

The issue of the historical demography of the ethnic populations of Asia Minor has been used recently by the Turkish government to cast doubt on the Turkish genocide of the Armenians during 1915-16. The Turkish government insists on systematically understating the extent of non-Turkish ethnic populations in the areas of the Ottoman empire. To help set the record straight, The GreekAmerican reprints here an article originally published in Volume V of The Bulletin of the Center for Asia Minor Studies in Athens. The article was written by Professor Paschalis M. Kitromilides, director of the center, and Dr. Alexis Alexandris, author of The Greek Minority in Istanbul and Greek-Turkish Relations, 1918-1974. The article is reprinted by special permission of the Center for Asia Minor Studies; all footnotes in the original essay have been deleted.

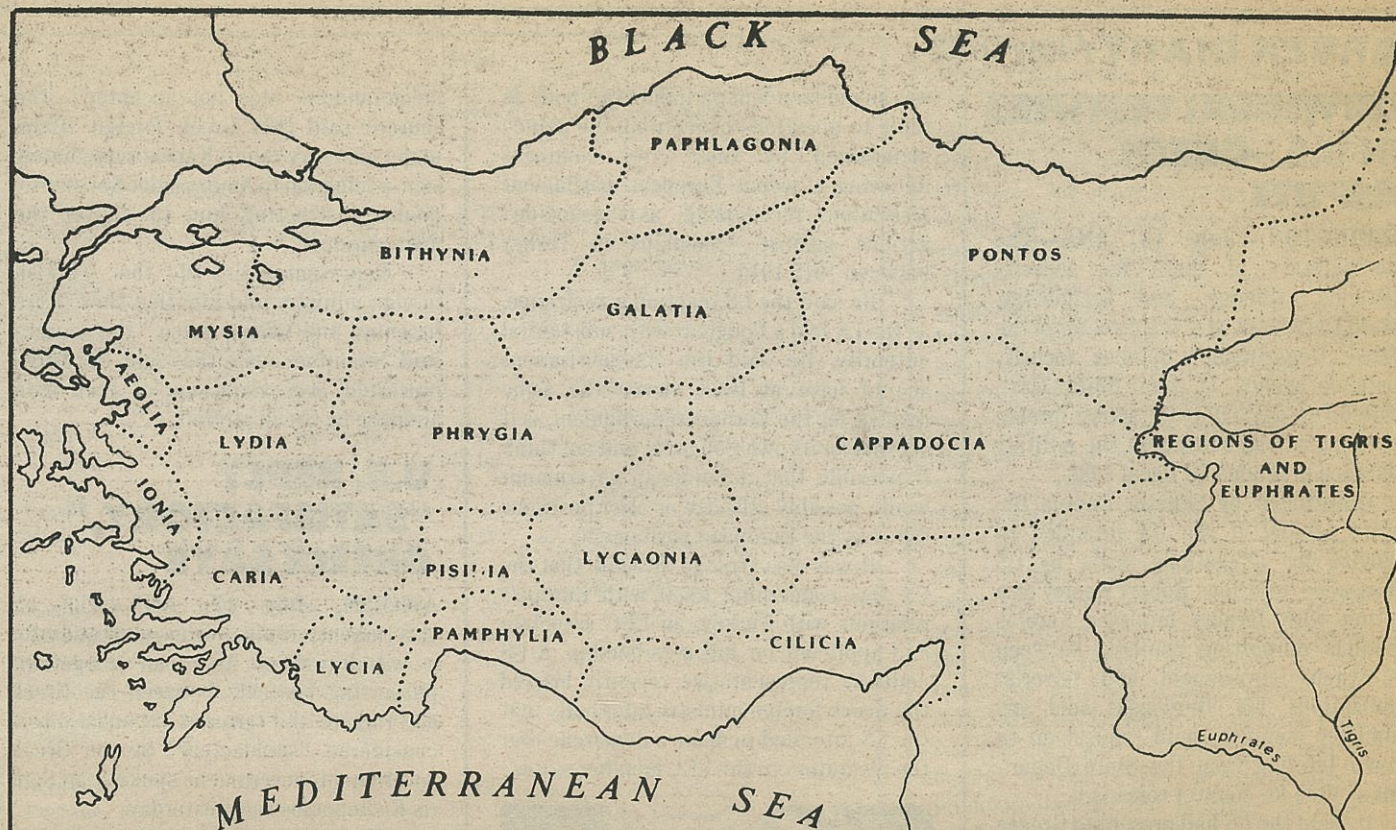
#### Introduction

An important new trend in Ottoman studies focuses on the historical demography of the Ottoman empire. A number of scholars have attempted in recent years to reconstruct the evolution of the population in various parts and provinces of the empire. The great interest of these studies consists in the new documentation they bring to light from the non-generally accessible Ottoman archives. The historical demography of more recent times, especially of the nineteenth century, can be documented on the basis of official censuses and other population registers. Both the interests of the researchers and the character of the sources used in these studies, however, tend, almost inescapably, to skew the overall demographic perspective represented in these studies. As a consequence, we have a general trend to overestimate the Turkish at the expense of other ethnic elements in the population of the Ottoman empire. This tends to be even more so the case in demographic studies of more recent and therefore politically more sensitive times, especially the period of the dissolution of the Ottoman empire, extending roughly from 1878 to 1920. To balance this partiality and reach a more precise picture of both the quantitative magnitudes and the ethnic composition of [the] Ottoman population, the evidence of other censuses, archival, and documentary sources should be consulted. The pluralism of source material might provide the needed corrective to the often imperceptible and unconscious biases in-built in historical research. In this spirit, the present article attempts to adduce its contribution to the scholarly debate on Ottoman historical demography by bringing to light a body of hitherto unknown data.

The phenomenon of legally recognized ethnic communities coexisting in Asia Minor and the Balkans had been a distinct feature of Ottoman politics. In this context, the Greek communities of Asia Minor were able to survive in their ancestral hearths from Byzantine times into the twentieth century, despite the dislocations caused by the centuries-long confrontation of Christianity and Islam in their homeland. Their eventual survival in Asia Minor, however, was precluded by the emergence of the disruptive force of nationalism, whose impact they felt in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

The establishment of national states in southeastern Europe and the diffusion of ethnic nationalism among the racial and

**Roman administrative division of Asia Minor.**



# ETHNIC SURVIVAL, NATIONALISM AND FORCED MIGRATION

## *The Historical Demography of the Greek Community of Asia Minor at the Close of the Ottoman Era*

religious groups in Asia Minor, particularly during the Balkan Wars of 1912-1913, resulted in serious intercommunal rivalries. Nationalism undermined, and ultimately obliterated, the delicate balance of the existing multiethnic structure which had ensured the symbiosis of the autochthonous inhabitants of Asia Minor. The final outcome of the new ethnic antagonism, which at the same time became entangled in international conflicts during the First World War, was the violent expulsion of the geographically dispersed and vulnerable Anatolian Greeks from their homelands. This formed an integral part of the large-scale forceful movement of people who paid the human cost of the emergence of nation-states in the Middle East.

The first part of this article examines the pattern of Greek settlement in Asia Minor as well as the Greek migratory movements before 1922-1923. The second section deals with the quantitative aspect of the problem. It considers the issue of Greek and Ottoman population statistics and evaluates their accuracy. The study concludes with a survey of the forms taken by the exodus of the Anatolian Greek population in the years 1922-1924.

#### The Pattern of Greek Settlement in Asia Minor

The Greek population of post-Byzantine Asia Minor, through the exchange of Greek and Turkish populations in 1922-1923, could be distinguished ethnographically in three broad entities, on the basis of clearly identifiable geographical, cultural, sociological and linguistic characteristics. The first entity comprised the dense Greek settlements of the western and northwestern coastal regions of the peninsula from the Sea of Marmara to the Kerm Gulf, extending inland along the riverine valleys

of western Asia Minor.

During the early centuries of the Turkish conquest, especially after the fall of Philadelphia (Alaschir), the last Byzantine stronghold, in 1390, [the] Greek presence was dramatically reduced in those hitherto demographically Greek-dominated regions. Vestiges of Greek settlement could always be found both in the cities and in the countryside in the subsequent period, but it was not until the eighteenth century and especially in the course of the nineteenth century, that the Greek presence in western Asia Minor was steadily reinforced by migrations from the Aegean islands, the Peloponnese, and continental Greece. Smyrna and its region in particular became a great center of attraction of Greek settlers, thus developing into a major Greek city in the Ottoman empire. The migration process was curiously strengthened after the creation of the independent Greek state in the 1830s.

The origin of a great part of this section of Anatolian Hellenism in migration from insular and continental Greece, proudly recalled by many Anatolian Greeks, and the geographical orientation of their new homelands toward the Aegean Sea, explain their close ties with mainland Hellenism as well as the preservation of common Modern Greek as their linguistic medium. It might therefore be observed that after the critical reduction in numbers brought about by the Turkish conquest, the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries witnessed the reenactment of the ancient migration pattern that had produced Aeolian and Ionian Hellenism in the archaic and classical periods. With Smyrna as its metropolis and the coastal and inland cities of western Asia Minor as its epicenters, this Greek population experienced [a] great economic and cultural

boom during the second half of the nineteenth century. The phenomenon was closely connected with the economic development experienced by the major sea ports of the Ottoman empire after the Anglo-Ottoman treaty of commerce of 1838. As a consequence, the major European ports of the empire, Constantinople and Thessaloniki, Smyrna and Kydonies (Ayvalik) on the Aegean coast of Asia Minor, Mersin, Attaleia, and Alexandretta on the Mediterranean coast, Trebizond, Samsun, and Sinope on the Black Sea coast, developed into busy ports of European trade. The development of the port cities created needs in manpower and accordingly Christians from the rural areas in the interior of Asia Minor as well as from the Balkans were encouraged to migrate in order to fill the requirements of the labor force. Thus in addition to Christian migrants from the Aegean and mainland Greece, many rural migrants from the Christian villages of Cappadocia emigrated to Constantinople and Smyrna. The many-sided development of the Greek communities of the region greatly impressed all foreign observers of the area in that period and nurtured the political and national aspirations of the unredeemed Greeks of the Ottoman empire. Sociologically, this section of Anatolian Hellenism was the most urban and economically modernized, although its greatest proportion, especially in northwestern Asia Minor, was overwhelmingly rural.

The second ethnographic entity of Asia Minor Hellenism comprised the Orthodox Christian populations of the interior of the peninsula, which were dispersed over a vast geographical area enclosed by the network of the great rivers of Asia Minor: to the east of the fertile riverine valleys of the Aegean region, to the

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Ethnic Survival...

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south of the rivers flowing into the Black Sea (Kizil Irmak and Sakarya), to the west of the region of the sources of [the] Tigris and Euphrates. Isolated by mountain ranges, deserts, and plateaux on all sides, bordering to the east on the vastness of the Asiatic continent, this region had its only outlets to the south, where the valleys of the Taurus mountains and of the highlands along the Mediterranean coast, provide throughways to the sea.

The physical shape of this area constitutes a classic case of the decisive impact of the geographical factor on collective life in Mediterranean society, that has been argued so vividly by [French historian] Fernand Braudel. In the hinterland of Anatolia, the presence, location, and natural formation of mountain masses determined, to a considerable extent, the collective destiny of local populations. This is made plain by the survival of Christian populations from Byzantine times to the twentieth century in the isolation of the mountain valleys of central Anatolia. Thus the natural features of the region turned it into a closed and self-contained world which preserved overtime the essential characteristics of its social cohesion and cultural particularity.

In the area of central and southern Anatolia, the Christian Orthodox presence in modern times was quantitatively meager but historically significant and ethnographically uniquely interesting. If the dense Greek settlements of the western regions of the peninsula had been by-and-large the product of relatively recent immigration, the sparse Orthodox communities, Greek-speaking or Turkish-speaking, of the interior of Asia Minor constituted direct survivals from the medieval Byzantine presence in the region. The most incontrovertible sign of the Byzantine origin of the local population, especially in Cappadocia and Lycaonia, was offered by the highly peculiar Greek idioms spoken in some of those communities, which bore unmistakable resemblance to Medieval Greek despite the heavy Turkish influence, especially in diction. Geographical isolation, and the cutting-off of these Christian communities to the east of the confrontation line between Byzantines and Turks in Asia Minor during the centuries of Turkish conquest (eleventh to fifteenth centuries), spared them the physical extinction or the cultural absorption through Islamization, which had wiped out most of the medieval Christian population of the peninsula.

In the midst of the compact mass of [the] Muslim population, the Christian element constituted a minority, which under the pressure of the conquest and of the exigencies of social survival had substituted Turkish for Greek as its language. The adoption of the language of their conquerors by the subject people was a mechanism of survival through the partial integration of the Turkish-speaking Christians into local society. The collective identity and the cultural particularity of the minority nevertheless was secured and preserved by the Orthodox Church. Orthodoxy became the hallmark of identity and the framework of collective consciousness. In the bosom of that Turcophone Christian society survived a few scattered and isolated linguistic islands, where Greek was preserved in the local idioms. These islets of Greek language were

A table of Greek Orthodox settlements in Asia Minor.

Province	Ethnic composition of the population						Language spoken by Greek inhabitants		
	α'	β'	γ'	δ'	ε'	σ'	ζ'	η'	θ'
Aeolia	50	41	9	23	22	5	41	2	7
Bithynia	181	154	27	107	57	17	125	34	9
Galatia	8	8	—	3	5	—	3	5	—
Ionia	122	102	20	57	45	20	90	12	20
Cappadocia	81	79	2	25	56	—	32	49	—
Caria	56	37	19	12	40	4	50	—	6
Cilicia	26	19	7	11	15	—	5 bilingual	14	5
Lydia	32	30	2	2	30	—	22	9	1
Lycaonia	10	9	1	—	10	—	3	5	—
Lycia	11	11	—	5	6	—	11	—	—
Mysia	60	34	26	11	29	20	37	3	16
Pamphylia	7	6	1	—	7	—	1	6	—
Paphlagonia	27	20	7	1	19	7	5	15	7
Pisidia	6	6	—	—	6	—	—	6	—
Pontos	1,454	795	659	600	212	642	612	195	617
Phrygia	19	11	8	—	19	—	2	14	—
Region of Euphrates River	9	9	—	3	6	—	3	1	—
Region of Tigris River	4	4	—	—	4	—	1	1	—
TOTAL	2,163	1,375	788	860	588	715	1,049	426	688

Source: 'Ο τελευταίος ελληνισμός της Μικράς Ασίας, Athens 1974, pp. 277-278.  
α': N° of Greek settlements. β': N° of settlements researched by CAMS. γ': N° of settlements non researched. δ': Purely Greek settlements. ε': Mixed Greek-Turkish settlements. σ': No information. ζ': Greek. η': Turkish. θ': No information.

located in Makri and Livisi on the Lycian coast, in Sille near Konya in Lycaonia, and especially in [the] thirty-two Grecophone out of the eighty-one Orthodox communities in Cappadocia.

Pontic Hellenism formed the third ethnographic component of [the] Greek presence in Anatolia. This ancient section of Hellenism, with its lively recollections of its Byzantine splendor and its traditions of resistance, occupied the northern region of the peninsula, extending from the mouth of the Sakarya river along the Black Sea coast to the edge of the Caucasus. Pontic Greek communities penetrated into the highlands and valleys of the Pontic Alps and onto the southern slopes of that mountain range. [The] Pontic presence further inland in central Anatolia, especially in Cappadocia, was the product of the migration of mining communities from their base in the region of Argyroupolis (Gumushane) to other areas where their skills were in demand. Fortified by geographic isolation and its medieval state, the empire of the Grand Comneni of Trebizond, which was the last bastion of Byzantine Hellenism to fall to the Turks in 1461, Greek society in the Pontos managed to preserve its social cohesion and ethnic continuity. The medieval Pontic empire had safeguarded local Hellenism from the disruption and large-scale Islamization experienced by the rest of Anatolia during the five centuries of Byzantine-Turkish confrontation. In the Pontos, the conquest came late and local Greek society was delivered intact and entrenched in its mountain strongholds to the new dynasts. The most incontrovertible evidence of its ethnological vigor was the preservation of its archaic language, a genuinely Greek though highly peculiar and idiomatic dialect. The Pontos was the foremost area where linguistic continuity transmitted uninterrupted the ancient Hellenistic and Byzantine cultural heritage of the area. Thus Pontic Greek society preserved on a quantitatively larger scale the same feature of Byzantine survival as the Greek-speaking villages of Cappadocia.

In its isolation and self-containment, Pontic society constituted a whole Greek world on its own, which, after meeting successfully the challenges of conquest and survival, capitalized on the economic opportunities of the nineteenth century and achieved remarkable material prosperity and cultural progress. The Greek population in the Pontos was primarily rural, living in the highlands of the region where the structure and cultural traditions of a closed, tightly-knit society sealed it off from the outside world. In the course of the nineteenth century, the overland trade of the Middle East and Central Asia which used the Pontic port cities as its terminal points prior to the opening of the Suez canal, and the exploitation of the natural resources of the area, contributed to economic and social changes that resulted in the creation of an important urban stratum in Pontic society, especially in such cities as Trebizond, Samsun, and Sinope. This group provided the leadership of Pontic society, which spearheaded the local nationalist movement and the abortive attempt to create the republic of the Pontos in 1919-1922.

The quantitative dimension of the Greek ethnography of Asia Minor is presented in Table 1. The data have been collected over many decades of research by the Center for Asia Minor Studies (CAMS). They present a picture of the geographical dispersion, the density of settlement patterns, and the linguistic situation of the Orthodox Christian population of the peninsula at the beginning of the third decade of the twentieth century. The data are arranged geographically on the basis of the ancient Roman administrative division of the peninsula as it had evolved during the last third of the second century and the first half of the first century BC.

This system of geographical classification has been followed by the Center in its research on the model of contemporary Western archeological and historical literature on Asia Minor. The table presents very graphically the density of Greek presence in the Pontos. It is by far

the area of the highest concentration of Greek settlements, in which furthermore the Greek language was in use. [The] Greek presence is attested in 1,454 settlements of which 795 have been studied by the CAMS. Of these, 600 were found to be entirely Greek, while 212 more were mixed Greek and Turkish villages. In 612 of these villages, the inhabitants were Greek-speaking. A large number of settlements, however (659), have remained unresearched for lack of native informants after the transfer of the Pontic population to Greece in 1924. This is explained by the fact that a large number of Pontic Greeks moved to the Caucasus and southern Russia during the First World War and after the exchange of populations. Therefore, the population of many Greek villages, especially from eastern Pontos, never reached Greece. Next to the Pontic region, the denser Greek settlement is encountered in western and northwestern Asia Minor in the provinces of Ionia (122 settlements) and Bithynia (181 settlements). In both of these provinces, Greek predominated as the language of most settlements (in 90 out of 122 in Ionia and in 125 out of 181 in Bithynia). Cappadocia in central Asia Minor came fourth in density of Greek settlements, with 81 villages and townships. In this area, however, as in the rest of central and southern Asia Minor, the linguistic pattern was reversed: the majority of the settlements were Turcophone (49 out of 81). In other provinces of the interior, Turkish dominated completely as the language of the Orthodox population: thus in Pisidia, all six Orthodox settlements spoke Turkish, in Phrygia 14 settlements out of 19 were entirely Turkish-speaking, in Pamphylia six out of seven were exclusively Turkish-speaking. The table shows that the linguistic picture was even more complicated than that. In Bithynia, thirteen Orthodox villages were Armenian-speaking, as was the case in five out of nine Orthodox settlements in the region of the Euphrates River in eastern Anatolia. In Cilicia, two Orthodox villages spoke Bulgarian, while in the region of the Tigris River the four Orthodox villages each spoke Greek, Turkish, Kurdish, and Syriac. To this pattern, one must add the fact that many of the Greek speakers themselves spoke highly idiomatic and diverse dialects, which made Greek speech quite incomprehensible from one region of Asia Minor to another and indeed from one Greek village to the next. We have already noted the uniqueness of Pontic Greek. In Cappadocia, the picture of the local Greek idioms was even more complex with quite different dialects spoken in even neighboring villages. Only in western Asia Minor, and in major urban centers such as Constantinople and Smyrna, was standard Modern Greek in common use.

These details of linguistic diversity have been cited in order to put in perspective the enormous problems in communication and adaptation these people had to face after their compulsory transfer to Greece. Following the Ottoman tradition of the millet system, in determining the population groups subject to the compulsory exchange agreed upon at Lausanne in 1923, nationality was defined on the basis of religion rather than language and this meant the indiscriminate expulsion of both Greek- and Turkish-speaking Orthodox Christians from Asia Minor.

Next week, "The Debate Over Numbers."