

## EVLIYA IN THE CORINTHIA

**An account of our stopping places in the Governorate of Morea**

First we went north, and in 4 hours [5] came to the village of Khassiá. This is in the jurisdiction of Athens, and is administered by a *voyvode*. It is a village of a hundred Albanian infidel households but there are only fifty houses. The subject populace is assigned to care for the highway and is therefore free of taxes. Passing through this village, we went by way of the sea-shore for 5 hours, through steep, rocky, forested places, frightening and dangerous lairs of the accursed, where infidel frigates set ambushes, and came to Megara.

In the year . . . it was taken by the Conqueror from the hands of the Venetian Franks. It is administered by a *voyvode* under the authority of the Governorate of Morea. The jurisdiction is valued at one hundred and fifty aspers and there are . . .

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district villages. There used to be a Local Commander of Troops (*Sipâh Kâhya Yeri*), a Captain of Janissaries, a Castle Commandant and garrison personnel located here, but after the beginning of the Cretan campaign the |10| infidels destroyed the castle, and now the whole populace of the township lives scattered and dispersed. We too, for fear of infidel frigates, passed through that neighborhood in a great hurry, and going back north once again came in 3 hours to Kúndura. This is a district under Megara, lying in an open area which contains a hundred Albanian infidel households and two monasteries. It is a prosperous village, with taxes assigned to the upkeep of the post-horses for the city of Thebes. From here we went south for 7 hours along the road cleared of trees and forests to make a passage for the Grand Vizier and the Ottoman army, and from there we went on through the prosperous villages and productive fields located in the Corinthian plain between two gulfs of the sea.

**Concerning the province of Corinth, which is to say the building  
of the rock-fast castle of Corinth**

|15|

The castle was founded initially in the time of John the Baptist, by a misguided king of the Christian faith named Koritoz, but the name has erroneously been changed in pronunciation from Koritoz to Gördes. Later on it fell into Spanish hands and thence

into the hands of the Venetian *Bundukani* Franks, and it prospered.

In the year 862, in the time of Sultan Mehmed Khan the Conqueror, when so many castles along the coast of the province of Morea were captured by the Ottoman Navy, this castle of Corinth did not submit. But the heroic Conqueror himself led a limitless army, great as the sea against Mistrá, the strong rampart and the mighty citadel of the province of Morea, and when he came to this region, the infidels in Corinth were overcome by the knowledge of their inability to withstand the majesty, splendor and ferocity of the Ottoman house. [20] A dispute broke out, therefore, among the infidels within the castle, and the *Bundukani* Franks fled. The Greek infidels delivered the keys to the Sultan, and by the terms of an eloquent royal edict, remained in the castle as subjects of the Ottoman house, with a full pardon. According to the cadaster of Sultan Mehmed Khan, Corinth, which is in the province of the Archipelago, is the headquarters of the Bey in a command under the authority of the Grand Admiral. The Bey's reserve, which comes direct from the Sultan, is 219,000 aspers.

There are 16 *ziamet*-class fiefs, and 911 *timar*-class fiefs.

Officers are the Commander of the Levy (*Alay Beyi*) and a Captain of Troops (*Çeri Başı*), and in times of campaign the total muster of the region, under the commander, comes to [25] three thousand troops.

Now, however, it is set off as a separate province, along

with Morea, which has an assessment of seven million aspers, and together they form a Governorate. Corinth is the Pasha's reserve, under the administration of a *voyvode*. The sacred jurisdiction is values at three hundred aspers, and with the attached jurisdiction of Megara, there are 306 district villages.

There is a chief Mufti (*Şeyh ul-Islam*), a Marshal of the Descendants of the Prophet, a Local Commander of Troops (*Sipâh Kâhya Yeri*), a Captain of Janissaries, a Castle Commandant, two hundred garrison personnel, an Inspector of Commerce, a Collector of Transit Dues, a Collector of Tribute Taxes, a City Intendant, a Chief Architect and several hundred magnates, Beys and sons of Beys, Pashas and sons of Pashas, among whom there is . . . Paşa and the Commander of the Levy, and Zekeriya Efendi, and Aziz Efendi, and Ca'fer Efendi, and Bekûr Ibrahim Bey-zade, and Ali Ketkhuda, and Aziz Efendi-zade Ahmed Ağa, and Mustafa Efendi, and his son the Commander of the Levy, and in addition to the above mentioned there are several hundred magnates, munificent landed gentry.

### **Concerning the appearance of the site of Acrocorinth**

A steep reddish rock, octagonal in form, whose eight corners face the eight winds, rises skywards in the middle of a six-mile wide isthmus between the Gulf of Corinth (Gulf of Naupactus)

and the Saronic Gulf (Gulf of Athens). On this is situated a castle without equal. A lofty platform, in ancient times built strong from top to bottom of cut stone, it is a mighty fortress standing ever-prepared, a sturdy defense on an embattled summit and an immense rampart. From the castle the whole of the Saronic Gulf and the Gulf of Corinth is laid out before you, |258a| for it is unequalled in its elevation toward the sky. Surrounded by a wall, mighty as Alexander's dyke, fourteen thousand paces in circuit, it is a castle abundant in wealth. The master architect crowned the parapet with seven thousand seven hundred and seventy-seven merlons, and battlements such as he built here are not to be found on any other fortress wall. There are altogether four distinct walls, situated on high steep cliffs, and there are five strong gates, but |5| four of these are kept permanently shut, though there are posterns which open in time of siege.

The great gate, which faces west, leads out and down to the lower suburb. But this is really three gateways, each with a strong iron gate, and there are division walls which set off the territory between each pair of gates. In the lowest division, just inside the first great gate, there are no houses except the little loggia just inside the gate for the guard to sit in, and three small vaulted rooms. The journey up the steep road from the lower town to this gate takes an hour and a half. There

is a fine view from the gateway, so that night and day the sentries, the watchmen and the |10| armed gate-guards are always fully prepared.

Once inside the gate, one goes two hundred paces up a steep path to the middle gate, which also leads out westward. This too is a mighty gate with strong iron leaves.

A small subdivision of the castle stretches five hundred paces up the steep slope from this middle gate, and here the infidel Greeks have their ill-starred houses, having been granted pardon and peace when they gave over the keys of the castle to Sultan Mehmed. There is not a single Muslim house here, but there are altogether two hundred Greek houses, some churches and ten shops. |15| There are no gardens or orchards, since it is on a rock.

One goes up steeply from here to the third gate, which has two flanking towers. One of these is filled to the brim with millet, barley, wheat and bearded rice, while the other is filled with clean firewood, so that all requirements and necessities are providentially kept in store, for in times of siege provisions are essential. In one tower there are also horse-driven mills, wheel-mills driven by man-power and thousands of hand-mills. Inside this third gate, in the settled quarter within the castle, there are altogether two hundred multi-storeyed Muslim houses built of masonry and roofed all over with tiles. There are |20| no

infidel houses, and if it were not that some Muslims have infidel wives, no infidels at all could enter here. There are altogether four important places of prayer. One of these is the mosque of Sultan Mehmed the Conqueror, an abbreviated but serviceable place of worship of the old sort. There is also the Bey-zade mosque, and the Ahmed Paşa mosque. The Fethiye mosque was originally a Christian church, but was later converted into a mosque. In addition to these, there are two neighborhood mosques, a coffee-house and a small shop, but in all this great fortified settlement there are no other public buildings, because, since it touches the very sky, everyone would be worn out with going up and down. Therefore, public buildings in the castle are few, but all the principal personages have their houses and cellars in the lower town, and indeed, the [25] interior of this castle is such a field of rocks and ruins that one cannot walk safely there.

There are, by the will of God, three hundred and sixty-six sources of water on top of this steep, high rock which touches the very sky, of which the western ones all yield bitter water, but those on the east yield water as sweet as the water of life itself.

### **Concerning fountains of the fresh water of life**

Under the mosque of Sultan Mehmed in the castle there are

two vaulted cisterns, sources of delicious life-giving water, cold as ice even in the month of July. And this is a miracle of God the Creator, that there are no mountains nearby higher than Acrocorinth from which you might say that the water flows to this castle. But we believe |30| and declare it for truth that God is all-powerful, for the elevation of the mountain of well-watered Acrocorinth above the surrounding mountains is an impediment, and it is beyond the wit of man to comprehend how there may be so many wells and fountains, but the works of the Artificer are without limit. The date of one fountain is as follows:

Hasan Ağa, son of Mustafa Ağa, ordered the building of this for God the Creator, dedicating his wealth to God and beseeching him for water, on a date in the middle of Rabi' I, in the thousand and first year [of the Hegira (=A. D. 1592)],

and

the date of one close by is:

Hacı Ağa ordered this for flowing water, for the love of God, on a date in the middle of Rabi' II, in the nine hundred and forty-sixth year [of the Hegira (=A. D. 1539)].

These fountains |/258b/| are noted for their abundant flow of water.

There are other fountains to the west, but their water is bitter, and yet it is good as a digestive, and for other purposes, as well as for watering animals.

Along the wall in the south corner of the main circuit that is presently being described, on a high steep peak, there is a rectangular inner redoubt. Here the Castle Commandant has his residence, and the Intendant, and there is a weapons store and a few cannon, but nothing else. From the towers and ramparts of the redoubt, one can see the castle of Santa Maura at the edge [5] of the Adriatic Sea, and the city of Ártá, and the mountains over Yánina. Looking to the east, one can make out altogether twenty-three islands in the Aegean sea. For this is a soaring rampart, crowned by a platform that touches the very sky.

Eastward from this inner redoubt there is a secondary fortress wall, called the new castle, which was built later than the main circuit. This stretch of wall was added here because the infidels once captured the castle from this side. Taken all together then, the entire castle has five subdivisions.

### **A place of pilgrimage**

At the peak of the castle, Gazi Ibrahim Baba is buried, may his tomb be sanctified, and this is a place of pilgrimage. This region of the castle is deserted [10] and foxes, jackals and hares live there, since the castle is so immense. There are also in the castle, placed there by the Conqueror, cannon of such immensity as to strike terror into the hearts of puny men,

and it is wonderful how such huge cannon-barrels were brought to the very summit of this high castle. They are also well worth a visit. There is not a trace of any lead-roofed building in the castle.

### **A survey of the lower suburb of Corinth**

To the north of this high castle a steep path of five thousand paces leads downward. Halfway down, in a steep and precipitous place above the road, there are two fresh-water fountains such that, by the will of God, in the whole of the land of Rumeli there is no such water save the water of the great |15| Someş river in Transylvania. The date of the life-giving fountain located nearer to the city is:

Joseph the tailor gave orders for this fountain of flowing water, entirely at his own expense, as a dedication to God and a plea for indulgence from the Merciful Lord, in the nine hundred and twenty-first year [of the Hegira (A. D. 1515)].

Below the fountain there are five neighborhoods in Corinth. First, the . . . neighborhood . . . . In totality, there are five hundred great, spacious palaces, like castles in their own right, and other similar mansions, all of masonry construction, all with orchards, vineyards, fountains of running water and rich gardens. They are all roofed with bright red tile. The

houses are built separate from one another, and it is very rare that one house will adjoin the next, for this is a spacious, 20 large-dimensional and productive place of residence. But in some places there are only narrow intervals between the houses, for there are many places full of ruins.

In the time of the infidels there were many buildings, three thousand paper-makers' shops, two thousand makers of gold and silver thread, two thousand knife- and scissors-makers' shops and a similar number of commercial inns, churches and monasteries, so that now, in hundreds of thousands of places there are evident remains of buildings.

#### Concerning the mosques of the Muslims

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There are altogether five mosques for the worship of the faithful, but only three of them are Friday mosques. First, there is the Mehmed Çavuş mosque in the market, which has no lead on its roof, but is possessed of numerous [25] congregations. Then there is the mosque of the Rebel . . . and the Dervish chapel mosque. The rest are neighborhood mosques about which I know nothing.

#### Concerning upper schools for the learned

There are altogether four schools for teaching or exegesis.

**Concerning the actual state of children's primary schools**

Comprehensively, there are seven houses for instruction in ABCs.

**A notice of the conventual centers for monotheistic worshippers**

There are, in sum, three dervish chapels, halls for the serious wearers of woolen cloth.

**Concerning the total number of shops**

In the wholeness, to use the Tatar way of saying "altogether," there are a hundred small, serviceable shops.

**A setting down of the number of commercial inns**

In the whole, there are two inns, one of which is a benefaction of Zekeriya Efendi.

**Concerning the number of baths**

In actuality, there is one bath, which is entered |30| by a flight of stone steps, and is dirty, but the inhabitants boast of their claim that there are seventy private baths in the palaces.

**Praiseworthy products from among the choice and fruitful works of the Creator**

In the gardens and orchards are cypresses, lemon-trees,

bitter orange, olive, pomegranate and fig trees without number, and the marmalade lemons and juicy, tasty oranges are especially famous.

### Concerning the productive crops

The wheat, barley, lentils and forty different varieties of greens and fodders are all famous. In the plain, there are many tenant-farmed estates as large as castles, with fine farmsteads, but the most populous is the estate of Zekeriya Efendi, called Vóha.

All the subject populace are Greeks or Albanians, and their | /259a/ speech is either Greek or Albanian. The [Turkish] dialect is Greekish, and they use many forms such as "varmışık, gelmişık, görmüşık, diyeşık."

### Concerning the peculiar dialect expressions of the people

They use a special manner of speech to one another, and there are many words noted here which they use as if they were expressions of refined courtesy, such as "*kakomíre*--unlucky man," "*kalé fos, si ne pa*--slut." "*Ya sen, almazsin canina bir temine.*" "You there, *kakomíre*, watch out for your head." I am using *kakomíre* here to mean "wretch." |5| "*Ya, bre esi, brakmış sen sirkecik çorbaya?*" "You there, bre did you put any vinegar in my soup?"

"*Bre, ya zevalli, vermesin bana bir sipsi tütüncük?*" "You there, wretch, won't you give me a whistle full of tobacco?"

"*Hezretinizden azamışim kukuli.*" "I asked your excellency for a cocoon of raw silk." "*Cenabinise ekmekim yoktur, işde şimdi yiyesin kalambok.*" "I have no bread for your excellency, today you might eat *kalambók*." *Kalambók* is Egyptian corn which grows overnight like a reed. They make a sort of white bread from it, and this is what they call *kalambók* food. |10| There are hundreds of thousands more dialect words besides, all special to themselves, so that if another man from foreign parts came among them, he would only comprehend their meaningless utterances with the aid of an interpreter. Your humble servant has put them down insofar as I could understand them.

The people are very virtuous, quiet, peaceable and generous by nature, and there are many munificent householders who spread a rich table and love foreign guests, men as generous as Hatim of Tayy or Djafer the Barmecide. The air and water are so pleasant that the place is its own summer residence, that is, it is a summer residence in summer and a winter residence in winter.

The people are all merchants, and include many well-attended magnates dressed in sable furs. The young men dress like Algerians, in tight-fitting clothes, and walk barelegged, wearing a red

fez, and with a two-edged |15| knife at the waist. On their feet they wear black Frankish boots. The women wear cloth mantles (*ferace*) of many colors and wide flat-brimmed hats bound on with a white kerchief. They stroll about chastely, for they are ladies of great modesty. There are numbers of lovable youths.

### **Concerning the names of men**

Dorak.

### **Nicknames of black slaves**

Most of their male slaves are blacks from Africa, but there are some lovely Frankish slaves too. The black slaves' names are Kundola, Serula, Serullah, Kukula, and Hafela.

### **Concerning the youthful servants**

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The names of the European servants are Ferüz, Peruşen, Behzad, Mirza, Cem, Arif, Şehbaz and Keyvan.

### **Names of female slaves owned by purchase**

Ruşina, Revani, Bad-i Sehar, Basmala, Simane, Peymane, Asima, Samisa, Sami'a.

There are hundreds of thousands of versifiers of every condition, long life and love to them, and long life and love to the elegant

associations of the people and their many bonds of devotion to one another. [25] May God be pleased with all of them.

In ancient times, the Bundukani Venetian king of those days, named Prinçiprim, a leprous infidel, on discovering through the power of the stars that the Conqueror would someday come against Morea, began to cut through the land of Corinth castle where it runs between one sea and the other, and to bring the waters of the two seas together in the region of Corinth, so that the province of Morea might indeed be an island. He cut a three-part channel, and along the inner face of it distributed ten strong castles, thus bringing the two seas to meet together, so that the province of Morea, which is altogether seven hundred and seventy miles in circumference, became [30] an island of refuge and tranquillity. However, "man proposes and God disposes."

This perverse and evil-doing king had cut through this place in order to make it into an arm of the sea in his fear of the Ottoman house, but the governor of the land, the Spanish king, came with one thousand seven hundred ships against the Morea, and taking possession of it, he tore down the ten castles and filled up the channel that had been cut between the two seas. Thus he rejoined the island of Morea to the mainland as it had been intended at the time of God's creation, and this was to provide a level and easy road for the Ottoman army. The castle

sites, individually distinct, and the location for the huge excavations still remain quite visible. Afterwards the *Bundukani* Venetians, coming in full strength, took the island of Morea |259b/| back from the Spaniards, and were rebuilding this defense when at last the Conqueror Mehmed Khan himself took it and conquered it. Sultan Beyazid the Saintly took Mόδon, Cόron and Pondikόkastro himself. Then, there remained Argos, Anάpli, Monemvάsia, Bardhύnia, Pάssava, Maίna and Thέρμισι castles, and these were taken in the year . . . by Kāsım Paşa, commander under Sultan Süleyman, so that Süleyman was the third sultan to conquer and take possession of the Morea, and may it remain in the possession of the |5| Ottomans till the end of time, Amen. oh God our Helper.

After this, I said farewell to the magnates of Corinth, and received a present of a Maniote girl and a Maniote boy from Zekeriya Efendi. Then I set off to make a general survey of the island of Morea.