



## Summary :

The Diocese of Cerasous (Kerasounta) survived until the late 17<sup>th</sup> century. From then onwards the area of its jurisdiction was at first a patriarchal exarchy, while later it was divided between the dioceses of Trebizond and Chaldia.

## Geographical Location

northeastern coast of Asia Minor

## Historical Region

Pontus

## Administrative Dependence

Patriarchate of Constantinople

## 1. The Region – Historical Background

The historical background of the province of Cerasous as an ecclesiastical administration upgraded to a diocese is directly connected with the general historical context formed in the [Pontus](#) by the Ottoman penetration and conquest. A diocese in the years of the [Grand Komnenoi](#) of Trebizond, the ecclesiastical administration of Cerasous survived until the 17<sup>th</sup> century. As a result, the diocese of Cerasous is a typical exception among the ecclesiastical provinces that survived in Asia Minor after the Ottoman capture and the reorganisation of ecclesiastical authorities after the institutional inclusion of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in the Ottoman structure. More specifically, the dioceses of Cerasous, [Rizaion](#) and [Laodicea](#) were the only ones among the Asia Minor dioceses of the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century that did not survive until modern years. Special historical conditions contributed to the abolishment of the above ecclesiastical provinces, with the first two being directly connected with the changes taking place in the ethnoreligious composition of the population of the Pontus after the completion of the Ottoman capture (1461) and particularly with the settlement of [Turkmen](#) populations as well as with the ongoing Islamisation.

The ecclesiastical administration of Cerasous was upgraded from a bishopric under the prelate of [Neokaisareia](#) to a metropolis in the Late Medieval years, particularly in the period when Trebizond and its region formed the kingdom of the Grand Komnenoi. The province of Cerasous was upgraded to a diocese as a result of the fact that it was still under the control of a Christian state, whereas the seats of the old inland dioceses, such as Neokaisareia, had been under Turkish-Muslim control already from the 12<sup>th</sup> century. In the relatively limited territory of the kingdom of the Grand Komnenoi (known as the “Empire of Trebizond”) there was enough room for three dioceses: Trebizond, which was the only diocese established far in the past, Cerasous and Rizaion in Lazika, both formed as upgraded bishoprics. All three dioceses survived the Ottoman conquest (1461) and generally operated until the 17<sup>th</sup> century, when the dioceses of Cerasous and Rizaion were abolished.

The city of [Kerasounta \(Giresun\)](#) came under Ottoman domination long before Trebizond, although the exact date of its capture by Turkmen emirs is not known. This must have happened towards the late 14<sup>th</sup> century, while the inland region of Kerasounta must have been under Turkish control long before the city was captured. The earliest Ottoman tax records dated 1486 reveal the robust presence of the Christian element in the interior of Trebizond rather than in the regions of Kerasounta, [Tripolis](#) and [Koralla](#), where the Christians were restricted to the cities. This strongly indicates that the inland of those cities had been under Turkish control long before 1461.

## 2. Population

Apart from the namesake [kaza](#) (Çepni), the province of the diocese of Cerasous extended to Kürtün kaza with the little towns of Tripolis (Tirebolu) and Koralla, as evidenced by 18<sup>th</sup> c. information on “Kourtounia” as part of the former diocese and patriarchal



**exarchy** of Trebizond at the time. The distribution of the Christian population in the 16<sup>th</sup> century as well as its proportion to the Muslim population after those regions were incorporated into the Ottoman state is evidenced by tax records dated between 1486 and 1583 (see auxiliary catalogue).

A number of Christian households, which during the 16<sup>th</sup> century increased from 269 in 1486 to 1301 in 1583, although small in comparison with the Byzantine period or with the Balkan households of the Ottoman period, was high enough for Asia Minor to justify the presence of a metropolitan, despite the fact that this number was extremely lower than the Muslim households of the district and was concentrated in only three little towns. The metropolitan of Cerasous must have been present and active, since he is reported in the patriarchal **berats** of 1483 and 1525, as well as in the bishopric list of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, which must refer to the 16<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>1</sup> The diocese of Cerasous is also reported in the berat of 1662,<sup>2</sup> the year of the terminus post quem for the deactivation of the diocese, since a few decades later, towards the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, it became a patriarchal exarchy and the bone of contention between the [dioceses of Trebizond](#) and [Chaldia](#) for a long time.

Although the Christian population of the area of Kerasounta increased in the 16<sup>th</sup> century – always a minority in comparison with the Muslims –, the 17<sup>th</sup> century was a period of actual decline. It is not known whether there is detailed information about the number of Christians in the 17<sup>th</sup> c. Pontus, but it is widely accepted that the specific century is described by decline. The consequences of Islamisation in the wider district of Trebizond contribute to the confinement of the Orthodox Christian population in the areas of [Gümüşhane \(Argyroupolis\)](#) due to the mines existing there, and [Maçka \(Matzouka\)](#) due to the influence of the great stauropegiac monasteries of [Soumela](#), [Vazelon](#) and [St. George Peristereotas](#).<sup>3</sup> For example, the diocese of Rizaion and the bishopric of Of were abolished at the time due to the Islamisation of the [Laz](#) and of the region respectively. Possibly the diocese of Cerasous was deactivated for the same reasons.

From then onward the district of the former province of Cerasous became a patriarchal exarchy for a while, but was soon claimed by the dioceses of Trebizond and Chaldia, thus being their bone of contention. The city of Kerasounta came under the jurisdiction of the metropolitan of Trebizond, but the rest of the province was incorporated into the province of Chaldia due to the settlement of Christian miners from Argyroupolis (Gümüşhane).<sup>4</sup>

---

1. Ζαχαριάδου, Ε., *Δέκα Τουρκικά Έγγραφα για την Μεγάλη Εκκλησία (1483-1567)* (Athens 1996), p. 141; Darrouzès, J., *Notitiae Episcopatum Ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae* (Paris 1981), pp. 419-421.

2. Κονόρτας, Π., *Οθωμανικές Θεωρήσεις για το Οικουμενικό Πατριαρχείο. Βεράτια για τους προκαθήμενους της Μεγάλης Εκκλησίας (17ος – αρχές 20ου αιώνα)* (Athens 1998), p. 233.

3. Bryer, A.A.M., "The *Tourkokratia* in the Pontos: Some Problems and Preliminary Conclusions", *Neo-Hellenica* 1 (1970), pp. 30-54.

4. Χρυσάνθος (Φίλιππιδης), αρχιεπ. Αθηνών (Chrysanthos, Archbishop of Athens), *Η Εκκλησία Τραπεζούντος* (Athens 1936), pp. 579-580.

## Bibliography :

	<b>Ζαχαριάδου Ελισάβετ</b> , <i>Δέκα Τουρκικά Έγγραφα για τη Μεγάλη Εκκλησία (1483-1567)</i> , Ινστιτούτο Βυζαντινών Ερευνών/Εθνικό Ίδρυμα Ερευνών, Αθήνα 1996
	<b>Κονόρτας Π.</b> , <i>Οθωμανικές Θεωρήσεις για το Οικουμενικό Πατριαρχείο. Βεράτια για τους προκαθήμενους</i>



	της Μεγάλης Εκκλησίας (17ος-αρχές 20ού αιώνα), Αλεξάνδρεια, Αθήνα 1998
	<b>Darrouzès J.</b> , <i>Notitiae Episcopatum Ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae</i> , Paris 1981
	<b>Bryer A.A.M.</b> , "The Tourkokratia in the Pontos: Some Problems and Preliminary Conclusions", <i>Neo-Hellenica</i> , 1, 1970, 30-54
	<b>Χρυσανθος Φιλιππίδης, μητροπολίτης Τραπεζούντος</b> , "Η Εκκλησία Τραπεζούντος", <i>Αρχαίον Πόντου</i> , 4/5, 1933, 1-1070
	<b>Bostan M.Hanefi</b> , <i>XV-XVI. Asırlarda Trabzon Sancağında Sosyal ve İktisadî Hayat</i> , Türk Tarih Kongresi, Ankara 2002

### Glossary :

	<b>berat</b>
	A sultanic decree that bestowed an office or a set of privileges on an individual or a group of people. They were given not only to all state officials, but also to the members of the high clergy, including patriarchs and metropolitans.
	<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>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 kaymakamlık.

### Auxiliary Catalogues

Christian and Muslim populations in the region of Kerasounta after its incorporation into the Ottoman State

Year	Kerasounta (Giresun)		kaza (total)		Tripolis (Tirebolu)		Koralla		Kürtün kaza (total)	
	Chr.	Musl.	Chr.	Musl.	Chr.	Musl.	Chr.	Musl.	Chr.	Musl.
1486	136	4	136	414	67	-	66	-	133	732
1515	263	33	263	2128	285	8	139	7	451	2135
1520	264	36	264	1992	285	8	139	7	427	2030
1554	215	33	215	234	265	16	111	14	452	3008
1583	345	187	345	4074	397	27	163	144	956	4246

The numbers refer to households.

M. Hanefi Bostan, *XV-XVI. Asırda Trabzon Sancağında Sosyal ve İktisadî Hayat*, (Ankara 2002), pp. 239, 240, 244, 245, 247.