

An Introduction to Pontic Greek History: Part IV



**Sam Topalidis
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Sam Topalidis Canberra, Australia 2025
sam.topalidis@bigpond.com

Cover page, 19 May Genocide of Pontos memorial in Thera, Island of Santorini, author's photograph 2024.

Table of Contents

	Page
Table of Contents	3
Preface	4
Chapter	
1. History of Miletos: the Greek Coloniser of Pontos	6
2. Mithradates VI, King of Pontos	12
3. The Fall of the Komnenoi Trebizond Empire 1461	14
4. History of Amasya	16
5. History of Unye	19
6. History of Tirebolu (Tripolis)	22
7. History of Platana (Akçaabat)	24
8. History of Sürmene	27
9. History of Ophis (Of)	29
10. History of Rize	30
11. Hazelnuts in Northern Türkiye	32
12. Black Sea Hamsi (Anchovy)	34
13. References	36

Preface

When Pontic Greeks left Pontos in the 1920s for Greece (their presumed homeland) following persecution and as part of the Exchange of Populations, the local Greeks called them foreigners, among other derogatory terms. Then, after World War II, with Greece left in tatters, some Pontic Greeks left for a better future to Australia. The Australians often referred to them as 'wogs'. Pontic Greeks have repeatedly faced persecution and discrimination but remain resilient (S Topalidis and A Tsilfidis).

This booklet is the fourth part of a series of short articles called *An Introduction to Pontic Greek History*. It aims to be an easier to read document on Pontos, the north-east corner of Anatolia near the Black Sea. This booklet is a summary of some of my more recent articles (focussing on history up to the 1920s) which are available on the PontosWorld website at: www.pontosworld.com/index.php/history/sam-topalidis The booklet is designed to be read in its entirety—there will be some unavoidable repetition. Within this booklet, words within square brackets '[]' within a reference are my own words. All the references are included at the end of the booklet.

In the following chapters, there is often a lack of information (due to a lack of reliable sources in English). This booklet includes the following chapters:

Chapter 1, *History of Miletos: the Greek Coloniser of Pontos*. From the 7th century BC, Greek Miletos on the west coast of Anatolia helped to establish Greek colonies around the Black Sea, including Pontos. It suffered after its harbours were silted over in the 17th century. It was abandoned in 1955 and relocated nearby.

Chapter 2, *Mithradates VI, King of Pontos*. In c.302 BC, Mithradates (of Persian descent) established the kingdom of Pontos, which survived until the reign of Mithradates VI (who died in 63 BC). Mithradates VI was a belligerent adversary of the Roman republic. He initiated a series of wars against the Romans that led to the expansion of Roman control in Anatolia.

Chapter 3, *The Fall of the Komnenoi Trebizond Empire 1461*. The Trebizond emperor, David Komnenos surrendered in 1461 to the Ottoman sultan. The emperor his officials, other notables and some of the wealthiest families were then sent to Constantinople. In 1463, the sultan executed David.

Chapter 4, *History of Amasya*. Amasya, south of Samsun, is an attractive town. Above the river hang the rock-hewn tombs of some of the Mithradates kings of Pontos.

Chapter 5, *History of Unye*. Unye is a coastal town east of Samsun which was colonised by Greeks. It is known for its production of hazelnuts.

Chapter 6, *History of Tirebolu (Tripolis)*. Tirebolu is a town west of Trabzon which was settled by Greeks after 400 BC. The town is clustered on and behind three rocky promontories.

Chapter 7, *History of Platana (Akçaabat)*. Platana was colonised by Greeks after 400 BC. Platana is a town which was used as an alternative port to Trabzon in bad weather.

Chapter 8, *History of Sürmene*. Sürmene is a coastal town east of Trabzon, colonised by Greeks. It has nearby villages where some Muslims still speak the *Romeyka* Greek dialect.

Chapter 9, *History of Ophis (Of)*. The Greeks colonised Ophis probably after 400 BC. Ophis, a coastal town, east of Sürmene is famous for having the oldest form of *Romeyka* Greek still spoken today.

Chapter 10, *History of Rize*. The Greeks established a colony at Rize, a coastal town east of Ophis. Rize is in the wettest province and in the main tea producing area in Türkiye.

Chapter 11, *Hazelnuts in Northern Türkiye*. The northern part of Türkiye produces most of the world's hazelnuts. In Pontos, the first recorded export of hazelnuts was in 259 BC.

Chapter 12, *Black Sea Hamsi (Anchovy)*. The small hamsi fish is part of Pontic folklore. It has been caught off the coast of Pontos and in the greater Black Sea for thousands of years. Hamsi were most probably used in fish sauces by the Greeks at least from the 5th century BC.

I wish to thank Michael Bennett and Russell McCaskie for their comments on this work. My latest two books Topalidis (2019; 2024) can be purchased at: www.afoikyriakidi.gr/en/search?orderby=position&orderway=desc&search_query=Topalidis. If the reader has any queries on Pontos, please contact me at: stopalidis@outlook.com

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Sam Topalidis

1. History of Miletos: the Greek Coloniser of Pontos

Introduction

The now deserted settlement of ancient Miletos is located 9 km from the Aegean Sea on the west coast of Türkiye (Fig. 1.1). From the 7th century BC, Miletos helped to found many of the Greek colonies on the shores of the Black Sea, including Pontos (north-east Anatolia, Fig. 1.2). Miletos was also distinguished by its scientific-philosophical figures. Before 500 BC, Miletos was the most important Greek settlement in Anatolia.



Fig. 1.1: Anatolia and the Black Sea region (Roller 2020:xi)

Early History

The oldest recorded human activity around Miletos comes from 3500–3000 BC. Then in c.3000–2000 BC, settlers from the Cycladic Islands in the Aegean Sea settled in Miletos. By c.1900 BC, the Minoans from Crete had established a trading colony at Miletos. In 1475–1415 BC, Minoan Miletos became Mycenaean Greek. Sometime between 1319 and 1295 BC Miletos was destroyed by the Hittites (Bryce 2023). Later, after the raids of the ‘Sea Peoples’ (Note 1.1), Miletos fell under the domain of the nearby Carians (c.1180–1050 BC) and Greek settlers from the Greek mainland in the late 11th and the early 10th centuries BC (Brückner et al. (2014); turkisharchaeonews.net/site/miletus).

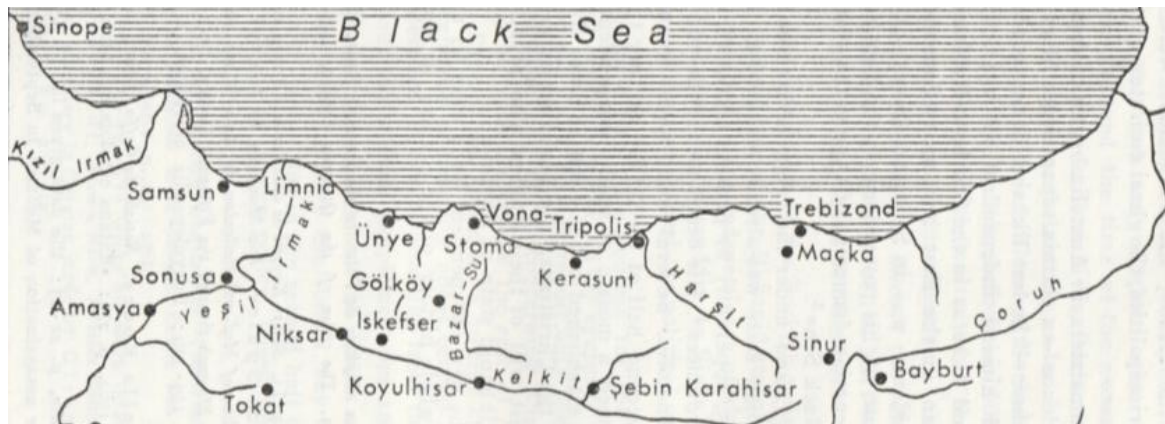


Fig. 1.2: North-east Anatolia (Pontos) (Amasya to Trebizond = 330 km, Zachariadou 1979:335)

In 546 BC, it then came under Persian control (turkisharchaeonews.net/site/miletus). Miletos participated in the Ionian Revolt against Persia (Ionia is on the west coast of Anatolia). In 494 BC, the Persians defeated the Milesians in a naval battle and then destroyed Miletos. Rebuilt Miletos then joined the Athenian-led Delian League against Persian aggression. After 404 BC, Miletos came again under Persian control. It later came under the control of nearby Caria. In 334 BC, Miletos was a fortified Persian defence which was captured by Alexander the Great (www.fhw.gr/choros/miletus/en).

Greek Colonisation of the Black Sea

Greek contact with local people in the Black Sea area occurred before Greek colonisation. Archaeological evidence does not prove any Greek settlement in the southern Black Sea coast before the last third of the 7th century BC (Manoledakis 2022).

From the second half of the 7th century BC, Lydia gradually invaded Ionian territory, this was when Ionia sent out its first colonies. Then, from the middle of the 6th century BC, the Persians began to conquer Ionian territory. In Miletos, this created a shortage of land which created a shortage of food and internal tensions (Tsatskhiladze 2006).

On the Black Sea coast, Miletos helped to establish probably less than 50 colonies. According to Greaves (2007) these early Greek colonies were located for defensive reasons, good ports, access to land for cultivation, close to mineral reserves or fish runs. Manoledakis (2022) believes that the reason for undertaking colonisation was primarily economic.

Southern Black Sea coast

Sinope may have been the earliest site at which Miletos established a Greek colony in the 7th century BC. Some of the other Greek colonies in Pontos included: Amisos (Samsun, founded by Miletos or by Miletos and Phocaea (north of Miletos), probably in the first half of the 6th century BC) (Manoledakis 2022), Tripolis (colonised after 400 BC), Ünye (colonised in 5th–4th century BC, at the earliest), Sürmene, Ophis and Rize. The last three settlements were colonised by Greeks after Trabzon was colonised. The

Greek colonies of Kotyora (Ordu), Kerasous (Giresun) and Trabzon were established by Sinope probably in the 6th century BC (Tsetschladze 2009a).

It appears that in the mid-4th century BC, there were more than 30 Greek settlements on the southern Black Sea coast (Manoledakis 2021). Other Ionian centres also took part in this colonisation.

Each Greek colony in the Black Sea area probably started with at least several hundred settlers. They probably received acceptance from the local population to establish a colony because it was beneficial to the locals. The first Greek colonists of the Black Sea who left Miletos and other centres were probably underprivileged men. After the colony was established more women and men probably followed from Greek centres while local women would have also married Greek men in the colony.

Colchis (western Georgia)

In c.610–570 BC, Dioskurias (Sohoumi), Gyenos, Phasis and Batumi in Colchis were founded by colonisers from Miletos and were probably mixed Hellenic and local native settlements (Avram et al. (2004); Tsetschladze (2019)).

Strabo, in the 1st century AD wrote that Colchis' wealth was derived from its gold, silver, iron and copper. It also had timber and linen. The tale of Jason and the Argonauts who sailed from Greece to Colchis in search of the Golden Fleece may have explained early 13th century BC Mycenaean Greek expeditions into the Black Sea. Evidence suggests that gold in Colchis was often panned from rivers using sheepskins (www.worldhistory.org/article/425/jason--the-argonauts/).

Northern Black Sea coast

In the northern Black Sea area, the Greeks had to travel up to 500 km inland to establish contact with the local Scythian population (Tsetschladze 2015). By the second quarter of the 6th century BC, many Greek colonies in the north-eastern Black Sea were founded (Muratov (2015); Petropoulos (2021)). The region produced wine, grain, salted fish and salt (Roller 2020).

Between c.625–550 BC, Tanais was possibly founded by settlers from Miletos, while Borysthenes was founded by Miletos, Samos, Ephesos and possibly Smyrna. Olbia, followed by Panticapaeum, Nymphaeum and Theodosia (Fig. 1.1) were founded by Miletos. Hermonassa was founded jointly by Miletos and Mytilene (Lesbos) (Avram et al. (2004); Tsetschladze (2006, 2009b, 2019)).

Milesian Philosophers and Scientists

The earliest known Greek philosophers/scientists lived in Miletos in the 6th century BC. They were the first to abandon supernatural explanations for natural phenomena. The earliest Milesian philosopher, Thales (born 624 BC) was able to predict a lunar eclipse and the solstices. He believed that the earth was flat and floated on water. His fellow Milesian, Anaximander (born 610 BC), was the first Greek to draw a geographical map while Anaximenes (born 586 BC) believed that the earth was flat but floated on air (Pomeroy et al. 2018).

Hippodamus (born c.500 BC) from Miletos is credited with the invention of the grid-plan system in planning towns. Hecataeus (born

c.560 BC) was the author of a review of Greek mythology and a sailing guide to the ports of the eastern Mediterranean. Another Milesian was Isidore, an architect, physicist and mathematician who in the 6th century AD, together with Anthemius of Tralles, designed the famous Hagia Sophia Church in Constantinople (turkisharchaeonews.net/site/miletus).

Hellenistic Miletos (323–129 BC)

In 323 BC, when Alexander the Great died, Miletos came under the control of Caria. In 312 BC, Antigonos I [a General under Alexander] restored democracy in Miletos. Soon after 295 BC, Lysimachus [another General under Alexander] must have assumed power in the region until 281 BC, when he was defeated by Seleucus [an army officer under Alexander]. In 246–245 BC, Miletos came under Ptolemy III of Egypt. Then in 201 BC, Philip V of Macedonia captured Miletos (www.fhw.gr/choros/miletus/en/elinistiki.php?menu_id=5).

Apart from the pottery, the city was famous in antiquity for producing textiles and purple dye. This reputation continued until the Hellenistic and the subsequent Roman period (www.fhw.gr/choros/miletus/en/ikonomia.php?menu_id=8#:~:text=Regarding%20the%20local%20production%20of,Hellenistic%20and%20the%20Roman%20period).

Roman Miletos (129 BC–4th century AD)

From 129 BC, Miletos was ruled by the Romans (Liebeschuetz 2006). The history of Miletos from this period and into the early Roman empire is largely unknown. Nevertheless, Miletos retained its commercial importance during the reign of the Roman emperors Augustus (31 BC–14 AD) and Trajan (98–117 AD) (www.britannica.com/place/Miletus). In 164, Faustina, wife of the Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius, visited Miletos and financed the construction of the baths which were named after her (Fig. 1.3) and the completion of the Roman theatre (Plate 1.1) (www.ehw.gr/asiaminor/Forms/flLemmaBody.aspx?lemmaid=8177).

Eastern Roman (Byzantine) Empire Period (4th–11th centuries)

Under Eastern Roman emperor Justinian (reign 527–565), a new cathedral was built in Miletos, the baths were restored and the harbour was dredged (Liebeschuetz 2006).

A Byzantine chapel was erected to the north-east of the stadium. Further to the north, there was the Church of St Michael and the bishop's palace (Fig. 1.3). They were erected on the remains of the 3rd century BC Dionysus temple. From the 7th–9th century, Miletos was apparently abandoned, which could have been the consequence of the Arab raids (turkisharchaeonews.net/site/miletus).

The countryside flourished in the 10th and 11th centuries (Niewöhner 2016). By the late 11th century, a new settlement was built on Kaletepe. Upon the arrival of the Turks, the late Byzantine city was founded anew on the fortified Theatre Hill (Caner Yüksel 2019).

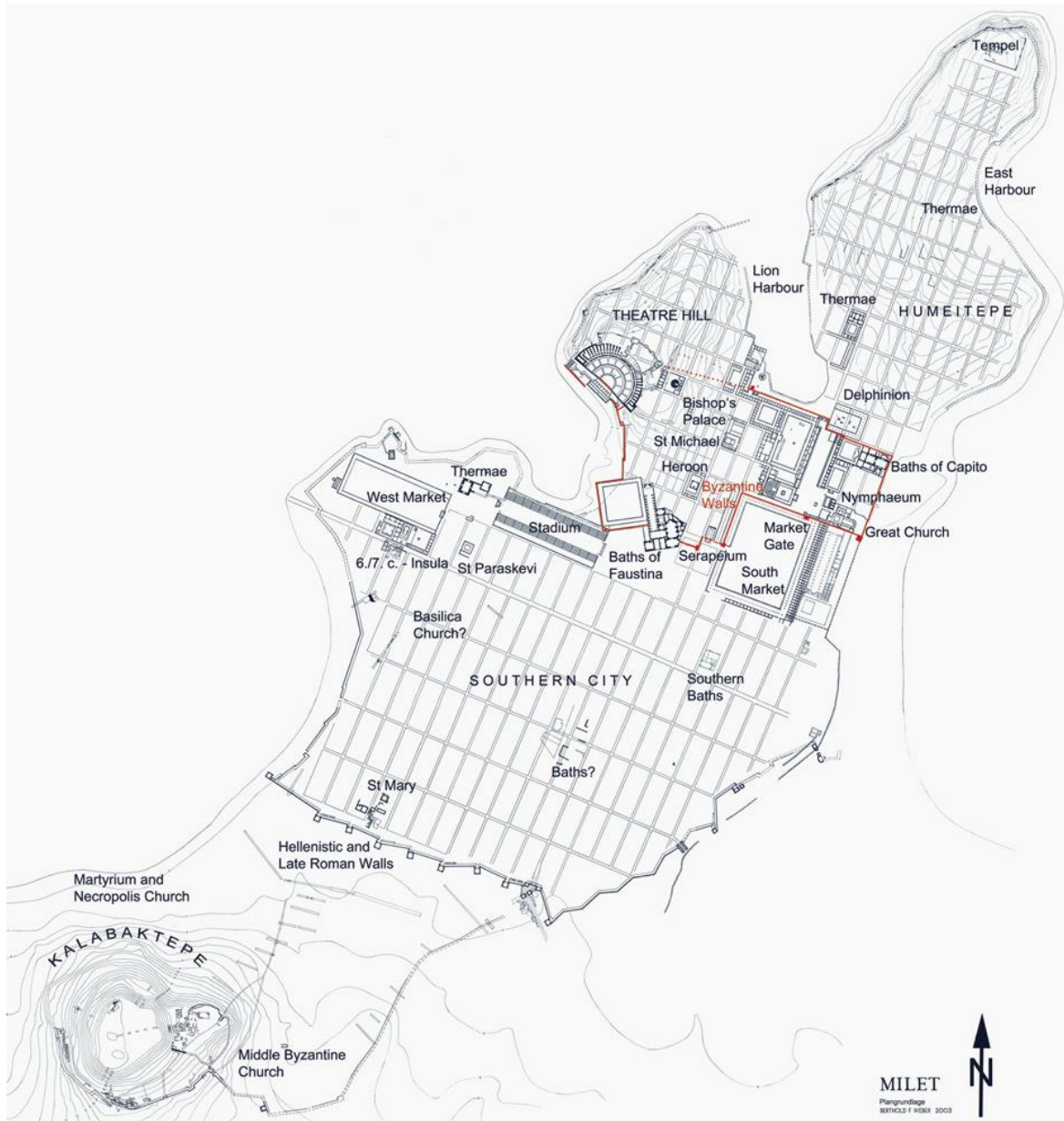


Fig. 1.3: Early Eastern Roman (Byzantine) Miletos (Niewöhner 2016:69)

Seljuk and Ottoman Turk Period to Today

In the 13th century, Balat, the Seljuk Turk settlement at Miletos, served as their port (Niewöhner 2016). From 1425, Balat became part of the Ottoman Turk empire but declined in the 16th/17th centuries due to the Maeander delta silting up (Brückner et al. 2014). In the 16th century, the settlement probably only had around 3,500 inhabitants (www.miletgrabung.uni-hamburg.de/en/milet/milet-geschichte.html).

In 1670, Evliya Çelebi visited Balat which had some 200 houses. Then in 1764, Chandler described it as, 'to a great extent, is spread with rubbish and overrun with thickets' (Meinardus 1973). From that period there is even less information on Balat.

After a catastrophic earthquake in 1955, the settlement was relocated some 3 km to the south and named Yeni Balat (Brückner et al. 2014).



Plate 1.1: The Roman theatre at Miletos (turkisharchaeonews.net/site/miletus)

Conclusion

The now deserted site of ancient Miletos had a rich history. It is well-known for helping to establish many Greek colonies around the Black Sea, including Pontos. It was a prosperous Greek settlement, which was also famous for its Greek philosophers and scientists. It was occupied by indigenous Anatolians with Minoan, Mycenaean, other Greeks, Romans, Eastern Romans (Byzantines), Seljuk Turks and Ottoman Turks. It suffered after its harbours were silted over in the 17th century and was finally abandoned in 1955 after an earthquake and relocated nearby.

Note 1.1

Sea Peoples

Records from the reign of Egyptian pharaoh Ramesses III (1184–1163 BC) tell us that large groups of peoples coming from across the sea swept through many parts of the Near East world, from Anatolia to Cyprus and across much of Syria and Palestine, leaving a trail of devastation in their wake before they were repulsed by the pharaoh's forces (Bryce 2023).

2. Mithradates VI, King of Pontos

Introduction

Alexander the Great left no plans for the organisation of his empire after he conquered Persia and thus there were 40 years of manoeuvring after his death in 323 BC, as his territories coalesced into various kingdoms. One of these minor kingdoms was Pontos (c.302–63 BC) in north-east Anatolia. Mithradates, of Persian descent emerged, declaring himself king in an area that became the kingdom of Pontos (Fig. 1.2) (Roller 2020).

Mithradates VI Ascends the Throne

After the creation of the kingdom of Pontos, there were six descendant kings before Mithradates VI (the last Pontic king) who was the most famous Mithradatic king (reign 116–63 BC) (Roller 2020).¹

Mithradates VI was a ruthless ruler of astonishing determination and political skill (Plate 2.1). He was one of the few men to offer a serious challenge to the Roman republic (www.britannica.com/biography/Mithradates-VI-Eupator).



Plate 2.1: Statue of the head of Mithradates VI
(www.worldhistory.org/Mithridates_VI/)

¹ In the 120s BC, Rome established the Roman province of Asia in western Anatolia (Fig. 1.1) (Thonemann 2016).

By at least 106 BC, it appears that he had gained control of Colchis (western Georgia) (Roller 2020). Greek cities around the Cimmerian Bosphorus in northern Black Sea were attacked by Scythians and asked for assistance from Mithradates VI. In 108 BC, Mithradates' forces defeated the Scythians and he became master of the north coast of the Black Sea. He sought a large part of Anatolia in addition to his Pontic empire (Scullard 2003).

The Mithradatic Wars

Around 107 BC, Lesser Armenia yielded to Mithradates. Then Nikomedes III of Bithynia (north-west Anatolia) and Mithradates agreed to partition Paphlagonia (Fig. 1.1). In 89 BC, Rome responded to Mithradates' expansionism with the First Mithradatic War (Roller 2020).

In 88 BC, Mithradates took the Roman province of Asia [in western Anatolia] and ordered the slaughter of Roman men, women and children in the Roman cities his armies encountered. This resulted in maybe 80,000 deaths. In the same year, Mithradates invaded Greece where he was defeated by the Roman General Sulla (Roller 2020). In 85 BC, he accepted peace terms (McGing 2009).

In 83 BC, General Licinius Murena marched Roman forces through Cappadocia where he was defeated by Mithradates. In 81 BC, this Second Mithradatic War ended (Roller 2020).

In 75 or 74 BC, the king of Bithynia died and left his kingdom to Rome. Mithradates installed his own king there which resulted in the Third Mithradatic War (73–64 BC). Although the Roman General Cotta was defeated, Roman General Lucullus invaded Pontos. Around 69 BC, Lucullus marched on Armenia (www.worldhistory.org/Mithridates_VI/).

After defeats by Mithradates' forces, Lucullus was replaced in 66 BC with Pompey. In the same year, Pompey defeated Mithradates and the king fled to the northern Black Sea where his son conspired to eliminate him. Mithradates committed suicide in 63 BC. Pontos remained allied with Rome until the 60s AD when it became part of the Roman empire (Roller 2020).

Conclusion

Mithradates VI was a belligerent adversary of the Roman republic. He ruled his kingdom for over 50 years and his reputation lingered for hundreds of years after his death. He tried to liberate Anatolia from the Romans. Mithradates' determination, his refusal to admit defeat and his broad vision was impressive. He initiated a series of wars that led to the expansion of Roman control in Anatolia (www.ebsco.com/research-starters/history/mithradates-vi-eupator).

3. The Fall of the Komnenoi Trebizond Empire 1461

Trabzon and Ottoman Sultan Mehmed II

The Ottoman sultan Mehmed II wanted to take possession of Sinope and Trabzon (Inalcik 1960). From 1458 however, Trebizond Byzantine emperor David Komnenos (Note 3.1) established an anti-Ottoman alliance with Uzun Hasan, chief of a Turkmen tribe that controlled much of eastern Anatolia and Turkman Ismail Isfendiyaroğlu (brother-in-law of the Ottoman sultan) from Sinope. Uzun Hasan's wife was a daughter of Trebizond emperor John IV Komnenos.

In mid-May 1461, the sultan's army had reached Ankara (Freely 2009). The sultan's navy of about 150 ships sailed from Constantinople under Kasim (Kaldellis 2014). The sultan's army reached Sinope (on the Black Sea coast) after the arrival of the sultan's fleet. Sinope surrendered. Kasim then sailed to Trabzon. The sultan and his grand vizier, Mahmud pasha, marched the army to Bayburt (Fig. 1.2). In July, the army divided. Mahmud pasha took a westerly route while the sultan took the easterly route north to Trabzon. The fleet besieged Trabzon with its formidable walls (Plate 3.1) for 32 days (Bryer and Winfield 1985). The sultan had made an agreement with Uzun Hasan that the sultan would not attack Hasan's lands if Hasan did not provide any assistance to the emperor of Trebizond (Kaldellis 2014).

Mahmud pasha reached Trabzon on or just before 14 August. He proposed terms of surrender to his Christian first cousin, George Amiroutzes (Kaldellis 2014). Amiroutzes was a philosopher and theologian who served as the senior financial official and Prime Minister of Trebizond emperor, David Komnenos (1458–1461) (*The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium* 1991).

Amiroutzes convinced his emperor to surrender on 15 August 1461, the day the sultan arrived with his army. The emperor, his officials, other



Plate 3.1: Part of the walls of Trabzon (author's photograph 2018)

notables and some of the empire's wealthiest families were sent by ship to Constantinople (Lowry 2009).

The sultan then selected around 1,500 young men and women from the town and the surrounding countryside. Of this number, around 800 of the boys were sent to Constantinople to join the Janissary Corps. The remaining around 700 young women and men were also sent to Constantinople to join the personal service of the sultan. The rest of the inhabitants remained in Trabzon. The sultan appointed a governor and left a garrison of Janissaries and guards in the town (Kaldellis (2014); Lowry (2009)).

The sultan's army then marched west initially along the Black Sea coast to Adrianople (in eastern Thrace). The fleet returned to Constantinople (Bryer and Winfield 1985). The sultan then ordered that the former emperor of Trebizond and his family be taken to Adrianople (Kaldellis 2014).

Murder of Former Emperor of Trebizond David Komnenos

In early 1463, the wife of Uzun Hasan sent letters summoning either a son of David Komnenos or his young nephew to Hasan's court. Amiroutzes handed these letters to the sultan, probably with benign intent. On reading these letters, the sultan became suspicious (Kaldellis 2014). David was accused of complicity in a plot against the sultan and imprisoned David with his wife and their children (Nicol 1996). David, along with his sons and his nephew, were executed in November 1463 (ehw.gr/asiaminor/Forms/fLemmaBody.aspx?lemmaid=3543). David's wife, their youngest son (aged six years) and their daughter were spared (Freely 2009).

Relationship Between Amiroutzes and Mehmed II

In Constantinople, Amiroutzes engaged in frequent theological and philosophical discussions with the sultan. In 1465, the sultan commissioned Amiroutzes to publish a translation of the 2nd century Greek manuscript *Geographica* by Greek scientist Ptolemy, into Arabic, as well as to compile the Ptolemaic maps into a single very large map. Mehmed was delighted with the finished work (Freely 2009).

Amiroutzes became very influential in Mehmed's court which enabled Mehmed to have a new view of the world and assist his expansion of the Ottoman empire (Modaffari 2020). Amiroutzes died before 1475.

Note 3.1

In 1204, Alexios and David Komnenos established the Komnenoi empire of Trebizond. They were the grandsons of Andronikos I Komnenos, the Eastern Roman (Byzantine) emperor. They fled Constantinople shortly before its fall to the 4th Crusade to the protection of their aunt queen Tamar in Georgia (Miller 1926).

In 1214, the Seljuk Turks occupied Sinope and the Komnenos empire of Trebizond was then reduced to a strip of land along the Black Sea coast to the east of Samsun (Miller 1926). Its wealth outstripped its size and population due to the trade via land and sea through Trabzon which was very profitable due to the taxes collected on goods entering and leaving the town to and from Asia (Nicol 1996).

4. History of Amasya

Introduction

The population of Amasya is around 93,500 people (2025 estimate) and is located south of Samsun at about 400 m above sea-level. It is an attractive town in north-eastern Türkiye (Fig. 1.2) and lies in the gorge of the Yeşilirmak River, hemmed in by cliffs. The left bank of the river forms a ledge on which a row of houses stand near the river. Over them hang the rock-hewn tombs of five of the Mithradatic kings of Pontos (Plate 4.1).

Early History

Excavation of the Harşena Castle on Mt Harşena in Amasya (Plate 4.2) shows there was an Iron Age settlement that extended towards the river; it also showed that the terraces contain cultural deposits from earlier settlements (Dönmez Ş 2014).

In the 5th century BC, Amasya was under Persian control. After the death of Alexander (323 BC), Mithradates (of Persian descent) established the kingdom of Pontos (c.302–63 BC) (Koromila 2002). Sometime between 297 and 266 BC, Mithradates established Amasya as his capital. In 183 BC, the capital was moved to Sinope (Roller 2020).

The famous Greek geographer Strabo was born in 63 BC in Amasya. Around 67 BC, the Romans laid siege to Amasya and they occupied Amasya for four centuries. Later in 1075, after 700 years of Eastern Roman (Byzantine) rule, the Turkmen Danishmends conquered Amasya. In 1178, Amasya was annexed by the Seljuk Turks and following their defeat in 1243, the region came under Mongol control (Etyemez (2011); Dönmez EEN (2014)).



Plate 4.1: Tombs of the Mithradatic Pontic kings, Amasya
(<https://turkisharchaeonews.net/city/amasya>)



Plate 4.2: Harşena Castle on Mt Harşena, Amasya
(<https://amasya.ktb.gov.tr/EN-259004/amasya-castle.html>)

Ottoman Rule

In 1387, the Ottoman Turks annexed Amasya. In 1402, Timur (of Turkic and Mongol decent) defeated the Ottomans at the Battle of Ankara. In the half century following this, the Ottomans tried to recoup their losses. After 1461, [and before 1486] part of Amasya's Muslim population was resettled in newly Ottoman Turk conquered Trabzon (McEvedy (1992); Kaldellis (2014); Karatas (2011)).

Sadly, little information is available in English on Amasya for the 16th–18th centuries. In 1836, Amasya's population was said to consist of from 3,000 to 4,000 Turkish houses, 750 Armenian and 100 or 150 Greek (Hamilton 1842:365–366).

In 1912, Amasya had around 15,000 Turks (or 57% of the population), 9,860 Armenians (37%), around 1,300 Greeks (5%) with one Greek church and 206 Protestants (Kitromilides and Alexandris 1984–85). In 1913, a fire burnt one third of the town (Etyemez 2011).

1915 Armenian Genocide

At the beginning of World War 1 the provincial district of Amasya had roughly 200,000 inhabitants, 64% of whom were Turks, 20% Greek and 16% Armenian. On 29 June 1915, 360 Armenian men were killed by Ottoman Turks and on 3 July, the deportation of Armenians began. The fifth (and last) convoy from Amasya comprised of around 1,000 Armenians—all males over eight years old, were killed (Kévorkian 2011).

1916 Greek Genocide

According to the Greek metropolitan of Amasya:

On the 27th December [1916] eighty Greeks among the richest and most important inhabitants of Amassia [Amasya] were arrested ... they were put into carts and conducted, like the vilest of criminals, through the mountains to the quarters of Kavza, whence they will be dispersed into different localities.

... the population of upper Amassia (Kadi Mahalessi) was ordered to assemble ... all these unfortunate creatures, numbering about 4,000 with their wives and children, were marched off into the interior, without any food ...

On the 1st of January [1917] ... All the notables and rich merchants, about 300 in all, were expelled.

The peasants who sought refuge at Amassia are in the meantime being despatched by groups to the interior in a completely destitute condition ...

'January [1917] more arrests of merchants were made. They were expelled to the interior on the 13th'. ...

The Christians of Amassia, Tharchamba and Bafra, were expelled at different intervals ... Villages that had escaped ravage so far were now set on fire, and their inhabitants deported (Greek Patriarchate 1919:120–121).

Post World War I

In 1919, Christian Armenian and Greek returnees to Amasya were forced back to their places of original deportation (Morris and Ze'evi 2019).

On 4 June 1921, 1,041 Greeks from Samsun were the first convoy exiled to the interior where the Turks killed 701 of them. The remaining 339 Greeks were led to Amasya (Tsirkinidis 1999). The fourth convoy of Greeks exiled from Samsun set out in June with 580 men—351 of the old men were sent to Amasya (Hionides 1996). In September 1921, about 250 Greeks were hanged in Amasya (Morris and Ze'evi 2019). In September 1922, following the Turkish victory in the Greco-Turkish War, there were operations against Greeks with women and children despatched to interior regions. According to Turkish records, 14,000 Greeks from Amasya [*kaza*, i.e. county]² were relocated (Korucu and Daglioglu 2019) (see Note 4.1).

Conclusion

Amasya, south of Samsun was not founded by Greek colonists. Relative to Turks and Armenians, few Greeks lived here. Tombs of five of the pre-Christian Mithradatic Pontic kings have become tourist destinations in the town. In the late 14th century it was annexed by the Ottoman Turks. The genocide of Christian Armenians and Greeks followed the same pattern as other areas of Pontos.

Note 4.1

The Exchange of Orthodox and Muslim Populations between Greece and Turkey was under the Lausanne Convention (January 1923). Most of the Greeks in Istanbul (i.e. those who were established before 30 October 1918) were exempt from this exchange as well as an equivalent number of Muslims in western Thrace. The exemption of the Orthodox Christian inhabitants on the islands of Imbros and Tenedos in the north-eastern Aegean Sea was specified in the wider Treaty of Lausanne signed in July 1923 (Hirschon 2003:8).

² Ottoman provinces were divided into districts (*sanjaks*) which were further divided into counties (*kazas*).

5. History of Unye

Introduction

Unye (classical and medieval Oinaion) is a coastal town located on the southern Black Sea coast, east of Samsun (Fig. 1.2; Plate 5.1). The town has an estimated population of 97,600 people (2022). There is no definitive explanation for how the town acquired its name. The town is known for its beautiful beaches and lush forests (trackstick.com/unye-turkey/). There is little reliable information in English on Unye.



Plate 5.1: Unye 2018 (www.hurriyetdailynews.com/tests-reveal-heavy-metal-content-in-unye-tap-water-131736)

History

Just east of Unye, a settlement was dated to 40000–12/10000 BC. Then the settlement was re-established in 4300–2950 BC and in the Early Bronze Age (Oy (2018); Yiğitpaşa and Yağci (2024)). Unye was colonised by Greeks in 5th–4th century BC (at the earliest), but there would have been indigenous people living at the site.

In c.302 BC, Mithradates established the kingdom of Pontus until the reign of Mithradates VI who was defeated by the Romans in 64 BC (see Chapter 2) (Roller (2020). It then became part of the Roman and then the Eastern Roman (Byzantine) empire.

In 1204, Unye was ruled by Alexios Komnenos of the independent small Byzantine kingdom of Trebizond (1204–1461) (Note 3.1). Unye may have passed into Ottoman Turk hands after 1404 (Bryer and Winfield 1985).

Unye flourished as a port, particularly in the early 19th century. However, a fire in 1839 nearly destroyed Unye and it then lapsed into a backwater. At that time, Greeks formed most of the population but seven years later, the town was two-thirds Turkish (Bryer and Winfield 1985). Towards the end of the 19th century, Unye's population was around 10,000 [mostly Muslims] (unye.gov.tr.translate.google.com/unyenin-tarihi?_x_tr_sch=http&_x_tr_sl=tr&_x_tr_tl=en&_x_tr_hl=en&_x_tr_pto=sc). By 1914, the Greek population had dropped to around 2,500 Greeks with 700 Armenians (Lazaridis (1988); Kévorkian (2011)).

There were quarries and iron, silver lead and manganese mines in the district (unyekent.com/haber/1864-68-yillarinda-unye-vilayet-olmustu-17449.html).

Churches

In 1813–1814, there were two Greek churches and one Armenian church. The remains of the medieval Greek chapel of St Nicholas were destroyed by 1970 by Turkish treasure hunters (Bryer and Winfield 1985). In 1914, the other Greek church was The Holy Trinity Church (Plate 5.2) (<https://virtual-genocide-memorial.de/region/page/36/>). It now serves as a Culture and Art Centre.



Plate 5.2: Former The Holy Trinity Greek Church, Unye 2023
(www.unye.bel.tr/sehir-rehberi/yali-kilisesi/)

Christian schools

In 1866, a small American Protestant mission was established at Unye (Topalidis 2023). In 1900, its little congregation was led by a Greek physician, with a small school (*The Missionary Herald* April 1900).

In 1870, there was one Greek Orthodox school with 330 students. By 1896, Unye had two Greek Orthodox schools (Lazaridis 1988).

Genocide

On the eve of the 1915 Armenian deportation, 25 Armenian notables from Unye county were shot. Later that year, the Armenian population was deported in four convoys (Kévorkian 2011).

After the Russians invaded north-eastern Anatolia in early 1916, the Turks responded by moving Greeks outside of Russian control from around the Anatolian Black Sea, without adequate provisions into the interior of Anatolia where many perished. In 1916, Turkish forces took 500 Greeks hostage [from the Unye area] and attacked Greek guerrillas at the village of Keris. The Turks killed the hostages and burnt their villages (virtual-genocide-memorial.de/region/page/36/).

In January 1917, there was a deportation from Unye of around 60 Greek men to Amasya (Fig. 1.2) where half died in the first 10 days (Ioannidou 2016). According to the Greek Patriarchate (1919), there was another Pontic Greek deportation in July 1917. Many Christians took shelter in the woods, with 300 of them escaping to Trabzon.

The Christians who returned to Unye after World War I were not given back their property which resulted in 300 of them needing to be fed by the relief fund (Fotiadis 2019).

On 16 June 1921, 101 Greek men from Unye were marched to Tokat (Hionides 1996). In September, the bands of Mustafa Kemal massacred most of the Christian males of Unye. While some men took refuge in the mountains, the Turks ordered the deportation of any remaining boys and women (Central Council of Pontus 1922).

In September 1922, after the Turks had recaptured Smyrna (at the end of the 1919–1922 Greco-Turkish War) from the Greek forces, Anatolian Greeks were being forced to leave for Greece. As a result of the Lausanne Convention, signed in January 1923, those Orthodox Christian Greeks who had not already left Turkey were forced to leave (Note 4.1).

Conclusion

Unye was colonised by Greeks in 5th–4th century BC (at the earliest). It was probably inhabited by Anatolian peoples before the Greeks arrived. In 1204, Unye was ruled by Alexios Komnenos of the small Byzantine kingdom of Trebizond. It may have passed into Ottoman Turk hands after 1404. The population was still predominantly Greek before the early 19th century.

6. History of Tirebolu (Tripolis)

Introduction

Tirebolu (formerly Tripolis) is a town on the Black Sea coast (Fig. 1.2; Plate 6.1) in north-east Türkiye, 7 km west of the mouth of the Harşit River west of Trabzon. Tirebolu has an estimated population of 20,700 (2022) and is clustered on and behind three rocky promontories which probably gave rise to its name—Tripolis in Greek means three cities (Bryer and Winfield 1985).

History

Tirebolu probably had indigenous people living there when it was settled by Greeks after 400 BC. (In 400 BC, Xenophon passed by the current settlement of Tirebolu and did not mention a settlement there.) In c.302 BC, Mithradates established the kingdom of Pontos along part of the southern Black Sea coast (Roller 2020) which existed until Mithradates VI was defeated by the Romans in 64 BC (Erciyas 2001) (see Chapter 2). Pontos then came under Roman, then Eastern Roman (Byzantine) rule up to 1204.



Plate 6.1: Tirebolu

(www.facebook.com/giresunkosebucak/posts/giresun-tirebolu-ii%C3%A7esi/1935205043251098/)

Tirebolu formed the border between the Komnenoi empire of Trebizond (1204–1461) and the Turkmen (Note 3.1). The Ottoman sultan, Mehmed II captured Tirebolu in 1461.

From the 16th century, the Greeks of Tirebolu were concentrated near the eastern castle (Kertmenjian 2009). Unfortunately, there is a lack of information on Unye in English for the 17th–19th century.

In June 1915, the displacement of its Armenian residents [genocide] began (Öztürkmen 2006). In November 1916, the Ottoman army used the encampment of the Russian army near the mouth of the Harşit River as an opportunity to do away with the Greeks in Tirebolu and Giresun. Claiming possible collaboration between Pontic Christians and Russians, the Ottomans began to deport the Greeks resulting in several thousand Orthodox Christians being marched from Tirebolu to Birk (Fotiadis 2019).

Churches

In the late 19th century, there were two Greek Orthodox churches and one Armenian church in Tirebolu. One of the Greek churches was dedicated to the Archangel Michael. There were also five old dilapidated Greek chapels (www.ehw.gr/asiaminor/Forms/fLemmaBody.aspx?lemmaid=6550 Cuinet (1892)). The other Greek Orthodox church was the Church of the 'Life Giving Spring' (Lazaridis 1988).

Population

By 1640, Tirebolu still had a Greek majority (ehw.gr/asiaminor/Forms/fLemmaBody.aspx?lemmaid=9640). However, Cuinet (1892) reported that in 1890, around 8,000 people lived in Tirebolu of whom 70% were Muslim, 25% Greek Orthodox and 5% Armenian.

In July 1921, of the around 2,500 Greeks in the town, only 200 women and children remained (Central Council of Pontus 1922). From September 1922, after the defeat of the Greek army in western Anatolia in the Greco-Turkish War (1919–1922), Greeks were pressured to leave Anatolia for Greece. The forced expulsion was finalised with the Exchange of Populations under the Lausanne Convention (January 1923) (Note 4.1).

Economy

By around 1856, hazelnuts replaced wine in importance. Hemp also yielded significant income for the inhabitants making ropes and textiles and indeed, the textile industry, based on hemp was widespread until World War I (www.ehw.gr/asiaminor/Forms/fLemmaBody.aspx?lemmaid=6550).

Greek education

In 1870, the first Greek boy's school was established. In 1905, there was a seven-grade boy's Greek school and a five-grade girl's Greek school with 350 pupils (Lazaridis 1988).

Conclusion

Tirebolu was colonised by Greeks after 400 BC. After control by the Mithradatic Pontic kings, Tirebolu came under Roman, Byzantine and then the Byzantine Komnenoi emperors of Trebizond (1204–1461). It was captured by the Ottoman sultan in 1461.

7. History of Platana (Akçaabat)

Introduction

In the 20s AD, the Greek geographer Strabo mentioned the settlement of Ermonassa (current Akçaabat), located just west of Trabzon on the Black Sea coast (Fig. 1.2). The first indication of the name 'Platana' maybe in 910 AD (Bryer and Winfield 1985). In 1640, Evliya Çelebi said the town was previously named Polathane (www.turkey.org/tourism/trabzon/trabtown.htm).

Platana provided a source of food for Trabzon and was used as an alternative port to Trabzon in bad weather (Plate 7.1) (Bryer and Winfield 1985). Akçaabat's population is estimated (2022) to be nearly 83,000.

Early History

Greeks from Sinope settled Trabzon in the 6th century BC. Platana was colonised by Greeks sometime after 400 BC. After the death of Alexander the Great (323 BC), Mithradates, in c.302 BC, established the kingdom of Pontos which survived until the reign of Mithradates VI (reign 120–63 BC) (Erciyas 2001) (see Chapter 2). Then Pontos came under the control of the Roman and then the eastern Roman (Byzantine) empire. In 1204, Pontos came under the control of the Komnenoi Byzantine emperors of Trebizond (1204–1461) (see Note 3.1).



Plate 7.1: Akçaabat

([google.com/search?q=Ak%C3%A7aabat&sca_esv=e948bafec9f39f8c&source=hp&ei=Kn-IaIawN7SZ4](https://www.google.com/search?q=Ak%C3%A7aabat&sca_esv=e948bafec9f39f8c&source=hp&ei=Kn-IaIawN7SZ4))

Ottoman Control

Platana came under Ottoman Turk rule in 1461. After 1580, Platana's population became mostly Muslim (Lowry 2009). There is a lack of reliable information in English for the 17th and 18th centuries. In 1836, Platana had about 140 Greek and 200 Turkish houses (Hamilton 1842).

In 1914, Platana had [around 1,725 Greeks, which included my father's family], two Greek churches and two Greek schools (Chrysanthos 1933). In July 1914, the Ottomans declared mobilisation of all men to arms (Fotiadis 2019).

1915 Armenian Genocide

In March 1915, the Ottoman Turks resolved to annihilate the Armenians (genocide) in their empire (Akçam 2019). In the same month, most Armenian soldiers in the Ottoman army were moved into unarmed labour battalions.

On 1 July, 300 Armenian men were arrested, placed on a ship off Platana then thrown into the Black Sea to drown. Armenian deportations from Trabzon commenced in July which was also applied to 16 locations south and west of Trabzon, with an Armenian population of 3,517 in the county of Akçaabat. The men there were killed in their villages by bandits (Kévorkian 2011).

Of the around 65,000 Armenians in the province of Trabzon, all but 15,000 were deported and subsequently killed. Some of these 15,000 escaped deportation by hiding, were exempted because of their occupational expertise or escaped from the deportation lines (Suakjian 1981).

Russian Occupation 1916–Early 1918

On 19 April 1916, the Russians bombarded Platana from the sea (www.akcaabat.bel.tr/fck-sayfalar.aspx?id=9). The Russian army then entered Platana and proceeded west to the Harşit River near Tripolis.

Life in the Trabzon region during the Russian occupation (April 1916 to February 1918) was difficult with a prevalence of diseases, armed bandits and lack of food. Nevertheless, life was relatively better for the Greeks than in areas adjacent to the Russian occupied regions, where they were exiled by Ottoman guards which resulted in the deliberate death of many thousands of Greeks (Topalidis and McCaskie 2018).

According to Mintslov's (1916) survey (published in November 1916), in the 83 villages in the Platana area, there were 12,614 adults recorded of whom 68% were Turkish and 32% Greek. In early 1918, at the time of the Russian withdrawal from Anatolia, Platana had been plundered by irregular Turkish troops and its inhabitants fled to Trabzon. In Trabzon, 30,000 Greeks from the Trabzon region left with the Russians (Fotiadis 1987; 2019).

1919–1923

In 1919, Armenians who returned to Platana after World War I were murdered. In May 1919, the Greek army landed at Smyrna (west coast of Anatolia). During the ensuing Greco-Turkish War in western Anatolia (1919–1922), the Turks regarded the Greeks throughout Anatolia, as potentially aiding the Greek army (Morris and Ze'evi 2019).

In March 1922, Greek males aged above 15 years from Trabzon and the adjoining areas were deported to join labour battalions (Tsirkinidis 1999).

By 1924, up to 1.4 million of the surviving Anatolian Greeks had been forcibly uprooted as part of the compulsory exchange of Christian and Muslim populations in accordance with the 1923 Lausanne Convention (Note 4.1).

Greek Churches

There were two Byzantine churches in Platana, one dedicated to St Michael and the other to the Incorporeal Saints (Freely 1996). The St Michael Church (Plate 7.2) is likely to have been built in the 13th–14th century and was restored and extended in 1846 (Ballance 1960), it is now the Ortamahalle Museum. Very close to the church was the Greek school built in 1893 which is now a Turkish Primary school.

Winfield and Wainwright (1962) state that the Incorporeal Saints Church had just been pulled down when they visited the site in 1961.



Plate 7.2: St Michael Church, now Ortamahalle Museum, Akçaabat (2021, www.dailysabah.com/arts/700-year-old-church-in-ne-turkey-converted-into-museum/news)

Conclusion

Platana was colonised by Greeks after 400 BC. After the Mithradatic kings, Roman and Eastern Roman (Byzantine) empire, it came under the Byzantine Komnenoi emperors of Trebizond (1204–1461) until it was captured by the Ottoman sultan in 1461. It was occupied by the Russian army from early 1916 to early 1918. It fell under the tragedy of the genocide of its Christian Armenian and Greek inhabitants. Its Christian population left with the exiting Russian army in early 1918 and then from the end of 1922 and 1923 under the Exchange of Populations.

8. History of Sürmene

Introduction

Sürmene is a town east of Trabzon (Plate 8.1, Fig. 8.1) which receives over 2,000 mm of annual precipitation. Its population is estimated at 26,000 (2022). The main industries of the region are fishing, agriculture and tourism. The area has a peculiarity in that some Muslim Turks in the surrounding villages still speak *Romeyka*, an old Greek dialect.



Plate 8.1: Sürmene, Black Sea coast, north-east Türkiye (2018,
www.youtube.com/watch?v=j_lgl3whw9c)



Fig. 8.1: Trabzon region, north-east Türkiye (Trabzon to Rize = 67 km,
commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=20298048)

History

Greeks colonised Sürmene probably after 400 BC where they probably encountered indigenous people living there. After control by the Mithradatic kings of Pontos it came under Roman control and then part of the Eastern Roman (Byzantine) empire.

Arakli Kalesi, west of Sürmene, was in the 2nd century a Roman fort. In the 5th century a Byzantine garrison was stationed there (Crow and Bryer 1997). The small Komnenoi Byzantine empire of Trebizond (1204–1461) in north-east Anatolia was independent of Constantinople. With the surrender of Trabzon to the Ottoman sultan in 1461, a process of Islamisation began in Sürmene. There is a lack of information in English on Sürmene for the 16th–17th centuries. The early history of Ophis and Rize (Chapters 9–10) is very similar to Sürmene.

At Sürmene the foothills rise so abruptly from the bay that in the 18th and 19th centuries they proved ideal sites for the local elites to build fortified residences for control of the town. By the 1830s, the Ottoman government had destroyed the older fortified hilltop residences [of the local elites, the *derebeys*] (Meeker 2005).

According to Chrysanthos (1933) in 1913–1914, in the Sürmene area there were 10 villages [with around 4,325 Greeks]. Each village had a Greek school and a Greek church. From early 1916 to early 1918, Sürmene was occupied by Russian forces. From December 1917, the advancing Turkish bands destroyed Greek villages and massacred Christians resulting in the majority of Greek inhabitants from the Sürmene district migrating to Russia (Greek Patriarchate 1919).

Romeyka is the last surviving Greek language spoken in Pontos (www.romeyka.org/). Islamisation of Greek speakers in the areas of Tonya (south-west of Trabzon), Of, Sürmene [e.g. Beşköy to the south] and Maçka (south of Trabzon), is reported in the 15th–18th centuries. Through the Exchange of Populations between Greece and Turkey (Note 4.1), Greek-speaking Muslims were allowed to stay in Anatolia, which explains why Greek survives only in small enclaves in this area (Sitaridou (2023); www.romeyka.org/).

In 1929, a flood destroyed several villages in Çaykara, Of and Sürmene (Fig. 8.1) and a large part of the population became homeless. As most of the Maçka valley was empty after the forced exodus of the Orthodox Christians in 1923, the homeless population from Sürmene was largely resettled there (Brendemoen 2002:32).

Churches

The Timiou Stavrou Greek Church was built around 1891 (www.pontosworld.com/index.php/pontus/churches/230-timiou-stavrou-tzita?highlight=WyJ0aW1pb3UiXQ==), it is now a mosque. Near this church is the former Church of the Metamorphosis probably built in 1880 (Bryer et al. 1972–1973). In 2023, it was in ruins.

Conclusion

Sürmene is a town colonised by Greeks, probably after 400 BC. Little of its history is written in English. It came under Ottoman control after 1461. Today, local people in some of its surrounding villages still speak *Romeyka*, an old Greek dialect which was spoken by their ancestors for several centuries.

9. History of Ophis (Of)

Introduction

Ophis (called Of by Turks) is a town on the coast, east of Trabzon (Figs 8.1). There is no definitive explanation on how the town received its name. It is assumed that Greeks colonised Ophis sometime after 400 BC.

The population of Ophis is 21,630 (2022 estimate). Tea and hazelnuts are important industries. The Oflus (people from Ophis) are one of the peculiar peoples of eastern Pontos. After 1461, Ophis became Muslim—however, the valley retained its *Romeyka* Greek speech.

Ottoman Occupation

With the surrender of Trabzon to the Ottoman Turks in 1461, a process of Islamisation began in the Anatolian north-east (Poutouridou 1997).

After 1850

In 1879, it was estimated that out of 10,000–12,000 families from the Ophis area, 8,000–10,000 spoke *Romeyka* Greek, but only 192 were [openly] Christian (Bryer 1968). In 1893, Lynch observed crypto-Christians in Sürmene and Ophis (Lynch 1901).

20th century

From early 1916 to early 1918, Ophis was occupied by Russian forces. Chrysanthos, the Greek Orthodox metropolitan of Trabzon, conducted mass in the village church at Yiga [Ophis region, probably in 1917] where 300 Muslims from the villages of Ophis had gathered. Among them were Muslim religious teachers and prayer leaders who were descendants of Greek Orthodox priests and who had kept their crosses and Bibles. They asked if they could be accepted back as Christians. Chrysanthos advised them to wait until the end of the war, so they wouldn't be slaughtered for having renounced the Muslim faith in case the Ottoman government should reoccupy the areas (Chrysanthos (1970) in Poutouridou (1997:51)). Apparently, only 1,200 Christians from Ophis emigrated to Greece during the Exchange of Populations (Agiralioglu and Agiralioglu 2023) (Note 4.1).

Romeyka Greek Dialect

During his research in the Ophis area, Professor Mackridge noted *Romeyka* Greek was spoken in villages in the districts of Çaykara, Dernekpazari and Uzungöl (Fig. 8.1). The most archaic form of *Romeyka* has survived among Muslims from the Ophis region who had Greek ancestors. The Ophitic Moslems' *Romeyka* Greek has been influenced by Turkish, but their speech is not tainted by modern *Demotic* Greek (Mackridge 1987). Incredibly, *Romeyka* is still spoken by some of these villages today (see www.youtube.com/watch?v=UcAYP4irSyQ).

Conclusion

The town of Ophis was colonised by Greeks probably after 400 BC. The Ottoman Turks took control after the fall of Trabzon in 1461. Today there are some local Muslims who still speak the *Romeyka* Greek dialect.

10. History of Rize

Introduction

Rize is a coastal town east of Trabzon (Plates 10.1–10.2; Fig. 8.1) with an estimated population of 102,800 (2024). Rize's mean average annual precipitation is a high 2,300 mm, in the wettest province in Türkiye (Abay et al. 2016). The Rize province is also the main tea producing area in Türkiye (Haq and Boz 2019). There is also a lack of reliable information in English on Rize.



Plate 10.1: Rize on the Black Sea coast, north-east Türkiye, 2014
(commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Rize_city_overhead.jpg)

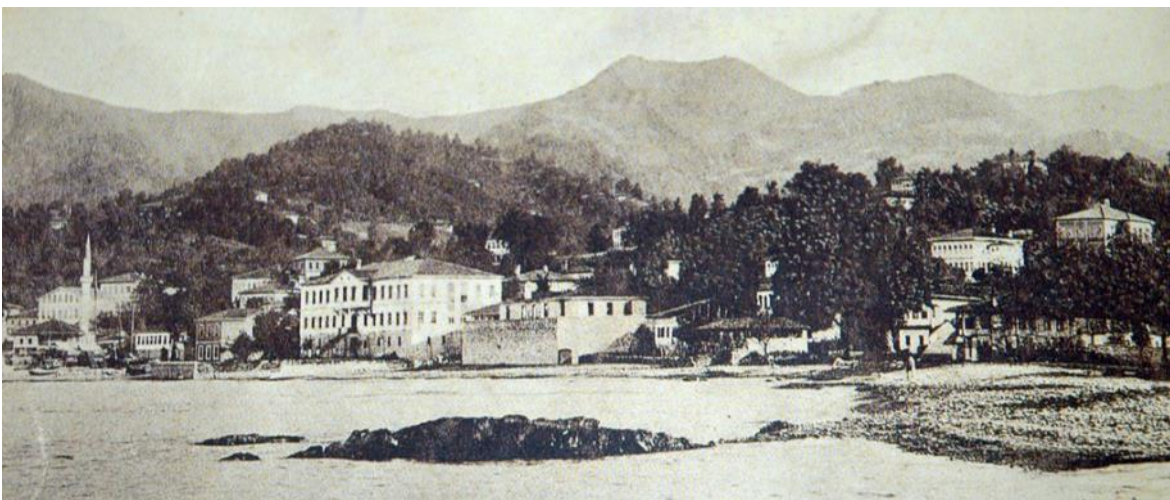


Plate 10.2: Rize, 1910 (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rize#/media/File:Rize-postakarti-osmanli.jpg>)

History

The Greeks established a colony at Rize probably after 400 BC. An acropolis and relatively sheltered anchorage would have attracted the Greek colonists (Bryer and Winfield 1985).

The Rize Castle is located in the south-west of the town centre. The inner castle is believed to have been built in the 6th century, the lower castle in the 13th century (rize.goturkiye.com/see). Eastern Roman emperor Justinian (6th century), overhauled Rize's fortifications. Later, during the Komnenoi Trebizond Byzantine empire, Rize was still an important eastern frontier post. In 1461, when Trabzon surrendered to the Ottoman sultan, Rize eventually came under Ottoman control. The late 15th century population of the Rize district had 2,063 Christian and only 162 Muslim households. The town became predominantly Muslim by the 17th century (Bryer and Winfield 1985).

Rize had two Greek churches and one Greek school (Chrysanthos 1933). In 1914, the Ottoman Turks boycotted Christian businesses forcing many of the Christians in Rize to emigrate while others took refuge in Sürmene (Greek Patriarchate 1919).

From early 1916 to early 1918, north-east Anatolia was occupied by Russian forces. In late 1917 to very early 1918, Turkish bands destroyed Rize which compelled many of its Christians to emigrate to Russia. Churches, schools and houses were demolished. Out of [up to] 2,000 Greeks, only four remained in Rize (Greek Patriarchate 1919).

From September 1922, after the defeat of the Greek army in western Anatolia in the Greco-Turkish War (1919–1922), Greeks were pressured to leave Anatolia for Greece. The forced expulsion was finalised with the Exchange of Populations under the Lausanne Convention (January 1923) (Note 4.1).

Conclusion

Rize was colonised by ancient Greeks probably after 400 BC and was subsequently occupied by various people including the Ottoman Turks after Trabzon fell in 1461. But it did not become predominantly Muslim till the late 17th century. Today, it is famous for being in the wettest region and the main tea producing area in Türkiye.

11. Hazelnuts in Northern Türkiye

Introduction

Turkish hazelnut kernels usually range from 1–4 cm in length. The northern part of Türkiye produces most of the world's hazelnuts (shaded area in Fig. 11.1). Hazelnut kernels are around 64% fat, 16% carbohydrate and 14% protein (Islam 2018).



Fig. 11.1: Hazelnut area of northern Türkiye (Samsun to Trabzon = 285 km
archive.aramcoworld.com/issue/201405/the.hazelnuts.of.trabzon.htm)

History

Samples from the centre of Anatolia from c.2000–1700 BC preserve evidence of charred hazelnut shells which supports the premise that hazelnuts were traded there (Fairbairn et al. 2014). In Pontos, the export of hazelnuts was recorded in 259 BC and they were still a major export during the Komnenoi empire of Trebizond (1204–1461) (Bryer and Winfield 1985).

World's Largest Hazelnut Producer

The largest producer of hazelnuts in the world is along the Turkish Black Sea coast. Hazelnuts reach maturity from early August to early September (Özdemir et al. 2024). Türkiye on average produces 66% of the world's hazelnuts and 70% of the world's hazelnut exports (FAOStat 2020). However, in recent years Türkiye's market share of hazelnut exports has declined.

Growing and harvesting hazelnuts

Hazelnut trees need more than 700 mm annual rainfall. Hazelnuts do not tolerate windy conditions and low humidity and require a well-drained soil about 1 m deep with high organic matter and neutral to slightly acid soil. Harvesting hazelnuts is usually by hand in the eastern Black Sea area, but generally mechanically in the newer western and middle Black Sea areas. They can be harvested off the ground or from the branch (Plate 11.1) (Islam 2018).



Plate 11.1: Picking Turkish hazelnuts (www.hurriyetdailynews.com/hazelnut-harvest-season-starts-in-black-sea-region-185461)

Hazelnut trees can be harvested for 50–60 years. Hazelnuts are dehusked and brought to a threshing floor and dried in the sun (traditional method). The hazelnuts are then separated from their shells by machine and can be dried again, bagged and sent for processing or taken to market. Harvesting and processing Hazelnuts require a short period of intense effort covering 30 days. The region is transformed when a part of the former rural population return home during the harvest (Duman and Dikçinar Sel 2024).

Conclusion

The north coast of Türkiye, including Pontos, has been producing hazelnuts for thousands of years. This area produces most of the world's hazelnuts and is the largest exporter of these nuts. The hazelnut remains one of Türkiye's important export products.

12. Black Sea Hamsi (Anchovy)

Introduction

The small hamsi (Turkish for anchovy) fish is part of Pontic folklore (Plate 12.1). It has been caught off the coast of Pontos and in the greater Black Sea for thousands of years (Fig. 12.1). Today, Türkiye imposes an ocean fishing ban from 15 April to 1 September to protect the marine ecosystem.



Plate 12.1: Black Sea hamsi (www.aa.com.tr/tr/ekonomi/trabzonda-hamsinin-kilogrami-125-ila-150-liradan-satisa-sunuluyor/3449007)

History of Fishing Hamsi

There is little specific historical information on hamsi. However, Black Sea fish are described in ancient Greece and Rome. Hamsi were most probably used in fish sauces by the Greeks at least from the 5th century BC. Roman *garum*, a fermented fish sauce was made from a small unknown species of fish [and probably included hamsi from the Black Sea] (penelope.uchicago.edu/encyclopaedia_romana/wine/garum.html). In the 2nd century BC, Pontic salted fish [which must have included hamsi] was a major export (Roller 2020).

When Çelebi visited Trabzon in 1640, he wrote that hamsi are finger length, thin and shine like silver and if a jar of pickled hamsi were salted well, it may remain edible for years (Demir 2007). Before 1918, my mother's parents lived just south of Trabzon and they used excess hamsi as fertilizer on their family farm.



Fig. 12.1: Map of the Black Sea (King 2004:xvii)

Hamsi Species

There are two species of hamsi in the Black Sea; the Black Sea anchovy and the Azov anchovy (Demir 2007).

Between November and December, the cooling of the surface waters drives the adult Black Sea anchovy from the north-west to the south-eastern corner of the Black Sea. Most of the annual catch of hamsi in Turkish waters is harvested within 30 days following their arrival. The Azov anchovy spawns in the Sea of Azov in the north-east and in winter they migrate south into the Black Sea (Gücü et al. 2022).

The Black Sea anchovy follows two paths at the onset of the overwintering migration. One group follows the west coast, passes by Bulgaria, reaching the western Turkish coast and then heads east. The other group moves eastward to arrive on the southern tip of Crimea. The sharp drop in the surface sea temperature force anchovies to move south through the centre of the Black Sea at the beginning of December (Gücü et al. 2017).

Conclusion

Hamsi has been caught in the Black Sea for thousands of years. The small and very tasty hamsi is a very popular dish in Turkish Black Sea cuisine. There are so many recipes that include hamsi that it has become part of Turkish and Pontic folklore.

13. References

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