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ANDREAS KOPASIS: THE PRINCE OF SISAM

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The island of Sisam (Samos) became remarkable during the Greek Rebellion-1821, as the corsairs of Sisam made attacks against the the Anatolian shores and Ottoman navy. After the rebellion, it was decided that this important island, close to Anatolian shores, would remain within the Ottoman territory however under the guarantee of England, France and Russia. Concerning the internal administration of the island, some privileges were allocated to the inhabitants to Sisam.

According to this reorganisation, the island of Sisam would be governed by a *Bey* of Greek-Orthodox origin who would be appointed by the Sublime Porte whereas an elected local parliament and senate would also be a part of the government in the island. Though the incomes of Sisam had been assigned for centuries to the endowment of Ottoman Grand Admiral Kılıch Ali Pasha in Tophâne, the island was obliged this time to send to the Sublime Porte a certain annual tax. In return, an Ottoman military force, consisting of a patrol ship and two detachments of troops, would be based in Sisam. In foreign affairs, the local government of the island would absolutely be dependent on Ottoman State (December 10, 1832).

Following this reorganisation of Sisam's administrative status, Stephan Vagoridis was appointed to be the first *Bey* of Sisam who had worked as a translator in the Sublime Porte during the foundation of Greece¹.

¹ For further information concerning the status of the island of Sisam under the Ottoman rule, Ali Fuat Örenç, *Yakın Dönem Tarihinde Sisam Adası: 1821-1923*, (unpublished M.A. Thesis, Istanbul University -Institute of Social Sciences 1995).

The subject of our study, Andreas Kopasis, was the eighteenth person appointed to be the governor of Sisam. Kopasis, as it will be described below, was an successful Ottoman official who was admired several times by the Ottoman State.

Isfakyalı-Kopasis Efendi of Cretean origin, was the son of Manolaki Kopasis. He was born in Hanya, Crete and educated in Crete and Şıra. Besides his education at the school, Kopasis had also private lessons through which he was able to learn several languages like Turkish, French, English, Italian, Spanish², and German³.

He started his career as a scribe in the Court of Appeal in Crete when he was still fourteen years old (April 1868). After a short time, in Dec. 13, 1869 he was appointed to the assistance of first secretary of the same court.⁴ His performance in this office was welcomed by the Sublime Porte and Kopasis Efendi was appointed in Oct. 12, 1872 to the first secretary of the Central Court of First Instance in Crete.⁵ Andreas, who was admired because of his regular attendance and attention at this office, was employed in 1877 in the senate of Crete as the second secretary. This work made Kopasis familiar with administrative and juridical issues.⁶

The literal career of Kopasis, the author of many scientific works⁷ which will be mentioned below, started during his office in the Cretean official paper. He worked there as the writer of the Turkish section.⁸ Besides this office, in July 11, 1877 he became the first secretary of the Cretean senate. At this latter

² Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi (hereafter BOA), *Sicill-i Ahvâl Defterleri* (hereafter SA), no.55, p.289.

³ Elenès S. Sborónoy, *Mikrasiatikon Emerologien tou etous 1908*, tomos deuterós, Samó 1908, 19-23.

⁴ Kopasis Efendi was appointed to this post with a salary of 250 piastres, BOA, SA, *ibid.*

⁵ He was appointed to this office with a salary of 470 piastres. This was increased in May 1, 1875 to 600 piastres and in May 2, 1876 to 750 piastres, BOA, *ibid.*

⁶ He started to work in the senate with a salary of 1200 piastres. His salary was decreased in March 2, 1879 to 600 piastres, BOA, SA, *ibid.*

⁷ Sborónoy, *op. cit.*, 21.

⁸ For this work, which he performed in addition to his office in the senate, he was paid an extra amount of 500 piastres, BOA, *ibid.*

post, he remained until February 28, 1880.⁹ Though Kopasis was appointed thereafter to be the correspondent in Greek (Rum mektubculuğu) of the Province of Crete (April 26, 1885), he resigned from this office in April 30, 1889.¹⁰

Kopasis Efendi went to Istanbul just after his resignation.¹¹ His first post in Ottoman capital, was his membership of the Ottoman State Council (Şurâ-yı Devlet). He was appointed to this office in July 3, 1889.¹² At the same time, Kopasis was also employed in the School of Law as the teacher of French. However, he resigned from this office in October 2, 1891.¹³

In January 3, 1897, Kopasis Efendi was transferred to the membership of the Civil Service Office of the State Council.¹⁴ Following this, he had successfully worked in various sections of the State Council.¹⁵

Regarding his experience and success, Kopasis Efendi acquired during his offices in the island of Crete and Ottoman capital, it was accepted by the

⁹ He was paid a salary of 1000 piastres at that post. In March 1, 1880, his salary was increased to 1200 piastres. In September 2, 1884, this amount was decided to be 1500 piastres, BOA, *ibid*.

¹⁰ As Kopasis was paid 1000 piastres during his office as the correspondent in Greek and 3000 in January 5, 1886, this amount was decreased in September 1, 1888 to 1500 piastres, BOA, *ibid*.

¹¹ Sborónoy, *op. cit.*, 21.

¹² He was appointed to the membership of State Council with a salary of 1500 piastres.

¹³ As the teacher of French, he was paid an extra salary of 400 piastres.

¹⁴ His salary was decreased in March 1, 1897 to 3600 piastres, BOA, *ibid*.

¹⁵ BOA, SA, 55, 289-290; 80, 235. Kopasis Efendi started to work in the State Council first in Judgement Office (Muhakemât dâ'iresi). As a result of the drawn lot, he was appointed to the membership of the Court of First Instance and remained at this post one year long. Because of his high performance, he was confirmed in this office. Afterwards he also worked in the Restoration and Civil Service Offices of the State Council. In Feb. 26, 1898 he was appointed, as an extra post, to the temporary membership of the Commission of Appeal (Temyíz Hey'eti) founded in the State Council. In April 3, 1900 he was appointed to the membership of the Commission of Accusation (Hey'et-i İttihâmiye) and in Feb. 27, 1900 as a supplementary duty to the membership of the Committee of Disagreement (İhtilâf Mercî' Encümeni) founded within the State Council. In these offices mentioned above, Kopasis was able to improve his knowledge of law which he obtained during his years in the Cretean Parliament, BOA, *Dâhiliye Nezâreti Muhâberât-ı 'Umûmiye Dâ'iresi* (hereafter DH. MUI.), 86-212.

Sublime Porte to send him to Sisam to overcome the disorder in that small but important island. If the order and security of Sisam could be formed again, this might contribute also to the Cretean case where similar problems had occurred.¹⁶

With the imperial order dated December 26, 1907, Kopasis resigned from the membership of the Office of Civil Service in the State Council and started to his duty in Sisam.¹⁷

Kopasis spent his first years in Sisam in very hard conditions, as the conflict between the present political parties in the island had reached to the top level. In addition to that, Themistocles Sofuolis' activities concerning the annexation of the island to Greece disturbed Ottoman government too much. The popularity of Sofuolis, the founder of one of the two big parties in Sisam, could be seen everywhere in the island whereas the authority of Ottoman State was remarkably decreasing. Though Kopasis was sent to the island in order to make such centrifugal forces ineffective in Sisam he understood after a short residence in the island that he wouldn't be able to practise this duty in such conditions. He had therefore recourse to the Sublime Porte to demand an intervention.

Though Ottoman bureaucrats had been imagining a military intervention for a long time, this was postponed several times because of the pressures of the guarantor states mentioned above. This time however, Ottoman government didn't hesitate any more as Kopasis insisted on such an intervention.

Kopasis wanted to get the control of the Ottoman troops in Sisam as soon as possible. He claimed that he could diminish the role played by Greek nationalists in the administration and strengthen the Ottoman domination in the island if he would be authorized in that way. Following the repetitious proposals of Kopasis and Ottoman military officials in the island, the situation in Sisam was reconsidered by the Sublime Porte and it was decided to send

¹⁶ *İkdâm*, no. 32 (March 28, 1912).

¹⁷ BOA, *Sisam İrâdeleri* (hereafter SI), nu. 245. For the post of ex-Bey Yorgiadis Efendi who lost his authority as a result of party conflicts in the island, Kostantis Viionnis Efendi was another candidate beside Kopasis Efendi. In the discussion of Ottoman Council of Ministers, Kopasis Efendi was appointed to this post.

As the Bey of Sisam, he was paid a salary of 20, 000 piastres, Örenç, *op. cit.*, 160.

supplementary troops to the island¹⁸ and to deliver Kopasis the authority to control them. As a result, the greatest naval operation of Hamidian period was realised in Sisam which assured the order in the island again. In between, the leader of the rebellion, Sofuolis, was able to flee from the island and went first to the island of Şira and then to Greece (1908). He was judged in default in a local court founded in Sisam, and condemned to death.¹⁹

Following this successful naval operation just at the end of the Hamidian period, Kopasis Efendi continued to take the necessary measures which would strengthen his authority and position in the island. Naturally, the government of Greece and Greek press in the island, were not in agreement with his policies.²⁰ The Greek government sent one of its diplomats, Fontana, as the consulate inspector to Sisam. Fondato, accompanied by the Greek consulate in Sisam, observed the situation occurred in the island after the exclusion of the Greek partisans from Sisam and started to contact local notables. First of all, he met the principals of the other great party in the island, the party of Hadji Yani. The Greek diplomat suggested them to found in the coming election a coalition with the party of Sofuolis which would assure the exclusion of Ottoman troops and their flag from the island.²¹

Fondato-mission seems to be successful as the two competitive parties in Sisam had decided to found an alliance. Thereupon, Kopasis Efendi demanded from the Sublime Porte to reinforce Ottoman troops based in the island. This offer was welcomed by the Ottoman government as Kopasis' supporters formed the majority of the General Assembly after the election.²²

¹⁸ At that time, the amount of permanent Ottoman troops in the island was increased to 400, BOA, *SI*, 248.

¹⁹ For further information about the details of Ottoman military operation in Sisam, collides occurred and the reformation realised in the island, A.F. Orenç; *op. cit.*, 143-150.

²⁰ *Ikdâm*, 32 (March, 28); A.Saffet, *Istanbul Musâhebesi*, Istanbul 1324, 17.

²¹ BOA, *DH. MUI*, 95/16. Fondato went from Sisam to Izmir.

²² BOA, *Meclis-i Vükelâ Mazbataları*, 142/44; *DH.MUI*, 115/53.

Though Kopasis Efendi was able again to put things in order, his rule in Sisam didn't persist for a long time. In March 22, 1912 he was killed by Stavro Boridis, a Greek conspirator from Athens.²³

The death of Kopasis Efendi had its reflections among Ottoman government and press. As he was seen as a real " patriot ", many telegraph messages of condolence were sent to his wife Eleni²⁴ and the conspiracy was reproached.

The contradicting depositions of the injured suspect, comments published in Greek and Ottoman press and also the first investigations made by the officials show us that there was no concrete information concerning the crime. However, proclamations of the Eteria organisation during the Balkan War displayed that this society might have played a role in this crime. In the declaration of Eteria, it was emphasised that every traitor Greek would be killed like Kopasis.²⁵

Kopasis Efendi was 59 years old when he was killed by a conspirator. He was not only a successful and favoured Ottoman official but also a scholar. He represented Ottoman State in the Great International Exhibition- Madrid 1892 which was organised to glorify the 400th anniversary of Kolumbus' discovery of America.²⁶ As one of the members of the Spanish Academy of Historical Sciences and the director of the Society " Ellinikos Filiologikos Silligos ", he

²³ For details of the crime, BOA, *Bâb-ı Alî Evrak Odası*, 1004-64/ 1, p.129-131; *Amedî Kalemi Eyâlet-i Mümtâze Sisam*, 7/241; *Tanin*, 1279 (March 24, 1912), 1280 (March 25, 1912), 1282 (March 27, 1912), 1284 (March 29, 1912); *İkdâm*, 29 (March 25, 1912), 32 (March 28, 1912).

²⁴ Eleni de Kiari was the daughter of Monsieur Kiari, the Ottoman ambassador in Austria. Eleni, a well educated woman, could speak various languages and play piano. Her brother, Arthur Kiani, was a members of the Austrian Senate, *İkdâm*, 32 (March 28, 1912; Sborónoy, *op. cit.*, 23.

²⁵ Cemal Kutay, *Etnik-i Eteryâ'dan Günümüze Ege'nin Türk Kalma Savaşı*, Istanbul 1980, 194 and 196.

²⁶ BOA, SA, 55 and 290. He displayed there his books about the discovery of America. These were *Tarih-i Keşf ve Feth-i Amerika* (The History of Discovery and the Conquest of America), 2 v., Istanbul 1310 and *Kristof Kolomb'un Rüfekâsından Piyed Davos'un Amerika Keşfine Dâir Olan Hatırâtı* (The Memoirs of Piyed Davos Concerning the Discovery of America), Istanbul 1314.

made studies on archaeology²⁷, as well as on " the history of Crete ", " church music ", " Shakespeare ", and " the grammar of Turkish, Arabic, and Persian ". He also wrote several articles published in journals like *Nea Sion* and *Eleklisiastiki Katastimaton*. Consisting of 4,000 books, he has a rich private library. Kopasis gave also many lectures. The last one was about the Sisamese poet Pisagor which he gave a short time before his death in Vothi.²⁸

Andreas Kopasis, a successful civil servant and a remarkable scholar as we tried to describe above in general lines, was awarded with various signs and medals. His efforts were welcomed not only by the Ottoman State but also by other states, especially Greece and then Iran, France, Spain, Serbia, Austria as well as the Patriarchies in Phanar/ Istanbul and in Jerusalem.²⁹

Kopasis Efendi was buried in Sisam, after an official funeral ceremony which was proper for his fame and esteem.

²⁷ BOA, SA, 55, p.289; Svozónos, *op. cit.*, 23.

²⁸ *Ikdâm*, 32 (March 28, 1912).

²⁹ For further information, BOA, SA, 55, pp. 289-290; 80, p. 235; Sborónoy, *op. cit.*, 21-23.