



Summary :

All types of migrations were very common throughout the Ottoman domination. However, it is obvious that they are also quite different in terms of frequency, number of immigrants, duration, reason, character and form. The present text attempts to consider and group the major migrations in the Ottoman period in Asia Minor.

Date

15th - 20th century

Geographical Location

Asia Minor

1. Context

All types of migrations were very common throughout the Ottoman domination. However, it is obvious that they are also quite different in terms of frequency, number of immigrants, duration, reason, character and form.

The present text attempts to consider and group the major migrations in the Ottoman period in Asia Minor. This is by no means a detailed analysis as special texts have dealt with most of them.

Migration has become the object of study and research for lots of historians and other social scientists. As a result, various theories have been suggested aiming to explain the phenomenon of migration and, thus, they have become new objects of research and review. This is mainly the case in theories based on a strictly dichotomous reading and interpretation of migrations, as well as in theories suggesting one-dimensional interpretations, which illuminate only one aspect of the phenomena under examination.¹ Today, for example, it is known that migrations should not be divided into voluntary and compulsory because any migration incorporates compulsion to some extent. The question concerns some migrations that started as movements of refugees, that is, as the most compulsory migrations, and continued after the elimination of their original reason, before they gradually became part of the family and individual strategies of the populations. It is also known that the strict separation into seasonal and permanent migrations is not functional either, for lots of periodic and seasonal movements finally led to permanent settlements. After all, it is only natural to try to define the point in time when a migration is considered permanent. The immigrants very often dreamed of their return and tended to consider their settlement temporary despite the actual duration of stay.

The above remarks should not equate all migrations and thwart the attempts to group them. They simply point out that the use of strictly dichotomous classifications should be avoided. All things considered, some of the classifications suggested so far will be used so that the readers could be presented with possible ways of grouping the migrations that happened in Asia Minor during the Ottoman period.

First, these migrations will be briefly examined in the course of time. Already from the first days of the Ottoman occupation Sultan Mehmed II the Conqueror ordered the compulsory transfer of populations from [Cappadocia](#) and Cyprus, aiming to populate Constantinople. The transfer of Christian Orthodox populations continued in the following centuries, although not so frequent and intense as it would become later. The first turning point was the 18th century, when migrations became more frequent and systematic. However, the truly dramatic period started in the second half of the 19th century. The migrations of this period were so frequent and intense that in some regions, such as the western coasts of Asia Minor and Cappadocia, the composition of the population changed dramatically. There was also huge impact on the settlements, as some of them –mainly the developing cities of the empire– had a considerable increase in population, while others, mostly in inland Asia Minor, were almost deserted. The different migration groups are as follows:



2. Migration Groups according to Destination

The first migrations grouped according to destination include people who moved to Asia Minor, within Asia Minor and outside Asia Minor. It is worth mentioning that most known migrations belong to the first two categories. It should also be reported that the Christian Orthodox populations that moved to Asia Minor mainly came from continental Greece and the nearby [Aegean](#) islands or the [Cyclades](#). These populations largely settled on the western coasts of Asia Minor. On the other hand, Greece, Egypt and America were reception places for immigrants from Asia Minor in the 19th century.

The next criterion for grouping the immigrants according to the place they settled as they moved towards or within Asia Minor concerns the big cities of the Ottoman Empire. The capital Constantinople early on attracted immigrants, while the growing cities of the Ottoman Empire, such as [Smyrna](#), [Samsun](#), [Adana](#), [Tarsus](#) and [Mersin](#), became the favourite destinations for the immigrants mainly from the 19th century on.

Although the greatest part of the immigrants was directed to the cities, not all of them did so. In the last quarter of the 18th century several immigrants from continental Greece settled as farmers in estates of Ottoman local rulers on the western coasts. Those farmers included the [Karaosmanoğlu](#) family in the [sancak](#) of Saruhan and the Cihanoğlu, Hasan Çavuş and Elisoğlu in the region of Smyrna.² In addition, in the 19th century populations from Thrace, where sericulture was quite common, preferred to settle in areas where they would be involved in similar activities. Last but not least were the [miners](#) from the Black Sea who, particularly from the late 18th century on, were always in search of new mines.

3. Migration Groups according to Duration

As regards duration, migrations are divided into seasonal and permanent. A typical example of the first category is the seasonal migrations of workers and craftsmen, especially in periods of increased workload, from the eastern Aegean islands to the western coasts of Asia Minor. Specialised craftsmen, such as [bezirci](#) (craftsmen working in linseed oil production), who usually came from specific [Cappadocian settlements](#), and the manufacturers of felt and quilts from [Misti](#) of Cappadocia are included in this category as well. No mention shall be made here to permanent migrations, which were the majority. As regards migrations from Cappadocia [to Constantinople](#) and other cities of the empire, the immigrants seemed to settle permanently to their destinations. However, the immigrants did not break off their relationships with their birthplace, where they returned regularly in order to visit their families, who still lived there.

4. Migration Groups with Respect to Life Course

The groups suggested so far have one thing in common: they do not take the immigrants, as the protagonists of the action, into account. As regards the experience the immigrants had, migration was to some extent part of their life course. Such migrations took place at rather regular intervals over more than one generation. As a result, they belonged to the collective experience of the local society or a wider region. Thus, the immigrants developed the practices that prevented them from experiencing migration, either on the personal or the collective level, as a traumatic event with negative effects on the people and the societies they belonged to.

Typical examples are the migration from almost all Cappadocian settlements to Constantinople at first and to the developing [cities of the Black Sea](#) and [Smyrna](#) later, the migration from the Cyclades islands to the wider region of Smyrna as well as the migration of miners from the Black Sea to either new or already existing mines. Seasonal migrations, which usually resulted from occupational activities, belong to this category. The transition from seasonal to permanent migration is also interesting. This phenomenon usually involved immigrants moving from eastern Aegean islands to the western coasts of Asia Minor. Finally, this category could also include the pilgrimage to Jerusalem, known as "[chatziliki](#)", as there are a lot of similarities to the rest of the movements of this category with respect to the way the pilgrimage was both organised and experienced by the travellers and the rest of the society they came from.

A different category comprises migrations not included in people's life course. Such were irregular migrations and migrations that did not last over more than one generation and, thus, they never became part of the local society's collective experience. They were



usually caused by some unscheduled events, which upset social balance. Typical examples of this category are the migrations from Cappadocia to Constantinople and Cyprus [upon a relevant decision](#) of the Mehmed II the Conqueror, movements of refugees following military conflicts, such as the [migration from Asia Minor coasts](#) to rebellious Greece during the War of Independence of Greece in 1821, movements of refugees following international treaties, such as the [exchange of populations](#) resolved by virtue of the Treaty of Lausanne, migrations to big cities because of the insecurity the immigrants felt in the country and, finally, movements because of dramatic events in their birthplace, such as natural disasters and drastic changes in financial activities that affected employment and led to new personal and family strategies.

Some cases are of particular interest because they have some characteristics of the first category although they seem to belong to the second. These include [transfer of population from continental Greece to the western coasts of Asia Minor](#), which resulted from the first Russo-Turkish War (1768-1774), and [migrations from the Black Sea](#) to Russia, particularly after the Crimean war.

5. Conclusions

There were always various types of migrations in Asia Minor throughout the Ottoman period. They are a permanent and, at the same time, particularly complicated and multi-sided phenomenon. The attempt to understand and interpret them has divided them into groups suggested in international bibliography from time to time. The groups are not binding on the readers. Besides, a more careful reading reveals that some migrations belong to more than one group. After all, the groups suggested here may as well help the readers ramble through the world of migrations and immigrants.

1. About a critical presentation of the relative bibliography, see Lucassen, J. – Lucassen, L. (edit.), *Migration, Migration History, History: Old Paradigms and New Perspectives* (Bern – Berlin – Frankfurt a.M. – New York – Paris – Wien 1997).

2. Αναγνωστοπούλου, Σ., *Μικρά Ασία, 19ος αι. - 1919. Οι Ελληνορθόδοξες Κοινότητες: Από το Μιλλέτ των Ρωμιών στο Ελληνικό Έθνος*² (Athens 1997), p. 198.

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	Karachristos I., "Theoretische Überlegungen zur Wahrnehmung der Migration am Beispiel von Migrationen Griechisch-Orthodoxer Bevölkerungsgruppen Kleinasiens", Hörandner, W., Koder, J., Stassinopoulou, M. , <i>Wiener Byzantinistik und Neogräzistik: Beiträge zum Symposium Vierzig Jahre Institut für Byzantinistik und Neogräzistik der Universität Wien im Gedanken an Herbert Hunger</i> (Wien, 4.-7. Dezember 2002), Βιέννη 2004
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Glossary :

	sancak (liva)
Medium sized unit of provincial administration of the Ottoman state, throughout its history. A subdivision of the early Ottoman eyalet (or beylerbeylik) and the later Ottoman vilayet. In the late Ottoman Period it was known also as mutasarrıflık.	