greek language in order to retain their Christian faith. A. Iordanoglou, «Οἱ Γκαγκαούζοι καὶ ἡ καταγωγὴ τους» (The Gagauz and their origins), *Δελτίο Κέντρου Μικρασιατικῶν Σπουδῶν* 5 (1985-85), p. 407; S. Vryonis, *The Decline of Medieval Hellenism in Asia Minor and the Process of Islamization from the Eleventh Through the Fifteenth Century*, Berkeley 1971, pp. 448-463 for a discussion of the Karamanlides.

'was hanged secretly at night and buried a bit beyond the Ottoman mosque near the Ghiaour meydan¹⁶ where those who had sought the restitution of their homeland had been slaughtered'.¹⁷

Other writers doubted the veracity of the story of Alexander,¹⁸ and chose to ascribe the 'apostasy' of the Oflus to the tyranny of the derebey. They date their mass conversion to the second half of the 17th c., concurrent with the first appearance of the valley lords. Unwilling to accept the Muslim Oflus at face value,¹⁹ they rarely failed to include apocryphal references to Oflus who 'jealously guard the Christian holy books and relics of their ancestors along with their language'.²⁰

Oral traditions²¹ of the Christian Oflus who arrived as refugees in Greece in 1923 tell of the panic caused by the approach of the Ottoman armies among the villages of Of following the capture of Trebizond. Fleeing the violence and the pressure to

16. Triandafyllidis, *The Fugitives*, p. 27: «According to both Christian and Turkish sources... following the fall (of Trabzon), the city was attacked and held for a short time... by poorly armed fugitive Trapezuntines who had fled to the mountains. Their daring plan... was to attack the city on a Friday at noontime, when all the Turks would be praying in their mosques. At first the city fell to them, but soon, in the fight against a much greater force, some fell in battle while others were taken and executed outside the walls in the hippodrome. Since then, that place... has been known as ghiaour meidan, and until recent years, was considered cursed, and remained uninhabited... Until a few years ago, it remained customary to close the gates of the city at Friday noon, and the gate through which they had entered was filled, and remains sealed since that time».

17. *Ibid.*, pp. 87-88.

18. Chrysanthos, «The Church of Trebizond», p. 708.

19. Chrysanthos, *Βιογραφικαὶ ἀναμνήσεις τοῦ Ἀρχιεπισκόπου Ἀθηνῶν Χρυσάνθου τοῦ ἀπὸ Τραπεζούντος* (Biographical Memoirs of the Archbishop of Athens, Chrysanthos of Trebizond), Athens 1970, p. 160: «In the morning I conducted mass in the church of village Yiga, where there were gathered three hundred representatives of the region's Muslim from all the villages of Of. They wanted to see me, greet me and thank me for the protection I had extended to them during the Russian occupation up to that point. Among them there were hocas and imams who were the descendants of Greek Orthodox priests and kept their crosses and bibles as holy relics... the Muslims asked me if they could be accepted back into the fold of Christianity from which their forbears apostated. I counseled them to wait until the end of the war, so that they wouldn't be slaughtered for having renounced the Muslim faith in case the Turkish government should reoccupy the area».

20. Chrysanthos, «The Church of Trebizond», p. 709.

21. The oral history archives of the Centre for Asia Minor Studies (CAMS) in Athens offer the researcher a wealth of detail as recorded from the refugee population who arrived in Greece following the 1923 Exchange of Populations. In files that exist for each of the Greek settlements along the Aegean and Mediterranean coasts, Anatolia and the Black Sea, much information is to be found concerning surrounding Turkish settlements, administration, economics, and folklore. There are 1.722 handwritten pages (files: Πο 122-136), and two manuscripts pertaining to the 8 settlements in the Of valley that had a Christian population in 1923. For a detailed description of the material available on the Black Sea, see CAMS, *Ὁ τελευταῖος Ἑλληνισμὸς τῆς Μικρᾶς Ἀσίας* (The Last Greeks of Asia Minor), Athens 1974, pp. 200-254.

convert, their forbears retreated up-valley and lived in the remote forest glades of the mountains, where they remained hidden for an undetermined length of time. Those who returned to their villages as soon as things quieted down, discovered that their neighbors had, in the meantime, accepted Islam while retaining their common dialect of Pontic Greek.²²

The mountainous region in which the fleeing Christians took refuge is indeed one of the most rugged parts of the Of valley, where peaks climb to over 2500 meters. It is also the area where the '*hariç az defter*' villages of the 1553 and 1583 tax registers were founded.²³

Other accounts tell of groups living in the forests who eventually made their way over the Karçalak mountains to Sourmena. There, they were well received by the local aghas, who invited the exhausted Oflus to settle down in exchange for working their fields.²⁴ In this way, the villages of Asu, Çikoli, Çita, Karakanci, and Meksezi came into existence.²⁵

Supporting the tradition among Oflus of a 'flight' to Sourmena, villagers of numerous settlements there are well aware of the fact that their forbears originally came from Of.²⁶ Family surnames continued to be shared among Sourmena's Christians and Oflu Muslims.²⁷ Right up to 1923 when they left the Black Sea, frequent intermarriage and a shared sub-dialect of Greek reinforced the bonds between the Greek Christians of Of and Sourmena.²⁸

This connection between Of and Sourmena becomes more intriguing if one consults the tahrir defters. According to the registers, among the villages of Sour-

22. CAMS, Πo 133, pp. 133-139: «When Trebizond fell, there was harsh persecution of the Christians. Some fled, and others turned Turk so as to be able to remain. Those that fled went and lived in the mountains, and when things quieted down, they returned to their villages and found the Turks, converted Christians that is, and settled near them, under their protection».

23. Ibid.: «...the mountains where they went were in the direction of Bayburt, to the big mountain of Halduzen, there where Mesoraş is... There were a number of places, one was called Ksenit, and another Likanlı. My people went to Likanlı, and it was from there they came down...».

24. CAMS, Πo 486 (informant P. Malamatidis): «...they couldn't last forever in the dense forests of Sourmena, and not finding food, were obliged to give themselves up to the aghas of Sourmena, who received them well. The aghas gave them work in their fields».

25. CAMS, Πo 131, p. 12: «Everyone knows that the inhabitants of neighboring Sourmena left the Of valley and settled there...».

26. CAMS, Πo 482 (inf. K. Konstantinidis); CAMS, Πo 483 (inf. Th. Efremidis); CAMS, Πo (inf. K. Spanidis); CAMS, Πo 483 (inf. I. Papadopoulos): «The inhabitants of Sourmena describe the origins of their forbears as being from Of. Only the villagers of Koinonissa are of different origin».

27. Ibid.: «Family names exist in the villages of the Greek speaking Turks of Of such as Kalominoğlu and Kuşoğlu, which also exist among the Christians of Sourmena such as Kalominiidis and Kousis».

28. CAMS, Πo 123, p. 260: «...we were very close with Sourmena, through marriages as well as the fact that our language and customs were the same».

mena which maintain a tradition of being founded by Oflus, Asu, Çikoli, Karakancı, Çide and Meksezi first appear in the mufassal defter of 1583. Except for Asu with 72 hanes, all the settlements are made up of only a few homesteads.²⁹

It would seem that in the latter half of the 16th c. there was a population movement from Of westward over the mountains and into the Sourmena valley. In the same period, Sourmena experienced a sharp increase in the number of settlements and taxable hanes, which Bilgin attributes to an influx of settlers arriving from other areas.³⁰ This rise follows a dramatic drop in Sourmena's population recorded in the 1553 defter³¹—something which brings to mind local aghas inviting the refugees from Of to settle on their lands.

Dependence on oral history alone is an unreliable means by which to reconstruct the past. As time passes, the memory of historical events tends to metamorphose and become codified. Later generations often improvise when it comes to filling in the gaps in their local histories. On occasion, stories are improved so as to better express the ideals of the group. The community's accumulated experiences and the changes in living conditions also play a role in how collective memory is passed on. Oral tradition used in conjunction with written sources, however, can help to present a more complete picture of the period in question.³²

The Greek-speaking Missionaries from Maraş

The few Turkish works³³ that deal with the thorny problem of the Ofliu Greek

29. M. Bilgin, *Sürmene Tarihi*, Sürmene 1990, p. 158 and note 1 on the same page; on pp. 161-162 Bilgin provides a table with the villages of the TKGM 43 register. Although he mentions Çide on p. 158, he forgets to put the village on this list. The numbers of hanes for the rest of the villages are as follows: Aso 72, Çikoli 17, Meksize 4, Karakancıo 13.

30. *Ibid.*, p. 158

31. *Ibid.*, p. 158. According to the table given by Bilgin, the number of taxable hearths, (hane+bive) in the nahiye of Sourmena was 2.160 in 1515, dropped to 1.531 in 1553 and reached 2.347 in 1583. While the number of settlements remains stable in the first two defters (23), it abruptly rises to 53 in the last defter of 1583.

32. In his introductory text to the recently published *Ordu Yöresi Tarihinin Kaynakları I: 1455 Tarihli Tahrir Defteri*, Ankara 1992, Bahaeddin Yediyıldız expresses the same view. He goes even further and gives examples of several cases where he succeeded in matching oral traditions concerning the number of original inhabitants, founding dates, and names of villages with data from a 1455 register.

33. I was unable to locate a copy of one of the most quoted works in the Turkish bibliography concerning the region, Şakir Şefket's *Trabzon Tarihi*, printed in İstanbul in 1869. Besides Hasan Umur's works, another often quoted source is Haşim Albayrak's *Of ve Çaykara*, Ankara 1990 (2nd ed.). Ömer Asan's, *Pontos Kültürü*, İstanbul 1996, stands apart for its frank approach to the subject. Included is a history of Of, a wealth of songs, sayings, and a short grammar and dictionary of Pontic Greek as spoken in his village Çoruk today.

speakers tend to describe the phenomenon as resulting from the complete hellenization of Turkish tribes who migrated to the eastern Black Sea via the Caucasus between 2000 and 750 BC, only to become re-turkified during the Ottoman period.³⁴

Accounts describing the spread of Islam throughout the valley underscore the peaceful means by which this was accomplished. The most widespread is the story of the three Greek speaking dervishes³⁵ from the city of Maraş, who succeeded in converting the Of valley to Islam roughly a century following the conquest of Trabzon.

The Maraşlı owed their linguistic talent to the fact that they were the descendants of Greek Orthodox theologians from Of, who, in the time of the Caliph Ömer, had been sent by the Emperor in Constantinople to prove the superiority of Christianity to Islam in a contest held in Jerusalem. Convinced by the many proofs revealed by the Muslim theologians, it was the priests from Of who converted to Islam and eventually settled in the city of Maraş.

A thousand years later, compelled by a dream, their descendants returned to the land of their ancestors to evangelize the unbelievers. Although they initially met with resistance, after the conversion of the local clerics, the rest of the population soon followed. Thus the Maraşlı dervishes fulfilled the cyclical course that their renegade forbears had set out upon ages earlier. Reputedly, one of them was buried in the village Paçan, where today his tomb continues to be revered as a pilgrimage site.³⁶

Though the story of the missionary dervishes is known throughout Of, while on a visit to the upper valley, the author encountered a very different rendition of events.³⁷

34. See Albayrak, *Of ve Çaykara*, pp. 103-113, for theories concerning proto-Turkish settlement in the Black Sea.

35. Although Umur is not sure whether or not the dervishes were Greek speaking, (*Of ve Of Muharebeleri*, Istanbul 1949, p. 15), he also offers the following: «Confirmed by official documentation, their names are Süleyman, Murat and İskender. ... The father of Süleyman and Murat was named Ligor (Grigoris?), and İskender's father's name was Kirazi (Kyriazis?). The fact that the fathers of these respected individuals were Christian, in no way lessens their honor...» (*Of Tarihi*, p. 22).

36. Umur, *Of Muharebeleri*, p. 16, says that a villager's dream revealing the burial place of a saint is not enough proof to convince him that the tomb in the village of Paçan belongs to one of the Maraşlı missionaries. When Umur asked to see the tomb, he was shown a pile of stones. In 1981 however, the tomb was rebuilt, and attracts pilgrims from the villages of the entire valley.

37. Recordings made in Aşağı Ögene in 1993 from a 75 year old informant. See Appendix 2 for text in transliterated Ofliu Greek with an English translation.

Missionaries from Maraş II: the story of Pavlos

Upper and lower Okena,³⁸ the two villages referred to in the following account are located at the very top of the Solaklı valley on the Bayburt road. As is common among Pontic speakers everywhere, the villagers of Okena continue to use nicknames (in some instances an ancestor's Christian given name), among themselves. In this case the informant's paronym/lakap is *Pavlanton*, i.e. of the clan of Pavlos, and the story concerns his distant ancestor, the village priest Pavlos.

After the fall of Trabzon, Fatih Sultan entrusted the final conquest of the Pontos to the city's Vali, Hızır Bey. Marching eastwards with his army, Hızır Bey arrived in Çaykara, where he forbade the speaking of Greek and sought to bring the people to Islam. Terrorized, those who did not convert, fled to the mountains.

Now, nearly a century later, the dervishes from Maraş arrived from the direction of Bayburt through the Soğanlı pass. The majority of the people in the lower valley had already been converted, not seeing the reason to hold onto old beliefs since the emperor was gone, and the Turks were firmly in control. Upon their arrival at Upper Okena, the village priest named Satosh made to attack the dervishes and their entourage with an ax. Other new converts admonished him saying '*have you lost your mind, the Turk has taken Trebizond, and up to Çaykara everyone has become Muslim*'. He converted.

The Maraşlı then came to Lower Okena and gathered the people of the village. Pavlos, the village priest,³⁹ refused to convert. Faced with his obstinacy, the cut off the heads of his four children before him, and threw them into a basket. They paraded Pavlos before the other villagers with the grisly load around his neck. His four convert brothers begged him to save himself and convert, but he still refused, confiding in them that the only thing he feared was hunger. His brothers immediately

38. As I was later to learn, the village of Okena has a special place in local Greek as well as Turkish lore as the last village to accept Islam: CAMS, IIO 126, p. 305 «... *the last village to convert was Okena, not only because of its remoteness, but because its inhabitants resisted heroically. Their resistance lasted for five years*»; CAMS, Manuscript of I. Papadopoulos, *Sourmena-Ofis-Rizaio*, Pireus 1861, p. 103: «*In the village of Upper Okena in the Of valley there were ninety families referred to by the other Turks as "Ceneviz", that is to say, old or ancient. While appearing to be Muslims, they participated in other strange rites known only to them.*»; CAMS, Manuscript of P. Papadopoulos, *Ofis*, Katerini 1949, p. 31: Okena was said to be the summer residence of the bishop of Of. Even today, the surrounding villages jokingly refer to Okena as «*gâvur köyü*». They ascribe it to the following word play on the village's name in Turkish, Ögene: Whenever the hoca who was sent to evangelize the remote village was asked regarding the success of his mission, the reply was «*o gine*», or -stil not yet.

39. The informant's having heard that the village church was dedicated to Agios Pavlos (St. Paul) seems to be confirmed by a reference in a document pertaining to a land dispute in Okena dated 1726 where the claimant's land is bordered by «*Ayobavlo*», Umur, *Of Tarihi*, p. 103, doc. # 56.

betrayed him, and after three days of beatings and being confined in a black cellar the priest gave in and converted. He became a Muslim but didn't live for much longer.

The Process of Islamization

The first decades of the 16th c. is a period which sees the further integration of the Of region into the Ottoman empire. According to the data provided in the 1515 defter, the Christian element remains the dominant. The fact that the Muslims make up a mere 2% of the taxable hanes would indicate that there had been no influx of settlers from other parts of the empire up to that date. It is probable that this situation remained static until the middle of the century. By then, the Muslims made up 11% of the valley's total population. While their numbers were still relatively low, they had become five times more numerous in forty years. After nearly a century of Ottoman administration, the religion of the rulers seems to have been slowly gaining ground.⁴⁰

By 1583, nearly a quarter of the population of the Of valley were Muslims, if not Turkish speaking. Christians were leaving the lower valley for the highlands. It is not clear whether they were doing so due to the arrival of new settlers,⁴¹ or because relations had become strained between them and the converts.

Obviously, the process of change in the religious character of the region continued for centuries,⁴² and indeed may have lasted until more recent times. In the CAMS files pertaining to Of there are numerous references to ruined churches and

40. Unfortunately, Umur does not transliterate villager's names from the three defters. Until a detailed study is made of the four available tax registers for the region, it will be impossible to follow the process of islamization through the generations. Umur does, however, give the first three names as they appear in the register lists, as well as a selection of Muslim names, which begin to occur in greater numbers in the second and third defters. Even with this selective sampling, however, the frequency of the name "İskender" among the Muslims is worth noting. H. Lowry, *Trabzon Şehrinin İslamlaşma ve Türkleşmesi, 1461-1583*, İstanbul 1981, p. 121 makes the same observation regarding Trabzon. In any case, the fact that the apostate bishop of Of, as well as one of the three Maraşlı missionaries are named Iskender, is food for thought.

41. According to I. Parharidis, «Στατιστική τῆς ἐπαρχίας Ὀρφέως τοῦ νομοῦ Τραπεζοῦντος» (Statistics of the Of region of the province of Trebizond), *Παγκρασιός* 3 (1879), p. 227 the Oflius living in the area of the Baltacı river had converted at a much earlier date than the late 17th c. because of the pressure exerted on them by bandits and settlers from Anatolia. Quoting G. Stratil-Sauer, Meeker in his article «Black Sea Turks», p. 343, remarks that the eastern Of valley is adjacent to the valley network of the İyidere in the direction of Rize, which was always known as a corridor for Anatolian settlers on their way to the Pontic lowlands.

42. The number of Muslims in Of must indeed have been great by the end of the 17th century, for an emirname of 1694/5 seeks 1000 soldiers from Of to participate in the war in Hungary (Umur, *Of Tarihine Ek*, p. 49, doc. # 38).

shrines throughout the valley, many of which are located in Muslim neighborhoods and villages. Local Christians retained the memory of the dedication for a great number of these ruined chapels and used to conduct mass there on the specific saint's name day.⁴³ Such retention of detail might indicate that certain areas lost their Christian character at a much later date.

Undeniably, there was a period when the two religions co-existed prior to Islam's becoming the dominant faith. Many of the Greek speaking villages in the upper valley founded after the 16th century and existing even until today were first settled by Christian Oflus.⁴⁴ This relocation to the highlands wasn't enough to preserve the Christian element, except for a handful of villages. The irony is that the villages which retained a Christian population until the Greek-Turkish Exchange of Populations in 1923 were located in the lowlands of Of.

The church organization in Of, an element which could have contributed to the preservation of a Christian peasantry, seems to have collapsed as early as the second century of the Ottoman period. The bishopric of Of, one of the only three remaining in Anatolia by the late 15th century,⁴⁵ disappears from the episcopal lists (*Notitiae Episcopatumum*) of the Patriarchate in Constantinople after 1645.⁴⁶ Monasteries, which in Maçuka played such a major role in the preservation of Greek culture, aren't known to have existed in Of.⁴⁷ Beyond the existence of toponyms as well as

43. CAMS, Πο 127, pp. 46-47: «*There was a small rise with the ruins of a church from old times in the Turkish mahalle of Mamoukantos [in the village of Zourel]. There were only a few stones, with the outline of the apse still discernible. The Turks called it "vakuf" and never bothered that place. When the church was standing, we don't know—both our fathers and our grandfathers knew it as a ruin. Neither do we know why it was called Ayios Thodoros [St. Theodore];* CAMS, Πο 125, pp. 180-191: «*In the Turkish mahalle [of Leka village] on the top of a hill there were ruins of a church. It was dedicated to St. George, and no masses were conducted there. We knew, though that it belonged to St. George.*»; CAMS, Πο 127, pp. 102-105: «*In the Turkish village of Kavalas [equestrian in Greek, usually an appellation of St. George], there was a hill called Ay Yorgi... the old people told how there used to be a church of St. George there, but no trace of it remained. On the eve of the saint's day however, sick people would rush to spend the night there... Turks as well... and there was even a time when the Turks provided bedding [for the pilgrims]. One of our priests would go there on the following day and conduct a mass outdoors.*»

44. For example, the mountain village of Alithinos, known today as Uzun Tarla, retains the memory of its once being a village of Christians. The present day doors of the mosque are in fact the antique carved wooden doors of the village church, complete with a motif of small crosses in a geometric hatchwork pattern typical of Pontic woodcarving.

45. S. Vryonis, *The Decline of Medieval Hellenism*, p. 307, n. 119.

46. Bryer usually refers to it as the «phantom bishopric» of Of, thus expressing his doubts that it even existed. See *Continuity and Change* for his Appendix: «The Three Cyrils», pp. 155-158.

47. The register of 1515 reveals 9 monasteries which had holdings in the Of valley later confiscated and transformed into timars. Among those which have elsewhere been identified are: Aya Sofia, Asamanos (Asomatos), Şuşka Bastos (Theoskepastos), Zesukfal (Chrysokafalos), Ayafokas and Ayo Oban (St. Eugenios?). Of the three unidentified monasteries that remain, Yarrasin (St. Gerasimos?), Asfalya and Yaraküs Yanaki, could any one have been located in Of?

some references to monasteries in Ottoman documents of the 17th c.,⁴⁸ little other evidence is available. Even if a monastery had existed, it is quite possible that because of its small size it was not able to survive the confiscation of its lands and their transformation into timar holdings by the Ottomans.

Besides the partial collapse of the pre-Ottoman social structure, another element which might have contributed to the dominance of Islam in Of are the social and economic upheavals which the area suffered throughout the 17th and 18th centuries. During this period, the anarchy and violence which had plagued the rest of Anatolia since the end of the 16th century became a daily component of life in the eastern part of the Black Sea. Besides sincere instances of voluntary conversion, or conversion for economic gain, we have to consider the possibility that during hard times, many found becoming a Muslim the best defense against violence and exploitation.

A look at 17th-and 18th-century Of through period documents

Period documents offer a grim portrait of life in the Of valley, especially during the latter half of the 17th c. and the opening years of the 18th c. In the following firman, from 1707, law enforcement officials are instructed to deliver, dead or alive (bi ayyuhahin)

...(the outlaws) from Mavrant Kel Ali oğlu, Kanlı Fazlı, and his brother Zeynel, Ömer and his brother Kanlı Mahmud and from the village of Leka Rüstem oğlu Ali and Çoban oğlu Hasan and Deli Mehmed and Vango oğlu Mehmed and from the village of Zeno – Kanlı Ömer and his brother İsmail ... and from Çufaruksa – Deli Hüseyin and from Zeno Kızıl Osman and Kara Ali oğlu Mehmed and from Sur – Loris Hüseyin and Kurud oğlu San Mehmed and from Zevaid Şekaki Ahmed and Hasan and from Melinoz – Kuduksuz Hüseyin ... full of malice and evil, and of one heart and in concord with Mehmet Kethuda, kethuda of Abdullah Paşa, former Vali of Trebizond, Uluç Mustafa, Erzerumlu Horlioğlu çorbacı, and Yekçeşim Mustafa, in the year 1120, in addition to pillaging their contents, put to the torch 200 homes and barns as well as seven mosques throughout 15 villages.

Allegations involving the complicity of high appointed officials, (in this case, the steward of the former Vali of Trebizond), and marauding outlaw bands is a recurring theme in the *kadı sicils* of the period. The narrative continues, describing the brigands' further outrages against the unprotected population.

48. Umur, *Of Tarihi*, p. 135, doc. # 102, in the proceedings of a land dispute dating to 1781, there is mention of a Valk manastırı and its «*ma' ruf kenisanın rahibi mürd oldukde*» located in the village of Karakeşiş.

They killed sixteen soldiers, and besides deflowering eighteen virgins (*bâkir kızların bekâretin izale eyledikden*), they raped a little girl, seven years old ... they shaved the hair from the heads of eight pregnant women. A party of men went to a village where they tied two women to a horse's tail, thus killing them. They chased other women fleeing to the mountains and there had their way with them. Some of the virtuous and chaste women (*muhaddere ve ehli irz hatunlar*), disgraced at having fallen into the hands of the irregulars (*sarice*), flung themselves into the great river and drowned, while others threw themselves from a high place and were dashed to pieces (*yüksek yerden atılıb pâre pâre olub*). Twenty five Muslim babies were left in their cradles in the mountains when their mothers were driven away upon capture. Sucking their thumbs, some died from hunger and lack of water, while others were torn to pieces by wild animals... (*yirmi beş mikdarın efali-müslimin mâsumlar dağlarda aç, susuz parmakların emerek fevt ve bazılarının yırtıcı canavarlar parlayub helâk*).⁴⁹

Villagers in Of were defenseless against the tyranny of corrupt officials. A firman of 1688 describes how a mütesellim named Yusuf in collaboration with others oppressed and robbed the poor by using a firman that he some way or other had gotten hold of (*bir tarikle bir ferman alup fukaraya zülmetmeler*).⁵⁰ In 1676, Müfettiş Mustafa ağa used the pretext (*bahane*) of searching for outlaws in order to squeeze more money out of the population. Along with local collaborators, he

frightened the people, wrongly taking 14.000 kuruş by force (*cebren*). Beyond the collection of taxes, he took another 14.000, calling it a penalty (*cerime namile*). Oppressing a number of villages, he destroyed their barns and burned their provisions (*erzaklar*). Poor people not having money were imprisoned and killed.⁵¹

At the same time, janissaries whose job it was to provide law enforcement also had become part of the problem. Special forces (*serdengeçti*) member Hüseyin and (*bayrakdar*) Mehmed, along with the well known janissaries Ahmed and Ibrahim threatened (*teaddi ve rencide*) the villagers of Paçan and illegally requisitioned 150 sheep (*eğnam*).⁵² As if renegade janissaries weren't enough, there are a number of accounts of wrongdoers posing as members of the janissary corps. In 1708, one Abdurrahman was stabbed in the stomach and killed by a gang posing as janissaries (*veniçerilik iddiasında*) in the village of İşkenas,⁵³ while a firman of 1717 describes

49. Umur, *Of Tarihi*, pp. 88-89, doc. # 35.

50. *Ibid.*, p. 70, doc. # 7.

51. Umur, *Of Tarihine Ek*, p. 38, doc. # 26.

52. Umur, *Of Tarihi*, p. 118, doc. # 79.

53. *Ibid.*, p. 92, doc. # 39.

how Kul Hasan and his brother Sarı Ahmed also posing as janissaries (*yeniçerilik iddiasında*), took the engaged virgin Zeyneb by force and outraged her (*hetk-i irz*).⁵⁴

Organized gangs operated with seeming impunity. A firman of 1688 first reports the attacks of Kanlı Ömer and his sons on the marketplaces and villages in Of as beginning in 1678.⁵⁵ Thirty two years later one sees that Kanlı Ömer's sons are still going strong. According to a firman dated 1709, they are recorded as being part of a gang that attacks and kills people (*katli-nüfus*) in the market (*sukde*), robs travelers (*müruri ubur iden ebnai-sebil*), and takes virgin girls by force (*bakir kızların cebren ahz*).⁵⁶ The names of certain outlaws occur repeatedly over a long period of time in the firmans sent by the Sultan in answer to the pleas of the kadıs of Of for action to be taken.

Even a cursory look through firmans of the Porte, as well as the correspondence of the kadıs of Of shows how preoccupied the state was with the collection of revenue through taxation. In one of his letters, the late kadı of Of, Ibrahim Effendi writes that

the entire population of the villages of Trabzon (*bilcümle kura ahalisi*) have dwindled (*tegayyürül hal*) due to the oppression of the former Miri-miran Ömer Paşa. At night, homes are left empty (*halî*) by the fives and tens, with no one knowing where (the inhabitants) have gone (*kande gittikleri namâlûm*). If this situation (*minval*) continues, it is certain that not a soul will be left from among the villages of Trabzon (*bir ferd kalmadığı mukarrerdir*).⁵⁷

Incidents portraying the unwillingness of the Ofus to pay taxes become more evident as the 17th century progresses before climaxing during the early years of the 18th century. In the year 1709 the situation had deteriorated to the point that armed villagers, having fortified themselves in remote strongholds (*alati harp ile sarp mahallere tahassun*), took the initiative and attacked government agents sent to collect overdue revenues (*edası lâzım gelen ve mali miriler*).

As a result, the populations of the seven villages in question (*zıkr olunan yedi pâre kariye ehalisiyle*), Zeno, Zisno, Kadhahor, Holaikebir, Paçan, Kotloş and Kondu as well as two specified clans (*kabîletâni mezburetân*), the Ayazlo and Kalmotlu resident among these villages, were ordered transferred (*nakl*) and resettled (*iskan*) in the recently re fortified castle of Anakra, located in Georgia, on the outer border of the Islamic world (*intihayi serhaddi islâmîyede Gürcistan hududında*).⁵⁸

The only hope remaining for unprotected citizens was intervention on the part of the Sultan. It was in the interests of the central government to preserve order

54. *Ibid.*, p. 93, doc. # 42.

55. *Ibid.*, p. 70, doc. # 9.

56. *Ibid.*, p. 85, doc. # 32.

57. *Ibid.*, p. 67, doc. # 3.

58. Umur, *Of Tarihine Ek*, p. 52, doc. #. 45.

throughout the empire, as well to protect the taxpayers. The desire of the Porte to impose law and order, and punish the oppressors of the peasants is readily apparent in the firmans of the period. Still, it would be interesting to know how many of the decrees of the Sultan were ever carried out, given the weakness of the central government during this period when local feudal lords begin declaring their autonomy and implementing their own laws.

To date, the one and a half century long period of the derebey⁵⁹ has not been adequately studied. If we draw once again on local tradition however, a picture of the Of valley in the 17th c. develops in which we see the peasants forced to align with one or another of the aghas during their constant clashes as each sought primacy. Whether on the side of the winner or loser, it was the villagers, both Christians and Muslims, that in the end suffered the consequences of the clashes.

Conclusion

This Oflus aren't the only Muslims along the Black Sea who speak a language identified with a non Islamic past. Roughly 80 kms further east, villagers in the remote Hemşin valley still speak an archaic dialect of Armenian.⁶⁰ The case of the Hemşinlis in many ways is reminiscent of that of the Oflus. The settlements in both valleys are inaccessible mountain settlements, even more so in winter months. Travelers' accounts differ as to when exactly the Hemşinlis became Muslims, and range from the middle of the 16th century to sometime in the 19th century. There seem to be many similarities between the accounts of the islamization of both valleys.⁶¹ Further research in Hemşin could help shed light on the history surrounding the events in Of, as well as helping to better understand the process of islamization in the Black Sea.

There are other Greek speaking communities besides Of that have survived in the province of Trabzon.⁶² Yet the Oflus remain the most populous among them, for beyond the 30-40 villages of the Of valley, one can find them in many cities of western Turkey as well as western Europe. The fact that this Greek speaking popu-

59. For an introduction and a basic bibliography, see the article «Derebey» by J.M. Mordtmann in the *Encyclopédie de l'Islam*, vol. II, Paris 1977, pp. 213-214; a more in depth discussion can be found in A. Bryer, «The Laz Risings and the Downfall of the Pontic Derebeys 1812-1840», *Bedi Kartlisa* 26 (1969), pp. 191-210.

60. A brief description and list of Armenian speaking villages can be found in P. Andrews, *Ethnic Groups*, pp. 130-131 and 358-359.

61. See *Ethnic Groups* for the article by R. Benninghaus, «Zur Herkunft und Identität der Hemşinli», pp. 475-479.

62. Greek speakers are also to be found in Tonya, a district of Vakfikebir, Maçka, Sourmena, and Yağmurdere.

lation was resettled by the government in Ankara among the Greeks of the island of Imvros⁶³ and in northern Cyprus remains a paradox.

It is no exaggeration to say that the Oflus maintain a complicated love-hate relationship with their own history. Of is famous throughout Turkey for the quantity and the devoutness of the religious scholars it produces, yet until a decade or so ago, the exegesis of the Qur'an was still being conducted in the local dialect of Pontic Greek, as illustrated in the following anecdote from the village of Çoruk:

Cumavank is the common *ayla* of the villages Çoruk, Küçükhol, Yarakar, and Ohşoho, where Hocas from each village take a turn (as prayer leaders) in the *ayla*'s mosque. When it was the turn of the hoca from Ohşoho to perform Friday prayers, he began to deliver his sermon in Greek. Küçükholli Kasım Ağa made the hoca stop, because the people of Küçükhol don't know Greek. That's why the congregation broke up before prayers were even read.⁶⁴

The New Year, or *kalandaris*, continues to be celebrated on the 14 of January⁶⁵ complete with the dance of the *momoyeroi*⁶⁶ from home to home in the deep snows of winter. In the summer, thousands of Oflus from all over gather on the *aylas* for an orgy of drinking and dancing during a series of festivals.

The people of Of continue to call the language they speak *rumca*, while some even go further by referring to themselves as '*romaioi*', a practice which, if it survives, will ensure the preservation of their distinct identity among the peoples of the Black Sea.

63. The entire village of Şahinkaya, located on the edge of the Greek village Skinoudi are Greek speaking Oflus, resettled there since the 1970s. A village of Şahinkaya also exists in the upper Of valley where it is still known by its old name Şinek.

64. Ö. Asan, *Pontos Kültürü*, p. 121.

65. According to the Julian calendar, which Pontic Greeks once followed, and is still followed by the Slavic Orthodox churches.

66. Mummers' performances celebrating the rite of rejuvenation and the beginning of the new year. This custom can still be seen today in villages of northern Greece and Thrace, and prior to 1923, all along the coast of the Black Sea.

APPENDIX 1: villages of Of according to the three tax registers

B - Bive, C - Christians, M - Muslims

* marks the incidence of the name İskender

Settlement name	1515			1553		1583	
	C	B	M	C	M	C	M
Iskane - Yerakar	80	7	0	51	5*	85	36
Iskane - Leka	53	5	1*	72	5*	67	11
Iskane - Karakesis	23		0	84	0	33	1
Iskane - Celha/Hisseli	64	6	0	23	5*	32	2
Yiga - Maki	58	1	0	61	7*	100	37
Yiga - Aleksî İvedo	50	1	1	49	6	29	31
Yiğâ Likos Mahurit	39	1	2*	37	6	16	21
Yiğâ Korkot	44		1*	46	2	42	24
Yiğâ Anahor	42	3	4*	24	11*	19	41
Alano Simlos	59	5	2*	50	6*	59	62
Alano Balcı Hamza	35	5	4*	42	10	36	20
Alano Kono	24	2	0	23	3		6
Alano Makode	77	3	1	107	10	83	60
Vuzak Kavalâr	98	4	5*	73	14*	78	48
Vuzak	59	3	0	90	7*	45	26
Vuzak Valarit	50	2	1	83	4	39	23
Çufaruksa Balaban	39	2	0	72	12*	83	19
Çufaruksa Lazo	19	1	0	12	1	10	2
Çufaruksa Calik	52		0	50	3	42	54
Çufaruksa Balaban i Küçük	7		6*	14	3*	12	2
Çufaruksa Kono	8		0	14	3	12	2
İsporyani Kusi Kebir	53	6	1	43	27	39	20
İsporyani Kavalâr	31	4	1*	52	5	70	3
İsporyani Kusy Küçük	48	6	0	29	18	31	0
İsporyani Tirone	31	7	0	20	13	20	11
İsporyani Harvel	28		0	26	2	38	6
İsporyani Mahurit	38	1	3*	50	3	17	28
İsporyani Kusi Büzrük	7	1	0	48	17	44	23
Mapsino Zinahe	15		0	11	3	10	5
Mapsino Lazo	33		1	63	0	81	6
Mapsino Zimaha	13		0	x	0	x	0
Kondu	49		0	52	4*	50	9
Oflare Visir	40	6	6*	57	2	29	12

Settlement name	C	1515		1553		1583	
		B	M	C	M	C	M
Oflare Vesye	47	8	0	34	4*	67	3
Oflare Kırnta	41	3	0	63	6	84	2
Oflare Cemal	18	2	0	21	1	8	7
Oflare Harsinkö	27	1	3	63	1	55	9
Paçan Hopkin	9		0	13	2*	13	2
Pacan Sero	26	1	0	42	3*	92	7*
Kaçli-Paçan	27	2	0	40	0	20	5
Polyale Işkane	46	2	0	50	0	48	6
Pulala Hohol	58	3	3	23	9	30	28
Pulala Kilidiler	35	3	0	52	9	44	0
Zisno Makodano	43	2	0	45	6*	72	16
Zisno Hakse	31	1	1	29	9*	32	6
Moroz Kalisato	46	5	0	70	2	93	9
Moroz Cemal	19	1	0	31	2	22	14*
Moroz Sila	14		0	12	2	10	5
Nokano Yerakar Bulala	61		0	53	12	87	29
Nokano Hol	27		0	35	2	27	4
Nokano Humrik	26	1	0	22	4*	30	7
Halman Zevaid	34	1	1*	24	12*	65	10
Halman	64	6	1*	84	3	57	21
Gorğore Bacan	31		0	67	1*	83	9
Holayse	44		1	70	3*	94	5
Limno	100	5	0	95	14*	58	37
Zino	41	3	0	49	1*	59	12
Holo	61		1	63	6*	85	6
Milyano - Melnoz	18		0	11	4	22	8
Kono Kuriç	56	2	0	36	13	67	7

Hariç az defter 1553

Hanlut	46	5	105	5
Hanlut Yordam Eğridere	12	3		
Mosariş	15	2	82	8
Haldüzen	10	1	11	5
İpsil	6	2*	14	4
Okene	4	1	50	4
Yente	11	3	55	17

Settlement name	1515		1553		1583	
	C	M	C	M	C	M
	B					
Hariç az defter 1583						
Gölkik					7	3
Surahte					12	0
Devasır Öküzlü					4	0
Polite Kondi					12	2
Likos Mahurit					6	8
Madiryas					6	0
Odon Tavla					7	0
Holo Kolisar					21	10
Total:	2550	51	2829	365	3168	991
% of Muslim pop. of total		2%		11%		24%
total hane: Chris.+Mus.	2601		3194		4159	

APPENDIX 2

Pavlo's Story: told in the Pontic Greek dialect as spoken in the village of Aşağı Ögene, Of. Recorded in 1993 by Margarita Poutouridou

On the fall of Trabzon

1453de to Istanbuli epirane i Osmanliðes. Epeki, sin Trapezounta etone Pontos Imparatorluđu.

1468 sin Trapezunta to Istanbuli p' epire, o Sultan Fatihis tina legomen, i manan' at Roumena etone, asin Trapezunta etone.

Epeçeka epiren aten o çirisat. Etone ti Trapezuntas o krallis ti Sultan Fatihi o dayis, o θion na legomen. Eçinos pa, uç işe zürriyeti, yarðelia uç işe o krallis. I Osmanliðes ekoplaşepsane, erizosane her tarafa. I Trapezunta yayif epomine —to Istanbuli epiyen. I Avrupalides epominan açi. To Yunanistani pa pirane, os ti Yugoslaviya eperasane, os ti Bosna.

O Imparatoris eduşunefte, yani, aouto ipen ne peria to bilahare. Eçino pa, oti «o θios' at», eipnen, «ime», ena haberi epolisen atona. «As erte», ipen, «eftago teslimi eçinona, ton Sultan Fatih». Also Istanbuli, asi Mavroθalassa ta gemia erðane, çe asi Maçka apan' ceka, kativen t'askerinat. I Trapezunta eyomoθen askeria, ta gemia pa eyanaşepsan, epiyen si dayi'nat to yani, so θion' at na legume, eteresen i pşi' at evyen çe stek, eş' k'apoθan. 'Δosen atonan ti hazine ta kliðia çe epiken eçeka si vezirus' at, s' anθro-

In 1453, the Ottomans took Istanbul. In Trebizond there was the Empire of the Pontos.

The mother of Sultan Fatih, the one who took Istanbul, was a Rum from Trebizond.

It was from there his father took her. The emperor of Trebizond was Sultan Mehmed's uncle, that is. He himself had no progeny, the king had no children. The Ottomans settled all about, and Trapezunta remained weak —Istanbul was (already) gone. The Europeans remained further on. They also took Greece, all the way up to Bosnia.

The emperor thought (to himself), «He (Fatih) is going to conquer (Trebizond) in the end. And since I'm his uncle, let him come, and I will surrender to him». And he sent him a message. The ships came from Istanbul and the Black Sea, and his armies descended from up in Maçka. Trebizond was filled with soldiers, and the ships put to shore. (Fatih) went to his dayi, to his uncle that is. (The emperor), realizing that he was dying, gave him the keys to the treasure, and before his ministers and retinue said

pus' at, «Epikato», ipen, «teslimi. Tamam. T' atinu», ipen, «ine, epiren'a teslimi. Tin Trapezunta pire».

«It's done. I surrendered the city. He's taken Trebizond».

The Maraş Missionaries

Şimdi, encen ađa asa Maraşutia leğom'a, so Sultan Muratı, horios etone. Apatuçeka bin sene evvel, to İslamiyeti ontan ekseven s'Arabistani, to Kūdusi so Bizans İmparatorluğu demeno etone. Ama i Bizanslıdes bola katari esane. Bolla eboyleftane as'ekinous. Epezezsane asi Bizanslıdes.

Epikane haberi ton iteno —Hazret i Omeris en— epolisane ena haberi, «as erte i papazi, as erte», ipan, «inumes teslimi s'eçinona». Omorfo iteno işen, idare. Etotes emorfo etone, har epozezsane to İslamiyeti.

Bu sefer, ap' ađa as'a Marashutia, enan papazi esumarlaepsane so Kudusi. Na pai eçeka, me tsi Muslumani ti hoçaðes o papazıs, yarışma na ftene. Na terune, pio dini en kallio.

Epiyane so Kudusi, yarışma osa t'epinane i Musulmani üstün geldiler. «Teseteron to dini, doğru olduğunu» epiçena teslim, yani «aou teseteron» ipen, «to dini, kallio en», o papazıs. Eentone Musulmanis. Apatha, asa Maraşutia p'ekseven. All' uç eporese n'erte sa Maraşutia (...) Epiyen so Maraşı. Epiyen eçeka eyerleşepse.

Arada bin yıl geçti. T'eçinu ti yarıdelio yarıdelia Musulami esan, o sūlales' at olo. O Sultan Fatihis, tin

Now up in Sultan Murat, in Marashutia as we call it, there was a village. A thousand years earlier, when Islam first appeared in Arabia, Jerusalem was part of the Byzantine Empire. But the Byzantines were very oppressive. The people suffered because of them.

They sent a message to the Caliph Ömer saying «Send priests so that we may bow down to them». It was a good system, with order that he had. Back then, Islam was good, but now they have ruined it.

Now it came to pass that a priest was ordered to travel to Jerusalem from Marashutia. The priest should go there and hold a contest — see which religion is superior.

The went to Jerusalem, where the Muslims came out «Your religion is better» said the priest, and converted. Not able to return to Maraşutia, he (...) went and settled in Maraş.

In the meantime, a thousand years passed. His childrens' children were Muslims, all of his line. Now Sultan

Trapezunta onta epire aso dayi' nat teslimi, har Rumca oup' ekser enan hoca araevi. Na kloθ' atsen so dini. İpane «So Maraşı, apatha asa Maraşutia ekseven is Papazis bin sene evvel, ti Latince, ti Rumce uç' efiken. Ta yarıdelia' nat emaθisen. Eçin ekserune, hem Türkce, hem Rumca. Epeçinus asi hoçades ne berume». İpan'a ton Sultan Fatih. O Sultan Fatihis, aso Maraşı, esumarlaepsen beş kişı ep' eçinus. Apaðaceka p'ekseven o papazis, epeçinu ti yarıdeli yarıdelia, as' anepşa't. Erθane si Trapezunta. Ebeçinusine enan pa epiçen Vali si Trapezunta Hızır ekue. To onoman' at Hızır etone. Eçinona epiçen Vali.

Hızır Bey and the forbidding of Greek

Şimdi, o Hızır beys, otuz iki sene, yani triandas ðio hronia, valiluk epiçen si Trapezunta. Hem Rumca kser, hem Türkce, hem Musulmanos en. Ti Trapezunta, ti Maçka, afto ti Mavrothalassa, to Karadenizi t'etrafi, oson esane, yasak (...) epiçen, yasak.

«Uçe na sindişeneten», ipen, «Rumca». Atin uli Latini ine i Trapezunliðes. Yasakladı. Ekato hronia, ato t'eçe-ka o,t'epiçen, epiçen. Eklosen'ats sin Türkçe, unuturepsen'ats.

The Conversion of Okena

Ato t'epanceka pa epiçen Musulmani, epemne ato o horios. I Maraşliðes apaða merea esevane, apaða so Soğanlı merea, asi Parpeti merea.

Fatih, at the time he took Trebizond from his uncle, sought a hoca who could speak Greek to turn (the unbelievers) to the faith. They told him that a priest had left here a thousand years earlier for Maraş, and had taught his children Greek, so they speak Greek as well as Turkish. «Let us take them for hocas». Sultan Fatih had five of them brought from Maraş. Those that went to Trebizond were the great great grandchildren of the priest that had left this place long ago. From them, one named Hızır was made Vali of Trebizond.

Now Hızır was the Vali of Trebizond for 32 years. He knew both Greek as well as Turkish, and was a Muslim. «You are not to speak Greek», and he forbade it in Trabzon, Maçka, and all over the Black Sea.

They are Greeks, these Trapezuntines. He (Hızır bey) accomplished this within a hundred years. He turned (the people) to Turkish, he made them forget.

Here people were converted too, and it was this village that was left. It was from the direction of Soğanlı, from Bayburt, that the Maraş arrived.

Erθan, ađa'pan horios en, t'an to horios legom'a. Eçeka erθane, (...). Eçeka pal, inas papazis Şatos etone. (...) piren t'aksinari çe kativen, to maşeri, na toyraev'ats. Epiyen eçeka, ipan atona, «yow, ehases t'ahilis? Ti Trapezunta o Turko pire, os açipuka, os to Katohori eyendane Müslümani, esas na kutaneazunesase. Esis ineste Müslümani». Eðiksane ta işaretia' tuna. Eçini eklostane. Eçini epikane kabuli to Islam, to Hristianluki efekan. Kativan ađaçeka.

Esan ađaçeka beş kardaş. O papos'atun ekoue Haralambon, çe o çiris atoun ekoue Zindo. Çe ta peðia o is ekoue Pavlo, çe o is ekoue Yero, çe o is ekoue Kero, çe o is ekoue Potur, çe o is ekoue Stringa.

Erθan ađa so horio, toplaeψan' atse. O Pavlo pal trano papazis. O köyun papazi o. Temetero o palaio, bu sefer, benim eskilerim. Ipan, «Ela athaçeka». Türkçe pa kseroune, Rumca pa. «Elate», ipane, «emisine Musulmani imesine. Apaçi asa Maraşutia eksevame. To Müsülmanluki epikame kabuli. Omorfo dini en. (...) na kof-tune sas e».

O beş kardaşdan, dördi döndi. O beş tane ađelfia esane ya, i tesseri eklostane. O Pavlo, uç eñelese. «Ego», ipen, «uçe na kloşkume». İpane, «na koftume se». «Kopsete me», ipe.

İşe dört tane peðia. Ta dört tane peðia so karşin'at ekopsane ta çefalia' tun çe valan'ata so kalaði, çe forto-san' ata (e)çi. Ton Pavlo. Çe porpa-

They came to the upper village (Okena) (...) there was a priest there named Shatos (...) he took his axe and came at them with the knife to cut them to pieces. Others said to him, «yow, have you lost your mind? The Turk has taken Trebizond, and up to Katohor everyone has become Muslim, they will smash you. Become Muslim!» They showed their proofs, and (the people) accepted Islam, and left Christianity. They (the Maraşh) came down here.

There were five brothers here. Their grandfather was named Haralambon, and their father Zindo. His children were called Pavlo, Yero, Kero, Potur and Stringa.

They came here and gathered the people. Pavlo was a great priest, the priest of the village. Our ancestor, this time, of my forbears. They said, «come here», speaking Turkish and Greek. «Come», they said, «we are Muslims, originally from Marashutia. We became Muslims, and it is a beautiful faith (...) or else you'll be slaughtered».

Of the five brothers, four converted. Pavlo didn't want to. «I'm not changing», he said. They (threatened) him saying, «we will cut you». «Cut me then», he said.

He had four children. They cut his four children in front of him and loaded their heads in a basket. They loaded him with the basket and

tesan aton apeşkes so horio (i praduk-hi). «Emis ter d'epikam'aton». Eçinos hiç ... yapmadi.

«Eyo» ipen, «ton kelem», ipen, «eðoka, to çefali'm». «Ti yarðelim to çefali pal ekopseten, ego uçe na kloskume so tini'sun».

Osa t'epenen, erotesan aton: «Ey Pavlo!». Ipen, «Do?». «Ar'ap'au tranitero ðoulia inete mi? Auto ti ðulia epikane se, ç' u ðelis na kloşkese! Ey klost, oğlu, ne olur?».

Ipen, «Ato tib'uç'en». «Am'pio en zori?». «O limos» ipen, «en pola zori».

«Ey vah», ipane, «ekopsame ti yarðeli'at ta çifalia. Demek, autos me to limo inutun israhis (?)».

Valon aton so mahpusane, so zindani. Htipisan aton, kliðosan aton. Üç gün estaðen eçeka, ne nero eðokan aton, ne fai. Üç gün istera, evoise, «Vyalte me» ipen, «inume Müsülmanis». Eentone Müsülmanis, ama pola uç eyaşaepsen. Haðen. Poðane. O şe-kilde, temetero o paleo.

In the above passage:

the Greek values 'ð' should be read as in 'that', 'θ' as in thing, 'γ' in Oflu Greek approximates the Turkish yumuşak 'ğ' and should be read as a softly gargled 'g'.

paraded him around the village. «See what we have done to him». He (...) didn't give ground.

«You can have my head as well. You cut the childrens' heads and I'm still not going to turn to your religion».

While they (were parading him), (the people) asked him, «hey Pavlo, is there anything worse than what they have done to you? And you won't give in? Go ahead son, convert».

He answered «this is nothing». Then what is worse? «Hunger is very hard».

«What a shame, we cut off his childrens' heads, and it would only take being famished for him to give in».

They locked him in a prison and beat him. He lasted for three days, with no food and water. After the three days he cried out. «Let me out, I will become Muslim». He converted, but didn't live for long. He was lost. He died. That's the story of our ancestor.