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From the Archive to the Field II: A Report on Summer 2016 Asia Minor Travel Seminar: The Greek Orthodox Christians of Ottoman Cappadocia, July 17- August 13, 2016

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FROM THE ARCHIVE TO THE FIELD II:
A REPORT ON SUMMER 2016 ASIA MINOR TRAVEL SEMINAR:
THE GREEK ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS OF OTTOMAN CAPPADOCIA,
JULY 17-AUGUST 13, 2016

Following on the success of the 2014 summer seminar, the New York Life Center for the Study of Hellenism in Pontos and Asia Minor of Hellenic College, and the Dean and Zoë Pappas Interdisciplinary Center for Hellenic Studies of Stockton University, once again sponsored a summer seminar that took place July 17-August 13, 2016. The Summer 2016 Asia Minor Travel Seminar: The Greek Orthodox Christians of Ottoman Cappadocia was taught by Professor Paschalis Kitromilides (University of Athens), and Professor Tom Papademetriou (Stockton University) on the history of the Greek Orthodox communities of Asia Minor in the late Ottoman period.

The purpose of the seminar was to introduce American graduate and undergraduate students to the history of the Greek Orthodox communities of Asia Minor. In particular, the focus was on the Cappadocian communities (*Karamanlides*), that were largely Turkophone, but that maintained their Greek Orthodox religious beliefs and practices in late Ottoman society. These communities were forcibly uprooted by the terms of the Lausanne Convention in 1923, and forced to settle in Greece, while the Muslims of Greece were forcibly uprooted and forced to settle in the newly established Republic of Turkey. The aftermath of this upheaval left lasting trauma on these communities. With the inspired energy of Madame Melpo Merlier, the founder of the Centre for Asia Minor Studies, a systematic program of oral history interviews were conducted in Greece with thousands of former residents of villages from throughout Asia Minor. This Oral Tradition archive formed the repository of memo-

ries of life in Asia Minor prior to 1923, and became the basis of study for the seminar. Topics covered in the seminar included the creation and categorization of the archives, geography and topography, economy and agriculture, political organization, daily life and customs, religion and festivals, and architecture.

While the seminar intended to travel from the archive to the field, to make extensive site visits to the various villages of Cappadocia near the city of Kayseri, Turkey (determined during the archival research), unexpected events took place that forced the organizers to cancel Turkey portion of the seminar. The June 28 bombing of the Istanbul Atatürk Airport was the first and immediate reason, while the state of emergency that resulted from the attempted coup on July 15, made travel to Turkey problematic. It turns out that two of the Seminar Fellows actually were stranded in Istanbul during the attempted coup, but later joined the group in Athens when travel restrictions were lifted. Undeterred, the Summer 2016 Asia Minor Travel Seminar focused not on places of origin in Cappadocia, but on places of arrival and settlement in Greece. This was the flip side of the study, as the refugees from Cappadocia sought to rebuild their lives, carrying with them as much culture from Asia Minor as they could. The main field trip took place in Evia, to the village of Prokopi, and Nea Sinassos.

The New York Life Asia Minor Fellows who were selected to participate in this program were made up of two Ph.D. students, two Masters of Divinity students/Seminarians, and three undergraduates focused on history and religion. They are listed are as follows:

1. Niko Birbilis: Holy Cross School of Theology (M.Divinity student/ Seminarian)
2. Elektra Burnet: Hellenic College (undergraduate in History and Literature)
3. Polina Ivanova: Harvard University (Ph.D. student in Byzantine history)
4. Yusuf Karabicak: McGill University (Ph.D. student in Ottoman history)
5. Susan Kourtis: Boston College (undergraduate in Religion)
6. Menios Papadimitriou: Holy Cross School of Theology (M.Divinity student Seminarian)
7. Shaun Steup: Stockton University (undergraduate in History)

The Fellows arrived individually in Athens, and stayed at the very convenient Athenian Callirhoe Hotel in Koukaki. The group gathered each morning and evening to walk together to and from the archives through Plaka.

Professor Paschalis Kitromilides, Secretary General of the Board of Trustees and Director of the Centre for Asia Minor Studies, and the staff of the Centre welcomed the seminar participants and were most gracious throughout the entire seminar. While the other research centers in Athens were closing down during the warm days of August, the Centre for Asia Minor Studies was active as ever, continuing being vibrant with research activity.

Prior to arriving in Athens, the students received course packs of preliminary readings that offered important historical background, and context for studying the Greek Orthodox community of Asia Minor. Upon arrival, the seminar opened with Professor Papademetriou's overview of the history of Asia Minor from prehistory through the contemporary period using a series a cartographical depictions.



Working in the Archives: Elektra Burnett, Niko Birbilis, Susan Kourtis.

Also, in those first days, he led a discussion of Speros Vryonis' seminal work, *The decline of Medieval Hellenism in Asia Minor and the Process of Islamization from the eleventh through the fifteenth century*, focusing on issues of process of social and cultural transformation,

Islamization and Turkification, the Byzantine residue, ecclesiastical culture, as well as the important discussion on the origin of the Karamanli communities. In addition, Professor Papademetriou discussed the theory and practice of using oral histories as historical sources, and offered instruction on how to identify, and read the handwritten materials, a task that is often challenging to new researchers. He was present with the students throughout the seminar to facilitate research, answer questions, and lead discussions based on multiple presentations.

Along with Assistant Director, Stavros Anestides, who was always at the disposal of the seminar, the library staff consisting of Mrs. Varvara Kontogiannis and Mr. Dimitris Politis offered exceptional service to assist students in their research. Centre researchers, Dr. Dimitris Kamouzis, and Dr. Ioannis Kiriakantonakis also offered invaluable assistance.

There were multiple lectures organized for the seminar by the scholars and staff of the Centre:

Dr. Markos Dragoumis: “Introduction to the Musical Archives”

Professor Paschalis M. Kitromilides: “Hellenism in Asia Minor: Concepts and Clarifications”

Dr. Ioannis Kyriakantonakis: “Intellectuals of Constantinople and Asia Minor”

Mrs. Varvara Kontogiannis & Mr. Dimitris Politis: “An overview of the CAMS Oral Tradition Archive/ Photographic Archive”

Dr. Dimitris Kamouzis: “The 1923 Population Exchange and aftermath”

Dr. Stavros Anestides: “A case of the 1923 Population Exchange: The Exodus of the Greek Orthodox inhabitants of Sinasos (Mustafaşa)”

There were also organized discussions with guests, who were present to hear the research projects of the Fellows including the Very Rev. Archimandrite Maximos Constas, Senior Research Scholar, Holy Cross School of Theology, and Mr. Panos Laskaridis, of the Aikaterini Laskaridis Foundation.



Presentation with Mr. Laskarides.



Seminar with Monk Maximos.

Other important presentations took place in other locations in Athens. With the assistance of Mr. Dimitris Politis, the seminar was honored with a private tour of the National Library of Greece, and a welcome by the Director, Dr. Fillipos Tsimpoglou.



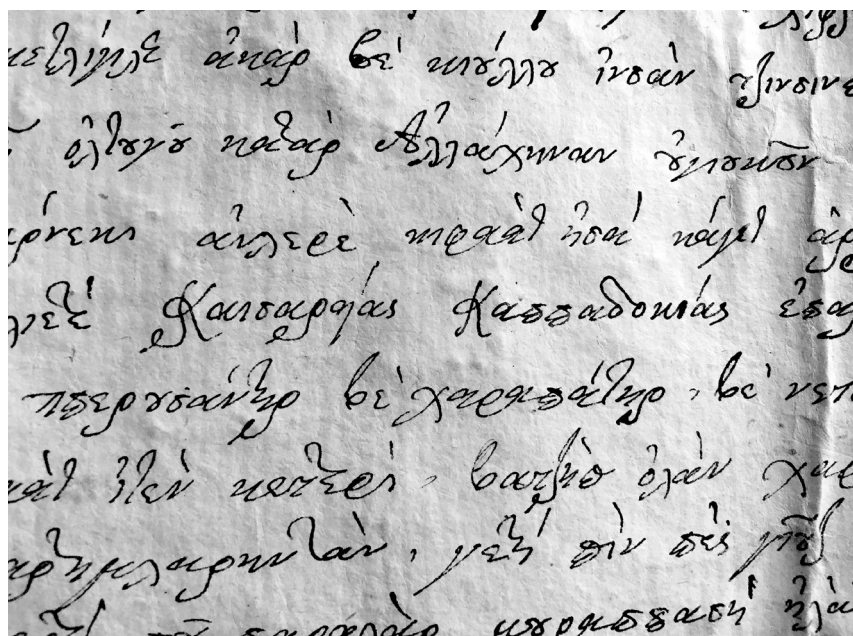
Professor Kitromilides discussing manuscripts, National Library of Greece.



With Dr. Fillipos Tsimpoglou, Director, National Library of Greece.



With Dr. Tsimpoglou.



Karamanli document in National Library.

The seminar had the rare opportunity to enter the stacks of the library to see the many rare books. A selection of books and maps of Asia Minor were prepared for the Fellows to examine. This experience was extra special as the National Library was in the midst of preparing for its major move to the Stavros Niarchos Foundation Cultural Center in Kallithea. The seminar participants were among the last to view this important national institution in its classic form. The seminar was also offered an additional beautifully curated presentation of manuscripts and archival material about Asia Minor prepared by the staff of the Department of Manuscripts, as well as an impromptu description of Byzantine musical manuscripts.

At the National Archaeological Museum, with the assistance of Professor Maria Konstantoudaki, the seminar received a private tour of the exhibit, “Dream of Splendid Ruins” given by Dr. Thodoris Koutsogiannis, Chief Curator of the Art Collection, Hellenic Parliament. Mr. Nicos Nicolaidis, led the seminar on a walking tour of Ottoman Athens, as well as refugee settlements in Neos Kosmos. He also guided the seminar on tours of the Benaki Museum collection and the collection of the Byzantine Museum. Dr. Dimitris Kamouzis led a walking tour of refugee settlement in Nea Philadelphia, and arranged for the seminar to visit the Μουσείο Μικρασιατικού Ελληνισμού “Φιλώ Χαϊδεμένου,” that possesses extensive collection of artifacts from Asia Minor.



Tour of Ottoman Athens: Polina Ivanova, Shaun Steup, Yusuf Karabicak, Prof. Tom Papademetriou, Menios Papadimitriou, Niko Birbilis, Susan Kourtis, Nico Nicolaidis, Elektra Burnett.



Seminar in front of the Asia Minor monument, Nea Philadelphia.



In the Refugee Museum of Nea Philadelphia.

A highlight was the special interactive evening of instruction of dance and music of Cappadocia by the Dora Stratou Foundation. After being welcomed by Professor Alkis Raftis, president of the Dora Stratou Foundation, the Fellows were taught by two of the performers of this famed dance troupe.



Learning Cappadocian Dances at Dora Stratou Theater Studios.

After the workshop, they attended the evening performance to witness the professional troupe perform very traditional renderings of Asia Minor dances, including dances from Pontos, and Cappadocia—and even the village of Pharasa!

Additional highlights in Athens included a visit to Vespers of St. Panteleimon in Halandri, seeing the opera *Carmen* in the Odeon of Herodes Atticus and plentiful opportunities for amazing dinners.

To the Field: Journey to Evia

On Sunday August 7, 2016 the seminar boarded a minibus for its trip to visit the refugee settlements on Evia. The first stop was in Chalkida, and the Emir Zade Mosque which is currently a museum. The exhibition of etchings of Chalkida placed the region in historical context as an important location during medieval and Ottoman times. Tours of the Folklore Museum of Chalkida housed in the Negroponte Frankish castle, the Venetian Bailo's residence, the Karababa Castle and museum, and

the Archaeological Museum of Chalkida offered the Fellows a view of the multiple layers of culture that this region experienced.



In Chalkida at the House of the Bailo.

Meeting Mrs. Sophia Eugenikou, President of the Association of Prokopi of Chalkida “Osios Ioannes o Rossos,” the group was then led to the village of Prokopi, which was the settlement location of the villagers



In Prokopi with descendants of refugees from Ürgüp.

of the Cappadocian Village of Prokopi, also known as Ürgüp. Prokopi is also the location of the major shrine of St. John the Russian whose relics were brought from Ürgüp to Evia, and that lie in state in the great cathedral church of the same name. The Fellows received the hospitality of his Eminence, Metropolitan Chrysostomos, the Metropolitan of Chalkida, and stayed in the comfortable guest house (*xenona*), in which pilgrims to the shrine stay. Mrs. Eugenikou made arrangements for the seminar to be offered wonderful hospitality from local families whose roots are from Ürgüp.

The next visit was to the village of Nea Sinassos, where the group was met by Mrs. Despina Bougioukmanou, an organizer of cultural exchanges with the Turkish village of Mustafapasha (Sinassos). Though smaller than Prokopi, Nea Sinassos offered a more direct experience of the Cappadocian village life of Sinassos (Mustafapasha).



Holding an Icon from Sinassos, Menios Papadimitriou and Susan Kourtis.



Priest with Church vessels and relics.



Church Vessel from Sinassos.

The church of Saint Nicholas at the village was a depository of the ecclesiastical relics, vessels, and utensils created in the Ottoman Empire, and used in the Cappadocian village of Sinassos. Many icons and even some ecclesiastical furnishings were brought by refugee settlers from the exchange. The experience of seeing first-hand artifacts that local villagers preserved and carried with them as part of the traumatic migration gave immediate context to many of the files and documents that the students had been reading. The group also was received by the local association of Sinassos, and was offered hospitality in their meeting house. Mostly grandchildren of Sinassos refugees, they offered many accounts of the struggles in those early years of their forbears settling in the region.



Icon from Sinassos.



Icon from Sinassos,
detail with Karamanli inscription.

After a delicious seafood lunch by the sea offered to the seminar by the Mayor of Aidipsos, and a quick swim in the beautiful blue water, the seminar participants boarded the minibus, caught a ferry and proceeded back to Athens.

The return to the Centre for Asia Minor Studies was marked by additional questions raised from the trip to the villages, and intensive research in the Oral Tradition files, as the students focused on advancing their individual research projects.

Conclusion:

The Summer 2016 Asia Minor Travel Seminar succeeded in its mission to investigate the social and cultural experiences of the Greek Orthodox Christians of Ottoman Cappadocia, both in the pre-1923 situation, and as refugees after 1923. By conducting research in the Oral Tradition archives of the Centre for Asia Minor Studies the graduate and undergraduate Fellows of the Asia Minor 2016 Seminar had a unique opportunity to deal with the theoretical challenges of working with oral history sources, and the very practical experience of working with such a unique and important collection of original handwritten sources.

The additional experiences outside of the archive, in the field, whether in the refugee villages in Evia, or in the settlements of Athens, in the museum and library collections, or in Cappadocian dance instruction, all offered a fuller more textured dimension of the cultural experiences of those people whose culture was being studied. When faced with the dramatic situation of contemporary refugees fleeing the Middle East who are landing in Greece, and other parts of Europe, this seminar offered a particularly poignant opportunity reflect on the refugee experience of those thousands of people who were uprooted from Asia Minor.

The travel component, though not to the destination that was originally planned, offered opportunity to the Fellows to see first-hand the physical spaces where the residents who created the oral histories settled, and to consider the impressive institutions and structures they created when they arrived.

The commitment by the New York Life Center for the Study of Hellenism in the Pontos and Asia Minor of Hellenic College, and The Dean

and Zoë Pappas Interdisciplinary Center for Hellenic Studies of Stockton University, to run this seminar every other year appears to be bearing fruit. Working with the highly esteemed, well-established Centre for Asia Minor Studies, graduate and undergraduate students are offered an intense experience of working within a fascinating and rich collection, on an important topic in the history of Hellenism. With the direction of Professors Kitromilides and Papademetriou, the seminar is a powerful learning experience. The program is being considered again for the future, for Summer 2018.