

# **A Survey of Churches in Inner Chaldia, Pontos**



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## 1. Introduction

This document is a summary of research on Christian monuments (nearly all Pontic Greek) in Inner Chaldia from the 1960s, primarily by Professor Anthony Bryer and David Winfield. Their work has been updated with recent Turkish commentary on former churches in the area. Sadly, the names of most of these former churches are still unknown.

In this document, Inner Chaldia is considered to be the area south of Trabzon in Pontos<sup>1</sup> beyond the Zigana Pass (at 2,050 m elevation, Plate 1) and the Pontic Gates (to the east) over the Pontic Alps. It includes the area from Gümüşhane<sup>2</sup> (and labelled here as the Gümüşhane zone) including old Gümüşhane and the villages north to Leri (now Yitirmez), Yaglidere, Stavri (now Ugurtaşı) and Imera (now Olucak) (Figs 1–2). The Torul ‘zone’ covers villages closer to this town. The third zone covers villages to the west of Gümüşhane.

Inner Chaldia excludes the plain of Bayburt to the south-east of the Vavuk pass and the region of Cheria (Şiran) to the south-west. The area north of Kromni around Santa (now Dumanlı) is also excluded. Inner Chaldia is high country with harsh winters and arid hot summers. Much of its landscape appears barren and is dominated by granite escarpments and the debris of volcanic upheavals. The contrast is stark with the valleys north of the Zigana Pass, where the landscape is covered by trees (Bryer and Winfield 1985:299).



Plate 1: Zigana Pass looking south into Chaldia (author's photo 2018).

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<sup>1</sup> Pontos is the north-eastern portion of Anatolia adjacent to the Black Sea.

<sup>2</sup> Gümüşhane's Greek name of Argyropolis was concocted by 1846 (Bryer 1991).

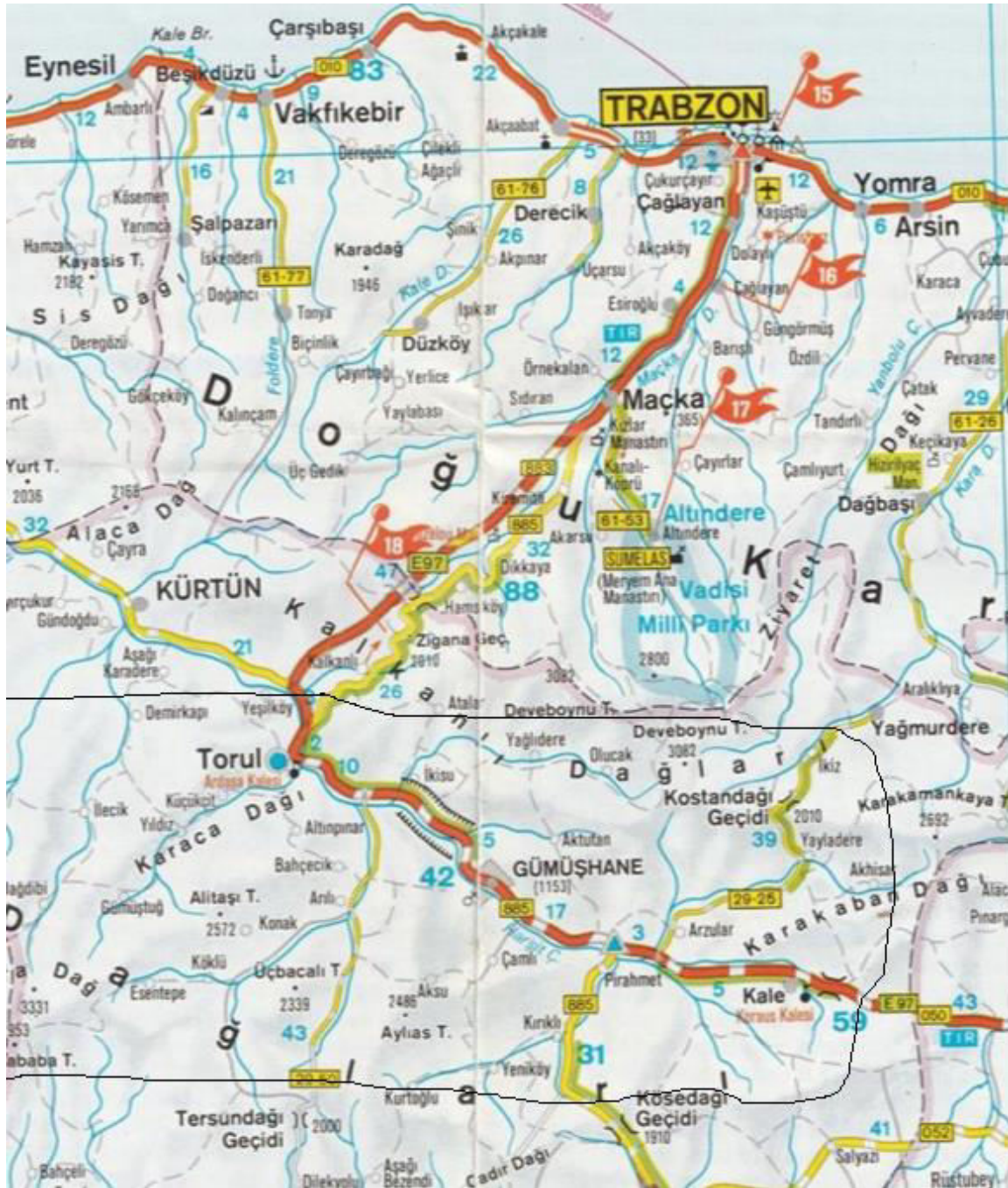


Fig. 1: Map marking the area under observation around Gümüşhane and Torul (Euro-Holiday map, Turkey: Black Sea, East Coast; Trabzon to Gümüşhane = 64 km).

This survey will review briefly the history of the region and then focus on specific centres which will include some of the Christian churches which have survived in various states of preservation which are existent and which are evidence of the impact of Christianity on this more remote part of northern Anatolia.

Some churches identified by Bryer and Winfield which were reported over 50 years ago have not been included here. They don't appear to have been included in more recent Turkish commentary and thus they may not have survived today.

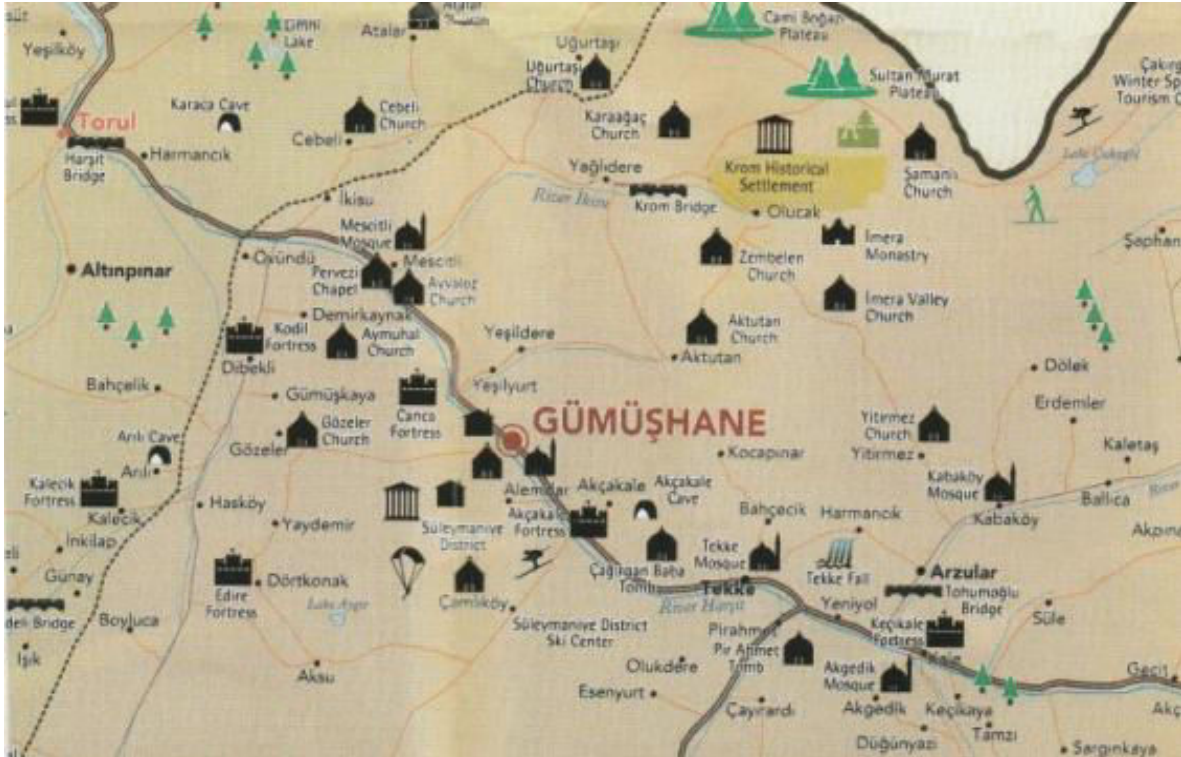


Fig. 2: Map of the Gümüşhane area (Köse (2013:82), Torul to Gümüşhane = 20 km).

Most of this Turkish commentary was sourced from the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism at the website: <https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-57846/kiliseler.html>. The author has (naively) relied on the accuracy of Google translation of Turkish into English from this website.

It appears that most of the churches were built in the 19th century with walls of rubble (rough uneven) stone, with the arches, corner stones, door and window jambs built with smooth cut stone. The roofs were covered with rock tiles, which appear to be slate. In the following descriptions of these churches, the stone work will not be described unless they vary from this general description. The dimensions of all the following Greek churches have not been recorded in available sources, but for those that are recorded, their length is no more than 20 m and no wider than 13 m.

N.B. The photograph on the cover page is the wooden sanctification cross decorated with silver and pearls which used to belong to the metropolitan of Chaldia, Gervasios Soumelidis (1864–1906) ([https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pontic\\_Sanctification\\_Cross\\_and\\_its\\_Case\\_Chaldia.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pontic_Sanctification_Cross_and_its_Case_Chaldia.jpg)).

## 2. A Brief History of Chaldia

In the 9th century BC, Chaldia was the Urartu land of Ararat (Note 1). In 400 BC, Xenophon<sup>3</sup> reported in his travels with his Greek army through the region that there were several indigenous Anatolian peoples south of the Greek colony of Trabzon. Some of these indigenous peoples included the Chalybes around Gümüşhane and the Scytheni further west.

Chaldia proved to be a difficult territory for the Romans and then the Byzantines [of the Eastern Roman empire]<sup>4</sup> to control. It had impassable roads, due either to forested areas or steep ground and unfordable rivers. It became progressively a defensive zone. Chaldia was integrated into the Early Byzantine empire after the successful expeditions of Byzantine emperor Justinian I (527–565) against the Tzanoi<sup>5</sup> in Inner Chaldia. Around 824, the area developed into an autonomous administrative and military division. Chaldia defended the coastline and the trade routes during Byzantine times: against the Arabs (7th–9th centuries), against the Seljuk Turks of Konya in the 13th century and the Turkmen emirs henceforth ([asiaminor.ehw.gr/Forms/fLemmaBody.aspx?lemmaid=6797](http://asiaminor.ehw.gr/Forms/fLemmaBody.aspx?lemmaid=6797)).

In 1072, Chaldia fell to the Seljuk Turks only to be liberated three years later by the Byzantine, Theodoros Gabras, who subsequently ruled as an autonomous leader, even though the region was controlled by the Byzantine empire (Malatras 2023).

From 1204 to 1461, Chaldia became part of the small Byzantine Komnenoi empire of Trebizond.<sup>6</sup> Chaldia had a network of dukes, such as the Kabazitai, Tzanichitai or Gabrades and was incorporated into the Ottoman empire from 1479 (Bryer 2009b:520–521). During the Komnenoi period, the Chaldian barons also took tolls for they guarded the trunk road from the port of Trabzon to Erzurum (which led to Persia), as well as the routes south (Note 2).

The Tzanoi in Inner Chaldia gave their name to Tzanicha, a principal stronghold of Chaldia and to the Tzanichitai, who were warlords of these mountains under the Komnenoi empire of Trebizond in the 14th and 15th centuries. After 1479, the Greeks produced the Phytianoi concessionaries to mine silver (Bryer and Winfield 1985: 300–301).

The rapid growth of the settlement in the late 16th century and in particular of the Christian population was due to the increased growth in mining activities. The powerful local superintendents of the silver mines among the Greek population of Chaldia seem to have contributed greatly to the Christian ecclesiastical autonomy of the area ([www.ehw.gr/asiaminor/Forms/fLemmaBody.aspx?lemmaid=10204](http://www.ehw.gr/asiaminor/Forms/fLemmaBody.aspx?lemmaid=10204)). The most important town of the region was Gümüşhane [Turkish for silver household or silver city] ([asiaminor.ehw.gr/Forms/fLemmaBody.aspx?lemmaid=6797](http://asiaminor.ehw.gr/Forms/fLemmaBody.aspx?lemmaid=6797)). At its height, the Gümüşhane area was like a state within a state which, as long as it produced precious metal for the Ottoman sultan, functioned with the

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<sup>3</sup> Xenophon was a military leader and historian from Athens.

<sup>4</sup> Comments within '[ ]' within a reference are the author's words.

<sup>5</sup> The Tzanoi were the indigenous inhabitants of Tzanicha.

<sup>6</sup> In 1461, Komnenoi Trabzon surrendered to the Ottoman sultan.

blessing of both sultan and Orthodox patriarch (Ballian 1995:212). In the early phase of silver mining, a significant role was played by the famous Soumela monastery<sup>7</sup> (south-east of Maçka, Fig. 1) which was obliged by the Ottoman authorities to send some of its serfs to work in the sultan's mines.

From the 1680s, the lands along the Tsite valley, south-west of Torul and in the Kromni, Imera and Stavri districts were settled, apparently for the first time, by Greek Christians and crypto-Christians who were miners, smelters, [tree-fellers/] charcoal-burners and graziers (Bryer and Winfield 1985:304). Crypto-Christians in the Ottoman empire were people who had openly converted from Christianity to Islam, but retained their Christian beliefs and practices in secret (Andreadis 1995).

The 18th century was an era of prosperity and growth for the Greek ecclesiastical province of Chaldia. Income from silver mining activities promoted the influence of local prelates [an official of high rank in the Christian religion], while Gümüşhane and the rest of the province were enriched with newly-founded churches and monasteries ([www.ehw.gr/asiaminor/Forms/flLemmaBody.aspx?lemmaid=10204](http://www.ehw.gr/asiaminor/Forms/flLemmaBody.aspx?lemmaid=10204)).

By the 19th century, Chaldia had a number of flourishing monasteries such as at Charsera (now Yeşildere), Choutoura (now Alemdar), Goumera (now Büyükçit) and Imera (now Olucak). Stimulated by the silver mining, together with a late 17th-century flight of Greeks from the coast to the mountains, the Chaldian monasteries prospered (Bryer and Winfield 1985:304).

It should not be forgotten that Chaldia has been subject to earthquakes which have damaged buildings like old churches (Note 3).

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<sup>7</sup> For details on the Soumela monastery, see the author's article at:  
[www.pontosworld.com/index.php/history/sam-topalidis/712-the-soumela-monastery-pontos](http://www.pontosworld.com/index.php/history/sam-topalidis/712-the-soumela-monastery-pontos)

### 3. Gümüşhane Zone

#### History

The silver mining town of [old] Gümüşhane in north-eastern Anatolia was established in the 1590s. The town lies along the Harşit River at 1,500 m above sea level, about 100 km (by road) south-west of Trabzon (Fig. 1). The silver mines produced lead, silver and a little gold (Note 4). There were also copper mines in its vicinity. The earliest Ottoman silver coins were struck at Tzanicha (just north-west of modern Gümüşhane) from 1520. This mint closed down sometime between 1574 and 1644 (Bryer (2009a:61); Bryer and Winfield (1970:325) (Bryer (1991); Bryer and Winfield (1985)).

From at least the mid-17th century, the Greeks of Gümüşhane and the surrounding villages (and the settlements like Kromni and Stavri) worked in silver mining, smelting or in the related charcoal burning [/tree-felling] industries. (The air must have been thick with the stench of burning ores and the mountain slopes increasingly devoid of trees (Carras 2021:26–27). [Lead poisoning and mining injuries must have reduced the life expectancy of its workers.]) For their work in mining, smelting or charcoal burning, the Christian villagers were excused the *harach*, a payment made by non-muslims in lieu of military service. Other tax exemptions, combined with persecutions in the mid-17th century from the Pontic *derebeys* (feudal valley lords) attracted Greek migrants from coastal Pontos (Ballian (1995); Bryer and Winfield (1970)). However, there was a Pontic *derebey* in the Torul area who caused angst among the local population.

In the 17th and 18th centuries, Gümüşhane was one of the most important mining towns in the Ottoman empire. The sultan's mines were effectively controlled by a *maden-bashi* or *ustabashi* [foreman] who was invariably a Greek. The skilled labour force was monopolised by Greeks. It is interesting that Gümüşhane drew its charcoal from an area later to be closely identified with crypto-Christianity (Bryer and Winfield 1970:325–327).

In 1763, during the reign of Catherine the Great, empress of Russia, the first Pontic Greek settlers of around 800 families left Gümüşhane for the Caucasus.<sup>8</sup> They worked the ore deposits on the northern border of modern Armenia (Manuylov 2015).

The mines were in decline before the Russian army reached Gümüşhane in August 1829, although the deeper silver veins had not been exploited (Bryer and Winfield 1970:325).<sup>9</sup> The Russians left in September 1829. After this 1828–1829 Russo-Turkish war, a combination of 42,000 Pontic Greeks from Gümüşhane and Anatolian Greeks from Erzurum (200 km south-east of Gümüşhane) followed the Russian troops and settled in the Russian empire in order to escape Ottoman repression (Xanthopoulou-Kyriakou 1991). With the decline of mining came the relocation of more of Gümüşhane's skilled miners to mines in other parts of Anatolia.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> See the author's article at: [www.pontosworld.com/index.php/history/sam-topalidis/683-the-relocation-of-greeks-from-pontos](http://www.pontosworld.com/index.php/history/sam-topalidis/683-the-relocation-of-greeks-from-pontos)

<sup>9</sup> The greatest problem the miners faced was groundwater seeping into the mines (Ballian 1995:121). Water seepage was a factor in the closure of some mines.

<sup>10</sup> Such as Ak Dag Maden (south of Samsun) in 1832 and the alum mines north of Şebinkarahisar (Bryer 1983:32).



From 1839 to 1871 was the period of the Ottoman sultan's legislation and reform called the Tanzimat. In 1844, (after foreign pressure) the death penalty for renouncing Islam was abolished and from 1845, conscription was introduced in most areas of the Ottoman empire. Christians in the empire were now eligible for military service, but they were able to pay a tax, in lieu of this service (Zürcher 2017). In February 1856, the *Hatt-i-Humayun* [a reform charter that proclaimed the principle of freedom of religion in the Ottoman empire] came into effect. From that time, the building of new churches with belfries also became much easier. Most of the crypto-Christians admitted their Christian faith from 1856 after the mines in Gümüşhane had been abandoned. In 1857, the acting British consul in Trabzon reported that in Gümüşhane there were around 1,500 houses of which 53% were occupied by Muslims, 27% occupied by Greeks and 20% by crypto-Christians (Bryer 1983).

The crypto-Christians were obliged to serve in the Ottoman army and also to be recorded under both their Muslim and Christian names. The Ottomans denied the crypto-Christians property inheritance rights. A Christian could not inherit from a Muslim, so a Christian convert could not inherit from his recorded Muslim parents (Note 5) (Tzedopoulos 2009). The crypto-Christians in the area had never paid the *harach* tribute before and they still demanded exemption, but mining service had ended and they were now obliged to do military service (Bryer and Winfield 1970).

Crypto-Christians of 1857 had been exempt from various tax burdens, but not the poll (head) tax [paid by non-Muslims in the Ottoman empire]<sup>11</sup> (Tzedopoulos 2009:173–75).

The end of silver mining coincided with the building of the Trabzon to Erzurum rural highway which bypassed [old] Gümüşhane by 4 km to the location of the new town (Plate 2). By at least 1869, new Gümüşhane became a centre of a soft fruit industry. By the 1890s, there were said to be 95 churches in the Gümüşhane area (Bryer and Winfield 1970:330, 333).

The massacre of Armenians in October 1895 by Ottoman Turks occurred in Gümüşhane [and in Pontos and many other areas] (Richter 2018:15).<sup>12</sup> (For some of the details on the 1915 Armenian genocide—see Note 6.) According to the Greek population 'count' in 1910–1912, the provincial district (*sanjak*) of Gümüşhane had 60,530 Greeks (Alexandris 1999:64).<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Tzedopoulos (2009:173) says Bryer believes the miners were excused the *harach* in return for mining, [smelting] or charcoal service. Tzedopoulos states that the miners from Santa paid tax in kind with charcoal loads. After the mines failed, they were obliged to pay in cash.

<sup>12</sup> In 1914, only 1,820 Armenians lived in Gümüşhane (Kévorkian 2011:486).

<sup>13</sup> The sanjak included the *kazas* (counties) of Gümüşhane, Torul (to the north-west), Shiran and Kelkit (to the south).



Plate 2: New Gümüşhane 2004 ([commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=37737955](https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=37737955)).

During World War I, the invading Russian army in north-east Anatolia had an impact on Christian villages near the military front. For example, in March 1916, the Ottoman Turks conscripted all Christian males between 15 and 51 years of age from Gümüşhane and its environs into the dreaded labour battalions (Vryonis 2007). Labour battalions (which comprised predominantly Christians, but also included Muslims) carried out road work, the transportation of material to the fronts and agricultural tasks. They were notorious for their poor conditions. Desertions were frequent (Beşikçi 2012).

In July 1916, the Russians occupied Gümüşhane and in the same month, the local Turks in Gümüşhane sought the help of the Greek head of the municipality who wrote to the Russian General in Trabzon, that there were up to 30,000 Muslims who were in need of food supplies (Akarca 2014).

In October 1916, a Russian army officer in Trabzon, Mintslov, wrote to the Chief of Staff to the Commander in Chief of the Caucasus army that the whole region from Trabzon to Gümüşhane (under Russian control) was on the verge of famine (Mintslov 1923:140). During the Russian occupation (1916–early 1918), [some of] the Muslim population in the region moved away from the Russian occupied areas (Kars et al. 2008:931). Around 45,000 Greeks, mostly from the counties of Gümüşhane, Kelkit and Şiran [south of Gümüşhane] sought refuge in Russia during the Turkish reoccupation (Fotiadis 2019:265).

From September 1922, after the defeat of the Greek army in western Anatolia in the Greco-Turkish War (1919–1922), the remaining Greeks were pressured to leave Anatolia for Greece. The forced expulsion was

finalised from January 1923 under the exchange of populations under the Lausanne Convention (Note 7).<sup>14</sup> Some of the Greek churches' stunning silverware and other sacramental items from Gümüşhane were brought to Greece and some are on display in the Benaki Museum in Athens.

Today, the town of Gümüşhane has a population of around 39,000 (2022, <https://biruni.tuik.gov.tr/medas/?kn=95&locale=en>) and is noted for fruit leather, churchkhela<sup>15</sup> apples, pears, walnuts, cherries, plums, apricots and hazelnuts (Eastern Black Sea Development Agency 2016:162).

## **Old Gümüşhane**

### Panagia Greek church

The ruined former Panagia Greek church with its roof collapsed was built on a rock in the south of Gümüşhane. Since it is similar in style to other churches in the region, it was probably built in the 19th century. The apse is carved into the rock with a holy spring on the northern side. The interior of the church measures 11 m by 8 m (<https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-231649/merkes-suleymaniye-mahallesi-panaghia-kaya-kilisesi.html>).

### St John Greek church

The ruined former St John the Prodromos and Baptist Greek church, with its collapsed roof (Plate 3) was possibly founded in 1736, but the present structure was rebuilt in 1819 and repaired and painted in 1832. It is a single-apse barn church, the north wall is the rock face (Bryer and Winfield 1970:346). The church was built 20 m by 8 m with mural paintings on the south wall (<https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/Eklenti/59094,suleymaniye-gezi-rehberipdf.pdf>).



Plate 3: St John Greek church, old Gümüşhane (<https://karadeniz.gov.tr/gumushane-kulturel-tasinmaz-varliklar/?amp=evet&sahife=4>).

<sup>14</sup> In the 1930s, it was believed that there were 100,000 Pontic Greek speakers [seems high] at Rostov-on-Don in Russia who spoke Pontic Greek consistent with that spoken in the Gümüşhane district—so [most] came from this district (Dawkins 1937).

<sup>15</sup> Fruit leather is made from pulverizing fruit and then drying it. Churchkhela is usually made with grape juice thickened with flour and with nuts.

### Surp Karabet Armenian church

This ruined former Armenian church measures 18 m by 13 m (Plates 4–5). Its roof has collapsed and its southern wall has largely collapsed. The church had semicircular triple apses. Decorations on the upper parts of the round-arched window niches have survived (<https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-231651/merkes-suleymaniye-mahallesi-surp-karabet-kilisesi.html>).

The church was built or rebuilt in 1885 and was originally domed. The narthex and gallery was embedded into the side of the hill which slopes steeply down below the apses (Bryer and Winfield 1970:343, 346).



Plate 4: Surp Karabet Armenian church, old Gümüşhane  
(<https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-231651/merkes-suleymaniye-mahallesi-surp-karabet-kilisesi.html>).



Plate 5: Inside the Surp Karabet Armenian church, old Gümüşhane  
(<https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-231651/merkes-suleymaniye-mahallesi-surp-karabet-kilisesi.html>).

### St Theodore Greek church

The ruined former St Theodore Greek church with its roof collapsed, was built above the road in the south-east of old Gümüşhane (Plate 6). It is the oldest church in the district. Its build date is uncertain, but in 1702, it had been partially restored. Its dimensions were 12 m by 9 m (<https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/Eklenti/59094,suleymaniye-gezi-rehberipdf.pdf>).

The most intact part of the church is the apse. In the rocky area in the south-east corner of the church may be a grave (<https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-231648/merkes-suleymaniye-mahallesi-hagios-theodoros-kilisesi.html>). It may have had three apses. The entrance must have been from the west.



Plate 6: St Theodore Greek church, old Gümüşhane

(<https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-231648/merkes-suleymaniye-mahallesi-hagios-theodoros-kilisesi.html>).

### St George Greek metropolitan church

In 1723, Ignatios Phytianos founded the St George Greek metropolitan church in Gümüşhane (Plate 7). By that date there was a number of small Greek chapels in the surrounding hills. The St George church was the largest church in Gümüşhane (and held precious silver sacraments, e.g. Plate 8). It had three apses and its roof has been destroyed. The long annex added to its southern side probably represented the cathedral offices and perhaps the library of Chaldia. The wall between the annex and the cathedral has collapsed. Some ruins to the south of the building could represent an earlier chapel (Bryer and Winfield 1970:332, 343–346).

The ruined church measures 18 m by 13 m (<https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-219991/suleymaniye-mahallesi-39hagios-georgios-metropolitik-ki-.html>). Some traces of frescoes were visible on the west wall (Kars et al. 2008:935). Its entrance was most probably from the west.



Plate 7: St George Greek metropolitan church, old Gümüşhane, 2022  
(<https://orthodoxtimes.com/the-ecumenical-patriarch-visited-argyroupoli-pontus-photos/>).



Plate 8: Parcel-gilt silver ciborium, 1827, St George church old Gümüşhane  
([www.benaki.org/index.php?option=com\\_collectionitems&view=collectionitem&Itemid=&id=143003&lang=en](http://www.benaki.org/index.php?option=com_collectionitems&view=collectionitem&Itemid=&id=143003&lang=en)).

### The St Stephanos Greek church

This ruined former Greek church (Plate 9) with its roof destroyed was built similar to other churches in Gümüşhane (Korkmaz and Beeson 2022:832). The church was built in 1832 and stands near a ruined mosque. A narrow chapel and fourth apse were added along the south side. There were traces of painting below the interior plaster Bryer and Winfield (1970:338). It probably had a western entrance.



Plate 9: St Stephanos Greek church, old Gümüşhane 2019  
([www.haberkaos.com/gumushane-hagios-stephanos-kilisesi/](http://www.haberkaos.com/gumushane-hagios-stephanos-kilisesi/)).

### St Sergios Armenian church, Vank

The ruined former Armenian monastery dedicated to St Sergios is located in the village of Vank, 3 km from old Gümüşhane. The former church of St Sergios in the monastery has a door on the west which has a round arch narthex. It was also accessed via the 2nd floor on the south side by outside stairs (Plate 10). The interior is divided into three naves by four columns. There are paintings inside.

The monastery presumably existed in the 17th century, but the current church bears features of a late 19th century building. It is a triple apsed domed structure, about 25 m in length. It was presumably abandoned in 1915 when Gümüşhane became a staging post in the Armenian deportations [genocide] (Bryer et al. 1972–1973:158; <https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-231653/merkez-vank-koyu-kilisesi.html>). Its roof appears to be damaged.



Plate 10: St Sergios Armenian church, Vank near old Gümüşhane  
(<https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-231653/merkez-vank-koyu-kilisesi.html>).

### **Alemdar Village**

#### Greek monastery of St George

Alemdar village is 6 km by road south of modern Gumushane (Fig. 2). In 1624, Murat Stratikevas was the founder or renovator of the Greek monastery of St George, Choutoura (now Alemdar) (Ballian 1995:72). The ruined former monastery was the leading monastery of Chaldia (Plates 11–13). The monastic library was burnt in 1764. Some of St George's sacramental items (such as liturgical fans, chalices and crosses) were taken to Greece during the exchange of populations in the early 1920s and are now in the Benaki Museum in Athens (Plate 14). Its 18th century main church of the monastery was replaced by a splendid structure in 1883. Like many medieval monasteries, Choutoura abuts a sacred cave in a cliff face, a pre-1461 origin is possible (Bryer et al. (1972–1973); Bryer and Winfield (1985:309)).

The church built in an east-west direction had three apses on its eastern end with the entrance at the western end. In the south-west, there is a round structure made of rubble stone, which may be a plastered well, built below ground level (<https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-219958/merkez-alemdar-koyu-39hutura-hagios-manastir-39kilisesi-.html>).

The now ruined former St George church has been plundered by treasure hunters and its roof has collapsed. The locals hope that the church, which is located just outside Alemdar village, will be renovated and opened to tourism ([www.hurriyetdailynews.com/orthodox-church-in-black-sea-region-plundered-by-treasure-hunters-162404](http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/orthodox-church-in-black-sea-region-plundered-by-treasure-hunters-162404)).





Plate 11: St George Greek church, Alemdar village, probably 1950s  
([www.hurriyetdailynews.com/orthodox-church-in-black-sea-region-plundered-by-treasure-hunters-162404](http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/orthodox-church-in-black-sea-region-plundered-by-treasure-hunters-162404)).



Plate 12: St George Greek church, Alemdar village, 1967 (Bryer et al. 1972–1973:170).



Plate 13: Ruined St George Greek church, Alemdar village, 2023  
([www.hurriyetdailynews.com/orthodox-church-in-black-sea-region-plundered-by-treasure-hunters-162404](http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/orthodox-church-in-black-sea-region-plundered-by-treasure-hunters-162404)).



Plate 14: Cross, Choutoura monastery 1700 (Ballian 2002: 347).

### Karşiyaka district church

Sometime before 1923, Alemdar had 40 Greek and two Turkish families, a school and three churches: St Euphemia (built in 1736), St George and the Koimesis of the Theotokos. In 1971, the only church in the village that had survived (with its roof intact) stood on the side of the tributary of the Kanis river. It is a 19th century three apsed barn structure with a dome (name unknown) (Bryer et al. 1972–1973:175–176).

This ruined former church [name possibly either St Euphemia, if it was rebuilt in the 19th century or the Koimesis of the Theotokos] with its roof and dome destroyed [post-1971] is located in the Karşiyaka district. The St George monastery is on the opposite slope of this church. The Karşiyaka district church was built 8 m by 8 m. On the eastern facade there are still three semicircular apses. The door is from the west with three iron-barred windows on the north wall (Plate 15). No frescos have been found in the damaged plastered interior (<https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-219959/merkez-alemdar-hutura-koyu-39kilisesi.html>).



Plate 15: Karşiyaka district church, Alemdar village, 2021 (name unknown, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=2ycS73liOdM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2ycS73liOdM)).

### **Çamlıköy Village**

#### Çamlıköy village church

Çamlıköy [formerly Mavrangel] is 9 km (by road) south of new Gümüşhane (Fig. 2). The former Çamlıköy church [name and date it was built are unknown] was established on a slope at the foot of the valley. The church was built 10.5 m by 6.5 m with a semicircular single apse on the eastern end (Plates 16–17). The only entrance is from the west. The church has two windows on the south walls, one in the apse and one on the western entrance. There is no decoration in the building. The church, which was used as a warehouse, has deteriorated (<https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-219961/merkez-camlikoy-koyu-39kiisesi39.html>). The author is unsure if the roof is intact.



Plate 16: Çamlıköy village church (name unknown, <https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-219961/merkez-camlıkoy-koyu-39kiisesi39.html>).



Plate 17: Inside the Çamlıköy village church (name unknown, <https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-219961/merkez-camlıkoy-koyu-39kiisesi39.html>).

## **Akçakale Village**

### Hozevrek district church

Akçakale is 7 km south-east of new Gümüşhane (Fig. 2). The former church (original name unknown) was built in the Hozevrek district, Akçakale village, with a single semicircular apse on the eastern end (Plate 18). The entrance of the church, which is now ruined, is on the northern facade. There are two windows on the north wall of the church and one on the south wall. The plaster in the interior has fallen off (<https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-219922/merkez-akcakale-hozevrek-kilisesi.html>). The age of this church is unknown, but it was probably built in the 19th century. The building now appears to be used for some practical purpose.

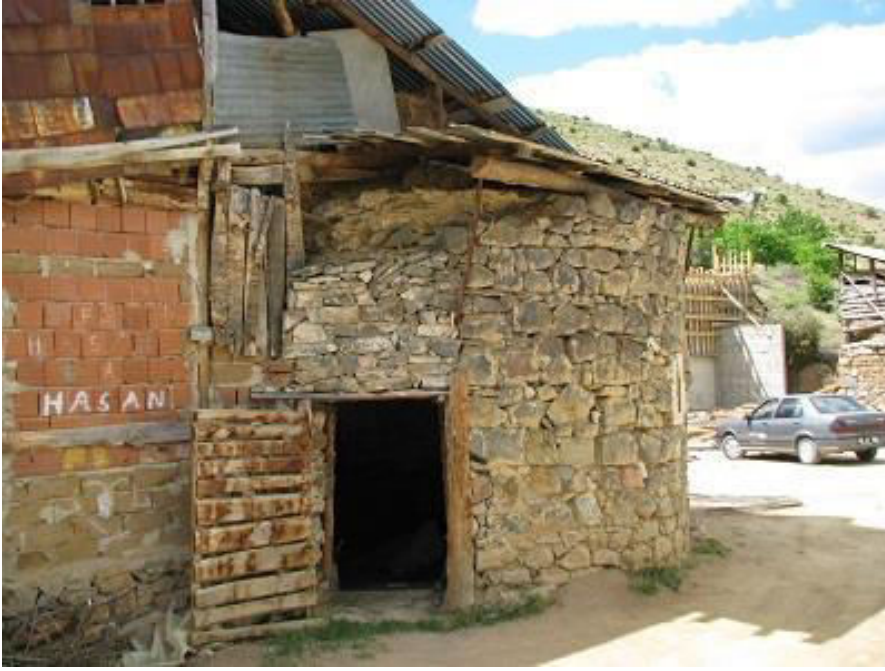


Plate 18: Hozevrek district church, Akçakale village (name unknown, <https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-219922/merkez-akcakale-hozevrek-kilisesi.html>).

## **Tekke Village**

### Işıkdere district church

This former church (name unknown) was built on a slope, next to a stream in the Işıkdere district in Tekke village, 13 km (by road) south-east of Gümüşhane (Fig. 2). Its western wall, where the entrance is located, was built of cut stone (Plate 19). Its original stone roof tiles have been removed. There is a rectangular building with a flat roof which was added later to the south wall and an oval extension which was added to the east wall. On the internal eastern wall there are six small stone cabinets where statues and candles may have been held (<https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-231652/merkez-tekke-koyu-isikdere-mahallesi-kilisesi.html>). The author is unaware of how many apses were associated with the church.



Plate 19: Işıkdere district church, Tekke village (name unknown, <https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-231652/merkez-tekke-koyu-isikdere-mahallesi-kilisesi.html>).

## **Kocapinar Village**

### Kastirget district church

This ruined former church (name unknown) in the Kastirget district, Kocapinar village is located 23 km east of Gümüşhane. It has a collapsed roof and was built on a hill, away from the residential area. It has a single semicircular apse on the east with a door on the western facade surrounded by an arch. There are two windows on the south and one window on the west facade (<https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-219979/kocapinar-koyu-kastirget-mevki-39kilise-kalintisi39.html>).

### Sidas district church 1

This ruined former church (name unknown) in the Sidas district was built on a hill near the Kocapinar village. The walls are partially standing and the roof has collapsed. There is a door on the west facade surrounded by an arch (Plate 20). There are two windows on the south facade and one window on the west facade. There is a round apse at its eastern end (<https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-219980/kocapinar-koyu-sidas-deresi-mevkii-39kilise-kalintisi39-.html>).



Plate 20: Sidas district church 1, Kocapinar village (name unknown, <https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-219980/kocapinar-koyu-sidas-deresi-mevkii-39kilise-kalintisi39-.html>).

### Sidas district church 2

This former church (name unknown) is on a slope located in the Sidas district, south of the Kocapinar village. The chapel was built in an east-west direction 5 m by 10 m with a southern door. It has an entrance sitting on four columns. The roof above these columns has been destroyed. It has four windows, two in the apse and two in the west. The windows have flat lintels<sup>16</sup> on the outside. The roof is largely intact. The semicircular apse is on the eastern end. The floor is paved with cut stone (<https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-219981/kocapinar-koyu-sidas-deresi-mevkii-39kilise-kalintisi-1-.html>).

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<sup>16</sup> A lintel is a horizontal structure placed above windows and doors to support the load from above it.

**Leri (now Yitirmez Village)**

Hagia Sophia church

Yitirmez is 27 km (by road) east of Gümüşhane (Fig. 2). The former Hagia Sophia Greek church is located at modern day Kabakoy, 4 km north-west of Yitirmez. The church points to a 6th century build date and it was probably rebuilt in the 9th century. It may be the oldest surviving church in Pontos. By 1737, the church was probably converted into the village mosque (Plate 21) [so there must have been Muslims living in the area]. Most of the Leri settlements remained Greek (Bryer and Winfield 1985:313, 315).



Plate 21: Hagia Sophia mosque, Kabakoy, 2021

(<https://kulturenvanteri.com/tr/yer/kabakoy-ayasofya-camii-gumushane/#16/40.436652/39.695355>).

The front of Hagia Sophia was largely rebuilt, presumably when the church became a mosque.<sup>17</sup> Half its population of 200 families were crypto-Christians who openly declared their faith in 1857. The other 100 families were Christian Greeks. Apparently, at the time, there were no Muslims in Leri. In the second half of the 19th century, seven or more churches were built in the valley (Bryer (1983:40); Bryer (2009b); Bryer and Winfield (1985:313–314)).

The converted church is about 14 m by 11 m. The east and south walls are built of blocks of yellow limestone. The west and north walls are very different. The facing of the north wall has been removed and is made up of small irregular stones. The south door has been blocked and serves

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<sup>17</sup> The mosque was restored again in 1972 and 2010  
(<https://kulturenvanteri.com/tr/yer/kabakoy-ayasofya-camii-gumushane/#16/40.436652/39.695355>).

as a mihrab [a niche in the wall pointing to Mecca]. The situation of the church of Leri makes it intriguing. Although it lay on the borders of the Byzantine empire, it seems to belong to the architectural traditions of Armenia and central Anatolia (Bryer and Winfield 1985:314).

#### Lower Götürmez district church

This former church (name unknown) was built with a gable roof in the lower Götürmez district, Yitirmez village (Plate 22). Most of the interior plaster has fallen off (<https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-232363/yitirmez-koyu-asagi-goturmez-mevki-kilise.html>).

The original west door had been blocked off before 1967 and had the date 1889 marked over this door [most probably its build date]. A makeshift entrance was made out of one of its three eastern apses. The roof originally had concave red tiles (Bryer and Winfield 1970:315, 323) and has not collapsed.



Plate 22: Lower Götürmez church, Yitirmez village (name unknown, <https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-232363/yitirmez-koyu-asagi-goturmez-mevki-kilise.html>)

#### Yitirmez village church

The former church (name unknown) is located on a hill at the entrance of the Yitirmez village. The east-west oriented building has a gable roof. The three apses on the east are semicircular. There are three small rectangular windows on the south facade. The entrance is provided through the western facade. There is a pointed arched pediment at the top of the plain door lintel made of marble [this would have increased its cost of construction]. The facade ends with a triangular pediment at the top. The two piers in front of the apses are divided into three naves by four columns. The inside is plastered and decorated with angel figures (<https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-232364/yitirmez-koyu-kilise.html>). The author is unsure of the current status of the roof of this former church.



### Yukari Götürmez church

This ruined former church (name unknown) is located 1.5 km south of the Yitirmez village in the Yukari Götürmez district and was built on a slope in an east-west direction (Plates 23–24). The western facade [where the door was probably located] and the roof have been destroyed. There are two windows on the north and south facades and one on the axis of the three eastern apses (<https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-232365/yitirmez-koyu-yukari-goturmez-mevki-kilise.html>).



Plate 23: The Yukari Götürmez church, Yitirmez village (name unknown, <https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-232365/yitirmez-koyu-yukari-goturmez-mevki-kilise.html>).



Plate 24: Inside the Yukari Götürmez church, Yitirmez village (name unknown, <https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-232365/yitirmez-koyu-yukari-goturmez-mevki-kilise.html>).

Please note that there were an additional five ruined churches in Leri mentioned in Bryer and Winfield (1970:318–322) whose names have not been identified and have not been included here. The author is unaware of the status of these churches today.

## **Aktutan Village**

### Bektaş district church

This ruined former church (name unknown) is located in the Bektaş district of Aktutan village [13 km by road north-east of Gümüşhane] (Figs 1–2; Plate 25). The church had a single semicircular apse at the eastern end. Its only door is from the west with a round-arched pediment above. The roof and almost the entire south wall have been destroyed (<https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-231643/merkez-aktutan-koyu-kilise.html>).



Plate 25: Bektaş district church, Aktutan village (name unknown, <https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-231643/merkez-aktutan-koyu-kilise.html>).

### Central district church

The ruined former church (name unknown) in the central district, Aktutan village was built in an east-west direction with a single semicircular apse. There are two windows on the south side and one in the west. On the southern facade is a door with flat stone inlay surrounded by an arch (Plate 26). All of the stone roof tiles have been removed (<https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-231644/merkez-aktutan-koyu-orta-mahalle-kilisesi.html>). The church was probably built in the 19th century.



Plate 26: Central district church, Aktutan village (name unknown, <https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-231644/merkez-aktutan-koyu-orta-mahalle-kilisesi.html>).

### **Yeşildere Village**

#### Greek monastery of St George, Charsera (now Yeşildere)

Yeşildere is about 5 km by road north of Gümüşhane, on the bank of the river. The former St George Charsera monastery was most probably 18th or 19th century in age. This site is the most obscure of the major monasteries of post-Trapezuntine Chaldia (Bryer and Winfield 1985:308). The author is unaware of the current status of this former Greek monastery.

#### Sigirli district church

This former church (name unknown) was built in an east-west direction with a single polygonal apse and a gable roof in the Sigirli district. The apse on the east facade is made of smooth cut stone (Plate 27). There are two long loophole windows on the apse and a rectangular-shaped, iron-barred window. It has a door in the west and south surrounded by arches. The floor paving stones have completely deteriorated (<https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-232362/yesildere-koyu-sigirli-mahallesi-kilise.html>). The author is unaware of the status of the roof.

#### Tzanicha chapels

The Tzanicha castle stands on a spur about 2 km north-west of modern Gümüşhane. Two painted chapels stood on eminences within the upper bailey. Both ruined chapels were probably 13th century in date (Bryer and Winfield (1985:309); Bryer (2009b)). The author is unaware of the current status of these ruined chapels.



Plate 27: Sigirli district church, Yeşildere village (name unknown, <https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-232362/yesildere-koyu-sigirli-mahallesi-kilise.html>).

### **Imera** (now Olucak)

#### Introduction

The former Imera monastery is located 40 km by road north-east from Gümüşhane and 3 km from Imera (Fig. 2). In 1991, the monastery was registered as an archaeological site requiring protection. The Greek church St John Prodromos (Plate 28) in the monastery is 14 m by 10 m. In Olucak, around 75 households were living there during summer and only 20 households in winter (Özgen et al. 2011:446).

In about 1710, the Imera monastery for women was founded and by 1780, 20 nuns were living there. In 1870, the Orthodox Greeks had opened a school. The present church with three apses to the east was built in 1859 by the abbess Roxanne ((Ballance et al. (1966); Bryer and Winfield (1985:304)). By the beginning of the 20th century it had only 12 nuns and after the exchange of populations in 1923, the monastery was abandoned. The church was then used by the Turks as a stable and fell into ruin ([www.pontosnews.gr/498111/istoria/o-agios-ioannis-imeras-o-gimeras-agian/](http://www.pontosnews.gr/498111/istoria/o-agios-ioannis-imeras-o-gimeras-agian/)).



Plate 28: Imera Monastery with the St John Prodromos Greek church, 1893 (Bryer and Winfield 1985, vol. 2 plate 230).

In 2020, the roof of the former St John church, missing stones and an interior column were repaired ([www.dailysabah.com/arts/gumushanes-imer-monastery-partially-restored/news](http://www.dailysabah.com/arts/gumushanes-imer-monastery-partially-restored/news)). It is being restored in order to attract tourists to the area (Plates 29–30).

Imera had once boasted 4,000 inhabitants. Ballance et al. (1966:295–296) listed seven churches in Imera and its immediate area [excluding the Imera monastery]:

- St Constantine, Thomanton
- St Demetrios, Chaltoyiannanton
- St George, Kathenmeretion
- St George, Zoubakanton
- St George of the Fields
- The Panagia (reputed to be 300 years old)
- The Three Hierarchs, Mantrion.

The exact location of these seven churches is unknown, but the following unidentified churches are most probably among the list of churches identified above.



Plate 29: Inside the St John Prodomos Greek church, Olucak, 2020  
([www.dailysabah.com/arts/gumushanes-imera-monastery-partially-restored/news?gallery\\_image=undefined#big](http://www.dailysabah.com/arts/gumushanes-imera-monastery-partially-restored/news?gallery_image=undefined#big)).



Plate 30: St John Prodomos Greek church, Olucak, 2020  
([www.dailysabah.com/arts/gumushanes-imera-monastery-partially-restored/news?gallery\\_image=undefined#big](http://www.dailysabah.com/arts/gumushanes-imera-monastery-partially-restored/news?gallery_image=undefined#big)).

### Mandiri district Greek church

The ruined former Greek church in the Mandiri district (original name unknown) is in a field in Olucak village. Only the northern wall and entrance to the church have survived. There is a pointed arched pediment over the entrance. It bears the architectural characteristics of the churches in the Imera and Yaglidere area ([https://gumushane-ktb-gov-tr.translate.goog/TR-219989/olucak-imerakoyu-mandiri-mevkii-39kilise-kalintisi39.html?\\_x\\_tr\\_sl=tr&\\_x\\_tr\\_tl=en&\\_x\\_tr\\_hl=en&\\_x\\_tr\\_pto=sc](https://gumushane-ktb-gov-tr.translate.goog/TR-219989/olucak-imerakoyu-mandiri-mevkii-39kilise-kalintisi39.html?_x_tr_sl=tr&_x_tr_tl=en&_x_tr_hl=en&_x_tr_pto=sc)).

### Imera [Greek] central church

The ruined former Greek church (name unknown) (Plate 31) is located in the Olucak village. More than half of the southern part of the church has been destroyed. Originally the entrance was from the west with another from the south-west corner. Inside the church is plastered ([https://gumushane-ktb-gov-tr.translate.goog/TR-219990/olucak-imerakoyu-39merkez-kilise39.html?\\_x\\_tr\\_sl=tr&\\_x\\_tr\\_tl=en&\\_x\\_tr\\_hl=en&\\_x\\_tr\\_pto=sc](https://gumushane-ktb-gov-tr.translate.goog/TR-219990/olucak-imerakoyu-39merkez-kilise39.html?_x_tr_sl=tr&_x_tr_tl=en&_x_tr_hl=en&_x_tr_pto=sc)). The remaining roof appears intact.



Plate 31: Greek church Olucak, 2022 (name unknown, [https://gumushane-ktb-gov-tr.translate.goog/TR-219990/olucak-imerakoyu-39merkez-kilise39.html?\\_x\\_tr\\_sl=tr&\\_x\\_tr\\_tl=en&\\_x\\_tr\\_hl=en&\\_x\\_tr\\_pto=sc](https://gumushane-ktb-gov-tr.translate.goog/TR-219990/olucak-imerakoyu-39merkez-kilise39.html?_x_tr_sl=tr&_x_tr_tl=en&_x_tr_hl=en&_x_tr_pto=sc)).

### Imera village church-1

This ruined former Greek church (name unknown, Plate 32) is located on the road at the entrance to Olucak village. It was built in an east-west direction 9 m by almost 9 m. The apse is located on the eastern facade. Almost all of the roof and part of the south wall have been destroyed. Its entrance from the west has a pediment enclosed in a pointed arch at the top. It once had fresco decorations ([https://gumushane-ktb-gov-tr.translate.goog/TR-219986/olucak-imerakoyu-39kilise-139.html?\\_x\\_tr\\_sl=tr&\\_x\\_tr\\_tl=en&\\_x\\_tr\\_hl=en&\\_x\\_tr\\_pto=sc](https://gumushane-ktb-gov-tr.translate.goog/TR-219986/olucak-imerakoyu-39kilise-139.html?_x_tr_sl=tr&_x_tr_tl=en&_x_tr_hl=en&_x_tr_pto=sc)).



Plate 32: Greek Olucak church-1, 2022 (name unknown, [https://gumushane-ktb-gov-tr.translate.goog/TR-219986/olucak-imerakoyu-39kilise-139.html?\\_x\\_tr\\_sl=tr&\\_x\\_tr\\_tl=en&\\_x\\_tr\\_hl=en&\\_x\\_tr\\_pto=sc](https://gumushane-ktb-gov-tr.translate.goog/TR-219986/olucak-imerakoyu-39kilise-139.html?_x_tr_sl=tr&_x_tr_tl=en&_x_tr_hl=en&_x_tr_pto=sc)).

### Imera village church-2

This ruined former [Greek] church (name unknown, Plate 33) is located in the old village settlement on the way to the former İmera Greek monastery. It has three apses [at the eastern end]. The roof has been destroyed and the south wall is partially destroyed ([https://gumushane-ktb-gov-tr.translate.goog/TR-219987/olucak-imerakoyu-39kilise-239.html?\\_x\\_tr\\_sl=tr&\\_x\\_tr\\_tl=en&\\_x\\_tr\\_hl=en&\\_x\\_tr\\_pto=sc](https://gumushane-ktb-gov-tr.translate.goog/TR-219987/olucak-imerakoyu-39kilise-239.html?_x_tr_sl=tr&_x_tr_tl=en&_x_tr_hl=en&_x_tr_pto=sc)). The entrance was probably from the west.



Plate 33: Greek church, Olucak church-2, 2022 (name unknown, [https://gumushane-ktb-gov-tr.translate.goog/TR-219987/olucak-imerakoyu-39kilise-239.html?\\_x\\_tr\\_sl=tr&\\_x\\_tr\\_tl=en&\\_x\\_tr\\_hl=en&\\_x\\_tr\\_pto=sc](https://gumushane-ktb-gov-tr.translate.goog/TR-219987/olucak-imerakoyu-39kilise-239.html?_x_tr_sl=tr&_x_tr_tl=en&_x_tr_hl=en&_x_tr_pto=sc)).



### **Kromni History**

Kromni (today Krom) is about 15 km (straight line distance, but over 35 km by road) north-east of Gümüşhane (Fig. 2) and some 2,000 m above sea level.

In Kromni, houses of crypto-Christians had a secret chapel in which they could worship (Andreadis 1995). In 1857, the acting British consul at Trabzon reported that in the 10 villages he identified belonging to Kromni (which included Mohora, Alithinos and Imera) there were 1,080 houses of which 67% were occupied by Greeks and 32% were occupied by crypto-Christians—only two houses were [apparently] occupied by Muslims (Bryer 1983:37–38) (Plate 34). We can assume that in Kromni some of the crypto-Christians were the descendants of Muslims (Tzedopoulos 2009).



Plate 34: One of the settlements of Kromni (Dawkins 1914, <https://digital.bsa.ac.uk/results.php?keywords=Dawkins&collection=BSA+SPHS+Image+Collection&start=201&irn=141847>).

Their so called ‘secret faith’ crypto-Christianity was actually well known (Deringil 2012). People from Kromni were able to carry firearms, like Muslims and were excused military service (Bryer 2009a:64).

By the second half of the 19th century Kromni comprised approximately 6,000 residents (Ballance et al. 1966:274). However, in contrast, Cuinet (1890–1895) in Hasluck (1929) estimated there were 12,000 to 15,000 people in nine villages of Kromni. According to Andreadis (1995:24–25) the Kromni area comprised the following 15 settlements:

- Alithinos (with districts, Aliandon, Tsirandon and Zarafangandon)
- Frangandon (with districts, Alchatzandon, Bairamandon, Seichandon and Stefanandon)
- Glouvena
- Kodonandon
- Loria
- Mantzandon
- Mohora [with two ruined churches, more details to follow]
- Nanak [with a ruined church, more details to follow]
- Rakan
- Roustandon
- Sainandon
- Samanandon (the largest settlement with districts, Garalandon, Goimpsandon, Kalistrandon, Moysandon, Tyrkandon and Vartanandon)
- Sarandon
- Tsahmanandon
- Zemberek.

According to Andreadis (2008:37–38), ruined former Greek churches were found at Frangandon (St John), Glouvena, Loria, Mantzandon, Nanak, Samanandon and Sarandon (St Theodore). The first mosque was built in 1815 and the first church (St George [which the author has been unable to identify and may have been demolished]) at Alithinos in 1831.

In 1850, the main road began to carry the revived Persian trade from Trabzon through the Zigana Pass, not the Pontic Gates [modern Kolabat Bogazi, east of Zigana]: thus the old route through Kromni was bypassed. Kromni was an agricultural centre and cannot have participated much in the commercial revival (Ballance et al. 1966:269).

In 1929, D Talbot Rice saw the remains of about 400 houses and only a dozen or so Turks squatting in the ruins of Kromni (Bryer et al. 1972–1973:290). Sinclair (1989:138) states that Kromni descends over a distance of about 1 km and is divided into an upper, middle and a lower town.

In this document, many of the churches mentioned above are described under other village names.

## **Yaglidere Village**

### Introduction

The village of Yaglidere is 30 km (by road) north of Gümüşhane (just west of Krom, Fig. 2). In the village is a former Greek church with three rounded apses. In the barrel vault there were paintings in a deplorable condition. It could have been the Greek church of St George (Ballance et al. 1966:283–284).

In 1857, the acting British consul at Trabzon, reported that there were 330 houses in the four villages of Yaglidere,<sup>18</sup> 64% of the houses were occupied by crypto-Christians, 36% by Greeks with no Muslim households (Bryer 1983:38). The identification of the many former churches in this area is very difficult but were most probably built in the 19th century.

#### Nanak church<sup>19</sup>

The ruined former [Greek] church (original name unknown) in the Nanak district, Yaglidere village was built 11 m by 9.5 m. The single apse at the eastern end has partially collapsed. The door on the south facade with a flat lintel and pointed arch pediment is bordered by a round arch at the top and colonnades on the sides. The roof and south wall of the church have been destroyed (<https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-232350/yaglidere-koyu-krom-vadisi-nanak-kilisesi.html>).

#### Mohora district Greek church under the rock<sup>20</sup>

This ruined former [Greek] church without a roof (Plates 35–36, name unknown) was built 9.5 m by 7.5 m, against a rocky cliff on the road to the Mohora district, Yaglidere. There is no settlement around it. The church has a single round-arched entrance to the south and a single apse at the eastern end (<https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-232343/yaglidere-koyu-krom-vadisi-kaya-alti-kilise.html>). In his 1857 report, the acting British consul in Trabzon stated that all the 100 village houses at Mohora were occupied by crypto-Christians (Bryer 1983:37).



Plate 35: Greek church Mohora district, Yaglidere village (name unknown, <https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-232343/yaglidere-koyu-krom-vadisi-kaya-alti-kilise.html>).

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<sup>18</sup> The four villages reported were Cercilandon, Nacarandon, Russion and Varenou.

<sup>19</sup> Andreadis (1995:24) includes Nanak as a settlement of Kromni.

<sup>20</sup> Andreadis (1995:24) states that Mohora was one of the 15 settlements of Kromni.



Plate 36: Inside the Greek church near Mohora district, Yaglidere village (name unknown, <https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-232343/yaglidere-koyu-krom-vadisi-kaya-alti-kilise.html>).

#### Greek church of the Panagia, Mohora

The former church (Plate 37) [identified by Hionides (1996:97) as the Greek church of Panagia] is located in the Mohora district. It measures 14 m by 10.5 m. The roof has collapsed up to the [three] apses on the eastern end. There are entrances on the southern and western sides. There are frescoes inside the church (<https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-232349/yaglidere-koyu-krom-vadisi-mohra-kilisesi.html>).



Plate 37: Greek church of Panagia at Mohora district, Yaglidere village (<https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-232349/yaglidere-koyu-krom-vadisi-mohra-kilisesi.html>).

#### Gavalak district church

This ruined former church (name unknown), with no roof, was built in the Gavalak district, at the foot of Alithinos (Turkish Alikinos) mountain in the Krom valley. Above the church's entrance is the marked date of 1845 [most probably its build date]. Its dimensions are around 16 m by 12 m and was originally built with a dome. The interior is divided into three naves with four columns and two piers. Its [three apses made of smooth cut stone] are five sided on the outside. On the western facade of the church is the narthex [also made with smooth cut stones, with decorations including a cross above the arches, Plates 38–39] with three arches arranged as two floors. The church has one window to the north, three rectangular windows to the south and one to the west. In the north-west corner of the church, there is a space that could have been a chapel 4 m by 2 m (<https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-232342/yaglidere-koyu-gavalak-kilisesi.html>).

The narthex is very similar to that of the St Sergios Armenian church at Vank near old Gümüşhane (Plate 10).



Plate 38: Narthex of the Gavalak district Yaglidere church (name unknown, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=uOHFJ3mOznw](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uOHFJ3mOznw)).



Plate 39: Gavalak district Yaglidere church (name unknown, <https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-232342/yaglidere-koyu-gavalak-kilisesi.html>).

### Central Yayla church

This former Central Yala Yaglidere village church (name unknown) was built on a rocky hill overlooking the valley (Plate 40), away from residential areas, around 700 m from the Gavalak district church. It was built measuring 9 m by 8 m. The south facade has an entrance and two windows. The apse on the eastern side is partially ruined. The interior is plastered. The column capitals are decorated with diamond shapes (<https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-232351/yaglidere-koyu-krom-vadisi-orta-yayla-kilise.html>). It appears that there is some damage to the roof.



Plate 40: Central Yayla, Yaglidere church (name unknown, <https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-232351/yaglidere-koyu-krom-vadisi-orta-yayla-kilise.html>).

#### Kopmuş district church

The ruined former church (name unknown) in the Kopmuş district, Yaglidere village was built 10 m by 11.5 m with a single entrance from the west. On the eastern side are the three semicircular apses. The roof has collapsed but the piers in front of the apses remain intact (<https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-232344/yaglidere-koyu-krom-vadisi-kopmus-mahallesi-kilise.html>).

#### Livana district church

The ruined former church (name unknown) with its roof destroyed is located on a slope in the Livana district. It was built 7.5 m by 11.5 m (Plate 41). On the eastern side, the semicircular apse is partially destroyed. The church has a single door from the west. Additionally, there are thin colonnades on both sides of the entrance and a round-arched pediment on top. The interior is plastered with frescoes (<https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-232345/yaglidere-koyu-krom-vadisi-livana-kilisesi.html>).



Plate 41: Livana district Yaglidere church (name unknown, <https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-232345/yaglidere-koyu-krom-vadisi-livana-kilisesi.html>).

#### Lorya district church

This former church (name unknown) in the Lorya district, Yaglidere village, was built on a slope 11 m by 9.5 m (Plate 42). It is dated to the 19th century. There is a single entrance with a round arch from the west with the semicircular apse at the eastern end. There is no decoration in the building (<https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-232346/yaglidere-koyu-krom-vadisi-lorya-kilisesi.html>). The roof seems mostly intact.



Plate 42: Lorya district Yaglidere church (name unknown, <https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-232346/yaglidere-koyu-krom-vadisi-lorya-kilisesi.html>).

#### Mancandanos district church

This ruined former church (name unknown) was built on a slope in the Mancandanos district. It measures 12 m by almost 9 m in an east-west direction, with five windows. The entrance from the west has a facade limited from the top by two nested round arches. There are chain borders, cross motifs, rosettes and cypress tree decorations around the entrance.



On the eastern facade is the semicircular apse. The roof has collapsed and the four columns in the middle of the naos have survived to half their height (<https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-232348/yaglidere-koyu-krom-vadisi-mancandanos-kilisesi.html>).

#### Karaagaç district rocktop church

The former church (original name unknown) is located on a hill in the Karaagaç district, Yaglidere village and was built with a single apse. There is a wooden door with a straight lintel from the west corner of the south facade. There is a colonnade on both sides of the entrance, which ends with a round arch at the top. The church has three windows on its southern facade. Interior decorations can be detected on the traces of plaster. The date 1894 [probably its build date] is written above the door inside the church (<https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-231654/merkez-yaglidere-koyu-karaagac-mahallesi-kayaustu-kilis-.html>). The roof appears to be intact.

#### Karaagaç district church

The small former church (name unknown) in the Karaagaç district, is almost hidden among the trees. It was built in an east-west direction. Its single apse in the east is semicircular. On the west facade there is a door with round arches (<https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-232339/yaglidere-koyu-karaagac-mahallesi-kilise.html>). The author is unaware of the status of the former church's roof.

#### Kayaüstü location church

The former church (name unknown) at Kayaüstü location, Yaglidere village was built on a slope on the edge of a cliff. It has three-naves with the interior divided by two piers and four columns in front of the three apses facing east. The wooden door is located on the western facade. The door jambs are made of two-coloured stone in a cross-like shape. The church has three windows on the eastern facade. Decorations and frescoes are identified on the remaining plaster (<https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-232340/yaglidere-koyu-kayaustu-mevkii-kilise.html>). The author is unaware of the status of the former church's roof.

#### Şamanlı district church

This former church (name and exact build date unknown) is located in the Şamanlı district, Yaglidere village, at the top of the road overlooking the region. It has a single-apse on the eastern side and a door on the west (Plate 43). While the naos was covered with a dome it has now been demolished. The floor was destroyed and the stone roof tiles were removed. No decoration has survived. It is the only example among the churches in the Krom valley that has a cross plan (<https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-232353/yaglidere-koyu-krom-vadisi-samanli-kilise.html>). The roof may otherwise be intact.



Plate 43: Şamanli district church Yaglidere (name unknown, <https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-232353/yaglidere-koyu-krom-vadisi-samanli-kilise.html>).

#### Ziganetli district church

The ruined former church (name unknown) is located in a forested area in the Ziganetli district outside the residential area in Yaglidere village. It was built 7 m by 9 m with its semicircular apse on the eastern side. There is a pointed arched pediment over the flat lintel entrance to the west (Plate 44). The roof is damaged (Plate 45). Unlike other churches, the entrance is enclosed in a second, larger round arch (<https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-232355/yaglidere-koyu-krom-vadisi-ziganetli-mahallesi-kilise.html>).



Plate 44: Ziganetli district church Yaglidere (name unknown, <https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-232355/yaglidere-koyu-krom-vadisi-ziganetli-mahallesi-kilise.html>).



Plate 45: Inside the Ziganetli district church, Yaglidere (name unknown, (<https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-232355/yaglidere-koyu-krom-vadisi-ziganetli-mahallesi-kilise.html>)).

#### Sogukpinar locality church

The former church (name unknown) in the Sogukpinar locality, Yaglidere village was built with inside dimensions of 11 m by 7 m with a pointed pediment over the entrance [probably from the western end]. The southern facade has two windows. The triple semicircular apses are on the eastern facade. There is no decoration in the church (<https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-232356/yaglidere-koyu-soguk-pinar-mevkii-kilise.html>). The roof may be intact.

#### Sariun church

The ruined former church [original name unknown] (Plates 46–48) in the Sariun district, Yaglidere village was constructed in the 19th century on a hill with commanding views (Korkmaz and Beeson 2022:832).

The church with its destroyed roof measures 11.5 m by 10 m with three apses on the eastern side. The entrance at the western end has a round arch. It is plastered and painted inside (<https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-232352/yaglidere-koyu-krom-vadisi-sarioglu-kilisesi.html>).



Plate 46: Apses of the Sariun district church Yaglidere (name unknown, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=8GujgTo7N8A](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8GujgTo7N8A)).



Plate 47: Entrance to the Sariun district church Yaglidere (name unknown, <https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-232352/yaglidere-koyu-krom-vadisi-sarioglu-kilisesi.html>).



Plate 48: Inside the Sariun district church Yaglidere village (name unknown, <https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-232352/yaglidere-koyu-krom-vadisi-sarioglu-kilisesi.html>).

#### Panagia Greek church in Alithinos district

The former Panagia Greek church in the Alithinos [Turkish Alikinos] district, Yaglidere village measures 15 m by 11 m with a gable roof covered with stone tiles (Plates 49–50). The interior has four columns and two piers in front of the three [five sided] apses located at the eastern end. Wooden beams which connected the internal columns have been cut. The entrance is from the west. It is plastered and painted and is one of the rare churches that have survived with its roof intact (<https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-232341/yaglidere-koyu-krom-vadisi-alikinos-kilisesi.html>). This former church should be renovated to foster tourism.

The YouTube video by writer Turgay Bostan at: [www.facebook.com/bostanhane/videos/alikinos-panagia-kilisesinde-definici-tahribati/975076083055645/](https://www.facebook.com/bostanhane/videos/alikinos-panagia-kilisesinde-definici-tahribati/975076083055645/) displays the inside of this former church. In a 2021 Facebook entry, Bostan states there was a beautiful icon of the Virgin Mary dating back to the 19th century in the church. During the exchange of populations in the early 1920s, Father Theodore from the Panagia church carried this icon to Trabzon where it was transported to Greece. The church has been ransacked by treasure hunters.



Plate 49: Panagia Greek church, Alithinos district, Yaglidere village  
([www.flickr.com/photos/fchmksfkcb/29377572760/in/photostream/](http://www.flickr.com/photos/fchmksfkcb/29377572760/in/photostream/)).



Plate 50: Inside Panagia Greek church, Alithinos district, Yaglidere village  
(<https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-232341/yaglidere-koyu-krom-vadisi-alikinos-kilisesi.html>).

### Zemberek district church

The ruined former Zemberek district church [original name unknown] in Yaglidere village measures 11 m by 9 m (Plate 51). The roof has been destroyed and its supporting columns have been removed (<https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-232354/yaglidere-koyu-krom-vadisi-zemberek-kilisesi.html>). It was constructed in the 19th century (Korkmaz and Beeson 2022). It has a single rounded apse at the eastern end and a very elaborate design of smooth cut stone around the doorway on the western end (Ballance et al. 1966:289).



Plate 51: Zemberek district church, Yaglidere village (name unknown, [www.flickr.com/photos/fchmksfkcb/29587074321/in/photostream/](http://www.flickr.com/photos/fchmksfkcb/29587074321/in/photostream/)).

### Viranköy district church-1

The ruined former church (name unknown) with no roof in Viranköy district is built on a slope outside Yaglidere village. The door at the western end is through a round arch. The walls are partially standing (Plate 52). It was designed with a triple apse on the eastern facade (<https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-232358/yaglidere-koyu-virankoy-mevkii-harabe-kilise-1.html>).



Plate 52: Viranköy district church-1, Yaglidere village (name unknown, <https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-232358/yaglidere-koyu-virankoy-mevkii-harabe-kilise-1.html>).

### Viranköy district church-2

This ruined former church (name unknown) is located on a slope outside the residential area in the Viranköy district. Its roof has been destroyed and much of its walls have collapsed. It was built with a single door with a round arch at the west (Plate 53). It had three semicircular apses on the eastern facade (<https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-232359/yaglidere-koyu-virankoy-mevkii-haraba-kilise-2.html>).



Plate 53: Viranköy district church-2, Yaglidere village (name unknown, <https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-232359/yaglidere-koyu-virankoy-mevkii-haraba-kilise-2.html>).



### Yogurtlu district church

The ruined former church (name unknown) in the Yogurtlu district, Yaglidere village has a wooden door with a flat lintel from the west (Plate 54). It has a single semicircular apse on the east facade. The upper part of the apse has been demolished. It has two pillars in front of the apse and four columns in the middle of the church. There is no surviving decoration in the church (<https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-232361/yaglidere-koyu-yogurtlu-mevkii-harabe-kilise.html>). It is assumed that the roof has been damaged.



Plate 54: Yogurtlu district church Yaglidere village (name unknown, <https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-232361/yaglidere-koyu-yogurtlu-mevkii-harabe-kilise.html>).

## **Stavri**

### Introduction

Stavri (now Ugurtaşı) is located 31 km (by road) east of Torul just north of Yaglidere (Fig. 2). In 1829, 2,000 Stavriot families migrated to the Russian empire. In 1857, the acting British consul at Trabzon, reported that in four villages of Stavri,<sup>21</sup> there were 296 houses, 54% of which were occupied by Christians, 43% were occupied by crypto-Christians and [apparently] only 3% by Muslims. By the 1860s, almost all the crypto-Christians in Pontos had declared themselves as Christians (Ballance et al. (1966:269–272); Bryer (1983:38–39)).

In 1890, Cuinet estimated the population of the nine villages of Stavri at 12,000–15,000. In the 1923 exchange of populations, about 566 Christian families left Stavri and its surrounding hamlets: about 100 of these families went to the Soviet Union. The former Panagia Greek church and a small chapel lie a little below Stavri (Ballance et al. 1966:274–275, 282). The current status of the former Panagia church and this small chapel is unknown.

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<sup>21</sup> The four villages of Stavri included, Epanohori (Upper Stavri), Monobanton, Bairamandon and Catohori (Lower Stavri).

The former upper parish (Emir) has the ruined former Greek church of St Theodore [more details to follow]. Lower down, the Mehelle parish has a simple church with a rounded apse. A 30 minute walk down the valley is another Greek church in the former parish of Ayliya. Only the lower walls remained [by the late 1960s]. Below this district is Ashagi Koyu with a Greek church with a single apse in Bulucan. A sixth Greek church is in Monomatli which has the date 1839 carved on the wall [probably its built date]. It terminates in three rounded apses in the interior (Bryer and Winfield 1970:307–308).

#### Alpullu district Greek church

This former Greek church (name unknown) in the Alpullu [Greek Monobanton] district, is at the entrance of Ugurtaşı village. The church, measuring 8 m by 9 m with a dome (Plate 55). The stepped hipped roof is covered with stone tiles. Crenellated windows are placed in the dome drum. The door has a pointed arched pediment (<https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-232440/torul-ugurtas-koyu-alpullu-mahallesi-kilise-1.html>). The church is dated to 1864 from an inscription on the drum. There used to be an open belfry before the west door, now destroyed. In 1971, it was being converted into a mosque; the apse had been blocked off and the second door (on the southern side) had been filled in to accommodate the mihrab (Bryer et al. 1972–1973:146). The author is unaware of when the converted mosque was abandoned.



Plate 55: Alpullu (Greek Monobanton) Greek church, Stavri (name unknown, <https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-232440/torul-ugurtas-koyu-alpullu-mahallesi-kilise-1.html>).

### St Theodore Greek church

The St Theodore Greek church with a dome was built in 1867 with a now destroyed belfry at its entrance (Ballance et al. 1966). It is located in the former Emir district and measures 13 m by 7 m (Plate 56). On the eastern facade are three semi-circular apses. Crenelated windows are located on the axes of the apses with rectangular windows and round pediments. The door jamb is bordered by a semi-walled capital column on the sides and a round arch embedded in the wall at the top. The wooden door at the west end is original. Columns carrying the roof are connected with iron bars.<sup>22</sup> A large part of the roof is ruined (<https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-232442/torul-ugurtas-koyu-emir-mahallesi--istavri-kilisesi.html>).



Plate 56: St Theodore Greek church, Stavri (<https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-232442/torul-ugurtas-koyu-emir-mahallesi--istavri-kilisesi.html>).

### Alpullu district church

The former church (name unknown) is located on a slope, away from the Alpullu district, Stavri (Plates 57–59). The building has three semicircular apses on the eastern facade which are lower than the main building. The gable roof is stepped. The interior measures 13 m by 9 m with two piers and four columns. While the columns were originally connected with wooden rods, they have now been cut. The roof appears largely intact. The entrance is through a rectangular opening on the western facade. It has a round-arched pediment. The door jamb is bordered by columns with capitals half-buried into the wall on the sides. There are motifs of the date 1862 [probably its build date] and a cross on the lintel. The interior

<sup>22</sup> Iron bars have been used in churches in the 19th century to provide reinforcement against the strains of earthquakes (Petrou and Charmpis 2019).

is plastered and some parts are painted. Some of the flower motif engravings on the column capitals and window arches have survived (<https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-232441/torul-ugurtas-koyu-arpullu-mahallesi-kilise-2.html>).



Plate 57: Alpullu district church, Stavri (name unknown, <https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-232441/torul-ugurtas-koyu-arpullu-mahallesi-kilise-2.html>).



Plate 58: Inside the Alpullu district church, Stavri (name unknown, <https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-232441/torul-ugurtas-koyu-arpullu-mahallesi-kilise-2.html>).



Plate 59: The apses of the Alpullu district church, Stavri (name unknown, <https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-232441/torul-ugurtas-koyu-alpullu-mahallesi-kilise-2.html>).

#### Manatli district church

The ruined former church (name unknown) was built 10 m by 7 m in the Manatli district, Stavri (Plates 60–61). The middle apse in the east projects outwards. There are three round-arched windows on the south facade. Most of the roof has been destroyed. Cross motifs are engraved on the lintel and side jambs of the entrance door located in the western facade. The upper part of the lintel has a fluted, round-arched pediment (<https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-232443/torul-ugurtas-koyu-manatli-mahallesi-kilisesi.html>).



Plate 60: Manatli district church, Stavri (name unknown, <https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-232443/torul-ugurtas-koyu-manatli-mahallesi-kilisesi.html>).



Plate 61: Inside the Manatli district church, Stavri (name unknown, <https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-232443/torul-ugurtas-koyu-manatli-mahallesi--kilisesi.html>).

## **Atalar Village**

### The Aydinlar Greek church

The former Aydinlar district Greek church [original name unknown] in Atalar village is some 27 km (by road) north-east of Torul (Fig. 2). The church was [possibly] built in the 1850s. In 2020, locals requested the renovation and reopening of the church (Plates 62–63) to promote tourism ([www.hurriyetdailynews.com/locals-want-historical-aydinlar-church-to-reopen-for-religious-tourism-157373](http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/locals-want-historical-aydinlar-church-to-reopen-for-religious-tourism-157373)).

The church measures 13 m by 9 m. The gable roof is still covered with local stone tiles and is intact. On the eastern facade are the [three] apses. The interior has two piers in front of the apse and four columns in the middle. Wooden rods connect the arches. The interior is painted with Christian depictions (<https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-232380/torul-atlar-koyu-kilise.html>). The entrance is from the western facade.



Plate 62: Aydinlar district Greek church, Atalar village 2020 (name unknown, [www.hurriyetdailynews.com/locals-want-historical-aydinlar-church-to-reopen-for-religious-tourism-157373](http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/locals-want-historical-aydinlar-church-to-reopen-for-religious-tourism-157373)).



Plate 63: Inside the Aydinlar district Greek church, Atalar village (name unknown, <https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-232380/torul-atlar-koyu-kilise.html>).

## 4. Torul Zone

### Introduction

Torul (formerly Ardasa) is both a town and the name of a much larger district (Plate 64). Today the local economy is based on agriculture, livestock, mining and harvesting of forest products. It also attracts nature tourism ([www.brspecial.com/black-sea-turkey/torul-black-sea-turkey.shtml](http://www.brspecial.com/black-sea-turkey/torul-black-sea-turkey.shtml)).

Torul is located 23 km [by road] north-west of Gümüşhane (Figs 1–2) at an elevation of 1,100 m. At Torul, the Harşit river becomes the Kanis river. A castle is built on the side of a rocky crag north of the river (Bryer and Winfield 1985:305). Torul is also 15 km south-west (by road) from the Zigana Pass.

In 1515, there were [apparently] 1,256 households in Torul of whom 98% were Christian. In 1565, it was reported that at least 200 silver miners from Maçka (north of the Zigana Pass) were working the large Biryazlu mine in Torul. By 1583 the number of households had increased to [apparently] 4,223 of whom still 85% were Christian (Ballian 1995:65). The decline in production of the mines of Torul after the mid-18th century led to migration of Pontic miners, particularly during the 19th century to more remote areas of Anatolia ([www.ehw.gr/asiaminor/Forms/fLemmaBody.aspx?lemmaid=10204](http://www.ehw.gr/asiaminor/Forms/fLemmaBody.aspx?lemmaid=10204)).

In 1857, the acting British consul at Trabzon, reported that in the 2,300 houses in Torul, 72% were occupied by Greeks, 20% occupied by crypto-Christians and 9% by Muslims (Bryer 1983:39).



Plate 64: View of Torul from Torul Castle, 2018 (Bağcı et al. 2019:115).



## **Altınpınar**

### Güneşli district Gorgodos [Gorgoras] church

Altınpınar is 9 km (by road) south of Torul. The ruined Güneşli district Gorgodos church (original name unknown) measures 8.5 m by 6 m (Plate 65). It was built with a single semicircular apse on the eastern side but the roof has collapsed. There was a window on the north and south facades. The entrance is from the south side. It is likely that it had a gable roof (<https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-232377/torul-altinpınar-beldesi-gunesli-mahallesi--gorgodos-k-.html>). The windows at the entrance and at the apse have been destroyed. There is no plaster or decoration in the church (Özkan 2010). There is a ruined small chapel nearby.

This church and nearby chapel look like what Bryer et al. (1966:181) describe as the church (with an intact roof) and chapel 70 m away (also with an intact roof) at Gorgoras village. This church once stood within an enclosing wall on a hill. They suggest the build date for both churches as the first half of the 19th century or even earlier.



Plate 65: Güneşli district Gorgodos [Gorgoras] church and chapel, Altınpınar 2021 (name unknown, <https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-232377/torul-altinpınar-beldesi-gunesli-mahallesi--gorgodos-k-.html>).

### Verodon church Güneşli district

The former church (original name unknown) with a gable roof was built outside the settlement where it can be seen by the road in the Güneşli district, Altınpınar. The east-west oriented chapel has a semicircular apse on the eastern side. Its only entrance is from the north side. The internal plaster is crumbling and part of its roof and the corner pillars of the walls are ruined (<https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-232378/torul-altinpınar-beldesi-verodon-kilisesi.html>).

## **Harmancik Village**

### Kotanis district church

Harmancik village is located 6 km (by road) east of Torul (Fig. 2). The former church (name unknown) is located in the Kotanis district, Harmancik village (Plate 66). Like other churches in the region, it is covered with a barrel vaulted roof. There are five loophole windows, two from the north and south and one from the west, which is directly above the door (<https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-232437/torul-harmancik-koyu-kotanis-mevki-kilise.html>). The status of the apse(s) at the eastern end is unknown. The roof may be intact.



Plate 66: Kotanis district church Harmancik (name unknown, <https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-232437/torul-harmancik-koyu-kotanis-mevki-kilise.html>).

### Mesehor district church

This ruined former church (name unknown) is located just outside the Mesehor district in the Harmancik village. The door is on the western facade with a round arched pediment at the top with a straight lintel (Plate 67).

The top of the apses on the eastern end is in the shape of a semidome on the inside. Stone columns are attached with iron bars (Plate 68). The date 1905 is written on the arch of the western window of the building [probably its build date]. Most of the roof has been destroyed and there are cracks in the walls (<https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-232438/torul-harmancik-koyu-mesehor-mevki-kilisesi.html>).



Plate 67: Doorway, Mesehor district church, Harmancik (name unknown, <https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-232438/torul-harmancik-koyu-mesehor-mevki-kilisesi.html>).



Plate 68: Inside Mesehor district church, Harmancik (name unknown, <https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-232438/torul-harmancik-koyu-mesehor-mevki-kilisesi.html>).

### The Armenian church

The former Armenian church (name unknown) (Plate 69) in the Harmancik village was believed to have been built in the 19th century (Korkmaz and Beeson 2022:832). The roof looks damaged. The author is unaware of the condition of the apse(s).



Plate 69: Armenian church in Harmancik (name unknown, Korkmaz and Beeson 2022:833).

### **Demirkapi Village**

#### Kayadibi district Greek church

This former Greek church (name unknown) is located on a slope in the Kayadibi district outside the Demirkapi village [22 km by road west of Torul], overlooking the valley (Plate 70). The entrance is from the south side with a triangular pediment, mouldings and pointed arches. [Its roof may be intact.] There is a smaller chapel (name unknown) 10 m to the east of the church. Like the church, it has a single apse to the east. The entrance is also from the south. The roof and a large part of the walls have been destroyed (<https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-232425/torul-demirkapi-koyu-kayadibi--mahallesi-kilise.html>).



Plate 70: Kayadibi district, Demirkapi Greek church (name unknown, <https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-232425/torul-demirkapi-koyu-kayadibi--mahallesi-kilise.html>).

### Virgin Mary Greek church Emrük district

This former Virgin Mary Greek church is located in the Emrük district, Demirkapi village. The church has three apses facing east. The door is in the west. It has a roof made of rock tiles (Plates 71–72) (<https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-232426/torul-demirkapi-koyu-unalan-emruk-mahallesi-kilise.html>). The roof seems to be intact.

According to Bryer et al. (1972–1973:232–233), an elderly inhabitant in the village gave the dedication of this church as the Meryemana (Virgin Mary). The west porch or belfry has been removed. The masonry is rough but was covered with white plaster.



Plate 71: Virgin Mary Greek church, Emrük district, Demirkapi  
(<https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-232426/torul-demirkapi-koyu-unalan-emruk-mahallesi-kilise.html>).



Plate 72: Inside the Virgin Mary Greek church, Emrük district, Demirkapi (<https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-232426/torul-demirkapi-koyu-unalan-emruk-mahallesi-kilise.html>).

## **Mescitli Village**

### Mescitli village church

Mescitli village is around 10 km by road north-west of Gümüşhane (Fig. 2). The former church (name unknown) in Mescitli was built in an east-west direction away from residential areas. The apse in the east of the building is semicircular (Plate 73). There is a round arched door on the west side. The roof has survived, but the stone tiles have been removed. No internal decoration has survived (<https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-219983/mescitli-koyu-kilise-onu-mevkii-39kilise39.html>).



Plate 73: Mescitli village church (name unknown, <https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-219983/mescitli-koyu-kilise-onu-mevkii-39kilise39.html>).

### Muzaras district Greek church

This ruined former Greek church (name unknown) without a roof was built in the Muzaras district, Mescitli village, an old Greek settlement, on a hill. It was built 7.5 m by 6.5 m with a single semicircular apse on the east facade. It has one entrance to the west with a pointed arch pediment (Plate 74) (<https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-219984/mescitli-koyu-muzaras-mevkii-39kilise39.html>).



Plate 74: Muzaras district Greek church, Mescitli village (name unknown, <https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-219984/mescitli-koyu-muzaras-mevkii-39kilise39.html>).

### Mescitli village Greek church

The former Greek church (Plate 75) (name unknown) with one apse in the east and a gable roof is about 3 km away from the Mescitli village. It was built in an east-west direction. The door on the western side has a pointed arch. No internal decorations have survived (<https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-219982/mescitli-koyu-39kilise39.html>). The roof may be largely intact.



Plate 75: One of the Mescitli village Greek churches (name unknown, <https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-219982/mescitli-koyu-39kilise39.html>).

### **Ikisu Village**

#### Ikisu village chapels

Ikisu (Greek Dipotamos) village is around 12 km by road south-east of Torul. Two adjoining ruined former chapels (names unknown) stand on a hill about 35 m above river level. Only some of their walls are standing (Plate 76; Fig. 3). One of the chapels may have been dedicated to St John. Chapel A's semidome was constructed of ashlar blocks of yellow stone. There were two small



Plate 76: Ikisu village double chapels (names unknown, <https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-219976/ikisu-koyu-hidirilyas-mevkii-39-kilise39.html>).



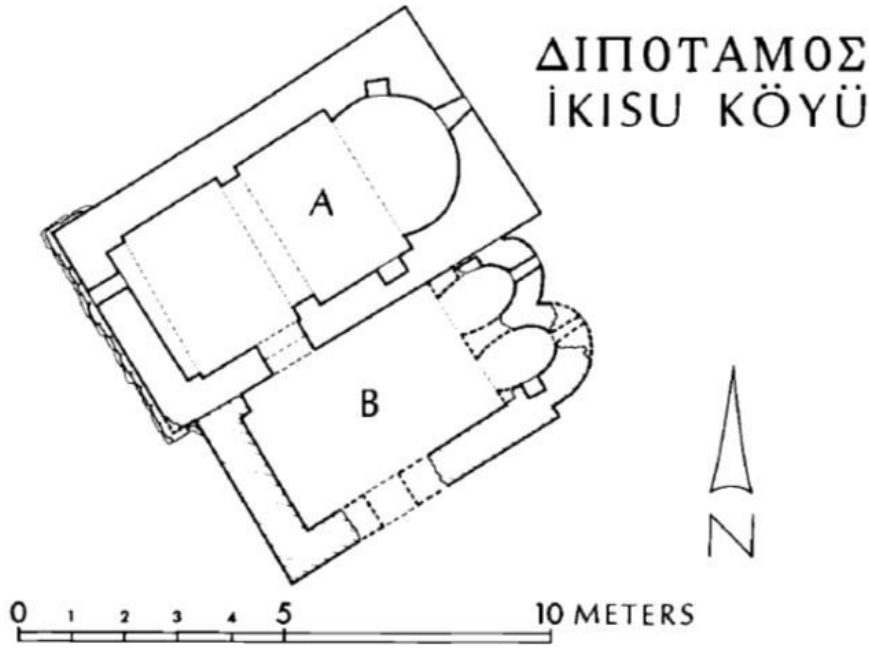


Fig. 3: Ikisu village double chapels (Bryer and Winfield 1985:318).

windows at the east and west ends. Chapel B is a later addition than chapel A. It seems likely that both chapels belong to the 13th to 15th centuries (Bryer and Winfield 1985:306–308). Chapel A was only accessed via chapel B.

#### Ikisu village rock [cave] church

The former cave church (name unknown) at the Ikisu village is shaped into a rocky area in three levels. Its entrance is 3 m above ground. It is believed that the traces of the frescos inside of the rock church are from the 19th century (<https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-219977/ikisu-koyu-39-kaya-kilise39.html>).

#### **Cebeli Village**

##### Çiçekli district church

Cebeli is 17 km by road, east of Torul (Fig. 2). The church (original name unknown) is located in the Çiçekli district, Cebeli village. The church, built in an east-west direction, measures 8 m by 7 m. There are three semicircular apses on the eastern side. The entrance is from the west. There is a pointed arched pediment above the door with a flat lintel (Plate 77). There is a carved cross motif in the middle of the lintel stone. The interior has four columns and two piers (Plate 78). While the roof was probably once covered with a dome, the roof has now collapsed. The stone columns inside are connected with iron bars (<https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-232417/torul-cebeli-koyu-cicekli-mahallesi-kilise.html>).



Plate 77: Çiçekli district church, Cebeli village (name unknown, <https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-232417/torul-cebeli-koyu-cicekli-mahallesi-kilise.html>).



Plate 78: Inside Çiçekli district church, Cebeli village church (name unknown, <https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-232417/torul-cebeli-koyu-cicekli-mahallesi-kilise.html>).

### Agrit district church

This former church (original name unknown) is located in the Agrit district, Cebeli village. It has three apses on the eastern side. Its roof is covered with stone tiles [and is probably intact]. There are three windows on the south. There is an entrance in the western facade (Plate 79). There is a pointed arched pediment above the entrance lintel. It has four columns and two piers. The internal columns are reinforced with block stones and wooden rods combined with iron bars. The plaster has fallen off and no decorations were found. It is used to store hay (<https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-232422/torul-cebeli-koyu-agrit-mahallesi-kilise-1.html>).



Plate 79: Agrit district church, Cebeli (name unknown, <https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-232422/torul-cebeli-koyu-agrit-mahallesi-kilise-1.html>).

### Küpçüler Agrit district church

This unnamed former Greek church is located in a wooded area away from the Küpçüler Agrit district, Cebeli. It is built in an east-west direction, with three apses at the eastern end (Plate 80). The entrance is from the western facade. There is a round-arched pediment and a cross motif above. The interior has four columns and two piers. The columns are connected by round arches. On the ceiling is a painted figure of Christ. Other religious images are also depicted inside (<https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-232423/torul-cebeli-koyu-kupculer-agrit-mahallesi-kilise-2.html>).



Plate 80: Küpçüler Agrit district Cebeli Greek church (name unknown, <https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-232423/torul-cebeli-koyu-kupculer-agrit-mahallesi-kilise-2.html>).

#### Virgin Mary church Hidrellez district

The former Virgin Mary Greek church was built in an east-west direction in the Hidrellez district, Cebeli village. Part of the three apses located to the east of the church are buried in the ground due to the slope. The porch, thought to be located in front of the entrance, has not survived. The door located in the western facade, has a flat lintel and is bordered on the sides by columns with capitals embedded in the wall and by round arches at the top. The door jamb is decorated with geometric motifs (Plate 81). It has four columns and two piers with a dome (Plate 82). There are wooden rods between the stone columns. Of the hand-carved decorations in the church, only the flower motifs on the dome have survived (<https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-232421/torul-cebeli-koyu-hidrellez-mahallesi-meryemana-kilise.html>). It has a stone tiled roof which looks intact.



Plate 81: Entrance to the Virgin Mary Greek church, Hidrellez district, Cebeli village (<https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-232421/torul-cebeli-koyu-hidrellez-mahallesi-meryemana-kilise.html>).



Plate 82: Virgin Mary Greek church, Hidrellez district, Cebeli village (<https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-232421/torul-cebeli-koyu-hidrellez-mahallesi-meryemana-kilise.html>).

### ŞiŖe engelli district church

This former Greek church (name unknown) was built in an east-west direction in the ŞiŖe engelli district, Cebeli village. There are three apses on the eastern facade (Plate 83). The roof is covered with stone tiles. The door jamb on the western end is bordered by colonnades on the sides and a round arch at the top (Plate 84). The columns are connected by round arches. Wooden rods connecting the columns are still present inside the church. Very few of the frescoes in the church have survived. Floral motifs are seen on the round arch borders connecting the columns. Excavations are found inside [most probably from treasure hunters] (<https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-232424/torul-cebeli-koyu-sise-cengelli-mahallesi-kilise.html>).



Plate 83: ŞiŖe engelli district Greek church, Cebeli village (name unknown, <https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-232424/torul-cebeli-koyu-sise-cengelli-mahallesi-kilise.html>).



Plate 84: Entrance to the Şiše Çengelli district Greek church, Cebeli village  
(name unknown, <https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-232424/torul-cebeli-koyu-sise-cengelli-mahallesi-kilise.html>)

## **Demirkaynak Village**

### Gündogdu district church

The former church (name unknown) in the Gündogdu district, Demirkaynak village is 16 km by road south-east of Torul (Plate 85, Fig. 2). The church is 10 m by 8 m in dimensions with a single rounded apse at the eastern end. There are wooden rods between the internal columns. There is a two-storey narthex on the western end of the church with three round arches. The existing plaster in the interior once had decorations. The roof was once covered with stone tiles, but these have been removed (<https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-219965/merkez-demirkaynak-koyu-39kilisesi39.html>).

The narthex looks similar in design to the St Sergios Armenian church near old Gümüşhane (Plate 10) and the Gavalak district church (name unknown) in Yaglidere village (Plate 38–39).



Plate 85: Gündođdu district church, Demirkaynak village (name unknown, <https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-219965/merkez-demirkaynak-koyu-39kilisesi39.html>).



## 5. West of Gümüşhane Zone

### Gözeler Village

#### Gözeler village church

The former church (name unknown) at Gözeler village is located 15 km by road west of Gümüşhane (Fig. 2). It was built in an east-west direction, measuring 10 m by 8.5 m with an apse on the eastern end. There are three windows on the north facade (Plate 86) and the door on the western side has a decoration consisting of grapes coming out of the pot on the side, on the top it is enclosed in medallions, the one in the middle depicts a two-headed eagle motif with a dragon under its feet and lion figures are depicted on both sides. The roof is covered with stone tiles and soil (https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-219975/gozeler-koyu-39kilise39.html).



Plate 86: Gözeler village church (name unknown, https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-219975/gozeler-koyu-39kilise39.html).

### Arili Village

#### Upper district church

This former church (name unknown) is located in the upper district, Arili village 30 km by road west of Gümüşhane and is in relatively good condition. It is located on a slope and measures 12 m by 7 m (Plate 87). The roof is covered with cut stone tiles. The semicircular apse is on the east facade. The entrance has a flat lintel on the west facade. There is a pointed arched pediment above the entrance. There is one porthole window on the west and east facades and two rectangular windows on the south wall. Most of the plaster on the inside walls has fallen off (https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-232379/torul-arili-koyu-yukari-mahalle-kilisesi.html).



Plate 87: Upper district church, Arili village (name unknown, <https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-232379/torul-arili-koyu-yukari-mahalle-kilisesi.html>).

### **Dörtkonak Village**

#### Malaha district church

Dörtkonak village is located 21 km by road south-west of Gümüşhane (Fig. 2). The ruined former church (original name unknown) is located near the Dörtkonak village within the Malaha district. It was built in an east-west direction. Some of the church's walls have survived, but its roof and three semicircular apses (in the east) have been destroyed (Plate 88). The church has an entrance to the west, with round arched mouldings. (<https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-219967/merkez-dortkonak-koyu-39kilise-kalintisi-koseoglu-mevki-.html>).



Plate 88: Malaha district church, Dörtkonak village (name unknown, <https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-219967/merkez-dortkonak-koyu-39kilise-kalintisi-koseoglu-mevki-.html>).

## **Büyükçit Village** (formerly Goumera)

### Papavere church

Büyükçit is located 33 km (by road) north-west of Gümüşhane (Fig. 2). The former Papavere church (original name unknown) is located in the Emirlers district, Büyükçit village and was built in an east-west direction with dimensions of 10 m by 5.5 m (Plates 89–90). It has a single apse at the eastern end. The entrance on the southern side has a lintel and an arch. It has eight internal columns. There are ivy motifs on the arches and angel motifs on the upper parts of the columns. The stone columns are connected with iron bars (<https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-232381/torul-buyukcit-koyu-papavere-kilisi.html>). The roof may be largely intact.



Plate 89: Papavere church, Büyükçit village (original name unknown, <https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-232381/torul-buyukcit-koyu-papavere-kilisi.html>).



Plate 90: Inside Papavere church, Büyükçit village (name unknown, <https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-232381/torul-buyukcit-koyu-papavere-kilisi.html>).

### Greek Monastery of Panagia Theotokos

The ruined former Greek monastery of Panagia Theotokos, Goumera (now Büyükçit) has surrounding walls 80 m by 40 m, with the ruined church with dimensions of 12.5 m by 9 m (Plates 91–92). It had entrances from the west and the south-west. The church with no roof had three apses from the east (<https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-232383/torul-buyukcit-koyu-meryemana-panagia-theotokos-manasti-.html>).



Plate 91: Greek church of Panagia Theotokos, Büyükçit village

([www.gumushane.gen.tr/galeri/displayimage.php?album=262&pid=10354#top\\_display\\_media](http://www.gumushane.gen.tr/galeri/displayimage.php?album=262&pid=10354#top_display_media))



Plate 92: Panagia Theotokos Greek monastery, Büyükçit village

(<https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-232383/torul-buyukcit-koyu-meryemana-panagia-theotokos-manasti-.html>).

The former monastery is located on the bank of the river Tsite (Fig. 1). It dates from before 1775 and may have been founded just after 1680. From the 1870s, the monks operated a school near the church which expanded to become a secondary school just before World War I. A chapel stands close to the church. The chapel, with a single rounded apse, is much older than the main church and may be pre-1461. By the early 1920s, the monastery had 15 monks. In 1957, it was noted that the church, whose roof had collapsed, had masonry of good workmanship and its internal walls were plastered white with no visible painting. The main door was faced with white marble at considerable expense (Bryer et al. (1972–1973:195–198); Bryer and Winfield (1985)).

### **Güvemli Village**

#### Vartli district church

Güvemli village is located 33 km by road west of Gümüşhane (Fig. 2). The ruined church (name unknown) without a roof is located on a hill in the Vartli district, Güvemli village (Plate 93). The church with three semicircular apses on the east facade has one rectangular window on the west facade and two on the south and north facades. The entrance is via the round arched north door (<https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-232434/torul-guvenli-koyu-vartli-mahallesi-kilise.html>).



Plate 93: Vartli district church Güvemli village (name unknown, <https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-232434/torul-guvenli-koyu-vartli-mahallesi-kilise.html>).

#### Başhaviyana district church

The ruined former church with no roof (name unknown) in the Başhaviyana district, Güvemli village, had three semicircular apses on the east facade. Only part of the walls (around 1.5 m high) remain. What had been standing at the time collapsed during the Erzincan earthquake (<https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-232432/torul-guvenli-koyu-bashaviyana-mahallesi-kilise.html>). In 1939, a 7.8 magnitude earthquake struck Erzincan, 80 km (straight line distance) south of Gumushane. In 1992, another major earthquake struck Erzincan (Note 3).

## **Gümüştug Village**

### Baş district church

Gümüştug (formerly Avliyana) village is 45 km by road west of Gümüşhane (Fig. 2). The church (name unknown) within the Baş district, Gümüştug village, measures 11 m by 8 m (Plate 94). While the entrance to the church was [originally] from the narthex in the west, this door was closed and a new door was opened in the northern wall. The gable roof was covered with stone tiles, but most of them have been removed. The remaining single apse in the east is made of smooth-faced stones. The other two semicircular apses were transformed into straight walls. A porch with a triangular pediment was added to the front and was used as a woodshed. Water from the leaky roof spills onto the internally plastered walls. Scenes from the Bible are depicted in the frescoes on the ceiling and walls (<https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-232430/torul-gumustug-koyu-bas-mahalle-kilise-1.html>).



Plate 94: Baş district church, Gümüştug village (name unknown, <https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-232430/torul-gumustug-koyu-bas-mahalle-kilise-1.html>).

### Gümüştug village church

This ruined former church, with its roof destroyed (Plate 95, name unknown) is located just above the Gümüştug village. The three apses have smooth cut stones. The entrance is on the north side. The narthex and four pillars and one column have survived (<https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-232431/torul-gumustug-koyu-bas--mahalle-kilise-2.html>).



Plate 95: Gümüştug village church (name unknown, <https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-232431/torul-gumustug-koyu-bas--mahalle-kilise-2.html>).

### **Gülaçar Village**

#### Ayana Avcilat district Greek church

Gülaçar village is 38 km by road south-west of Gümüşhane (Fig. 2). This former Greek church (name unknown) is located on a hill, overlooking the region in the Ayana Avcilat district, Gülaçar village (Plate 96). There are three semicircular apses on the eastern side. Due to the slope, parts of the east and south facades are buried in the ground. There is a stepped roof covered with neatly cut stone tiles. There are two windows on the north facade. Access is through a flat lintel door on the western facade. It has two pillars in front of the apse. The columns' wooden connecting rods have been cut (Plate 97). Most of the plaster has fallen off but there are still some frescoes of Jesus and angels (<https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-232427/torul-gulacar-koyu-ayana-avcilat-mahallesi-kilise.html>).



Plate 96: Ayana Avcilat district Greek church, Gülaçar village (name unknown, <https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-232427/torul-gulacar-koyu-ayana-avcilat-mahallesi-kilise.html>).



Plate 97: Inside Ayana Avcilat district Gülaçar Greek church (name unknown, <https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-232427/torul-gulacar-koyu-ayana-avcilat-mahallesi-kilise.html>).

#### Manat district church

This ruined former church (original name unknown) in the Manat district, Gülaçar village has three semicircular apses on the east facade. The roof was destroyed (Plate 98). The door is on the south facade. There is an additional building to the west. There is an attached building used as a barn to the south (<https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-232428/torul-gulacar-koyu-manat-kilise.html>).



Plate 98: Inside Manat district church, Gülaçar village (name unknown, <https://gumushane.ktb.gov.tr/TR-232428/torul-gulacar-koyu-manat-kilise.html>).



## **6. Conclusion**

Nearly all the former churches discussed here are believed to be Greek Orthodox. It is clear the devotion to Christianity by the resident Orthodox Pontic Greeks in Chaldia by the large number built. Many of the built churches are now in ruins with some having been dismantled possibly in order to re-use the stone work in the local Muslim homes. Some of the remaining former churches should be renovated in order to foster tourism.

It is significant that so many Greek Orthodox churches were built in Chaldia—most seem to have been built in the 19th century. Most of the churches described have a similar design with walls built with rubble stone. Corner stones, arches, door and window jams were built using smooth cut stone. The roofs were usually covered with stone tiles (probably slate). Many churches were internally plastered with painted decoration. Sadly, the original names of most of these former Greek churches are unknown.

Additional strengthening in the churches was provided by tie beams laid at the level of the springing of the arches and vaults. Tie beams are a traditional part of Byzantine church construction, but a common feature of the Pontic churches is the substitution of iron for wood. In so far as there are dated examples for the use of iron tie rods, these appear to be a 19th century innovation (Bryer et al. 1972–1973:258–259).

Thanks to the work of Bryer and others, we have a solid understanding of the importance of these artefacts. However, more work needs to be done to ensure that the buildings themselves and their frescoes are not lost to enhance our appreciation of the cultural history of this region.

The photographs in this paper give the reader a glimpse into the number of remnants that still exist and the panoramic, often idyllic location of these important religious entities.

## 7. Notes

### Note 1

In the 9th to 7th centuries BC, portions of eastern Anatolia, north-western Iran, Azerbaijan and Armenia belonged to the kingdom of Urartu and the earliest historically attested polity in the South Caucasus. Stone fortresses on hills and royal inscriptions carved into architectural blocks or living bedrock mark Urartian control throughout this mountainous region (Hammer 2022:267).

### Note 2

In 1404, Spanish Ambassador Ruy Gonzales de Clavijo took one week to travel from Trabzon inland to Erzincan. On the third day of his journey, he stopped by the castle of Zigana which belonged to Kabazites. On the fourth day he passed modern Torul. The fifth day was spent haggling with Kabazites about payment for a safe passage through the mountains from the Çepni Turks. On the sixth day Clavijo crossed over mountainous country and came to the district of Arzinga. From here Clavijo branched south-east through Shinik. Here the Kabazites escort left Clavijo and his Spanish party (Bryer and Winfield 1985:52).

After the fall of Trabzon in 1461, Kabazites did not abandon his ancestral strongholds. It was not until early 1478 that sultan Mehmed II was able to send his son Bayezid to suppress the principality of Torul, the last vestige of the empire of Trebizond (Bryer and Winfield 1985:64).

### Note 3

#### 1939 Erzincan earthquake

The December 1939, 7.8 magnitude earthquake struck Erzincan [80 km, straight line distance south of Gümüşhane], Turkey destroying more than 110,000 buildings, claiming 33,000 lives, leaving 100,000 people injured and 250,000 people homeless. It was the deadliest natural disaster in Turkey's modern history. The catastrophic event impacted on a fifth of the area of Turkey, triggering disturbances 350 km away. As a result, Erzincan needed to be rebuilt at a new location 5.5 km away (Tunc and Tunc 2022).

#### 1992 Erzincan Earthquake

The March 1992, 6.8 magnitude earthquake struck Erzincan causing about 500 deaths, 2,800 injuries and about 11,000 damaged households (Erdik et al. 1992).

### Note 4

Bryer (1982:138) interpreted Hamilton's (1842) calculations in 1836 of an operating silver-lead mine, about 2.5 km south-east of Gümüşhane. It took very roughly, 260 tons of timber to produce 65 tons of charcoal to roast about 1.8 tons of galena lead ore which yielded 15.4 kg of silver and on the seventh day of poisonous firing, 0.45 kg of gold. [The production of 15.4 kg of silver also produced 2,000 kg of lead]. Hamilton (1842:235–237) reported that the mine extracted around 154 kg of ore daily. Between 50 and 60 men were employed—half worked the mine, the other half worked the furnace.

In 1854, Dr Sandwith arrived in the neighbourhood of Gümüşhane. He was told that there were 36 mines of which up to 14 were of copper, the rest of argentiferous lead. Sadly, these Ottoman mines had failed to take advantage of modern inventions. He was told that from one mine, the smelters produced 300 kg of lead which also yielded 0.6 kg of silver (and every 710 gm of silver would produce 28 gm of gold). Each furnace produced about 227 kg of lead every 10 days. All the miners were Greeks (Sandwith 1856:35–36).

### **Note 5**

Around this time, the Ottoman state targeted the *Stavriotes* of the Ak-Dag Maden region [around 300 km south of Samsun]. They were miners from the Stavri region (north of Gümüşhane) who had not taken part in the declaration of Orthodoxy of 1857 by the crypto-Christians. The *Stavriotes* requested to be officially recognised as Christians only after the proclamation of the Ottoman Constitution of 1876. Although their request was rejected, they were allowed to marry into the Orthodox community. Finally, in 1910, the crypto-Christians and the *Stavriotes* were allowed to register with just their Christian names. The Ottoman authorities then subjected the *Stavriotes* to new hardships by refusing to recognise them as Christians. They declared marriages between Christian men and *Stavriotes* women null and void and tried to enlist the *Stavriotes* into the army (Tzedopoulos 2009).

There were 581 people from Stavri in Ak-Dag Maden and in the surrounding villages. They had been known as Muslims until the 1882 [population count] when they declared that they were Christians. The official instruction was to ignore their claims and continue to treat them as Muslims. Yet they continued to openly worship in the Christian manner despite warnings (Deringil 2012:129).

### **Note 6**

In July 1915, Ottoman army officer, Lieutenant Sayied Ahmed Moukhtar Baas, was ordered to accompany a batch of deported Armenians. It was the last batch from Trabzon and consisted of 120 men, 700 children and about 400 women who were taken to Gümüşhane. There the 120 men were taken away. He was later told they were killed. At Gümüşhane he was told to take the women and children to Erzincan. On the way he saw thousands of unburied Armenian bodies. On the way he gave 300 children to Muslim families who were willing to take care of them. He was able to include his batch with the deported Armenians who had come from Erzurum. In charge of the latter was Mohamed Effendi. Effendi told him later that after leaving Kamack they came to a valley and a band of Shotas [armed bands organised by the government] sprang out and shot all the Armenians and threw them into the river (Morris and Ze'evi 2019:185).

### **Note 7**

#### Population exchange

The Greek army was defeated in late August 1922, in western Anatolia during the Greco-Turkish War (1919–1922). This exposed the Christian population in Anatolia to retaliation by irregulars and the Turkish army (Hirschon 2003b). The Turks then started to force Greeks out of Anatolia.

The Lausanne Convention signed in January 1923 concerned the terms for the compulsory exchange of Christian and Muslim populations between Greece and Turkey. The exclusion of the Orthodox inhabitants of the Aegean Islands of Imbros and Tenedos, however, was specified in the later Lausanne Treaty (signed in July 1923) (Hirschon 2003a).

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