An Introduction to Pontic Greek History

by **Sam Topalidis**

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An Introduction to Pontic Greek History
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Preface

This booklet is a brief introduction to Pontic Greek history for those who are not interested in reading detailed work on this topic. My aim is to produce a well-researched work in English on Pontos to pass onto our youth. In this booklet I use the word 'Pontic', the academically accepted term in English for people from Pontos. All the many academic references are included at the end of the booklet.

My many more detailed articles on Pontic history and culture can be found at least on the excellent PontosWorld website at: <www.pontosworld.com/index.php/history/sam-topalidis>. My book, Topalidis (2007), *A Pontic Greek History*, can be found in some libraries. I have referred often to the landmark research by Professor Anthony Bryer, the great doyen of Pontic History. For those who can read Greek, I recommend the excellent work by Dr Vlasis Agtzidis.

In this booklet, the first three chapters give an outline of who are Pontic Greeks, where they came from and where they were relocated.

Chapters four to seven cover the history of four Pontic settlements: Sinope, Trabzon, Samsun and Gümüshane, the famous silver mining centre of the Ottoman empire.

Chapters eight to 12 describe five of the many famous former churches or monasteries in or around Trabzon which I visited in 2018.

Chapter 13, on 'The Pontic Greek Dialect', describes when Pontos became isolated from other Greek speaking areas its Greek language maintained many old characteristics which have now been lost in *Demotic* Greek.

Chapter 14, 'Trabzon Metropolitan Chrysanthos' describes the man who protected his Greek flock but who also assisted Turkish refugees during World War I.

Chapter 15 on the history of 'The Single- and Double-Headed Eagle Symbols in Pontos', looks at the importance of these symbols to Pontic Greeks.

Chapter 16 summarises the significance of the Greek Crypto-Christians. These people were openly Muslim but maintained their Christian beliefs at home.

Chapter 17 briefly describes the Pontic 'Family History of Sofia Dimarhos'. What a story! I warmly thank Sofia for allowing me to interview her several times and for the extra weight I gained as she force-fed me.

The final chapter, 'Where to From Here?' points us to what we can do to foster Pontic history and culture for the coming generation.

We should be in awe of the courage shown by our Pontic ancestors in defending their families, their Christian religion and Greek culture. They were great survivors. May we stand upon their shoulders so we can see further.

Temeteron.

1. Who Are the Greeks From Pontos?

The Pontic Alps stretch over 700 km, and less than 100 km inland from the Black Sea in Anatolia which rise up to 4,000 m to the east of Pontos (NE corner of Anatolia—Figure 1.1 & Note 1.1.) These Alps create isolated pockets of settlements in often densely forested areas (Bryer and Winfield 1985). This rugged and isolated geography greatly impacted on the people of Pontos.

From the 7th century BC, the Greeks from Miletos, on the west coast of Anatolia, were predominantly responsible for establishing Greek colonies in Pontos. Pontos was already settled by indigenous Anatolians who were often hostile to these Greeks. Today, Pontic Greeks are most probably descendants of these Greek colonists, indigenous Anatolians, Greeks who had moved relatively recently to Pontos, or other people who migrated to Pontos and converted to Christianity.

For around 2,500 years Greeks survived in Pontos up to 1924 when Christian Greeks left their homeland under the compulsory Population Exchange for Greece (and the much smaller number of Muslims in Greece moved to Turkey—Note 1.2). (Many Pontic Greeks were still living in nearby Russia and the Caucasus.) As a result of their journey to the Pontic ports and their voyage to Greece, as part of the Population Exchange, many of them died under harsh conditions. On arrival in their supposed homeland Greece, they were called Pontic Greeks and eventually received 'a form of acceptance' by other Hellenes. Their new life in Greece was another struggle.

Pontic Greeks feel they are different from other Greeks and have retained a separate culture (most obvious in their dialect, dance and music). Being Pontic Greek is to claim origins in a lost homeland. Memories of Pontos [and visits back to Pontos] accompany discussion of loss and survival which binds Pontic Greeks together and enables them to keep their ancestral homeland alive. Their physical separation in Pontos from other Greek communities led over the years to the development of a distinctive culture and Pontic Greek dialect. They are not so different to be called non-Greek (Pratsinakis 2013).

Pilgrimage to Pontos has also had a reciprocal positive effect on Pontic Muslim Turks, especially those who still speak *Romeyka* (a 'cleaner' version of Pontic Greek—see Chapter 13). Such Pontic Turks may have Christian ancestors who had converted to Islam. This love of culture also helps to build bridges between Greeks and Turks.

Pontic Greek associations have been lobbying governments worldwide to have the deaths of over 200,000 Pontic Greeks (Note 1.3) in the Ottoman empire in the early 20th century, recognised as genocide. These atrocities were part of the larger genocide of Christian Armenians, Assyrians, Greeks and other minorities by the Committee of Union and Progress and its agents and later by the Kemalist Nationalists and which lead to the formation of the new Turkish Republic in 1923. The lack of recognition of this genocide by the Republic of Turkey remains an area of political confrontation to modern democracies and anathema to the Turkish psyche.

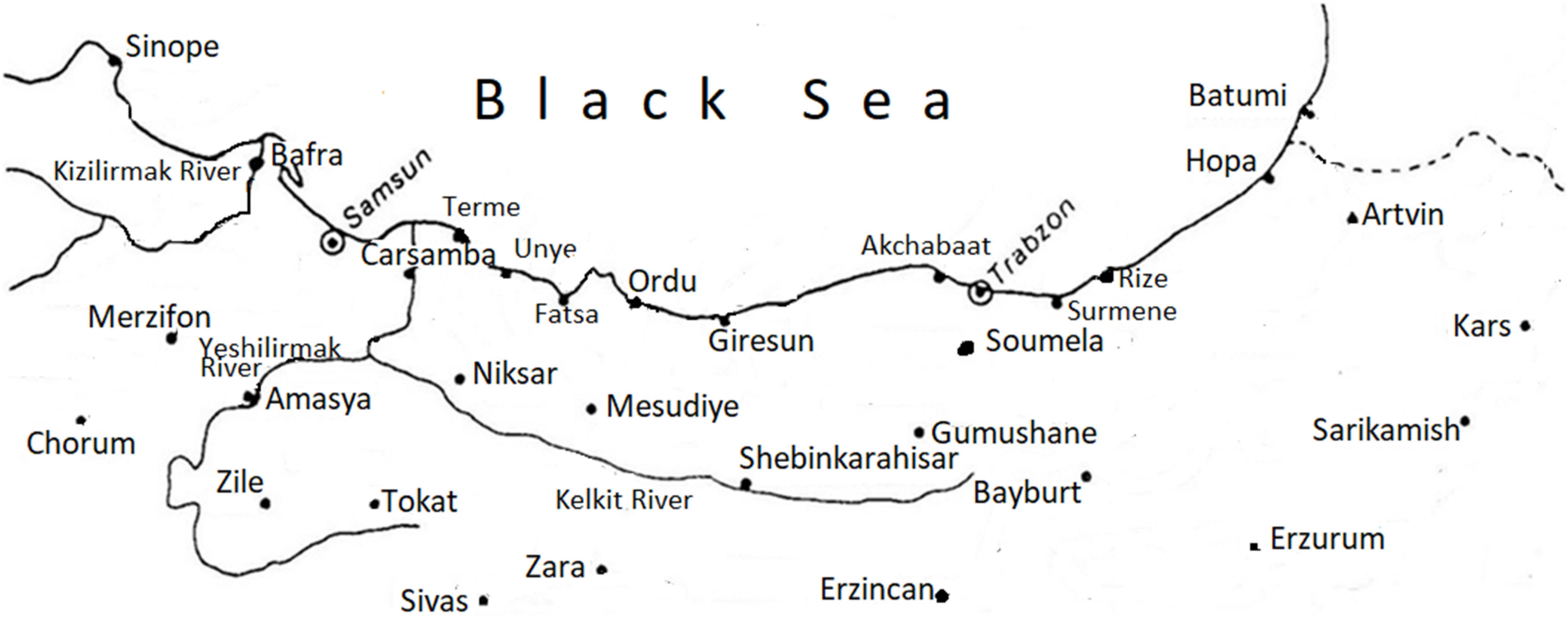

Figure 1.1: Settlements in Pontos, NE Anatolia (Turkey). (Scale: Samsun to Trabzon, 290 km.)

On a positive note, bridges are also being built between Greece and Turkey by the collaborative work of Pontic musicians in both countries. There is more that culturally binds Pontic Greeks and Pontic Turks than separates us.

Note 1.1

Pontos has also been described as consisting of the six Greek Orthodox dioceses (metropolitanates) of Amasya, Chaldia, Kolonia, Neocaesarea, Rodopolis and Trabzon.

Note 1.2

The Treaty of Lausanne was signed in July 1923 and formalised the terms of peace between Turkey and the Allied Powers that fought in World War I and in the Turkish War of Independence. It formalised the end of the Ottoman empire (*Encyclopedia of the Ottoman empire* 2009).

Earlier, in January 1923, Greece and Turkey had signed the Lausanne Convention concerning the Population Exchange between Greece and Turkey. This convention stated the compulsory exchange of Turkish nationals of the Greek Orthodox religion in Turkish territory and the Greek nationals of the Moslem religion in Greek territory. The Greeks in Constantinople and the Muslims in western Thrace were exempt from this exchange. The exclusion of the Orthodox inhabitants of the islands of Imbros and Tenedos was specified later in the wider Treaty of Lausanne (Hirschon 2008).

Note 1.3

The Ottoman Turks never conducted a modern census. The population data they collected were primarily for taxation and or conscription purposes and focused on counting males above a certain age. Population data reported in Alexandris (1999) uses data from the Greek Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople's Greek census [survey] of Anatolia of 1910–12. These data can be used to attain 'an appreciation' of the number of Pontic Greeks before 1916, i.e. before the beginning of the massacre of Pontic Greeks by the Turks.

There was 397,160 Greeks in northern Anatolia in the provinces of Kastamonu, Sivas and Trabzon. However, this figure did not include data for the provincial district of Sivas, or the Greek communities in Kars [part of the Caucasus] or Artvin. Also, population data collected for the Greek Orthodox dioceses of Neocaesarea and Kolonia were undercounted (Alexandris 1999, p. 64–65).

I have increased the above figure by 7,700 people from the provincial district of Sivas for 1912 from Soteriadis (1918) and a further 11,145 people from the *kaza* (district) of Ak-Dag Maden (from the Yozgat provincial district within the province of Ankara) by Alexandris (1999) producing a total figure of around 416,000 people. Thus, at least 416,000 can be used as a minimum 'working figure' for the number of Pontic Greeks in northern Anatolia before World War I. There were also many Pontic Greeks who were living in Russia and the Caucasus etc, surrounding the Black Sea before World War I. (See Chapter 3 for more information.)

2. Formation of the Greek Settlements in Pontos

Introduction

The Greeks were familiar with the Black Sea by at least the 8th century BC. Greek mythology links Greek contacts and the people of Pontos to the story of Jason and the Argonauts' voyage to Colchis (Georgia) in search of the Golden Fleece (Tsetskhladze 1994).

Miletos colonising Pontos

In the late 11th–10th century BC, the Ionians, then the Dorians and Aeolians migrated from Greece and settled in the Aegean Islands and the western coast of Anatolia (Ionia). In Ionia, Miletos (Figure 2.1) became the main centre. From the second half of the 7th century BC, Lydia, its eastern neighbour, expanded taking Ionian territory. From then Ionia began sending out its first colonies. However, Miletos was the principal coloniser of the Black Sea, founding its first colonies there. In addition, from the middle of the 6th century BC, the Persians began to conquer Ionian territory and in the wake of the Ionian revolt in 499–494 BC, the Persians laid it waste (Tsetskhladze 2006).

Sinope

Sinope's Greek colony was founded around 630 BC by Greeks from Miletos who drove out its Anatolian natives. Sinope then conquered land from the Anatolian natives to the east for her colonists (Avram et al. 2004). The Greek settlers in Sinope and Amisos had to deal with the native people from the beginning of their colonial activities (Summerer 2007). Sinope in turn founded Trabzon, Kotyora (Ordu) and Kerasous (Giresun) (Figure 2.1).

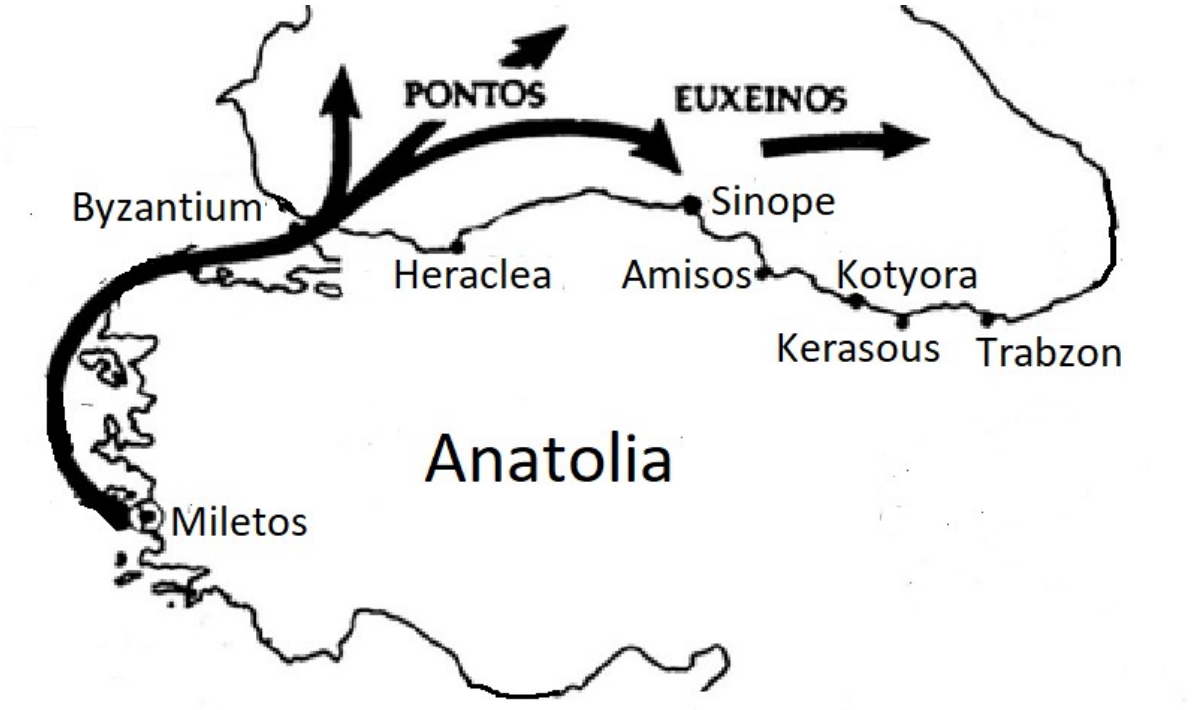

Figure 2.1: Some Greek colonies in Pontos. (Scale: Amisos to Trabzon, 290 km.)

The two harbours of Sinope and its peninsula provided a naturally strong defensive site. Sinope's main interest was towards the rest of the Black Sea (Tsetskhladze 2007). Even in Sinope's period of autonomy it had occasionally to submit to the demands of Persia (Avram et al. 2004). Persian influence in the eastern Pontos expanded during the early 4th century BC (Doonan 2009). By around 332 BC (at least) Sinope was under Persian control (Şerifoğlu 2015). (See Chapter 4.)

Amisos (Samsun)

Amisos was founded around 564 BC. It was either founded by Miletos, or jointly by Miletos and the Ionian settlements of Phocaea. Amisos had intensive links with central Anatolia and looked more inland than across the Black Sea (Tsetskhladze 2007). The hills come down to the sea for a short distance on either side of Amisos. Amisos has no fine harbour. Its main assets were iron, its lands produced olives, some local silver and the overland route which led to southern Anatolia (Avram et al. 2004). (See Chapter 6.)

Kotyora (Ordu)

Kotyora, east of Sinope, stands at the head of an inland route with two wide deltas to the east (Bryer and Winfield 1985). Kotyora was settled in the 6th century BC by Sinope. As stated by Xenophon, when he visited Kotyora in 400 BC, the Greek colony of Kotyora paid tribute to Sinope.

Kerasous (Giresun)

The Greek colony at Kerasous was founded in the 6th century BC by Sinope (Avram et. al 2004). According to Xenophon, Kerasous also paid tribute to Sinope. Kerasous' rocky peninsula provided a good defensive site. Possibly its historical importance was due to it being the outlet for the alum exports from Şebinkarahisar to the south (Shebinkarahisar in Figure 1.1) (Bryer and Winfield 1985).

Trabzon

Trabzon was colonised by Greeks from Sinope in the 6th century BC in an area already occupied by local Anatolian natives. It profited from the coastal route to Colchis (modern Georgia) and from the route inland to the south. It had supplies of timber and silver in the hills (Avram et al. 2004). (See Chapter 5.)

Conclusion

The few Greek colonies established around 630–550 BC along the southern Black Sea coast were small. If these initial sites have not survived they could have been hidden due to the rises in the level of the Black Sea in antiquity. These colonies were few, due to the local geography and the hostile local Anatolian people (Tsetskhladze 2007).

3. The Relocation of Greeks From Pontos

Introduction

Greeks established colonies around the Black Sea (Figure 3.1) by the 7th century BC including in modern Georgia, southern Russia, Ukraine and in Pontos (the NE corner of Anatolia) (Tsetskhladze 2009). From the 18th century, the Greeks began migrating from Pontos to modern Georgia and southern Russia. Later, after the August 1922 defeat of the Greek army in Anatolia and the compulsory Population Exchange, Pontic Greeks were exiled with other Greeks from Turkish territory to their supposed homeland, Greece (Note 1.2).

Many Pontic Greeks were murdered (genocide) in Anatolia during 1916–23 by the Turks. After this period and especially in the years following the collapse of the Soviet Union (December 1991), many people of Pontic Greek descent moved from the former Soviet Union to settle in Greece. We do not know the exact number of Pontic Greeks who lived in regions at different periods. The best available population figures follow.

Russian-Turkish wars in 19th century

After the 1828–29 Russo-Turkish war, around 42,000 Pontic Greeks followed the Russian troops out of Anatolia (Xanthopoulou-Kyriakou 1991). From 1856 to 1866 (after the Crimean War) around 60,000 Pontic Greeks moved to southern Russia. In addition, in the last decades of the 19th century, thousands of Pontic Greek refugees settled in the Caucasus, especially around Kars (Figure 3.1) (Karpozilos 1999). (After 1877–78, Russia annexed the Kars region.)

Census figures from the former Soviet Union and from 1991 (with the collapse of the Soviet Union) in the Caucasus, Kazakhstan, Russia and Ukraine underestimate the number of people of Greek descent. This was because some people of Greek descent who had been culturally assimilated would report as being Georgian or Russian etc (Note 3.1) (Zapantis 1982).

Population, exile and labour battalions 1910–18

In 1910–12, based on the survey of the Greek population in Anatolia and Thrace organised by the Ecumenical Patriarch, there were at least 416,000 Greeks in Pontos (Note 1.3). In addition, before October 1917 it was believed that around 250,000 Pontic Greeks were living in the Russian empire (Hasiotis 1997 in Voutira 2011). This would make an estimated roughly around 665,000 Pontic Greeks living around the eastern Black Sea region before the beginning of the 1916 massacre of Greeks in Pontos.

During World War I, after the spring of 1916 when the Russian army occupied the NE corner of Anatolia, the Ottoman authorities announced that wherever Christians failed to report for military service or deserted, their community would be held responsible. This provided an excuse for the Turks to burn Christian villages (Clark 2006).

Then in December 1916, for 'military reasons', the Ottomans ordered the deportation of Greeks from the Black Sea coast away from the Russian front line (Hofmann 2011). While many thousands of Pontic Greeks died in

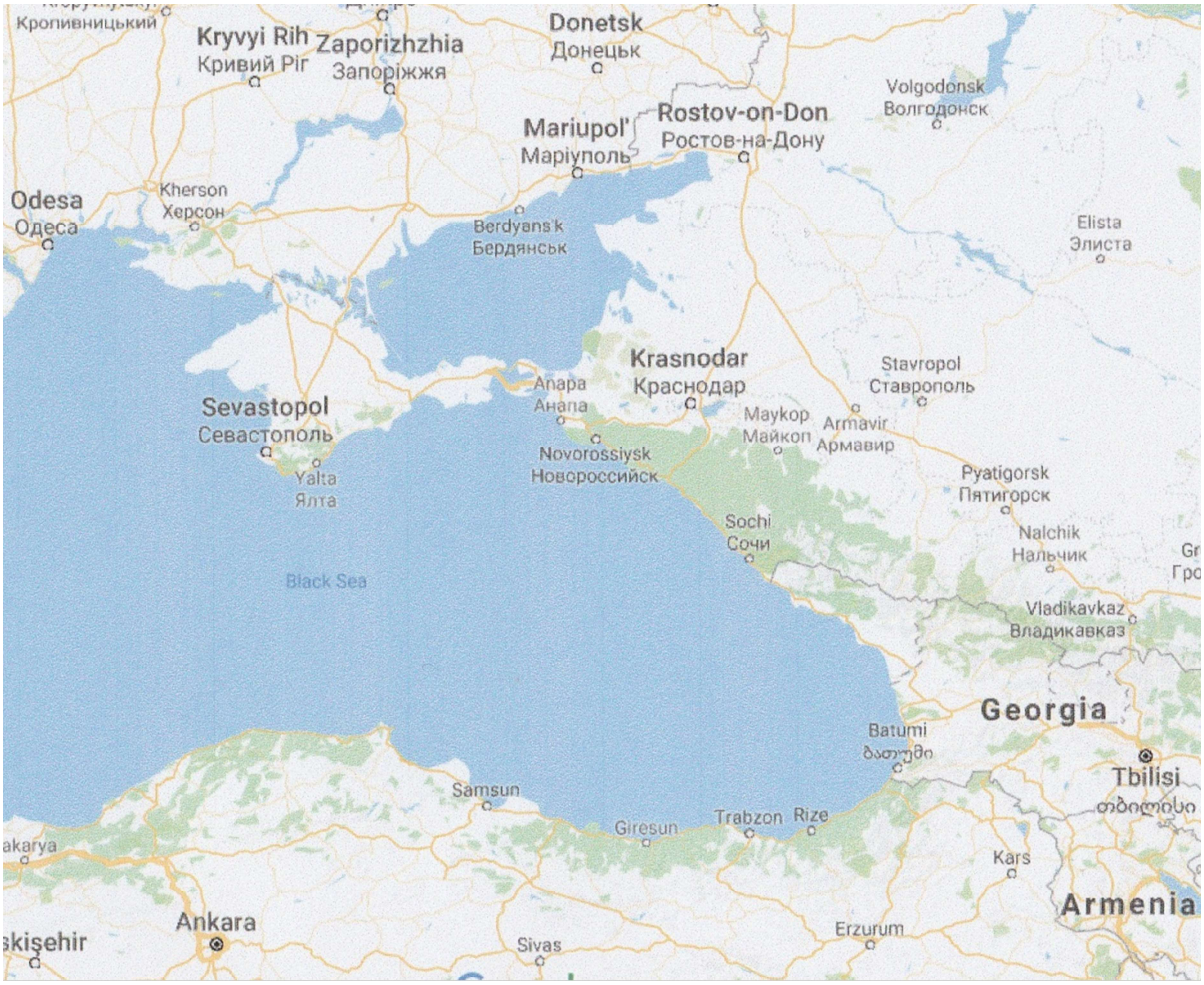

Figure 3.1: Eastern Black Sea region (Google maps 2018). (Scale: Samsun to Trabzon, 290 km.)

these deportations, others fled across the Russian border or took to the mountains and formed guerrilla groups. Aside from Ottoman persecutions, villagers in Anatolia were terrorised during and after World War I by Muslim bandits (Doumanis 2013).

Exodus from Pontos 1918–24

When the Russian army completely withdrew from eastern Pontos [by early 1918], an estimated 80,000 Greeks accompanied them (Xanthopoulou-Kyriakou 1991). After World War I, the Greek guerrillas and survivors of the deportations returned to their villages. Around Giresun and Samsun there was intercommunal tension, where there was a sizeable Greek population (Mango 2002). In early May 1919, Mustafa Kemal [called *Atatürk* from 1934] was charged to restore order and prevent resistance against the government and started raising a Turkish guerrilla force (Shaw and Shaw 2002). On 19 May 1919, Kemal arrived in Samsun and over the next two years localised fighting intensified (Stanley 2007). A few days earlier in May, the Greek army landed at Smyrna.

In 1919, Kars and Ardahan (near Georgia) were occupied by the Turks which forced a mass flight of Pontic Greeks to Russia. From May 1920 to the end of February 1921, an estimated 53,000 Pontic Greeks left via Batumi (Figure 3.1) for Greece (Pratsinakis 2013; Vergeti 1991).

In June 1921, a Greek warship bombed Inebolu (west of Sinope). In view of a possible Greek landing at Samsun, this resulted in all Greek males aged between 15 and 50 years being deported to the interior (Mango 2002, p. 330). Many thousands of Greeks were murdered in the process.

The 1923 Lausanne Convention's compulsory Population Exchange (Note 1.2) legalised the existing situation. That is, after August 1922, with the defeat of the Greek army in Anatolia, the vast majority of Greeks of Anatolia had been forced to leave for Greece from the advancing Turkish army (Klapsis 2014). By 1924, nearly all the remaining Anatolian Greeks were deported. Thousands perished in the process before they arrived in Greece. Their new life in Greece was another struggle where many more died in the harsh conditions. There were also many Pontic Greeks still living in Russia and the Caucasus. The 1926 Soviet Union census stated there were 213,700 Greeks, (an underestimate) living in the Soviet Republics.

In Greece in 1928

The surviving Pontic Greeks abandoned Anatolia during 1916–24, leaving mainly for Greece (Note 3.2) and the Soviet Union. Table 3.1 records the number of refugees in Greece in the 1928 Greek census. [The number of refugees remained stable during 1923–28 since the reduced number of men resulted in arresting a natural increase of the population.] (Klapsis 2014). It is believed there were more than 230,000 Pontic Greek refugees (combining the figures from Pontos and Caucasus in Table 3.1). Some Pontic Greek refugees probably appeared in the census as coming from Asia Minor and Thrace (Vergeti 1991). Vergeti believes [optimistically] there were as many as 400,000 Pontic Greek refugees in Greece from Anatolia and from the Soviet Union in the 1920s.

Table 3.1: Number of refugees, 1928 Greek census

Place of origin	Number of people
Asia Minor	626,954
Pontos	182,169
Caucasus	47,091
Russia	11,435
Constantinople	39,458
Thrace	256,635
Other areas	59,107
Total	1,222,849

Source: Statistical Yearbook of Greece (1930, p. 41)

In the former Soviet Union 1930–49

It is estimated there were 100,000 Pontic Greeks at Rostov-on-Don (Figure 3.1) in Russia (Dawkins 1937). According to the January 1939 Russian census there were 286,600 people of Greek descent in the Soviet Union, (an underestimate, see Note 3.1). In 1929–39, about 50,000 Greeks went to Greece from the Soviet Union (Voutira 2011). In June 1944, 15,000 ethnic Greeks [probably Pontic Greeks] were deported from Crimea to the Soviet Republics of central Asia (Hionidou and Saunders 2010). Simultaneously,

16,400 Greeks [Pontic Greeks] were deported from Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia to the former Soviet Republics of central Asia (Bougai 1996).

In 1946, a large number of Pontic Greeks in southern Russia were deported to Kazakhstan. In 1949, about 100,000 Pontic Greeks in the Caucasus were deported to the central Asian republics. At the same time, the last Pontic Greeks around Krasnodar in southern Russia were expelled (Agtzidis 1991).

Movement in 1980s–90s from Russia/Caucasus to Greece

Greeks reported in the 1926 to 1989 Russian censuses were mostly of Pontic Greek descent. In Greece, a non-compulsory survey reported that the number of immigrants from the former Soviet Union who remained in Greece between 1987 and the end of 2000 was around 155,300 people (an under-estimate). [Most were of Pontic Greek descent.] (Vergeti 2010–11).

Current distribution of Pontic Greeks

There are nearly 11 million people in Greece (2011 Greek census). The real number of people with Pontic Greek descent in Greece or in the diaspora is unknown. There were 238 active Pontic Greek associations in Greece with at least 100 active members per association (Vergeti 2010–11). Active Pontic Greek associations in the diaspora have been established in at least the following countries: Australia, Belgium, Canada, Cyprus, England, Georgia, Germany, Switzerland and USA.

During 1916–23 at least 200,000 Pontic Greeks died in the genocide. Pontic Greeks were forced to leave their homeland by 1924 as part of the Population Exchange for their nominal homeland Greece. Many of them had previously moved to Crimea, Georgia and Russia around the Black Sea, and then most were forcibly relocated from there to the Soviet Union's central Asian republics. From around the 1990s many relocated from the former Soviet Union to Greece. Many people of Pontic Greek descent have now also joined the Pontic Greek diaspora forming Pontic associations.

A survey is needed on the number of people with Pontic Greek descent in Greece and in the diaspora (although it would be very difficult to ensure its accuracy). New York and then Melbourne appear to be the largest cities in the diaspora with people of Greek descent and thus they are probably the largest cities with people of Pontic Greek descent in the diaspora.

Note 3.1

Peoples' ethnic origin was described in most official documents. At the age of 16 years, children from mixed marriages were able to choose between the nationalities of their parents. In the second half of the 20th century many chose Georgian, Russian or Ukrainian, according to their republic of residence (Kaurinkoski 2010). So some people with Greek heritage were not recorded in censuses.

Note 3.2

The real number of refugees who entered Greece is unknown but it was probably between 1.25 and 1.4 million. Greek civilian losses in Anatolia were exacerbated through the Turks' forced conscription of Christian men into labour battalions [see Note 6.1] after the defeat of the Greek army in August 1922 (Pentzopoulos 1962; Hirschon 1998). We will never know the real number of Pontic Greeks who fell victim to the genocide during 1916–23.

4. History of Sinope

Greek settlement

Sinope stands on the NE corner of a peninsula which provides a strong defensive site (Figure 1.1 & Plate 4.1). The peninsula has low, gently rolling fertile hills. The mountains begin to rise to around 1,300 m about 35 km inland. The main harbour of Sinope is the best on the Pontic Black Sea coast. Its two ports are divided only by the walled town. Sinope did not lie at the head of a major trade route, but it was a major port during the classical and up to the mid-19th century (Bryer and Winfield 1985).

The name Sinope is probably of Hittite origin and its settlement may have existed during the Hittite period or even earlier. After the fall of the New Hittite kingdom and the migration of the Kashka people to the east, the SE Black Sea coast seems to have been inhabited by what the Greeks called 'White Syrians' (De Boer 2015, p. 74).

Sinope's Greek colony was founded around 630 BC by Greeks from Miletos (Figure 2.1) who drove out the local Anatolian natives. Sinope then conquered land from the Anatolian natives to the east for her colonists who settled Trabzon, Kotyora (Ordu) and Kerasous (Giresun). Sinope's main interest was towards the rest of the Black Sea rather than trade with the interior. Around 436 BC the tyrant Timesileos was driven out of Sinope by the Athenians under Pericles. A contingent of 600 men was sent there to consolidate Athenian influence and to establish a democracy. They probably departed in 405 BC (Avram et al. 2004). In 400 BC, Xenophon with his Greek army visited Sinope on their way back to Greece.

Plate 4.1: Sinope (Source: '2011 calendar, cities of Pontos', Infognomon, Athens)

Persian to Ottoman period

By 547 BC, northern Anatolia became a part of the Persian empire, however, Persia probably exerted little direct political control over the Pontic mountains to Pontos. By around 332 BC (at least) Sinope was under firm Persian control (Şerifoğlu 2015).

Although the army of Alexander the Great (356–323 BC) defeated the Persians in Anatolia, the Greeks didn't march north to conquer the Black Sea coast. These areas however, eventually accepted Greek authority (Şerifoğlu and Bakan 2015). After the death of Alexander (323 BC), Mithradates I, established the kingdom of Pontos in 302 BC. He probably came from the upper classes of Pontos and was possibly related to the Persian dynasts. Mithradates I and kings from the same family ruled over the area from Heraclea (Eregli) to Trabzon on the Black Sea (Figure 2.1) until Mithradates VI was defeated by Rome in 64 BC (Erciyas 2001). It then became part of the Roman empire and then part of the Byzantine empire.

In 1204–05 Sinope fell to Alexios and David Komnenos of Trebizond as part of the little Pontic Byzantine empire. But in 1214 the Seljuk Turks captured Sinope and the Trebizond empire became a vassal to the Seljuks. Around 1324 (if not later) Sinope passed into the hands of the Turkmen of Kastamonu. The emir of Sinope was defeated by the Ottoman Turks in 1461 (Bryer and Winfield 1985).

By 1836, Sinope contained 500 Turkish and 300 Greek houses (Hamilton 1842). In 1853 the Russians bombarded Sinope which precipitated the Crimean War. The original line of the walls which marks the Greek town follows the coastline north and south of the isthmus (Pugsley 2014).

Sinope flourished not as a producer or exporter, but as a trading centre. In the mid-19th century, direct steamship services were introduced from Constantinople to Crimean ports, Samsun and Trabzon. They bypassed Sinope which made it enter into decline (Bryer and Winfield 1985).

After World War I

In 1916 (during World War I), an order was issued that the Greeks near the Black Sea should be deported. After the Greeks from Sinope were deported to the interior a fire broke out at Sinope, destroying 400 Greek houses and shops (Greek Patriarchate 1919).

After World War I, the Greeks that survived the deportations were able to return home. In June 1921, a Greek warship bombed Inebolu, west of Sinope. With the perceived danger of a Greek landing in Samsun, the Turkish authorities deported all Greek males aged between 15 and 50 years to the interior (Mango 2002). The Turkish authorities murdered many thousands of Greeks in Pontos in this period. The Greeks that survived this deportation were forced to leave for Greece after the defeat of the Greek army in Anatolia in August 1922 and in the Population Exchange under the 1923 Lausanne Convention.

Today, Sinope's population is estimated (2013) to be 38,500 (*Encyclopaedia Britannica* at: <www.britannica.com/place/Sinop>).

5. History of Trabzon

Introduction

Trabzon is a port town on the NE Turkish Black Sea coast (Plate 5.1 & Figure 2.1) and is believed to have over 320,000 people. It is the second largest Turkish town (after Samsun) on the Black Sea. Its previous name of Trebizond and its current name of Trabzon were derived from the Greek word 'trapeze', meaning table. (Named after the table like elevated landmass on which the classical town was sited.) The classical town was protected by ravines on its eastern and western sides and on the northern side by a cliff overlooking a foreshore. The site also had a strong wall built to close off the town. Historically, it was a strategic and commercially important port. There is no level hinterland to the town and the hills rise gently inland (Bryer and Winfield 1985).

Human settlement

Trabzon was settled by Greeks from Sinope by the 6th century BC but there were indigenous people already living there (Avram et al. 2004). Northern Anatolia became part of the Persian empire in 547 BC. However, Persia probably exerted little direct political control over the Pontic mountains. (This can be supported by Xenophon in his recorded journey through Pontos in 400 BC. Doonan (2009) states that Persian influence in the eastern Pontos expanded during the early 4th century BC.) When Alexander the Great (356–323 BC) defeated the Persians in Anatolia, the Greeks did not march north to conquer the Black Sea coast, but this area eventually accepted Alexander's authority (Şerifoğlu 2015; Şerifoğlu and Bakan 2015).

Plate 5.1: Trabzon from Boz Tepe (2018, author's collection)

The Mithradates kings and the Romans

After the death of Alexander (323 BC), Mithradates I, established the kingdom of Pontos in 302 BC. He probably came from the upper classes of Pontos and was possibly related to the Persian dynasts. Mithradates I and kings from the same family ruled over the area from Heraclea (Eregli) to Trabzon on the Black Sea (Figure 2.1) until Mithradates VI was defeated by Rome in 64 BC (Erciyas 2001). It then became part of the Roman empire and then part of the Byzantine empire.

The Grand Komnenoi of Trebizond

Trabzon's strong fortifications protected it from the Seljuk Turk invasion over Anatolia after the battle of Manzikert in 1071 and at that time, Theodore Gabras, saved it from the invaders (Miller 1926).

In 1204, Trabzon became the capital of the small Komnenoi Byzantine empire of Trebizond (along the southern shore of the Black Sea protected from central Anatolia by the Pontic Alps). Its wealth and influence far outstripped its size and population. The trade via land and sea through Trabzon was very profitable due to the collected taxes on goods entering and leaving the town to and from Asia. The Komnenoi emperors of Trebizond (1204–1461) were Greek by language, Byzantine by culture and tradition and Orthodox Christian by faith. They were threatened by their Mongol and Turk neighbours. Their emperors prospered partly by making payments and by marrying their daughters or sisters with their leaders (Nicol 1996, pp. 120–21).

In 1461, the emperor of Trebizond surrendered to Ottoman sultan Mehmet II. The emperor, his family, the emperor's officials, plus other notables and some of its wealthiest families, were shipped to Istanbul (Chalkokondyles; Lowry 2009).

Revival of the Trabzon-Erzurum-Tabriz trade route

After the 15th century, the Trabzon to Tabriz (Persia) trade route was largely abandoned. The Ottomans also closed the Black Sea to foreign commerce. However, by 1774, the Black Sea was opened again (King 2006). By the mid-1830s Trabzon's commerce prospered. The period coincided with the Ottoman Tanzimat reforms and the suppression by the Ottoman state of the Pontic *derebeys* (feudal valley lords) (Bryer 1970).

In 1837, several major Persian merchants in Istanbul and Tabriz in Persia went bankrupt and were mostly replaced by Russian, Greek and Armenian merchants. As the activities of the Greek and Armenian merchants of the Russian Black Sea ports and Tabriz increased, the position of the Greeks and Armenians in Trabzon became important (Braude and Lewis 1982).

In 1856, most remaining civil restrictions on the non-Muslims were lifted and the crypto-Christians (see Chapter 16) were allowed to declare their Christian faith (Bryer 1970). In the 1860s and 1870s Trabzon's trade decreased and then levelled off due to the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 and an alternative route created to divert the Persian transit trade away from Trabzon. By 1884, Greek and Armenian merchants dominated the foreign trade of Trabzon. The advantages enjoyed by the Christian merchants who held Russian passports created strong resentment among the Muslim merchants (Braude and Lewis 1982).

Russian army 1916–18

In April 1916, during World War I, the Russians captured Trabzon which had 12,000 Greeks. The vast majority of the Turks had already fled the town. By August 1916 there was an influx of some Armenian gangs into the Russian held territory who began robbing and murdering the remaining Ottoman Turks (Mintslov 1923). (For more details see <www.pontosworld.com/index.php/history/sam-topalidis/647-life-during-the-russian-occupation-of-trabzon>.)

Things changed after the Russian February 1917 Revolution and the abdication of Tsar Nicholas II. The Ottoman army held its positions without firing a shot for the rest of 1917. The Bolshevik Party seized power in Russia in the October 1917 Revolution and sued for peace with the Ottomans. A formal armistice was agreed in December 1917 and the Russian soldiers in Trabzon began to return home. Disorder increased when Turkish gangs drew closer to Trabzon as the Russians withdrew. Pillaging and panic was common at the end of January1918 (Rogan 2015).

In January 1918, the Greek Metropolitan of Trabzon, Chrysanthos (see Chapter 14), distributed arms to some of the Christian inhabitants for their own defence (Greek Patriarchate 1919). The complete withdrawal of the Russians in February from the Trabzon area forced 30,000 Greeks from the area to leave with the Russians (Fotiadis 1987).

After the October 1918 Armistice, the persecution of the Christians by the Turks continued which forced some Greeks to organise armed bands of guerrillas for defence against the irregular Turkish soldiers and brigands (Ligue Nationale du Pont Euxin 1919).

After World War I

The Greek community led by Chrysanthos began calling for an independent Pontos state at the 1919 Paris Peace Conference. Around Giresun and Samsun there was intercommunal tension, where there was a sizeable Greek population (Mango 2002). To restore order, Mustafa Kemal [called *Atatürk* from 1934] was appointed to head the regional army and in May 1919 he landed in Samsun. Over the next two years the chaos and localised fighting intensified. By 1923, Mustafa Kemal and General Kazim Karabekir pasha brought the region back under Turkish control. In 1921–22, one technique used was to forcibly exile Greek men aged between 15 and 50 years from the Black Sea coastal region—many of Trabzon's male Greeks were marched to central Anatolia, where many died (Stanley 2007).

In January 1923 most of the Christian families who still lived in Trabzon were forced to leave under the compulsory Population Exchange. The uprooted Greeks were taken to disease-ridden refugee camps in Istanbul (where many died) on route to Greece (Clark 2006).

Of the much smaller number of Muslims forced to permanently leave Greece to their notional home of Turkey, only 1,328 people arrived in Trabzon. However, only a mere 393 people settled. Initially, Trabzon was not selected for settlement since the large number of the houses vacated by Greeks and Armenians had all been occupied by local residents (Çomu 2012). By 1945, Trabzon's population was still lower than its pre-World War I population.

6. History of Samsun

Introduction

Modern Samsun, known as Amisos by ancient Greeks and Byzantines lies between the deltas of the Kizilirmak River and Yeşilirmak River (Figure 1.1). It is the largest city (Plate 6.1) on the Black Sea coast in Turkey with over 540,000 people.

Ancient Amisos lies on the flat top and eastern slopes of a plateau headland [which rises to 150 m] just to the west of the modern port of Samsun (Avram et al. 2004). Amisos had intensive links with central Anatolia and looked more inland than across the Black Sea (Tsetskhladze 2007). It has a fertile hinterland with three gentle passes to the south which offer the easiest route over the whole Pontic Alps (Bryer and Winfield 1985).

Human settlement

By around 2600–2300 BC, the central Black Sea region of Anatolia was under the dominion of Indo-Europeans and from 1700 to 650 BC it was under the Kashka people (Tsetskhladze 2007). After the fall of the New Hittite kingdom and the migration of the Kashka to the east, the SE Black Sea coast seems to have been inhabited by a group which were called 'White Syrians' (by the Greeks). Amisos was also a White Syrian town before the first Greeks arrived (De Boer 2015).

Amisos was settled by Greeks around 564 BC from either Miletos (Figure 2.1), or a joint foundation by Phocaea and Miletos (Tsetskhladze 2007). The Greek settlers in Amisos had to deal with the indigenous people who probably formed a part of the population in Amisos (Summerer 2007).

By 547 BC, northern Anatolia became a part of the Persian empire, however, Persia probably exerted little direct political control over the Pontic mountains to Pontos. Although the army of Alexander the Great (356–323 BC) defeated the Persians in Anatolia, the Greeks didn't march north to conquer the Black Sea coast. These areas however, eventually accepted Greek authority (Şerifoğlu 2015; Şerifoğlu and Bakan 2015).

Plate 6.1: Samsun (Google images)

After the death of Alexander (323 BC), Mithradates I established the kingdom of Pontos in 302 BC. He probably came from the upper classes of Pontos and was possibly related to the Persian dynasts. Mithradates I and kings from the same family ruled over the area from Heraclea (Eregli) to Trabzon on the Black Sea (Figure 2.1) until Mithradates VI was defeated by Rome in 64 BC (Erciyas 2001). It then became part of the Roman empire and then part of the Byzantine empire.

Seljuk and Ottoman Turks

The Byzantine settlement of Amisos on the acropolis, was probably abandoned before 1194 for a site to the east on the shore (Plate 6.1). There was a period of Greek-Turkmen coexistence. After 1214, the site became Seljuk Turk Samsun. The Genoese station of Simisso was established by 1285, only an 'arrows flight away' from Samsun and provided protection to the local Greeks and Armenians, who were probably still the majority of the population. In 1242, the Mongols defeated the Seljuks. After the Mongol withdrawal, Samsun was ceded to the Turkmen dynasty of Sinope (Bryer and Winfield 1985).

By the 14th century, Turkmen Samsun and Genoese Simisso were still distinct settlements existing side by side. Around 1393, the Ottoman sultan captured Samsun. The Genoese left their Simisso colony soon after 1424 and set it on fire. After 1452, Samsun declined (Bryer and Winfield 1985).

In 1813, the population of the small settlement of Samsun was almost entirely Turkish but the adjoining villages were mainly populated by Christians. By the 1860s there was a small Turkish village on the shore at Samsun and a smaller Greek suburb inland; their combined population was less than 5,000 (Bryer and Winfield 1970).

Rise of commercial activity from 1860

Samsun's revival began with the building of the highway south to Amasya and with the expansion of the tobacco industry at nearby Bafra to the west (Figure 1.1). By the 1860s, Samsun became the port of the main Constantinople-Bagdad trade route. The Greeks began to take over the commerce of the port in the 19th century. During the revival of Samsun and Bafra, the Greek proportion of the population at Samsun rose to 40%, due to immigration (Bryer 1970).

In 1910, Samsun's population peaked at around 40,000 and Greeks, Armenians and Franks controlled at least 91% of its 156 businesses. By 1911, of the around 120,000 people in the Samsun *kaza* (district) the majority were Greek (Bryer and Winfield 1985).

1915–17 deportations of Armenians and Greeks

During World War I (1914–18) the Ottoman Turks continued to implement the genocide of their minority multi-ethnic subjects. In 1915, the Armenian deportees were marched out of Samsun. Immediately outside of Samsun the men were separated from their families and murdered. Their families met their death later (Payaslian 2009).

After the spring of 1916, when the Russian army occupied the NE corner of Anatolia, the Ottoman authorities announced that if Orthodox Christians failed to report for military service, or had deserted, their community would be held responsible. As a result, many Greek males from Samsun joined the mountain guerrillas (Clark 2006).

In December 1916, the Ottoman War Minister, Enver, ordered the deportation of the Greek population from the Black Sea coast to an area away from the Russian front line (Hofmann 2011). Subsequently, between December 1916 and February 1917, Greek villages were torched in the Samsun region (Psomiades 2006). In some villages the men were conscripted into labour battalions (Note 6.1). In January 1917 4,000 Greeks from Samsun were deported and resettled (Akçam 2012). After the armistice in late 1918, those Greeks that survived were able to return home.

Arrival of Mustafa Kemal 1919

The Armistice between the defeated Ottoman empire and the Allies in World War I was signed on 30 October 1918. Around Giresun and Samsun there was intercommunal tension, where there was a sizeable Greek population (Mango 2002).

In early May 1919, Mustafa Kemal [called *Atatürk* from 1934] was charged to restore order. He was expected to prevent resistance against the government and started raising a popular Muslim guerrilla force (Shaw and Shaw 2002). On 19 May 1919, Kemal arrived in Samsun. An important perpetrator of the genocide of Pontic Greeks, Topal Osman and his band also wreaked destruction in areas around Samsun (Psomiades 2006).

In June 1921, a Greek warship bombed Inebolu, (west of Sinope). As a result, the Turkish authorities deported to the interior all male Greeks aged between 15 and 50 years. [Many Greeks were murdered.] In June 1922, a Greek warship then bombed Samsun. This only served to worsen the lot of the remaining local Greeks (Mango 2002, pp. 330–31).

The surviving Greek males of military age not conscripted into the labour battalions had to escape by covert methods. Under the Population Exchange, Turkish ships took many of the refugees away from Samsun in hellish conditions (Clark 2006).

Nearly 52,000 Christians left the Samsun region as part of the Population Exchange. Up to 20,000 of them may have come from Samsun who left by October 1924. Of the number of Muslims forced to permanently leave Greece [their homeland] only 18,410 were initially settled in the Samsun area. Settling Muslims here was difficult as nearly all the Christian houses had been destroyed after the Christians had left. Eventually 8,760 exchanged Muslims settled in 41 nearby Samsun villages (Aydan 2016; Çomu 2012).

Note 6.1

The labour battalions during World War I were overwhelmingly (but not exclusively) manned by non-Muslim Ottoman enlisted men who were regarded as untrustworthy to bear arms. These battalions carried out manual work like road work, the transportation of material to the fronts and agricultural tasks. They were notorious for their poor living and working conditions (Beşikçi 2012).

7. History of Gümüshane

The silver mining town of Gümüshane (Turkish for silver city) in NE Anatolia was established in the 1590s. (Its Greek name of Argyropolis was concocted in the 1840s) (Bryer and Winfield 1985). The silver mines also produced lead and some gold. The town lies along the Harshit River at an elevation of 1,500 m about 65 km SW of Trabzon (Figure 1.1).

In its early phase of mining, a significant role was played by the Panagia Soumela Monastery which was obliged by the Ottoman authorities to send serfs to work in the mines. From at least the mid-17th century, the Greeks of Gümüshane and the surrounding villages were exempt from normal taxes in return for working in silver mining, smelting or in the related charcoal burning industries. Due to poisoning (at least) the life expectancy of miners and smelters must sadly have been low. These villages were excused the *haraç* (*harach*) tax which Christian males of military age paid in lieu of military service. These tax exemptions, combined with the persecutions in the mid-17th century, from the Pontic *derebeys* (feudal valley lords), attracted a relatively large number of migrants from other regions of Pontos (Ballian 1995; Bryer and Winfield 1970).

Gümüshane was one of the most important mining towns in the Ottoman empire in the 17th and 18th centuries. The mines were the property of the sultan and were effectively controlled by the *maden-bashi* or *ustabashi* who was invariably a Greek. The skilled labour was monopolised by Greeks. It is interesting that Gümüshane drew its charcoal from an area later to be closely identified with crypto-Christianity (see Chapter 16). The mines were in decline before the Russian army reached Gümüshane in 1829 (although the deeper silver had not been exploited). When the Russians left they were followed by thousands of Greeks and Armenians who migrated to Russia. With the decline of mining came the relocation of Gümüshane's skilled miners to mines all over Anatolia. The crypto-Christians openly admitted their Christian faith in 1856 after the mines in Gümüshane had been abandoned. As they had never paid *haraç* before, they still demanded exemption, but mining had ended and they were given the 'opportunity' of military service instead (Bryer and Winfield 1970, p. 325–27).

The end of mining coincided with the building of the Trabzon-Erzurum rural highway which bypassed Gümüshane by a few kilometres (Figure 1.1). Then Gümüshane's centre moved to the present town (Eski Gümüshane) on the main road at Sarab Han. By at least 1869 Gümüshane became a profitable centre of a soft fruit industry (Bryer and Winfield 1970). Soft fruit remains the principal export of Gümüshane today.

In 1916, during World War I, the town was occupied by the Russian army (until February 1918). The remaining Greeks were forced to leave Turkey from 1922 for Greece after the defeat of the Greek army in Anatolia and under the 1923 Population Exchange (Note 1.2). Some of the Greek churches' silverware from Gümüshane were also taken to Greece and are on display in the Benaki Museum in Athens.

Gümüshane had an estimated population (2013) of 32,440 (*Encyclopaedia Britannica* at: <www.britannica.com/place/Gumushane>).

8. Former Panagia Theoskepastos Monastery, Trabzon

This former monastery is located on the slopes of Boz Tepe (Turkish for Grey Hill), overlooking the Trabzon harbour (Plates 8.1 & 8.2). It was founded at least by the 1340s during the reign of Alexios III Komnenos (1349–90) of Trebizond. The Panagia Theoskepastos is enclosed by a rectangular wall and comprises a small 19th century side-chapel adjoining the cave church, a 19th century church of St Constantine above the cave church, a large two-storied hall and the cave church (with a holy spring) of Theoskepastos itself. The Theoskepastos was the only known nunnery in the Komnenoi Trebizond empire and remained open until 1922 when it was abandoned (Bryer and Winfield 1985).

Restoration of the former monastery began in 2014. It is hoped it will be open to the public sometime in 2019 (Plate 8.3). The restoration is expected to include the historical cave church and the rare wall paintings. It is expected that the opening of the renovated former monastery will bring an increase in tourism to the town.

The cave in the hillside of the monastery was probably once associated with the cult of Mithras [Persian sun god]. Afterwards the cave may have been a church before it was incorporated into the Theoskepastos Monastery. In the 19th century, the abbess ruined the well preserved portraits of Alexios III Komnenos (1349–90), his wife Theodora and his mother when she had the walls of the church on the outside within the antechamber plastered and painted. These original portraits were unfortunately replaced with figures of Theodora, Alexios III and Andronikos (Bryer 1968; Bryer and Winfield 1985).

Plate 8.1: The renovated former Panagia Theoskepastos Monastery (2018, author's collection)

Plate 8.2: The walls around the former Panagia Theoskepastos Monastery (2018, author's collection)

Plate 8.3: The closed entrance to the former Panagia Theoskepastos Monastery (2018, author's collection)

9. St Anne Church, Trabzon

Located in the eastern suburbs of Trabzon, St Anne (Plate 9.1) is the oldest surviving church in Trabzon. It was built before 884 and was an important mortuary chapel in the late 14th and early 15th century. It remained in Greek hands until 1923 [when the Greeks were forced to leave under the Population Exchange]. After the Greeks left, it was used as a residence and sadly the fires lit inside the church blackened the frescoes on the walls (Talbot Rice 1929–30).

It is a small triple-apsed barrel-vaulted basilica (Plate 9.2). The interior of the church was entirely painted, notably with scenes from the Joachim and Anne cycle [Joachim and Anne were believed to be the Virgin Mary's parents] (Bryer and Winfield 1985).

In 2018, the St Anne Church was open to tourists. It still has traces of frescoes inside (Plate 9.3). I am unaware of the age of these frescoes. The interior walls are sadly still covered in soot which must be covering, if they haven't destroyed, nearly all the existing wall paintings. When entering this church you are in awe that this over 1,100 year old building is still standing.

Plate 9.1: St Anne Church from the south (2018, author's collection)

Plate 9.2: Inside St Anne Church (2018, author's collection)

Plate 9.3: Fresco in St Anne Church (2018, author's collection)

10. Former Panagia Chrysokephalos Church, Trabzon—now Fatih Mosque

This former church stands in the middle of classical Trabzon, between the Byzantine walls, currently the Ortahisar district and was the most important church in the small Byzantine empire of Trebizond. Originally it was surrounded by monastic buildings. Panagia Chrysokephalos (Greek for Golden-Headed) was the metropolitan church of the Komnenos rulers of the empire of Trebizond, where coronations and burials took place. Its epithet, 'Golden-Headed' is probably derived from a golden icon of the Virgin Mary that was once held in the church. The church was constructed in the 10th century and has undergone a number of structural alterations (Bryer and Winfield 1985).

In 1461, with the capture of Trabzon by sultan Mehmet II, the church became the principal mosque of Trabzon and was renamed Fatih Mosque (Lowry 2009). In World War I, during the Russian occupation of the Trabzon region, Russian Professor Uspenskii uncovered near the church the skeleton of Trebizond emperor Alexios IV Komnenos (died 1429) (Akarca 2002).

The latest renovations of the Fatih Mosque commenced in 2015 and it is hoped they will be completed in 2019. Part of the renovations involved cleaning the external stone work (Plate 10.1) which looks in very good order. It also appears that new windows have been installed. There was an impressive mosaic found on its floor which will be preserved under glass and is planned to be exhibited in the future. I am unaware of the status of any other interior renovations.

Plate 10.1: Former Panagia Chrysokephalos Church—now Fatih Mosque (2018, author's collection)

11. Former St Sophia Church, Trabzon—now Ayasofya Mosque

The former St Sophia Church is situated just south of the seashore, nearly two km west of Trabzon's classical walled town. The church was originally part of a monastery which consisted of the main church with three apses and three porches (Plate 11.1), a smaller church standing north of the main church, a belltower standing west of the main church (Plate 11.2) and remains of monastic buildings within a walled enclosure of about 50 m by 90 m. Only the main church and belltower remain. The main church was founded by Manuel I Komnenos (reign 1238–63) (Bryer and Winfield 1985).

The external design and decoration of St Sophia is unusual and is not consistent with normal Byzantine art and architecture. It contains the finest Byzantine wall paintings of the 13th century (e.g. Plate 11.3). Outside it is dominated by three large porches on its south, north and west entrances. The surface of the church is decorated with sculptures and reliefs. Inside the church extensive sections of the original wall paintings survive. The church measures 35 m by 27 m and the top of the dome is 18.5 m high (Eastmond 2004).

The belltower was built in 1426 and stands 22 m west of the church and contains wall paintings which were cleaned in 1961 (Bryer and Winfield 1985). The belltower has a rectangular plan and is approximately 5.0 m by 5.5 m and 23.5 m high. It was restored in 2010 (Türker et al. 2011).

Plate 11.1: The former St Sophia Church—now the Ayasofya Mosque (2018, author's collection)

Plate 11.2: Belltower at the former St Sophia Church (2018, author's collection)

The church was probably converted into a mosque in 1572. But by 1610, the mosque was closed due to a lack of a congregation because of its distance from the walled town. It fell into disrepair (Lowry 2009). In 1836 it was still in a sad state of decay (Hamilton 1842). By 1879 it had been appropriated for military purposes and was full of stores. The ground

around the church had a barrack built which was occupied by soldiers (Tozer 1881). In 1893 the interior frescoes of the church were noted to have been covered with whitewash (Lynch 1901). During World War I it was used as a depot and military hospital but it became a mosque again after the war (Yücel 1988).

In June 1916, when Trabzon was under Russian occupation, Russian scientists under Professor Uspenskii were cleaning the frescoes on the walls of St Sophia and taking up the wooden floor covering the mosaic floor. Both had been preserved extremely badly (Mintslov 1923).

In 1964, after six years of cleaning and restoration work by the *Russell Trust* (based in Edinburgh), overseen by Professor Talbot Rice under field direction of David Winfield, it became the Ayasofya Museum (Bryer and Winfield 1985).

In 2013, the Ayasofya Museum was converted, despite some protest, back into the Ayasofya Mosque. In order to be used as a mosque, frescoes have been hidden from the faithful during prayer by white screens. Carpets now cover the tiled floor. The restored wall paintings on the western entrance by David Winfield and his team, are still spectacular (Plate 11.3).

In February 2019 the mosque was closed for renovations which will also include the belltower. It is expected that it will be closed for at least a year.

Plate 11.3: Looking out the west entrance of the former St Sophia Church (2018, author's collection)

12. The Soumela Monastery

The former Greek Orthodox monastery of the Virgin Mary, Soumela (Plate 12.1) is 48 km south of Trabzon in Turkey (Figure 13.1 in Chapter 13). The monastery is located on the cliff face of Mount Mela nearly 300 m above a subsidiary of the Degirmen River. The monastery complex has five floors and 72 rooms.

Tradition states that it was founded by the monks Barnabas and Sophronios, who were commanded by the Virgin Mary to take her icon, painted by St Luke, to Pontos. The icon preceded the monks, coming to the cave on Mount Mela, next to the holy-water fountain. It is difficult to separate tradition from fact in Soumela's early history. Soumela seems to have been established by the 10th century (Bryer and Winfield 1985).

The monastery enjoyed the patronage of the Grand Komnenoi of the empire of Trebizond. In 1364, Alexios III Komnenos issued an imperial edict exempting the monastery of all imperial taxes and tributes, as well as future dues. Soumela was obliged only to pay a twice-yearly tribute into the Imperial Vestiary (Bryer and Winfield 1985).

After sultan Mehmet II conquered Trabzon in 1461, the monastery maintained its privileges of holding its nearby villages. It seems to have lost its property further away. Selim I, either when he was the governor of Trabzon or later as sultan (reign 1512–20), confirmed these privileges and donated a set of massive silver candlesticks to the monastery. In the 17th century, the monastery continued to prosper due to donations from the silver mines of Gümüshane to the south. Between 1686 and 1744 the

Plate 12.1: Panagia Soumela Monastery (2018, author's collection)

monastery was extensively restored. In 1860, after the establishment of the new Greek Metropolitanate of Rhodopolis [which included the Peristereota, Soumela and Vazelon monasteries and was south of the Metropolitanate of Trabzon] and the lifting of the Ottoman restrictive measures against the crypto-Christians in 1865, the monastery prospered again (*Encyclopaedia of the Hellenic World*: <www.ehw.gr/ehw/forms/Default.aspx> accessed January 2017).

In 1864, the monastic approach, the aqueduct, the library entrance and the entire present façade were built. They replaced the old wooden cells which had hung from the cliff face. The new buildings were required for the thousands of pilgrims (including some Muslims) who came annually on 15 August, to commemorate the death and assumption of the Virgin Mary into heaven and to venerate the icon of Panagia Soumela. In 1877, the monastery was plundered by a gang of Turks. [By 1877, at the latest, Soumela had to recommence paying taxes (Tozer 1881).] In 1890, Soumela still held 15 villages, many from grants made in the 14th century (Bryer and Winfield 1970, 1985).

At Easter 1916, Turkish soldiers forced entry into the monastery. They stayed for two months until Russian troops (who had occupied NE Anatolia during World War I) were in the vicinity. The Turks took some silver cutlery, some expensive carpets and one library book. They didn't ruin anything nor did they take the Soumela icon in the cave church (Plate 12.2) (Mintslov 1923).

In August 1923, before they were expelled from Pontos (under the Population Exchange) the last abbot of Soumela, Jeremias and his monks, hid the icon of Panagia, the Gospel by St Christopher and the cross donated by Manuel III Komnenos (reign 1390–1417) in an iron chest and buried the treasures in the basement of the St Barbara Church near Soumela. In 1931 the Turkish government allowed the treasures to be recovered and returned to Athens. On 15 August 1952 the icon of Panagia was placed in a new church of Panagia Soumela built near the village of Kastania between Kozani and Veria in northern Greece (Holy Apostles Convent 1991).

After it was closed in 1923, many of the items from the monastery's library were deposited in the Ankara Archaeological Museum. The monastery was used by tobacco smugglers and was then gutted by a fire around 1930. It suffered badly from vandals. In 1961 it became the headquarters of a State Experimental Forest (Bryer and Winfield 1985). In 1972 it came under the control of the Trabzon Museum (Holy Apostles Convent 1991) and it was still in ruins.

A secret chapel had been found, one of four, in the cliff face about 100 m north of the Soumela Monastery proper, apparently lost since 1893 (Tüfek 1978 in Bryer and Winfield 1985). In 1992, during renovations, two icons were found and were placed on display in the Trabzon Museum (Köse 2010).

The renovations of Soumela were not faithful to its pre–1923 design, (see photographs at: <www.pontosworld.com/index.php/history/sam-topalidis/712-the-soumela-monastery-pontos>). To the delight of Pontic Greeks, the monastery was open for an annual Orthodox Greek church service on 15 August from 2010 to 2015 by the Ecumenical Patriarch of

Plate 12.2: Entrance to the cave church at Soumela Monastery (2003, author's collection)

Constantinople. The monastery has been closed since September 2015 for restoration and to secure the rocks above the monastery. Part of the monastery is expected to reopen in May and to be open for the 15 August 2019 Greek Orthodox service by the Ecumenical Patriarch.

Tenders have been asked for the construction of a 2.5 km long cable car at Soumela. It is expected this will increase the number of visitors to Soumela, which was believed to be hundreds of thousands annually before it was closed in 2015. Exactly where the cable car will be built, when construction will really commence and when it could possibly be completed is unknown <www.hurriyetdailynews.com/construction-for-sumela-monastery-cable-car-project-to-start-in-march-140992>.

13. The Pontic Greek Dialect

Introduction

After around 2,500 years of occupation in Pontos, the Greeks were expelled from Turkey in the early 1920s during the Population Exchange between Greece and Turkey. When these Pontic Greeks arrived in Greece most of them spoke Pontic Greek, an old form of the Greek language.

Today, the Pontic Greek dialect spoken in Greece has included terms from modern Greek. The Pontic Greek dialect is still spoken by a few Muslim Turks in Pontos, who not exposed to modern Greek terms, speak a cleaner version of the dialect called *Romeyka*. Most of the ancestors of these Muslims were forced to convert to Islam [between the 15th and 18th century] (Mackridge 1987). Pontic Greek and *Romeyk*a are also spoken (to a degree) in the wider diaspora and have absorbed local terms from the communities in which these people live.

Pontic Greek dialect in Pontos

In the 11th century when the Seljuk Turks invaded Anatolia, the Pontic Greek dialect became isolated from other Greek speaking areas. There are hundreds of words in Pontic Greek that are unfamiliar to other Greek dialects. There is also a number of archaic words and forms that are preserved in the dialect (Mackridge 1987). So, it is not surprising that to *Demotic* Greek speakers, Pontic Greek is generally incomprehensible.

The most archaic form of the Pontic Greek dialect (*Romeyka*) has survived among the Muslims from the Of region (east of Trabzon, see Figure 13.1), who under pressure from the *derebeys* [feudal valley lords] in the 17th century converted to Islam (Dawkins 1937). In the past, many Turkish settlers near Of became *Romeyka* speakers since it was the major local language (Mackridge 1987).

According to Özkan (2013), today *Romeyka* is spoken in certain villages in the following four parts of the Trabzon region (Figure 13.1):

- The Tonya district.
- Beşköy in the Köprübaşi districts (east of Trabzon) in the upper valley of the Manachos River which flows into the Black Sea at Sürmene.
- The Of district: in the Çaykara, the Dernekpazari (north of Çaykara) and the Uzungöl districts.
- The Maçka district in the Galyana valley.

The highest concentration of *Romeyka* speakers also come from the region around Of. Although the number of speakers of *Romeyka* is decreasing, it remains a preferred language spoken when *Romeyka* speakers meet (Özkan 2013).

In Turkey today, children do not speak *Romeyka* as well as their *Romeyka*-speaking parents due to a number of factors such as the Turkish language and not *Romeyka* is taught in schools (Sağlam 2017).

Dr Sitaridou states that when the Islamisation of many Christians in Pontos took place, the *Romeyka* of the Muslims was isolated from the Christian Greek speakers. The movement of Muslim *Romeyka* speakers

Figure 13.1: Area around Trabzon near the Black Sea (Nişanyan & Nişanyan 2001, p. 217). (Scale: Tonya to Uzungöl, 90 km.)

from the Trabzon region, coupled with the influence of the Turkish-speaking majority, has left *Romeyka* vulnerable to extinction (<www.romeyka.org/the-romeyka-project/rediscovering-romeyka> accessed October 2018).

Pontic Greek dialect in the former Soviet Union

Pontic Greeks had been emigrating to Russia and the Caucasus from the 18th century up to the Population Exchange. In the 20th century and especially in the years following the collapse of the Soviet Union (in 1991), many Pontic Greeks moved from the former Soviet Union to Greece.

In the 1930s it was believed that there were 100,000 Pontic Greek speakers at Rostov-on-Don in Russia who spoke Pontic Greek consistent with the Pontic Greek spoken in the Gümüshane district (south of Trabzon) so they came from this Pontic district (Dawkins 1937). Another feature of the Pontic Greek dialect is the influence of other languages, especially Turkish and in the former Soviet Union, Russian and Caucasian languages as well. There are a lot of lexical borrowings in Pontic Greek spoken in the former Soviet Union, but it also keeps Turkish borrowings that are inherited from the period Pontic people lived in Anatolia (Berikashvili 2017).

Conclusion

Recently there has been an effort by Pontic Greek associations in Greece and in the diaspora and some Greek Universities to teach the Pontic Greek dialect. As a result, the future of the Pontic Greek dialect looks much brighter. However, the future of *Romeyka* in Turkey is dire. The future of the Pontic Greek dialect spoken in Russia and Georgia is unknown. It is unknown how many Pontic Greek or *Romeyka* speakers exist. Only a minority of people with Pontic Greek descent are fluent speakers of the dialect. Are you a fluent speaker?

14. Trabzon Metropolitan Chrysanthos

Chrysanthos (Plate 14.1) was born Charilaos Philippidis in 1881 in Komotini, Thrace [now in Greece]. In 1904, after his theological studies in Constantinople, he was ordained archdeacon at the Cathedral of Trabzon. In 1907 he resigned his duties and continued his studies in Europe. In 1911, he returned to Constantinople and was appointed archivist at the Patriarchate and editor of the official journal of the Patriarchate. In 1913, he was appointed Greek Orthodox Metropolitan of Trabzon (Dalakoura-Kamara 2003). This metropolitanate stretched along the Black Sea coast 115 km west and 165 km east of Trabzon (Kiminas 2009).

Plate 14.1: Chrysanthos, Metropolitan of Trabzon (Ligue Nationale du Pont Euxine 1919)

In Trabzon, Chrysanthos proved to be a skillful diplomat. When the Turks evacuated the town in April 1916, during World War I, due to the encroaching Russian army, the Ottoman governor granted the control of the town to a provisionary administration headed by Chrysanthos (Akarca 2014).

The Russian forces in the greater Trabzon region (1916–early 1918) established a town administration formed of the residents of the town. Although Chrysanthos did not take part in this administration, he enjoyed real influence (Mintslov 1923). During the Russian occupation, the Russian Professor Uspenskii unearthed the skeleton of Trebizond emperor Alexios IV Komnenos [died 1429] near the Chrysokephalos Church. He handed the relics to Chrysanthos who later took the relics to Greece (Akarca 2002).

The humanitarianism of Chrysanthos continued during the Russian occupancy with the hospitality of thousands of Turkish refugees against the revenge of the Armenians in the Russian Army [against the Muslim Turks for the 1915 genocide of the Armenians]. The Russian army officer in Trabzon, Mintslov, described Chrysanthos as a young man of great intellect who spoke excellent French and German, but no Russian (Mintslov 1923). He also spoke *Demotic* Greek and probably Pontic Greek.

Russian Tsar, Nicholas II, abdicated in early 1917 and a provisional government assumed power (Rogan 2015). With the October 1917 Revolution, the Russian troops began leaving the occupied Ottoman lands. New authorities emerged in Trabzon, with Chrysanthos being the most influential (Akarca 2008, 2014).

In January 1918, a month before the Turkish re-occupation of Trabzon, Chrysanthos distributed arms to some Christian villages for their defence against Turkish brigands (Greek Patriarchate 1919). The complete withdrawal of the Russians from the Trabzon region [by February] forced 30,000 Greeks from the region to leave with the Russians (Fotiadis 1987). Chrysanthos' influence during the Russian occupation of Trabzon was important in limiting the violence by Turkish bandits against the Greeks in the countryside (Mintslov 1923).

In 1919, Chrysanthos was sent by the Ecumenical Patriarchate to Paris, London and to Italy as the representative of the peaceful negotiations after World War I. He defended the rights of the Greeks in Anatolia, especially those in Pontos. After returning to Trabzon he lobbied for the formation of a Greek-American federation with the union of Pontos with Armenia (Clark 2006).

In 1920–21, for his own safety, he left for Constantinople and in 1922 to Athens (Dalakoura-Kamara 2003). For his actions overseas, Chrysanthos, in late 1921, was sentenced to death by the Turkish authorities (Kiminas 2009). In Athens, in 1926, he became the representative of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. From 1928 till 1949 he served as chairman of the Committee of Pontic Studies in Athens [which publishes the journal *Archives of Pontos*]. In 1933, he published his famous over 1,000 page landmark volume, Chrysanthos (1933), *The church of Trabzon* in the *Archives of Pontos*. From 1938 until 1941 he was Archbishop of Athens and All Greece (Dalakoura-Kamara 2003). In 1949, this great man died.

15. The Single- and Double-Headed Eagle Symbols in Pontos

Introduction

The origin of the single- and double-headed eagle emblems is from Mesopotamia in the 4th millennium BC. The eagle symbol was used by many people including the Hittites, Ancient Greeks and Romans (Alexander 1989; Himmetoğlu 2017). Later, the single- and double-headed eagle symbols were used by the Seljuk Turks (and other Turkmen) and the Byzantine Palaiologan dynasty (1261–1453). In Pontos, ancient Greek coins were struck at Sinope around 4th century BC with the symbol of the eagle (Plate 15.1). Both the single- and double-headed eagle symbols were used by the Komnenoi emperors of the small Byzantine empire of Trebizond (1204–1461) (Angelov and Herrin 2012).

Plate 15.1: Sinope silver drachma coin, 4th–3rd centuries BC, <www.ancientimports.com>

Single- and double-headed eagle symbols in the Byzantine empire

Isaac I Komnenos

The Roman imperial eagle was single-headed, but in 1057 the Byzantine emperor of Constantinople, Isaac Komnenos, adopted the two-headed eagle [this point is contentious] (Ambrose 2013).

The following Komnenoi emperors of the small Byzantine empire of Trebizond have official portraits or descriptions of their official robes decorated with or without eagles.

Manuel I Komnenos (reign 1238–63)

The double-headed eagle was not a symbol of the Komnenoi Trebizond empire in the 13th century, when a single-headed eagle was twice displayed in the St Sophia Church in Trabzon. (There was also an inscription of Alexios II Komnenos (reign 1297–1330) above a single eagle on the western

wall of the lower city in Trabzon.) The double-headed eagle was a common Seljuk and Turkmen symbol, at this time (Bryer and Winfield 1985). In 1850, Finlay observed the following in the former St Sophia Church in Trabzon:

> I was fortunate enough to find a full-length figure of the emperor Manuel … his robes are adorned on both sides, down the front, with two rows of single-headed eagles on circular medallions (Finlay 1851, p. 394).

This portrait is now lost. The common use of eagles in Anatolian art in the 13th century prevents any specific association of the eagles at St Sophia with the Komnenoi emperors. The eagle is not a heraldic symbol (at this time) as both single- and double-headed eagles are also associated with the Palaiologan emperors in Constantinople (Eastmond 2004).

John II Komnenos (reign 1280–85 & 1285–97)

In 1282, John II Komnenos went to Constantinople to marry the daughter of the Byzantine emperor (Miller 1926). It was believed the robes that John II wore were probably adorned with single-headed eagles (Finlay 1851). In reality, we do not know what robes he actually wore. The belief that the special emblem of the Komnenoi emperors was the single-headed eagle may be a Trabzon myth started in 1827 by the historian Fallmerayer. It is unlikely that John II would deliberately wear inferior single-headed eagles in an imperial portrait (Bryer and Winfield 1985).

Alexios III Komnenos (reign 1349–90)

In the portrait of the couple on the imperial edict of the Dionysiou Monastery at Mt Athos, Greece, the wife of Alexios III Komnenos wore a robe patterned with double-headed eagles. Alexios III wore official robes with no eagles. From the mid-14th century, symbols of double-headed eagles appear on the coins of the Trebizond empire and on Catalan [NE Spain] maps. The double-, rather than the single-headed eagle seems to have been used as a mark of the empire. It was, of course, a much more common symbol of the Palaiologan Byzantine empire of Constantinople (Bryer and Winfield 1985).

Eagle emblem used by Pontic Greek associations today

Pontic Greek community associations in Greece and in the diaspora enrich their iconography with the single-headed spread-winged eagle which appeared on the silver coins minted at Sinope around the 4th century BC (Plate 15.1). This symbol is most prominent in the press and in Pontic periodicals, the most important being the journal *Archeion Pontou* [*Archives of Pontos*] (Bruneau 2013). The symbol of an eagle on ancient Greek coins from Sinope is the oldest example of this symbol in Pontos.

The Komnenoi emperors of Trebizond (1204–1461) used both single- and double-headed spread-winged eagles as symbols. Since the black double-headed spread-winged eagle on a gold background is now the symbol of the Greek Orthodox church, it is fitting that a unifying symbol for Pontic Greeks should be a single-headed spread-winged eagle.

16. Greek Crypto-Christians in Pontos

Introduction

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. After the sultan's Tanzimat reforms in the 19th century, which also granted religious freedom, it made conversion back to Christianity possible for crypto-Christians. In Pontos, crypto-Christians were also called *Kromlides* (from Kromni, 70 km south of Trabzon) (Tzedopoulos 2009) and *Stavriot* from the Stavri region near Kromni.

From at least the mid-17th century, the Greeks of Gümüshane (south of Trabzon, see Figure 1.1) and the surrounding villages were exempt from normal taxes in return for working in silver mining, smelting or in the related charcoal burning. Its charcoal came from an area later to be identified with crypto-Christianity. These villages and those around Kromni and Stavri were also excused the *haraç* (*harach*) tax which Christians paid in lieu of military service (Bryer and Winfield 1970).

Crypto-Christians in Pontos were not polygamists and they were married in a Christian as well as a Muslim ceremony. When they died they had a Christian as well as a Muslim funeral (Pears 1911). The secret Christian rites of Greeks in the Trabzon district included their children being baptised with both a Christian and Muslim name (Hasluck 1929).

Historical perspective

During the century after 1461, Christian Trabzon became a predominantly Muslim town, due to the influx of Muslims, the deportation of Christians and through conversion of Christians to Islam. (See <www.pontosworld.com/index.php/history/sam-topalidis/79-a-history-of-trabzon?start=1>.) Conversion to Islam was much slower to the south of Trabzon where the great Greek monasteries of Peristereota, Soumela and Vazelon kept their local lands and had better control over their flock. In the late 17th century, Christians in Trabzon like the village Of (east of Trabzon) were pressured by the Pontic *derebeys* (feudal valley lords) to convert to Islam (Bryer 1968; Bryer and Winfield 1985).

The Tanzimat reforms

The Tanzimat was a period of legislation and reform during 1839–76 in the Ottoman empire (Shaw and Shaw 2002). In 1844, the death penalty for renouncing Islam was abolished. 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 special tax, the *haraç*, in lieu of this service (Zürcher 2017). In 1856, a new reform charter, *Hatt-i Hümayun*, proclaimed the principle of freedom of religion within the Ottoman empire. From then, the building of new churches with belfries also became much easier (Bryer 1983).

As a consequence, in July 1857, the *Kromlides* presented a petition to the pasha and western consuls in Trabzon appealing for protection on behalf of 55,755 people of 58 settlements, of whom 52% were claimed to be open Christians, 31% crypto-Christians and 17% Muslims. The most intensive crypto-Christian areas in the 1857 petition had been dependent on

silver-mining, smelting and charcoal burning. Smaller crypto-Christian elements were listed near alum mines where some of the miners of Gümüshane moved after 1829 (Bryer 1970).

In 1858, it was reported that the residents of the villages in the area of Giresun and Tripoli (west of Trabzon) were crypto-Christians, who spoke Pontic Greek and had two names (one Christian and one Muslim) (Fotiadis 1996).

Economic conditions of the Gümüshane region

Gümüshane's silver mining economy began to decline in 1829 and the emergence of the crypto-Christians after 1856 are related (Bryer 1983). Following the closure of the Gümüshane mines in the 1850s, the *Kromlides* were obliged to serve in the army as former Muslims and be recorded under both their Muslim and Christian names. In this way the Ottoman state gave them a double identity and placed them in a special category called the *tenassur rum*, (Greek-Orthodox Ottoman subjects sharing the Muslims' obligation to arms). To discourage further Christianisation, the Ottomans denied the *Kromlides* property inheritance rights (a Christian could not inherit from a Muslim, so a Christian convert could not inherit from his recorded Muslim parents) (Tzedopoulos 2009).

Then the Ottoman state targeted the *Stavriots* of the Ak-Dag Maden region (south of Samsun). They were miners (and their families) who came from the Stavri region (near Gümüshane) who had not taken part in the declaration of Orthodoxy of 1857 by the *Kromlides*. Instead, the *Stavriots* 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. They refused to be registered as Muslims. Finally, in 1910 the *Kromlides* and the *Stavriots* were allowed to register with just their Christian names. The Ottoman authorities then subjected the *Stavriots* to new hardships by refusing to recognise them as Christians. They declared marriages between Christian men and *Stavriots* women null and void, and tried to enlist the *Stavriots* in Muslim army units (Tzedopoulos 2009).

Concluding remark

The crypto-Christians claimed their Christian faith in 1856 only after the mines of Gümüshane were abandoned and the increase in religious freedom. As they had never paid the *haraç* before they still demanded exemption, but mining service had ended and they were now eligible for military service. The argument dragged on into the 1860s (Bryer and Winfield 1970).

It is uncertain if there are any crypto-Christians in the Trabzon region today.

17. Family History of Sofia Dimarhos

Sofia Spyridopoulou (Plate 17.1) was born in 1934 in Veria, northern Greece. In 1935 her family moved to Katerini. Sofia migrated to Australia in 1961. In 1962, her fiancé, Demetre Dimarhos, also migrated to Australia. Demetre was born in Katerini and his Pontic Greek father was from the Caucasus but his roots were from Trabzon in Pontos. Demetre's father changed his name from Dimarhopoulos to Dimarhos.

Sofia's father, Savvas Spyridopoulos was born in 1905 in the river-town of Amasya in Pontos (Figure 1.1), but his family soon moved to Ordu on the Black Sea. Sofia's mother, Maria Karapidou was born in 1905 in Ordu.

Plate 17.1: Sofia Spyridopoulou

Sofia's mother's father, Savvas Karapidis, was also born in Ordu and he tin-plated the inside of copper cookware as an occupation. He owned a two storey house decorated with Persian carpets. He also owned a house at Tsampasin, the *parhar,* 50 km south of Ordu. Savvas worked away from Ordu for six months of the year and travelled as far as Bulgaria.

He was forced by the Turks to join the second Greek exodus (death march) (Note 17.1) from Ordu in August 1921. His children were evicted from their house but were fed and housed by the generosity of neighbouring Turks. Two days after Savvas returned home in 1922, he died.

Sofia's mother's mother, Sofia Hionides, was born in Ordu and died just prior to the August 1921 Greek exodus. In July 1914, Sofia Hionides' brother, Ioannis, was conscripted into the Ottoman army. Ioannis deserted and went into hiding in Ordu. In August 1917, he boarded a Russian ship and ended up at Batumi on the Black sea coast. In 1920 he returned to Ordu. In August 1921, the Turks forced Ioannis to join the second Greek exodus (death march) from Ordu into the interior. Ioannis froze to death in early 1922 near Bitlis (in eastern Anatolia near Lake Van) (Hionides 1996).

In 1915, Sofia's mother (aged 10 years old) witnessed Armenians, mostly children, being marched by Turks in Ordu.

On the 19th August 1917 Ordu was bombarded by the Russian fleet (Note 17.1). Afterwards they carried-off some Greek inhabitants. Expulsion began in September 1917. The deportation of Greek villages around Ordu took place between October 1916 and September 1917 (Greek Patriarchate 1919).

Sofia's great-grandmother, Maria Hionides was drowned in the Black Sea by the Turks soon after the Russian ships departed (Hionides 1996). Topal Osman entered Ordu in December 1920 with a band of 100 men and inflicted damage and murder in the town.

Sofia's mother's parents had died by the time Sofia's mother, Maria Karapidou, (aged 17 years), was forced in late 1922 to leave Ordu for Greece. Maria left by ship with her two younger brothers and her older sister and many other orphaned children.

Sofia's father's mother, Maria, died in Ordu in 1921, before the second Greek exodus. Sofia's father's father, Elias Spyridopoulos, died on the 1921 Greek exodus. Sofia's father, the then 16 year old Savvas was saved from the Greek exodus by a Turkish friend who took care of him. This Turk supported two wives. Savvas, who tended the Turk's cattle, was much loved by the Turk. In 1922 (before the survivors of the 1921 Greek exodus had returned to Ordu) one of the wives helped Sofia's father to escape on a ship for Greece.

Savvas settled in Veria where he married. Sadly his wife died and he married his second wife, Sofia's mother Maria. In 1935, the family moved to Katerini, where he grew tobacco.

Around 1937, Savvas found his older sister Rothi in northern Greece. In 1941, during the German occupation of Greece in World War II, the Germans imprisoned Sofia's mother for hiding two New Zealand soldiers.

In 1952, a friend, returned to Ordu on a holiday and he saw the Turk who had saved Sofia's father from the 1921 Greek exodus. The Turk gave him a letter asking Savvas to visit him in Ordu. And so, in 1953, 31 years after leaving Pontos, and against his family's wishes, Savvas visited the Turk

in Ordu. Savvas died in 1957 in Greece. Sofia's mother, Maria, moved to Australia where she died in 2000.

Note 17.1

The Turks forced several 'exoduses' of Pontic Greeks from Ordu. After the Russians invaded NE Anatolia in 1916 during World War I, the Ottoman Turks uprooted Greeks without adequate provisions, shelter and marched into the interior of Anatolia. Many perished.

The New York Times, 7 April 1918, article stated a Russian flotilla of nine warships and three torpedo boats bombarded Ordu on 9 August 1917. The Russians aim was to destroy ammunition depots located in Ordu. After the Russians exploded the buildings and 2,000 Greeks onshore were able to scramble aboard the Russian ships and were taken to Trabzon. On 20 July 1917 orders were sent from Ottoman army headquarters stating:

> by July 25 let no Greek man over 16 and under 50 be found in Ordu. Send all such on into the interior. As for the families, we will send further orders later (Kostos 2010, p. 96).

Immediately after the Russians left Ordu in August 1917, the Turks ordered the first Greek exodus out of Ordu. More than 3,000 Greeks departed in groups into the interior. They went to Niksar and finally to Erbaa. This took 30 days with around 40% of the Greeks dying from hunger and disease (Saltsis 1955 in Hionides 1996).

After World War I, the survivors of this first Greek exodus returned home. In May 1919, the Greek army landed in Smyrna on the west coast of Anatolia. A few days later on 19 May, Mustafa Kemal (who from 1934 was called *Atatürk*) landed in Samsun where he planned the next round of Greek persecutions.

On 9 June 1921, a Greek warship bombed Inebolu (west of Sinope). With the perceived danger of a Greek landing in Samsun, the Turks decided that all Greek males aged between 15 and 50 years should be deported to the interior (Mango 2002). Thus, from June 1921 commenced the second Greek exodus from Ordu. From Ordu they passed inland by Tsampasin. At Bitlis, (SE Anatolia) they stayed four months building roads (Hionides 1996).

In September 1922 after the Turks had recaptured Smyrna from the Greek forces, Greek Christians were forced to leave Turkish soil. After the January 1923 Lausanne Convention which dealt with the Population Exchange, those Greeks who had not left Turkey were forced to leave (with the major exception of Greeks in Istanbul). The men were still in exile. This can be considered the third Greek exodus from Ordu.

18. Where to From Here?

The aim of this booklet is to provide a brief introduction on the history of Greeks from Pontos to pass on to our youth. What can we do to maintain our history and culture? Here are some suggestions.

Learn about our roots, history and culture

In order to learn about our roots, we must immediately document our family genealogy and history from our older family members. This history must be preserved and passed on to younger family members. A growing area for genealogical purposes is the testing of people's DNA. However, care is needed not to build expectations before following this route (Note 18.1). We must also convey Pontic Hellenism throughout the world to students in their many languages.

Building bridges between people

There is a need to continue to build bridges between Pontic people. Bridges already have been built by the collaborative work between Pontic Greek and Pontic Turk musicians. More bridges can be built by increased cultural tourism back to Pontos in Turkey.

There are other opportunities to foster the exchange of Pontic culture between Turkey and Greece via museum exhibitions in Greece of Pontic Christian icons and manuscripts held in Turkish museums. This could be complemented by the timely renovation of historic Ottoman buildings in Greece to attract Turkish and other tourists. An exhibition in Greece and Turkey of items removed from the Trabzon region in World War I by the Russians is also long overdue (Note 18.2).

Surely also there is a need for a co-ordinated vision in the Pontic community to link Armenians, Greeks, Laz and Turks to help spread Pontic culture and history. Pontic people are stronger together than apart. It would be grand if we had Synapantemas (gatherings) where Pontic Armenians, Pontic Greeks, Pontic Laz and Pontic Turks could meet in friendship.

Recognition of the genocide of Christians and other minorities

Finally, for those with Christian roots or roots of other former minority subjects of the Ottoman empire, it is beholden on us to continue to apply pressure on the Republic of Turkey to acknowledge the genocide of Armenian, Assyrian, Greek and other Ottoman minorities perpetrated by the Committee of Union and Progress and its agents and then by the Kemalist Nationalists in the formation of the new Turkish Republic in 1923.

Note 18.1

> … for those who assume that personal ancestry testing results have the authority of science, it is important to keep in mind that many of the results are easily misinterpreted and rarely include the warnings that scientists attach to tentative findings (Reich 2018, p. 269).

Note 18.2

In 1916, the Russian archaeologist Uspenskii sent manuscripts, documents and books collected in the Trabzon region to St Petersburg to the Imperial Academy of Sciences (Akarca 2002).

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The Panagia Soumela icon

Sam Topalidis' grandmother at Panagia Soumela monastery, near Veria Greece, 15 August 1965