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Yusuf Karabıçak

AH UMUT: PONTIC VILLAGES IN THE LATE OTTOMAN EMPIRE¹

*The Mahmut mountain... It was written wrong.
Its real name is Ahmut. It is a Turkish word which comes from "Ah Umut".*

*And it means ax ελπίδα. (O Hope!)*²

Located northwest of Gümüşhane and southwest of Torul, Mount Ahmut is host to a village named Fytiana (Φυτίανα) which was no ordinary village, if there ever is an ordinary village. It boasted between 1654 and 1841, "a patriarch of Antioch, five successive archbishops of Chaldia, metropolitans of Amaseia, Nikopolis and Georgian Ahtala, five ruling abbots (mostly of Soumela), and a number of didacts."³ Gümüşhane itself took its name from famous silver mines, and the involvement of Fytiana was not marginal. The Fytianoι, a family that took its name from the village, were "often (with the Sarasites clan) *archimetalourgoι*, concessionaries of its booming silver mines, whose flock eventually included all Ottoman Christian miners, extending to the alum-mining villages and bishoprics of Nikipolis-Sebinkarahisar-Koloneia, and finally the first, but not last, coal-miners of Zonguldak to stage a strike."⁴

1. This paper was made possible by the HCHC Asia Minor Travel Seminar, organized and funded by the Holy Cross Hellenic College and Stockton University. I would like to extend my thanks to these institutions, to Tom Papademetriou for organizing the seminar in Athens, to the Center of Asia Minor Studies in Athens and its staff, especially to Paschalis Kitromilides and Stavros Anestidis for being great hosts.

2. A. Nikolaidis, *Κέντρο Μικρασιατικών Σπουδών* (Center for Asia Minor Studies - KMS), Κορόνιξα (ΠΟ 846), p. 37.

3. A. Bryer, "The Pontic Greeks Before the Diaspora", *Journal of Refugee Studies* 4,4 (1991), p. 325.

4. *Ibid.*

Fytiana was one of the thirteen villages located near the river Cizere in late 19th century. According to testimonies, ten of these villages had Greek-Orthodox populations.⁵ Among them, four villages had only Greek-Orthodox inhabitants: Papavram (Παπαβράμ - Atköy), Goli (Γόλη - Kolu), Sarandar (Σαραντάρ - Erikli), Ambrikanton (Αμπρικάντων - Embrik). Three of them had only Muslim inhabitants: Manastır, Köycüğez, Otalan. The other six had both Muslims and Greek-Orthodox in different proportions: Fytiana, Fitikiar (Φιτικιάρ - Fiteğer), Hopsa (Χόψα - Kopuz), Matsera (Ματσερά - Macara), Koronixa (Κορόνιξα - Görekse) and Letsouh (λετσούχ - Eleççük).

By the 19th century, the region had lost most of its glory though. The mining operations had long declined and most of them had disappeared. The only mine by the Cizere river, in Koronixa was abandoned. In 1870, per the yearbook of the Trabzon *vilayet*, “although there is still some ore in the Görükse mine, it was abandoned as an imperial order (*irade-i seniyye*) for its opening did not materialize.”⁶ Without the mines, villagers had to survive on farming and animal-herding which were never enough to feed the population. Most chose to travel out of their communities to earn money.

The Ottoman officials were aware of the hardships of the *sancak* of Gümüşhane and were trying to devise solutions to the problem as early as 1860s. Per the report of an inspector charged by the central government to examine the situation in the Pontos region in the process of bringing the Tanzimat reforms there, “the *sancak* of Gümüşhane succumbed to excessive frailty and destruction due to some unavoidable hardships stemming from its position.”⁷ Among the “unavoidable

5. The list is provided by St. Papadopoulos, KMS, Φυτίανα (ΠΟ 853), pp. 56-57. The villages are mostly uninhabited now, there are very few people who live there permanently, but a lot of people have their summer houses which they visit for various months. I happen to be a descendant of a Muslim inhabitant of Fytiana. There is no official list of the villages of Cizere river, but people of the region would mostly agree with this list.

6. S. Özcan San, *Trabzon Salnamelerinde Gümüşhane Sancağı*, Gümüşhane, Gümüşhaneliler ve Gümüşhaneyi Sevenler Hizmet Vakfı, 1993, p. 16.

7. BOA (Turkish State Archives, formerly Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivleri), A.MKT. MHM (Bab-ı Ali Sadaret Evrakı, Mektubi Kalemi, Sadaret Mektubi Mühimme Kalemi Evrakı) 312/88-1, 3 Rebiülahir 1281 (5 September 1864).

hardships” he later counts the region being “a rocky country” and “the abandoning of the production in the mines.” He suggests re-arranging the borders of Gümüşhane and the town of Ardası for the inhabitants to have more farming and pasturing lands, and the re-opening of the mines.

From a long-term perspective, these problems were never resolved. The inhabitants continued to emigrate to Russia, and famines and droughts repeatedly occurred until the end of the Empire. In 1894, flocks of villagers from Gümüşhane and Erzurum reached the coastline in hope of being fed. The Ottoman authority tried to provide them with supplies to see them through the winter but more importantly they considered teaching the villagers to cultivate potatoes to avoid later famines.⁸ The success of these measures is debatable as the people of Gümüşhane never stopped emigrating till the empire’s last day and another famine hit the *sancak* in 1908.⁹

In short, life was hard for a declining region. Many inhabitants felt that emigration, temporary or permanent, was necessary. In the words of one former inhabitant of Goli, in the early 20th century “Every house in Goli had its expatriate, because otherwise they couldn’t survive.”¹⁰ However, people did their best to survive and made use of every opportunity that came their way. They were not necessarily miserable; we can probably call them hopeful. Therefore, this study focuses mostly on the concept of hope, and tries to understand the personal lives of the people of the region and their intersection with region-wide and world-wide trends beyond their control.

8. BOA, BEO (Bab-ı Ali Evrak Odası) 315/23602, 9 Teşrin-i Sani 1309 (21 November 1893); BEO 331/24779, 30 Teşrin-i Sani 1309 (12 December 1893); BEO 347/26004 and 26005, 10 Kanun-ı Sani 1309 (22 January 1894); BEO 354/26517, 24 Kanun-ı Sani 1309 (5 February 1894), BEO 370/27748 and 27782, 23 Şubat 1309 (4 March 1894); BEO 378/28349, 17 Mart 1310 (29 March 1894); BEO 386/28878, 4 Nisan 1310 (16 April 1894).

9. BOA, BEO 3419/256421, 29 Ramazan 1326 (25 October 1908). For a discussion on farming and food shortages in Gümüşhane region see: K. Saylan, “20. Yüzyılın başlarında Gümüşhane’de Tarım”, *Gümüşhane Tarihi (İl Oluşununun 85. Yılında Gümüşhane Tarihi ve Ekonomisi Sempozyumu Tarih Bildirileri)* 25-26 Mayıs 2010, Gümüşhane, Gümüşhane Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2016, pp. 274-288.

10. P. Vasiliadis, KMS, Γολή (ΠΟ 845), p. 117.

I will make use mostly of the testimonies of Greek villagers from this region, collected by and preserved in the Centre for Asia Minor Studies in Athens. These testimonies were collected from 1930s to 1970s by people working for the center. The center tried to locate Greek refugees that emigrated from different parts of Asia Minor and asked them a list of questions to understand the locations, life and culture of Hellenism in various parts of Asia Minor before the Greek-Turkish War. Luckily, Pontos is one of the regions with an abundance of documentation. The correspondents were not necessarily chosen following a model, the Center was mostly desperate to reach anyone they could reach and had limited resources.¹¹ Especially the interference of the people who conducted interviews with the correspondents is a matter of debate. One wonders if the correspondents really talked about themselves as Hellenes rather than Christians and about their neighbors as Turks rather than Muslims. Still, I find these testimonies very important for the study of life in most of Asia Minor in late 19th century as they are not only the rare few we have, but they are also voices from a part of the society that remain dark to us historians. To balance shortcomings of all sources involved, the testimonies will be supported by other material as much as possible, although this should be seen as a two-way relationship as sources supporting each other. I have no claim for the primacy of Ottoman bureaucratic sources. Before delving further, I would also like to stress that I do not use hope as a necessarily good thing. As a saying in Turkish goes “hope is the bread of the poor.”

Cizere River and its Environs

Administratively, the villages of the Cizere river were part of the *kaza* of Torul and the *sancak* of Gümüşhane. The *kaza* of Torul, according to the Ottoman yearbook for of 1870 for Trabzon, had a male population of 16038, and was a majority *Rum* area. Roughly 63% of this popula-

11. For a discussion of the archival material and their value see: Evi Kapoli, “Archive of oral tradition of the Centre for Asia Minor Studies: its formation and its contribution to research,” *Ateliers du LESC* [En ligne] 32 (2008), accessed 17 septembre 2017. URL: ateliers.revues.org/1143.

tion, 10130, were *Rum*.¹² The effects of the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877-78 must have been felt in population figures as well. In the yearbook of 1893, Torul has 19458 Muslims and 16679 *Rum*, females included.¹³ In the yearbook of 1902, there are 22369 Muslims and 21166 *Rum*.¹⁴

The villagers of the *Cizere Deresi* in late 19th century, visited the town of Torul for its markets and shops or to carry out official business, and likely both at the same time. The *keymakam* was located there, as well as the local court. The shops were trading with Trabzon on the seacoast, and the merchandise going to *Gümüshane* generally stopped in Torul before continuing to their final destination. Most of the shops were owned by the *Rum* who were residing in close villages, while the population living in the town were Muslims.¹⁵

Manastır was an unofficial seat of power around the Cizere river. The properly named *derebeys* (river lords) were in Manastır,¹⁶ and although they lost some of their power after 1850s, they were still very powerful. The location of the *derebeys* was probably the main reason for the local market being in Manastır. They were jealously protecting their monopoly as well; when Greek villagers tried to open their own market in Ambrikanton, they faced hostility from the *derebeys*.¹⁷

Spiritually, the *Rum* of the region were part of the metropolitan see of Chaldia. The metropolitan, who was residing in *Gümüshane*, occasionally visited the villages as well. When he visited the villages in 1890s, he was served *alabaluk* (trout) from the river, cooked in butter. In the memory of people from these villages, *alabaluk* was the tastiest fish; even the fish in Greece could not compete with it.¹⁸ Beyond the lounging for it,

12. Özcan San, *Trabzon*, p. 14.

13. *Ibid.*, 53.

14. *Ibid.*, 86.

15. K. Tiftikidis, KMS, *Άρδασα* (ΠΟ 858), pp. 3-4; P. Sidiropoulos, KMS, *Άρδασα* (ΠΟ 858), pp. 5-7. There is a major difference in their accounts. According to Tiftikidis, the town only had a few Greek shops while Sidiropoulos says that 75% of the shops were owned by Greeks. They agree on other details.

16. I. Kourtidis, KMS, *Αμπρικάντων* (ΠΟ 843), p. 131.

17. P. Sopidis, KMS, *Αμπρικάντων* (ΠΟ 843), p. 92.

18. I. Stafylidis, KMS, *Γολή* (ΠΟ 845), pp. 52-53; H. Papadopoulos, KMS, *Χόψα* (ΠΟ 854), p. 38.

and the tastiness of the *alabaluk* to which the current inhabitants of these villages would also testify, river Cizere was important for the connections it provided. It merged with Harsiotis (Χαρσιώτης – Harşit) a bit north of Torul. Following the river, one could go north all the way to the Pontos coast, to the town of Tripoli (Tirebolu). It seems this was a common route for Muslim animal-herders of the region who went in winter to the coast and came back in summer.¹⁹ Although, this wasn't the preferred destination, some *Rum* were going to Tripoli in winter as well.²⁰

Once Tripoli was reached it was easier to move around in the Pontos coast. One had the option of travelling by rowing boats. On the coast, Trabzon was a favorite destination for *Rum* and Muslims, though the preferred route to Trabzon was inland through Zigana passes, which was shorter. For the *Rum* in late 19th and early 20th centuries Trabzon was the official gate to Russia, it was where you were supposed to get a passport and it was where you could take a larger boat to Russian coasts.²¹ Many families also had relatives in Trabzon. When the Cizere river became a front in the First World War, many *Rum* fled to Trabzon which was under Russian control.

This was how the *Rum* populations of river Cizere remembered their homes in 1960s. The history, though, goes way back.

A Thriving Mining Community

The mines of Gümüşhane had been important for the Ottomans from the start. Most of these were located in the Harsiotis river basin.²² Ottoman

19. H. Alexandridi, KMS, Φυτίανα (ΠΟ 853), p. 65; Papadopoulos, KMS, Χόψα (ΠΟ 854), p. 61. This route has been active well into 1970s. My grandfather and my father were following the same route from Fytiana to Tripoli, back and forth. Although, by my father's birth, the people of Fytiana had already started acquiring land in the coastline and settling there. That is why my father was born in Tirebolu.

20. A. Nikolaidis, KMS, Κορόνιξα (ΠΟ 846), p. 86; H. Papadopoulos, KMS, Χόψα (ΠΟ 855), pp. 24-26.

21. G. Ignatiadis, KMS, Παπαθράμ (ΠΟ 849), p. 26; Papadopoulos, KMS, Χόψα (ΠΟ 854), p. 36.

22. M. Altunbay, "XVIII. Yüzyılın ikinci yarısında Gümüşhane ve Yöresinde

authorities took great care to protect mining communities in order to ensure the continuation of activities. This meant special privileges for the population of mining communities, and for close villages that provided not only workers, but also supplies and sometimes financed the mines. They were exempt from many extra-ordinary taxation, they were free of the interference of local governors, but their disputes had to be resolved within the community and they were not allowed to go to the capital or other centers to solve their legal disputes.²³

Evliya Çelebi, who passed through Gümüşhane in 1647, gives the number of mines – working and inactive – as 70, and says that the inhabitants were exempted from all taxation.²⁴ It seems that the 17th and 18th century transformation in the central administration, affected the operation of the mines in Gümüşhane as well. A *hüküm* probably from 1140 [1727/1728], orders the governors of Erzurum and Gümüşhane together with the *kadı* and *molla* of Erzurum, not to “oppress or offend them [the miners of Gümüşhane] in any way.”²⁵ Of course, such orders generally attest to the existence of a problem; it seems that the miners were harassed by local officials, powerholders and bandits in the 18th century.²⁶ The final closing of the mines in Gümüşhane was the result of a combination of the lack of technological means, lack of capital, but also the breach of privileges by local powerholders and government officials.²⁷ By 1870, almost all of the mines were abandoned, they were filled with water and their depth and width could not be determined.²⁸

The mine in Koronixa, which was abandoned by then, was still part

Madencilik Faaliyetleri”, *Trabzon Tarihi Sempozyumu Bildiriler Kitabı*, Trabzon, Trabzon Belediyesi Yayınları, 2000, p. 383.

23. A. Refik, *Osmanlı Devrinde Türkiye Madenleri*, İstanbul, Devlet Matbaası, 1931. For an example of such permissions from late 18th century in Gümüşhane, see: BOA, AE.SABH (Ali Emiri - Sultan Abdülhamid I) 290/19534, 6 Ramazan 1188 (10 November 1774).

24. Cited in Refik, *Osmanlı Devrinde*, p. viii.

25. *Ibid.*, pp. 27-29.

26. Ahmed Refik published two different documents related to bandits harassing mines on the coast around Tirebolu from 18th century, *Ibid.*, pp. 31-32 and 34-35. Ottoman documents constantly talk about such problems in the south.

27. Altunbay, “XVIII. Yüzyılın ikinci yarısında Gümüşhane”.

28. Özcan San, *Trabzon*, p. 16.

of local remembrance in the late 19th century. One correspondent, Ananias Nikolaidis, tells the story of how the people of Koronixa were farmers and animal-herders around 1650-1700. Then, with villagers from neighboring villages, they started working in the mines in Gümüşhane, and finally at an undated point they discovered the mine in their own village. Very quickly, the village became the new center of mining in Gümüşhane.²⁹ Of course, the details of the story do not have to be true; 18th century was a time when mining was going down in the region, the discovery and opening of a new mine would not have gone unnoticed. But the fact stands that a neighboring village, Fytiana, got very rich and influential thanks to their position as the *archimetallourgoi* of the booming silver mines, especially around Cizere river. For now, there is reason to believe that Koronixa became one of the centers, if not *the* center of silver mining in Gümüşhane at some point which brought with it the privileges attached to mining communities. A. Nikolaidis talks about the village's position as arbitrator between surrounding Greek villages and state authorities, which lasted well into 1800s.³⁰ Some correspondents also talk about their reservations in using Ottoman courts and their reliance on local methods to solve problems in late 19th and early 20th centuries. This might be related to the tradition of privileges enjoyed by the mining communities, but it can also be the result of mistrust to, or the hardship of reaching to, Ottoman courts. The closest town center, Torul, could only be reached after a rather dangerous journey through a mountainous area which took the greater part of a day from most of the Cizere river villages. Unfortunately, the correspondents do not elaborate on their reasons of this preference.³¹

Needless to say, the closing of the mines in the late 18th century, took its toll on the villages of Cizere river. Emigration to other mining centers, short or long term, was very common and it was one of the reasons that changed the population of the region.³² Once the mining business was

29. A. Nikolaidis, KMS, Κορόνιξα (ΠΟ 846), p. 89.

30. *Ibid.*, pp. 89-90.

31. Kourtidis, KMS, Αμπρικάντων (ΠΟ 843), p. 124; St. Papadopoulos – S. Papadopoulos, KMS, Σαραντάρ (ΠΟ 850), p. 57.

32. It should also be noted that Ottoman authorities recruited miners from

gone, the land was not enough to survive for many inhabitants. Panagiotis Metallidis, from Papavram with the fortunate surname of a miner, talks about how the villagers were going to work in Argana-Maden, in today's Ergani in the Diyarbakır province from as far as 200 years before.³³ Pantelis Vasiliadis, remembers his grandfather's generation and those before him, going deep into Asia Minor, or to south to work in Malatya-Adana region.³⁴

Ottoman authorities had been concerned about such movements when they were not initiated by the officials. One document from 1789 talks about villagers from mining villages giving up mining to pick up other trades and moving around "in destitute" for the last ten years. The *emin* (intendant) of Gümüşhane mines was ordered to gather these people back to the mines and make them "work day and night in digging caves, extracting mines and working the ovens."³⁵ This concern seems to be reserved for those giving up mining, though. Another order, just one year later, makes it clear that Ottoman authorities had no problem about miners working outside Gümüşhane in other mines. The order, given on the request of miners originally from Gümüşhane working in Ergani, Keban and Bozkır, forbids the interference of other metropolitan bishops to these miners. The religious and economic (*cizye* collection) supervision was to remain with the metropolitan bishop of Chaldia and carried out by him or someone he appointed.³⁶

The decline in the number of inhabitants, the problems miners faced which compelled them to emigrate or look for other occupations in order to survive were part of a long-lasting problem that was created by the rise of local powerholders, or *derebeys*.

Gümüşhane for their expertise, when they opened new mines. For an example of a demand for miners from the mines in Ergani and Keban, see: BOA, C.DRB (Cevdet Darbhane) 3/110, 12 Zilkade 1176 (25 May 1763).

33. P. Metallidis, KMS, Παπαβράμ (ΠΟ 849), p. 79.

34. Vasiliadis, KMS, Γολή (ΠΟ 845), p. 117.

35. BOA, C.DRB 27/1302, 8 Şevval 1203 (2 July 1789).

36. BOA, AE.SSLM.III (Ali Emiri - Sultan Selim III), 26 Cemaziyelevvel 1206 (31 January 1791).

The Lords of the River

As mentioned above, one of the reasons for the fall of the mining business was the constant interference of local authorities and other power-holders against the privileges of the mining communities.³⁷ In fact, Pontos was one of the regions central authority focused to bring into submission in the early 19th century. The establishment of the control of the central authority was not complete until 1850s.³⁸

Derebeys of the river Cizere came from the Üçüncüzade family. Per local legend, they were sons of “different women of the Sultans that they had in their harems.”³⁹ Therefore, they were related to each other distantly. Ioannis Kourtidis also says that they were centered in Trebizond, but by the time he was alive it seems that the Üçüncüzade family were concentrated mostly around Torul. However, one of the earlier leaders of the family, Üçüncüzade Ömer Paşa, was the governor of Trebizond between 1739 and 1742.⁴⁰ The reach of his power and interests can be

37. There are many orders from the late 18th century, trying to prevent this but proving in the end how powerless the central authority was in this respect. For example, see: BOA, AE.SABH 290/19534, 6 Ramazan 1188 (10 November 1774); C.DRB 59/2927, 14 Recep 1214 (12 December 1799); C.DRB 7/304, 15 Ramazan 1215 (30 January 1801). The last document lists Koronixa as one of the mines that was left idle due to involvement from the *ayans* and *derebeys*.

38. For discussions of the Pontic “river lords” see: A. Bryer, “The Last Laz Risings and the Downfall of the Pontic Derebeys, 1812-1840”, *Bedi Kartlisa XXVI* (1969), pp. 191-210; A. Güven, “Doğu Karadeniz Ayanlığına Kısa Bir Bakış (1808-1826)” (unpublished MA Thesis, Atatürk Üniversitesi, 1999); A. Güven, *Trabzon Ayanlarından Satiroğlu Osman Ağa'nın Bölgedeki Faaliyetleri (1808-1830)*, Trabzon, Trabzon ve Çevresi Uluslar Arası Tarih-Dil-Edebiyat Sempozyumu, 2001. Tripoli was an important locus of local power, and occasionally it incorporated the mines of the *sancak* of Gümüşhane. For Tirebolu, see: M. Feridun Emecen – D. Karadeniz’de Ayanlık, *Tirebolulu Kethüdazade Mehmed Emin Ağa*, Belleten 2001; F. Sümer, *Tirebolu Tarihi*, İstanbul, Tirebolu Kültür ve Yardımlaşma Derneği, 1992.

39. Kourtidis, KMS, *Αμπρικάντων* (ΠΟ 843), p. 144.

40. For his life, see: A. Güngör Üçüncüoğlu, *Trabzon’un Ünlü Valisi Üçüncüzade Ömer Paşa*, Gümüşhane, Top-Kar Matbaacılık, 2011. For more general information on the family, see: A. Güngör Üçüncüoğlu, *Torul – Kürtün Tarihi*, Gümüşhane, Torul Belediyesi, 2016, pp. 174-183. Ömer Paşa was the *mutasarrıf* of Şebinkarahisar before being appointed to Trabzon in 12 November 1739; BOA, AE.SMHDİ (Ali Emiri - Sultan Mahmud I) 139/10338, Şaban 1152.

glanced from the documentation about what he left behind that were collected and sent to the capital after his execution. He had interests as far as Ünye to the west, Şebinkarahisar to the south and Van to the east.⁴¹

The execution did not end the power of the family in any way. About a decade later we see his son appointed to deal with bandits around Gümüşhane.⁴² Another member of the family, Keleş Ahmed Bey, was invited to join the forces of the governor of Trabzon who was tasked with dealing with local “bandits.” It seems that he was blamed for supporting these same bandits and was hanged in his base of power, the village Manastır in river Cizere.⁴³ After his execution, one of his men together with his “relatives” took over Manastır and started building fortifications. The new leader of the faction was defeated and hanged in Manastır as well.⁴⁴ The family was still holding great lands in the early 19th century, according to Anthony Bryer:

The timariot family who ruled Görele, the Uchinchohlou, also held Torul (Ardasa) and presumably the Harshit (Philabonites) valley which runs for 100 kilometers between the fortresses. The defile and castle at Torul are the keys to the Zigana Pass, and the Uchinchohlu seem to have held the same stranglehold over the Tabriz route at this stage as did the Greco-Laz Kabazites family.⁴⁵

The family supported the governor of Trabzon, Hazinedarzade Süleyman Paşa, against the uprising of Tuzcuoğlu.⁴⁶ They showed no indication of losing power, even after the Tanzimat reforms began.

41. The documentation on the collection of the money owed to Ömer Paşa and his other interests can be found in: BOA, C.DH (Cevdet Dahiliye) 330/16464, 22 Şevval 1155 (20 December 1742); C.AS. (Cevdet Askeriye) 879/377758, Evahir Şevval 1155 (27 December 1742); AE.SMHDİ 87/5910, 5912 and 5914, 20 Zilkade 1155 (16 January 1743); AE.SMHDİ 186/14435, 4 Şaban 1158 (2 September 1745).

42. BOA, C.DH 239/11905, 3 Zilkade 1167 (22 August 1754).

43. BOA, C.DH 36/1786, Evail Şevval 1173 (26 May 1760); C.ZB (Cevdet Zabtıye) 49/2422, 25 Şevval 1173 (10 June 1760); C.DRB 4/153, Undated (should be around 5 January 1761); C.DH 257/12848, 28 Cemaziyelevvel 1174 (5 January 1761).

44. BOA, HAT (Hatt-ı Hümayun) 15/611, 25 Şevval 1178 (17 April 1765).

45. Bryer, “The Last Laz Risings”, p. 195.

46. Güven, “Doğu Karadeniz”, p. 29.

Tanzimat and the Pontus Provinces

When the Ottoman center decided to implement *Tanzimat* measures in the Pontus region, it faced the usual dilemma of having to work with local powerholders whom the reforms were meant to control.⁴⁷ Moreover, Gümüşhane was already a troublesome region and the new reforms, by themselves, did not seem to be promising. One of the earlier *kaimmakams* of the *kaza*, Mehmed Vamık, explains as much:

the province (*liva*) in question is already a rocky country and its population are majority Christian and they had built small houses to stay, in the shape of shacks on top of mountains and rocks only because of the mines and had created small land patches by cutting down the forests; before the *Tanzimat* they were exempted from all taxation and served in the mines and made do with their salaries. Now as a result of the *Tanzimat* they are required to pay various taxes like other provinces, and because the mines are abandoned, one third of them left their lands within a short time and some others are leaning to become subjects of foreign states by changing their religions and unlike other places no immigrants or others desire to settle in their place (...)⁴⁸

47. For an example of different outcomes of the reforms based on local participation see: Y. Köksal, "Imperial Center and Local Groups: *Tanzimat* Reforms in the Provinces of Edirne and Ankara", *New Perspectives on Turkey* 27 (Fall 2002), pp. 107-138. For *Tanzimat* reforms in Pontus, see: M. Çadircı, "Tanzimat'ın Karadeniz Bölgesinde Uygulanması", *II. Tarih Boyunca Karadeniz Kongresi Bildirileri*, Samsun 1990, pp. 15-23; Ö. Yılmaz, *Tanzimat Döneminde Trabzon*, İstanbul, Libra, 2014.

48. BOA, A.MKT.MHM 350/30, 15 Ramazan 1282 (1 February 1866): "liva-i mezbur zaten sengistan ve tengistan ve esker ahalisi Hristiyan olub yalnız me'adinler sebebiyle dağlar ve taşlar başında kulübe şeklinde birer dâr-ı sükena inşa ve ormanları kat' ile birer parça arazi peyda iderek kable't-tanzimat taraf-ı eşref-i devlet-i aliyyeden kâffe-i tekalifden ma'fuvv oldukları halde ma'denlere hizmet ve elegeldikleri ücretle idare edegelmişler iken hasbe't-tanzimat eyalat ve elviye-i mütecavire misillu her dürlü tekalifle mükellef olduklarından fazla me'adin-i mezkurenin mu'attal olması cihetiyle az vakt içinde sülüsü terk-i evtan ve bazıları dahi tebdil-i edyan birle düvel-i ecnebiyye tâbi'iyetine mâ'il-i ez'an olarak ve terk-i evtanları halinde yerlerine mahal-i sa'ire gibi muhacir vesa'ireden hiç iskana rağbet itmeyub [...]".

Similar problems existed for Torul as well. For the places around Torul, officials had to deal with the Üçüncüzade family members, and sometimes official positions were given to the family anyway.⁴⁹ From early on, the Ottoman center had trouble with local men appointed to official positions, and by 1860s tried not to appoint influential local men to local positions. In 1853, the *müdür* (governor) of the *kaza* of Torul, Osman Bey was sacked from his office because he was “showing hostility” to local people and not allowing them to go to Gümüşhane to complain about him, or to do other business.⁵⁰ A few years later when another *müdür* left the office, the central government objected to the appointment of Hayreddin Bey, arguing that local men should not be appointed to positions of power in their power bases.⁵¹ It seems that this insistence worked as Hayreddin Bey petitioned the central government to find him a position one year later.⁵² Still, it is not clear whether these measures lasted. Only three years later, we see Osman Bey who was the nephew of Hayreddin Bey as the *müdür* of the *kaza*. He was held responsible for not sending the required amount for the payment of the soldiers in Asia Minor and Batum during the Crimean Wars.⁵³

49. Üçüncüzade Emine Hanım, living in Trabzon, was given a monthly allowance by the government: BOA, DH.MKT (Dahiliye Nezareti Mektubi Kalemî) 298/13, 9 Rebiülahir 1312 (10 October 1894); another document describes the family as “one of the most ancient and famous families of Trabzon” and asks for a position for a member, İskender Bey: DH.MKT 295/19, 13 Rebiülahir 1312 (14 October 1894); as late as 1905 Üçüncüzade Mürsel of Torul was responsible for collecting the *aşar* tax: BEO 2494/187028, 23 Zilkade 1322 (29 January 1905).

50. It is not clear if Osman Bey is an Üçüncüzade. The document only says that he was from the local community: BOA, A.MKT.UM 129/97, 18 Cemaziyelahir 1269 (29 March 1853).

51. Hayreddin Bey was an Üçüncüzade, we will encounter him in the accounts of Greek inhabitants. BOA, A.MKT.UM (Bab-ı Ali Sadaret Evrakı, Mektübî Kalemî, Umûm Vilâyât Evrakı) 383/16, 11 Cemaziyelevvel 1276 (6 December 1859); A.MKT.MVL (Sadaret Mektubi Kalemî, Meclis-i Vala Evrakı) 116/77, 10 Zilhicce 1276 (30 May 1860).

52. BOA, A.MKT.UM 467/63, 13 Şevval 1277 (24 April 1861).

53. BOA, A.MKT.UM 184/76, 15 Cemaziyelahir 1281 (18 November 1864). It is not clear if this Osman Bey is the one that has been sacked before. If he is, it would mean that the sacked *müdür* was an Üçüncüzade, and the family was so powerful that it ensured his return.

This process was experienced in quite another way by the local populations, as far as we can gather from the accounts of the villagers who were of course recounting the tales told to them by their grandparents. The *kaza* of Torul and more specifically the village of Manastir was the Üçüncüzade family's base of power in late 19th century, as attested to by many correspondents.⁵⁴ It was closest to Ambrikanton, which might be one of the reasons that the stories about the *derebeys* come to us from this village almost exclusively.

According to Ioannis Kourtidis, the *derebeys* were most powerful around 1830, remaining important but with diminishing power until 1850s. He identifies four figures Χαμίτ Μπέης (Hamit Bey), Χαιρατού Μπέης (Hayreddin Bey), Μουσάλ Μπέης (Mürsel Bey) and Χατζη Αλού Μπέης (Hacı Ali Bey) who was the son of Mürsel.⁵⁵ According to him, the reason for the problems until 1850 were the result of "them, not respecting Turkish officials at all." They were gathering villagers to perform *corvée* labor for them.⁵⁶ The *Rum* had to work in their fields, surrender anything they wanted; be them animals, dairy products, even women.⁵⁷ Mürsel Bey, according to Ioannis, was the harshest as he wasn't even allowing the *Rum* to have clean houses. According to one story:

Once, the *Derebeyi* Mürsel Bey was passing through the higher neighborhoods of Ambrik on horseback and he saw the house of Galtisi in the lower neighborhood, all made of limestone. This made him fly into a rage and he said if two hours later when he would be coming back he didn't see the house black; he would demolish it. Mürsel Bey left, and the owner of the house Galtsidis, afraid of his house being demolished took the *katamagian*, a cloth used to clean an oven

54. G. Tsahouridis, KMS, Φιτικιάρ (ΠΟ 852), p. 84; Kourtidis, KMS, Αμπρικάντων (ΠΟ 843), p. 129.

55. Kourtidis, KMS, Αμπρικάντων (ΠΟ 843), p. 133. All of the following stories are from his account and can be found in the same file, pp. 131-159. Ioannidis was not born when these events took place, so he is recounting what has been told to him. These stories have symbolic interest beyond everything, but they correspond with the general trend in Ottoman rural communities and therefore are very valuable sources as well.

56. *Ibid.*, p. 131.

57. *Ibid.*, p. 133.

from ashes, and with some water and soot painted his entire house black again. This way, when Mürsel Bey returned he was very happy as his ego was satisfied and his order was respected.⁵⁸

Of course, the villagers occasionally resisted. One of these moments of passive resistance was when Hayreddin Bey gathered about 40 men to carry stones for him. Kourtidis tells the story of one old man, 105 years old, who objected by saying “Old pines turned into shovels” (“Eski çamlar, kürek oldu.”)⁵⁹ According to Kourtidis, the pressure of the *derebeys* gradually diminished thanks to “the actions of the Greeks of the region and the aging of the *derebeys*.”⁶⁰

The final confrontation was led by the *muhtar* of the village, Kahya Koca Paulos (Κεχαγιάς Κουσάπαυλος – Paulos the Large/Great). According to the story, one day Paulos decided that they have suffered enough, invited the people of Ambrikanton to a gathering; told them to hand over the keys of their houses without asking any questions and the people did what he told them to do. With the keys, he went to Torul, to see the *kaymakam*. The *kaymakam* who “liked him a lot” received him and asked what the problem was:

Koca Paulos, then, told him that life was no longer possible in the village. “I brought you all the keys of the village and we are going to go wherever the road takes us.”

The *kaymakam* did not understand what he meant and gave him his word that any of the Turks that were bothering them would have to face him.

“No” said the *muhtar*, “the accused are next to you” (he meant Hamit Bey who was at the time sitting next to the *kaymakam*).

“Just yesterday his men came to our *yayla* [summer pasturing grounds] and took whatever animals and dairy products they wanted and threatened the lives of my fellow villagers. Under such circum-

58. *Ibid.*, pp. 138-139. This event was so important that it found its way to the central archives. Unfortunately, the document was in repair while this research was conducted: DH.MKT 366/29, 28 Şevval 1312 (24 April 1895).

59. *Ibid.*, p. 140.

60. *Ibid.*, p. 132.

stances, life became unbearable and we couldn't remain any longer in the village.”

The *kaymakam* got so mad at Derebey Hamit Bey that he brought him in front of him like a criminal and scolded him for his conduct. After this, he told to our *muhtar* to go and soothe his fellow villagers and tell them that Hamit Bey would never bother them again. Koca Paulos however remained and said that he wouldn't leave if Hamit Bey did not sign a deed with what he just said. The *kaymakam* ordered the *derebey* to sign a deed saying that he wouldn't let his men to bother the villagers of Ambrikanton again. This way, we were freed from that extortioner and the life in the village calmed down.⁶¹

Kourtidis dates this episode to 1830s, though he says he is not sure. However, he has stories that talk about the power of the *derebeys* which he dates after this event. The one above with Mürsel Bey, for example, he says “happened in the days of my grandfather, which means in the 1870s or earlier.” Kourtidis, according to the information collected by the Centre, was born in 1893;⁶² which makes 1870s a viable date. The other source for the same event does not help with dating at all. Panagiotis Sopidis, dates this episode to a vague “approximately 100 years ago.”⁶³

In the version of Sopidis, Paulos is not the Large, he is the Little (Küçük Paulos - Κιουτσούκ-Παυλος), and he goes to the *kadı*, not the *kaymakam*, the *derebey* in question is Hayreddin Bey, not Hamit Bey, and the personal relationship is between the *kadı* and the *derebey*, not between Paulos and the *kaymakam*.⁶⁴ Other details are pretty much the same, the quarrel is about summer pasturing grounds, the *derebey* is sending his lackeys to harass the villagers, *muhtar* Küçük Paulos threatens to leave the village with everyone. There are two very significant differences though, first, there is a president [πρόεδρος] in the court, rather than the *kadı*; and second the *muhtar* threatens to send a telegram to the Sultan and leave with the villagers to Russia.

It would be very misleading, and confusing, to try to date this episode

61. *Ibid.*, pp. 133-137.

62. I. Kourtidis, KMS, Αμπρικάντων (ΠΟ 842), p. 41.

63. Sopidis, Αμπρικάντων (ΠΟ 843), p. 146.

64. Sopidis, Αμπρικάντων (ΠΟ 843), pp. 146-151.

focusing on the details. Of course, telegrams did not exist in 1830s, they arrived in late Tanzimat era and were widespread only with Abdulhamid II.⁶⁵ Russia as a hero and a possible place of emigration emerged with the war of 1828-1829, but especially in the late 19th century with better communications and transportation possibilities. If the court had a president, it should be a *Nizamiye* court, rather than a *kadı* court.⁶⁶ *Kadı* courts have only the *kadı* and his *naibs* and in the *Nizamiye* courts there is no place for a *kadı*, unless custom continuous to call *Nizamiye* court judges *kadı*. This would pull the date as far as 1850s-1860s. In short, both Kourtidis and Sopidis are probably remembering what they had been told, through what they experienced. So, the daily world of Koca or Küçük Paulos is filled with the details of the daily lives of Kourtidis and Sopidis.

Regardless, I believe this story has traces of the *Tanzimat* struggle against local powerholders; and the expectations of the local communities ingrained in it. The culprit in both versions is a *derebey* though the name differs. The heroes, if we can name them heroes are *Tanzimat* officials. *Muhtar*, a locally chosen man gains his power here through his relation to the representatives of the central authorities, and not to the local lord.⁶⁷ He will go to the *kaymakam* or to the court, rather than to the *derebey*. This is what makes him a *Tanzimat* man.

The same applies for the *kaymakam* and the president of the court. They suffer from the notorious limit of the *Tanzimat*, i.e. having to work with local-powerholders.⁶⁸ *Kaymakam* has Hamit Bey by his side; the

65. On telegraphs and their use by the Ottoman power see: R. Davison, "The Advent of the Electric Telegraph in the Ottoman Empire", *Essays in Ottoman and Turkish History, 1774-1923*, Austin 1990.

66. On *Nizamiye* courts and legal transformation in the Ottoman Empire, see: A. Rubin, *Ottoman Nizamiye Courts: Law and Modernity*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.

67. On *muhtars* and their position in local Ottoman governance, see: M. Çadırıcı, "Türkiye'de Muhtarlık Teşkilatının Kurulması Üzerine Bir İnceleme," *Belleten* XXXIV,135 (1970), pp. 409-425 and Ali Akyıldız, "Muhtar", *TDVİA*, v. 31, pp. 51-53.

68. For a study on the use of *Tanzimat* courts by the non-elite, see: M. Petrov, "Everyday Forms of Compliance: Subaltern Commentaries on Ottoman Reform, 1864-1868", *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 46,4 (Oct. 2004), pp. 730-759.

court has a *kadı* who is the uncle of Hayreddin Bey, with whom the new official, the president, has to work together. They were the actors in the locality who could and who were expected to change things. However, they were limited by their relations to and dependence on the local men. If things were to change, they needed allies among the local community. Allies they found among the oppressed Christian populations. These two stories attest to the expectations local communities had of the new institutions and their hope for the message of the Tanzimat. These hopes may belong to characters like Paulos in the stories, but they belonged especially to the people who recounted them.

Mother Russia

There is still something that will cast a shadow over any interpretation of these stories as an excitement about the Ottoman reform program: Russia, described here as the place to run away to. After all, if the problem was just about the local lords, why not run away to another part of the Empire?

As the result of a long history that probably started with Russo-Ottoman War of 1768-74, Russia emerged as the protector, sometimes savior and hope of the Orthodox populations of the Ottoman Empire.⁶⁹ This feeling was strengthened throughout the 19th century. In Pontic villages and cities, in particular, the first real contact came with the Russian invasion of Eastern Anatolia in 1828. Gümüşhane was one of the cities that the Russians took over. The archbishop at the cathedral welcomed the Russians with a service.⁷⁰ However, the Russians were not there to stay, they left after the treaty of Adrianople, leaving many of their Greek supporters with no choice but to leave with them. A few years after the war, we see the Russian general in Tbilisi sending gifts to the metro-

69. For a discussion of the Küçük Kaynarca treaty that ended the war and its effects, see: K. Beydilli, "Küçük Kaynarca Antlaşması", *TDV İslam Ansiklopedisi*, v. 26, pp. 524-527.

70. Bryer, "The Pontic Greeks", p. 326. Gümüşhane was abandoned when the Russian armies arrived; according to local Christians, men of the Üçüncüoğlu family looted the city's Christians and left it defenseless: Uğur Akbulut, "1828-1829 Osmanlı-Rus Savaşı'nda Gümüşhane ve Çevresi", in: *Gümüşhane Tarihi*, p. 41.

politan bishop of Chaldia, which the latter had to reject as the Ottoman authorities did not like the connotations of such gift exchanges.⁷¹ By this time, the Ottomans were concerned about Russian officials having direct relations to Greek-Orthodox community leaders in Pontos.

Russia probably had a comfortable place in the heart of the good Christian in late 19th century Pontos. One demonstration of this, was the story of Sopidis where he made Paulos threaten the Ottoman court that they would leave for Russia *in toto*. Kourtidis tells another story from his grandfather's days, which he identifies with 1850s this time: "the Turks closed our churches. But with the pressure of the Russian ambassador on the Sultan, he gave another order to re-open them." Russia's protection of the churches was welcomed with over-enthusiasm: "This fact spread in the Pontos with the bells of the churches, starting from the regions of the Pontos which were closer to the City and reached us and those further on with the sound of the bells."⁷² This story may be a bit far-fetched; I know of no case in the 19th century where the Ottoman government closed all Orthodox churches in the Empire; but it serves to demonstrate the place Russia had in the heart of a good Christian.

Political and religious connections apart, Russia provided jobs for regions like Gümüşhane, which had an acute problem of unemployment and did not have the agricultural capacity to feed everyone. So those who could go among the *Rum* populations went to Russian ports to work.⁷³ Those who went to work, probably worked there for a few years and returned to their villages for a few months to go back again. If they managed to own a shop in Russia, they brought their families as well.⁷⁴ This was one of the reasons why so many of the correspondents of the Center for Asia Minor Studies arrived in Greece from Russia.

This kind of emigration caused alarm for the Ottoman officials, local

71. The Ottoman central officials asked the Patriarchate to intervene and make the metropolitan reject these gifts. HAT 778/36468, 36468A and 36468B, 5 Cemaziyelevvel 1251 (29 August 1835).

72. Kourtidis, KMS, *Αμπρικάντων* (ΠΟ 843), p. 129.

73. Papadopoulos, KMS, *Χόψα* (ΠΟ 854), p. 36; G. Mourtidis, KMS, *Ματσέρα* (ΠΟ 848), p. 17; Vasiliadis, KMS, *Γολή* (ΠΟ 845), pp. 33-34; Stafylidis, KMS, *Γολή* (ΠΟ 845), pp. 119-120.

74. N. Paraskevopoulos, KMS, *Αμπρικάντων* (ΠΟ 843), pp. 121-123.

and central. We have seen some of the reports coming from officials in Gümüşhane. It was in the report of es-Seyyid ‘Ali Rıza who wrote to the center that “a lot of the non-Muslim subjects moved to Russian lands.”⁷⁵ Such concerns were voiced about Muslim and “crypto-Christian” populations as well.⁷⁶ One early example is from 1866, where five Muslim men from the region of Gümüşhane went to an unnamed metropolitan in Asia Minor to convert to Orthodoxy, secretly got passports and ran away to Crimea and became Russian subjects.⁷⁷ It is not clear whether these people were crypto-Christians, as far as the Ottomans were concerned they would be recorded as Muslims, but it shows the concern about Ottoman populations “defecting” to Russia.

Increasingly from the 1890s on, we see documentation about Ottoman workers in Russian lands in the Ottoman archives. It seems that both Muslims and Christians were migrant workers in Russian ports and mines. Documentation about Christian workers generally surfaces when they died in Russia and their descendants received payment from the Russian government or received their inheritance.⁷⁸ Another, rarer case is when these people decided to become Russian citizens through official means.⁷⁹ Documentation about Muslims surfaces when the govern-

75. BOA, A.MKT.MHM 312/88-1, 3 Rebiülahir 1281 (5 September 1864).

76. The villages around the *Cizere* river did not have crypto-Christian populations, but they were very close to crypto-Christian villages of Kromlides and Stavriotes communities. For crypto-Christianity, especially in the Pontus regions, see: S. Deringil, *Conversion and apostasy in the late Ottoman Empire*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2012, pp. 118-141; Y. Tzedopoulos, “Public Secrets: Crypto-Christianity in the Pontos”, *ΔEATIO* [Bulletin of the Centre for Asia Minor Studies] XVI (2009), pp. 165-210.

77. The report is from the Ottoman consul of Kerch. BOA, HR.TO (Hariciye Nezareti, Tercüme Odası) 326/57, 9 Teşrin-i Evvel 1866 (9 October 1866).

78. Among others see: BOA, HR.UHM (Hariciye Nezareti, Umur-ı Hukukiye-i Muhtalita Müdüriyeti) 15/34, 20 Haziran 1310 (2 July 1894); Paraskevas son of Athanasios from Torul died in Yalta; HR.UHM 19/33, 21 Şubat 1311 (4 March 1896); Nicholas Constantinos Karamanov from Gümüşhane died in Rostov.

79. Among others see: BOA, HR. TH (Hariciye Nezareti, Tahrirat) 96/84, 22 Cemaziyelahir 1307 (13 February 1890), The man in question in this correspondence, Apostol veled Pavli (Apostolos son of Pavlos) was from Hopsa; HR.İD (Hariciye Nezareti, İdare) 22/56, 19 Nisan 1890 (19 April 1890); HR.TO 92/109, 19 Mayıs 1307 (31 May 1891).

ment was searching for young men to turn up for their military service. It seems many young Muslim men ended up working in Russian lands rather than going to serve in the military. People of the same village sometimes ended up in the same cities, working in similar jobs as they are listed together.⁸⁰ Other times, Muslims and non-Muslims ended up working for each other in *ξεντιά/ gurbet*. Such was the case of Ömer bin Mehmed from Yağlıdere who was working under a certain Nicholas from Torul in Revan (Erivan) railway construction.⁸¹ I could not find many Muslim examples from the *Cizere* river villages working in Russia except two cases, one from Manastır, another from Beşkilise (Fytiana). The problem with them is that there are two *Manastırs* and two *Beşkilises* in Torul and there is no way to determine which ones the documents are talking about.⁸²

Russia had another more direct and influential effect on Pontic populations. This was caused by warfare between the two empires. Pontos was very close to the Caucasian front making it vulnerable to the hardships of warfare. In 1828 and in 1878, the Russians marched through the Caucasus and occupied some Pontic cities. In 1916, the Russians took over Trebizond. As the armies marched back and forth, so did civilian populations who had to bear the brunt of these wars. In the Crimean War, many Muslim refugees from the Russian dominions arrived in the Ottoman Empire, some of them were settled in the villages of *Cizere* river.⁸³ The movement was to the other side in 1878, when Russia took over Kars from the Ottomans. Many *Rum* families emigrated to Kars.⁸⁴ The

80. There is an abundance of lists from Gümüşhane. For example, BOA, HR.TH 123/27, 23 Safer 1310 (16 September 1892) lists seven young men from the village of Kurdoğlu working in Batum as porters.

81. BOA, HR.TH 321/25, 28 Haziran 1321 (11 July 1905). Another example can be found in HR.TH 364/49, 26 Mayıs 1324 (8 June 1908).

82. BOA, HR.TH 357/4, 27 Zilkade 1325 (1 January 1908): Emir Osman oğlu Receb b. İsmail from Bekilise working as a baker's apprentice; BOA, HR.TH 357/45, 7 Zilhicce 1325 (11 January 1908): Küçük Ömeroğlu İbrahim bin Mehmed from Manastır working as a servant to merchant Emir Hasan in Yalta.

83. Papadopoulos, KMS, Χόψα (ΠΟ 854), p. 40.

84. P. Orfanidis, Κορόνιζα (ΠΟ 846), p. 67; Kourtidis, KMS, Αμπρικάντων (ΠΟ 843), pp. 22-23. Kourtidis tells about a Turkish family who went with the Greeks to Kars and became Christians. About the Russian administration in Kars,

idea was to live in a freer environment, according to Ioannis Kourtidis, as Russia was an Orthodox power. Some of the people who emigrated never returned, while others did.

The Grand Nation in the Little Valley

Something else caught the loyalties and imaginations of local populations of the Cizere river in the late 19th and early 20th centuries: education. For the *Rum* this meant being influenced by a Greek national outlook, if not by the Greek Kingdom and Greek nationalism.⁸⁵ For the Muslims this meant being influenced by the Hamidian education system which ultimately opened the way for an Islamic loyalty to the Sultan, and through it a Turkish national outlook.⁸⁶

For Ottoman officials in Istanbul, the concern was to “protect” Muslim populations living among Christians from converting. In some villages, this was more urgent than others. *Çit-i Kebir* near Torul was one. When the *Rum* inhabitants asked for permission to build a school for their community, panic ensued in Istanbul. According to a correspondence to the governor of Trabzon from the Grand Vizierate “in this region certain people appearing in Islamic names and clothing out of their ignorance and with the desire to avoid conscription declared themselves Christians” but

see: C. Badem, *Çarlık Rusyası Yönetiminde Kars Vilayeti*, İstanbul, Bir zamanlar Yayıncılık, 2010.

85. Greek education in the Empire was organized through the efforts of the Greek Literary Society of Constantinople. See: G.A. Vassiadis, *The Syllogos Movement of Constantinople and Ottoman Greek Education 1861-1923*, Athens, Center for Asia Minor Studies, 2007; H. Exertzoglou, *Εθνική Ταυτότητα στην Κωνσταντινούπολη τον 19ο αιώνα: ο Ελληνικός Φιλολογικός Σύλλογος Κωνσταντινουπόλεως*, Athens, Nefeli, 1996, p. 49. For a discussion of Ottoman perceptions on Greek educational societies see: Y. Ziya Karabiçak, *The Development of Ottoman Policies towards Greek Associations, 1861-1912*, Istanbul, Libra, 2014.

86. On Hamidian education in the Ottoman Empire, see: B.C. Fortna, *Imperial Classroom: Islam, the State and Education in the Late Ottoman Empire*, Oxford-New York, Oxford University Press, 2002. On the modernization of education in the Empire, see: S. Akşin Somel, *The Modernization of Public Education in the Ottoman Empire, 1839-1908 Islamization, Autocracy, Discipline*, Leiden, Brill, 2001.

they were not allowed. Now, the panic was about losing the village's population to Christianity "together with surrounding places." Therefore, the construction of a Muslim school in the village was seen urgent.⁸⁷ Needless to say, *Çit-i Kebir* was a crypto-Christian village. Around the same discussion, similar concerns were raised for other communities. Maçka, with their Greek Muslims living among a sea of Christian villages was one.⁸⁸ Two villages from the *Cizere* river, Beşkilise (Fytiana) and Macara, and another one very close, Avliyana, were also listed in another document as "villages needing the construction of schools."⁸⁹

Fytiana may have received a school. According to the correspondents, the educational center of the community was Fytiana. The Muslims of Fitikiar, for example, were sending their children after the local *mekteb* (the Quran school) to Fytiana to get regular education.⁹⁰ Panagiotis Metallidis from Pappavram, remembers Fytiana as the most educated village in the community together with Koronixa.⁹¹ It seems that the mining business and its long-term effects were still felt in these two villages even in the late 19th century.

However, other villages had their own schools as well. The village school in Goli was founded in 1905-1906. It was teaching Greek, Turkish, French and mathematics.⁹² It seems that the teachers were from the local community. One of the teachers in Goli was called Iordanis Stafylidis, someone that might have originated from the village if the surname suggests anything; he has the same surname with the correspondent, Ioannis Stafylidis. Another one, Themistoklis, was from another village in Gümüşhane called Seriana. We don't know about their education unfortunately, but if it is an indication of anything, Iordanis went to Egypt in 1912 and studied pharmacy there.⁹³

Sarantar had two schools. It seems that, although it was considered shameful for the girls to continue schools, there were girls in the two

87. The correspondences can be found in: BOA, BEO 2051/153817, 20 Muharrem 1321 (18 April 1903).

88. BOA, BEO 2098/157340, 28 Rebiülevvel 1321 (24 June 1903).

89. BOA, BEO 2522/189142, 20 Zilhicce 1322 (19 March 1904).

90. Tsahouridis, KMS, Φιτικιάρ (ΠΟ 852), p. 79.

91. Metallidis, KMS, Παπαβράμ (ΠΟ 849), p. 65.

92. Stafylidis, KMS, Γολή (ΠΟ 845), p. 91.

93. Stafylidis, KMS, Γολή (ΠΟ 845), pp. 91-92.

schools of Sarantar as well. The teachers were paid by the village; every family was paying according to their income. They were hired for a year and were fed by the village; every day one family would take it upon themselves to provide them with food. They would generally be graduates from the Frontistirio in Trebizond. Students from higher classes helped in teaching the lower ones. The courses included arithmetic, Greek, reading and writing. The books came from Trebizond and were in *katharevousa*. In the fifth and sixth years, Ancient Greek and “useful subjects” were taught. At the same time, they learned physics, calligraphy and gymnastics. The teachers were also supposed to know Byzantine music and teach it to children with nice voices. In the church, the teachers were the chanters. In class, they were very strict, shouting at and sometimes hitting the children, a very widespread practice in the 19th century anywhere in the world. In fact, the parents were handing their children to the teachers saying: “O Teacher, take him and do whatever you want to him.”⁹⁴

If the preceding account by Ioannis Tsenidis is any indication of the organization of education in the villages, we can surmise a few things. First of all, education had both a religious and secular significance for those who supported it. This is not to argue for a separation between the two, to the contrary, the villagers probably thought of both at the same time without distinction. One had to survive in the world, that is why children were educated in the first place; they could rise in social hierarchy and become “something” in a world that required them to go as far as Russian port cities to earn their living. If they learned their religion at the same time, all the better. There was absolutely no friction between these two necessities in their minds.

Secondly, the “national” was crawling into the minds and worldviews of the youngsters. For one thing, the teachers were from Frontistirio, part of the grand project of a “national” Greek education in the Empire. This doesn’t necessarily mean nationalism, but the celebration of a national identity that was foreign to village communities, but familiar at the same time in some ways. The books were in *katharevousa*, a purist language hard to understand even for the Greeks in Greece who spoke

94. I. Tsenidis, KMS, *Σαραντάρ* (ΠΟ 850), pp. 140-143.

dimotiki, and a totally different world for the Pontic Greeks who had their own dialects. Of course, Ancient Greek had to be included in the curriculum as it was the pillar of Greek national identity.

A subject is suspiciously missing in the account of Tsenidis though: history. Did the school in the early 20th century not teach any history? Probably we won't be able to know, and it is hard to guess what texts were read for Ancient Greek or *katharevousa* courses. But we can have an understanding of the historical imagination from another village. Ioannis Kourtidis talks about history:

In our village I don't remember hearing about the revolution in Greece or the Philiki Eteria etc. Maybe it was because our parents were uneducated or because they did not show interest out of fear. In our school, however, when I went there, I was reading the history of Kolokotronis, Rhigas Feraios, which we did in class until the *seferberlik* [mobilization] of 1914 when modern history was banned.⁹⁵

Of course, this was the account of a "nationalized" Greek citizen living in Greece although he was a product of late Ottoman society and it was recorded by another Greek citizen in 1953. Therefore, the interest in whether 1821 was there or not is understandable; and the assumption that uneducated means unaware of 1821 is telling. It shows the natural connection between education and a national consciousness in many early 20th century minds. Taking this memory into account, I think we can safely assume that a Greek national consciousness was taking hold among the *Rum* of the Cizere river villages in the early 20th century. Education is to be praised (or to be blamed) for this.

Love Thy Neighbour

It is not easy to reconstruct what changes the Muslim imagination in Cizere river villages was going through at this time. This is mainly because a similar source telling the story from the perception of the Muslims of the time is missing. Fytiana had a "regular" school for Muslims according to one account. We know that Fytiana was a leading place

95. Kourtidis, KMS, *Αμπρικάντων* (ΠΟ 843), p. 166.

for the Muslims as well; but the center of power in the valley, Manastir did not have any Greeks living in it; therefore, the correspondents do not give any comparable information for that village. Fytiana also had a Muslim doctor, the inhabitants of neighboring villages went to see him when they got sick, something which was rare according to them, as they were living “a natural life.”⁹⁶ It is easy to establish that there was really a doctor in Fytiana, Hasan Ziver Efendi, as he was the benefactor of the mosque of the village, which is still standing. We can surmise from here that similar connections and possibilities of education existed for the Muslim populations of the region. Without going into detail, and following the bibliography on Muslim education in late 19th century Ottoman Empire, I will assume that the Muslim populations of the Cizere river villages went through a process very similar to the *Rum*: pride in the history and religion of the group, and a hazy identification with a state. The question is, how did this affect inter-communal relations, if it did at all?

One side of this story is how the Greek populations interacted with powerholders. We have seen part of this in references to the *derebeys*. These relations were gathered under the title “Relations with Turks” in the documents of the CAMS, together with interactions among villagers. The danger here is the implicit assumption that peasant populations can be equated with the strongmen. There should be no doubt that the *derebeys* had their henchmen from among the Muslim population of the valley, however, this doesn’t mean that these henchmen were constituting any kind of majority. Also, obviously Muslims had a higher status officially, and in the eyes of the *derebeys* as well; but this shouldn’t blind us to possible tyrannical behavior of the *derebeys* toward Muslim villagers. Since there are no sources, we can only guess.

The daily relationship among communities seems cordial. Most correspondents from mixed villages report that they had good relations with

96. Stafylidis, KMS, Γολή (ΠΟ 845), p. 113. One can only imagine the feeling of longing these people had for their villages and the tone of their voice when they were recounting their stories. Occasionally these feelings burst through all the intermediaries to reach the reader: “Τι ευλογημένα μέρη! Μακάρι να ήμουνα εκεί, να ζούσα φυσιολογική ζωή!” [What blessed places! I wish I was there, to live a normal life!], Ignatiadis, Παπαβράμ (ΠΟ 849), p. 50.

their neighbors. Generally, a mixed village had different neighborhoods gathered around the temple of the community. This created a separation of spaces, but since the area was small anyway this separation did not matter a lot. Village identities could be more important than religious affiliations sometimes. When the mother of Georgios Tsahouridis from Fitikiar died the Turks of the village did not allow her to be sent to Goli to be buried although this was her wish, as she was from Goli originally; a bride was “taken” from another village so she could not return, even in death.⁹⁷

In Goli, Muslims and Orthodox had great relations. Pandelis Vasiliadis recounts how they had very good Turkish friends and visited each other in the holidays of the other religion; but bad relations with those in Manastır who, in the end, came during the war to plunder their village.⁹⁸ Ioannis Stafylidis from the same village tells that when Greek males went to work in Russia, they left their families to be taken care of by their Turkish neighbors.⁹⁹ Petros Orfanidis claims that Koronixa had good relations with Turks, but had problems with Greeks as they were sharing important water sources.¹⁰⁰

In Fitikiar, a Muslim majority village, things were not different. This is how Georgios Tsahouridis describes their relations:

Our relations with the Turks were very good. We were beloved friends and lived with them in harmony [...]

In our exchanges they were good. They did not do us wrong. They preferred suffering damage to wronging us. They said: “gavur hakkı” (the right of the infidel). It seems like their religion is forbidding this [...]

The truth is when we were little children we would fight with Turkish boys. We used to say that our religion was better than theirs, and they in turn would say the same.

Thursday evenings, the Turkish children had a practice: after they were out of their school they would go to their rooms in their houses

97. Tsahouridis, KMS, Φιτικιάρ (ΠΟ 852), p. 76.

98. Vasiliadis, KMS, Γολή (ΠΟ 845), pp. 121-122.

99. Stafylidis, KMS, Γολή (ΠΟ 845), pp. 123-124.

100. Orfanidis, KMS, Κορόνιξα (ΠΟ 846), p. 82.

and do their prayers. (The holy day of the Mohammedans is Friday). After finishing the prayer, they would insult us saying: “Padişahın kılıcı keskin olsun, gavurların gözü kör olsun” (May the sword of our king be sharp, and the eyes of the infidels be blind) And we, children, from our rooms in our houses would respond them: “Türklerin gözü kör olsun” (May the eyes of the Turks be blind) We weren’t afraid to say this, because the grown-ups did not interfere with our affairs.¹⁰¹

Tsahouridis remembers the Muslim villagers of Fitikiar as very religious and he links their behavior to the religion. This is somewhat different than the cases where Muslim populations are described as not really knowing what Islam was about.¹⁰²

Not all relationships were good though. Savvas Moudrouridis remembers not being able to go out of the church on Good Friday (Μεγάλη Παρασκευή) for fear of Turks.¹⁰³ In Sarandar, a Greek village, the relations with neighboring Muslim villages were not so good. Ioannis Tsenidis remembers them as “wild people” who were stealing the village’s animal stock.¹⁰⁴ What is worse, a Greek was killed by a Turk during the celebration of Saint Panteleimon.¹⁰⁵ It seems that the celebration was always observed together¹⁰⁶ as Turks from Manastır joined in. No apparent reason is given for the murder. Tsenidis dates it to 1896, saying that he was 10 years old at the time and tells that Turks killed “one of us.”

As previously mentioned, we have a lack of sources when it comes to having a glance at how the Muslim populations in the *Cizere* river experienced the daily reality. The sources we have at hand are those that were written by local state officials that reached the imperial center,

101. Tsahouridis, KMS, Φιτικιάρ (ΠΟ 852), pp. 98-100.

102. For an example, see: Papadopoulos, KMS, Χόψα (ΠΟ 855), pp. 32-34. He tells that Turks did not have a mosque and they celebrated Christian holidays together with Greeks. A mosque was built later, with the help and active work of the Greek inhabitants.

103. S. Moudrouridis, KMS, Χόψα (ΠΟ 855), p. 1.

104. Tsenidis, KMS, Σαραντάρ (ΠΟ 850), p. 155.

105. *Ibid.*

106. St. Papadopoulos, KMS, Σαραντάρ (ΠΟ 850), p. 77; Tsenidis, KMS, Σαραντάρ (ΠΟ 850), pp. 85-86.

at best. These documents will not necessarily mention the “trivialities” of daily life and they won’t surface until there is a significant problem within the community. Collecting oral sources after this point seems to be an unfruitful effort as well. The oldest Muslim inhabitants living were born in the 1930s, at least 40 years after most of the correspondents of the Center for Asia Minor Studies. There is one local Muslim source we can use to have a glance at the Muslim side of the relations. It is the inscription of the mosque in Fytiana in honor of the founder Hasan Ziver Efendi. The translation of the inscription is as follows:¹⁰⁷

1. He was called Hasan Ziver Efendi
It would be fitting to call him the second Lokman¹⁰⁸
2. He is the Socrates, Hipocrates and the Plato of his time
With his efforts he gave the science of medicine a unique shape
3. He healed many thousands of sick with his medicine
He healed many thousands of wounded with his salves
4. So as to be eternally remembered with beneficence in this world
He wished the construction of a mosque
5. He worked and managed to see and reach its completion
May his clean building be respected in the world
6. May he be blessed in this and the next world
As long as the five prayers are performed in it
7. May the Lord of the Worlds protect it from hazards
May it stand until the Judgement day like Jesus¹⁰⁹
8. Say the date of the temple with the secret of Bismillah¹¹⁰

107. The translation is mine. The inscription was published in H. Özkan, “Torul-Güzeloluk Köyü’nde Osmanlı Dönemi Yapıları”, *Atatürk Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi*, v. 3/4 (2004), pp. 1-21.

108. A wise man in the Qur’an after whom the 33rd chapter is named. In Ottoman culture, he is remembered as the most accomplished of doctors.

109. According to Islamic belief, Jesus did not die on the cross. He was not caught by the Romans, he was taken to heavens to stay alive and observe the world until the day of Judgement.

110. A shortened version of the opening verse of the Qur’an, means “With the name of Allah.” According to Islamic belief, the believers should start every good deed “with the name of Allah.”

The mosque of Islam was finished with the help of Allah Year 1299 [1881-1882].



The inscription of Güzeloluk Köyü Cami

Ottoman doctors, as they received a modern education, probably had respect for ancient Greek figures seen as the founders of the field. This is not necessarily modern, as such figures have been respected throughout the history of Islam. However, taken together with the reference to Jesus, in all probability the inscription is possible because Fytiana was a mixed village. The inscription should have been made for local consumption; even if people could not read, there were probably those who knew what was written and could tell it to others. It makes sense to make references to Greek and Christian figures in a village where Greek Christians are a daily reality. It doesn't matter that the neighborhoods are divided, and they are concentrated around different temples; the reality is inscribed into the center, as it is inscribed into daily life.

Conclusion: A Line That Divides the Earth in Two

In 1916, Russian armies arrived, for the third time in a century. Cizere river became a front line between the advancing Russian armies and the retreating Ottoman ones. Mount Ahmut was the first line of Ottoman defense.¹¹¹ War meant that people had to leave their villages; the villagers of Fitikiar, both Greeks and Turks, moved deeper into Pontos and then went southwest to Sivas. Georgios Tsahouridis was one of them; he returned to Giresun in 1917 after the Russian armies started retreating, and went to Greece from Trebizond in 1918.¹¹² Fitikiar was destroyed by the soldiers, who used any wood they could find, including those wooden parts of the houses to warm themselves.

In Goli, which remained on the Russian side, the population including the Turks did not run away. The Greeks of the village covered for them and protected them against any possible Russian oppression.¹¹³ In Ambrikanton, a Greek-only village, the inhabitants went either to Gümüşhane, or to Trebizond wherever they had their families.¹¹⁴

Almost every correspondent talking about the war times notes being pillaged. According to many of them, these people were not from the valley; they came from the region around Trebizond. Georgios Mourtidis, after recounting how the Muslims of the village were never fanatics and had great relations with the Christians despite having a *molla* with them, goes on to relate the “foreign Turks” who came from around Trebizond and pillaged the Christians of the village. They, in turn, ran away to the mountains out of fear. His family ran away to Aloutzera, a village close to

111. Haralambos Papadopoulos says Mount Ahmut was held by Russians: Papadopoulos, KMS, Χόψα (ΠΟ 854), p. 58. He served in the Ottoman army for two years until 1917; we don't know if he was in this region; chances are, he was not. Papadopoulos, *ibid.*, p. 28. Ananias Nikolaidis says that Mount Ahmut was held by the Ottomans and the Russians were stationed in the opposite mountain Kankana: Papadopoulos, KMS, Κορόνιξα (ΠΟ 846), p. 26. He was in the village when the Russians arrived and he went to Russia. His account agrees with the oral memory of the villages, as far as what I learned from my grandparents, Papadopoulos, *ibid.*, p. 16.

112. Tsahouridis, KMS, Φιτικιάρ (ΠΟ 852), pp. 9-10.

113. Vasiliadis, KMS, Γολή (ΠΟ 845), pp. 121-122.

114. Kourtidis, KMS, Αμπρικάντων (ΠΟ 843), p. 168.

the Cizere river, others went to Ardasa. Two years later when the Russians were gone, and Ottoman officials were back they returned to find the village totally empty. The Turks of the village had run away as well. In 1918, the Turkish authorities started gathering the men and sending them to Erzurum.¹¹⁵

A similar story is told by Stephanos Tshipidis from Papavram: “The Turks wanted to murder the Christians. Not, of course, the friendly neighboring Turks, but savage Turks who we didn’t know.”¹¹⁶ The villagers remained though, the Russian soldiers were stationed in the next village, Matsera. But when the Russian army retreated after the revolution, out of fear for repercussions the Greeks left with them; leaving no one in the village.

The Turks coming from Trebizond are called “refugees” in an account from Goli. Ioannis Stafylidis recounts how these “refugees” came to Goli and plundered taking away all the animals.¹¹⁷ The only time these Turks are named is an account from Ambrikanton. Ioannis Kourtidis calls them Tsipanoi (Τσιπανοί - Çepni). He says that after Trebizond was taken over by the Russians, this group followed the Harsiotis river inside plundering Greek villages they found on their way.¹¹⁸

It would make sense for these people to be Çepni. They have been known to be bandits in the Pontos region for a very long time, during the war they have been used by officials to strike fear among the Greek populations; and they had a role to play in the expulsion and murder of Armenians. In 1916, the Greek villages in regions close to Trebizond and the Russian front were part of a compulsory relocation. Gümüşhane, as it was a front by now rather than being close to it was not part of this. Çepni bandits were instrumental in the relocation and plunder of many Greek villages; they might have just reached the Cizere river before the arrival of the Russians to strike fear and as this was too far away from their real focus allowing the damage to be more limited.

Regardless, this war was different than the previous incursions of the

115. Mourtidis, KMS, *Ματσέρα* (ΠΟ 848), pp. 48-49.

116. St. Tshipidis, KMS, *Παπαβράμ* (ΠΟ 849), p. 85.

117. Stafylidis, KMS, *Γολή* (ΠΟ 845), pp. 123-124.

118. Kourtidis, KMS, *Αμπρικάντων* (ΠΟ 843), pp. 160-162.

Russian armies. First of all, there was no return. Orthodox and Muslim populations moved to both sides of the border with the advancing and retreating armies until now. There was always the possibility to return though. That is what happened to the Orthodox populations who decided to return to their villages from the Russian held Kars after 1878. This time, the authorities were not willing to let them in again. Even those very few who survived and were willing to return were subject to the Lausanne population exchange. Secondly, Russia after the Bolshevik Revolution was not necessarily a desirable place for Greek refugees. In the following decade the majority of the Greek-Orthodox who had been living in Russian territories found their way to Greece. Thirdly, as is evident from George Tsahouridis's account, Greece was a real possibility in the minds of some, especially educated, Greeks. Tsahouridis did not try Russia, did not wait for exchange, did not join the short-lived Republic of Pontus. He went to Greece directly.

When the battles were over, Cizere river no longer had Greeks. History did not stop of course, but that is the topic of another study.

