ΙΔΡΥΜΑ ΜΕΙΖΟΝΟΣ ΕΛΛΗΝΙΣΜΟΥ

Authoring : *Kotzabassi Maria*
Translation : *Πανουργιά Κλειώ*
For citation : *Kotzabassi Maria , "Diocese of Anchialos", Encyclopaedia of the Hellenic World, Black Sea*
URL: <http://www.ehw.gr/l.aspx?id=11881>

Summary :

One of the most important dioceses of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in the Thrace and Bulgaria area. Apart from the town of Anchialos (Pomorie), under its jurisdiction were numerous villages and the large harbour of Pyrgos (Burgas). Greek education in the area was particularly developed.

Geographical Location

Bulgarian coast of the Black Sea

Historical Region

Northern Thrace, Eastern Rumelia

Administrative Dependence

Patriarchate of Constantinople

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1. The beginnings of Christianity in Anchialos

Christianity spread to Anchialos (Pomorie) at the beginning of the 2nd century, according to the tradition which survives in the life of St Sevastiani: “when St Sevastiani arrived in Anchialos she found a pupil of Apostle Paul named Theofanios and she embraced him and his brothers”. Already by the middle of the 2nd century Anchialos had an organized church headed by bishop Sotas who fought against the Montanism.[1]

2. The Diocese of Anchialos during the Byzantine period

Little information survives concerning the first centuries of the history of the bishopric of Anchialos. The lists of bishops who participated in the 1st Ecumenical Council of Nicaea and the 2nd of Constantinople (325 and 381 respectively) contain the names of the bishops of Anchialos. In the 7th century it is mentioned as an independent archbishopric directly dependent on the Patriarchate of Constantinople, while later there are contradictory reports on the existence of a bishopric or archbishopric. During the years of Andronikos II Palaiologos (1282-1328), Anchialos was promoted to a diocese and retained this status until its destruction in 1906.[2]

It is worth noting the participation of the metropolitans Sofronios I in the byzantine mission to the Council of Ferrara-Florence (1438-1439), where he supported the anti-unionist faction of Mark of Ephesus (Eugenikos), although he was forced to sign the unifying “clause”.[3]

3. The Diocese of Anchialos during the first centuries of Ottoman rule

After the Fall of Constantinople, many aristocratic byzantine families settled in Anchialos and its bishopric throne became coveted. The Ecumenical Patriarch Ieremias II the Great (*Tranos*) (1572-1595), a distinguished theologian who corresponded with German theologians from the University of Tübingen and supported the positions of Orthodoxy fervently, came from Anchialos. In 1593 he called a great Local Council in Constantinople, where he recommended to the prelates the establishment and maintenance of schools and support for education.[4]

Information we have on the history of the diocese is sparse. We know however that the metropolitan of Anchialos Parthenios I (1609-1623) became Ecumenical Patriarch in 1693, during a particularly turbulent period for the Church. In the 17th century the ecclesiastical province of Anchialos included the cities of Anchialos and Pyrgos (Burgas) and 54 smaller towns and villages. During

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the years of the metropolitan Mitrophanis (1628-1658), a long-standing dispute with the ecclesiastical province of Preslava came to an end and the villages Tsali Kavak, Semedovo and Klinovo were returned to its jurisdiction.[5]

4. The diocese of Anchialos during the 19th century. Ecclesiastical and educational activity.

The metropolitan of Anchialos Evgenios Karavias, who had taught at the Anchialos School until 1807, was hanged in April 1821, together with Patriarch Grigorios V and other prelates in Constantinople (Istanbul) after the outbreak of the Greek War of Independence.[6]

The metropolitan Sofronios II (1831-1847) was so valued by his flock that they managed to cancel his transfer to another ecclesiastical province. His successor Sofronios III (1847-1865) was equally esteemed by the people of Anchialos; so much that despite his old age and difficulty in hearing during the last years as a metropolitan of Anchialos, no one asked for his replacement. After his voluntary resignation in 1865, he remained in Anchialos under the care of his successor Basileios I, until his death in 1867. Basileios distinguished himself for his education, his integrity, as well as for his educational and charitable activities. At his initiative the bishopric mansion was erected near the cathedral of the Taxiarchs and the foundations were laid for the church of the Panagia (Virgin Mary). He founded the "Progressive Society of Anchialos" (Philoproodos Syllogos Anchialou), he contributed to the improvement of the city's schools, and persuaded many prosperous parents to send their children for further studies to various European cities. In 1877, during the Russo-Turkish war, Basileios was accused by the city's Muslims of having wished for the victory of the Russians and was removed from his position after a decision by the Ottoman authorities. After four years he returned to the city, where he was particularly respected, and continued to care for the progress of education until 1884, at which time he was transferred to the diocese of Smyrna. On his departure, Basileios donated the largest part of his library to the "Progressive Society of Anchialos".[7]

Three metropolites passed through this ecclesiastical province over the next four years. Grigorios Drakopoulos from Mesimvria (Nesebar), brother of the notable Vlasis Drakopoulos who had settled in Anchialos, was elected metropolitan in 1885 but was transferred to Kastoria in 1887. His brother and other nobles applied to the Patriarchate for him to remain but their request was not granted; this caused great dispute and disorder within the community. His successor Sofronios IV (1888-1889), made great attempts to ease the disputes which had divided the community but he was violently removed from Anchialos and the Bulgarian territory by the Stambolov government after an incident caused by his opponents.[8]

The metropolites Vasileios II Georgiadis (1889-1906), later Ecumenical Patriarch (1925-1929), was an educated and distinguished orator, who worked with great fervor to consolidate the position of the Patriarchate in the area. During his days, Anchialos acquired the wonderful building which housed the Greek Girls' School and was erected after a bequest by Fotini Karyandi, and the church of the Panagia was also completed. Vasileios II played a leading part in these works, offering even his personal labour, but was unable to maintain the unity and sympathy of his flock, the most conservative part of which turned against him with reports to the Patriarchate and attacks in the press. He was removed for a while to Constantinople where he became involved with the faction who opposed the Patriarch. Vasileios II was an educated man, a friend of the arts; in 1904 he sent a musical manuscript dating from 1450 to the National Library in Athens. During the destruction of Anchialos in July 1906, Vasileios II was arrested by the Bulgarians and was imprisoned in Sumla until October. After his release he was forced to depart for Constantinople.[9]

5. Title and jurisdiction of the metropolitan of Anchialos

The title of the metropolites was "of Anchialos and Pyrgos, and all the Black Sea". The province of Anchialos included the cities of Anchialos and Pyrgos (Burgas) and approx. 80 villages and small towns such as Aetos, Karnobat, Daoutli, Iera Karya, Akrania, Efstathochori and Taş Tepe, which had churches and a Greek school.

Anchialos itself had four churches and numerous chapels. There was the cathedral of the Taxiarchs, the church of St Theodoroi, the church of the Transfiguration of the Saviour and finally the church of the Panagia which was founded in 1884 during the days of the metropolitan Vasileios I and was completed in 1899. Its construction cost 280,000 francs. The church was imposing, with houses for the priests and staff. As mentioned previously there were also numerous chapels such as that of the Charitomeni, of St Anna, St

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Paraskevi and others. All the churches except that of the Transfiguration were burnt during the city's destruction in 1906, while the property, such as shops and houses, which belonged to the churches of St Theodoroi and Panagia were also destroyed.[10]

The monastery of St Georgios also came under the jurisdiction of the diocese of Anchialos. Initially, there was a chapel of the saint but in 1858 the Greek community built a church and the monastery, which amassed a great fortune in land and salterns, was founded. A memorandum issued by the Anchialos community states that the monastery had forty two rooms, four storehouses, two stables, a garden, nursery, threshing floor, bakery and shop. Every year on 23rd April a holy Mass, a pilgrimage and a commercial fair that lasted for three days were held at the monastery; the fair attracted visitors from the surrounding area. In 1885 the Bulgarians began laying claim to the monastery which they finally occupied by force in 1906.[11]

6. Scholars and artists from Anchialos

It is worth noting that from the 16th to the 19th century eminent ecclesiastical musicians from Anchialos, who settled and worked on Mount Athos, distinguished themselves. The musical poems of Konstantinos or Kostas from Anchialos" or "Konstantinos Anchilinos" are a testimony both to his musical talent and the particular blossoming of music in his place of origin. Codex V of the Lavra Monastery is entitled "Book admirable and sacred to those who enter the musical science with great passion, composed by the most musical master Konstantinos from Anchialos, the new Koukouzelis and painter". Another codex of the Lavra Monastery mentions Ioannis "from Anchialos" Chrysovergis, a member of the city's eminent family.[12]

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Glossary :

Council of Ferrara-Florence (1438)

Ecclesiastical Council assembled at both Italians cities Ferrara and Florence in 1438-1439 and decided the reunion of the Orthodox and Catholic Church. The Ecumenical Patriarchate didn't really accept the decisions of the Council and didn't never practise the reunion.

Second Ecumenical Council (Constantinople, 381)

The Second Oecumenical Council assembled at Constantinople in 381 in order to discountenance the ideas of Macedonios, who challenged the divine nature of the holy spirit, and to condemn the hersy of apollinarism, which referred to the nature of Jesus Christ. This council appended the clauses pertaining to the holy spitrit to the Nicene Creed.

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