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THE MONASTERY OF SOUMELA AND ANCIENT TRADE ROUTES CONNECTED TO IT

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Rezumat: *Este bine cunoscut faptul că între rutele de comerț și temple au existat relații apropiate. E imposibilă excluderea mănăstirilor din această generalizare. Crearea unei conexiuni între comerț și trei mănăstiri, aflate în zona străbătută de rutele comerciale, este inevitabilă. Mănăstirea Soumela se distinge, în fața celorlalte două, prin amplasarea sa unică pe ruta comercială de vară. Turnurile de supraveghere și adăposturile pentru cămile, din apropierea mănăstirii, dovedesc acest lucru.*

Un alt aspect important legat de Mănăstirea Soumela și relația acesteia cu rutele comerciale îl reprezintă structura demografică și amplasarea satelor în areale cu destinație comercială. În mod special, memoriile călătorilor și registrele Imperiului Otoman arată că în regiune, pentru o perioadă lungă de timp, a existat o economie vivace. De asemenea, anchetele de teren din ultimii ani arată importanța rutelor comerciale care străbat regiunea.

Abstract: *It is a well known fact that trade routes and temples had a close relations. It is not possible to exempt monasteries from this generalization. It is inevitable to build connection between trade and three monasteries located in the area where trade routes passing. The Monastery of Soumela comes front among the rest two with its unique location on summer trade route. Watch towers and camel inns at the vicinity of the Monastery prove this fact.*

Another important aspect related to Soumela Monastery and her connection to the trade routes is the demographic structure and settlement of villages located on the trade destinations. Especially travelers memoirs and registers of Ottoman Empire show that for a long period there was a lively economy in the region. Field surveys at the last years also show the importance of trade routes passing from the region.

Résumé*: On sait qu'entre les chemins commerciaux et les temples ont existé depuis toujours des relations proches. Il est impossible d'exclure les monastères de cette généralisation. La création d'une connexion entre le commerce et trois monastères, situés dans la zone traversée par les routes commerciales, est inévitable. Le monastère Soumela se distingue, des autres deux, par son emplacement unique sur la route commerciale d'été. Les tours de veille et les abris pour les chameaux des alentours du monastère prouvent cette chose-ci.*

Un autre aspect important lié au Monastère Soumela et à la relation de celle-ci avec les routes commerciales est représenté par la structure démographique et l'emplacement des villages dans les zones à destination commerciale. Spécialement, les mémoires de voyageurs et les registres de l'Empire Ottoman montrent, que dans cette région-ci, pour une longue période de temps, il y a eu une économie extrêmement active. Les enquêtes de terrain des dernières années montrent, aussi, l'importance des routes commerciales qui ont traversé la contrée.

Keywords: *Kolat, Soumela, Trade Routes, Sameruksa, Tax Books, Camel Caravans*

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Introduction

Numerous religions have a monastic aspect, including Hinduism, Buddhism and Christianism. The monastic tradition of these three religions often includes vows of poverty and service, with monks and nuns humbling themselves to the greater service of God.

In the construction of monasteries the choice of place had vital importance, monasteries were built far away from settlement areas, at the tops of rocks observing the valleys in the vicinity, caves of the great rocks where it was deserted and almost impossible to reach or on hills it was only possible to reach via steep tracks. Sometimes a monastery housed a religious community of monks and nuns, and governed by them together. Exiled princes, opponent dynasties and clergies, were imprisoned and trained in monasteries to rid them of their contentious ideas. The most important income sources of the monasteries were donations and taxes collected from the villages in the vicinity of the monastery.

Donations were collected by monks who devoted their life to the monastery, monks especially in Eastern Orthodox Christianity, like Anatolian dervishes were serving their monasteries with the philosophy of *"one piece of bread, one piece of clothing"*. With the beginning of 13th century, feudalism in Europe diminished and the power of church was questioned, so monasteries lost their power and importance, although in Eastern Christianity they preserved their power and importance until the late 19th centuries. The Ottoman Empire's governance of those lands in that era and Ottomans' policy not to intervene or prevent monastic life had made it possible.

I. Zeki Eyüboğlu argues that; in the vicinity of Maçka almost all monasteries might be dated after the twelfth century. Whereas the case especially in Eastern Christianity, about all monasteries from medieval ages traditionally having been built at the deep surface of a cliff having a cavern inside supports Eyuboğolu's argument, the foundation date of Soumela should be a few centuries before the medieval ages. According to Anthony Bryer, all large monasteries in the Black Sea Region have a sacred cavern or all are built in front of a natural cave[1]. The fact that Soumela and all other important monasteries in the region are built next to a natural cave corrects Bryer.

At the beginning monasteries were educational centers where, Bible, Christian theology and liturgy books and especially history of churches were basic lessons to be taught. Greek language, literature, logic, canonical theology and discourses were the basic lessons.[2] Students after completing the study of said lessons, in line with their skill levels were promoted to the next post in accordance with a determined hierarchical order. Due to the fact that, during monastic history, construction

[1] Anthony Bryer and others, *The Post-Byzantine Monuments of the Pontos*, (UK: Ashgate Variourum, 2002), p. 166.

[2] İsmet Zeki Eyüboğlu, *Maçka*, 1. Baskı, (Istanbul: Pencere Yayınları, 2004), p. 45.

traditions were more effective than canonical administration; priests in monasteries have been named as; "monakos".

Monakos, had the lowest rank in a monastic hierarchy hence all students entered into a monastery initially were named as monakos. In English, the term "monk" etymologically derives from the word "monakos". Because monks were devoting themselves to God and will be expected to suffer, they had been trained in difficult conditions. They were not allowed to marry and any of them who succeeded to advance in the canonical structure could become diocesan which was a lower post before becoming a priest. Diocesans were two sorts, one allowed to get married and the other not. They had the right to have a determined parish and they also had the chance to become a priest in time. The post after diocese was episcope. In line with their merits, episcopes had the right to become archbishops. As bishops were assumed representatives and successors of apostles, as apostles had associates, bishops also were acting as faith witnesses of their parishes.[3] In this canonical hierarchy, after some pre-determined steps bishops had the chance to become metropolitan.

Metropolitans were domiciled at the center of their metropolitanates and they were representatives of the Christian parishes in their area. They were solving problems of their parish and controlling duties of all ecclesiastics. Christian schools, church buildings or rebuilding works were under the authority of metropolitans. They were under the patriarchate and relevant to their parish and works, had been obliged to submit periodical reports. Metropolitans were assigned by Patriarchate and their authorization area was determined by charters given to them. They were strengthening and encouraging continuous cooperation between churches and monasteries, they also had been authorized to inspect monasteries under their governance. Metropolitans were authorized to control monastery foundations and after approval of monks they could purchase estates on behalf of monasteries. Annual revenue of monastery foundations also was under the authorization and responsibility of metropolitans and they had preserved all aforesaid rights during Ottoman governance.[4] In addition to incomes of monasteries at their area, some of the monasteries also could have incomes from Eflak *Wallachia* and Buğdan *Moldovia*[5] also.

In the monastic hierarchy the last position a priest could achieve was to become Patriarch which is an equal post to Pope in eastern Christianity. Patriarchs were the most superior authority, being patriarch until they died, were governing all Christian society, churches, monasteries and clergies under them. In Anatolia like other Orthodoxy churches and monasteries Soumela and its monks also were under the governance of Phanar Orthodoxy Patriarchate.[6]

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[3] Mehmet Aydın, *"Hıristiyan Konsüllerine Genel Bir Bakış"*, *Belleten,* C. LIV, Sayı: 24, (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, Nisan 1966), p. 372.

[4] Ahmet Türkan, *"Trabzon'da Hıristiyanlık Tarihi ve Sumela Manastırı'nın Hıristiyanlıktaki Yeri", Yayınlanmamış Yüksek Lisans Tezi*, No: 123189, (Konya: YÖK Dokümantasyon Merkezi, 2003), p. 53.

[5] Today's Romania had been named as Eflak and Buğdan at the time of Ottomans.

[6] Despite discussions on its Ecumenical position, Phanar Patriarchate today governs all Greek Christian Orthodox Society.

In Anatolia the founding father of monastic tradition was Saint Basileos Bishop of Kayseri (329-379). Upon emergence of different usages and methods at the very beginning of Christianity, Saint Basileos aiming to achieve educational unity and teach Christianity to illiterate people had established the first sample monasteries. Thus, large amount of monasteries in Anatolia are the product of St. Basileos' monastic discipline. Monasteries had been founded in the vicinity of defined regions where monks were living. Whereas monastic tradition and monkish type of living started before him, Basileos was recognized as the first priest who determined basic rules and regulated monkish living standards and monastic traditions.

Due to this reason Basileos in Orthodoxy is given superior importance and he is one of the a few saints, whose figures appeared in Cappadocia who were always painted on the church apses and naves. After structuring his discipline, St. Basileos preferring to be a monk, he paid visits to monkish centers in Palestine, Egypt, Syria and Mesopotamia, in 357-362 he came to Trabzon[7] which at that time was under the governance of Pontos State.[8] St. Basileos came to Trabzon around the date St. Sophronios and Barnabas' arrival in Trabzon who were recognized the first founders of the Monastery of Soumela. However, we don't have any information in the written sources creating a connection between St. Basileos' visit and the establishment of Soumela Monastery. After St. Basileos, monkish type of living and monastic traditions had a regulated order and since this date it has become a custom for monks to be dressed in black which is the symbol of sainthood. Due to their long black cloths covering their heads monks have been called "black-headed" for a long time.

Because missionary activities were one of the primary and may be have been the most important aim of students, during education in the monasteries, special attention had been paid to train students in this area. In Orthodoxy, monasteries were of three types; male monasteries in which only monks were living, maiden's monasteries where only nuns were living and the third type called common monasteries in which nuns and monks were living together. In the area of Maçka almost all monasteries were male buildings, where only monks were living because of stern life conditions in the difficult environment. There were three main monasteries in the region; Vazelon (according to tales date of foundation is: 270), Soumela (according to tales date of foundation is: 386) and Peristera (according to tales date of foundation is: 752) and were male monasteries. In addition to the Maidens'

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[7] Türkan, *loc cit.,* pp. 41-42.

[8] Pontos State: National state of Anatolia, founded in BC. 298, by Persian monarchs living in Anatolia together with Anatolia's native people. Its first capital was Amasya city (Rock Tomps of Kings carved in this era), second capital was Sinop city and temporary capital was Pergama, in this era the tradition using paid Ionian soldiers has been abandoned and a national army formed by Eastern Black Sea region people was founded. It is the national state of Anatolia, its flag was with crescent and star, dominated Ionians and fought against Roma to protect Anatolia's independency. It has no any kind of relation with Ionian people or Greeks. Because Eastern Black Sea was under the governance of this state, it is also named "Pontus" in ancient times. For more information see; Mahmtu Goloğlu, *Trabzon Tarihi Fetih'ten Kurtuluşa Kadar*, 1. Baskı, (Trabzon: Serander Yayınları, 2000), pp. 60-63.

Monastery in Trabzon centre, according to records there was another maidens' monastery at the site of Vazelon Monastery, located alongside the Hamsikoy Village road. This monastery has been exposed to fire and burnt down wholly in 1944.[9] At the outside entrance of monasteries there always were churches easily accessible to women and men for worshipping. The church or chapel of Soumela, was Saint Barbara located at one km distance, to the right side end of the new built vehicle road. Sallina Balance is not sure whether this Chapel belonged to Saint Barbara or not says that; the rough masonry and tiny windows of the chapel give it a medieval appearance, but the pointed arch over the doorway looks later.[10]

Starting from its foundation date to 1923 when the Monastery was emptied, Soumela or with its Turkish name Maryemana preserved its specialty to be a male monastery. Necmettin Aygün, while surveying Trabzon trade in the 18th centuries, at his work on Ottoman Court Records, quoting from Fallmerayer argues that; in Soumela nuns were making income due to linen works,[11] hitherto I think, Aygun when quoting confused Maidens' Monastery in Trabzon centre with Soumela. In Soumela nuns never lived and none of the sources include any information regarding nuns' existence in the Monastery.

Considering their architecture, stone works, internal paintings and locations, monasteries, chapels and churches in Maçka, Kurum, Stavri and Imera settlements, resemble Caucuses examples rather than Byzantine. Especially, on the paintings of those buildings Caucasus and Byzantine synthesis is clear. [12] While some of buildings have a resemblance of basilica construction features which was inherited by Christianity from Rome, some of them have been built mostly in oriental style. Basic building material was stone and despite lacking quarries in the vicinity, ashlars for stonework of Soumela used at frontage surface, door and window niches and jambs have been excavated at quarries and brought from Santa High Plateaus seventeen km distance from Soumela[13] Buildings' doors and windows have been built with arched ashlars while their arches at the middle were smooth cut stones.

Almost at all buildings, window and door niches, ashlars and ornaments are of great merit and elaborate works. Roofs of buildings were generally domed, sometimes barrel vaulted and a few examples were cross vaulted. The roof of Soumela in the church and monks' cells sections are mostly barrel vaulted,[14] whilst at the monastery part of frontage is cross vault, constructed with wood. As they were very wealthy, monasteries were very often attacked by smugglers or outlaws, therefore special

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[9] Eyüboğlu, *loc cit.,* p. 45.

[10] Anthony Bryer and others., *The Post-Byzantine Monuments of the Pontos*, (UK: Ashgate Variourum, 2002), Part I, p. 262.

[11] Necmettin Aygün, *Onsekizinci Yüzyılda Trabzon'da Ticaret*, (Trabzon: Serander Yayınları, 2005), p. 352.

[12] Gabriel Millet and D. Talbot Rice, *Byzantine Painting at Trabizond*, 1st Ed., (UK: Academie Des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres and University of London, 1936), p. 148.

[13] Özkan Tüfek, *Sumela Meryemana*, (Trabzon: 1978), p. 101.

[14] Ismail Köse and others, *Pratical Anatolian Guide, 1st Ed.*, (Ankara: Detay Yayıncılık, 2008), p. 237.

entrance gates of monasteries were constructed with strong ashlars of maximum width of one person.

As it was mentioned above, entrance gates have been built at a width so only one person may enter, always at the uppermost of the entrances there were eyelets to watch outside and guard insiders. When penetrated from the entrance there always should be a narrow passage to let insiders defend themselves. The case is the same in Soumela. The entrance gate of Soumela was guarded by watchmen and it was accessible by using a suspended wooden ladder until 1850's. The ladder was being pulled up at nights and the Monastery was inaccessible to any outsider.[15] The entrance corridor of Soumela coming after the gate is three meters length, constructed as narrow as possible and roofed by barrel vault. As it was told before, the style used at the churches and monasteries in Maçka and its vicinity besides having a Caucasus effects resemblances medieval stone works also can be seen. Thus, effects of medieval architecture may clearly be seen in the stone works of earlier built parts of the Soumela.

To Bryer, after the conquest in 1461 Trabzon had a monastic economy of almost Tibetan proportions and at the beginning of the 19th centuries due to reestablishing of ancient trade routes, people living around were enriched by the trade like Comnenus Kings had been enriched centuries ago. According to him, via those developments monasteries and churches in the region came under a comprehensive restoration or new ones started to be constructed.[16] Bryer also argues that; due to existence of the three great monasteries (Vazelon, Soumela and Gregorius Peristera-Kuştul in local language), Christian Greeks in Maçka could have preserved their identity and faith whereas lacking such great monasteries, people living in other parts of Trabzon mostly had converted from their religion.[17] Despite the fact, Heath W. Lowry's arguments also seconds Bryer, surveys on Ottoman Tax Books and Court Records provide clear and strong evidence undermining Bryer and Lowry's arguments.[18]

Contrary to Bryer's argument, three monasteries have been built situating on the three valleys of Maçka region neighboring to the passage of trade routes and together with Rums[19] Christian Greeks, Christianized Turkish tribes and so on, also had preferred to settle at the vicinity of aforesaid trade routes. Also, the late Ronald C. Jennings, based on his surveys at Ottoman Court Records *Ser'iyye Sicils* says that; many elements of the society and economy of Maçka during the Kingdom of Trabzon continued under Ottoman rule in the 16th and early 17th centuries. During Ottoman rule, peasants of Maçka doubtless lived at least with the same degree of prosperity

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[15] Jakop Philip Fallmerayer, *Doğu'dan Fragmanlar*, Çev. Hüseyin Salihoğlu, 1. Baskı, (Istanbul: İmge Kitabevi Yayınları, 2002), p. 118.

[16] Bryer and others, *loc cit*., p. xxviii.

[17] *Ibid*.

[18] Hanefi Bostan, *XV-XVI. Asırlarda Trabzon Sancağında Sosyal ve İktisadi Hayat*, (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 2002), p. 351.

[19] Orthodox Ottoman citizens under Phanar Patriarchate; including Greeks, Christianized Turkish and some Caucasian tribes. At this work to identify these people the term "Rum" will be used.

from their agriculture as they had enjoyed prior to 1461. Ottoman courts imposed and maintained the Pax Ottomanica, extending security of person and property to the Christian villagers.[20] In this context, Ilber Ortaylı says that; Ottoman Juridical System is the continuity of Rome's Jurisdiction as it was protecting non-Muslims' rights and he names Ottoman Juridical System "*Turkokratia*".[21] In either case, Jennings' findings and neutral fixings have vital importance correcting biased and deliberate purposive arguments of Bryer, Lowry and other numerous orientalists. Jennings also shows that, how those baseless arguments lacking any scientific root.

The last record regarding Soumela given by Jennings from Court records is dated May 25, 1629, is related to the monks' objection to extraordinary taxes which would be collected from the Monastery's foundations. According to record; Monk Avram V. states; back from father and grandfather he had possessed property belonging to Meryemana (Soumela Monastery) Vakf. Monk Avram asks the court to examine the *fetva*, in his possession and issue a legal certificate of the proceedings whether this extraordinary tax demand is consistent to Sharia or not?[22] Jennings does not give any information about the result of the hearing, but this is a vital case record, proving that, monks' appealing to the court not to pay tax means Soumela or other monasteries do not pay tax for their foundation fields and non-Muslim citizens also easily could have applied to courts when they felt being wrongly treated.

The ancient trade routes and the monastery of Soumela

There are Zigana and Soğanlı mountains following the Kackar- Vercenik mountain range between Trabzon and Gümüşhane Province. Zigana Mountains also functioned as a route of return of ten thousands in the 4th century BC. While passing over peaks of the Zigana, Ten thousands had seen the Black Sea and arrived at Trabzon after a hard journey.[23] There are still some stone masonry remaining from the Ten Thousands. Soğanlı Mountains are south of Zigana Mountains and both mountain chains were convenient for the establishment of several settlements, so numerous monasteries, churches and chapels were built in these areas. Even today many villages where people all year round can be seen up to an altitude of 1800 meters, and also many seasonal pasture settlements where people live only in summer exist at an altitude of over 1800 meters.

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[20] Ronald C. Jennings, *"The Society and Economy of Maçuka in The Otoman Judicial Registers of Trabzon, 1560-1640", Studies on Ottoman Social History in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries-Women, Zimmis and Sharia Courts in Kayseri, Cyprus and Trabzon*, (Istanbul: The Isıs Pres, 1999), p. 610.

[21] İlber Ortaylı, *Osmanlı Toplumunda Aile*, 5. Baskı, (Istanbul: Pan Yayıncılık, 2002), 2.

[22] Jennings, *op. cit*., p. 543.

[23] Ksenophon Anabasis, *Onbinlerin Dönüşü*, Çeviren; Tanju Gökçöl, İkinci Baskı, (Ankara: Sosyal Yayınlar, 1998), p. 144.

As it was mentioned before, Ottoman Christian citizens under the Orthodox Patriarchate were named "Rum" as in the Millet System.[24] Rums included people whose origins were of Greek, assimilated Turkic and other Caucasian tribes, who became Christian afterwards and people who lived in the Eastern Black Sea region were also named as Rum as they were up to the Phanar Orthodox Patriarchate. Ottoman Rums or Orthodoxies who belonged to a church apart from the Armenians were densely settled on the west and south slopes of the Zigana-Soğanlı mountain ranges.[25] As ancient routes, ancient pack trails and a sub way of the Silk Road were in that territory, most of the settlements were located there. Also many settlements were located on the trade routes between Trabzon and Erzurum as the routes were very important in ancient times and especially in the Byzantine period.[26] Trabzon harbor had an important role in transportation throughout history and this importance had lasted until the beginning of the 19th century. Silver and copper mined in Gümüşhane were being sent to Istanbul through Trabzon harbor. The Starting point of the trade routes to Iraq, Iran and India was also Trabzon.[27] Trade routes starting from Trabzon reached to the Maçka district where there was a military base located in the Byzantine period. The Route to Tabriz and a sub way of the Silk Road were included in the routes above mentioned. Routes were split into two different directions in Maçka, one was for winter travel, it reached to Gümüşhane, Baiburd and Erzurum passing Zigana.

The other was for spring and summer travel, it reached Altındere Valley following The Meryemana River and passed in front of the Monastery of Soumela. This route also reached the Kolat Inns following the Monastery of Soumela, it was generally passed when going to the ancient city of Kurum and combined with the other routes.[28] These ancient trade routes had a vital role in trading throughout the centuries, but they lost their importance with the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 and the emergence of alternative trade routes in Samsun. Bryer reports that; the whole invaders and merchants had to go to Maçka district coming through the Pontus Gates

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[24] **Millet System**: It is a kind of covenant between Ottoman Empire and non-Muslim citizens who are living on conquested soils. Due to this covenant, non-Muslims' rights, freedom and protection were quarantined. Millet System has not based on ethnicity or tribal kinships, yet it had based on sense of belonging to a religious society. Thanks to this system, several hostile tribes living disconnectedly had been brought together and reorganized under their religious society. Until French Revolution in 1789 the system operated excellently but after this date it started to undermine Ottoman Empire's territorial and cultural integrity. Hostile tribes who reorganized and became societies due to nationalistic movements accelerated collapse of Ottoman Empire. For more information regarding, Millet System and Ottoman Family Structure see; Ortaylı, *op. cit.,* pp. 7-16.

[25] Anthony Bryer and others. The Post-Byzantine Monuments of the Pontos, A Source Book, Ashgate Variourum Collected Studies Series: CS707, UK, 2002. Bölüm 1, p. ix.

[26] F.İ. Uspenski, Trabzon Tarihi, Kuruluşundan Fethine Kadar, Çeviren; Enver Uzun, Eser Ofset Matbaacılık, Trabzon 2003, p. 99.

[27] Hüseyin Albayrak and others, *Trabzon Yıllığı 97*, Yayın No: 52, (Trabzon: Trabzon Belediyesi Kültür Yayınları, 1997), p. 86.

[28] Necmettin Aygün, *Onsekizinci Yüzyılda Trabzon'da Ticaret*, (Trabzon: Serander Yayınları, 2005), p. 119.

in the east of Trabzon and they also had to pass the funnel shaped valley in Yazlık Village. Bryer also says that; Marco Polo and Ruy Gonzales Clavijo a Spanish traveler also had used these routes.[29] Ruins of a watch tower can be seen in the west entrance of the Yazlık Village. The watch tower was built for the security of trade routes and it was located in a place where the whole valley could be controlled. The area named "Pontus Gates"[30] by Bryer is located in a highland between Camibogazi and Zigana canyon like a passage.

While describing the route they used to visit the Monastery in 1840, Fallmerayer says that there were very sheer slopes and they went on their tour looking the River at the bottom of the valley, but they couldn't hear its burble because of distance.[31] We concluded from the route description that Fallmerayer also used the route; he went to the Yazlık Villge, passed between Saveriksa Plateau and Altındere Village, and then reached the Monastery of Soumela. The route Fallmerayer described in 1850 above is matched with the old pack trails as the old people in the territory described. The River that Fallmerayer mentioned is the Meryemana River combination of other runnels and it is still possible to see the River among the trees from the old route, but it is not likely to hear the River's burble because of distance.

As it was told before, S. P. Mintslov who was the Russian Army commander during the invasion of Trabzon, on August 27, 1916 had paid a visit to Soumela; he also affirms what Fallmerayer said. According to Mintslov's descriptions; the track leading to Soumela was passing over deep valleys, steep land, arêtes and rocks whilst River of Meryemana ran at the bottom of deep valleys making gurgling sounds.[32] Similar information regarding the track leading to the Monastery and its belongings was also given by Russian Military Newspaper "Voenniy Listok" published during the invasion.[33]

Throughout known history, Trabzon was an ancient active seaport city. This case is clearly understood from the existence of Apollo's[34] head on one side and ship and anchor figures on other side of coins found minted in Trabzon. In ancient ages besides its commercial importance, Trabzon was a replenishment base also.[35] Records show that, Trabzon was the last sea arrival point of the trade route beginning from Persia *Iran*. According to information given by the famous traveler of the 13th century Marco Polo; caravans setting out from Trabzon and passing mountainous range between Maçka and Gümüşhane were arriving at Kazvin, Nishapur and Badakhshan or Kabul, by passing Ghazni onto the Indian seaports. Also at this time, there was a trade route

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[29] Bryer and others., *op. cit.,* p. ix.
[30] *Ibid.*
[31] Fallmerayer, *op. cit.,* p. 121.
[32] Uzun, *op. cit.,* p. 76.
[33] Enver Uzun, *İşgal Yıllarında (1916-19179 Trabzon'da Rus Askeri Gazetesi Voenniy Listok*, (Trabzon: Eser Ofset Matbaacılık, 2008), pp. 23-25.
[34] Collette Estin and Helene Laporte, *Yunan ve Roma Mitolojisi*, Çeviren; Musa Eran, 24. Baskı, (Ankara: Tübitak Yayınları, 2007), p. 104.
[35] Bostan, *op. cit.,* p. 372.

starting from Trabzon and arriving at Baghdad and caravans set out from Trabzon leading to Tabriz could have arrived here in an average thirty, thirty two days.[36]

French orientalist Claude Cahen at his work *"La Turquie Pre-Ottomane-Turks in Anatolia Before Ottomans"* says that; caravans passing setting out from Persia, Armenia and Azerbaijan generally were arriving at Erzurum and Trabzon unloading their freights in Trabzon seaport and directing their destinations from here.[37] Ibrahim Tellioğlu at his work *"Osmanlı Hakimiyetine Kadar Doğu Karadeniz'de Türkler*-Turks in Black Sea Coasts Until Ottoman Sovereignty" says that; at the most ancient times, existence of mine ores in Gümüşhane and Baiburt caused rising importance of both cities and in this region there were over a hundred natural caverns convenient to settle and live in.[38]

W. Eleroy Curtis also in his work; "Around the Black Sea" says that; Trabzon is the terminus of the northern caravan route from Persia. The road over which the caravans travel is the same that Xenophon followed in the retreat of the Ten Thousands and it has been kept in fairly good condition all these centuries also it is scarcely fit for vehicles. Camel caravans usually take average 1380 km's (860 miles) forth and back abut sixty days and at the beginning of the 19th century about twenty thousand camels arrived annually at Trabzon carrying several objects.[39] E. Lord Weeks at his work *"From the Black Sea through Persia and India"* says that; Persia begins in Trabzon practically and the road from Trabzon, through Erzurum to Tabriz or Tauris, the largest city in Persia is undoubtedly the oldest caravan route in the world. According to Weeks, from Tabriz to Black Sea by camel caravan takes three months which usually means travel by night and rest during the day.[40] Gümüşhane is located on the main junction of trade and caravan routes where at that time was under the governance of Kadı Burhaneddin visited by Ibn-i Battuta one of the most famous travelers of medieval ages. Battuta at his travel in the first half of the 14th century says about Gümüşhane that; the city has silver mines, the population is high where merchants from Iraq and Damascus pay visits, confirm at earlier times what Cahen, Tellioğlu and other travelers said.[41] By using said trade route to arrive from Erzurum to Trabzon different routes should have been used convenient to seasons. Information about these routes will be given in later pages of this paper.

Soğanli Mountains' northern slopes are covered by green and marvelous pine forests whilst the side of Gümüşhane, southern slopes consists of barren lands and

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[36] Bostan, *ibid,* p. 373.

[37] Claude Cahen, *Osmanlılar'dan Önce Anadolu'da Türkler*, 3. Baskı, (Istanbul: E Yayınları, 1994), p. 166.

[38] İbrahim Tellioğlu, *Osmanlı Hakimiyetine Kadar Doğu Karadeniz'de Türkler*, 2. Baskı, (Trabzon: Serander Yayınları, 2007), pp. 4, 6.

[39] William Eleroy Curtis, *Araound The Black Sea-Armenia, Caucasus, Circassia, Daghestan, The Crimea, Roumania*, (New York: Hodder & Stoughton.), pp. 46-47.

[40] Edwin Lord Weeks, *From The Black Sea Through Persia and India*, (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1896), p. 2.

[41] İbn-i Batuta, *Tuhfetü'n-nazar fi Araibü'l-emsar ve 'acaibü'l-esfar Seyahatname-i İbn-i Battuta*, Çeviren; Mehmet Şerif, (Istanbul: 1333), p. 328.

due to carstic surface morphology as Tellioğlu said there numerous underground caverns at those slopes. The routes passing from Gümüşhane leading to Trabzon one way or another ought to pass Maçka. The seasonal route which was used during spring and summer time having Kurum, Stavri, Imera-Kolat as connections were leading from the southern opposite slopes of Soumela Monastery, and was passing a Village named as Sameruksa by the 15th century Ottoman Tax Books *Tahrir Defterleri*.[42] This area's definition today is located between Altındere Village and Saveriksa High plateau, the ancient route was passing from large pastures extending between both.

The Tax Books, Comprehensive Tax Books and Court Records belonging to the 15th century include vital figures regarding the land trade over Trabzon. The figures and data given by Ottoman records show that; Trabzon seaport was one of the largest seaports in Black Sea which became an Ottoman sea by Fatih's conquests[43] had vital commercial and military importance for the Empire. While the seaport of Trabzon was hired by private enterprises for three years and the rental rate was written down in the Tax Books show the vital importance and active situation of the seaport.[44] The Monastery of Soumela had been built in Altındere *Skalita* Village in the valley between Maçka and Altındere, at the intersection point of ancient routes passing by Kurum, Stavri and Imera ancient cities which merged in Kolat Ins. Altındere is the steepest sloped village in this valley and its former name Skalita derives from the Greek words stepped-ladder due to this characteristic.[45] Whereas there is no information in Ottoman Registers regarding the village of Altındere where Soumela is located, according to Greek sources, it was a Rum village having 250 people.[46] House remnants in this village are very similar to those in the Kurum valley, such houses in Altındere are like houses in the Kurum valley and had been built by stone, wood and front ground floors were used as stables for bovine animals. Therefore in cool winters it was easier to heat the houses.

Tayyib Gökbilgin argues that; Ottoman's historical records on Trabzon cover the period after the 15th century and there is not any record addressing the period

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[42] The records written down regularly by Ottoman Empire to register new conquest territories, determine lands' usage type and ownership, to clarify taxing rates were called Land Registers *Tahrir Kayıtları*. It was rule to renew those records out of thirty years. The registers were written down curiously including all administrative entities. All kind of economical, fiscal situations and administrative structure were operated according to those registers. Registers that was prepared full comprehensive basis were called *Icmal Defterleri*. See: M. Tayyib Gökbilgin, *"XVI. Yüzyıl Başlarında Trabzon Livası ve Doğu Karadeniz Bölgesi" Belleten*, Cilt XXVI, Sayı: 102, (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayını, Nisan 1962), p. 295.

[43] Mehmed Neşri, *Kitab-ı Cihan-Nüma, Neşri Tarihi*, II. Cilt, (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1995), pp. 826-827.

[44] Bostan, *op. cit.,* p. 376.

[45] Ilyas Karagöz, *Maçka Yer Adları*, (Istanbul: Turan Kültür Vakfı, 2003), p. 90.

[46] *Ibıd.*

before this date.[47] Empire's Tax Books on the 15th century also do not include the name of Altındere Village, moreover the pastural area named Saveriksa at present located at the upper slopes of Altındere and used by Yazlık *Livera* villagers only in summers, it is probable this area was the place registered with the name Sameruksa in Ottoman Tax Books. Information given by Tax Books regarding Galyan(e) Village which was located on the opposite side slopes of the Saveriksa strengthen presumption of this fact. In later years we see that; the name of Sameruksa Village in Tax Books changes into two such as, *Sameruksa-i Kebir* Large Sameruksa and *Sameruksa-i Küçük* Small Sameruksa. During this time it is highly probable that the settlement of Saveriksa below 1600 meters altitude included Altındere Village. At present between the upper border of Altındere Village and the lower border of Saveriksa High Plateau there is a partly plain meadow named "Cevirme" which was encircled by high walls being at least half of a meter width. The meadow being made a safety zone by high walls most probably was the rest area of caravans. Murat Arslan says that; one of the summer caravan routes passes from Kusal where the upper slope of aforesaid meadow is and reaches the Saveriksa High Plateau. According to information given by Arslan, at this destination there is a 17.5 km's cobblestone Roman route.[48]

The above mentioned route passing from the upper slopes of Cevirme and Saveriksa, and the route passing from Cevirme together led to Yazlık Village. It is highly probable that considering weather and safety conditions both routes should alternatively be used. Arslan argues that; those routes might be remnants of ancient Roman roads.[49] According to registers belonging to this era in the year of 1486 in Sameruksa Village there was only one Muslim household[50] whereas the rest of population was Rum citizens. The importance of Sameruksa for the caravan trade is definitely clear in Court Records also. According to 1564 and 1565 Court Records; a wooden storage in Sameruksa-i Kucuk Village was sold with six months credit and the storage's value was eighty three Akche whilst another stone made storage was sold for 180 Akche.[51] According to information given by Jennings from Court Records this dealing was done between Baskal bn Grigor Lazo and Yani bn Siglahito.[52] The above mentioned records also prove that the summer route at the vicinity of Soumela was passing from the area between Altındere Village and Saveriksa pasture arriving at Yazlık Village.

According to Tax Books' records in 1486; in Maçka's forty nine villages there were 1.717 households, of those 104 divorced women *bive*, sixty nine single men *mücerred*, twenty five households holding inherited fields *baştina*, thirty three households responsible for maintenance and repairing of bridge and roads *müsellem*, thirty two households assistant helpers, nine single Christian assistant helpers

[47] Gökbilgin, *op. cit.,* p. 293.
[48] Doç. Dr. Murat Arslan, unpublished Surface Survey Report on Trabzon and Seventeen Districts, between August 01-19, 2008.
[49] Arslan, *op. cit.,* 2008.
[50] Bostan, *op. cit.,* p. 184.
[51] *Ibid,* p. 452.
[52] Jennings, *op. cit.,* p. 585.

mucerred yamak.[53] Whilst in Balkan Organization of Empire households responsible for road maintenance and repair could be Christians, in Anatolia and eastern lands it was Muslims generally charged with such tasks and all of them were named *müsellem*, exempted from tax payment. Because of this fact, *müsellem* households were not included into the Muslim population, like Balkan organizations in Maçka also thirty three households responsible for road maintenance and repair were Christian citizens. Court Records given by C. Jennings also proves this fact.[54] According to Tax Books; in Maçka's Sameruksa Village one household, Galyan(e) Village one household, Elvaniye Village three households, Hacevera Village two households and Kongi Village two households there were nine Muslim households in total.[55] Court Records give information about a disagreement and solution of this disagreement between a Muslim and a Christian citizen living in Sameruksa Village.

Hanefi Bostan in his survey on Tax Books estimates Maçka's population in the year of 1486 as 9.580 people. This population consisted of; 9.535 Christian and 45 Muslim citizens.[56] According to the above mentioned figures, contrary to arguments, twenty five years after the conquest, the Christian population in Maçka region were preserving their faith and population density. According to Tax Books of the year of 1515; the population of Maçka increased about up to 11.474 people, of which 11.289 people were Christian and 185 people were Muslim citizens.[57] Between the years of 1486-1515 while Christian population increased rapidly the rise of the Muslim population is very limited being less than 1% of total. All those population movements mostly were related to trade routes and closely affected the Soumela Monastery. Having crowded surrounding villages, donations and trade routes' activity were causing large rises in Monastery's incomes.

According to Comprehensive Tax Books *Icmal Defterleri* registers; in the year of 1520 the population of Maçka was about 14.397 people, of this population's 525 people (3%) were Muslims.[58]

Whilst in this five years the Muslim population had a 350 people rise, Christian population's rise was 2.583 people. According to Hanefi Bostan's surveys on Tax Books; between the years of 1520-1554, the Christian population had increased to 14.241 people whilst the Muslim population had increased by 894.[59] In 1583 registers we come across with Soumela in for first time, and in Tax Books Soumela is described as, the Church Soumela called wilderness settlement centre *"Kilisa-i Soumela adındaki kır iskan merkezi"*. In this era, monks and other personnel of Soumela consisted of 0,45% of Maçka's population and in the Monastery there were

[53] Bostan, *op. cit.,* p. 184.
[54] Jennings, *op. cit.,* p. 597.
[55] Bostan*, op. cit.,* p. 184.
[56] *Ibid*, p. 185.
[57] *Ibid*.
[58] *Ibid,* pp. 185-186.
[59] *Ibid,* p. 188.

sixty people lived.[60] In 19th century the census of Soumela shows rising numbers of monks.[61] (Enclosure: I)

According to registers mentioned above; between 1515-1520 Maçka district's caravan tax revenue was 100 Akche. In 1554 the caravan tax revenue was also 100 Akche and some of caravan inns were located within the borders of Maçka. In 1583 the caravan tax revenue rises to 200 Akche.[62] The rises of caravan tax revenues and vertical population movements are parallel. During the 16th century which has been enlighten by Tax Book registers there was probably large rises at the number of caravans and their freights passing from Maçka, thus Maçka's population had a continuing rise during this era. At that time, in Soumela there were sixty monks including other personnel which was a large number for those centuries. Monks of Soumela most probably were involved with caravan passages and trade running in the vicinity.

Despite domestic and external population movements between those years overlapping the 16th century's beginning and last decades, until the 19th century's end and beginning of the 20th century, we do not observe mass vertical population movements in Maçka district located on the Trabzon-Tabriz caravan route. Therefore, the density of the Christian population stayed the same throughout these years.

The last Ronald C. Jennings who had serious surveys on Trabzon Tax Books *Tahrir Defterleri* and Court Records *Ser'iyye Sicils* also says that; in the 17th and 18th centuries, orchards, hazelnut groves, olive groves, vineyards, beehives and pastures continued to dominate the rural landscape, characterized also by watermills, fountains and springs in the little district of Maçka. Judicial registers note the presence of vineyards, some farms possessing factories for making grape juice.[63] As a result of caravan routes in the vicinity of Soumela, commercial life connected to these routes, fertile lands, the realm of freedom provided by the Ottoman Empire, presence of densely populated Christians settlements, in this area numerous church and monasteries have been built. Ottoman Annual Books *Salnameler* belonging to the 20th century also confirms this data. According to data given by Annual Books; at the beginning of the 20th century in Maçka region which was also known as *Cevizlik* (Walnut grove), there were over 500 hundred churches, monasteries and chapels.[64]

The same is on the slope of mountains to the Gümüşhane side; there were churches, monasteries and large Christian villages, the most important villages among them were Kurum, Stavri and Imera. Stavri lies in one of the side valleys of the Yağlidere (Kurum) River which run parallel to each other and lie to the north of, and at right angles to the river. The main valley forks north-east to Kurum, some twelve kilometers east of Stavri and East to Imera three kilometers further on. Buildings at those large settlements appeared to be from the medieval age and it is known that, Comnenus Kings of Trabzon State in the medieval ages had built castles in Kurum to

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[60] *Ibid.*

[61] Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi (BOA) No 1101 Book: 1835 dated census Registration Book.

[62] *Ibid.,* 447-448.

[63] Jennings, *op. cit.,* p. 583.

[64] *Trabzon Vilayeti Salnamesi*, 1904, C. 22, Transkripsiyon Kudret Emiroğlu, (Ankara: Trabzon İli ve İlçeleri Eğitim, Kültür ve Sosyal Yardımlaşma Vakfı Yayınları, 2009), p. 259.

guard the most popular trade route passing from there.[65] Differing from Stavri and Imera, Kurum has an important copper mine and this importance has been underlined in Annual Books.[66] According to Annual Books, at the beginning of the 19th centuries Kromnitos had constructed a larger and comfortable road between their settlement and Maçka.[67] At this point, it is vital to focus on Kurum which was situated on the most important summer trade route, which also was the nearest and largest settlement to Soumela.

Anthony Bryer and David Winfield throughout fieldworks they arranged recent decades, ignoring all records and historical documents some time clearly sometime tacitly argue that, all Christian people in the region were Greek originated. Both carry out their argument saying that; Muslims in this region at present are the descendants of Greeks.[68] Almost all orientalists studied this region put forward above mentioned arguments and turn blind eyes to realities undermining or contradicting their ideas. Nevertheless the realities are beyond different; orientalist historians deliberately or inadvertently ignore Baptism Registers of the Vazelon Monastery which was the baptism place for all Christians at the vicinity. If they had taken a look to these registers they would obviously see numerous names written down in the Baptism Books that etymologically do not have any relation with Greek or Greeks.

Rustem Shukurov who worked on Baptism Registers of the Vazelon Monastery, says that; among the names in Books Turkic tribe names are more than other ethnic groups. The names Koumanos and Khzaros possibly belong to any newcomer from the North and most likely, from the Crimea or Dashti Qipchag region. Due to mass Christianization of Turkish tribes, Greek language spoken in the region also came under the effect of Turkish.[69] Shukurov and other neutral surveys show that, contrary to the arguments of Anthony Bryer, Heath W. Lowry[70] and other orientalist historians, Greeks in the region have not been Islamized and then Turkificied, during the period before the conquest of Ottomans it were Turkish tribes mostly Christianized and became Greek, in other words melted within Rum citizens.[71]

It is almost impossible to deny interaction among people living in the region between Macka and Gümüşhane where at that era located on the crossroads of highly active trade routes and was one of the main passages for several civilizations. In this area there absolutely were people from several nations Islamized and became Turk by the time meanwhile historical documents and evidences also prove the fact that, there absolutely were Turkish tribes Christianized and forgetting their own national roots

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[65] Bryer and others., *op. cit.,* Part- I, pp. 268, 287.

[66] Sabri Özcan San, *Trabzon Salnamelerinde Gümüşhane Sancağı*, No:3 (Gümüşhane Valiliği Yayını), p. 104.

[67] *Trabzon Vilayeti Salnamesi*, *op. cit.,* p. 229.

[68] Bryer and others., *op. Cit.,* Part-I, pp. 268-287.

[69] Rustam Shukurov, *Turkish Speaking Byzantines of the Pontos,* Trabzon Tarihi Sempozyumu Bildirileri, 06-08 Kasım 1998, 2. Baskı, (Trabzon: Trabzon Belediyesi Kültür Yayınları, 2000), pp. 102-104.

[70] Heath W. Lowry, *Trabzon Şehrinin İslamlaşması ve Türkleşmesi 1461-1583*, (Istanbul: Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Yayınevi, 2005).

[71] Bostan, *op. cit.,* pp. 347, 545.

became Greek. Contrary to the arguments leaded by Bryer and other some orientalists, etymological surveys show that, names of densely populated settlements are not Greek, actually Turkish originated. For instance in Maçka some village settlements densely populated by Christians namely; Hortokop, Guzari, Çali, Varyan, Zavera, Çin, Şemseddin, Virane are clearly Turkish names and have been named by Turkish tribes.[72] Also, the name of a settlement which in Turkish called "Krom", in English and Greek sources "Kurum" is the name of one of the Turkish tribes, a society from Göklen Turks. Meanwhile historical documents show that; "Krum=Kurum" was the name of one of the Bulgar Turk Khans.[73] Thus, it is obvious that Christian people, by Bryer's words, *crypto-Christians* domiciled in Kurum settlement were not Greeks, contrarily it is most highly probable that they were mostly Turks.

Also; the music instrument *kemençe* which is one of the basic instruments of Black Sea folklore and Greeks trying to owe, is the music instrument of Koumanos/Cuman Turks and the local play performed in Trabzon accompanied by this instrument at present with same figures and acts is played by Gökoğuz, with today's name, Gagauzia Turks living in Balkans showing that both coming from same Turkish tradition.[74] It is possible to multiply above samples but this work's aim is not to unearth ethnic origins of people living or had lived in this area, actually this is not necessary. I only would like to underline the fact that; contrary to orientalist historians' arguments, large part of people living in this area despite were Christians; obviously were not Greek originated. As some historians argued; if as believed people living in the Black Sea area were/are descendants of Argonauts or colonialists who had come these coasts in the 8th centuries BC[75] , rising of this population rates onto today's rates are impossible. Even for a moment we do not take into account epidemics, wars, raids and other natural disasters which all were negative multipliers of population increases at that times, Greeks whose population numbers is known at that ages, could not establish sovereignty on a so large area and their achievement of so large population numbers are still impossible. The only reason of rising was immigrations not from sea but inlands which were covered by Turkish tribes migrated from Central Asia and Caucasus setting out to Anatolia.

Actually it is not an important subject what are the ethnic origins of people living in the area, they had succeeded to live in peace throughout centuries and most probably if not being agitated by deliberate propagandas during last century the existing peace would go on without any interruption. By Population Exchange because they were Christians *Karamanid* Turks had been sent to Greece and all forgetting their descendant ethnic roots melted among Greeks at presents so as, Greek originated citizens who were Muslims and out of exchange because of this all melted in the society they live. With rootless and biased arguments agitating these people and breaking solidarity between them I think a crime committed against humanity.

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[72] *Ibid.,* pp. 341-342.
[73] *Ibid.,* p. 345.
[74] *Ibid.,* p. 350
[75] Estin and Laporte, *op. cit.,* pp. 190-191.

The Empire of Ottomans had never evaluated her citizens regarding their ethnic origins; moreover including Maçka all around her soils established freedom of people to worship their faith and live according to this faith in peace. Being an Islamic state, in Ottoman Empire, regardless to ethnic origin, when became Muslim all citizens' vertical movements always had been encouraged and there were no glass barriers connected to national identity. Blood linage only were necessary for Sultanate and except throne each Ottoman citizen had to right and chance to be Grandvizier which was equivalent to today's prime ministry.

Let's put ethnic argumentations aside and focus on commerce network at the vicinity of Soumela; Altındere village settlement where some parts are national park at present is located to the northeast of Soumela. Large parts of settlement named Sameruksa by Tax Books at present within the borders of Altınere village. Because decreasing numbers of its residents Altındere village almost covered by forests whilst until Population Exchange it had large corn, wheat and barley fields and the village settlements were encompassing whole slopes at opposite side of the valley. At a point of this village we may say the middle, there is a medium sized church obviously built by Khorasan Mortar. It is with four central columns one aisle barrel vaulted, is still survived and inscription on the northern door gives the building date 1876, in 1930's it was used as mosque and during this era its paintings have been covered by whitewash. It is highly probable that it was built at the place of a former church, have one long aisle in the direction of east west, in basilica style and the long barrel vault pitched on four ornamented columns.

The apse at the east side has been demolished and a straight wall has been built at the place of apse when it was converted into a mosque. Eyewitnesses say that, there was paintings on the demolished apse, the church is twelve meters length east to west, eight meters width has been built by cut stone, the thickness of walls about one meter. It has two entrances one to north and other west, its barrel vaulted roof covered by tiles. The building's windows like other buildings' windows in this area, their outer sides are rectangular and narrow, inside surfaces arched below sides built by about seventy degree sloping angle. Ornaments and simple painting tracks are still visible at frame borders. Differing from traditional chapel and church architecture, the building has been built rectangular, its stone works and architecture are similar to the buildings in Kurum valley. Its attractive north door which was demounted and stolen in the year of 2008 had been ornamented with grape vines.

On the ceiling the painting survived at present is *Theotoks* Mother of God with the Child and *Pantacrator* Christ, figures are partly visible from underneath of whitewash. Also on the ceiling, similar to ornaments in Kurum Valley, there twelve circled shaped borders ornamented with leaves and dodecahedron shaped circles. Taking into account dense Christian population in this area and active trade routes between Gümüşhane and Maçka, it is obviously clear that there was an active relation, communication network, connection between Kurum, Imera and Stavri cities which located on the southern slopes and Soumela Monastery located on the northern slope in a cliff face.

Due to fact that when compared with Trabzon, Gümüşhane has more strict and powerful connections with central Anatolia, it is highly probable that Gümüşhane had been Christianized before Trabzon. Despite lack of information as to whether the valley, Soumela situated was a cult area or not, before Soumela's establishment, nevertheless it is obvious that there were trade routes passing from this valley before the Monastery's establishment because the area had located on crossroads. Therefore, the founder monks of Soumela, according to tales, St. Barnabas and Sofronios from Athens had come this area via passing Kolat-Kurum destination or they had been supported by Christians and monks living in Kurum area. The area Kolat where camel caravan inns built is located on the edge between Soumela and Kurum. Considering above data we may arrive a conclusion that before Soumela's establishment there should be a watchtower at the area where the Monastery has been established.

In the opposite slopes of Soumela, to the left of the newly built second bridge where frontage of Soumela is visible there was a small chapel. The chapel is partly visible and mostly ruined at present, located in ten minutes walking distance from the bridge. It had been located symmetrically linear opposite side of St. Barbara chapel and anyone here could watch Soumela's entrance gate easily. The chapel's architecture, selection of place and situation resemble to Cappadocian style. At present there are remnants of frescoes inside, the style is similar to the Cave temple's third layer. The said chapel is located in the middle of a rock face, is in two meters length built on a narrow flat area is about one and half meters width. I think it has been built or used with observance aims, is about four meters higher than the ground and it is impossible to access in without usage of a ladder. It is high probably used for both security of Soumela and safety of trade route passing nearby. It is like an aerie resembles small churches built on rock tops in Cappadocia. The chapel hidden behind pine and bay trees nevertheless sharing other buildings' fate at the vicinity, has been pillaged and demolished. Though it has been demolished by treasure hunters, its barrel vaulted roofing and masonry to the west, and the Christ painting on the apse partly survived. Being on a lonely spot, it has been also used by monks for worshipping.

Existence of above mentioned chapel/watch tower situated onto the opposite southern east slopes of Soumela also proves the argument that there should be small watch towers and chapels in this area before establishment of Soumela. If we ignore the highways of today, it is meaningless to climb up this inaccessible cliff face to build only a Monastery. Nevertheless, without usage of existing routes, the arrival to Soumela would take at least one week. Arrival to Soumela by passing from Kurum and Kolat inns was much easier and the Monastery was same time ensuring the safety of the trade routes bypassing.

As we do not have any documents related to this period, what we told about this era are all improvable observations. But this probability must be taken into account and we must not overlook some connections. It is wondered whether the two reputed founder monks of the monastery and the monks who developed the facility afterwards were in close contact with the monasteries and the monks in the region using ancient Karaağaç-Hancüka-Acısu-Kolat-Stavri or Karaağaç-Hancüka-Acısu-Kolat-Kurum routes even in earlier times. It is not clear whether the road passing

through the region was just used in the spring and summer months and that old road was used before St.Andreas introduced Christianity to the region in the 3rd century.[76] Those are the questions never to be answered exactly but should be defined as they are the questions of great historical importance in terms of life and trade route passing from Altındere Valley.

Today it is possible to reach Soumela Monastery in motor vehicles in an hour. Although we do not know much about how to reach the monastery in its early days when it was built it must have been reached after a tiring and long journey we disregard the available highways built in the early days of the 20th century, unlike today's highways, the mentioned macadamized roads passing through the hills and slopes were being used to reach the Soumela Monastery, not the road passing along the Meryemana stream.

Transportation from Gümüşhane side was either via Kurum ancient city especially in spring and summer months or via ancient trade routes passing over the sites where Kurum inns were.[77] Karaağaç and Hançüka postures above the Soumela Monastery where shortcut passed over were connected with the Soumela Monastery and there are still remnants of old wall and buildings in both plateaus. If you take the road on the left of the entrance stairs of the Soumela Monastery at the end of the aqueduct, it will lead you to the Karaağaç plateau at an altitude of 1650 meters. If one continues from the north of the plateau, will reach Kurum and Kolat inns where there are still remnants of macadamized roads. Build in the appropriate width for horses and reinforced sporadically with the walls, this road is a shortcut providing connection between the Soumela and Kurum, Kolat, Imera, Santa and Stavri. Not being appropriate for camel caravans, it is shorter than the ancient trade route passing south of the Soumela Monastery. If one continue the road from Karaağaç plateau after following the way mentioned above and having the ancient trade route to the left, one can reach Hançüka, Camiboğazı and Acıgöl plateaus and arrive at the ancient Kolat camel inns which were used as caravan route at the joint place of Kurum and Stavri ancient roads at an altitude of 2300 meters.

Anthony Bryer states that the road leading to Kurum ancient city from the Soumela Monastery reaches Camiboğazı between two streams after some curvings and that the mentioned road is about ten hours horse riding.[78] The road mentioned by Bryer is the ancient trade road passing over Cevlik plateau and convenient for camels and shorter than the road reaching Karaağaç plateau from the Soumela Monastery.

According to Bryer, it is possible to reach Stavri, Kurum and Imera from Camiboğazı which is the peak point between Gümüşhane and Maçka and it takes about six and a half hours to Gümüşhane. Bryer states that it took medieval merchants and travelers three days from Baiburt to Trabzon.[79] The route Bryer wrote about

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[76] *Trabzon Vilayeti Salnamesi 1869*, C. 16, Transkripsiyon, Kudret Emiroğlu, (Ankara: Trabzon İli ve İlçeleri Eğitim, Kültür ve Sosyal Yardımlaşma Vakfı Yayınları, 2007), p. 329.

[77] Arslan, *op. cit.,* 2008

[78] Bryer and others., *op. cit.,* Part: I, p. 283.

[79] *Ibid.*

proves our findings and the information given by local residents Aziz Tüfek and Mersin Yıldırım born here in 1930's. As Bryer said, after arriving at Camiboğazı, it was possible to reach Gümüşhane by using one of the routes to Kurum, Imera or Stavri. In addition to this, it was possible for those coming from inner Anatolia via Erzurum-Baiburt route to reach Kolat inns by following one of these ancient trade routes and then Soumela Monastery via track path.

On the other hand, the route mentioned here intersects ancient trade route passed over Kurum and used in the summer months. The ancient trade route located in the Trabzon direction of Altındere valley and whose popularity continued until the late 1900's passed about one kilometers south of the Soumela Monastery. The cobblestoned camel roads and the chapel remnants which were aforementioned are located above the bridge where a ropeway was built to carry restoration materials to the monastery in recent years. It is most likely that the chapel used to be a watch tower as we mentioned before. Today almost invisible stone roads are known very well by the local residents who are over fifty years old. According to what is being said by the local residents there used to be a stone bridge collapsed a few years ago but was used for a long time over the stream in the Altındere Valley on the northern side of Camiboğazı. Trade route was passing over Cevlik plateau upper parts of the stone bridge and there are still cobblestoned roads in this plateau.

The road passing near highway which is being used to get the plateaus, used to reach the end of asphalt. This road, named Kaderefke, used to reach the inns at the end of the asphalt. There used to be inns called *Hanın Suyu* Inn's River in the place where the mosque on the right is located about one kilometer from the entrance of Altındere National Park before the rest place located at the end of the asphalt road large vehicles can drive up to. According to information given by two villagers Mersin Yıldırım and Aziz Tüfek, near to at present's mosque building there had been camel inns at that place named Inn's River *Hanın Suyu* and the caravan route was partly one meters width, cobblestoned leading toward uphill with a soft bank. The said route first was passing by large meadows which were named *Yeniköy* New Village due to fact that the area has been afforested during the beginning of the 19th centuries and was leading to another before said large meadow named Çevirme *encircled* where was situated between Altındere Village and Saveriksa Postures. There are wall remnants visible in the said meadow at present. The two villagers say that, there were several chapel, church, house and settlement remnants throughout this route. (Enclosure: II)

Conclusions

Trabzon was an important center and trade routes started from the city were marching to inner Asia throughout centuries. The Monastery of Soumela played an important role on the way of one alternative caravan routes, especially for summer carriages. The monks and villagers living in the vicinity very well benefited from the trade went on around them. Field studies I carried out with village residents who know the area very well confirm the information mentioned above. However, a large

part of the antique trade route has disappeared either because of remaining under newly opened roads after 1958 or not being used for a long time.

The place where the camel inns used to be, is the most important proof that the antique trade route used especially in summer and spring, which Murat Arslan said passed through Iskopel plateau down Cevlik mountain pass went through this area.[80] The place named River's Inns *Hanın Suyu* where the camel inns existed is the starting point of the zig zag path leading to the Soumela Monastery.

The lime and tile pits of Soumela Monastery which were used for a long time and existing above the camel inns can still be seen today. Tiles made from clay soil and used as roofing were obtained by melting rocks of lime stone characteristic. While the roofing of all buildings remaining from this period is tile, lime stone obtained from the aforementioned pits has been used as the basic building material. Lime was one of the most important elements of Khorasan mortar used rather frequently in the construction of the buildings in the region. As the construction activities in the monastery continued periodically and the rock particles falling off the rock mass especially in the autumn and winter months caused damages to the different parts of the complex from time to time, the need for tile and lime never came to an end. Lime and tile known well to have been used for the reparations of the monastery, were also used in the construction of bridge, house and church in the valley to provide the monastery with money.

The trade route continuing from the camel inns to the north, towards Trabzon, was leading to the summer village of Yazlık Köyü *Livera* by passing over Altındere *Skalita* village, and down the Saveriksa plateau. At the end point of Altındere village, on the very track below Saveriksa plateau, there are two abandoned buildings one of which is a lime pit and other of which cannot be distinguished whether it is inn or church. These remnants approximately one kilometer away from mentioned place, named Çevirme, were built at the ridge point viewing both north and South. The information given by the local residents proves that the caravan route was leading to the Yazlık Village where metropolitan stayed and held the administration of the churches and monasteries.

On the antique trade road between Altındere, the nearest village and charitable foundation to the Soumela Monastery, Yazlık Village, there are many settlements, vast meadows, lime pits, a church and chapels. I myself tried to visit the church, chapel and inn-like buildings whose traces are still visible today. It must have been inevitable for the monks residing in the Soumela Monastery not to get involved in trade transactions around. This antique trade route which had been in use from the early ages on not only contributed to an enriching Kurum ancient city but also enabled the Monastery to become a huge complex. Except the remnants of the buildings whose intended use cannot fully be understood, no written record has been found. Therefore, the information gathered from the people who are at home with the area, namely Osman Tüfek, one of the early teachers of the district, Aziz Tüfek and Ali Tüfek, who once stayed in Germany, Mersin Yıldırım, the eldest person in the

[80] Arslan, *op. cit.,* 2008.

village remembering seventy five years ago, and Kemal Yıldırım, the village imam is significant. They passed down some information about caravan routes, inns, church remnants, wells made with tiles and lime, which is of vital importance for the history. In the light of their accounts, important conclusions regarding the remnants of historical buildings and settlements, agriculture and trade life in Altındere, could be drawn. In the information given about Soumela Monastery and the complex around it, there is discontinuity between the period between 1923 population exchange and the housing carried out in 1929-1930 in Altındere Village. That is why the knowledge gathered from local residents is of great importance.

In accordance with the treaty signed in Lausanne on August 1923, the Greeks living in the antique settlements of Altındere, Kurum, Stavri and Imera, including the Monastery of Soumela, its surroundings and in the other villages had to abandon Turkey. After Christian community of Trabzon left, the negotiations on the swapping terms of Lausanne Treaty between Turkey and Greece which started in 1924 were only concluded in 1925 due to the disagreements hard to tackle on the possessing of those subjected to swapping process.[81] After Population Exchange, the first people to have been settled by the government in the village of Altındere, which was empty until the year 1929, were those who were left homeless due to the flood which occurred in the vicinity of Sürmene and Of provinces on July 5-7, 1929 and claimed a lot of lives.[82] Before that living a nomadic life, the indwellers of Karlık Village used to inhabit some districts of Altındere Village, particularly the quarter of the Topeleç. What the region indwellers relate substantiates the fact that in the 1930's there were a larger number of deserted houses and that the crops such as corn, wheat and barley were grown.

In addition, according to what the region indwellers say, Karlık Villagers, who were angry with the government since they had been made to abandon their villages, where the sufferers from Sürmene and Of were settled, set the houses they used on fire. After that, as the trade routes changed their directions, Altındere village became smaller and the majority of the houses became disused wall remnants after being deserted. Due to this, it is not possible to find sound inn, church and house remnants in the site.

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[81] Mehmet Gönlübol, Cem Sar and others. *Olaylarla Türk Dış Politikası (1919-1995)*, 9. Baskı, (Ankara: Siyasal Kitabevi Yayını, 1996), pp. 63-69.

[82] Hikmet Öksüz, "*Çaykara'da Afete Bağlı Göç (1929-1973)*", *Karadeniz Tarihi Sempozyumu (25-26 Mayıs 2005)*, II. Cilt, (Trabzon: Karadeniz Teknik Üniversitesi Yayını, 2006), pp. 1006-07.