

CORINTH IN THE OTTOMAN PERIOD (1458-1687 AND 1715-1821)

THE AFTERLIFE OF A GREAT ANCIENT GREEK AND ROMAN METROPOLIS

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Corinth, known to the Ottomans as Korintos or Koritos, later as Gördüs, was in Antiquity a sea port and one of the largest and most famous cities of ancient Greece. The Ottoman name Gördüs - used from the second half of the sixteenth century onwards - derives from the local, dialectical pronunciation “Gortho”. Throughout the Greco-Roman Antiquity it was one of the largest cities of the Eastern Mediterranean. In the late Byzantino-Frankish period, Corinth sunk to the level of 50 decrepit houses, as reported by the Italian notary Niccolo da Martoni from Capua in 1396 A.D¹. In Ottoman times (1458-1687 A.D and 1715-1822A.D) the town was an important fortress (the “Key of the Morea”, at first the seat of the Ottoman Sandjak Bey of the Morea and centre of a large Kadılık (district under the supervision of a Kadı/Judge). Later, especially in the eighteenth century, it developed into a Muslim center of local importance, containing a number of monumental domed mosques, some colleges of higher Islamic learning (medrese) and a number of dervish convents (tekke). Among the latter was the Tekke of the Gülşeniye Order of dervishes which owes its existence to the work of the poet and writer Hasan Sezâ'i, a native of Corinth, and his son and successor Mehmed Sadık Efendi. After a series of destructive earthquakes, especially that of 1858 A.D, the destroyed city was rebuilt on a new site on the shores of the Gulf of Corinth, seven km to the north-east of the old city. The site of the old city and medieval Byzantine/Frankish and Ottoman settlement survived as the village of Palaio Korinthos. The history of Corinth as an Ottoman town has never been told with any detail and the available Ottoman source material was hardly, or never, used.

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¹ Niccolo da Martoni, see: Van der Vin, *Travellers to Greece*, vol. I, pp. 37-52, and II, p. 614-618. See also: Le Grand, “Relation de pèlerinage a Jerusalem,” pp. 566-669.

The historic city of Corinth consisted of two distinct parts, the mountain top citadel of Acrocorinth (more than 300 m. above the plain, in the past regarded as almost impregnable) and an open settlement on the plain at the foot of the citadel (more than a km. north of the Acrocorinth). Because of the geographical position of the fortress, commanding the narrow isthmus of Hexamilia which connects the mainland of Greece with the Morea, and situated at the point where two important waters meet (the Gulf of Corinth and the Saronic Gulf), combined with the fertility of the soils and the abundance of freshwater the area of Corinth was inhabited since the most remote times.

Corinth did already exist as a fortified mountain settlement in the pre-Greek period, before 1100 B.C. The name Corinth is also held to be of pre-Greek origin. In 146 B.C. the large antique city, one of the most important of the Greek world, was destroyed by the Roman Consul Mummius as punishment for resisting Roman rule. It was rebuilt only a hundred years later by no less than Julius Caesar. Soon the re-born Corinth was the place where Saint Paul came to preach Christianity and later wrote his Letters to the Corinthians, included in the New Testament of the Bible.

In the Late-Antique period Corinth suffered terribly under the invasions of the Germanic Goths and Heruli in 267 A.D. In 295 A.D. it was again destroyed, this time by the Visigoths (West Goten) under the much feared Alaric. In the fourth century it saw a calm period of some recovery. In 521 A.D the half-deserted town was destroyed by a violent earthquake. Emperor Justinian (527-565 had it rebuilt for the last time, reducing its build-up surface to one third of the old size. The Greco-Roman city occupied a surface 547 hectare within its almost 7½ km town walls². Applying the usual formula of 150 inhabitants per hectare this would give a total population of about 80.000 à 85.000 inhabitants³. One third of 547 hectare of before Justinian' rebuilding is about 180 hectare, which would give around 27.300 à 27.500 inhabitants, still quite impressive for time and place. The phenomenon of decline or disappearance of the ancient city in general has been described in detail by Liebeschuetz in 1992 and Cameron in 1993, based on a vast documentation. Wolfgang Müller-Wiener (1986) brought it at a point in his masterful study called: 'Von der Polis zum Kastron'.

After the invasions of the Slavs, 580-585 the old lower town was totally deserted for a longer period. Since 789 Corinth under the reconstituted Byzantine administration is known to have been one of the centers of the newly created Theme of Morea. The sequence of coins found during the American excavations of Agora of Corinth in the 1950s and '60s (a total of 1860 pieces) reflects vividly the fate of the city after the end of the Roman period. Early-Byzantine coins run up in an ever decreasing number to 668. After that year there is a complete void of a full century. In the early nineteenth century, say 800 – 820, a few coins show that urban life and monetary economy very slowly reviving. During the rule of Emperor Basileius the Macedonian (867-886) coins are again found in significant number.

² Müller-Wiener, "Von der Polis zum Kastron, pp. 435-475.

³ Mols, *Introduction a la Démographie historique*.

The reign of Leo VI (886-912) is well represented in the coin finds. His reign marks the beginning of a steady increase in the numbers of coins found, an increase that reached its summit under Alexios I Comnenos (1081A.D-1118A.D), and Manuel I Comnenos (1163-1180). The flourishing times of the fourthth and fifth centuries, succeeded by a deep decline in the period after about 580 is also reflected in the construction of a group of large-size Early-Christian basilicas, especially the Kraneon Basilica at the Kenchreian Gate and even more the H. Leonidas Basilica in the western port town of Corinth, Lechaion, with 115 m length the largest know Early-Christian basilica in the Balkans. It is thought to have been built between 450 and 460⁴. After their destruction in the late six and entire seventh century these churches were not rebuilt and in the subsequent centuries disappeared slowly under the earth until the twentieth century archaeologists re-discovered them. The “dark period” of Corinth’s history coincides with the invasions of the Slavs and Avars.

Protected by its almost unassailable castle on the Acrocorinth the town remained in Byzantine possession until 1210, when it was taken by the Franks under Geoffrey de Villehardouin after a siege of five (!) years. It remained part of the Frankish principality of Achaia until 1358, when it was acquired by the Florentine lord Niccolo Acciajuoli, who in 1365 was succeeded by his son Nerio. Nerio made the mountaintop fortress his residence. When in 1385 he was in great danger because of the actions of the mercenaries of the Grand Compagnie de Navarra, Nerio made an alliance with the Byzantine Despot of Mistra, Theodoros, who received one of Nerio's daughters as wife. Because Nerio had no male heirs Corinth and its territory would after his death become a part of the Byzantine Despotate of Morea.

In September of 1387 A.D, an Ottoman army under the command of the redoubtable Ghazi Evrenos Bey appeared in southern Greece, not as conquerors but as mercenaries in the service of Despot Theodoros in his war against the Frankish principality of Achaia. This action is also mentioned in an instruction of the Venetian Senate from October 1387, where the Venetian ambassador at the court of Sultan Murad I is instructed to release the Venetian prisoners captured by Evrenos Bey. In the following year the Venetians protested to Nerio Acciajuoli for assisting the Turks in attacking Venetian controlled territories.

Nerio Acciajuoli died in September 1394 A.D. Carlo Tocco, the Frankish (Italian) lord of the mainland Western Greece, who had also married a daughter of Nerio, wanted to exploit the opportunity and tried to take Corinth, which at that moment was besieged by the Byzantines under Theodoros. Carlo went for help to Evrenos Bey, now the Ottoman governor of Thessaly, who came to Corinth and drove away the Byzantine army, took 3.000 men cavalry prisoner and almost captured Despot Theodore as well. A memorandum of the Venetian Senate dated 23 July mentions that Carlo Tocco, Count of Cephalonia, had joined the Turco-Albanian raid on the Venetian town of Argos, 35 km south of Corinth.

⁴ Ćurčić, *Architecture in the Balkans*, pp. 126-127.

Being an open town Argos was evidently an easier prey than the heavily fortified Corinth⁵. The events of 1387 and 1395 were the first Ottoman contact with Corinth and its district. Previously, in 1327 and 1361 Turkish pirates of the small, independent, principality (Beylik) of Aydinoglu had raided the town. The expedition of Carlo Tocco and Evrenos Bey had no lasting effect as the Ottomans had to withdraw their troops rapidly because a huge Crusaders army under King Sigismund from Hungary was marching towards Nikopol on the Danube at the northern fringes of the Ottoman territories. With the Ottoman troops gone Theodoros took the town (1395) but soon realized the weakness of his own forces. In 1400 he went to Rhodes, capital of the (Roman Catholic) Knights of St. John, who were well-known as bold and experienced warriors. Theodore sold Mistra, Kalavryta and Corinth to them. The Knights occupied Corinth which caused violent reactions of the Greeks and finally led to a deal. In June 1403 A.D, making use of the disturbances, Nerio Acciajuoli's successor, his relative Antonio, wanted to recover the old patrimony of his family, formed a heterogeneous coalition and tried to take Corinth. A note in the Byzantine "Short Chronicle 47" mentions:

*"In the year 6911, Indiktion 11, the Thebans (Antonio's' capital, Thebes) united with the Turks, with those of Megara and with the Athenians and attacked Corinth and the inland territories and caused great damage to the animals and under the people as well, on the 7th of June"*⁶.

They failed to take the strong town and compensated themselves with ransacking the undefended open land belonging to Corinth. Afterwards the Acciajuoli prince further concentrated on his possessions in Athens and Boeotia. Meanwhile Theodoros and the Knights made a deal. The Knights left Corinth in 1404 and in exchange received the old Frankish Barony of Salona (Amphissa). Theodore re-entered Corinth, which was to remain Byzantine to 1458.⁷

During the many wars of the fourteenth century Corinth had suffered beyond bounds and was reduced to a very small place. In 1396 the Italian traveler Niccolo da Martoni, visiting Corinth and Central Greece, noted that the houses of Corinth were few and very mean, and that the total civil population did not exceed 50 families (or 200-230 persons).

To re-settle the terribly destroyed land the Frankish rulers, as well as the Byzantines, attracted ten thousands of Albanian settlers, who came and

⁵ Imber, *The Ottoman Empire*, p. 35 (the 1387 Evrenos expedition), 49 (the Evrenos-Tocco raid). For the 1387 action see: Loemetz, "Pour l'histoire du Péloponnèse,".

⁶ Schreiner, (At **1403**) Die Byzantinischen Kleinkroniken, I, Wien (Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften) 1975, Chronik 47) p. 345 (original Greek text), and: II, 1977, p. 381; (At **1444**). Chronik 33, No 49, p.251 p. 240, 252 (the original Greek text, which is either from 1470 or around 1500). German translation in III, 1979, p. 67, No 49. (At **1463**), Kleinkroniken II, 1977, pp. 507-508.

⁷ Finley, "Corinth in the Middle Ages," pp. 477-499 ; Zakythinis, *Le Despotate grec de Morée*, pp. 266-274.

fundamentally changed the ethnic composition of the Moreote population. Zakythinos mentions a report of the Venetian Governor-General Stefano Magno, who in 1453 estimated the total number of Albanians in the Morea as 30.000 people. The Byzantine Despot Manuel Paleologos (1349-1380) and his successor Theodore I Paleologos (1383-1407) invited “ten-thousand warlike semi-nomad households to settle in their empty lands.” On a total population of not more than 150.000 this greatly transformed the Moreote population⁸.

In 1423/24 Antonio Acciajuoli again tried to recover Corinth but again was unsuccessful. In 1444 A.D, during the Crusade of Varna, when the Ottomans needed all their strength in Danubian Bulgaria to stop the Crusaders, the Byzantine Despot Constantine re-fortified the Hexamilion wall across the Isthmus of Corinth and penetrated deep into the mainland of Greece - than under Ottoman suzerainty - took Thebes and pillaged Levadia and Lamia (Zeitouni) and pushed on the Agrapha (in Thessaly) as related in the Byzantine Short **Chronicle No 33**⁹. In November 1446, after the resounding Ottoman victory at Varna, Murad II, with a large army broke through the Hexamilion wall after a heavy cannonade and punished Despot Constantine by a raid deep into the Morea. In the spring of 1458, on May 15 during a new Ottoman campaign, Sultan Mehmed the Conqueror appeared before Corinth, which capitulated after a siege of two and a half months (2 August 1458), the Greek bishop of Corinth having reached an agreement with the Sultan to leave the civil population undisturbed. Sultan Mehmed took over the town and the Acrocorinth castle, in which he placed a garrison of 400 Janissaries and supplied it well with guns, food and arms.¹⁰ The experienced Turahanoğlu Ömer Bey, the great benefactor of Thessaly, was placed in command. The local Greek population was given the task helping the garrison in case the Dizdar (Fortress Commander) asked for it. In exchange Sultan Mehmed gave them a *firman* granting them almost full tax freedom; but this was partly recalled when four years after the surrender the basic registration was made. The essential part of the text of this Imperial Order is repeated in a partially preserved census- and taxation register T.D. 10 in the Ottoman Archives in Istanbul. The new census was completed in 1461.¹¹ The text is of such an importance that we give here entirely:

- 1) “mez-kûr korintos cema'atınıñ ellerinde hükümları vardır ki haracdan
- 2) ve cemiye avâriz-i divâniyeden ve ispenceden mu'af ve müsellemler olalar ve dizdar
- 3) dedüği vakit hisarda nöbet bekliyeler amma defter arz olunduğı vakt hemân
- 4) ispenceleri mu'af olundu haracları ve gayrı mu'af olunmadı”

⁸ Zakythinos, “La Population de la Morée,” pp. 7–25 and 107-132.

⁹ Schreiner, (at 1403) *Die Byzantinischen Kleinkroniken*, I, Wien (Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften) 1975, Chronik 47) p. 345 (original Greek text), and: II, 1977, p. 381; (at 1444). Chronik 33, No 49, p.251 p. 240, 252 (the original Greek text, which is either from 1470 or around 1500). German translation in III, 1979, p. 67, No49. (At 1463), *Kleinkroniken* II, 1977, pp. 507-508.

¹⁰ Kritovoulos, *History of Mehmed the Conqueror*, pp. 131-136.

¹¹ Beldiceanu – Beldiceanu-Steinherr, “Corinth et sa région en 1461,” pp. 37-59.

In English: “The mentioned community (cema’at) of Corinth has sultanic documents in its hands stating that they are fully freed and exonerated from the poll tax, the extra-ordinary (avâriz) tax and from the hearth tax (*ispence*) and that they help guarding the castle when the commander asks them.

However, at the time of (new) defter they are freed from the *ispence* but they are not exonerated from the poll tax and the other taxes.”

The conquest of Corinth by the Ottomans is mentioned very briefly by the Early Ottoman chroniclers (Aşıkpaşazâde, Neşrî, Oruç Edirnevi, Tursun Bey, and Kemal-paşazâde, all of them contemporary or almost. The most detailed account is given by Kritoboulos of Imbroz.

After the conquest an old monastery in the castle of Acrocorinth was transformed into the Mosque of Sultan Mehmed Khan, shortly called: Fatih Camii.” This was a three-aisled basilica, built in the style of the “Colonial Gothic” of Frankish Greece. It is built on top of a huge cistern with nine pillars, attribute to Emperor Justinian. A very high minaret was added to the new mosque. The massive basis of it still stands today.

A synoptic (icmal) register for the poll tax (djizye) of the entire Ottoman Empire made in 896 (14. 11. 1490 – 3. 11. 1491) is preserved in the National Library of Sofia and was published *in extenso* by Todorov and Velkov, giving the main lines of the demographic situation of Corinth, as well as of the entire Morea¹², (It shows that the *kaza* of Korintos had a total population of 3.678 Christian households and 355 incomplete households headed by widows, which gives a total population of about 18.000 people. Muslims are not mentioned in this kind of registers because they did not pay the cizye tax. In many parts of the Ottoman Balkans this tax amounted roughly between 40 to 60 akçe per year per household varying according the productivity of the district. The mountainous and poor district of Konitsa in the Pindos Mountains paid only 29 Akçe per households. Around 1490 50 Akçe was one Venetian gold Ducat¹³. Widows, being taken as half a complete household, paid only half the amount. In the district of Corinth the normal household paid 34 Akçe, the widows 17. This amount is far below the usual level and reflexes a deliberate policy. It is often thought that the height of poll tax was everywhere the same but this is not true. A brief look in the “Todorov-Velkov Register” suffices to see this. In contrast to the stagnant situation in 1461 the same register from 1491 shows that the district of Corinth now had a slow, but steady growing population. If compared the amount of cizye-paying households in 1491 with the results of the accounts of the year before we see this growing population clearly. According to the previous register the amount of households of the Corinth district was 3.589 households. The new account shows 175 new households (nev yafte) that had to be added, and 86 heads of household who had died and had to be subtracted. The new number was 3.678. For the widows the situation was the same (346 old ones, 12 increase and three deaths, bringing the total number at 355. The net revenue of the

¹² Todorov –Velkov, *Situation démographique*, p. 268 (Konitsa) and p. 283 Corinth. Ottoman text on p. 198.

¹³ Sahillioğlu, “Akçe”, pp. 224-227.

cizye grew in a similar manner. It should be added that in the last quarter of the fifteenth century in many parts of Central- and Western Europe, after deep decline and stagnation in the 14th and first half of the fifteenth century, populations started to grow again. First, very hesitating, than with an ever greater speed which continued through almost the entire sixteenth century.¹⁴

The 1491 poll tax register also allows us to see how the district of Corinth compares with the other districts of the Morea after a period on 33 years of peace. We take the examples of the old Byzantine capital of Mistra, which had the highest population of all the 27 Moreot districts. It comes as a surprise to see that Corinth follows on place number two. The inland districts of Kalavrita and Karytena follow as number three and four. Together these four districts contained 60% of the whole Morean population.

Medieval Corinth had been a very small, albeit always important place. In the early Ottoman centuries “Korintos” was not going to be much bigger. This came later. The first account we have is the population and taxation register (tahrir) **T.D. 10**, kept in the Prime Minister’s Ottoman Archives in Istanbul (B.O.A). It is the census taken in 1460/61, immediately after the Morea was definitely added to the Ottoman Empire by removing the two ever quarreling Byzantine Despots; Thomas and Demetrius Paleologus. This census mentions 328 full households of Greek Christians in the town, besides 41 *mücerreds* (unmarried adult males) and 74 *bive* (widows). The low percentage of unmarried adult males shows that we have to do with a stagnant or even slightly declining population. Beside the Christian inhabitants was a small group of Jews, three families. Muslim civilians were not (yet) living in Corinth. The register gives no information about the size of the garrison. Because of the Ottoman-Venetian War was still ranging, with in 1466 a large-scale Venetian attack on Athens and Attica it will have been kept at the level of 1458: 400 men. In 1479 peace was made but between 1499 and 1502 war raged again in the Aegean. After last mentioned year the garrison could be reduced. This was actually done. The *İcmal Defter T.D. 114*, written in 920 (1514), a fragment only dealing with garrisons, shows on p. 87 the total of 196 *mustahfizân* under four officers stationed in the Acrocorinth castle. From the strength of this garrison can be seen that the military force was placed in Corinth to guard the vulnerable coast against attacks from an enemy coming via the sea. The Ottoman garrisons of the inland castles were usually a fourth or a fifth of those along the coast. The exposed castles of Koron (Koroni) and Modon (Methoni) in the south-west “finger” of the Peloponnese had 217 and 331 men respectively. The inland castles of Bardunia, Kalavryta and Karitena (Karytaina) deep inland, had 16, 32, and 23 men respectively, all including the officers. The same picture is shown by the coastal and inland strongholds in the Sandjak of Eğriboz (Chalkis), which include the entire mainland of eastern Greece between Lamia in the north and Athens in the south.

¹⁴ Helleiner, “The Population of Europe”, pp. 1-95 ; Mols, “Population in Europe”, pp. 15-82 ; Russell, “Die Bevölkerung Europas”, pp. 9-58.

The picture shown by the 1460/61 register is largely that of the pre-Ottoman period. The next preserved register is T.D. 80 written in 920 /1514, where the little town of Corinth is described on the pages 768-774. It shows remarkable changes. The percentage of widows went down from 18% to 10% whereas the percentage of unmarried adult males went up from 11% in 1461 to 20% in 1514. The 1514 register also shows a small group of Muslim civilians, five household and eight unmarried adult males. From the 13 men no less than 10 had no Muslim fathers, as can be seen on the names of the fathers. They were recent converts to Islam, a trend that would go on throughout the sixteenth century. For unknown reasons after census of 1514 the Muslims are excluded from the record, a phenomenon also to be observed in the South Albania district of Berat (Arnaud Belgrad). Among the Muslim settlers in Corinth must have been a sizeable group of Turks because in the course of the seventeenth century an important part of the Muslims was speaking Turkish.

The overall picture of the town in the year 1514 is given in **T.D. 80**, p. 768-775. The register shows a total of 344 Christian households and 101 *mücerreds* and 52 incomplete households headed by a widow. These people were divided in two normal *mahalles* having 224 Christian households with the usual Ottoman status. After them came a group of five *cema'ats* (congregations) of craftsmen – masons, stone cutters and roof-tile makers, crossbow shooters (*zemberekeci*) and *k.i.k.c.i.a.n.?*) as well as a group of 18 gypsies. These five groups, 88 households of craftsmen and military men together had a privileged status. They did not pay the poll tax (*haradj*), the hearth-tax (*ispence*), unpopular extraordinary tax *'avariz-i divaniye* but had the task to help the garrison in case of an enemy attack and keep the castle in good repair. Curiously enough the gypsies - 18 households - were also included in the privileged group. From other Ottoman castles in the Balkans is known that the task of the gypsies was to “make music for the garrison.” The people of all these groups had documents in their hands issued by “the late Sultans Mehmed (the Conqueror) and Sultan Bayezid (II) and our Ruler (Selim I),” describing their privileged status.

Between the register of 1461 and that of 1514 are great differences. In 1461 the entire population of Corinth was exonerated of practically all taxes in exchange for serving as guardian of the castle in case of need. In 1514, when the situation was stable and no great thread expected, only 88 households, or one quarter of the Christian population, had a military status. As a group they were called *müsellem* (“engaged in military service in lieu of tax payment”).

Besides the mentioned people there also was a group of un-privileged people styled “*re'aya*” who had come from villages in the environs of Corinth and had settled down in the town, 12 households (“*re'aya ki etrâfinda olan keradan gelüb mütemekkin olmışlardır*”). The names them suggest that they were Greeks (Yani, Dimitri, Vasil, Nikola. Todor etc.). After this group the village named “Neochori (New Village) is mentioned as being inside the marks of town of Korintos and having six households. Than follows a group of 17 households and four unmarried male adults living in the village of Paliyos (Palaeochori), also within the borders of Corinth. Among them were people with names like Gjin, Gjon,

Leka etc. which are specific Albanian. Finally came the Jews of Korintos who had grown from three to eleven households, a sign that business was going on in Corinth. It is interesting to remark that a quarter of the Christian population of the town had a military status, were armed and had the task to defend the castle in case of need. This situation is not unique but characterizes the reality of Ottoman rule in the first two centuries of the Empire. In the mid fifteenth century the Ottoman military force of the Sandjak of Vidin in north-western Bulgaria was for 54% composed of Christians, 374 Muslim soldiers, 444 Christian¹⁵. In Northern Serbia, the large district of Braničevo on the Danube, facing the Catholic Kingdom of Hungary, the Orthodox Christian population made up more than half of the total military force¹⁶. In 1519 the Ottoman military force of the great Sandjak of Kyustendil, comprising Western Bulgaria and the eastern half of today's Republic of Macedonia showed to same picture: of the total Ottoman military machinery, 7.530 men, 4664, or 62% were Christians.¹⁷

The 363 households of Korintos in 1514, together with the 200 men of the garrison give a total population of about 2.200 persons, an enormous expansion since Nicollo da Martoni's visit in 1396.

The next stage in the development of Corinth is shown in the register **T.D. 605** from H 991/1583, a completely preserved *mufassal* defter of 551 pages, describing the entire northern half of the Morea. In theory there is a *mufassal* register of the northern half of the Morea from 979/1572 (T.D. 446) but at the time of writing this was not available.

T.D. 605 describes "Korintos" on p. 165-172. It starts with a description of the status of the *müsellemân*:

Zikr olunan elli sekiz nefer zimmiler defter-i atik ve ellerinde olan ahkâm i-şerife mucibince haracdan ve ispençelerdenve avâriz-i divâniye ve tekâlif-i örfiyeden mu'af ve müsellemler olub Korintos kal'esine hizmet ve muhâfızân edüb kendü banlarında (destroyed) termîm etmek üzere kayıd olmağın hala defter-i cedîde dahi vech- mezbur üzere mu'af ve müsellemler kayd olundular.

In short: these 58 non-Muslim subjects are mentioned in the old registers and have in their hands noble orders stating that they are freed from the poll tax, the hearth tax and the extraordinary tax (*avâriz*) perform service to the castle of Corinth and are its defenders and with their tools keep the castle in good repair. "Now they have been written down in the new register as being free and exonerated conform the above-mentioned manner."

After the 58 privileged ones follows a list of four mahalles, two separate groups, and the families living in the villages of Paleochori and Neochori. The latter had seen a spectacular

¹⁵ Inalcik, "Od Stefana Dušana", pp. 35-36 (Inalcik's source is the register MM 18 from 1466, in the B.O.A.. Istanbul.

¹⁶ Djurdjev, "Hriščani Spahije u Severoj", pp. 165-169.

¹⁷ Kiel, *Art and Society of Bulgaria*, pp. 67-69.

growth till 178 families. The entire no-privilege group amounted to 553 “nefer.” When we take the number of unmarried young males as being about 20% of the total adult males – representative for a slow-growing population, we arrive 442 household. For unknown reasons the group of widows is no longer mentioned. The 442 households, the privileged ones and the garrison represent a total population of almost 2.800 people.

For dates about the Christian inhabitants of Corinth in the last years of the sixteenthth century we have at our disposal the *mufassal Cizye* Defter written on 17 Ramazan 1004 (15 May 1596) and valid for the financial year running between mid-May 1594 and mid-May 1595. On 77 pages it describes the Christian inhabitants of the town and the 157 villages belonging to its Kaza. The town of “Gördüs” had five *mahalles* /wards) with a total of 82 *cizye hâne*, or a population of about 370/380 inhabitants. The “*Mahalle* of the Upper Gate of the Castle of Gördüs” had 24 households, the *Mahalle* of the Middle Gate of the mentioned castle with 16 households, the *Mahalle* of the Gate of Felicity (Bâb-i Sa’adet) of the mentioned castle with 9 households. The *Mahalle* of Papa Yani in the mentioned castle with 15 households and finally the *Mahalle* of Turhisar (?) in the mentioned castle with 18 households. It is reasonable to add around 10% of poor people, who did not have land and herds of cattle and were left out of the registers. Left out is also the large group of Christians with a military or para-military function.

It is remarkable that among the population of the Christian villages of the judicial district (*kaza*) of Corinth there are many male individuals with typical Albanian names and/or patronyms: Gjin, Gjon, Leka, Duka, Dode, Lepur etc. and even five whole villages with Albanian names: Peter Bardhi, Todor Buga and Gjin Duka, and two called “Kelmendi” pointing to the origin of the first settlers in these villages: the mountain District of Kelmend in the North-Albanian Alps. These personal names and toponyms are a survival of the late fourteenth century colonization of Albanians in this part of the Morea, which in the mentioned period had been very much depopulated because of the endless wars of that time, as may be recalled. Even today Albanian is spoken in some places of the Corinth district. The 1514 register T.D. 80 shows that up to one third of the entire population of the Kadılık Korintos was formed by Albanians.

The *tahrir defters* from 1461, 1514, 1572 and 1583 give some information about the economy of the town. It shows a relatively slow population growth but an economy that expanded vigorously. This expansion can best be shown in the form of a table, taking the eight most prominent products as example. As a rule 10% of the production was taken as canonical tax (‘öşr) or as customary tax (resm). As it is possible to explain the rise of the monetary value of the production as “yet another manner to exploit the subject population” - as nationalist historiography often claims - the amount of the production in quantity of the different items is **here** also given. It shows that the numbers reflect in fact a real rise of production and a growing production for the market instead of increased exploitation.

For this overview we have only three dates. The register of 1461 shows only the monetary value of the products. Hence we only have the period between 1514 and 1583. These were exactly the prime years of the Ottoman Balkans. It is easy to see that between 1514 and 1572 the production of wheat had jumped up, and in the much shorter period between 1572 and 1584 it kept growing grew vigorously. Between 1514 and 1583 the harvest of barley almost doubled. The wine production more than tripled. Between 1514 and 1572 the production of olive oil rose more than three times, and in the period between 1572 and 1583 had more than doubled. Honey also nearly trebled in the first period and kept growing in the period that followed. We should add that honey was not taxed by the value of the product but by the much easier to calculate number of beehives. As a rule one Akçe per hive was taken. Spectacular is also the growth of textile production. Cotton double between 1514 and 1572 and almost tripled in the following 11 years. Flax went up only a bit slower, rising more than double in 69 years. We have to take in a account that cotton went in bales of roughly 5 kg, in 1583 producing a total of 8000 bales, flax rising to the same large amount. This vast rise of production sustained a growing home industry of textiles, which in turn needed more hands to do the work and attracted more inhabitants from the villages to settle in the town. In the Ottoman system ready-made products were not taxed. The expansion of textile production lured people from outside to settle in the town which explains at once the steep rise of the town's population and laid the foundation of the growth of the town in centuries to follow.

In the first years after 1460 Sinan Bey, son of Elvan Bey is mentioned as Sandjak Bey of the Morea with Corinth as its capital. Much later, when Anabolu (Nauplio) surrendered to the Ottomans as result of the Venetian-Ottoman treaty of 1540, ending a four years war, the seat of the province of Morea was moved to that well-fortified harbor city. The 1460/61 register shows that Corinth had remained the seat of a Greek bishopric, the bishop, and his staff of 10 Papaz -all mentioned by name- are explicitly mentioned in the register as living in the town¹⁸.

In the last decade of the fifteenth century the Ottomans carried out important works of repair and further strengthening of the triple circuit of walls of the Acrocorinth. A building account of the work in 1491 on the castle of Corinth and the castles of Argos and Athens in 1491 are preserved in the Istanbul Belediye Kütüphanesi¹⁹. The work was done between 10 Şaban - 15 Zilka'de 896 (18 June – 19 Sept. 1491) and was carried out by 58 Muslim carpenters and masons coming from 9 different districts in European Turkey and 76 Christian masters of the same branches. Besides them was a large force of unskilled workers (İrgâd), all Christians, coming from eight different districts in Albania and Greece to do the job.

¹⁸ - Beldiceanu –Beldiceanu-Steinherr, "Corinth et sa région en 1461," pp. 37-59.

¹⁹ - Istanbul, Belediye Library (Atatürk Kitaplığı) "M.Cevdet Yazmaları O.91 from 1490", p. 551-552.

In the course of the 16th century more Muslims came to live in Corinth. The open lower town revived again. A still visible sign of revival is the monumental fountain (çeşme) built in 921 (1515/16 by Yusuf al-Hayyât (the tailor). This fountain, built on the old road from the open town in the plain to the Acrocorinth castle is locally known as the “Fountain of Hadji Mustafa.” Another sign of revival is the sizeable mosque with a domed prayer hall, flanked on each side by two domed spaces that originally served as guestrooms and had hearths to heat the room in the winter. Only later the lateral walls were broken away and the gained space added to the prayer room. This kind of buildings was usually preceded by an open portico covered by five domes. The Corinth mosque once stood in the centre of the market area (çarşı) of Corinth. The five-domed porch is well visible on the drawings of Stackelberg (**vide infra**). This type of mosques came into being in the 1470s and is visibly inspired by the great Üç Şerefeli Mosque in Edirne/Adrianople, built between 841-851 (1437/'38–1447/'48. In the former princely residence of Manisa near İzmir/Smyrna, four examples of this plan can still be seen: the Mosque of Çeşnegir Sinan Bey, 879 (1474), Mosque of İvaz Bey, 889) 1484, the Hatuniye Mosque, 1490 and the Mosque of Hafza Sultan, mother of Süleyman the Magnificent, 929 (1522/23). A good example in Turkish Thrace is the mosque of Güzelce Hasan Bey in Hayrabolu from 905/1499. In the city of Rhodes the Mosque of Sultan Süleyman from 1521/22, is the last representative of the plan that in around 1530 fell in disuse, only to reappear briefly in a work of the master architect Sinan, the grand Mosque of Admiral Sinan Pasha in Beşiktaş, İstanbul from 1552-1556.²⁰ The Corinth example is very carefully depicted in a drawing of 1812 by the Baltic German nobleman Otto Magnus von Stackelberg²¹. Behind the mosque stood a likewise domed mausoleum, the *türbe* of the founder of the building. More drawings of it survive, but they are much less accurate than Stackelberg's pictures. The building in Corinth was one of the most sophisticated middle-sized mosques of the Balkans.

The Christ. Popul. of the Kaza of Corinth in number of poll tax payers						
Year	Mistra	Corinth	Karytena	Kalavryta	Holomic/ Gastouni	
1491	6.200	3.678	3.313	2.361	1.538	
1716	7.040	4.197	2.293	3.990	2.612	
1816	8.529	5.748	5.717	6.516	4.443	
1830	6.942	5.555	6.941	6.584	4.831	Per persons
	4,48	4,7	4,9	5,37	4,7	Per household
* In 1816 and 1830 the Kaza of Karytena also included the districts of Phanari and Leondari.						

Table 1 : Research and Design M. Kiel, 2016.

²⁰ Aslanapa, *Osmanlı Devri Mimarisi*, pp. 66-73, 149-152 ; Goodwin, *A History of Ottoman Architecture*, pp. 93-102.

²¹ Of which there are good reproductions by: Papageorgiou, *Peringintes kai zographoi*, pp. 112-116, (with abundant illustrations and rich bibliography) and Tsigakou, *Das wiederentdeckte Griechenland*.

THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF CORINTH BETWEEN 1461 and 1583							
In Akçe (small silver coin in 1467 42 Akçe was 1 Venetian gold Ducat in 1547: 60 in one Ducat)							
Year	Adult Males	Wheat	Barley	Wine	Olive Oil	Cotton	Flax
		in Akçe					
1461	371	10.400	1.592	7.191	0	200	380
1514	455	20.280	13.620	12.521	1.600	429	1089
1572	358	35.000	18.000	30.000	4.000	900	2.000
1583	553	40.000	24.000	30.000	10.000	2.400	3.200
The Economic Development of Corinth between the years 1514 and 1583							
Expressed in quantities of agricultural production. The sums of money represent 10% of the total harvest.							
Year	Wheat	Barley	Wine	Olive Oil	Honey	Cotton	Flax
1514	500 mud	681 mud	659 medre	160 medre	371 hives	143 ledre	362 demet
1572	875 himl	900 hl.	1500 med.	400 med.	1029 hives	300 ledre	500 demet
1583	1000 hl.	1200 hl.	2000 med.	1000 med.	1300 hives	800 ledre	800 demet

Table 2 : Research and Design M. Kiel, 2016.

The Ottomans did not possess Corinth undisturbed. In the autumn of 1463, five years after the definite conquest of the Morea, the Venetians under Loredano and d'Este besieged the Acropolis castle for several months until in November an Ottoman force under Turahanoğlu Ömer Bey and Mahmud Pasha drove them back to their base, the strong Venetian port of Nauplio/Napoli di Romania.²²

In 1611A.D the town suffered from an unsuccessful raid of the Knights of St. John of Malta, but soon recovered. Especially in the seventeenth century Ottoman Gördüs (as it was now called) developed into an Islamic centre of local importance. The English traveler Bertrand Randolph visited the Morea a number of times between 1671 and 1679 and left a good description of it.²³ It is interesting to compare Randolph's description with the Ottoman administrative sources and the remarks of Niccolo da Martoni from 1394. In the long title of his work Randolph has the remark that the Peloponnesus "*had been near Two Hundred Years under the Turks Dominion; and is now much depopulated.*" Statements of this kind are characteristic for the attitude of many educated Christians. The Ottoman

²² Schreiner, (at 1403) *Die Byzantinischen Kleinkroniken*, I, Wien (Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften) 1975, Chronik 47) p. 345 (original Greek text), and: II, 1977, p. 381; (at 1444). Chronik 33, No 49, p.251 p. 240, 252 (the original Greek text, which is either from 1470 or around 1500). German translation in III, 1979, p. 67, No49. (At 1463), *Kleinkroniken II*, 1977, p. 507/08 ; Babinger, *Mehmed der Eroberer*, pp. 243-244.

²³ Randolph, *The present state of the Morea*, pp. 1-2.

administrative sources show quite the opposite of Randolph's statement – instead of decline the first 150 years of Ottoman rule shows irrefutably that this period was one of rapid recovery and expansion.

The best description of Ottoman Görös, with many details, is given by great Ottoman traveller Evliya Çelebi, who visited the town in 1668²⁴, just a few years after Randolph. In the lower part of the (Acrocorinth) castle, between the second and the third gate, was a "Bölme Hisarcık" where Evliya noted 200 houses of Christians, the successors of those families who in 1458 were serving in the defense of the castle in case of need. In the upper section of the castle were another 200 houses, solely inhabited by Muslims. Inside the castle were four mihrabs of which three were Friday Mosques: Sultan Mehmed's Mosque, built in "old style," the Bey-zâde Mosque and the Mosque of Ahmed Pasha, and separately, the Fethiye Mosque, which formerly was a church. It is possible that that our traveler made one mosque into two because only one Mosque of Sultan Mehmed is known, the converted church on top of the cistern.

In the open lower town in the plain Evliya mentions 500 houses among fruit gardens, vineyards, running water spread out over a wide area with gardens and corn fields between them. The houses were entirely built of stone, that looked like castles or were spacious mansions (konak), all covered with ruby red roof tiles but all these houses were not built in rows but stood each separately from the other. In the lower town were five places of prayer, three of them were Friday Mosques. He mentions four by name: the Mosque of Mehmed Çavuş, the Mosque the Bazaar (Çarşı), the Tekke Mosque and the Zorba Mosque. There was only one hamam in the town, but in many mansions (konak) were no less than 70 house hamams. The population of the town spoke Greek and Albanian, but Greek was dominating. Their spoken Turkish was cripple and contained many strange words. The people of Corinth were outspoken gentle and munificent. In the castle a garrison of 200 men was stationed. Evliya's number of houses in the town as a whole suggests a bigger place than it was in reality, caused by the habit of having a house in the lower town, where life was easy, and another one in the high mountain castle, which was only inhabited in times of danger, when corsairs roamed around. In 1675, less than ten years after Evliya, Jacob Spon and George Wheler²⁵, two very learned men and excellent observers, mention in the lower town of Corinth 200 houses of Greeks and 100 houses of Turks which gives a total population of 1.300 – 1.400 people, or much less than Evliya who throughout his 10 volumes Book of Travels (Seyahatnâme) gives higher population numbers than in reality.

A hitherto unknown source about the population of the Corinth province, dating from 16 years before Evliya's visit to the town is a summary version (icmal/idjmal) of the Bedel-i Nüzül of the entire Morea from the year 1062 (A.D. 1652, preserved in the Muallim Cevdet Yazmaları collection in the Atatürk Kitaplığı in Istanbul. The Bedel-i Nüzül was a creation of the 17th century and was thought as a substitute (bedel) for the common and traditional

²⁴ Evliya Çelebi, *Seyahatnâme*, pp. 275-282 ; Kahraman – Dağlı – Dankoff, *Evliyâ Çelebi*, pp. 125-128.

²⁵ Spon et Wheler, *Voyage d'Italie* ; Wheler, *A journey into Greece*.

duty of giving food and drinks (*nüzül* means “provisions”) to government officials passing through the district.²⁶ As basis for this tax the records of the poll tax/*cizye* were taken. Per settlement a fixed number of *cizye hâne* were taken and formed to a *nüzül hâne*. How many poll-tax paying households were put in one *nüzül hâne* depended on the prosperity of the settlement. In the twenty districts of the Morea four *cizye*-paying households in one *nüzül hâne* was the most common. Being an *idjmal* defter the *Bedel-i Nüzül* Register of 1652 gives only the total numbers of *nüzül* units per district. When placed in order of size this allows us to find the place of Corinth in a time that in the existing demographic literature is seen as the decade of the deepest demographic decline in general. From the 11.492½ units of the Morea the large district of Mistra with 1.511 *nüzül hâne* came on place number one, the district of Holomiç/Chlemoutsi (including the sub-district of Gastouni) with 1.127 units on place two and Gördüs-Corinth with 1.059 on place three. This would mean 4.236 normal households, to which should be added 10% of those who were too poor to pay and therefore not taken in the register. The Corinth district would have had 4.500-4.700 households which would mean that the demographic decline seen elsewhere did not happen in Corinth; at least by far not as heavy as elsewhere in the Ottoman Balkans²⁷.

In 1687, during the long war with the Christian coalition, the Venetians took Corinth by treaty. The Ottoman population left. Among them was the 18 years old Hasan Sezâ’î ben Ali, the future founder of the Gülşeniye dervish order and great mystic poet.

It looks as if the Venetians did not destroy the Ottoman buildings but simply gave them a different function. Some mosques became churches, other, like a mosque in the upper castle, became a gun powder store. During the war and because of the disappearance of the Muslim population the town suffered deep decline. The Venetian census of 1702, “*Libro Ristrette della famigli e animi*” mentions only 74 families in the castle of Corinth and 25 families in the open town, altogether 378 souls²⁸.

The Ottomans returned in June 1715 and took the town after a fight of one week. The Venetian garrison, 400 men, was allowed to retreat to Corfou. Rioting janissaries broke the capitulation and carried off a part of the Greek population in captivity. The re-conquest of the Morea was in fact a “military walk,” no resistance, no plundering and no requirement of foodstuffs. The Commander-in-Chief, Grand Vizier Ali Pasha, paid for everything at normal market prices. The recapture of the Morea is described in detail by Benjamin Brue, who accompanied the Ottoman army during the entire campaign.²⁹

One of the first things the Ottomans did was making a comprehensive register of district by district, village by villages and household by household as well as the size of the agricultural production and the tax amount (10%) of each product. These grand registers are preserved in the Old Archive (Kuyudu Kadime) of the General Directorate of the

²⁶ Gibb – Bowen, *Islamic Society*, p. 30, n. - 31, n.

²⁷ For a comparison with other districts of the Balkans see: M. Kiel, “The Ottoman Imperial Registers,” pp. 195-218 ; Kiel - Sauerwein, *Ost-Lokris in türkischer*.

²⁸ *Libro Ristrette della famigli e animi effective cadaun territori dei Regno di Morea*.

²⁹ Brue, *Journal de la campagne*, pp. 13-22 (most detailed and reliable account of the 1715 reconquest).

Cadaster and Land registration in Ankara (Tapu ve Kadastro Genel Müdürlüğü) where research by historians is only possible under stringent rules, valid for foreigners as well as Turkish citizens. Of these great registers a summary (icmal/idjmal) was made, allowing a quick overview of the settlements, the population and the tax to be taken. A well written and clean copy of the synoptic register is preserved in the great Prime Minister's Ottoman Archives in Istanbul, where working conditions are almost perfect. This icmal register, MAD 2785 from 1128 (1715/16) contains on p. 176 the basic data on the Kaza-i Gördüs:

“Kaza of Gördüs, (taken) from the afore-mentioned tahrir (= the great register made by Süleyman Ağa).

Subjects: 4.197 [male] individuals (nefer)

(people with privileged status): invalids 14, sibi: nefer 1, widows: 29 persons, derbendjis (guardians of the passes, mostly Christians): 320 nefer, (two unreadable groups) 81 nefer. Total 481 nefer

Deserted villages: 41; deserted çiftlik: 137, (surface in total: 626 çift; mezra'a: 4, size of the arable land 2.017½ çift.

A number of other Moreote districts had next to Christian tax-paying subjects also small pockets of “new Muslims, apostates” (*nev muslim, mürted*), crypto-Muslims who after 1715 came back to Islam: 8 nefer in the Kaza of Arkadia, 289 in Kaza Hutaliç/Chlemoutsis) 15 “Muslims” in the Kaza Fanar and 120 new Muslims, 410 in the great Kaza of Mezistre/Mistra. In the Kaza Gördüs no Muslim had survived. These numbers indicate that the destruction of the villages of the Corinth district had been moderate if compared with other districts. The high number of deserted çiftlik in the district shows that this form of land holding was rather unpopular among the peasantry. Against the common imagination these çiftlik were rather small, 4½ çift, which is a piece of land from which four peasant families could live with ease, and no *latifundia* at all.

After 1715, as elsewhere in the Morea, the Ottomans reconstructed their buildings and revived Islamic life. Sultan Ahmed III himself came himself to the Morea and had a mosque built in the Upper Castle of Corinth and several others in the harbor town of Nauplio. A part of the old Turkish citizens of Corinth came back after 1715. Ekrem Hakkı Ayverdi found in the Ottoman archives some data concerning the reconstruction of Islamic life in Corinth: In the year 1136 (1723/24) a Mosque of Musa Pasa is mentioned in the records; in 1171 (1757/58) a Halvetiyye Tekke of Sheyh Ali Efendi; in 1196 (1781/82) a Gülşeniye Dergâh; in 1200 (1785/86) a Mosque of Miralay Abdi Bey³⁰. A vakf of the son of Abdi Bey, Yunus Bey in Corinth from 1163 (1750) is mentioned in fihrist 3 in the Vakıflar Gen.Müd., made in 1859. These dates do not necessarily refer to the year of construction. The greatest benefactor of late-Ottoman Corinth was doubtless the governor of Anabolu/Nauplio, Mustafa Pasha, who shortly before 1723 built in the open Lower Town of Corinth a mosque, a *khân*, a hamam, and a row of 87 shops and next to them a

³⁰ Ayverdi, *Osmanlı Mimârî Eserleri*, section: “Gördüs.”

coffeehouse, a *bozahâne*, a bakery and farrier workshops to generate income for the maintenance of these foundations.³¹

From the mid-eighteenth century onward there was the medrese built by Halil and Yusuf Bey “*in the kasaba of Gördüs.*” An Ottoman document from the end of the year 1778 mentions the appointment of a new müderris/teacher in this school for higher education, still testifies the existence of this long disappeared building.

Another aspect of the Ottoman period of the history of Corinth and its district - often forgotten to mention - is the cultural activity of the Christian village population of the Corinth region. Around the big village of Sofikon, south-east of Corinth, in an open rolling land, a whole group of churches dating from the 12th till to eighteenth century is still standing. Near Stiris, half an hour climbing from the village of Korfos is the lonely church of the Holy Virgin from the first half of the eleventh century. In 1668 its interior was repainted by monk Theodoulos Kakavas from Nauplio. The church of the monastery of Phaneromeri near Chiliomodio is from the twelve century. The cross-in square church (Kreuzkuppelkirche) of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary, half an hour going east of Sofikon, has to be dated in the second half of the twelve century. The other cross-in-square (Kreuzkuppelkirche) church of the Taxiarchoi, also outside Sofikon, is from around 1300. It could be added that the village of Sofikon in 1594/95 with 90 households was one of the largest of the entire district.

Built and painted in the Ottoman period, or enlarged by a narthex which was also painted is a number of churches of whom some should be mentioned here. Aya Marina just outside the Phaneromeri Monastery has frescos from 7115 (1607), painted in the tradition of the Cretan school of painting by the well-known artist Demetrios Kakavas from Nauplio, grandfather of Theodoulos Kakavas, the painter of the 1668 frescos in the church of the H. Virgin of Stiris.

On a hill outside Sofikon the church of St. Paraskevi from 1617 still has its well preserved fresco decoration of the same year. Its building inscription notes: “*Erected from the foundations and painted was this church ... in the year 1617.*” An hour going east of Sofikon stands the small but monumental church of the H. Antonios, dating from the mid-17th century. The Hypapanti Church in the plain near Sofikon has to be dated in the late 17th century. The foundation inscription of the parish church of Sofikon itself notes: “*This Godly and most holy church of the great and glorious martyr St. Georg the Victorious was erected and painted through the gifts of all the pious Orthodox Christians living in this village for the benefit of their souls ... in the year of Adam 7250, August 24 (A.D. 1742.)*”. The most remarkable example of the Orthodox Christian art are the frescos in the small monastic church of the Assumption of the Virgin outside Sofikon mentioned above. These paintings are evidently inspired by the art of the great monasteries of Mount Athos and belong to the best of the Morea in the 16th century. An inscription carved in a slab of

³¹ Ankara, V.G.M. Arşivi, Vakfiye of 1135 (1723)

marble notes: “Renewed was this house of God by the most holy Archbishop Kyr Neophytos from Didymoteichon in the year 7084 (1576).” Some two decades later the church was enlarged by a narthex and painted with frescos of an even higher quality than those in the main church. The buildings mentioned here and their fresco decoration, the survivors of the Byzantine period as well as those made in the Ottoman centuries, testify from a history that is so different from the writings of the 'historians of pipe and drum' that still dominate historiography. It is also interesting to note that the French “Expedition Scientifique de Morée” active immediately after the Greek War of Independence - 1831- and published in 1834, found no less than 14 active monasteries in the Corinth district.

In 1175 (1760/61 the son and successor Sezâ'î, Mehmed Sâdik, left the mother convent of the Gülşeni order of dervishes in Edirne/Adrianople and returned to Corinth. There he transformed the house where his father was born into a Gülşeni convent. His daughter Zehra married the local Sheyh Ahmed Müsellem. Other returnees settled also in Corinth. Sezâ'î's poetic work was collected in his Divân that was printed and soon became very famous and was highly esteemed. Although printed, the Divân continued to circulate in hand-written copies until the end of the nineteenth century. It brought the author the honorific title of the “Hafız-i Shirazi of the Ottomans”. A large group of his letters to friends and relations (Mektubât-i Hazret-i Sezâ'î) is also preserved and was printed (Istanbul 1289/1872). In Corinth the türbe of Mehmed Sâdik Efendi and his successors still stands and even saw some conservation work. In Edirne the mother convent is largely preserved, with minaret, monumental entrance and two *türbes*. The mosque and the sema-hâne were reconstructed in the 2010s. The foundation charter (vakfiye/ Vakıfnâme) of the pious foundation of Mehmed Sadık Efendi is preserved in the General Directorate of Pious Foundations in Ankara.³²

An anonymous French report about the population and production of the Morea, most likely written in 1790, shows Corinth as a minor town of “3.500 or more” inhabitants. From the 20 cities and towns of the Morea Corinth came on the fourth place following Tripolitza, Nauplia and Patra³³.

Western travelers, who in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries came frequently in the Morea, were not interested at all in Ottoman buildings and only marginally in the Byzantino-Frankish Middle Ages, their brains being full with the Classical Antiquity. Around 1785 Luigi Mayer shows in his drawings four minarets in the lower town, William Page (around 1820) has five minarets. About names and dates of these mosques the travelers did not care, no one knowing Arabic or Ottoman Turkish. Moreover Islamic art was not a topic in the curriculum of any European university. This was to come only at the very beginning of the twentieth century when in 1904 the Pergamon Museum in Berlin opened a permanent section devoted to Islamic art. Other European capitals and some of the great cities in the USA were soon to follow.

³² Ankara, Vakıflar Genel Müdürlüğü, Arşivi: *Küçük evkaf sâni*, No 326.

³³ Anoyatis-Pelé, *Connaissance de la Population*.

The best pictures of what must have been the most important mosque of the town are made by Magnus von Stackelberg, as mentioned above. This building could have been the Mosque of Mehmed Çavuş, mentioned by Evliya Çelebi as the first mosque of the lower town and situated in the market area (Çarşı). It was transformed into a church by the Venetians after 1687 and again reconverted to mosque after 1715. The site where it stood is now occupied by the main church of Palαιο Korinthos, a concrete structure of the 1960s. Some traveller/artists do show a sizeable single domed mosque in the southern outskirts of the open town in the plain. Stackelberg also has a very fine drawing of the Palace of Kamil Bey, the greatest and most sumptuous building in the Ottoman Morea, and a sizable *khan* for the merchants and travelers. The architecture of both buildings is characteristic for the eighteenth century.

Corinth as it was at the eve of the Greek War of Independence is described in some detail in the “Beschreibung der Europäischen Türkei, von J. Hütz, which appeared in München in 1828. “*The town itself (disregarding the Acrocorinth) had three mosques, 5 Greek churches, 500 houses, laying scattered, and has a Greek Archbishop. Here are also a number of great storehouses, of merchants (Handelshäuser) but little remains from Antiquity and no trace of the splendour of this (old) Greek city.*” Via its two ports Corinth exported 300.000 *keyl* of wheat (ca. 7.500 tonnes), 20.000 *keyl* of other cereals, 1300 Zentner (1 Zentner is ca. 50 kg) wool, 1.500 barrels of olive oil, 4.000 pound of *kermes* (cochenille, prinokokki, red dye), 3.400 zentner tar and raisins, as well as butter and wax.

Other numbers of the agricultural production are given by François Pouqueville based on Ottoman administrative documents to which Pouqueville, as personal physician and adviser to the famous Tepedelenli Ali Pasha of Yannina, had access. For the year 1814 he noted for the entire district of Corinth a production of: 80.000 *keyl/Kile* (= bushel) of wheat, 70.000 *keyl* of barley, 7.000 barrels of olive oil, 12.000 quintal of cheese (1 Q.= 50 kg), 1.500 Okka (1 Okka=1,282 kg) of Silk, 1,500 okka of vermilion (paint), 10.000 of bee wax, 15.000 Okka of honey, 600 quintal cotton and 3.000 quintal unwashed wool; wheat, barley, olive oil and cheese being by far the most important products. What is also visible is that among the 20 Cantons/Kadılıks of the Morea Corinth belonged to the three most productive areas of the peninsula, preceded only by Gastouni and Mistra³⁴.

In 1805 William Martin Leake saw ‘three to four mosques’ still standing in the Acrocorinth castle. He describes the open town in the same manner as Evliya Çelebi, spread-out over a large area, with much green and vineyards between the houses. Leake gives the number of inhabitants as 100 Turkish and 200 Greek households. François Pouqueville, in 1800, saw: ‘370 houses, divided by plots of arable land’ Both Leake and Pouqueville, as well as other travelers mention the *saray* of Kamil Bey (by Leake “Nuri Bey”) the *Derebey* of Gördüs, whose family had ruled the province as *Derebey* in the name of the Sultan since 1715. The building was one of the largest and most luxurious of Greece. Both Pouqueville and Leake

³⁴ Pouqueville, *Voyage dans la Grèce*, p.24/25.

mention that the province of Corinth was the most prosperous of the entire Morea (une des contrées les plus florissantes du Péloponèse thanks to the benevolent rule of a family of *Derebeys* who were in charge since 1719. Pouqueville gives for 1813 wheat, barley, olive oil, cheese, silk, linen and raisins as the most important products of the Corinth district, which numbered 80 villages. The *Dizionario Geographico* from 1829 gives the population of the town as high as 400 houses. This would give a total population of around 2000 people.

In 1822, during the Greek War of Independence, Corinth was taken by the Greek insurgents who took Kamil Bey as prisoner and shot him in 1823, when an Ottoman army of relief under Dramalı Ali Pasha approached the town. During the war the Muslim population either perished or fled. After the war the surviving Ottoman buildings were either demolished or fell in ruins because of neglect. This happened in particular with the buildings of the Acrocorinth castle, which became a completely deserted field of ruins.

In 1829/31 the French *Expédition Scientifique de Morée* established that from the 27 Eparchia of the Morea the Eparchie Corinth came with 26.110 inhabitants at place four in number of inhabitants, with Kalavrita with 35.509 as number one, followed by Karytena (34.012) and Mistra with 31.102. With 4,7 people per family Corinth had a relative quickly growing population. These numbers show that, although the Corinth district in 1830 had sunken from the second place in 1491 and 1716 to the fourth largest in 1830, also shows that at the same time the population rose (in round numbers) from 4.200 in 1716 to 5.500 in 1830. This indicates vividly that between the peaceful Ottoman re-conquest of 1716 and destructive war of independence the speed of the recovery of the area had been very high. Not for nothing native Greek writers from the Morea like Kanellos Deligiannis remembered the years from 1716 to the Orloff invasion of 1770 as “the good old time”.³⁵

More of Corinth was destroyed by a series of earthquakes in the 1850s. This culminated in 1858 with the transfer of the town to a new site at the sea shore, five km to the north-east.

Today in the castle we still see the ruins of the minaret of Fatih Sultan Mehmed. The domed mosque of Sultan Ahmed III, with its mihrab in the style of the Turkish baroque still stands. In the 1970s its dome was still intact. Some decades later it collapsed because of sheer neglect. In the lower town we still see the ruins of a half-buried hamam with several domes and one small single-domed house-hamam at the ruins of Kamil Bey’s great palace. The Çeşme of Yusuf the Tailor is also still standing, as is the türbe of the Gülşeniye tekke of Şeyh Hasan Sezâî with the graves of Sheikh Mehmed Sadık and his successors. A small inscription cut in a marble slab has the invocative text: *Yâ Gülşeni !* A more definite history of the Ottoman culture of “Gördüs” still needs to be written.

³⁵ Deligiannis, *Apomenoneumata*.



Pl. 1. The Carshi Cami'i from the front side. Because the wings with on both sides the guest rooms the building is unusually wide. Therefore the portico could not do with the usual three-domes, but had to have 5 domes in the portico. These are very well visible on this picture.

Stackelberg, *Trachten und Gebräuchen der Neugriechen*.

(Courtesy Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, München)



Pl. 2. The Market place of Corinth showing the so-called Carshi Cami'i in its background. The Carshi **Cami'i**, as seen from the flank, showing the minaret, the domes of the two guest rooms, and the top of a türbe behind the mihrab wall

Stackelberg, *Trachten und Gebräuchen der Neugriechen*.

Courtesy Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, München



Pl. 3. The Great Khan in the centre of Corinth,
Stackelberg, *Trachten und Gebräuchen der Neugriechen*.
Courtesy Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, München.



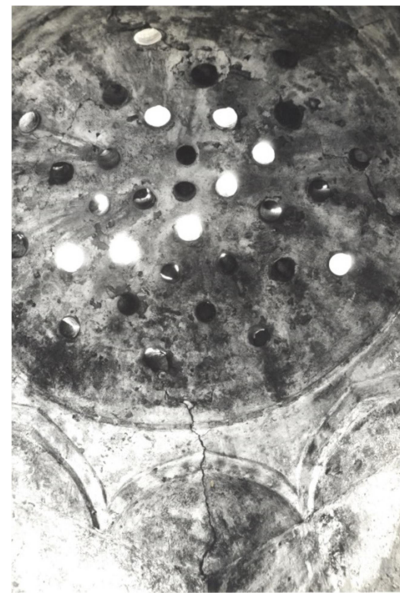
Pl. 4. Acrocorinth, Ahmed Pasha Mosque (Kiel 1972)



Pl. 5. Corinth, Lower Town, Çeşme of Yusuf Hayyat (Kiel 1972)



Pl. 6. Corinth, Lower Town, house-hamam (Kiel 1974)



Pl. 7. Morea-Corinth, Lower Town, house-hamam (Kiel 1974)



Pl. 8. The 18th century dervish convent, of the most important son of Ottoman Corinth, Hasan Seza'i in Edirne (Adrianopolis), its sema-hâne reconstructed recently. (Kiel 2016)

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