

NEW HISTORICAL ELEMENTS ABOUT THE RELIGIOUS AND  
SOCIAL STRUCTURE OF ASVESTOHORI DURING THE 1830's

1. Ten kilometres north-east of Thessaloniki, the ornament of the Thērmaïkos, lies one of its loveliest suburbs, Asvestohori<sup>1</sup>. This little town is built in and around a narrow pass between two hills at the foot of Hortiatis, and a branch of the Via Egnatia used at one time to form a short cut from here to Thessaloniki. It is said that this branch road, which also happens to be the natural road, was used during the Ottoman domination by mail-coaches carrying mail from Dyrrahio to Thessaloniki and Constantinople<sup>2</sup>. The Via Egnatia began at Dyrrahio and ended at Constantinople, passing behind Thessaloniki and alongside lakes Ayiou Vasileiou and Volvi<sup>3</sup>. Asvestohori, built, as we have said, on this branch of the Via Egnatia, was famed for its rich and abundant production and export of mineral asbestos and for its dry and wholesome climate<sup>4</sup>. The townsfolk were always involved with asbestos production and continued this occupation whenever lack of land to cultivate forced them to seek their fortunes abroad. They would travel to Gallipoli and thence on large merchant ships to Asia and its many provinces<sup>5</sup>.

We cannot state with certainty exactly when Asvestohori was founded, nor do we know when and how the valley was first inhabited. Recent inform-

1. A. I. Arvanitou, *Ἡ Μακεδονία εἰκονογραφημένη*, Athens, "Avyi" printinghouse, 1909, p. 116.

2. Harilaou Yeoryiou Tsekou, *Ἱστορία τοῦ Ἀσβεστοχωρίου*, Thessaloniki 1957, p. 18-24.

3. O. Tafrali, *Thessalonique au XIV<sup>ème</sup> siècle*, Paris 1919, p. 122, note 2; A. Xyngopoulos, *Συμβολαὶ εἰς τὴν τοπογραφίαν τῆς Βυζαντινῆς Θεσσαλονίκης*, Publications of the Society for Macedonian Studies. Theology and philology series, no. 2, Thessaloniki 1949, p. 8, note 6. See also Ch. I. Makarona, *Via Egnatia and Thessalonike. Studies presented to David Moore Robinson*, I. St Louis 1951, p. 380-388, particularly p. 384 onwards and note 12. See also G. I. Theocharidou, "Καλαμαριά" (From the history of Byzantine Halkidiki), *Μακεδονικά* 17 (1977) 260.

4. Angelikis Tsiomou, «Μακεδονικαὶ καὶ ἄλλοι» (Ἡ κομπόλις Ἀσβεστοχωρίου—Τοπεῖα—Μαγευτικὰ καλλοναὶ—Σχολεῖα—Ἐκκλησία—Κάτοικοι—Μία ἐκδρομή), *Kosmos* issue (1st January) 1915, p. 10: "This town is indeed so rich in its exports of useful building material, having an entire asbestos-producing mountain at its disposal, that it supplies not only Thessaloniki but also the nearby towns, hamlets and villages".

5. E. M. Cousinery, *Voyage dans la Macédoine*, Paris, vol. I, 1830. See also Gr. P. Konsta, *Ἐνέργειαι καὶ δολοφονικὰ ὄργια τοῦ βουλγαρικοῦ κομιτάτου ἐν Μακεδονίᾳ καὶ*

ation indicates that Neohori—the first name of Asvestohori—very probably existed from Byzantine times, though some earlier researchers into the history of Asvestohori do not believe that the townlet existed earlier than the XVIth century<sup>6</sup>. Nevertheless, a chrysobull of Andronicus IV (1376-1379) dated November 1378, which is now in the Archive of Ayiou Pavlou Monastery on Mount Athos, makes the following reference: [+ 'Επει Σαμπίας ὁ Ρο-δοσλάβος ἀνέφερεν, ὅτι κέκτηται πρὸ χρόνων καὶ [μέχρι τοῦ νῦν περὶ τὴν Καλαμαρίαν] παλαιοχώρια δύο [ἡνωμένα, Π τὸ δὲ 'Αβραμίτας καὶ Νεο-χώριον λεγόμενα, καὶ παρεκάλεσεν, ἵνα πορίσῃται χρυσόβουλλον τῆς βασι-λείας μου...].<sup>7</sup> From this text we may conclude that Neohori—Asvestohori—is the village mentioned in Andronicus' chrysobull as a village "near Kalamaria" (παρὰ τῇ Καλαμαρίᾳ).

Dr Michael Papadopoulos<sup>8</sup>, the author of the oldest book (1879) about Asvestohori, informs us that this township cannot be more than 300 years old<sup>9</sup>, which means that it began to come into being during the Ottoman domination, c. 1580-1600, when the locality was considered suitable for the encampment of a garrison of soldiers. At that time there was no organised security in the Thessaloniki region and a good many brigands were infesting the country-side. Following an edict from the sultan, it was decided to colonise

*ἰδίᾳ ἐν τῇ ἐπαρχίᾳ Καστοριᾶς κ.τ.λ.*, Athens 1902, p. 34, 111-112. See also Anon. (M. Papadopoulos), *Ἀσβεστοχώριον ἢ Πατριδογραφία μετὰ ποικίλης ἄλλης περιγραφῆς φυσικῶν ἀντικειμένων* (A reader for pupils in the third or fourth grade of primary school), published at the expense of the Brotherhood of Asvestohori, Thessaloniki, "Hermes" printing-house under Sophocles K. Garpolas, 1879, p. 31. The natives of Asvestohori emigrated not only to Turkey but to all the Balkan countries, Serbia, Bulgaria, Romania, and the Russian Caucasus, see Grigoriou I. Dimopoulou, *Αἱ παιδικαὶ μου ἀναμνήσεις Νεοχώριον* ('Ασβεστοχώριον), *Makedonikon Imeroloyion*, ed. The Pan-Macedonian Society of Athens, 1909, p. 167. See also H. G. Tsekou, *Ἱστορία τοῦ Ἀσβεστοχωρίου*, p. 50-54.

6. Anon. (M. Papadopoulos), *Ἀσβεστοχώριον ἢ Πατριδογραφία*, p. 31. See also H. G. Tsekou, *Ἱστορία τοῦ Ἀσβεστοχωρίου*, p. 25.

7. Franz Dölger, ed., *Aus den Schatzkammern des Heiligen Berges*, Münchner, no. 11, p. 49. Also Franz Dölger, *Regesten der Kaiserurkunden des Öströmischen Reiches*, no. 3160. See also Evloyiou Kourila Lavrioti, *Τὰ ἀγιογεῖτα Ἀρχεῖα καὶ ὁ κατάλογος τοῦ Πορφύριου Οὐσπένσκη*, Year-book of the Society for Byzantine Studies (hereafter referred to as *SBS*), 7 (1930), 217, no. 99.—Rodoslavos conceded these lands to Ayiou Pavlou Monastery in a document in 1405: ed. Franz Dölger, *Aus den Schatzkammern des Heiligen Berges*, no. 31, Dölger, *Regesten...*, no. 3205. See also Evloyiou Kourila Lavrioti, *ibid.* *SBS* 8 (1931) 71, no. 186.

8. H. G. Tsekos informs us that the author of the book *Ἀσβεστοχώριον ἢ Πατριδογραφία* was Michael Papadopoulos, a doctor from Asvestohori.

9. Anon. (M. Papadopoulos), *Ἀσβεστοχώριον ἢ Πατριδογραφία*, p. 31.

the uninhabited well-wooded region, both for the protection of the aqueduct, the traces of which are still visible today near Hortiatís, and for the safety of the Via Egnatia and protection of the passing mail-coaches<sup>10</sup>, it should be mentioned that until 1887 Thessaloniki was supplied with water exclusively from springs in the mountainous region of Hortiatís<sup>11</sup>. To serve these garrisons, which were made up of government employees usually from southern Greece, small tower-like outposts were constructed, known as "koules". According to tradition, the guards were chiefly of Maniot origin, a fact which is confirmed by the existence there even today of Maniot family names, such as Mourdzinos, Moniatis<sup>12</sup> etc. These guards and their families formed the original nucleus of the colony, and it was called Neohorion or Nihori<sup>13</sup>. Greek and foreign writers dealing with the Thessaloniki region<sup>14</sup> knew it by this name, as do older Thessalonicians even today.

During the XVIth and XVIIth centuries Jewish refugees came and settled in Thessaloniki and the other towns of Macedonia, and at the same time poor Christians began to come down from the mountain refuges to the newly-formed commercial centres. Research by the Macedonian Historical Archives indicates that the most significant, and also the most distant, departure, points of Macedonian immigrants (to Thessaloniki and elsewhere) were the poor and troubled mountainous areas of Agrapha and Aspropotamos; many Agraphiots are mentioned as living in Thessaloniki in October 1605<sup>15</sup>. At the same period, it also seems that various families from Agrapha, Western Thessaly and Western Macedonia were settling in the Thessaloniki region, as is

10. H. G. Tsekou, *Ίστορία τοῦ Ἀσβεστοχωρίου*, p. 20.

11. M. I. Maravelaki, *Πῶς ὑδρεύεται ἡ Θεσσαλονίκη*, Bulletin of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Thessaloniki, 5 (1951), 71, "During the period 1887-1900 and aqueduct was constructed in the flat area of Thessaloniki at Kalohori to supply the western part of the town with water; the water is brought to the surface by boring".

12. H. G. Tsekou, *Ίστορία τοῦ Ἀσβεστοχωρίου*, p. 23.

13. Anon. (M. Papadopoulos), *Ἀσβεστοχώριον ἢ Πατριδογραφία*, p. 31. See also H. G. Tsekou, *Ίστορία τοῦ Ἀσβεστοχωρίου*, p. 20. (see book review by Stilpon T. Kyriakidis, *Makedonika* 4 (1955-60) 616).

14. E. M. Cousinery, *Voyage dans la Macédoine*, Paris, vol. 1, 1830, p. 111. Anon. (M. Papadopoulos), *Ἀσβεστοχώριον ἢ Πατριδογραφία*, p. 31. Mihail Hadji-Ioannou, *Ἀστυνογραφία Θεσσαλονίκης, ἥτοι τοπογραφικὴ περιγραφή τῆς Θεσσαλονίκης*, Thessaloniki, printing-house "Macedonia", Thanou and Vasileiadi, 1880, p. 49. Gr. P. Konsta, *Ἐνέργειαι καὶ δολοφονικὰ ὄργια τοῦ βουλγαρικοῦ κομιτάτου ἐν Μακεδονίᾳ καὶ ἰδίᾳ ἐν τῇ ἐπαρχίᾳ Καστοριάς κ.τ.λ.*, p. 34. A. I. Arvanitou, *Ἡ Μακεδονία εἰκονογραφημένη*, p. 116. Grigoriou I. Dimopoulou, *Αἱ παιδικαὶ μὲν ἀναμνήσεις—Νεοχώριον (Ἀσβεστοχώριον)*, p. 167-176.

15. Ioannou K. Vasdravelli, *Macedonian Historical Archives*, vol. A, Thessaloniki

indicated by family names such as Karagounis etc. Many of these people settled outside Thessaloniki in Asvestohori (Kirech-Kioi), occupying the area south of the church alongside the stream, which was called Vlahikos Lakkos (Wallachian Pit). They spoke Wallachian and were craftsmen, tailors, dyers, jewellers, shoemakers etc; being more cultured than the local people, they referred contemptuously to all the older original inhabitants as "paizans"<sup>16</sup>.

When the settlement began to increase in size, the Turks gave it the name of Kirech-Kioi, ie. Asbestos Village (Asvestohori), on account of the area's abundant production of asbestos. It is also referred to by this name in various documents from the XVIIth century onwards. In the Macedonian Historical Archives, and in particular in the Archives of the Ecclesiastical Court (*iero-dikeio*) of Thessaloniki, various records are to be found regarding the Asvestohori area. More specifically, two incidents involving men from Asvestohori are mentioned with precise dates, and the name Asvestohori is used, and not Neohori<sup>17</sup>.

Close though it was to the capital of Macedonia, Asvestohori nevertheless possessed noteworthy educational establishments. An elementary school was functioning there before 1860, and more systematic organisation of the school began the years later in 1870, when Anastasios Ekonomidis, a teacher and native of Asvestohori, took over the headmastership and held the post for some thirty years<sup>18</sup>. It is worth noting that in 1879 Asvestohori disposed of a girls' school and a boys' school with four classes each and two infants' schools; there were a total of 400 pupils and five teachers<sup>19</sup>. According to

Archive (1695-1912), Thessaloniki, Society for Macedonian Studies—Macedonian Library, no. 1952, p. 4, 109 onwards.

16. H. G. Tsekou, *Ἱστορία τοῦ Ἀσβεστοχώρου*, p. 40. See also Apost. E. Vakalopoulou, *Ἱστορία τῆς Μακεδονίας 1354-1833*, Thessaloniki, 1969, p. 143. See also M. Hadji-Ioannou, *Ἀστυνογραφία Θεσσαλονίκης*, who reports on p. 49 that "Neohorion, too, may have originated in the suburbs, a large village with a population of some 3,000 souls two hours north of Thessaloniki on the foothills of Hortiatiss. We consider Kiepert to have done this village an injustice in not having included it on his very creditable maps. The inhabitants are not called Bulgarians, but Paizans, the origin of which name is unknown to us".

17. See I. K. Vasdravelli, *Macedonian Historical Archives*, vol. A, Thessaloniki Archive (1695-1912), p. 21, document 17, K. 4, page 6, date 19 Zil Hedje 1107 (21st July 1696), where it is reported that "on the way to and close to Asvestohori Veli made his attack...", p. 311, document 221, K. 138, 38/39, date 15 Siapman 1194 (17th August 1780) which mentions "the young maiden Anastasia of Asvestohori, daughter of Panayotis, named Fatime".

18. Stephanou I. Papadopoulos, *Ἐκπαιδευτικὴ καὶ κοινωνικὴ δραστηριότητα τοῦ Ἑλληνισμοῦ τῆς Μακεδονίας κατὰ τὸν τελευταῖον αἰῶνα τῆς Τουρκοκρατίας*, Thessaloniki, Soc. for Macedonian Studies, Macedonian Library, no. 31, 1970, p. 127.

19. Anon. (M. Papadopoulos), *Ἀσβεστοχώριον ἢ Πατριδογραφία*, p. 14-15, 34. See also

one of the inhabitants, until the last years of the Ottoman domination Asvestohori was one of the largest villages in Macedonia and one of the best communities too. It had a boys' school with seven classes, a girls' school with four, an infants' school with two, and a church<sup>20</sup>. This is also substantiated by the population census of the European provinces of the Ottoman Empire, which was conducted in 1904-1905 by Hussein Hilmi Pasha; the census revealed that Asvestohori was a notable small town with 736 households and a total of 4,422 inhabitants, "all Greeks"<sup>21</sup>.

However, the French traveller Cousinery reports that c. 1830 in the Thessaloniki region, the only village which was inhabited by Bulgarians and in which Bulgarian was spoken was Yenikioi (New village), near Hortiatiss, ie. what is now Asvestohori<sup>22</sup>. It has been verified, however, that the population of Asvestohori did not consist of Bulgarians alone, as the famous traveller would mistakenly have us believe; it also comprised Greek-Wallachians from the Agrapha region, who had settled in Asvestohori long before 1821<sup>23</sup>. Besides, Cousinery himself mentions that the inhabitants of Asvestohori spoke Greek and Turkish<sup>24</sup>.

This is not the first time that Cousinery takes the language spoken as the only criterion indicative of a group of people's nationality. According to what he writes, it is very probable that the Bulgarians in question had come as labourers and builders during the Ottoman domination and settled come as labourers and builders during the Turkish Occupation and settled in the village together with the Greeks; which is precisely why it was called Yenikioi (New village). Moreover, this was not the only instance of a peace-time movement of Slavs and formation of a new community during the Ottoman domination, which was a period when the populations of the Balkan Peninsula were moving about freely<sup>25</sup>. There is no reason, however, for us to exclude the possibility that they were Slavic-speaking Greeks who brought Bulgarian to the village, the language, owing to close contact with the other Greeks, acquiring numerous common Greek elements. The bilinguality of

Stephanou I. Papadopoulou, *Εκπαιδευτική και κοινωνική δραστηριότητα του έλληνισμού της Μακεδονίας κατά τον τελευταίον αιώνα της Τουρκοκρατίας*, p. 128.

20. Aristotelis Hadjiasteryiou, *Asvestohori, Association of Asvestohorites "O Ayios Yeoryios" (St. George)*, Thessaloniki 1961, p. 6.

21. Stephanou I. Papadopoulou, *Η κατάσταση της παιδείας τὸ 1906 στὴν ὑπαιθρο τοῦ καζᾶ Θεσσαλονίκης* (An unpublished report by Dimitrios M. Sarros), *Makedonika*, 15 (1975) 117-118.

22. E. M. Cousinery, *Voyage dans la Macédoine*, p. 111.

23. A. E. Vakalopoulou, *Ιστορία τῆς Μακεδονίας*, p. 143.

24. E. M. Cousinery, *Voyage dans la Macédoine*, p. 111.

25. A. E. Vakalopoulou, *Ιστορία τῆς Μακεδονίας*, p. 494.

the inhabitants and the particular dialect spoken in Asvestohori are reliably substantiated by H. G. Tsekos<sup>26</sup>.

Wishing to add further to what has hitherto been written about this lovely suburb so close to Thessaloniki, we are publishing a hitherto unknown source concerning the community history of Asvestohori and its ethnological composition. It is a handwritten document signed by Archbishop Makarios of Thessaloniki and was written during the Greek War of Independence—on 12th February 1826, to be precise. The Greek is faultless. This document, which is reproduced on the next page, is probably an encyclical addressed to the notables of Asvestohori and makes a contribution to research into the administration of community affairs during the Ottoman domination<sup>27</sup>.

The writer of the letter, Archbishop Makarios Vamvouris of Thessaloniki, is one of the few archbishops of Thessaloniki about whom anything is known. He was born in Mytilini and served to begin with as Bishop of Kambania with his uncle Makarios<sup>28</sup>. In February 1814 he was appointed Archbishop of Limnos<sup>29</sup>. In 1821, when the Greek Revolution began, Archbishop Makarios of Limnos was a member of the Holy Synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, and it was in this capacity that he found himself in Constantinople, an eye-witness to the tragic death of the national martyr, Patriarch Gregory V<sup>30</sup>. In March 1824, having served his country for an entire decade, Makarios of Limnos succeeded Matthew as Archbishop of Thessaloniki<sup>31</sup>; in 1830, however, he was dismissed from office and banished to Iviron Monastery by

26. H. G. Tsekou, *Ίστορία τοῦ Ἀσβεστοχωρίου*, p. 29.

27. The need for this was pointed out some twenty years ago by Professor St. P. Kyriakidis, see Efthymiou Dionysiati—St. P. Kyriakidi, *Ἐγγραφα τῆς ἱερᾶς μονῆς τοῦ Ἀγίου Διονυσίου ἀφορῶντα εἰς ἀγνώστους ναοὺς τῆς Θεσσαλονίκης*, *Makedonika* 3 (1953-1955) 375.

I acquired this manuscript as a gift from Mr Nikos Theophilopoulos, whose mother, Androniki, daughter of Arsenios Purzonas and Eleni Hadjiolou, was a descendant of an old Asvestohorite family.

I should like to thank here my old fellow-student from Thessaloniki University, Mr Nikos Theophilopoulos, for this gift and for gifts of other documents from the same period which are now in my archive, thanks to his assistance.

28. Archbishop Jacob of Mytilini, *Τάφοι Πατριαρχῶν καὶ Μητροπολιτῶν εἰς τὴν Λέσβον*, Μυτιλήνη 1979, p. 26.

29. For the record of the election of the Archbishop of Limnos, together with details of his activities on his native island, see Vasileiou G. Atesi, *Ἱερὰ Μητρόπολις Λήμνου διὰ μέσου τῶν αἰώνων*, *Archive of Ecclesiastical and Canon Law* 13 (1958) 33-38.

30. *Ibid.*

31. *Ἐκκλησιαστικὴ Ἀλήθεια*, vol. 2 (1904) 244, 329. See also L. Petit, *Les évêques de Thessalonique*, *Echos d'Orient* 5 (1901-1902). Alexandrou Letsa, *Ίστορία τῆς Θεσσαλονίκης*, Thessaloniki 1963, vol. 2, p. 160.

the Patriarch, accused of heresy for having transgressed the accepted customs of the time<sup>32</sup>. He died on 2nd March 1856 and was buried behind the sanctuary in Mytilini cathedral in the company of the archbishops of Mytilini<sup>33</sup>.

In the middle of the last century, the small town of Asvestohori was divided into four Greek sections, each of which bore the name of one of the notables. The anonymous work entitled «'Ασβεστοχώριον ἢ Πατριδογραφία» ("Asvestohorion i Patridographia") mentions four areas, the names of which correspond to the names of four of the notables of Asvestohori at that time. The houses in the southern part of the village comprised the section belonging to Hadji Steryos, a total of 115 households. In the middle of the village was Tsiterikos' section, with 147 households. The 146 households in the north-eastern part comprised Yannos Tsekos' section and lastly the north-western section was under Akrives and comprised 142 households. During the second half of the XIXth century, then, Asvestohori had a total of 550 households<sup>34</sup>.

Archbishop Makarios' letter mentions the notables of Asvestohori by name, leading us to the conclusion that the community leaders of Asvestohori, that is, the Council of notables or "nobility", were seventeen in number. As far as their election is concerned<sup>35</sup>, we know that they were elected at the annual general meeting of the "notables" "and other citizens". The election of the community leaders, therefore, was based on the principle of equality;

32. I. K. Vasdravelli, *Historical Archives of Macedonia*, p. 521: "Firman issued following a charge by the Patriarch. For acting in a manner contrary to the religious customs, the Archbishop of Thessaloniki, Makarios, was removed from office and banished to Mount Athos and ordered to be confined in Iviron Monastery. Until the election of another archbishop, the cleric Yerasimos was appointed exarch". Date (Beginning of Jemazi oul Evel 1246 (1830)).

33. The following inscription is written on his headstone:

«ΑΜΦΙΡΥΤΟΥ ΜΥΤΙΛΗΝΗΣ  
ΒΛΑΣΤΗΝ ΑΓΛΑΟΤΙΜΟΝ  
ΜΑΚΑΡΙΟΝ ΚΛΗΣΕΙ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΙΟ  
ΤΑ ΑΡΧΙΘΥΤΗΝ ΛΗΜΝΟΥ ΠΡΟΣΤΑΣ  
ΟΣ ΠΑΡΟΣ ΑΥΤΑ ΑΠΟ ΘΕΣΣΑΛΟΝΙΚΗΣ  
ΕΥΣΕΒΕΟΣ ΝΩΜΑ ΦΥΛΑ ΜΑΚΗΔΟΝΤΗΣ  
ΤΥΜΒΟΣ ΟΔ ΑΜΦΕΚΑΛΥΨΕΝ  
ΑΝΕΨΙΟΣ ΟΝ ΤΕ ΓΕΡΑΙΡΩΝ  
ΒΑΜΒΟΥΡΗΣ ΕΝΘ ΟΙ ΧΕΥΕΝ ΑΠΟΣΤΟΛΙΟΣ»

2nd May 1856. See Jacob, Archbishop of Mytilini, *Τάφοι Πατριαρχῶν καὶ Μητροπολιτῶν εἰς τὴν Λέσβον*, p. 26.

34. Anon. (M. Papadopoulos), *Ἀσβεστοχώριον ἢ Πατριδογραφία*, p. 14.

35. *Ibid.*, p. 49.

they served a term of one year. The community leaders elected were: the leading elder, the secretary, the aldermen, the school inspectors and the churchwarden.

In Asvestohori the community leaders had administrative, taxational and legal jurisdiction. The leading elder, the secretary, and the aldermen were responsible for collecting the village's community revenue, the taxes of the administrative authority and the prelate's stipend. At the same time, it was a part of their duties to keep an eye on public order in the village and to settle the villager's minor disagreements and quarrels. Apart from their internal jurisdiction, the community leaders also represented the community in its external affairs. The leading elder was exclusively responsible for representing the village in the capital, Thessaloniki, either alone or accompanied by others<sup>36</sup>. The school inspectors were responsible for handling the schools' financial affairs, appointing and paying the teachers, and overseeing the schools generally. The churchwarden was responsible for the *pagari* (the area immediately inside the church door where candles may be bought and lit), the Church's cash account and general order within the Church<sup>37</sup>. The Council of notables had fairly wide administrative, taxational and legal jurisdiction until the last years of the Ottoman domination. Of course, ultimately Asvestohori was under Thessaloniki's administrative and legal jurisdiction, as it is today; the villagers' minor disagreements and quarrels were resolved by the leading elder, the secretary and the aldermen, within the bounds of the community's autonomy, but all the more serious disagreements and the crimes and felonies committed by the villagers were dealt with by the Thessaloniki law-courts<sup>38</sup>.

It is worth noting what the letter has to say about the judicial authority and the rights of Archbishop Makarios of Thessaloniki<sup>39</sup>. His judicial authority was an integral part of Asvestohori's community autonomy, an autonomy which has characterised Greek communities from the time of the Venetian

36. *Ibid.*, p. 49-50.

37. *Ibid.*, p. 50.

38. *Ibid.*, p. 50. For the internal conditions behind the development of the institution of local self-administration (the community system), see Nikolaou I. Pandazopoulou, *Κοινοτικός βίος εις την Θεσσαλομαγνησίαν επί τουρκοκρατίας*, republication, Thessaloniki, Aristotelean University of Thessaloniki, Yearbook of the School of Law, vol. 14-3, Festschrift for Dimitrios I. Karanikas, 1967, p. 41-48.

39. Concerning the legal jurisdiction of the Church during the Turkish Occupation, see Nikolaou I. Pandazopoulou, *Ἐκκλησία καὶ Δίκαιον εἰς τὴν Χερσόνησον τοῦ Αἰῶνος ἐπὶ τουρκοκρατίας*, Thessaloniki, Aristotelean University of Thessaloniki, Yearbook of the School of Law, vol. 8, In memory of Periklis Vizoukidis, 1960-1963, p. 709-725.



and the Ottoman Occupations. Until the end of the XVIIIth century and certainly thereafter, the community institution functioned strongly; its significance for the Greek population of Macedonia is pointed out by Beaujour when he speaks of the "leading elders" of Thessaloniki and of the Greek clerics who directed public affairs<sup>40</sup>. The basic reason which impelled the archbishop to send this letter to the notables of Asvestohori was, it seems, the controversy which had arisen between the local notables and the people responsible for the administration of the church at Asvestohori, which was subject to the Archbishop of Thessaloniki. The dispute concerned Church and State property, in particular the financial obligations of each. Similar disputes between the community and the clergy occurred during the Ottoman domination and even in more recent times. The report of the "Inspector General of the Greek Schools in Macedonia", Dimitrios M. Sarros<sup>41</sup>, dated 2nd June 1906, concerning Asvestohori, states: «Τὸ ταμεῖον τῆς ἐκκλησίας (μετὰ τοῦ κηροποιείου) εἶναι δυσεξέλεγκτον, μηδὲν σχεδὸν συνεισφέρον ὑπὲρ τῶν σχολείων. Ἀνάγκη ἢ Ἱερά Μητρόπολις νὰ ἐξετάσῃ προσεκτικώτερον τοὺς κοινοτικούς λογαριασμούς, καθ' ὅσον εἶναι δυνατόν, ὡς ὁμολογοῦσι καὶ αὐτοὶ οἱ Ἀσβεστοχωρίται, ἂν ὑπάρξῃ σκοπιμωτέρα διαχείρισις τοῦ κοινοτικοῦ χρήματος νὰ διατηρήσωσι τὰ σχολεῖα καὶ ἄνευ τοῦ ἐξ 170 λιρῶν ἔθνικοῦ εἰσοδήματος» (The Church's cash account—including the money made from the sale of candles—is difficult to check, and contributes nothing to the schools. The Holy Metropolis should itself examine the community accounts as carefully as possible—and the villagers themselves agree—to see if a more convenient means of administering the community finances can be found so that the schools may be maintained without the state subsidy of 170 pounds).

The archbishop particularly insists that Church and State property be separated and exhorts the notables to draw up a balance-sheet of revenue and expenses for both Church and State. This division of Church property and State property was already taking place during the Ottoman domination. It is certain that the Church's property belongs to the community, despite the division, as the document stresses: «μ' ὅλον ὅπου καὶ ἐκεῖνα ἰδικά σας εἶναι, οὔτε κανένας ἄλλος θέλει τὰ λάβῃ» (whatever belongs to you no-one wishes to take away). The archbishop's jurisdiction in community affairs is

40. Félix Beaujour, *Tableau du Commerce de la Grèce. Formé d'après une année moyenne, depuis 1787 jusqu'en 1797*, vol. 1, Paris 1800, p. 49. See also, *Ἱστορία Ἑλληνικοῦ Ἔθνους*, vol. 11, p. 196.

41. St. I. Papadopoulou, *Ἡ κατάσταση τῆς παιδείας τὸ 1906 στὴν ὑπαιθρο Θεσσαλονίκης*, p. 119.

also indicated by the fact that it is he who certifies the balance-sheet which the notables are to present to him: «καὶ ἀφοῦ κάμητε τὸ βελάντζον καὶ τὸ φέρητε καὶ πρὸς ἡμᾶς, διὰ τὰ τὸ ἴδωμεν καὶ ἐπιβεβαιώσωμεν» (and when you have drawn up the balance-sheet, bring it to me so that I may see and confirm it). This indicates the extent of the Church's legal jurisdiction throughout the field of common law. It is also clear that the power of this legal jurisdiction was expanding and becoming stronger. Another point in the letter which is worth emphasising is the «ποιήσατε ἐξ ἀποφάσεως» (make the decision), which gives us cause to examine the function and means by which decisions were made by the notables<sup>42</sup>.

The letter also confirms that the archbishop was acting as a religious leader («χάρις εἴη ἐν ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη ἀπὸ Θεοῦ»—«ἵνα καὶ ἡ τοῦ Θεοῦ χάρις καὶ τὸ ἀπειρον ἔλεος εἴη μεθ' ὑμῶν») (may the grace and peace of God be with us—that the grace and boundless mercy of God be with us), but at the same time also as a supreme judge over the common-law affairs of the citizens of Asvestohori<sup>43</sup>. The interweaving of these two functions of the archbishop reminds us of the original apostolic Christian Church<sup>44</sup>, and leads us to conclude that this tradition is being continued within the Orthodox Church.

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42. Apostolou E. Vakalopoulou, *Ἱστορία τοῦ Νέου Ἑλληνισμοῦ, I, Ἀρχές καὶ διαμόρφωσή του*, Thessaloniki 1961, p. 200-1. Concerning the administration of Thessaloniki during the Turkish Occupation, see K. Tatti, *Ἡ κοινότης Θεσσαλονίκης. Πῶς διέκειτο ἄλλοτε—Τὰ ἄγραφα ἔθιμα—Ἡ δωδεκάδα—Τὰ σπιτάλια—Ὁ προεστὼς—Οἱ πρόκριτοι—πόσοι ἦσαν οἱ ἐκλογεῖς—ἄγνωστοι λεπτομέρειαι*, *Makedonikon Imeroloyion*, ed. The Pan-Macedonian Society of Athens, 1913, p. 85-89.

43. The judicial authority of the archbishop, during the Turkish Occupation, which was his "ancient custom", was as follows: "...That he should try whomsoever should apply for his judgment, and should anyone seek a trial and demand his rights, the opponent must go before the archbishop to be tried without let or hindrance...The decisions and arbitration of the archbishop shall carry legal authority without any contradiction whatsoever, and he shall levy fees for his decisions in the usual way..." In other words, the judicial decision of the archbishop was final as far as the litigants were concerned. See Ap. E. Vakalopoulou, *Ἱστορία τοῦ Νέου Ἑλληνισμοῦ, I*, p. 200-1.

44. *Acts of the Apostles*, chapter II,

[illegible]

in *confessione*

\*, Αντίγραφο γράμματος του μητροπολίτη Θεσσαλονίκης Μακαρίου (Θεσσαλονίκη 12 Φεβρουαρίου 1826).

(Τὸ πρότυπο τοῦ ἔγγράφου στὸ ἀρχεῖο τῆς συγγραφῆς).

*A copy of the letter written by Archbishop Makarios of Thessaloniki (Thessaloniki, 12th February 1826).*

*(The original document is in the writer's archive).*



«τιμιώτατοι πρόκριτοι χριστιανοὶ τοῦ χωρίου ἀσβεστοχωρίου, ὅτε προεστῶς Γεώργιος, Χ:ήλίας στέριου, Χη=ἀντώνιος, καὶ φράγκος Χη:Ἀργύρη, δημήτριος Σπανδωνῆ, κώτας φιλίππου, στέριος κυπαρίσσι, πέτκος στοῖου, κωνσταντῖνος νικολάου, Γεώργιος παναγιώτη, παναγιώτης τζοκάλα, μάρκος στογιάννη, κυπαρρίσης κυριάκου, φράγκος ἀγγελούση, Γιάννος ἀγγελούση, μακούσιος διαμαντῆ, θωμᾶς δαβίδ, καὶ στέριος κωνσταντῆ χάρις εἴη ὑμῖν, καὶ εἰρήνη ἀπὸ θεοῦ. βλέποντες τὴν παροῦσαν ἡμῶν ἔκδοσιν, νὰ συναχθῇτε ὅλοι σας, καὶ νὰ καθήσητε νὰ ξεκαθαρίσητε τοὺς λογαριασμοὺς τῆς ἐκκλησίας σας ἐν φόβῳ θεοῦ, καὶ καθαρᾷ συνειδήσει, καὶ νὰ χωρίσητε τὸ χρέος τῆς ἐκκλησίας ἀπὸ τοῦ χρέους τοῦ χωρίου σας, καὶ νὰ καταστρώσητε ἕνα μπαλάντζον πόσον χρέος ἔχει ἡ αὐτὴ ἐκκλησία, καὶ ποῦ χρεωστεῖ καὶ πόθεν ἔχει νὰ λαμβάνη, διὰ νὰ μένη χωριστὸν τὸ χρέος τῆς ἐκκλησίας ἀπὸ τὸ χρέος τῆς χώρας, μάλιστα εἶναι καὶ ἁμαρτία νὰ ἐννόνητε τὸ χρέος καὶ τὸ κέρδος τῆς ἐκκλησίας μέσα εἰς τὴν χώραν σας. καὶ διὰ τοῦτο πρέπει νὰ εἶναι χωριστὸς ὁ λογαριασμὸς τῆς ἐκκλησίας, καὶ μ' ὅλον ὅπου καὶ ἐκεῖνα ἰδικά σας εἶναι, οὔτε κανένας ἄλλος θέλει τὰ λάβη, καὶ ἀφοῦ κάμητε τὸ βελάντζον, καὶ τὸ φέρητε καὶ πρὸς ἡμᾶς, διὰ νὰ τὸ ἰδῶμεν, καὶ ἐπιβεβαιώσωμεν ὅθεν οὕτω γινώσκοντες, ποιήσατε ἐξ ἀποφάσεως, ὥς ἡδὴ γράφομεν σας, ἵνα καὶ ἡ τοῦ θεοῦ χάρις, καὶ τὸ ἄπειρον ἔλεος εἴη μεθ' ὑμῶν.

Ὁ Θεσσαλονίκης Μακάριος

ἀγκστ τῇ ιβ φεβρουαρίου  
1826 τῇ 12 Φεβρουαρίου»