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**OSCE
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MOSQUES IN WESTERN THRACE

Mosques and minarets are one of the most important parts of the Muslim Turkish Minority's religious and cultural life. Although the historic monuments inherited from the Ottomans have been subject to systematic eradication, as of the year of 2006 there are 301 mosques in Western Thrace. 24 are closed and 277 of them still operate. Most of these mosques have minarets. In the last years only 14 minarets were built across the region. Much permission for building or restoring mosques and minarets are still pending in the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Education. Building a minaret up to 16 meters high was easier until the year of 2004. Since then, permissions for building mosques and minarets up to 16 meters and higher are still pending.

There are 161 mosques in Komotini. 157 operate and 4 are closed. 11 new mosques and 12 new minarets were built in Komotini in the last years.

The total number of mosques in Xanthi is 115. 97 mosques operate and 18 are closed. 10 new mosques and one minaret were built in the last years.

23 out of 25 mosques operate in Alexandroupolis, while 2 new mosques and one minaret are to be built.

PERMISSION PROCEDURE

The law no 1363/1938 which was later replaced by law no 1672/1939 conducts the procedure of getting permission to build any kind of house of prayer as well as mosques and minarets. This law later was changed by the new law 1577/1985. According to article 21, paragraph 2 of this law the height of the minarets has been reduced from 16m and over to 7.5 m. However in the same paragraph, there is a "deviation" (discretionary power) which gives the right to the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Education for "reasonable" and special cases to give permissions for the heights of minarets 16m and over.

According to this law, permissions for mosques, minarets and any other kind of house of prayer needed the authorization of the bishop of the region. The authority, which was given to the region's bishop was transferred to the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Education in 1997.

The Bishop of Komotini and Maronia region in many cases used the right to veto or postponed the permits. Furthermore in some cases he recalled his permissions. For example: In July 1995 The Bishop of Komotini and Maronia region signed the 16m permission of the Peleketi (Arabacikoy) minaret. The same bishop in 13-11-1996 recalled his permission of 16m and reduced it to 12m on the bases of the Greek Orthodox community's objections living in the same village.

After the transformation of the authorization of the bishop to the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Education, up to the year of 2004 many applications for building minarets were approved. However this is not the case since then. Many applications for building mosques and minarets up to 16m were refused or not answered at all by the Ministry.

Applicants complain that the “deviation” (discretionary power) of article 21 is used more for political pressure rather than positive measures.

MP of Rodopi Region Ahmet Hacıosman, led a question to the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Education on 15/5/2008 regarding the permissions for building minarets in the Venna (Demirbeyli), Kallindirio (Kalenderkoy) and Filira (Sirkeli) villages of the region of Rodopi.

Minister of Education and Religious Affairs of the period Evripidis Stilianidis on his answer stated that the law permits of the length of the minarets is only 7.5m and that the bill should be implemented. The problem mentioned above is still to be resolved.

The issue in question is not only limited to the heights of the minarets. The Greek Administration often raises difficulties for giving construction permits for restoration attempts of old mosques. In some villages, restoration permit applications of the members of the Minority have either been repeatedly denied or procrastinated. In some cases, because the restoration applications have been denied, these old ruins present a danger to the community of the villages.

WHY THE MINARET IS IMPORTANT

Minarets are important and they are the essential parts of the mosques. Minarets are used to call prayers to gather in the mosque when the prayer time comes. This happens 5 times a day. The length of the minaret is important to reach the farthest point. The taller the minaret the farthest point you reach.

In the mosque's minaret architecture the length of the minaret has to be over twice as tall as the mosque's height. Length is also important in terms of aesthetics of the minarets.

The policy of the Greek Administration to shorten the heights of the Minarets is based on a feeble policy to hide that the village in question is a Turkish village and to pretend that Western Thrace is not densely populated by Turks. Hence the policy to build churches to every single village, even to those that have no Christian populations at all.

CITY PLANS

According to city plans of Komotini and Xanthi drawn in 1930's almost all mosques, mesjids, pious foundation lands, cemeteries and private Minority school buildings lose part of their property.

The report on this issue prepared by Ibrahim Baltali (Journalist-researcher) gives a clear clarification on today's situation. (Please find attached.)

The above mentioned issues create a setback for the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace, regarding their religious rights that have been granted by several international and bilateral agreements and conventions, specifically those rights that have been safeguarded by the Treaty of Athens as well as by the Treaty of Lausanne. The above examples are a clear violation of these rights and prove that the Greek Government is not yet ready to provide for the needs of the Turkish Minority. The Minority on the other hand, expects that the Greek state refrains from interfering in its religious affairs.

THE MOSQUE ISSUE IN ATHENS

Muslims in Athens are voicing their displeasure concerning the delay of a mosque construction that would house tens of thousands of worshippers. The mosque would allow for many Muslims living in Athens adequate place to pray and gather, instead of using abandoned factories or converted coffee shops as prayer houses, as they have been doing for years.

The Greek Parliament approved a bill in 2000 allowing the construction of Athens' first mosque and Islamic Center. In 2006 the government passed a new law providing for the establishment of a mosque, without a cultural center. In 2007, the Greek government approved a new bill for the construction of a mosque on a large plot of land owned by the Greek navy. According to the bill, the mosque would be run by a non profit organization staffed by state officials and members of the Muslim community, and the imam would be government appointed, backed, and salaried. However, Muslims said that the construction of a state-funded mosque and cemetery in Elaionas, near the center of Athens, has faced countless delays. A specific reason for the delay has not been given.

Athens is one of the few European Union capitals to lack a functioning mosque. Furthermore is the single EU capital where no officially Mosque operates. Initiatives by governments to build a new mosque in the capital ran into objections from the Orthodox Church and protests from citizens who associate mosques with four centuries of subjugation under the Ottoman Empire and political rivalry with Turkey.

The authorities managed to secure the church's backing and passed a law providing for the construction of a mosque by 2010 in the central Athens district of Elaionas, on a large plot of land. A similar law passed before the Athens 2004 Olympics, for the construction of a mosque near the international airport, was shelved after furious protests by residents and the Church, which did not want visitors flying into Athens to be greeted by a minaret.

According to the European commissioner for human rights, Thomas Hammarberg, such procrastination denies Muslims their basic rights.

"Islam is a major religion in Europe today, so European authorities should facilitate Muslims in practicing their religion," Hammarberg said. "Europe is seeing an increase in the construction of mosques, but these are funded by the state, not with money imported from the Middle East, to ensure that they remain independent."

Human rights groups maintain that immigrants have the same rights to worship as other residents.

There are many Ottoman monuments in Athens. The number of Turkish monuments in the country was 3370 when Greece declared its independence from the Ottoman administration in 1821. According to statistics, 2336 of these were mosques and mesjids. Today there are only four mosques left in Athens and these remain closed.

ATTACHMENTS (1)

DEMOLISHED OTTOMAN HISTORIC MONUMENTS AND EXPROPRIATED LANDS IN WESTERN THRACE BY IBRAHIM BALTALI SUMMARY

Turkish – Islamic historic monuments in Western Thrace inherited from the Ottomans are systematically eradicated. Mosques, chapels of dervishes, bridges are not restored and attempts of restoration by individuals are not given permission. The destruction begins with the inscriptions being torn down, eliminating the identity of the work. In other cases, the so-called restoration process is delayed expecting that, time itself will do the destruction. Meanwhile the Alevi-Bektashi chapels of dervishes, who were the first settlers of Western Thrace, are converted into churches. Some publications distributed by the Government refer to Ottoman mosques as “Turkish churches” and the Ottoman bridges are regarded as “Pomak bridges” in an effort to prove that these architectural works belong to another nation. The city plan drawn by Komotini (Gümülcine) Municipality in 1933, which covers about 20 mosques and mesjids, is carried out gradually. From time to time, Ottoman tombstones in nearby villages, which are estimated to be 350 – 400 years old, are taken to unknown destinations by trucks and the police forces just witness these occurrences without taking any action to stop them.

EXPROPRIATED LANDS

Komotini (Gümülcine)/Gumulcine City Plan of 1933¹

Komotini (Gümülcine) City Plan that was drawn in 1933 covers more than 20 mosques and pious foundation land from the Ottoman era. Many mosques, mesjids, pious foundation lands, cemeteries and school buildings lose part of their property based to this plan. About 2565, 61 m² of land face the threat to be expropriated. A detailed account of the land to be expropriated is as follows:

<i>Arifhane Mesjid</i>	<i>75, 60 m²</i>
<i>Old Mosque (Eski Cami)</i>	<i>38, 31 m²</i>
<i>Kayali Mosque and its Medrese</i>	<i>62, 75 m²</i>
<i>Kesikbas Mosque and the premises of the Western Thrace Minority Association of University Graduates</i>	<i>247, 23 m²</i>
<i>Kirmahalle Mosque and Kirmahalle Primary School</i>	<i>746, 38 m²</i>
<i>Mastanli Mosque and Mastanli Primary School</i>	<i>41, 99 m²</i>
<i>Osmaniye Mosque</i>	<i>215, 99 m²</i>
<i>Sehrekustu Mosque</i>	<i>303, 02 m²</i>
<i>Supuren Mesjid</i>	<i>39, 60 m²</i>
<i>Tabakhane Mosque</i>	<i>25, 79 m²</i>
<i>New Mosque</i>	<i>126, 75 m²</i>
<i>New Mosque and its primary school</i>	<i>153, 00 m²</i>
<i>Yuksekk Mesjid</i>	<i>448, 65 m²</i>
<i>Yunus Bey Mosque</i>	<i>41, 25 m²</i>
<i>The dormitory of `Celal Bayar` High school</i>	<i>210, 45 m²</i>

Total: 2700, 36 m²

EXPROPRIATED LARGE LANDS

¹ Gümülcine 1933 Şehir Planı (Komotini (Gümülcine) 1933 City Plan) / R. Molla İsa

The first expropriation in Greece was applied by the Act 2185/1952 regarding “Providing terrain for landless farmers and cattle breeding”. The articles of this Act anticipate that more than 500 acres of land which is cultivated by its owner and more than 250 acres of the land which is not cultivated by its owner to be expropriated.

In accordance with this Act, the land belonging to Turkish people in Western Thrace has been expropriated and given to Greek families.

2000 acres land of which 85-90 % belonged to Turkish minority and located in the western part of Komotini (Gümülcine), in the south and west of “ Kosmopolis”, has been expropriated for the settling of Pontus people who immigrated to Greece in 1989 and an Exemplary Settlement Site (EKTENEPOL) was constructed over that land. At first, 150 families of the immigrant Pontus families were accommodated and later 150 families more were added to the first ones and they were given the land register on the condition that they would remain and continue living permanently on that area.

1. In 1978, 4000 acres of land was expropriated by force with the aim of constructing an Industrial Zone in Komotini (Gümülcine) 4000 acres land belonging to the villages of Amaranda (Yahyabeyli), Vakos (Vakif), Trilorion (Kafkaskoy), Pamforo (Ambarkoy), Filakas (Seymen) located around Komotini (Gümülcine) were expropriated in 1978 due to the “public need” for the construction of the Industrial Zone. Half of the expropriated land was used for the premises whereas the other half has been rented to Greek villager for many years.

2. In 1980, 3200 acres of land was expropriated for the Thrace Dimokritos University. The fields which are referred as “Yaka area” were enclosed with wire fence. Some owners received compensation lower than the actual value of the land while some others were not given compensation at all. After the expropriation, hundreds of Turkish families lost their fertile farmlands. In the end, small parts of the expropriated land were used for the construction of university buildings. The other parts remain unused! 3200 acres of land located in the Thamna (Esekcili), Agiasma (Ayazma), Rizoma (Gebecili), Asomatoi (Bulatkoy) villages of Komotini (Gümülcine) were subject to mandatory expropriation for the campus of Dimokritos University. The expropriation cost determined for the land was calculated based on the market price submitted to tax administration. (The submitted value is much lower than the actual price in order to pay less tax). 18000 – 23000 drachmas were paid per acre. However, in those years the lowest price to be paid per acre in that area was 50000 – 60000 drachmas. Moreover, the expropriated land is 5 times larger than the total land of 640 acres of the largest university in Greece (University of Thessaloniki) occupies. 80 % of the expropriated land still remains vacant.

3. In addition, 4200 acres of farmland near Komotini (Gümülcine) was expropriated and declared as military zone. 4300 acres of farmland located in the south of Komotini (Gümülcine) and cultivated by minority people were expropriated in 1976 in order to be used for the exercises of the military forces nearby. The main reason of this expropriation was to weaken economically the minority living in the outskirts and depending on tobacco trade and agriculture for a living.

4. The attempt to expropriate 3200 acres of land in the village of Evlalo (Inhanli) in Xanthi (İskeçe). 2300 acres of land registered to Hatipoglu Huseyin and Idrisoglu Mustafa in the 1872/103 Ottoman Empire Property Title Deed has been used by their descendants as farmland until 1981. In 1981 the Financial Office of Xanthi (İskeçe) claimed that 1800 acres of this land belonged to the Treasury based on the “Issue Protocols” and asked the minority to abandon it. The hunger strike, which took place near the Clock Tower in Xanthi (İskeçe) in 1982, is the first action of resistance of Western Thrace Turks. The members of the minority started a long lasting legal struggle related to these farmlands and in the end, they averted the expropriation of the lands declared as property of the Treasury; however, they were not able to achieve the registration of the lands to their names. These lands, declared as “Disputed Lands” currently remain vacant.

5. In 1984, 7000 acres of land near the village of Aratos (Karacaoglan) faced the threat of expropriation. Attempts were made to build an open-air prison. The minority people protested this decision and stood firmly against it. As a result, the government renounced its decision. Unfortunately, the uneasiness of the people over the matter has not ceased, as rumors stand for a future adoption of the plan. On 24 July 1984, a Presidential Decree was issued stating that 6000 acres of land located around the Turkish villages of Passos (Basirlikoy), Filira (Sirkeli), Mistakas (Biyiklikoy), Arizvi (Ircan), Aratos (Karacaoglan), Ariana (Kozlukebir) and the Greek village of Anthia would be subject to forced expropriation in order to be used for the construction of an open-air prison. Minority High Council assembled to discuss the decision that would strike a blow to approximately 15.000 people living in the area and took the decision to act against it. Accordingly; 1. A committee sent to Athens will hold an international press conference to make the situation publicly known around the world. 2. Sit-down strikes will be organized in the expropriated lands by the local people. (Adults and children will take part in these strikes). 3. A memorandum will be drawn and submitted to international political/diplomatic bodies/authorities. 4. A committee will hold

meetings with all political party leaders, the Speaker of Parliament and with the ambassadors of Islam countries as well as countries-members of European Union. 5. Both the Government and the Opposition parties will be informed that Western Thrace Turks would not be held responsible of the incidents that might occur in the area in case that this decision is not withdrawn. 6. The main road will be intercepted. 7. The flow of traffic will be obstructed by forming a human chain in a row, kilometers long on a predetermined date. 8. Signs with the statement “we will not let a prison erect” will be put onto each roof of the every single house in the area. 9. Minority members living within the boundary of Evros (Meric) – Nesthos (Karasu) will not leave their houses and not step outside on a predetermined date. 10. The incident will be condemned by a committee sent to the European Parliament. On 5 March, a group of thousand people from the minority intercepted the traffic on the highway of Komotini (Gümülcine) - Aleksandroupoli for hours. This was followed by other actions. Some political parties in Athens also gave support to the movement and as a result, the decision of expropriation was renounced.

6. The hayfield in the village of Lykio (Kurcalı) was given away to Pontus people emigrated from the former Soviet Union. It was said that there would be constructions, however; this was not realized. The land is still unused.

7. The farmlands belonging to Turks in the district of Sapes (Şapçı) were expropriated with the promise of exchange but the Turks were deemed unjustified. The lands were assigned to homeless people.

8. 200 acres of land in the village of Nevra (Sınurdere) – which is in Fylira (Sirkeli) municipality - belonging to Turkish people were expropriated by the Ministry of Forestry.

9. In the sub districts of Organi (Hemetli) and Kechros (Mehriköz) many lands owned by Turkish people who inherited them from their ancestors are deprived of title deeds and they are qualified and referred as part of the forestland.

10. It is stated that the high-speed train railway will be connected to the Industrial Zone of Komotini (Gümülcine) resulting in the expropriation of 150 acres of land around the villages of Amaranta (Yahyabeyli), Vakos (Vakıf) and Fylakas (Seymen).

11. Recently, the only hayfield of the Minority (where people graze their cattle, use it as stackyard, dry up corn, sunflower etc.) a land of 50 acres located in Kikidio (Tuzcuköy) village in Komotini (Gümülcine) prefecture was assigned to Panthrakikos Football Club as training field without asking for either the permission, or the opinion of the villagers and construction work has already begun. The villagers objected to this decision collecting signatures but their action has not been taken into consideration.

12. Xanthi (İskeçe) Clock Tower:

The Xanthi (İskeçe) Town Council/Municipal Board had taken the decision to demolish the Clock Tower in 1972. However; after the reaction demonstrated by the office of Mufti in Xanthi (İskeçe) and the Minority members, Governor at the time Mr. Gakis withdrew the decision. After this incident, the Board torn down the inscription of the Tower, which had been indicating its Ottoman-Turkish nature and identity. Moreover, there had been some restoration on the Tower in an attempt to make it resemble Byzantine artwork.

In addition, Pazaryeri Mosque constructed by Hacı Emin Aga and located on the same premises with the Clock Tower was burnt down by Bulgarians in 1943, the land of the mosque and the public bath, which was next to it, expropriated and turned into a city center.

13. In the south of Chrysa (Kireççiler) village in Xanthi (İskeçe) 1200 acres of land of which 80% belongs to minority were subject to forced expropriation in 1978-1979 and Xanthi (İskeçe) State hospital and housing for workers were built over those lands.

14. About 100 acres of farmland in the villages of Amaksades (Arabacikoy), Pelekiti (Bekirli) and Monahi (Hocamahalle) were expropriated as property of the Treasury and distributed to Greek families living in the area on 25 November 1987 by decree No: 11747 dated 10.11.1987 of the Rodopi Governor.

15. In 1974, located in the village of Mesi (Meşe) 1280 acres of land, all of which belonging to the Minority and have been cultivated by the Minority for centuries, were expropriated as being property of Treasury and distributed to Christian inhabitants of the area.

16. In Seleron (Gökçeler) village located in Xanthi (İskeçe) Prefecture, a meadow of 200 acres, which has been used by the villagers for centuries, has been taken away from the Minority with instructions of the Governor of Xanthi (İskeçe) on 29 January 1989 under the supervision of 700 police officers and distributed to Christians living in the neighboring villages.

17. The same year, in the village of Mavromati (Karagozlu) in Komotini (Gümülcine) a meadow land of 120 acres which has been used by the Minority people for centuries was taken away by force and given away to Christian people.

THE OTTOMAN CULTURAL HERITAGE

The Region of Komotini (Gümülcine)

The Old Mosque

The fenced tombs of the Old Mosque, which is in Komotini (Gümülcine) and which is an Ottoman monument built in 1608, were destroyed. A shed and a shop were built in the east part of the mosque's building site. These two buildings give a bad appearance to the mosque. Moreover, a taxi stand has been set in front of the mosque. The fountain which is in the east part of the mosque was not restored by the authorities in spite of the minority people's requests and it was left to destruction. A new fountain with Byzantium architecture was built in front of it by the Municipality of Komotini (Gümülcine). According to the City Plan, which was prepared in 1933 and which is put in practice step by step, 38,31m² - out of 954,16m² of the Mosque property -were expropriated. The inner restoration of the mosque, which was completed recently, was financed by the Management of the Minority's Wakf (Pious Foundation) and the government has not contributed at all to the recovering of this monument.

The New Mosque

The New Mosque in Komotini (Gümülcine), which was built in 1585, is famous for its glazed tiles. Its restoration by the Management of the Minority's Wakf still continues. The restoration was stopped for some time with the poor excuse that the exterior of the mosque is not restored according to its original. In this case too, the government did not finance the restoration and was only interested in the archeological issue. According to the City Planning of 1933, the 126,75m² land-out of 2206,42m²- of the mosque's building site were expropriated.

The Clock Tower²

The Clock Tower in Komotini (Gümülcine), which was built in 1884 by Sultan Abdulhamid, was deviated from its Ottoman architectural style in 1950. There was a doom placed on poles on the upper part of the tower, however, the doom was removed and a new construction with rectangle windows and iron railings were placed with a Greek flag on it.

Gazi Evrenos Imaret (Eatery for the poor)³

Gazi Evrenos Imaret was built between 1365 and 1385 in Komotini (Gümülcine) by Gazi Evrenos. In the past, the Imaret had a Turkish bath. The Turkish bath was demolished a short time ago and a Home for the Aged was built in the place of it by the Municipality of Komotini (Gümülcine). The Imaret which used to distribute food to poor people in the past was used by the Electricity Administration until the past few years. Recently, the Imaret was turned into a Church Museum with a EU program and some icons are exhibited here. The Imaret lost much from its original appearance and it was destructed. The sign, which is placed on the Gazi Evrenos Imaret's entrance states that 120.000.000 drachmas were given by the national and EU funds in order to restore and to make this monument a Church Museum. Another sign which is still in front of the Imaret states that it is "a Byzantium monument in Komotini (Gümülcine) to be turned into a church museum (imaret). It is done with the support of an EU Support Program 1994-1999."

Gazi Evrenos Imaret, which is one of the oldest Ottoman monuments in the Balkans, is forced to change "identity" with a European support.

² Yunanistan'da Türk Mimari Eserleri (Turkish Architectural Art Work) / İsmail Bıçakçı

³ Yunanistan'da Türk Mimari Eserleri (Turkish Architectural Art Work) / İsmail Bıçakçı

Women's Hamam (Turkish Bath)

It is situated next to the New Mosque in Komotini (Gümülcine). Some ruins which belong to the Turkish bath were found during the construction of a building; however, these ruins have disappeared. Nowadays, only a wall of this Turkish bath remains erect. The authorities were insensitive with the issue of the Turkish bath.

Celal Bayar High School

Celal Bayar High School, which was opened in Komotini (Gümülcine) in 1952, lost some part of its land site, which belonged to the Pious Foundation, so that a road could be built around the new buildings that were constructed lately. Moreover, according to the City planning of 1933, the back yard of the school is to be expropriated. The cries for help of the Turkish Minority had no result and the government acted according to the benefits of some people.

Government Quarters in Komotini (Gümülcine)

The temporary Western Thrace Republic was founded in and was managed from the Government Quarters in Komotini (Gümülcine). From the day that Greece took over until 2006, the building was used as a Courthouse. During the restoration of the building, the stars and the crescents, which were engraved on the windows and the inscription, were removed. On the inscription, it was written that the building was built in 1877 by Kazim Pasha. Nowadays, there are irons in front of the main door giving the impression that it is going to be restored. As in all cases with the Ottoman monuments in Greece, this building is left to destruction too.

The Buildings of Junior High School in Komotini (Gümülcine)⁴

Some parts of these buildings belonging to the Ottoman period were demolished. However, the parts that still exist are used as a shopping center for the army. The buildings are far away from their originality and their inscriptions were removed.

The Prison in Komotini (Gümülcine)⁵

The prison was built in 1895 and its inscription was written by Kazim Pasha. This building was demolished and in place of it the courthouse was built. In the area which was next to the Government Offices, there were billets, stables, and warehouses for the gendarmerie's soldiers. It is impossible to see these buildings nowadays as all of them were demolished by the government.

The High School Building

The High School Building was built in 1883 by Kadri Pasha. The building was restored and the fountain which was just in the middle of the school and belonged to the Ottoman period was removed and destroyed. In the place of the old fountain a new one was constructed.

The Tomb (Turbe) of Servili Mosque

It was built for Kayserili Suleyman Efendi in 1761. The tomb is in a very bad condition and some parts of its tombstone were destroyed. Furthermore, the Servili Mosque was completely destroyed and only some parts of the minaret remain intact.

Postubos Baba's Tekke (Dervish Lodge) in Komotini (Gümülcine)

Postubos Baba's Tekke is a tomb for Gazi Evrenos and Ahmet Rifai who conquered these places and both of whom were great wise people of that period. Food was given to people who visited the tekke. The tekke is recorded in the yearbook of Edirne with the date of 1310. Some of the tombstones which were artwork of the 17th century were destroyed and unfortunately the destruction still continues. The Municipality of Komotini (Gümülcine) demolished the already ruined tekke in 1989. Although the Municipality had promised that it would build a new one, this never happened. Nowadays, there are iron railings around the tekke and only a few tombstones. This monument was demolished despite the protests of the Turkish people.

⁴ The Archives of Rıdvan Hasan

⁵ Ibid.

The Tekke in Venna (Demirbeyli) (Karacaahmet's Tekke)

This tekke is near the village of Demirbeyli in the Province of Rodopi. The date of its foundation remains unknown. The local people believe that the person who is buried here is Karacaahmet. In the past, there were stables, guest houses and a fountain that do not exist today. People still visit this tekke. It was burned twice and it lost its original structure. It was repaired by sensitive people.

Hidir Baba's Tekke⁶

Hidir Baba's Tekke is in the village of Pagrota (Taşlık), which belongs to the Municipality of Sapes (Şapçı). According to some old sources Hidir Baba is buried here. It was destroyed in 1967 by the Military Junta. Recently, a small monastery was built on the land where the tekke used to be. In addition, its inscription was destroyed and it lost its originality. Hidir Baba's tombstones are somewhere hidden in the monastery. The church that got under control this monastery continuously renovates and extends it. Today, Hidir Baba's tekke is called St. George monastery.

Yunus Bey's Mosque in Komotini (Gümülcine)

It is situated in Postubos Baba Street. It is unknown when and by whom it was built. Nowadays, only the four walls and the arched main door remain intact. The mosque is lost among high buildings and the inner part of it is allotted to children as a playground.

The Arched Bridge in Ircan⁷

The Arched Bridge is in the village called Ircan, on the way to Istanbul. During the civil war, it was blown up with dynamite. Most of the parts of the bridge which could "survive" are underground. It was built in 1649 by Architect Kasim Aga. The Municipality of Sapes (Şapçı) with the initiative of its Turkish members tried to repair the bridge, however, due to the fact that the bridge was a historic Ottoman monument, their enterprise never realized. The bridge, nowadays, is face to face with the danger of eradication.

The Region of Alexandroupoli (Dedeğaç)

Celebi Sultan Mehmed's Mosque

It was built by Ivaz Pasha on the order of the 5th Ottoman Sultan Celebi Sultan Mehmed in 1420. It was the first Ottoman monument built in European territories. The mosque was open to worship until 1952. It was closed on account of "collapsing" as the Turkish population in this area became smaller. From 1952 until nowadays the mosque is close to worship. It collapsed because the inner part of the mosque was completely made of wood. An archeologist on duty stated that the mosque would be renovated in a year. However, it is clear that once again this Ottoman monument will be left to eradication, under the guise of renovation that will never realize. Some fanatics think of this mosque as equivalent to Ayasofya in Istanbul.

Fisilti Turkish Bath⁸

It is situated on the bank of the river Kizil Deli beneath the castle of Dimetoka. It faces the danger of eradication. In Evliya Celebi's yearbook, this bridge is described in details.

Nefes Sultan's "Isiklar" Zaviye (Small Tekke)⁹

It is on the mountains in the Province of Alexandroupoli (Dedeğaç), in the village of Ilica, near Fere. Yildirim Bayazit Han's son Duzmece Mustafa is buried here. This zaviye was built by Ekmekcizade Ahmet Pasha in 1591. Nowadays, only a cistern exists. Evliya Celebi states that in this Zaviye there are Holy Korans and candlesticks as precious as the Egyptian treasures. In the course of time, it was destroyed and a monastery was built on the tomb (turbe). This monastery, surprisingly, was named St. George. (It is believed that St. George cures the sick and that is why his name is given to tekkes).

⁶ The Archives of İbrahim Baltalı

⁷ İbid.

⁸ The Travelbook of Evliya Çelebi, Volume VIII

⁹ Enisü'l Müsamirin History of Edirne 1360-1650 / Abdurrahman Hibri

Nefes Sultan`'s Thermal Springs¹⁰

They are in the village of Thermes (Ilıca), in the Province of Alexandroupoli (Dedeağaç). Mehmed the 4th came to these thermal springs and he recovered. The domes covering the thermal springs were built by Davut Pasha who was Sultan Bayazıt Han`'s vizier. The thermal springs were destroyed and are in very bad condition. The domes of the thermal springs are in bad condition too.

Evrenos Bey`'s Han (Inn)¹¹

Gazi Evrenos Bey built an inn next to the Nefes Sultan`'s Thermal Springs. The people who came to the thermal springs stayed at this inn until 1950. The inn faces the danger of eradication. No action is taken in order to save this Ottoman inn.

Sancaktar Baba`'s Tomb (Turbe)

This tomb is on a hill covered with pine trees, in the village of Miri, in the Province of Alexandroupoli (Dedeağaç). The building site of the tomb is fenced with woven wire fence and is used as a camp for children. The walls and the roof of the tomb still exist but because of the restorations it lost its originality. Its door is locked and entry to the tomb is not allowed. The mihrap which is out of the tomb is still visible today. The Christians organize festivals here from time to time.

The Turkish Bath in the Village of Miri

It is situated in the center of the village and next to the water source. The water source and the water mill are recorded in Evliya Celebi`'s travel book. Although the walls, the roof and some parts inside the bath still exist, it is left to collapse and animals live in it.

The Mosque in Alexandroupoli (Dedeağaç)

It is the only mosque in Alexandroupoli (Dedeağaç) which still exists. The Bulgarians burned it down with the religious community in it during the Bulgarian occupation. It was rebuilt by the Greeks and an inscription written in Greek was put on the door. On the inscription it states that it was built in 1906. It was burned down on 13th March 1993 once again. It was rebuilt by the authorities but there is no sign of its former originality. The mosque is open to worship. It is lost among high buildings.

The Tombstones in Kambi (Kamberler) and Sarpidona (Sarpdere)

These tombstones are on the mountains in the south of Kambi (Kamberler) and Sarpidona (Sarpdere) villages, in the Province of Alexandroupoli (Dedeağaç). Sarpidona (Sarpdere) is one of our villages which does not exist anymore and only four families live in Kambi Kamberler. The tombstones which were 300-350 years old and belonged to the Ottoman period were carried away on trucks and they were destroyed. Although the local people made known the license plate of the trucks which carried away the tombstones to the media, the government took no action. The tombstones were taken somewhere else and were destroyed.

Seyyid Ali Sultan`'s Dergah (Place where dervish groups meet)

It is on the mountains near the village of Rusa (Rusenler) in the Province of Alexandroupoli (Dedeağaç). It is one of the four caliphate offices of the Alaouite-Bektashi sect in the world. The Alaouite sheiks who lived in the Balkans took their authorization from this Dergah and every year they used to pay some money to show their devotion. It has been used as a stable for years by the Christians and it was destroyed. This monument which is the oldest Turkish monument in Western Thrace needs to be renovated.

The Region of Xanthi

Hamidiye Bridge

Hamidiye Bridge is located on the main road between Xanthi (İskeçe) and Echinis (Şahin). On its inscription -where a star and crescent was engraved - it was written that it had been built in 1901. The inscription was removed from its place and its original place was plastered. In this way, another Ottoman trace was erased from Xanthi (İskeçe) region.

¹⁰ İbid.

¹¹ The History of Edirne and Balkan Wars Memoirs of Dağdevirenzade M. Şevket Bey / Dr. Recep Kazancıgil, Nilüfer Gökçe

Kasaba Mosque

Kasaba Mosque which is located in Genisea (Yenice), in the region of Xanthi (İskeçe), was left to its own fate and it is nearly destroyed.

Hemetli Mosque

It is situated in the prefecture of Xanthi (İskeçe). It is an illustration of stone construction. This Mosque is also under the threat of demolition.

Emirler Tekke

It is located in Xanthi (İskeçe). In the past there was a tekke and a graveyard here. The municipality of Xanthi (İskeçe) demolished this monument and built a sport centre in its place.

The Clock Tower of Xanthi (İskeçe)

It was built in 1870 by Hacı Emin Aga. As time passed, it was changed and lost its previous architectural characteristics. In 1972 The Clock Tower was intended to be demolished by the municipality; however, this demolition could not take place after the opposition of the public. The mosque, however, which was next to The Clock Tower was destroyed.

Kütüklü Baba Tekke

It is situated in the village of Selino (Kereviz) in Xanthi (İskeçe). It has the 15th Century Ottoman architectural characteristics. Lately it is being restored deprived of its originality. Icons have been placed in the tekke and efforts are spent to change it into church.

Soğucak Mosque¹²

It is located in Xanthi (İskeçe). It was built in 1430. After some restoration, in 2002 its ancient inscription was removed from its place and it was found in a destroyed manner. It is one of the oldest Ottoman work of art in West Thrace. It is under the threat of destruction.

Tabakhane Mosque

Tabakhane Mosque which was in the city of Xanthi (İskeçe) was demolished by the governors in 22 December 1972.

Okçular Mosque

It is the first Ottoman historical monument towards the city of Xanthi (İskeçe) from Kavala. It was burned down late at night on 7th March 2004. Its minaret had Turkish-Islam art illustrations. The mosque was restored, but from its past characteristics nothing remained. Its tomb areas and its congregation rooms are in a terrible condition.

¹² www.millet.gr