



Summary :

Matthaios Kofidis was born in Kromni (Kurum) in 1855. He served at the Tobacco Monopoly and was a deputy of Trebizond in the Ottoman parliament in the period 1908-1918. He cooperated with the Committee of the Young Turks, but was sentenced to death by Kemalists, accused of advocating the independence of the Pontus; he was hung in Amaseia (Amasya) in 1921.

Date and Place of Birth

Kromni (Kurum), March 22, 1855

Date and Place of Death

1921, Amaseia (Amasya)

Main Role

politician

1. Life

Matthaios Kofidis was born in Likast' of [Kromni](#) (Kurum) on March 22, 1855. He served as an assistant at the [Tobacco Monopoly](#) and was a [deputy of Trebizond](#) in the Ottoman parliament in all three sessions of the early 20th century (1908-1912, 1912-1914 and 1914-1918). In 1921, the 'Ad hoc Court of Independence', which was controlled by the Kemalists, [sentenced him to death](#) by hanging along with other notable figures of the Pontus, as they were accused of participating in the [Pontus Independence Movement](#). The sentence was carried out in [Amaseia](#) (Amasya). During that same period, his son was killed during his deportation.

2. Political Action

The [movement of the Young Turks](#) in 1908, as well as their proclamations of egalitarianism, raised high hopes among the ethnoreligious groups living in the Ottoman Empire. Several Christian Orthodox were positive about the movement, while some took actively sides with the Young Turks. Among the latter was Matthaios Kofidis, who was a member of the Committee of "Union and Progress" of the Young Turks.

Greek deputies of the 1908-1912 Ottoman parliament collaborated with the '[Organisation of Constantinople](#)' and the 'Political Club', which was established by members of the 'Organisation', and tried to rally the Greek Orthodox of the empire in order to promote the so-called '[oriental ideal](#)'. After the Young Turks were divided into Liberals and Unionists, the organisation and its Greek deputies turned to the Liberals. They aimed to safeguard egalitarianism among all the subjects of the empire and maintain the community privileges of the Christians. This was obviously helped by the policy of Ottomanisation followed by the Unionists.

However, there were also those who wished to participate in the new Turkish state, which would be created after the complete dominance of the Unionists. Representatives of this tendency were the deputies who had collaborated with the committee in the 1912 elections, among whom was Matthaios Kofidis, who had already cultivated relations with the committee. The description of the personality of Kofidis by the deputy of Smyrna [Emmanouil Emmanouilidis](#), who belonged in the same party, is typical of the tension between the representatives of the two tendencies.¹

In the parliamentary session of 1914-1918, there was rather limited intervention from the Greek deputies. They mainly dealt with the issue of [ethnic cleansing](#), with those elected in regions affected by the specific policy, among whom was Kofidis, being more active. During a meeting at the [Patriarchate](#) in April 1917, with the participation of deputies from the afflicted regions, the need for immediate action was underlined. It was decided that an official document should be sent to the government. The document would describe the situation created so far. It was also considered necessary that measures be taken for backing the displaced and, finally, that all Greek deputies cooperate in this issue.



However, there were bitter controversies. Patriarch Germanos V, following a conflict with some members of the Synod of the Patriarchate of Constantinople on the occasion of the election of the new [metropolitan of Colonea](#), removed them from office under the pretext of their expired two-year term. On May 12, 1917, those who were removed submitted a written protest to the Patriarch. The latter wanted to send them into exile and, as a result, the police went after him. The Greek deputies considered that they could not intervene and object to the decisions of the Patriarch, but thought it was their duty to prevent the removed synodals from persecution. Thus, Senator [Georgantzoglou Paşa](#), the deputy of Smyrna Emmanouil Emmanouilidis, and Kofidis took the necessary actions and finally managed to avert the persecutions. According to information provided by Ottoman documents, in November 1919 Kofidis replaced the [metropolitan](#) of Trebizond, [Chrysanthos](#), in his non-ecclesiastical duties, when the latter travelled to [Batumi](#) to participate in a congress that aimed to coordinate the actions of the Pontic clubs to deal with the Pontic issue.² There are also two written authorizations dated on March 2, 1919, and bearing the signature of Chrysanthos. The first deals with the appointment of Kofidis as delegate "[...] for political, national, economic and administrative matters [...]." The second refers to his appointment as president of the Trustee Committee of the Armenian Communal Landed Property.

(We wish to sincerely thank Mr. Georgios Kofidis, grandson of Matthaios Kofidis, for the information he has kindly provided concerning the exact birth date of Matthaios Kofidis and Chrysanthos' authorizations for him.)

1. See quotation 'Emmanouil Emmanouilidis, deputy of Smyrna, on Matthaios Kofidis'.

2. According to the relevant document: 'the day before his departure (of Chrysanthos) arrived at the department the former deputy Mr. Kofidis, who is going to replace him while he is away, in order to justify –half-officially– the trip of the metropolitan. He said that the metropolitan should by all means go there... and that he is going in order to convince the gangs of the Pontus gathered there to make friends with their Muslim compatriots...'. Στάθη, Π., 'Απόρρητα τουρκικά έγγραφα αναφερόμενα στη δράση του Χρυσανθου Τραπεζούντας για την ανεξαρτησία του Πόντου', *Αρχείον Πόντου* 34 (1977-1978), pp. 167-168.

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Glossary :



Oriental ideal

Political ideology in the beginning of the 20th century which aimed at promoting cooperation between the various national groups in the Ottoman Empire in order to face the Bulgarian influence on the one hand and the influence of the foreign powers in general.

Quotations

Manouil Emmanouilidis, deputy of Smyrna, on Matthaïos Kofidis

‘Ο Μ. Κωφίδης, ανήρ χρηστός και πλήρης ζήλου εις τα Ελληνικά ζητήματα, κατέβαλεν ιδιαίτεράν προσοχήν διά να μη προσκρούση εις την Τουρκικήν δυσπιστίαν και δυσμένειαν, φρονών, ότι ούτως ηδύνατο να παράσχη υπηρεσίας ευκολώτερον. Υπέστη επιθέσεις και εγέυθη την διά του τύπου εκχεομένην χυδαιολογίαν. Δεν ήλλαξε πολιτικήν, κατά την διάρκειαν δε του γενικού πολέμου προσπάθησε να φανή λίαν προσεκτικός και συντηρητικός. Δεν διέφυγεν όμως το μοιραίον. Συλληφθείς υπό των Κεμαλικών αρχών, ως σπαδός της ιδέας του Πόντου, απηγχονίσθη κατά τα 1921 εν Αμασεία. Ο υιός του, εκτοπιζόμενος εις το εσωτερικόν της Ανατολής, εδολοφονήθη καθ’ οδόν’.

Εμμανουηλίδης, Ε., *Τα τελευταία έτη της Οθωμανικής αυτοκρατορίας* (Athens 1924), p. 304.