



## Summary :

The establishment of the diocese of Chaldia is closely related with the development of mining activity in the region. The diocese of Chaldia is a unique case of ecclesiastical administration, since its jurisdiction went beyond the borders of a fixed territory and included mining regions all over Asia Minor.

## Other Names

Diocese of Chaldia and Cherroiana

## Geographical Location

Northeastern Asia Minor, Black Sea coast, mining regions in Asia Minor

## Historical Region

Pontus

## 1. General Background

The establishment of the ecclesiastical province of Chaldia, initially as a bishopric under the [metropolitan of Trebizond](#) and later as an archbishopric and a diocese under the name of Chaldia and Cherroiana, is a particular historical case in relation to the other provinces in Asia Minor that existed until the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The diocese of Chaldia was not an old ecclesiastical authority of the Byzantine period, which simply survived the Ottoman era, but a new one whose foundation is due to particular historical circumstances after the Ottoman conquest of [Pontus](#). In particular, its foundation and development reflects the concentration of the Orthodox Christian population of the wider Trebizond area in the Torul district because of the exploitation of silver mines since the 16<sup>th</sup> century. These mining activities, which were pursued mainly by the Christian population, contributed on the one hand to its continued presence in the area and the prevention of its [Islamization](#), and on the other hand to the relative prosperity of the Orthodox Christians of the area. As a consequence, they had the opportunity to establish a powerful ecclesiastical authority. Although the initial geographical core of the Chaldia ecclesiastical region was the Torul region, with [Gümüşhane](#) as its capital, the gradual [migration of Pontic miners](#), initially to other areas of Pontus and, during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, to other parts of Asia Minor, resulted in the geographical expansion of the territory of the prelate of Chaldia to a series of interspersed, scattered and remote pockets of Pontic mining settlement, as these populations sought to remain under the pastoral auspices of Chaldia and not of local prelates.

## 2. Establishment and development of the ecclesiastical region of Chaldia (17th - 18th century)

The historical beginning of the ecclesiastical region of Chaldia, which was upgraded from a bishopric under the auspices of the diocese of Trebizond to an archbishopric and then to a diocese, can be traced to the particular circumstances of the subordination of the Pontus region to Ottoman rule. The survival of the Christian kingdom of the Great Comnenes of Trebizond for many years after the final subordination of the rest of Asia Minor to Islamic rule guaranteed the numerical superiority of the Christian population during the first period of Ottoman rule (until the 17<sup>th</sup> century). The existence of a population basis capable of supporting the establishment and active functioning of higher ecclesiastical authorities was thus preserved. The Torul region, which is identified as the [Bandon of Trebizond](#) of Mesochaldion was, until 1461, a regional dominion of the Great Comnenes, while after the Ottoman conquest it formed, from a point of view of ecclesiastical organization, the initial geographical core of the Chaldia province. Initially included in the territory of the [Diocese of Trebizond](#), the Torul district is classified among the regions of the so-called “outer perimeter” of the Trebizond province, which extended to areas relatively distant from [Trebizond \(Trabzon\)](#), as Koloneia, Bayburt, Of, etc., which the metropolitan of Trebizond governed indirectly through local bishops,<sup>1</sup> in contrast to areas nearer the town, such as [Maçka](#), Trikomia and [Sürmene](#), which he governed directly. In a bishopric list of the Ecumenical Patriarchate dating probably from the 16<sup>th</sup> century, as well as in the so-called “nomokanon” written by Iakovos of Ioannina (1645), the bishop of Trebizond appears to control the two dependent bishoprics of Canin and Of.<sup>2</sup> The mention of a “bishop of Canin” refers to the River Can which runs through the [kaza](#)’s



capital Torul and is linked either to the town itself or the entire Torul region. The inclusion of the bishoprics of Canin and Of in texts such as bishopric lists can be interpreted as a result of their constant functioning in contrast to bishops in other regions of the wider province of Trebizond who were only appointed occasionally (e.g. Bayburt). The reason for the possible constant functioning of the bishoprics of Canin and Of was none other than the survival of a sufficient Christian population until and including the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The following table clearly shows the overwhelming superiority of the Christian population in the Torul kaza throughout the 16<sup>th</sup> century, about which precise information has survived.<sup>3</sup>

Year	1486*	1515	1554	1583
Christian households	210	1228	1199	3592
Muslim households	1	28	265	631

\*The information may be insufficient because of the short period since the Ottoman annexation of the region.

The increasing influence of Islamization in the wider province of Trebizond, product of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, gradually brought about a shift in demographic numbers which resulted in a weakening of the Christian element and a decline of the Christian character of most rural areas. This development also contributed to the demise of ecclesiastical authorities such as the bishopric of Of. However, the growth of [mining activities](#) in Torul contributed to the preservation and strengthening of the local Christian population and, as a result, of the local bishopric. The mining and exploitation of silver and other metal deposits in the Torul region is an activity not recorded in sources of the Byzantine era, but is first mentioned during the first half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century and was likely a recent development. In a register entry of 1554 we encounter a reference to the mines of Janiha: "kariye-i nefis-i Canca maden"; moreover, the intense and rapid growth of the settlement between 1554 and 1583, and in particular of the Christian population, can be attributed to the increased growth in mining activities which acted as a magnet for settlers from other regions. The demographic growth between 1554 and 1583 is recorded as an increase of Orthodox households from 113 to 478 (an increase of over 300% !!!), a decrease of Muslim households from 31 to 16, and the arrival of an Armenian population (116 households) which did not exist during the first census.<sup>4</sup> During the following century Janiha becomes known as Gümüşhane, a name also used by the Greeks until the first decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century when the Hellenized name Argyroupoli is established.

The possibility for the Christian population to be involved with mining activities which was encouraged by the imputation of tax privileges, on the one hand acted as a deterrent for Islamization and on the other contributed to the concentration of the Christian population from the surrounding areas in Torul.<sup>5</sup> These developments proved beneficial for the local bishopric, which thus secured its long term survival and further development. Already since 1624 the bishopric of Canin was known as the bishopric of Chaldia,<sup>6</sup> in an attempt to revive its Byzantine name that once referred to the entire Trebizond region. The increase in mining activities was beneficial for the diocese of Trebizond as they developed into a substantial source of its income. Evidence dating from 1644/45 concerning the financial contributions of the provinces to the Ecumenical Patriarchate show that the diocese of Trebizond, which still included the bishopric of Chaldia, was at the time the most financially robust of all the provinces of Asia Minor, making an annual contribution of 80 florins, when other dioceses of Asian Minor did not contribute more than 25 florins.<sup>7</sup> The elevation, moreover, of the powerful local elite of metalworkers (superintendents of mines) among the Greek population of Chaldia seems to have contributed greatly to the ecclesiastical autonomy of the area. The upgrading of Chaldia into an autonomous archbishopric occurred between 1647 and 1654, during the prelaty of Sylvestros, while the influence of the metalworkers on the affairs of the Chaldia province can be discerned not only in their financial support and generous donations to this new ecclesiastical authority, but also in the fact that one of the first archbishops, Philotheos Kasteliotis (1694-1717), was the son of the "master craftsman of the matentzides [mine-workers, from the Turkish *madenci*]" Athanasios Kasteliotis.<sup>8</sup> Of particular interest is also the fact that most of the first archbishops of Chaldia between 1654 and 1757 come from the same Fytianos family while later a line of four prelates all came from the village of Tziti (Çite), evidence which reflects issues of local political processes.<sup>9</sup>

The autonomy of the Chaldia province was a particularly dire development for the diocese of Trebizond both because of the loss of income from mining activities and also because of the dwindling of land and population sizes brought about during an era when the Christian population of the entire region had generally decreased due to Islamization. The metropolitans of Trebizond reacted strongly



but unsuccessfully against the secession of the Chaldia province; apart from a temporary return of the Chaldia province to the diocese of Trebizond between 1660 and 1665-1667, the autonomy of the province was irreversible.<sup>10</sup>

### 3. The development and expansion of the Chaldia province (18th-20th century)

The 18<sup>th</sup> century was an era of prosperity and growth for the ecclesiastical province of Chaldia. Incomes from mining activities promoted the status and influence of local prelates, a process crowned by the upgrading of the archbishopric to diocese in 1767, while Gümüşhane and the rest of the province were during this time enriched with newly-founded churches and monasteries as well as by the establishment of the first school in 1730. Further developments in education included the establishment in 1836 of the boys' primary school in Gümüşhane which, in 1845 was renamed "musical school" and later "[Frontistirion](#)"; by 1878 it also offered gymnasium classes, while the first girl's school was founded in 1873.<sup>11</sup>

The end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century also brought about the geographical expansion of the authority of the Chaldia prelate to areas of migration by Pontic miners. The beginnings of the phenomenon is signalled by the settlement of miners from Torul in several coastal villages of the [Kerasounta](#) (Giresun) province at the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, a time during which the Christian population had diminished from the rural areas of this province, which was then a patriarchal [exarchy](#). In 1698, when the Kerasounta exarchy was ceded to the metropolitan of Trebizond, the then metropolitan Nektarios accepted to cede the influential mining villages to the authority of Chaldia against a sum offered by the master metal craftsman Iordanis Chatzi Symeon Galatas. In 1708 this procedure was denounced as illegal by Nektarios' successor and thus began a long dispute over the control of the mining villages of Kerasounta between the two ecclesiastical authorities of Trebizond and Chaldia. The dispute, which lasted until 1767, was characterized by patriarchal decision in favour of one or the other side and ended with the final supremacy of the prelate of Chaldia.<sup>12</sup>

The decisively important development within the context of this dispute was the issuing of a patriarchal decision in 1710 which recognized the authority of the prelate of Chaldia over the mining villages.<sup>13</sup> This decision later served the metropolitans of Chaldia as a legal precedent in their aim to be in charge of all communities throughout Asia Minor formed by the migration of Pontic miners. The decline in production of the mines of Torul after the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century led to migrations of Pontic miners to remote areas of Asia Minor, particularly during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The success of the Chaldia metropolitans in keeping these communities under their jurisdiction contributed to the propagation of their territorial jurisdiction throughout the Asia Minor peninsula and to an absence of geographical cohesion between the communities which formed this ecclesiastical province. From its initial territorial core, which is pinpointed to the kazas of Torul and Şerin (for this reason the full title of the diocese was Chaldia and Cherroiana), during the 19<sup>th</sup> century and until the expulsion of the Greek-Orthodox population (1922-23), the domain of the bishop of Chaldia expanded to distant territorial areas, such as:

- A large part of the Kerasounta province, which included the bishop's second official seat in the coast town of Bulancak (Poulantzaki).
- The 18 villages of the [Akdağ Maden](#) region in the [vilayet of Konya](#).
- The villages of the Bulgar Maden region in the [vilayet of Ankara](#).
- Interspersed villages or groups of villages in other parts of Asia Minor, even in the [sancak of İzmid](#) (Nikomideia).

The last territorial expansion of authority of the bishop of Chaldia occurred in 1913, at which time the town of Kerasounta came under his territory, after being ceded from the authority of the metropolitan of Trebizond, an event which reflected his control over the province's villages for a long period of time. This final occurrence can be interpreted as the result of the pressure exercised by the Christian inhabitants of the rural areas to counteract problems of representation to the Ottoman authorities which occurred because of the inconsistency in the ecclesiastical subordination of town and rural areas.

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## Glossary :

	<b>exarchy</b>
An ecclesiastical province that does not belong to the nearest diocese, but is administrated either directly by the Patriarchate or by a patriarchal monastery.	
	<b>florins</b>
Ottoman gold coins first issued by Mehmed II around 1460 in imitation of the Venetian gold ducats - hence the Italian origin of the name. Otherwise known as <i>sultani</i> .	
	<b>kaza</b>
The basic grade of the Ottoman provincial administration. It included the surrounding region of a city or a town. During the late Ottoman Period it is identified with the <i>kaymakamlık</i> .	

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