

СЕОБЕ  
ОД АНТИКЕ ДО ДАНАС

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MIGRATIONS  
FROM ANTIQUITY  
TO THE PRESENT DAYS



УРЕДНИЦИ:

Снежана Вукадиновић,  
Светозар Бошков и Ифигенија Радуловић

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# MIGRATIONS FROM ANTIQUITY TO THE PRESENT DAYS

THEMATIC VOLUME

1

EDITORS:

Snežana Vukadinović,  
Svetozar Boškov & Ifigenija Radulović

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**Cover page**

*Dionysos Crossing the Sea by Exekias*

Attic black-figure kylix cca. 540/530 BC – Munchen Staatliche Antikensammlungen  
Inventory number 8729 (formerly 2044).

**На корицама**

*Дионис њлови морем, Екзекијина куџа*

Атички црнофигурални киликс из 540/530. године пре нове ере – Минхен, Збирка старина  
број. инв. 8729 (претходни 2004)



## FROM PONTUS TO MACEDONIA. THE CASE OF ATHANÁSIOS GORGÓROGLU, SON OF NIKÓLAOS

**Abstract:** Our narrative will track the migration route of a Greek family from Pontus, Turkey-in the mid-third decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century-which reached Macedonia, Greece, under tragic circumstances. Amidst a clime of social and political hardship, this community struggled to create the conditions for its new living, at first to ensure its very survival, and eventually to produce great achievements, armed with its lofty ideals and values.

**Keywords:** Pontus, Pontic Populations, Genocide, Greece, Treaty of Lausanne, Mines of Pontus.

Modern Genetics has produced evidence in support of our understanding that the genes governing human behaviour are to a certain extent inherited and related to experiences that a nation or race may confer onto its progeny. This means that human experiences as psychosomatic elements of life are passed on from generation to generation. Much in this way, the experience of migration, with anything that this may entail, constitutes a genetic element which characterises components in the personality of said progeny.

The writer of this article is himself the descendant of such a lineage of migrants, whose ancestry goes back to the ancient Ionians, whose fate lead them to wander across the region of the Black Sea (the Póntos Eúxeinos) in modern-day north-eastern Turkey. I speak of the inhabitants of the Caucasus and the coastal colonies of the Black Sea which comprise the so-called Historical Pontus<sup>1</sup>, the people who, according to the Austrian historian and traveller Jakob Philipp Fallmerayer visiting them in 1845<sup>2</sup>, are „the Byzantine Greeks“ speaking the Pontic Dialect which resembles the Ancient Greek language.

These Greek colonists are mentioned in ancient times since the 8<sup>th</sup> century BCE, going through stages of heyday and decline, moving on to the Hellenistic Era when they created their own *Kingdoms of Pontus* (302–64 BCE)<sup>3</sup>, and reaching the days of Byzantium with their *Empire of Trebizond* (1204–1461).<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Βαλαβάνης, Γ. *Σύγχρονος Γενική Ιστορία του Πόντου*, Θεσσαλονίκη: εκδ. Αδελφών Κυριακίδη 1989, 17 onwards. Also see, Σαμουηλίδη. Χρ. *Ιστορία του Ποντιακού Ελληνισμού*, Αθήνα: εκδ. Αλκυών, 1985, 10–16.

<sup>2</sup> Fallmerayer Ph Jack., *Ιστορία της Αυτοκρατορίας της Τραπεζούντας*, (μτφ. Θωμάς Σερμπίνης), Θεσσαλονίκη: εκδ. Αδελφών Κυριακίδη, 1984.

<sup>3</sup> See, Σαμουηλίδη 1985: 25–32.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Σαββίδης, Αλ. *Η ιστορία της Αυτοκρατορίας των Μεγάλων Κομνηνών της Τραπεζούντας (1204–1461)*,

It was in this Historical Pontus where our „hero“ lived, Athanasios Gorgóroglu, son of Nikolaos, a descendant of those very same Greek tribes, born in the last decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Gorgóroglu possessed a profoundly Greek identity and lived along with his patriarchal family in a village near Argyroupolis (Gümüşhane), in eastern Turkey, whence he was forced to migrate due to adverse political and social circumstances in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in the direction of mainland Greece<sup>5</sup>, alongside hundreds of thousands of people of Greek descent.

### 1. The Mines at Dérraina

Since ancient times, the region of Argyroupolis in Pontus had been well known for its underground ore which was rich in metals.<sup>6</sup> Early on, the Sublime Porte was quick to grasp the importance of exploiting this abundance of ore for the improvement of its finances, and so it organised the systematic mining hereof, aimed at maximizing its incomes. The Ottoman officials tasked with this duty had soon ascertained the special tradition which had been established with regard to the mining of metals, which was based on the workforce originating from local Greek-Pontic populations, highly specialised in working inside the shafts of the mines.<sup>7</sup> The family of Athanásios Gorgóroglu, his father, and nearly all his relatives used to work in those mines since already the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Initially, they used to live in a small, riverside village called Dérraina<sup>8</sup> outside Argyroupolis with other Pontic Greeks. The relevant historical evidence bears testimony to the important role which the individuals from the broader social and economic circle of Gorgóroglu used to play in the local community of Argyroupolis and its surrounding territory. It was from their

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Θεσσαλονίκη: εκδ. Αφων Κυριακίδη, 2009. Also see, Ιωαννίδη, Σαβ. *Ιστορία και στατιστική της Τραπεζούντας και της γύρω περιοχής και στοιχεία για την εκεί ελληνική γλώσσα*, (επιμ. Αρ. Κεσόπουλος, 1870<sup>1</sup>), Θεσσαλονίκη: Αφοι Κυριακίδη, 1988<sup>2</sup>; Σαμουηλίδης 1985: 53–120. About the period in general, see Ostrogorky G. *Ιστορία του Βυζαντινού Κράτους*, vol. 3, Αθήνα: εκδ. Βασιλόπουλος, 1993, 97–111. Also see, Καραγιαννόπουλου, Ι. *Ιστορία του Βυζαντινού Κράτους*, Θεσσαλονίκη: publ. Βάνιας 1999, 114–118

<sup>5</sup> The first migrations of Greek Pontic populations are mentioned in 610 CE during the reign of Emperor Heraclius (610–641), toward the north and toward the mountainous ranges of Caucasus in Russia. This large-scale flight of these populations was due to reasons related to their great expertise in the mining of metal ore. A landmark event in the history of migrations emanating from the region was, doubtless, the Fall of Byzantine Trebizond (1461) and of the coastal cities, causing the rapid escape of these Greek populations toward various destinations. Another wave of migrant flight took place in the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century after the Revolt of the Terhesseg Laz people, and shortly afterwards, with the outbreak of the Greek Revolt of 1821, when these populations became the target of Ottoman retaliatory acts. Among the periods of persecution against these populations, we would be amiss if we failed to mention the Russian-Turkish wars from 1829 to 1866, when the Greek-speaking Pontic villages suffered unnumbered woes under Ottoman rule. Cf. Νικολαΐδης, Κ. *Οι Ρωμιοί της Υοσγάτης και του Μεταλλείου Άκνταγ*, Μελίσι Πέλλας: 2014, 97–100. Finally, we have the tragedy of 1922–1925, when under the Treaty of Lausanne, 1.7 million Greeks embarked on a journey either to Greece or to Russia; approximately 500,000 must have reached the former. See Βαλαβάνη, Κ. 1989:12–14. On the matter of the Greek Diaspora in the states of the former Soviet Union, see Χανθοπούλου Κυριακού, Art. „The Diaspora of the Greeks of the Pontos: Historical Background“, *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 4, 4 (1991), 358–360.

<sup>6</sup> See Βαλαβάνη 1989: 20–21

<sup>7</sup> Σαμουηλίδη 1985: 148–158

<sup>8</sup> Dérraina was one of five Greek-speaking villages in the area.

extended family that the particularly well known clerics of the local Church came, who served the ideals of their Greek kin.<sup>9</sup>

Work was hard in the sunless galleries<sup>10</sup>, demanding great stamina, strength of body, mastery of the craft, and dexterity in handling the special metals.<sup>11</sup> Specific workers would break the chunks of metal, they would pulverise them, and through appropriate laundering, they would bring forth and separate the silver, lead, tin, copper, and gold as well as the rest of the metals. Others would cut down timber of fir and would fashion wooden, supporting beams that were necessary for the safe passage through the galleries in the mountains of Argyroupolis.

Due to the high incomes that would be derived from the mines, the manager of Finance of the Ottoman Empire would grant a series of privileges to the inhabitants of those regions, which we typically see being granted only in special cases of subjects of the empire, Christians in particular.<sup>12</sup> What is attested to by evidence collected is that the relatives of Gorgóroglu, who used to work in the mines, were pleased with their incomes. In this, they appreciated the fact that they earned for their labour a decent salary from the state, and also that they benefited from a series of privileges on matters of property and social functions.<sup>13</sup>

At that time, the Constitution of 1876 had been signed, and the populace of Greek descent felt politically encouraged by this event, hoping that it would improve its economic and cultural relations on the basis of international rules and law.<sup>14</sup> The Greek-speaking populations of Pontus accepted the proclamations of the Young Turks on the issue of egalitarianism for the minorities in the newborn state with a great deal of satisfaction<sup>15</sup>.

<sup>9</sup> Νικολαΐδη 2014: *passim*. Μωυσιάδης, Κοσ. – Παπαδόπουλος, Θεοδ. Βίβλος Γενέσεως ιερέως Γεωργίου Σερταρίδη, Γιαννιτσά - Λεύκη Καβάλας: 2017.

<sup>10</sup> During certain periods, when Ottoman rule would exert great pressure on local populations, the underground galleries would serve as places of religious worship, given that a number of the people used to be crypto-Christians and could not worship overtly. Cf. Νικολαΐδη 2014: 100–106.

<sup>11</sup> First, the Chief Executive of the mines used to be Greek Pontian; he would run the entire line of production up until the point when the precious metals would be given over to the special guard who would escort them to the state coffer in Constantinople. Alongside the rest of the workers, he himself lay under the protection of the Emin, the governor of the province. Furthermore, it was an established prerogative that the chief-metalurgist could bequeath his position to a relative of his own. This meant that the mines had remained for long in Christian hands. Second, they were exempt from taxes to the Sublime Porte. Third, they had the right to organise their own religious life and to build churches to their saints. Fourth, they had freedom to organise their social life and to amuse themselves as they liked in their free time. Fifth, they had a system of education available to them, in which their many children would enrol, as Pontian families would typically pursue to bear many children.

<sup>12</sup> These privileges would often create strife and conflict between Turkish and Greek populations, leading even up to murder.

<sup>13</sup> An additional indication of local wealth was the visit of Patriarch Dositheus II of Jerusalem (1669–1707) in the region, in order to collect resources for the needs of his See.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Ενεπεκίδη, Πολ. *Οι διωγμοί των Ελλήνων του Πόντου (1908–1918): Βάσει των ανεκδότων εγγράφων των Κρατικών Αρχείων της Αυστροουγγαρίας*, Αθήνα: εκδ. Συλλόγου Ποντίων Αργοναύται Κομνηνοί, 1962, 8 onwards. On the conditions for the development of Greek letters between 1918–1922 see the article by Αλεξανδρής, Αλ., «Η Ανάπτυξη του Εθνικού Πνεύματος των Ελλήνων του Πόντου 1918–1922: Ελληνική Εξωτερική Πολιτική και Τουρκική Αντίδραση», (edd.) Βερέμης Θ., - Δημητρακόπουλος Οδ., *Μελετήματα γύρω από τον Βενιζέλο και την εποχή του*, Αθήνα: εκδ. Φιλιπότη, 1980, 429

<sup>15</sup> See Βεργέτη, Μ. *Από τον Πόντο στην Ελλάδα, Διαδικασίες διαμόρφωσης μια Εθνοτοπικής Ταυτότητας*,

However, later developments discouraged them, primarily due to the outbreak of the Russian-Turkish War of 1877–1878, but also because they soon realised it had all been a political ploy, which would turn out to produce painful consequences for them.

In the meantime, political developments began to rearrange the domestic scenery in Neo-Ottoman Turkey.<sup>16</sup> Pontus found itself under the Young Turk regime from 1908 to 1912, which laid the grounds for the establishment of the political ideology of the „Turkish Nation“ and of the secularised power in New Turkey.

## 2. Relocation in the Village of Abdurrahmanlı

These developments coincided with the closing down of many a mine in the area of Argyroupolis and the subsequent search for work-by Gorgóroglu’s father as well, Nikólaos- in other regions where they hoped to be able to exercise their specialty.<sup>17</sup> News reaching the Pontic villages mentioned the province of Ak-Dağ-Maten (Akdağmadeni)<sup>18</sup>, approximately 440 km to the south-west of Argyroupolis, where new mines were planned to begin operating. Under difficult circumstances around 1840 and up until 1848 they left Dérraina and relocated in a village of the province of Meten called Abdurrahmanlı<sup>19</sup>, in which twenty to thirty families of Turks<sup>20</sup> used to live already. These Muslim families fiercely resisted allowing the Christian ones to build their own church<sup>21</sup>; consequently, the latter had to seek refuge for their worship in a cave amidst the cliffs outside the village, where they practiced their religious duties in the presence of their priest.<sup>22</sup>

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Θεσσαλονίκη: εκδ. Αδελφών Κυριακίδη, 1994, 100.

<sup>16</sup> See Αγτζίδης, Βλ. *Ποντιακός ελληνισμός. Από τη γενοκτονία και το σταλινισμό στην περσεστρόικα*, Θεσσαλονίκη: Αφοι Κυριακίδη, 1991, 16–18.

<sup>17</sup> See Σαμουηλίδη 1985: 188–196; Νικολαΐδη 2014: 100–109.

<sup>18</sup> At Ak-Dağ-Maten, the provincial centre of the Prefecture of Ankara lay a city growing particularly after the advent of Greek miners. Located 310 km east of Ankara, it belonged to the administrative subdivision of Yozgat, and in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century about 1200 families of Greeks lived there, 200 families of Turks, and 80 of Armenians. It had four mahalle (quarters) and three Christian parishes: St. Charalambos, St. George, and St. Nikolas. The first Pontians must have reached Chaldia circa 1845. In total, the province had a large hinterland and 180 villages, 30 of which were wholly Greek. (Oral recordings by Pavlides Eustáthios, at Dytikón, Pélla, Greece, 3/5/2017). At Maten, there used to be a demi-gymnásion (*scholarcheion*), given that the area’s school-children were many. Furthermore, Greek populations did not wish to send their children to Turkish schools. However, there was a drawback to this city, which lay only kilometres from the main highway connecting Constantinople with Bagdad. This meant the city would be fall easy prey to the wishes and plundering of many a sort of ruffians: bandits, Tsetes (Ottoman irregulars), militia, etc. See Βαλαβάνης 1989: 266–267. Cf. also the noteworthy work by Νικολαΐδης 2014: 97–106.

<sup>19</sup> The reader can seek information of a remarkable nature about Abdurrahmanlı in the aforementioned work by Nikolaidēs Konstantinos but also in the research by Μωυσιάδης, Κοσ. – Παπαδόπουλος, Θεοδ.: 2017.

<sup>20</sup> In the meantime, Meten had become the strategically located lair of Kemalic forces, who used to plan from that spot their operations of ethnic cleansing against minorities as well as against Ottoman dissidents.

<sup>21</sup> In this manner, they attempted to deny newcomers their established privilege as granted to them by the legal authority of the very Muslim Eparch himself.

<sup>22</sup> According to oral tradition of the elders of the area, we are informed that they would place their candles in the folds of the rocks during Sunday Liturgy and the rest of the ceremonies (Oral recordings of Pavlides Eustáthios,

In general, after the first phase of their settlement, the terms of their relationship with the Turkish inhabitants of the area could be described as good on both sides. However, it is certain that these relations were dependent on whichever individuals held institutional authority and on the prevalent political circumstances, which would either trigger strife or dampen relations between communities. Relations between Greek and Muslims might not at this time bear the sort of tension which existed in the past, but suspicion and animosity on the part of the dominant Ottomans set the boundaries of social statuses and would often prompt Pontians, who were active in commerce, to show mutually compulsive tolerance.<sup>23</sup>

The hundreds of local communities of numerous Pontian villages were characterised by strict social structure: they would intermarry, celebrate with Pontian songs and dances following the calendar of Christian feasts and parish by parish in each village-they would uphold traditional customs, and felt a sense of adoration for Greece. In this manner, the deep rooted Greek Pontic culture, which existed therein, would strengthen the sense of social cohesion in the community and was an expression of its distinct and unique ethnic character. Moreover, it is a commonly accepted fact that these new inhabitants would, as a rule, strive to acquire tracts of land, obviously enabled to do so by the economic affluence with which they had been provided by means of their former professional activities. What is more, the fact that the newly-come Pontian families were 180-a number capable of altering the existing population proportions-was deemed a likely threat by local Ottomans, who would on several occasions openly demonstrate their dissatisfaction or even their animus against them.

### 3. The Treaty of Lausanne-Historical Context

One of the greatest calamities that Hellenism has ever survived was the defeat and ruin of the Greek Army on the front of Asia Minor in the summer of 1922, during the advance of the Greek military into the heartland of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>24</sup> The errors in strategy and the mistaken political assessments on the part of the Greek Government were great and tragic.<sup>25</sup> As a result, a defeated Greece capitulated and signed with Kemal Atatürk's (Mustafa Kemal Atatürk 1881–1938) Turkey the Treaty of Lausanne on 30 January 1923.<sup>26</sup> This treaty provided

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at Dytikón, Pélla, Greece, 3/5/2017).

<sup>23</sup> The fact of the mutually generated conflict formed the main cause of the expatriation of the Greeks of Pontus toward Russia, of the same religious doctrine, where they would seek refuge.

<sup>24</sup> Καργάκος, Σαρ. *Η Μικρασιατική εκστρατεία (1919–1922). Από το έπος στην τραγωδία*, Αθήνα 2013. Ζολώτα, Αναστ. *Η Εθνική Τραγωδία*. Αθήνα: Πανεπιστήμιο Αθηνών, Τμήμα Πολιτικών Επιστημών και Δημοσίας Διοικήσεως, 1995· Horton, Geor. *Consul General of USA των ΗΠΑ in the Near East for thirty years, Η Κατάρρα της Ασίας*, (Greek transl. Γεωργίου Α. Τσελικά), Indianapolis USA: publ. The Bobbs - Merrill Company 1926.

<sup>25</sup> See Αγτζίδης 1991: 68–70 & 90–101.

<sup>26</sup> This is the “*Convention on the Exchange of Greek and Turkish Populations*” signed on 30 January 1923, but only enacted in May 1923. The transfer of populations on either side took place at a very slow pace for various reasons. The main masses of people mobilised in the spring of 1924 and reached the centres of reception after months of journeying. Similar *Conventions* of dictated-voluntary transfer of populations existed between Turkey and Bulgaria (1913), Turkey and Greece (1914), as well as the Treaty of Neuilly (1919) between Greece and Bulgaria. See Pentzopoulos, D. *The Balkan Exchange of Minorities, and its Impact Upon Greece*, Paris: Ecole

for the compulsory exchange of Greek populations from Pontus, Cappadocia, and Asia Minor bound for mainland Greece, and the equally compulsory exchange of Turkish populations who used to live in Greece-mainly in Macedonia-bound for Turkey.<sup>27</sup> This was to be implemented according to the criterion of religion.<sup>28</sup> Thus, Christian populations would have to be transferred to Greek territories and Muslims to Turkish lands.

#### 4. The Perilous Return Home. The Departure.

Since 1913, it had been made clear that there existed an organised plan fostered by Young-Turk nationalism with regard to the displacement, initially, and the annihilation, eventually, of ethnic minorities in the regions of Pontus.<sup>29</sup> These minorities were mainly Pontians and Armenians. Under the pretence of conscription, they were led to „labour battalions“<sup>30</sup> („*Amele Taburlari*“ in Turkish) where they were forced to work with scant means at their disposal, dressed in rags, to build roads, construct railway lines, and to move huge boulders (quarries).<sup>31</sup>

In a camp like this, somewhere in the depths of Turkey, a then young Athanasios Gorgóroglu was drafted to labour from dawn to dusk under harsh conditions of work, on little food, in next to no clothes, drinking water gathered from ditches, and eating stale

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Pratique des Hautes Etudes, 1962, 54–64.

<sup>27</sup> Estimating the number of the main bulk of the expatriates cannot be done with accuracy, because many were lost on their way back to the fatherland due to adversities and diseases, while others migrated to countries in Europe and America. The official count of 1928 speaks of 1.221.849 refugees. Noteworthy research was done by Kitromilides, Pasc. - Akexandris, Alex., „Ethnic Survival. Nationalism and Forced Migration: The Historical Demography of the Greek community of Asia Minor at the close of the Ottoman era“, Αθήνα: *Δελτίο Κέντρου Μικρασιατικών Σπουδών* 5 (1984–1985), 34 onwards. See Αγτζίδης 1991: 105–107.

<sup>28</sup> On the matter of Ottoman institutions in the Ottoman Empire, see Σταυριανός, Λ. *Τα Βαλκάνια από το 1453 και μετά*, Θεσσαλονίκη: publ. Βάνιας 2007, 195–219.

<sup>29</sup> The genocide of Pontic Greeks involved massacres, persecutions, and displacements of the Greek populations of Pontus, taking place during the period of 1914–1923. The entity which performed this act was the *Young Turk Movement*. It is estimated that 300.000 to 400.000 Pontic Greeks lost their lives. Fotiadis, Kon. *The Genocide of the Pontian Greeks*. Θεσσαλονίκη: εκδ. Αντ.: Σταμούλης, 2015. Τσιρκινίδης, Χάρ. *Επιτέλους τους ξεριζώσαμε... Η γενοκτονία των Ελλήνων του Πόντου, της Θράκης και της Μ. Ασίας, μέσα από τα γαλλικά αρχεία*, Θεσσαλονίκη: Εκδοτικός Οίκος Αδελφών Κυριακίδη, 2002. Totten, Samuel and Paul, R. Bartrop, „Pontic Greeks, Genocide of.“, *Dictionary of Genocide*, Greenwood Press, Vol. 2, 337. Βαλαβάνη 1989: 132κεξ-Αγτζίδης, Βλ. „Το ελληνικό ολοκαύτωμα του Πόντου“, in *Οι Αγνοστοί Έλληνες του Πόντου*, Αθήνα: Εταιρεία Μελέτης Ελληνικής Ιστορίας, 1990, 51–63. Νικολαΐδη 2014: 47–61. There is no doubt in contemporary historical scholarship that his act was aimed at homogenising the multiethnic landscape of Turkey on the basis of Kemalist doctrine, a fact that continues to divide contemporary Turkish historiography.

<sup>30</sup> These battalions were the cause of male Pontian populations seeking refuge in the mountains in order to dodge the draft. Thus, the „guerrilla movement of Pontus“ was born: armed militia that were organised mainly in rocky, wooded areas and who fought against neo-Ottoman troops, often with great success. See Αγτζίδης 1991: 30–39.

<sup>31</sup> This was a methodically coordinated attempt to wipe out Pontians under the pretence of labour in the country's heartland, so as to accommodate routine needs in construction works. Most of them never returned to their homes. They died of adversity, diseases, famine, and torture. World War I aggravated these persecutions further, as Greece had aligned itself with the opposite side. See Ενεπεκίδη 1962: 52–56; Τσιρκινίδη 2002: passim- Βαλαβάνη 1989: 273.

bread.<sup>32</sup> We do not know how many years it was that Gorgóroglu remained with the labour battalions. We know that he survived through harsh conditions and upon his return to the village of Abdurrahmanlı he merged again with the rest of his family. Indeed, he married a young woman by the name of Zográpha, who most likely died of unknown causes on her way to the Fatherland.<sup>33</sup> It is said that the State Authorities sought him in his village to force him to appear before the notorious Independence Tribunals (Istiklâl Mahkemeleri)<sup>34</sup> but he fled into the woods of the area.

In the spring of 1924, the Treaty of Lausanne was in full effect and already several families had departed for Greece from the area of Meten.<sup>35</sup> The family's patriarch, Nikólaos Gorgóroglu, and father to Athanásios, in coordination with other kin had taken the route of return, of abandoning the lands of their forefathers, as a compulsory and violent solution, that of expatriation. They went to the village church, where they venerated the icons<sup>36</sup>, lit candles on the graves of their ancestors, and armed themselves with courage to embark on an Odyssey of their own.<sup>37</sup>

In the beginning of July 1924, the families from Abdurrahmanlı formed a caravan. With very little food available, the Gorgóroglu family had no water, no sufficient clothing, moving through hardship, having to face deadly diseases and most notably an uncertain future, they began their march to Ankara. They drew power from their faith in God and from the icons they had taken from their local church. There was some information that in Ankara they had been approached, like many other families of Pontian migrants, by a Christian priest who later became the false-patriarch, father Euthymes, a personal friend of Kemal's. He urged them not to abandon the land where they had been born, and to become Christian citizens of the Ottoman Empire, which was doubtless an act of political expediency.

The families would march all together without losing touch of each other, due to the ever-present risk of falling prey to bandits and marauders. They traversed approximately 300 km eastwards to reach Ankara.<sup>38</sup> From then on, they sought a way of proceeding to Constantinople, whence it was possible for them to rent a boat to Piraeus according to information they had received. In Ankara, the Gorgóroglu family looked for a way to board a train. As a matter of fact, this means of transportation was available to them, but a new

<sup>32</sup> In eastern Pontus, political conditions were different. The Russians had entered Trebizond in 1916 and delivered the city's administration to the Christian Metropolitan Chrysanthos (1881–1949) since the majority of the population in the area were Greeks.

<sup>33</sup> When later he arrived and settled in Greece, he married again and took for his wife Olga Kostikiadou. His second child was a girl, and he gave it the name Zográpha, in remembrance of his first wife.

<sup>34</sup> These tribunals were instruments of "legitimate ethnic cleansing operations" in the hands of the Young Turks, where during rigged procedures clerics and intellectuals of the Greek community would be convicted.

<sup>35</sup> The largest waves of fleeing were noted between the years 1922–1924. See Αλεξανδρή 1980: 465

<sup>36</sup> They managed to carry off some of those icons on themselves, concealed in whatever scant clothing they wore.

<sup>37</sup> This process was not applied only in the case of the Gorgóroglu family alone. Other families too would bid loved ones farewell in this manner. See the unpublished, hand written sketch by Vasileios Tarnanides, composed in the idiom of Matsuka, *Ο άχαμπον*, Θεσσαλονίκη 2017.

<sup>38</sup> The transportation was provided in araba-carriages of *Čerkezi* people (Circassians) who had been tasked with this job, and were friendly to the Greek populations.

problem arose: diseases<sup>39</sup>, which decimated the members of the broader clan.

They reached Constantinople in early August 1924. The Greek refugee populations were numerous. Everyone would try to find a means to sail away from Turkey. A passenger ship was found whose itinerary would lead them to Piraeus. Whoever among them had remained still alive-given that those who had perished would be hastily interred wherever the family could find some free space, covered with just a small amount of dirt<sup>40</sup>-boarded the ship. Let us also not forget that they experienced the sense of constant fear of threat against their lives posed by the Turks, who were looking for ways, as victors in the battlefronts, to exact their revenge against the beleaguered Greek populations.

At the close of 1924, and after having tackled many seafaring perils, they reached the Greek port of Piraeus, hoping that here their ordeal would finally come to an end. On the contrary, though, there awaited for them a specially prepared place at the port, fenced around with barbed wire chain-link, in whose centre lay a quarantine facility, through which all the migrants would be processed. They remained in Piraeus<sup>41</sup> approximately for fifteen days, and from there on the family of Gorgóroglu, like thousands others, relocated northwards under the dictates of the Greek Government, towards Macedonia, in search of a permanent place to settle down in.

In general, one would argue that neither was the Greek Government indeed prepared to receive and effectuate such a plan involving hundreds of thousands of repatriates, nor was Greek society itself mature enough to accept a great portion of its Diaspora back, which political circumstances had uprooted them from the land of their birth.<sup>42</sup>

##### 5. Reception by the Greek State, Integration into Society

Thus, after many a hardship they reached the outskirts of Thessaloniki, Macedonia, at a place called Harman Kōy (Ελευθέριο Κορδελιό). There too, local populations received them with a sense of apprehension. The silver lining, though, was that in the refugee camps over there they met kinsmen, whom in many cases they had regarded as dead or lost until that time. By and large, they sought to find people, such as relatives, friends, former neighbours from the villages back home, to settle next to and thus feel a sense of proximity to family and friends. This search lasted for several weeks.

It was in that place that a three-member committee was convened to be tasked with

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<sup>39</sup> Typhoid and smallpox were the best-known ones. See Σαμουηλίδη 1985: 269–270. Out of 1.300.000 refugees from Pontus it is uncertain whether 650.000 of them managed to reach Greece, because hardship and diseases had been disastrous.

<sup>40</sup> There had been occasions when circumstances would not allow them to bury their dead properly. In fact, some people would merely manage to pile a few rocks on top of the corpses of their relatives, and they would immediately continue their journey to Greece afterwards.

<sup>41</sup> There, they had them cut their hair completely, men and women alike, as lice and filth were common among the newcomers, who had been journeying for three months.

<sup>42</sup> Reports on the newcomers stemming from indigenous Greeks were often not flattering. On the matter of their reception and the prevalent conditions during the first phase of their settlement in Greece see Βεργέτη 1994: 169–183; Αγτζίδης 1991: 103–117.

determining the site of their new settlement. They located an area to the west of the River Axios, called "*Konjikovo*"<sup>43</sup>, which showed some promise to satisfy their needs. Furthermore, it possessed a series of geographical features which were deemed to be advantageous to them: it lay in a wooded area, which would provide them with timber for their heat and building purposes; it had fertile fields; the village was not located close to any main highway, which would offer protection against being threatened by nefarious passersby; it also featured a watermill suitable for the processing of wheat crops. In addition, it had a beautiful church, built in 1815, decorated in Greek icons. The choice had been made.

In that village lived a Turco-Albanian big landowner (owner of a *Çiftlik*) named Gezim Bej, in whose tracts of farm fields worked ten to fifteen families of probably Slavic descent, maybe Bulgarians.<sup>44</sup> Meanwhile, some refugee families originating from Samsun, Pontus, had already settled in the village, and suggested to their kinsmen Pontians that they stay in this place and build their lives alongside them.

The family of Gorgóroglu discussed this matter with the other refugees—approximately eighty families in total—and, in their consideration, the location they had selected looked suitable for settlement.

Although the support of State institutions was all but negligible, showing no organised interest in providing living conditions for the refugees, nevertheless, their own nature, which loved progress, their dedication to lofty ideals, their devotion to a new Greece, and primarily their eagerness to make a living for themselves, led to their quick integration into the social fibre of the country, and raised them to hold important offices in State administration, therefore earning them high distinction amid Greek society. Moreover, they successfully took upon themselves to rebuild their own church, which they consecrated in honour of SS. Constantine and Helen.

Gorgóroglu changed his name to Gregoriádes, a Greek one, which later on became Athanasiádes. As for the village, now an organised settlement, it was renamed Stíva, and later Dytikón.

He worked hard as a construction worker building houses; he would frequently offer his services pro bono to his fellow villagers, and he created a family of his own with his new wife, Olga, since his previous one had perished due to the adversities of the journey. Three children were born to the couple: George, Zogràpha, and Demétrios. His new life had just begun. However, he would always feel nostalgia surge within him for his village in Pontus, and he would often say: "*There, in the unforgotten homeland...*"

Athanásios Gorgóroglu was my paternal grandfather.

<sup>43</sup> The word is of Slavic origin, meaning "horse-village", konji: horse.

<sup>44</sup> We can deduce they must have been Slavs, because they belonged to the Bulgarian Exarchate, which, during that period of time, had already been intensely active in said region. On the matter of the activity of the Exarchate throughout the region of Giannitsa see, Τιμ. Τιμοθεάδη, "Τα Γενιτσά (Γιαννιτσά) το 1904 μέσα από την έκθεση του Γεωργίου Τσορμπατζόγλου", *Μακεδονικά* 34 (2004), 359–376.

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