

SCANDINAVIAN JOURNAL OF BYZANTINE AND MODERN GREEK STUDIES

- 9 *Ingela Nilsson*
The Literary Voice of a Chronicler:
The *Synopsis Chronike* of Constantine
Manasses
- 41 *Sandro Nikolaishvili*
Georgian Manuscript Production and Tran-
slation Activities in the Christian East and
Byzantine Empire
- 81 *Charis Messis and Ingela Nilsson*
L'ixeutique à Byzance: pratique et
représentation littéraire
- 109 *Maria Kalinowska*
I asked him about the secret he knew...
(Juliusz Słowacki) Konstantinos Kanaris and
his Fights in Polish Romantic Poetry
- 129 *Lambros Baltiotis*
Conversions of Muslims during the Greek
War of Independence: transitions from a
Greek-Orthodox nation to a civic nation
- 167 Book Reviews

Conversions of Muslims during the Greek War of Independence: transitions from a Greek-Orthodox nation to a civic nation

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The following paper is an attempt to present a few initial conclusions from the author's ongoing research concerning the *Neofotistoi* (Νεοφώτιστοι) or *Neofytoi* (Νεόφυτοι).¹ The term refers to Muslims who converted to Orthodox Christianity during and immediately after the cease of hostilities in the Greek War of Independence.² The period under examination begins in Spring 1821, when hostilities commenced, and ends in mid-1833, when Greek administrative authorities were established in every corner of the fledgling Greek state. However, the events that took place during the period that followed, when conversions to Christianity were still carried out, will not be examined for two reasons: firstly because the numbers of the conversions are rather insignificant and concerned either the leftover Muslim populations in Euboea³ or populations that were emigrating to Greece, and secondly and most importantly, because these conversions were carried out within an established state which wielded at least a modicum of power over its territories. The focus of this discussion is to reveal what transpired during the turbulent years as part of an “ingenerate” process marking the behaviors and activities of the involved populations, as well as the policies that were implemented for the *Neofotistoi* and the reasons for their development during the first years after the establishment of the Greek state.

¹ *Neofotistos* (Νεοφώτιστος) and *Neofytos* (Νεόφυτος) in the singular. The feminine form of *Neofotistos* is *Neofotistē*.

² Here I will not be discussing conversions of a few Jews to Christianity which also occurred in the same periods.

³ This matter has been thoroughly examined in Baltsiotis 2017, in particular 189–207.

The conversions that took place during the Greek War of Independence have been previously discussed in the relevant literature. The historians of the 19th century frequently mentioned the occurrence of conversions to a greater or lesser extent. Later, though, the dominant Greek national narrative led to the erasure of this issue since the aim to establish a link between Ancient Greeks and the citizens of the new state increasingly assumed greater significance. Discussing the conversions would cast doubt on the entire notion of the ancient Greek racial “origin” of the residents of the newly found state, since the narrative that was being formulated identified “origin” with a specific religion and a specific religious denomination. Moreover, a discussion on religious conversions would dispute the dividing lines between Greeks and Turks which had dominated not only public history, but also, up to the 1970s, academia as well.

Before 1970, I know of only one major study that referred extensively to the issue of conversions, namely that of Apostolos Vakalopoulos, published in 1941. Vakalopoulos focus, however, is on the practices of captivity during hostilities.⁴ Despite the fact that references of conversions were not unheard of –especially in works pertaining to local history⁵– the issue had generally been relegated to the footnotes of academic texts. The contemporary academic researchers became familiar with the *Neofotistoi* issue through the dissertation of Georgios Nikolaou in 1997,⁶ who first attempted to investigate the subject by delving into archival sources. The same author published an article on the specifics of the issue.⁷ We owe our knowledge of conversions to his pioneering research. Additionally, there are also a few brief references in other academic texts dealing with more specialized subjects touching on the *Neofotistoi*.⁸ Two recent papers –one by Stefanos Katsikas and Sakis Dimitriadis, the other by Evdoxios Doxiadis– attempt to examine

⁴ Vakalopoulos 1941.

⁵ For example, Kapsalēs 1957.

⁶ Nikolaou 1997.

⁷ Nikolaou 2006.

⁸ For example, in legal studies, such as that by Georgios Nakos concerning the legal status of Ottoman lands, or in more recent ones, such as Christos Loukos 2018.

aspects of the issue.⁹ It seems that 2021 –the bicentennial of the War of Independence– sparked some interest around the conversions.¹⁰ In view of this renewed interest, the initial finding of my own research, which has been ongoing for many years, appears to be not only pertinent to the current discussion on conversions, but also adds to or modifies the findings of the two major studies of Nikolaou (1997), Katsikas and Dimitriadis (2021), and the one of Doxiadis (2021).

The War of Independence and the Greek nation

The Greek War of Independence, which commenced in Spring 1821, despite the insurgents' initial ambitions to expand it into the wider Balkan area, was quickly limited to parts of Central Greece and the Peloponnese, and a few islands in the Aegean Sea. These were the main regions that would later comprise the Greek state. In two short years after the beginning of the revolution, the insurgents managed to assume control of large areas in the aforementioned regions and to conquer many towns and cities. This situation was reversed after 1825 with the gradual advance of the army of Ibrahim Pasha of Egypt and other Ottoman forces across the Peloponnese and Central Greece. The victory of the three Great Powers' fleet (the British, the French, and the Russian Empires) against the Egyptian-Turkish fleet in the Battle of Navarino, off the southeastern coast of the Peloponnese in October 1827, inaugurated a new round of diplomatic pressure by the three Great Powers to the Sublime Porte which eventually resulted in the gradual withdrawal of the Ottoman forces from their former positions and the granting of independence to the Greek state.

John [Iōannēs] Capodistrias, former deputy Foreign Minister of the Russian Empire, was appointed the first Governor of Greece. In January 1828 he arrived in Nauplion. His power initially extended over the limited areas controlled by the insurgents. However, the final borders and the

⁹ Katsikas and Dimitriadis 2021; Doxiadis 2021.

¹⁰ We know of three relevant conference addresses: one by Giorgos Nikolaou, one by the author of this paper—both of which have touched on the general issue—and a more specialized one by Dimitris Dimitropoulos (forthcoming 2022).

question of the new state's full independence were determined gradually through a series of treaties and protocols, the last of which was signed in 1832.¹¹ Capodistrias was assassinated in 1831, a development which further deteriorated the government's hold over many of its territories. In January 1833, the son of King Ludwig I of Bavaria, prince Otto, still underage and the future monarch of Greece, arrived in the country. An absolute monarchy was established, which was in turn overthrown in 1844, when the first constitution of Greece was adopted.

The Greek nation-building process, one of the first in the Balkans, became inextricably linked with religious affiliation. As in every other Balkan national movement, the new Greek nation was defined according to religious, denominational and ecclesiastical dividing lines, not according to the mother tongue¹² or any other identifying notion such as birthplace in a certain territory or citizenship. The Greek language eventually became of major importance to the Greek national narrative because it was the sole "visible" link of the new nation with Ancient Greece. Besides, the romantics of the West, who saw in the insurgency a revival of Ancient Greece, were instrumental in drumming up support for the Greek War of Independence. However, even though the theories of Ancient Greek racial origin of Modern Greeks and the continuity of the Greek language from antiquity to the present were the direct result of the romantic and racial perceptions which were dominant in the West at the time, they were quickly appropriated and fully incorporated in the ideology of the fledgling state. Despite this, and despite the dominant discourse concerning the language, for the next two centuries, the criterion of membership in the Greek nation was institutionally associated exclusively with religious and denominational attachment, while linguistic diversity was a non-issue in principle, provided that language was not connected to an actual or potential distinct religious or ecclesiastical affiliation. Conversely, having a different religion or belonging to a different denomination or ecclesiastical body was

¹¹ By 1830, full independence had been granted, but the northern borders were still contested.

¹² Excluding the Albanian nation which was defined by language.

believed to reflect a different *racial* origin according to the terminology used—and resulted in exclusion from the Greek nation.

The Muslims of Roumeli and Morias (Central Greece and the Peloponnese)

The Muslim populations residing in the Peloponnese and Central Greece before the outbreak of the War of Independence had not been counted in any reliable way.¹³ The first Greek population counts, under Capodistrias, tended to significantly underestimate the Muslim populations, while the various population accounts cannot always be considered credible. In 1859, a somewhat accurate tally appeared. Despite it, underestimation of the real figures, which reported that in 1821 there were 63,813 Muslims in the Peloponnese, 19,852 in Central Greece, and 7,163 in Euboea,¹⁴ continued. A clear example of the underestimation can be found in the inhabitants of Eğriboz, the Ottoman *sancak* which included, among others, Euboea, Attica, Thiva, Livadeia, and Zitouni (present-day Lamia). In the case of Euboea, the reported figure of 7,163 Muslims in the island probably constitutes less than half of the actual population.¹⁵ The estimates concerning the percentage of Muslims in the general population are even more suspect. It should also be noted that during the hostilities, as well as later, there were significant population movement since the Christian population exhibited increased mobility. Furthermore, Greece was inundated with refugees from other rebelling provinces—and, after 1830, even immigrants from the Ottoman Empire—while at the same time a significant emigrant flow began from Greece towards the Ottoman Empire. Many of the refugees and immigrants who came to Greece ended up settling in urban centers.

¹³ The Aegean islands that were included in the new state were virtually devoid of Muslim populations.

¹⁴ Spēliotakēs 1859, 29–31. The data was taken from an undated document (tentatively dated to 1856) bearing the title *Renseignements statistiques sur la Grèce* and can be found in the *Greek State Archives (GSA)*, Historical Archives of Giannēs Vlachogiannēs, catalogue Δ', 26.

¹⁵ For an estimate of the Muslim populations in Euboea, see Baltsiotis 2017, 22–24.

Nonetheless, there is a clear picture of the urban Muslim populations, despite the fact that specific figures for each town and city are lacking.¹⁶ In regard to the Peloponnese, there is abundant information for even smaller settlements, such as the cases of Langadia or Karytaina. Information on rural settlements, though, is fragmentary. Thus, we have an accurate estimate of certain groups, such as that of Bardounia in Laconia or Fanari in Ēleia, mostly because of the religious and ethnolinguistic peculiarities of these groups. In general, we lack concrete figures for many areas, such as the significant settlements in Vatika, Laconia.¹⁷ For some of them there is not a single mention, at least in the Greek archives, which leads to the common perception that there were no farming Muslim settlements in many areas—which is not the case. Apart from the plains of Ēleia, Fanari in Western Peloponnese, and certain areas of Laconia, reports concerning the rest of the Peloponnese and the entire Central Greece, with few exceptions, are non-existent. Additionally, there is another type of settlement which seems to have evaded our attention: these are the “representatives” of large Muslim landowners in the villages that were dependent on them. These “representatives” were usually a couple of Muslim families. In some cases one or two other Muslim families resided in the same settlement or another settlement nearby. In terms of occupation, these families usually evolved around a specific professional function (for example they owned the mill or were operating it). These small communities can be found solely in the oral tradition or through indirect references. In general, these observations relating to the existence of such Muslim settlements equally apply to areas of Central Greece, for which archival sources are decidedly scarcer.

¹⁶ The careful reading of the travellers of early 19th century and a number of other archival sources help the researcher to represent the population and its socioeconomic profile in Ottoman cities in the regions which later on will be included in the newly formed Greek state.

¹⁷ It is illuminating that a large part of the information we have on Muslim populations in Vatika can be found in *Neofotistoi* catalogues (see also below).

Information regarding the languages spoken by the Muslim communities is likewise relatively scarce.¹⁸ A significant number of urban and rural Muslim communities spoke Greek, others spoke Turkish –especially the urban ones– and some rural groups spoke Albanian. What we do know is that in the Albanian-speaking communities, and in most of the Turkish-speaking ones, a language shift towards Greek had already commenced or there was at least a sufficient knowledge of Greek,¹⁹ with probable few exceptions in Central Greece. Finally, there is proof of presence of various *tarikats* in the entire area, but we must note that references related to Bektaşî/Kızılbaş groups are limited.

The existence of this rather numerous Muslim population within the territories of Roumeli and Morias, well above the one sixth of the total population, was an issue the insurgents had to address.

Aspects of the *Neofotistoi* issue

The Greek War of Independence was marked by the mass extermination of Muslims and Jews in many cities, towns, and villages that were captured by the insurgents²⁰ during the first two years of the war. This constituted a coherent policy: “The extermination of the Mussulmans in the rural districts was the result of a premeditated design. It proceeded more from the vindictive suggestions of the Hetairists²¹ and men of letters, than from the revengeful feelings of the people, or the innate

¹⁸ The travellers of early 19th century are less talkative and far less reliable. Some governmental reports of the new state, like the one published by Gritsopoulos (1971) and other references, for example in memoirs, help the researcher to reconstruct the linguistic landscape of some Muslim communities.

¹⁹ The Albanian-speaking community of Lala in Èleia, and the surrounding area in general, provides an example of the former, while Tripolis provides an example of the latter. I should note that the urban population consisted of various ethnolinguistic groups.

²⁰ In those cases where the population had not managed to flee to an Ottoman-held stronghold or had not been evacuated from insurgent-held areas.

²¹ He means the members of *Filiki Etaireia* (“Society of Friends”), a secret society modeled after the Freemasons. The Society played a decisive role in the organization of the War of Independence.

barbarity of the klephts²².²³ Often, the 19th century historians reported the complete extermination of Muslim communities and—where present—the Jewish, but this was far from the truth. For example, in the case of Talanti (present-day Atalantē), in Eastern Central Greece, there is an explicit account stating that only a Muslim “doctor” was spared,²⁴ while now we know that many more were spared and either fled to Chalkida or converted to Christianity.²⁵

Until now, the various conclusions on Neofotistoi were based on two comprehensive *Neofotistoi* catalogues compiled in 1834, one of Nauplion and another of some areas of the district of Laconia,²⁶ both of which were analyzed in an exemplary fashion by Georgios Nikolaou.²⁷ The two catalogues do indeed shed some light on certain aspects of the issue, while at the same time obscure other aspects of it. The Nauplion catalogue, especially, mainly concerns individuals who had fled to the city, many of whom were in dire financial straits. To a certain extent, this impoverishment has been confirmed by my own research, but applies mostly to individuals who had moved away from their place of origin for reasons other than marriage, land ownership or skilled employment. In fact, one of the characteristics of the *Neofotistoi* is that they often moved away from their place of origin for a variety of reasons.²⁸ This does not apply only to those individuals who fell into poverty, but even those who preferred or were obliged to acquire property in other regions. Thus, there seems to be an incomplete evaluation of archival sources on

²² These were small armed groups—here it meant Christian ones—who lived as outlaws for long periods of time. They earned their living through robberies, kidnappings, and extortion.

²³ Finlay 1877, vol. VI, 152.

²⁴ Sourmelēs 1853, 152.

²⁵ For the first instance, see Baltiotis 2017, 205–206. So far, I have managed to confirm that at least 12 persons from Atalantē converted to Christianity.

²⁶ GSA, Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs [1833–1862], series 5, file 66 and Historical Archives of Giannēs Vlachogiannēs, B’ Manuscripts Catalogue, file 193.

²⁷ Nikolaou 1997, 346–374, 468–529.

²⁸ According to the Laconia catalogue, 63% of *Neofotistoi* did not reside in the settlement from which they originated, but rather several of them had settled in nearby villages (Nikolaou 1997, 360).

this issue which can lead to confusion around the place of origin, the social profile, or the actual figures of *Neofotistoi*.²⁹ Moreover, even the Laconia catalogue, as detailed below, should be partly reexamined. At this point, no comprehensive catalogue has surfaced pertaining to the *Neofotistoi* of Central Greece.

Below certain aspects of the issue of *Neofotistoi* will be examined, especially those that have been contradicted by my own findings.

The extent of the practice of conversion and its geographical distribution

The areas that were inhabited by Muslims who converted to Orthodox Christianity were designated first and foremost by the following factors: a) whether their inhabitants had been captured by the insurgents, b) whether their communities had managed to flee, c) at which stage of the war they were captured and in what way, and d) what was the stance of the armed units concerning the Muslim community, both during the initial period of occupation and afterwards. The complete absence or the low numbers of *Neofotistoi* in some areas can be attributed to these factors. The issue is further complicated by the fact that some towns and cities, such as Livadeia in Central Greece, changed hands more than once. It should also be noted that certain cities, not only in the Peloponnese but in Central Greece as well, especially in the eastern part, were never captured by the insurgents or were captured only briefly—and hence the few *Neofotistoi* that have been identified there were usually later converts or had moved there from elsewhere.³⁰ These findings somewhat weaken certain conclusions by Nikolaou (1997), i.e., that there is a strong correlation between the distribution of *Neofotistoi*

²⁹ For example, Doxiadis 2021, paragraph 16, identified 3 men and 3 women in certain documents related to Leonidio, in Arcadia, and came to the conclusion –since that area had a very small or non-existent Muslim community– that the *Neofotistoi* were numerous, an assumption that he proceeds to generalize. As Doxiadis’s text shows, these were clearly Muslims from elsewhere who had some connection with the area, either because their parents or their Christian spouses held property there, or because they had simply moved there.

³⁰ Mostly in Central Greece.

and areas of widespread conversions to Islam, after the recapture of the Peloponnese by the Ottomans in 1715.³¹ The significant presence of *Neofotistoi* in cities and towns such as Salona (present-day Amfissa), Livadeia, Kalavryta, Argos, and Arkadia (present-day Kyparissia) undermines this assumption. Even though a connection could possibly be established between a number of settlements or groups of families, who were converted to Islam after 1715 and subsequently reconverted to Christianity, and seen as a factor signifying the number of *Neofotistoi* in an area, this connection could not be treated as a determining factor for the process of conversions and the actual number of *Neofotistoi* throughout the Peloponnese. There is no evidence to support the particular significance ascribed to this connection in areas outside Laconia and specific parts of Ēleia.³² Even more, in the rural settlements of Laconia³³ and parts of Ēleia this connection is not generally applicable. Correspondingly, in the *kaza* of Gastounē, which saw many conversions to Islam after 1715, in the many converted villages of the wider plain area, there are virtually no *Neofotistoi* to be found. They can be found only in some hill villages and a few villages in the south of the *kaza*.³⁴ In regards to more recent conversions to Islam, mainly those occurred after 1770 in some parts of Peloponnese, a connection with the aforementioned reconversion to Christianity can be detected. However, post-1770 conversions to Islam were rather numerically insignificant and did not necessarily result in reconversions after 1821.³⁵

³¹ Similar conclusions can also be found in Katsikas and Dimitriadis 2021, 307.

³² There are insufficient data to support that in these areas or in other areas of Ottoman Empire, the converted communities to Islam after a lapse of period of three generations, they still considered themselves as having some association to Christianity.

³³ It should be noted that is insufficient evidence about the origin of the inhabitants of many Muslim settlements in Laconia. Some of the inhabitants are locals (re)converted to Islam after 1715, while others might be Muslims fled from the area between 1685 and 1690 who resettled after 1715 and some others are new Muslim settlers of unknown origin.

³⁴ This conclusion could be reached even by a close reading of Nikolaou 1997.

³⁵ According to a report of the Acting Commissioner of Monemvasia, dated 26 August 1828, a part of those unconverted Muslims still residing in Monemvasia, did so as “descendants of recently converted to Islam” (“καταγόμενοι προσφάτως από Χριστιανούς») (Moschona 1980, 59).

Initial finding concerning Central Greece show a possible connection of resent conversions to Islam and reconversions after 1821 in a few settlements of Western Roumeli (Karlı İli). It should be stressed that these conversions concerned also the rural populations, a non-urban Islam, who had many relations with their Christian neighbors.

Moreover, contrary to previous studies, through my research so far, I have not been able to identify any correlation between particular linguistic-cultural groups and the issue of *Neofotistoi*. Apart from the singular example of the Albanian-speaking town of Lala, in which practically no conversions occurred, the town of Kalavryta stands as an indicative example of such a lack of correlation, since the Turkish language was still spoken there to some extent during the period in question.³⁶ To the above mentioned, should also be added two more elements: the adoption of certain older accounts concerning the occurrence of conversions due to “insufficient religious sentiment” among certain Muslim groups, and invented explanatory narratives referring to “an indifference to religion” by Albanian-speaking groups.

All these “justifications” are thought to have contributed to the conversions of Muslim inhabitants to Christianity. The rationale behind these older accounts—for example the fact that they highlighted the absence in many settlements of mescit or mosque,³⁷ and the invented narratives about lack of religious sentiment is not supported by archival sources. The absence of mescit or mosque is not indeed a fact for most of the rural settlements, even the minor ones. Additionally, there was a mosque or a mescit³⁸ in settlements which are considered as lacking one. In Laconia a mescit or a mosque have been traced in villages like Liantina, Xērokampi, Mousga, Kaminia, Agios Iōannis, Parori, Molaoi,

³⁶ Gritsopoulos 1971, 448, citing an 1828 report prepared in order to be sent to Capodistrias. In Kalavryta, many individuals converted while belonging to completely different social and possibly ethnolinguistic groups.

³⁷ In the beginning of the 19th century there were numerous small settlements that had no mosque or even mescit all over the Ottoman Empire. It is worth noting though that many small Christian settlements were lacking a church respectively.

³⁸ The term used for both buildings in Greek documents is *tzami* (cami). In some cases it is clear that a minaret exists but not in every case.

Perivolia and Vatika.³⁹ In Western Peloponnese in settlements like Zourtsa, Romanou and Phanari.⁴⁰ Even in the mixed village of Hrisso in Fokida, where no other Muslim settlement can be found nearby, a rather emblematic mosque was serving the small Muslim community.⁴¹

Similarly, the suggested correlation between Bektashism and conversions to Christianity, an argument that is advanced by Nikolaou (1997) and supported by Katsikas and Dimitriadis (2001, 307–308) has not been substantiated by own research. In any case, there is no proof to support the presence of *Bektaşî/Kızılbaş* communities in the rural areas of the Peloponnese and Central Greece and little is known about the influence of Halveti *tarikats* on Muslim populations of the above regions.⁴² The *tarikats* were very much involved in the spread of Islam in the Balkans. The narration formed suggests that this was a Balkan peculiarity and is related with the alleged “relaxed” religious practices adopted by Bektashism and other *tarikats* like the Halveti. In fact, *tarikats* were equally influential in the spread of Islam in many regions of the world, from South-East Asia to sub-Saharan Africa and Northern Caucasus. Additionally, misconceptions on the notion(s) of religious syncretism and a “relaxed” Islam are mostly older western perceptions sometimes mixed with political intentions.⁴³ There are no references that in the Balkans, let alone other areas of the world, adherents of *tarikats* presented a tendency to convert to Christianity or other religions.

Finally, the existence of Crypto-Christians in the regions under discussion is also not supported by the sources, at least as far as the term

³⁹ See respectively Nikolakakou 2011, 29, Tartarē 1966, 1, Laskaris 2002, 166–167, Mezinēs 2021, 3, Leake 1830 vol. I, 133 and *GSA*, Archive of the Court of Auditors 1831–1948 [CA], series 1, Roll books of land concession to Neofotistoi 1839–1904 [RN] 232, Leake 1830 vol. I, 129 and *GSA*, CA, RN 232, Petrakakos 1933, 23, Leake 1830 vol. III, 17, Belia 1980, 105.

⁴⁰ See respectively Tagarēs 1970, 114, *GSA*, CA, RN 232, *GSA*, CA, RN 232 and Leake 1830 vol. I, 69; Leake writes: “There are five or six mosques in Fanári”, quite probably referring to a group of villages in the area.

⁴¹ Liaskou 1982, 25–26, 40, 60 and *GSA*, CA, RN 232.

⁴² Nikolaou 1997, *passim*, also mentions those who were related to the *tarikats* of Halveti, an assumption repeated by Katsikas and Dimitriadis 2021, 307.

⁴³ As in the cases of Albanian nationalism and the Alevis in Turkey.

is used to categorize as such communities who consciously observed the fundamental practices and rituals of a different religion, other than the one they declared and were registered under.⁴⁴ Our approach to the issue of Crypto-Christians is somewhat different: Crypto-Christianity as has been described and practiced by certain communities in the course of 19th century is quite dissimilar to practices described in the 18th century in rural areas. The appearance of persons declaring simultaneously a Muslim and a Christian name in certain villages in a part of Ēleia and in some villages in Vardounia in early 19th century,⁴⁵ might be considered as a form of rural “religious fluidity”. Nevertheless, the attitude of the entire population of the town of Lala, again, during the War, suggests that no general pattern can be applied to these communities, a fact already known from the *Laraman communities* in the Balkans.

Furthermore, it must be taken to account that conversions in certain rural settlements left behind almost no traces, even if the process of conversion concerned whole villages. One characteristic example is provided by the villages of Ēleia: In 1950, Chrysathakopoulos named three extended families in Koulogli,⁴⁶ one family in Giarmena, one extended family in Lagatoura, while for the village of Basta he reported that the population was “entirely Turkish”, meaning Muslim.⁴⁷ Also, the case of Basta is indicative, since there is no indication of population movement to the settlement after 1821, and indeed it is one of the few villages in Ēleia where the Albanian language was spoken well up

⁴⁴ Nikolaou 1997, 273–284 proceeds to cast a doubt about the existence of Crypto-Christians through an incisive analysis of sources. However, his findings are not adopted by Katsikas and Dimitriadis 2021, 307–308. Katsikas and Dimitriadis (2021) perceive as singularly significant –and as a peculiarity of the Peloponnese– the existence of mixed marriages between Christians and Muslims, probably because they fail to realize that these were exclusively marriages between Muslim men and Christian women. This practice, which in many cases occurred without demanding the conversion of the wife, is in accordance with the teachings of some main Sunni schools (madhhab) which consider it as sanctioned by the Quran itself. These unions were not that rare in the Ottoman Empire, both in urban and rural regions.

⁴⁵ Nikolaou 1997, 242–243, 281.

⁴⁶ Most of the settlements that are mentioned have since been renamed. For a complete list of name changes see <https://settlement-renames.eie.gr/>.

⁴⁷ Chrysanthakopoulos 1950, *passim*.

until the 1940s.⁴⁸ However, there were large Muslim settlements which correspond to a disproportionately low number of *Neofotistoi* in the archives, despite the fact that we know from indirect references that their numbers were surely higher, such as in Athens and Lidoriki in Central Greece, and in parts of Gortynia and Ēraia in the Peloponnese.

In total, if the low numbers of *Neofotistoi* in Patras, Methonē, and Koronē, as well as in Thebes and perhaps Zapanti in Central Greece are excluded, there is reason to believe that in all other cases their numbers were relatively high.⁴⁹ The calculations by Nikolaou (1997, 349), that the numbers of *Neofotistoi* in the Peloponnese did not exceed 600 to 700 individuals, are incorrect. Nonetheless, any generalized conclusion would be arbitrary because of the peculiarities of each settlement. In this context, the hypothesis by Katsikas and Dimitriadis (2021, 310), who projected the figures of the two aforementioned catalogues to the entire country and estimated that the *Neofotistoi* made up about 1% of the total population of Greece, must be considered unfounded. It is still too early to make an estimate about the whole number of the *Neofotistoi*, since there is no sufficient information for many settlements, including cities and towns. After considering a part of the source material gathered, my research has yielded close to 2,000 individuals, while a total calculation of their number cannot be formulated presently, not even as a working hypothesis. In regard to the figures, one of the foremost examples is that of the village of Vatika in Laconia. The 1834 catalogue contains 27 to 31 individuals who cite Vatika as their place of origin and residence, and 9 citing a different place of origin and Vatika as their place of residence. However, by reviewing two more catalogues which contain 33 names from Vatika,⁵⁰ it was discovered that only around 20, at most, can be correlated with the contents of the 1834 catalogue. Interestingly, of the remaining 13 individuals 10 are male, which could conceal an unknown number of women and children too. For the rest of Laconia, the individuals not found in the 1834 catalogue

⁴⁸ Baltsiotis 2002, 265.

⁴⁹ These are the results of my research thus far.

⁵⁰ GSA, Secretariat/Ministry of Finance Archive: National Lands 1833–1869 (NL), series 3, subseries 1, file 1396.

but already identified and cross-referenced in my research are more than 200. This number, resulted from the analysis of only a fraction of the extant archival material. Another characteristic example is the province of Gytheio, which was virtually devoid of Muslim inhabitants before the War of Independence. By examining only the electoral registers and based exclusively on the surname and patronymic of voters in the province, more than 60 male *Neofotistoi*⁵¹ may be identified. Besides, the authorities themselves repeatedly admitted that, in Laconia where the conversions were numerous, there were hundreds of individuals that were not included in the catalogue(s).⁵²

In any case, the presence of *Neofotistoi* is fairly visible, and extensive, on a local level, and spreads beyond a few specific rural areas. If we exclude Tripolis, from where most of the indigenous *Neofotistoi* moved away, the figures are not negligible in other cities and towns, even in those which still remain mostly unexamined, such as Vostitsa (present-day Aigio) in Northern Peloponnese.

A case of young women and children?

The dominant perception about *Neofotistoi* is that they were mostly young women and minors. This is not entirely inaccurate, however my research places these assumptions into context. Indeed, in many cases the *Neofotistoi* appear to be women and individuals who were minors during 1821–1822.⁵³

In the comprehensive catalogue of Laconia, out of 361 individuals, around 63 women and 37 men appear to have been older than 15 or 16 years of age in 1821.⁵⁴ However, this estimate changes radically if one takes into account a group of settlements in Eastern Laconia that is mentioned in the catalogue, prominent among them the Monemvasia,

⁵¹ *GSA*, Collections of: a. Georgios Ladas b. Giannēs Vlachogiannēs Election material, Province of Gytheio (elections 1848–1874). For the peculiarity of the *Neofotistoi* in this region see below the sub-chapter “Social integration and mobility”.

⁵² See various documents in *GSA*, NL, series 3, subseries 8, files 1493–1516.

⁵³ The term “minor” is used somewhat improperly, since reference is made to persons younger than 15 or 16 years of age.

⁵⁴ It is clear that the ages recorded are, at best, of doubtful accuracy.

Sykia, Molaoi, Agios Nikolaos, and Vatika villages, which record around 117 individuals. Nearly half of them, about 23 women and 26 men, are shown to have been older than 15 or 16 years of age in 1821. Conversely, in the Nauplion catalogue, out of 140 individuals, many of whom were natives of Tripolis, there are no more than 6 men who were over 16–17 in 1821. It is worth mentioning that only 10 individuals are recorded as natives of Nauplion (plus 2 Jews). Thus, different patterns may be discerned: *Neofotistoi* households, on the one hand, and *Neofotistoi* who fled to the cities alone. From archival sources, other “in-between” categories may be identified, such as concentrations in relatively large settlements close to their place of origin, and poorer individuals who kept moving from town to town throughout the 1830s. So, there are many different “categories,” whose diversity is obscured by generalization. Also, as can be inferred from archival sources –and it is quite evident– some of them had passed away in the meantime, thus lowering even further the numbers of the *Neofotistoi*. Since most of the documents available to us date from 1833–1834 onwards, and particularly after 1838, the tendency is to “overlook”, apart from certain references, those who passed away 10 to 15 years after their conversion, who were mostly adults over 40 and children under 5. For example, as aforementioned, if the focus was on a different area of Laconia, i.e., in the province of Gytheio, an initial processing of the available material yields a significant number of adult men. On the contrary, concerning other areas, such as Livadeia in Central Greece, sources depict a probable pattern of family conversions, a fact which could apply to other towns as well, such as Vrachōri (present-day Agrinio) and Salona.

Later conversions and the non-converted

It is believed that during the Greek War of Independence, the Muslim captives who were not sold as virtual slaves could only be spared or/and remain in their place of origin if they converted to Christianity.⁵⁵ In most cases, this is an erroneous assumption. In the case of Muslim captives, religious conversion did not constitute a prerequisite for salvation. In

⁵⁵ See relevant reference in Doxiadis 2021, paragraph 8.

most instances, executions and forced conversions were separate and distinct practices, and the population had no choice in the matter. Many of the captives, especially in urban centers, who were not attached to Christian families spent their lives working in inhumane conditions, or were sold off to wealthy Christians, particularly the women, irrespective of whether they converted.⁵⁶

Besides, in many cases the baptisms took place many months or even years after captivity or the capture of a settlement. In at least 8 such cases out of 21 where the year of baptism is provided, this has been traced. In two of these cases, the baptisms took place between 1828 and 1830. Some individuals even remained Muslims until the end of the conflict.⁵⁷ Unfortunately, the catalogues of “Ottomans” that we know for certain that they were compiled before the mid-1830s, have not yet been located. However, through a series of documents related to the remaining Muslim inhabitants of Monemvasia in mid-1828, it is learned that 76 non-converted individuals were still residing in Monemvasia and, additionally, 34 poor females⁵⁸ lived in the neighbouring villages.⁵⁹ The explicit list of the 76 individuals demonstrate a variety of social stratification and, in most cases, family patterns. This particular case of non-conversion was not an exception as in another list, that of the “captives who resided temporarily in Nauplion”, dated 20 September 1828, 75 non converted *captives* are mentioned, some of them male.⁶⁰ It is indicative that out of the two aforementioned comprehensive *Neofotistoi* catalogues compiled in 1834 –one concerning the residents of Nauplion and the other those of Laconia– the former contains about 10 unbaptized individuals out of 140, while the latter contains

⁵⁶ This has already been described by Vakalopoulos 1941, but I should also mention two accounts, one by James Hamilton Browne and one by Edward John Trelawny in September 1823 from Tripolis: “[A] harem . . . might be formed on reasonable terms”, writes the former, while the latter reports “maidenhead as plentiful as blackberries” (Minta 2007, paragraph 31).

⁵⁷ Most of them were baptized later, while others moved to the Ottoman Empire.

⁵⁸ “Insignificant women” (“γυναικες ασήμαντοι”) in the text.

⁵⁹ Moschona 1980.

⁶⁰ *GSA*, Archive of the General Secretariat (Governor I. Capodistrias’ term) [1828–1833], file 128.

9 unbaptized out of 361 individuals. Baptisms took place up until well into the 1850s.⁶¹ The unbaptized usually –though not always– shared certain social characteristics: they were widows, unmarried women, and individuals of low socioeconomic status. Men constituted a minority.⁶² It seems that women who were not visible in society or did not participate in family functions could remain unbaptized within the new state.⁶³

Socioeconomic origins

One more erroneous assumption stems from the belief that mainly the descendants of wealthy families were spared, for the reason that they might have been useful in the hands of the rebels and, subsequently, they converted to Christianity. Available data allows us to claim with certainty that the converted belonged to every socioeconomic group.⁶⁴ It is not that rare in the documents to find persons classified as *Arabs* and *Ethiopians*, terms which were used to denote slaves, servants, or

⁶¹ From 1851 until 1860, 6 women and 1 man were baptized in Tripolis (Beloka 2017, 344).

⁶² Here are a few indicative cases of males: Dēmētrios Mimikos or Galanopoulos from Kalavryta, who fought on the side of the insurgents, remained unbaptized until 1830. In 1833 he escorted the Greek Committee which went to Munich to prepare the coronation of the new king. In 1839 he was a lieutenant of the gendarmerie (see various documents in *GSA*, NL, series 3, subseries 5, file 1486). Bekirēs Mallousēs from Kalavryta, living in Kerpinē, was still unbaptized in 1838 (see documents in *GSA*, NL, series 3, subseries 5, file 1467). Achmetēs from Tripolis, living in Marathonēsi (present-day Gytheio), 19 years old in 1838, had been baptized 4 or 5 years earlier (Diplomatic and Historical Archives of the Hellenic Ministry of Foreign Affairs (*DHAMFA*), Central Office, 1838, 76.1). In the sizeable *Neofotistoi* community of Salona, a certain Mehmetēs, scion of a wealthy family, was still a Muslim in the year 1831 (*GSA*, Historical Archives of Giannēs Vlachogiannēs, B' Manuscripts Catalogue, file 135).

⁶³ Hereby, the difference concerning those who arrived in Greece after the end of the conflict must be underlined. These individuals were largely exempted from these restrictions. Thus, out of two Muslim men (not converted) who are included in the electoral register of the city of Athens in 1847, one is mentioned as Athenian and the other as Macedonian (*GSA*, Collection of Georgios Ladas, Election material, Municipality of Athens elections).

⁶⁴ See relevant mention in Katsikas and Dimitriadis, 2021, 311.

manumitted slaves,⁶⁵ and also Gypsies.⁶⁶ The high percentage of affluent individuals in the archives, especially wealthy women, who were claiming back their considerable estates, further obscures the larger picture. However, apart from references to individuals with middle scale status, or with little or no family property, in the two aforementioned catalogues, individuals of similar status appear rather frequently in the rest of the material. Furthermore, the aforementioned hypothesis that many *Neofotistoi* who came from rural settlements were not recorded must be taken into account. This is a fact which could also modify the bigger picture of who the *Neofotistoi* actually were.

Integration into the new state

The relevant arrangements and the question of applicable law

Although the issue of the *Neofotistoi* had come under the attention of ecclesiastical authorities and the insurgents' executive and legislative bodies as early as the first years of the War, it would later stop being a priority. In June 1829 Capodistrias issued the first circular stipulating that some of the prior holdings of the *Neofotistoi* be returned to them.⁶⁷ He revisited the matter in January 1830 and once more in July 1830 with a letter to the Senate⁶⁸ which raised the subject of the restitution of the property of *Neofotistoi* "Turk children". In September 1830, he issued another circular stipulating the extent and characteristics of the real property to be allocated.⁶⁹ There were references of such restitutions as

⁶⁵ The term *Arab* (Αραβ or Αράβης (masc.) and Αραβίς or Αράβισ(σ)α (fem.) in Greek) might denote individuals and families of different social strata depending on the text.

⁶⁶ See below sub-chapter "Citizenship in the new state and the discourse concerning fellow-citizens".

⁶⁷ *General Gazette of Greece*, 79, 1 October 1830, 369–370 (see also Katsikas and Dimitriadis 2021, 314–315)

⁶⁸ Capodistrias 1987, 73.

⁶⁹ See for example Nakos 1970, 467–564, 499–500, where the relevant references can be found. For the process in the Senate, see *Αρχείο Ελληνικής Παλιγγενεσίας...* 2008, vol. 23, 20.

early as 1831.⁷⁰ Capodistrias' rationale was provisionally upheld by an unpublished Royal Decree in November 1833, and was then confirmed in 1836 with the Royal Decree of 21 April/10 May⁷¹ which provided for restitutions of a part of the previously held assets or other holdings, up to an equitable amount. The beneficiaries, in order to claim these assets, had to be residents of Greece in September 1830.

As to the rest of the citizens' relationships with the new authorities, the official legal framework was hardly implemented during the fledgling state's first few years. In the case of the *Neofotistoi*, there are hundreds of long-winded legal reports discussing the law they fell under, especially family and succession law, along with many decisions issued by the higher courts. The prevailing rationale in the new state was that, for events that had taken place prior to 1821, Ottoman law applied, or else, the law which pertained to legal relationships between Christians. However, after 1821 the "new law" went into effect, which was largely unformed even well into the 1840s.⁷² In practice, though, issues of property and relationships between natural persons, especially when they involved Muslims, were impossible to resolve without invoking or even applying Ottoman law.⁷³ Many times, the government's and the

⁷⁰ See for example a document dated 11/29 February 1849 (*GSA*, Secretariat/Ministry of Finance Archive (1833–1862), sub fond 1, sub fond 1 (Palace Archive), series 8, file 226). There are indications that properties were restituted even before the end of the war (see the decision by the Legislative Body [Βουλευτικόν] in July 1824, concerning the restitution of property to Panagiōtēs Tsakirēs who "even though a Turk, believes in Christianity" *Αρχαία της Ελληνικής Παλιγγενεσίας*, . . . 1862, vol. 2, 341).

⁷¹ *Government's Gazette* 20, 15 April 1836, 81–83. There followed one more Decree, in November 1838, concerning the monitoring of relevant procedures along with a relevant *Proclamation* by the Finance Minister, which redefined the restitution procedure.

⁷² Baltsiotis 2017, 46–47.

⁷³ Doxiadis 2021, paragraph 19 erroneously reports "In 1836 a permanent committee was established to deal with the properties of such women [sic] who, under Ottoman (Islamic) law, recognized by the Greek state since 1830 as the customary law for Muslims, were stripped of their inheritances". The committee he mentions is a Joint Committee with judicial powers (that is the reason why it is occasionally mentioned as a Judicial Committee) (see *Government's Gazette*, 35, 17 July 1836, 163–164). This committee ruled on the disputes that arose from property transactions in Eastern Central Greece (and Euboea) and only incidentally, and rarely, did it deal with matters

administration's intentions were defeated by the harsh facts of reality.⁷⁴ Ottoman family and succession law was the first to be used in order to resolve the controversial issues which emerged.⁷⁵ The decisions by the Court of Cassation would in turn make their own interpretation, usually defending the state's right in properties that constituted *Neofotistoi* inheritance,⁷⁶ but these decisions were inconsistent. As has been correctly pointed out, there was no judicial interest in drafting a uniform body of case law and so the various issues that turned up were decided in an ad hoc and completely inconsistent manner.⁷⁷ The tremendous delays in resolving the *Neofotistoi* cases, sometimes running to dozens of years, should not be seen as the authorities' negative stance on the issue of restitutions. Rather it was an endemic problem within the fledgling state, especially in matters pertaining to property. On the other hand, the process of the restitution of property exhibits signs of a high degree of organization,⁷⁸ which was not carried over to most aspects of everyday life, a fact that was common occurrence during that period.

There was also another factor at play, concerning the relations between the government and the local authorities as far as the *Neofotistoi* are concerned. The latter served the aspirations and expectations of

pertaining to the *Neofotistoi* who came from these regions (Baltsiotis 2017, 65–91). There was no committee tasked with the *Neofotistoi* issue.

⁷⁴ For a few examples of the solutions given, see *GSA*, Secretariat/Ministry of Finance Archive (1833–1862), sub fond 1, sub fond 1 (Palace Archive), series 8, file 226. Some of the notable cases are those of Angelikē, spouse of Chasanēs; Vasilikē, formerly Emine, daughter of Machmout Aga Elioglou and spouse of Chavouzēs Lasti[otēs]; Konstantinos Laliotēs, son of Chousein, and his *Neofotistē* mother, Maria.

⁷⁵ For example, see the cases of Magdalēnē, daughter of Machmout Loumēs from Lakedaimon, Panagiōtēs Fasakoutas from Mantinea, and Maria, daughter of Moustafa Moutzos from Korinthos. The legal framework and procedure for resolving disputes between *Neofotistoi* and their Muslim relatives in Euboea and cities such as Athens, that is, where Muslims retained their property, is erroneously generalized by Katsikas and Dimitriadis 2021, 316.

⁷⁶ Ioannidēs 1874, 3787. However, see contrary decision concerning Serifēs/Serifopoulos from Kalavryta, who was baptized along with his children “because of need or fear” (ibid. 3228).

⁷⁷ Karipsiadis 1992, 229, 239.

⁷⁸ See for example the relevant tables and expert reports in *GSA*, NL, series 3, subseries 2, file 1410.

the local population.⁷⁹ The pattern of opposition between central and regional authorities in minorities' policy would bedevil the Greek state for the next two centuries. However, it should be acknowledged, that the tolerance of the policies implemented by local authorities which were non-aligned politically to the government ultimately constituted a central political choice for the government.

Social integration and mobility

The restitutions to the *Neofotistoi* were never met with significant resistance from the population. In instances, however, where the *Neofotistoi's* previous property was considered as a non-transferable public property, and where subsequently they were offered alternatively property elsewhere, the local communities reacted negatively. The *Neofotistoi* newcomers were granted land that the locals were expecting to cultivate themselves. The most indicative example here is the case of the Bertzova village in Arcadia: the settlement's fertile lands were preferred by *Falangites*⁸⁰ and *Neofotistoi*, to the great dissatisfaction of the local population, since close to half of all available land had been given to "outsiders".⁸¹ This example pertaining to the reaction of the locals demonstrates the significance of *Neofotistoi* issue, as a problem which should not have been underestimated.

Furthermore, the fact that behind some wealthy *Neofotistes* women were husbands wielding a certain influence does not explain the great number of restitutions. An illuminating incident is the case of a *Neofotistos* who denied the existence of his two brothers in Izmir, so that his claim on family lands would not be reduced.⁸² The extent of the issue is clearly demonstrated by another example: Fōtios Chrysanthopoulos or Fōtakos, a figure of the Greek War of Independence, was accused of fraud by the residents of Kalavryta. He spotted a certain *Neofotistē*

⁷⁹ Baltsiotis 2017.

⁸⁰ Officers of irregular units who were organized into a special force after the end of the War of Independence, in 1835.

⁸¹ *Πρακτικά των Συνεδριάσεων της Βουλής* [...], vol. 1, 1846, 346.

⁸² See the document dated 1st October 1838 in *DHAMFA*, Central Office, 1839, 68.1 A–B.

woman without relatives, living in the mountainous region of Ēleia, and presented her as heiress of a huge fortune. In reality, Maria Davla, 60 years old, was the daughter of “an Ottoman, who had arrived in the area as a laborer. Her mother, an Ethiopian, was named Eli and was the sister of manumitted Ethiopians ... both her father and mother had no property and did not own enough land for their own grave”.⁸³

The social diversity of *Neofotistoi* is also reflected to some degree in the ways that they were integrated into the new state. Beyond that, though, the interminable delays in returning to them even a fraction of their property, along with reactions in the local level, contributed to some of them falling to poverty and others moving to the towns and cities.⁸⁴ It seems, in general, that the majority of rural *Neofotistoi* populations, along with those who remained in their place of residence, usually shared the fate of their Christian neighbours. For example, in an electoral register, the *Neofotistoi* of Langadia are mentioned as masons, the profession that is practiced by nearly the entire male population of the settlement.⁸⁵ However, it was not that uncommon for some individuals, or even whole families, to live their lives as pariahs, or at the level of an extremely low socioeconomic status, especially those who had left their place of origin to move elsewhere.⁸⁶ It must be emphasized that women who had married men with a certain social standing in Greek society are over-represented in the archival material, and this somewhat obscures the issue. It is true, nonetheless, that a large number of military men, especially officers and former captains of the irregulars, but also many powerful figures of the economic and social life of the country, married *Neofotistes* women in order to take advantage of their property.⁸⁷

⁸³ This document from 1850 and a number of documents relevant to this case are to be found in *GSA*, NL, series 3, subseries 5, files 1479 and 1482.

⁸⁴ See for example certain instances in *GSA*, NL, series 3, subseries 2, file 1389.

⁸⁵ We cannot rule out that they had already been practicing this profession, which means that there was not a disparity between the two religious groups as regards their profession.

⁸⁶ See for example Kōnstantinidēs-Trifylios 1961, 154–155. For the course of certain families see Trilikēs 2008, 17, 20–21, 207, 254–255, 260–261.

⁸⁷ This was a practice which was followed even by individuals coming from territories where there were no *Neofotistoi*. One example is the case of shipowner Ēlias

There are two more factors, at first glance paradoxical, which must be considered: these factors concern the participation of *Neofotistoi* and non-converted individuals in insurgent units, but also their professional career after the end of the war. First, after reviewing close to 1,000 individuals, especially from regions of the Peloponnese, of whom adult males in 1821 were no more than 200, 22 to 27 individuals, who had joined the insurgent forces, were identified. This practise is more prevalent in Laconia, but it is by no means absent in other regions⁸⁸ as well. It seems that the chieftains conscripted many *Neofotistoi* and non-converted in the armed units. Indeed, one of them is mentioned after 1828 as lieutenant in active service, and one more as a captain. Further research is required to ascertain whether these were individuals exclusively from the Peloponnese, or whether some of them had been captives who had arrived in the Peloponnese from abroad.⁸⁹ The second paradox is that a significant number of *Neofotistoi*, after 1828, was employed in the gendarmerie. At least 4 to 5 such constables have been identified (all of whom of non-Laconian origin) along with one lieutenant of the gendarmerie.

On the other hand, Katsikas and Dimitriadis (2021, 319–320) correctly report instances of hostility toward the *Neofotistoi* or them having a reduced capacity for social mobility, although these references concern mostly specific segments of the public sector. Nevertheless, we should not generalize on the notion of discrimination or non-discrimination against the *Neofotistoi* based on certain instances, since they usually reflect ex-post perceptions about social exclusion of specific groups in Greece. For example, the Greek army continued to include in

Kammenos, son of Panagiōtēs, from Galaxeidi, who married Maria Omeraga Aliaga Levaditou “from a fine family” (*GSA*, NL, series 3, subseries 1, files 1389. See also file 1394).

⁸⁸ The case of Serifēs, later known as Christodoulos, from Nauplion, is indicative (see various documents in *GSA*, NL, series 3, subseries 1, file 1389).

⁸⁹ Katsikas and Dimitriadis (2021, 321) erroneously consider those who are described as “Muslim philhellenes” to be indigenous Muslims. These are individuals of diverse origin (from Anatolia to Albania) which joined the insurgent forces for various reasons. This misconception arose from a study which included in the “Muslim philhellenes” half a dozen indigenous Muslims (see Loucatos 1980).

its ranks Muslim officers who had come from abroad until the end of the 19th century, a practice which was later abandoned. The occupational profile of many of the *Neofotistoi*, as inferred by the electoral registers and other documents, does not support a hypothesis of discrimination, for example in the area of practicing a variety of professions. In any case, any alleged discrimination does not affect the restitutions that took place later,⁹⁰ neither the descendants of the *Neofotistoi*. Furthermore, something which might be of more significance is that no administrative document contains even a passing mention of the *Neofotistoi* as a distinct category of second-class citizens or raises doubts about their inclusion in the nation.

The conversions that took place in Euboea after 1833, when a central authority had already been established in the region, along with the terms of the social integration of the converted, constitute a separate and distinct issue.⁹¹ In the large Muslim population of Chalkida, the conversions began after 1840, in stark contrast to with the relatively remote Kızıl Hisar (present-day Karystos), where they began as soon as the Greek authorities were installed there.⁹² However, in the case of Euboea we should not focus so much on the local authorities' arbitrary behavior and potential economic benefits, but rather on the conversions' considerable symbolic significance.⁹³

The rationale of charity

Frequently, when property was restituted, the decision stated that this practice was against the law, and that it was being allowed for reasons of

⁹⁰ For example, in the restitutions of 1881 and 1882 in the village of Belesi, in Gortynia. In this settlement 4 male *Neofotistoi* can be identified, of whom one was not indigenous (see Papastamatiou 2012, 213–225).

⁹¹ Further confusion often arises, since, as early as the beginning of the 1840s, there were conversions of immigrants, usually of Gypsies. See also the confusion between place of origin and place of baptism (Athens instead of Chalkida) in Doxiadis 2021, paragraph 23. We will not comment on the findings by Doxiadis 2021 concerning the Muslim and Jewish communities of Euboea, since he is unaware of the relevant literature.

⁹² For example, see *DHAMFA*, Central Office, 1833, 76.1.

⁹³ Baltsiotis 2017.

clemency or charity.⁹⁴ This was the dominant rationale. Some individuals were granted property when previously they had none, and there have been a handful of cases where individuals who were not residents of the country were given back part of their property. The same rationale applied to certain regions, such as Attica and Euboea, where Muslims kept their property, since those territories were not considered as having been captured by insurgents. This practice went against the clear instructions by Governor Capodistrias stipulating that the *Neofotistoi* had no inheritance rights, according to the Ottoman law concerning “those converting [from Islam] to another religion”.⁹⁵ It is also indicative that, from the end of the 1830s, many Muslims who resided or arrived in Athens, the capital of the new state, to resolve the disputes that had arisen with regard to the sale of their property, received a “welfare benefit” by the state.⁹⁶ These policies are undoubtedly significant in their own right and reveal the position of the fledgling state, which will be examined below, but it should not be underestimated that “unlawful” restitutions of any kind were far from the exception during the period in question. Furthermore, as we shall see, these policies concealed underlying political motives.

Citizenship in the new state and the discourse concerning fellow-citizens

Contrary to various suggestions,⁹⁷ citizenship policies during the first years of the Greek state have long been discussed in academia.⁹⁸ The initial approaches which applied at least up to 1826 were severe to the point of being against all presence of Muslims in the new state: the National Assembly, in its instructions to the Assembly Committee which had

⁹⁴ For many such documents see for example *GSA*, Secretariat/Ministry of Finance Archive (1833–1862), sub fond 1, sub fond 1 (Palace Archive), series 8, file 226.

⁹⁵ See the document sent by the Governor dated 24 February 1831, addressed to *The Committee for Attica and Euboea* (*GSA*, NL, series 4, subseries 12, file 1871).

⁹⁶ For similar cases, see *DHAMFA*, 1839, 7.1 A–Γ and 1841, 7.1 A–B.

⁹⁷ Including the one in Doxiadis 2021, paragraph 1.

⁹⁸ See mainly Vogli 2008, 191–204 and Baltiotis 2017, 177–207, Baltiotis 2022 (forthcoming); read also critically Karipsiadis 1992, 288–315.

been formed by its own members, based on the *Secret Resolution*, placed limits to negotiations with the admonishment “to press unflinchingly, so that no Turk can have property or permanent residence in Greece”.⁹⁹ The reservations of the enlighteners such as Adamantios Coray and Jeremy Bentham were eventually assuaged,¹⁰⁰ and contrary to the provisions of what is now known as the three Revolutionary Constitutions, drafted between 1822 and 1827 about granting citizenship only to Christians, in 1833 citizenship was eventually granted to the members of the sole organized Jewish community that existed in the 1830s in Greece,¹⁰¹ but also to the few Muslims, indigenous or not, who had supported the insurgency.¹⁰² The regime which was established in 1833 employed a more liberal approach to the issue. It must be underlined here that the 1830 Protocols and the relevant “notes” of the three Great Powers to Capodistrias limited the legal obligations of the Greek state with regard to “the equality of civil and political rights” to Christians only.¹⁰³

According to the aforementioned inclusive approach, all *Neofotistoi*, men and women, were granted Greek citizenship.¹⁰⁴ Perhaps what is more compelling is that even sedentary Muslim Gypsies who converted were granted citizenship.¹⁰⁵ The suggestion is that at the time, the

⁹⁹ Mamoukas 1839, 95–96.

¹⁰⁰ Despite their vacillations over the years, they were mostly unwilling or cautious in granting citizenship, permanent residence, or property to Muslims. Especially for Bentham, see for example Penna 2005. Katsikas and Dimitriadis (2021, 314) express the opposite opinion; Doxiadis (2021, paragraph 13) correctly points out the views of the two intellectuals.

¹⁰¹ Vogli 2008, 195–199; Baltiotis 2022 (forthcoming).

¹⁰² As regards the indigenous Muslims, it has been confirmed so far with absolute certainty the case of Metos Brachopoulos, who appears in the 1844 electoral register, as well as one more individual who resided in Nauplion and was hired as a civil servant. For those who had originated outside the kingdom, see Baltiotis 2017, *passim*. Greek citizenship was granted to other Muslims, tentatively at first, from 1850s onwards (Baltiotis 2017, 177–189, 288–305).

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 179–180.

¹⁰⁴ It is worth noting an 1848 decision by the Court of Cassation which confirms the rights of *Neofotistoi* to Greek citizenship (Karipsiadis 1992, 307).

¹⁰⁵ Cases like this can be found in the province of Olympia (especially in the municipality of Skillous). For example, see the case of the village of Makrysia in the electoral registers of 1871 (*GSA*, Election Material from Vlachogiannēs Collection, series 1,

Greek state, by granting citizenship to the aforementioned categories, and also to the “visible” Greek-Orthodox Gypsies, and furthermore, by introducing the 1835 Nationality Act based on principles of *jus soli*, introduced fundamentally liberal policies, contrary to legal approaches and practices of Serbian revolutioners, for example, during that same period.

As discussed earlier, the restitutions to the *Neofotistoi* were undoubtedly connected with the fact that converting to Orthodox Christianity resulted in inclusion in the nation. However, we should not overlook much baser motivations for this inclusion, such as that which is revealed in a letter by Capodistrias, dated August 1830, reminding the Senate to authorize restitutions to the *Neofotistoi*: “The Ottomans who converted to the Christian religion, at some point had fortunes and substantial property, and have now been reduced to poverty, so that many of them are planning to go to Turkey, since they lack any means of making a living in Greece. We think it is our duty to make haste and prevent such a scandalous development, and to this end we know of no other way than the one we previously announced”.¹⁰⁶ It is quite revealing that these measures caused a backlash in the Senate.¹⁰⁷

After the death of Capodistrias, the *Neofotistoi* restitution remained a divisive matter. Despite the fact that the National Assembly generally judged restitutions as “justified and charitable,” because of “*strong reactions*” by its members, and despite the favorable opinion by the Explanatory Committee, a decision dated March 1832 attempted to reduce the amount of property to be restituted to every *Neofotistos* and annulled prior restitutions.¹⁰⁸

But it was the outlook of the new Bavarian authorities which inaugurated a clear shift: this was evident in the Declaration by the

file 40). It is worth noting that a part of sedentary and most of itinerant Gypsies granted Greek citizenship according to legislation entered into force in 1968 and 1978–1979.

¹⁰⁶ *Αρχαία της Ελληνικής Παλιγγενεσίας...*, vol. 21, 2008, 59–60.

¹⁰⁷ See *ibid.* 95, where the answer of Capodistrias to the Senate (dated 22 January 1831) is included.

¹⁰⁸ For all of the above see *Αρχαία της Ελληνικής Παλιγγενεσίας...*, vol. 5, 1974, 58–63, 147, 157–163.

Viceregency, dated 10/22 February 1833, which imposed certain safeguards and effectively welcomed those “adherents of the Ottoman religion” who wanted to remain in the new state,¹⁰⁹ but also the exemplary conduct of the Bavarian army towards the Muslim population during the capture of Euboea. The approach advanced by the Bavarians, along with a not insignificant portion of Greek politicians –who at any rate were occupying the leading administrative positions at the same time– proved decisive in the treatment of diverse religious groups which were included in the Greek state.¹¹⁰

The policies implemented in the *Neofotistoi* issue were part of a wider rationale, where citizenship and inclusion in the nation went beyond the Greek-Orthodox religion. In a state founded after a revolution, the provisions related to citizenship included in the body politic those who “took up arms” and joined the insurgents. Those who had participated in the *struggle* had earned the right to remain non-converted, contrary to the provisions of the articles concerning citizenship in the 1827 Constitution as well as the Nationality Act of 1835, which referred to the Constitution. According to them, only *indigenous* Christians and Christians who had come *to* “join the fight” were granted citizenship. However, a much more open interpretation prevailed, and citizenship was granted both to Muslims who moved to insurgent territories and to indigenous ones.

To this extend, let us first consider the notorious cases of “doctors” such as Brachopoulos and Dritsakos –whose wife, Fatme Balaka, also remained unbaptized– as well as Chasan Kourtalēs. The latter married again and raised a Muslim family in Chalkida and along with Ibraïm Arnaoutoglou, a well-known landowner from Kalavryta, they kept a significant part of their property and lived, along with their descendants, as members of the Muslim community of Chalkida –and most of them as Greek citizens– at least until the end of the 19th century.¹¹¹ On the

¹⁰⁹ *Government's Gazette*, 2, 22 February 1833, 8–9. For a similar unpublished “Declaration” dated 10 August 1830, signed by Capodistrias and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, see Baltsiotis 2017, 107–108.

¹¹⁰ Baltsiotis 2017. Doxiadis 2021, paragraph 30, argues in favor of the contrary.

¹¹¹ See in detail Baltsiotis 2017, 167–172, 184–189, 234–235, 288–289, 298–301.

contrary, the application of a Muslim from Karystos to be granted citizenship in 1852, was rejected because “not only did he not join the struggle, but also fought against it”, and also because his father had emigrated, thereby “confirming he was an alien”.¹¹²

However, the discourse concerning these *fellow citizens* had been formulated still earlier. As early as 1828, Bayramēs Liapēs, an armed insurgent who had come from abroad, wrote to Capodistrias: “I am a Turk by religion, Albanian by race, but a Greek citizen, because I fought for the Greek struggle for freedom right from the start; and I fought of my own free will”.¹¹³ Many years later, a *Neofotistos* from Tripolis who was living in Kalamata, stated in his application that he had joined the insurgency “fighting as a Greek”. It goes without saying that these views were not written by the hand of illiterate soldiers, but by literate men who undertook to submit their complaints to the administrative authorities, however they do reveal that these and similar ideas were already prevalent.

After being baptized, an individual’s shift to a different *quality* was particularly pronounced during the first years after the establishment of the Greek state and would continue to be so. In 1840, a document by the Authorities of Chalkida to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs related to a *Neofotistē* woman mentions the following: “She used to be an Ottoman, but now she is a baptized Christian, she is Greek, and she is subject to the religious and political Laws of Greece, that she will remain in Greece, her Homeland”.¹¹⁴ This shift of *quality* also results in corresponding favorable legal decisions in the courts—in the majority of cases. In 1849, the Court of Cassation decided that “he took the Greek-Orthodox religion and thus became Greek”.¹¹⁵ This way of thinking resulted in a shift of the authorities’ rhetoric. In October 1852, the Finance Minister,

¹¹² For all of the above see Baltiotis 2017, 177–189. In any event, it was suggested to the applicant from Karystos to reapply for citizenship following the procedure for naturalisation.

¹¹³ The document was brought to our attention by Stathis 2010.

¹¹⁴ Baltiotis 2017, 191.

¹¹⁵ Karipsiadis 1992, 240.

introducing a bill to reconstitute the property of Metos Brachopoulos¹¹⁶ from Arkadia, who had joined the insurgents as a surgeon, said in Parliament: “This moderate and rightful application [to reconstitute his property] by this Ottoman in religion, surely, but a Greek in spirit and homeland, Brachopoulos ... Gentlemen! There were Ottomans who chose to remain in this country and to join the fight of Greeks as surgeons, as in this case, or soldiers”. Furthermore, the rapporteur of the draft law said: “The Ottoman Metos Osta Brachopoulos and his wife ... earned their right to this country’s gratitude ... and, fighting as a genuine Greek ... against his coreligionists ... he is an Ottoman in religion only, and Greek in heart and soul”.¹¹⁷ In order to complete the picture, we should note that the “loss” of a *Neofotistos* was considered a symbolic failure of the national community.¹¹⁸ Conversions to Orthodox Christianity after 1833, meaning those which took place mainly in Euboea, were a matter of “national pride”¹¹⁹ of such importance that they endangered Greek-Ottoman relations.¹²⁰

Conclusions

The previous studies stress the significance of religious fluidity in the *Neofotistoi* issue. The logic of total segregation, as well as irreversible conversions, stem from stereotypes and misconceptions rather than from actual reality. However, there was no religious fluidity in the sense that is raised by the studies, as common rituals, religious and everyday practices and beliefs do not alter the fact that strong boundaries between religious communities were of vital importance in Ottoman society. In the Ottoman Empire, conversions to Christianity were a state of exception

¹¹⁶ He was married and had four children.

¹¹⁷ *Πρακτικά των Συνεδριάσεων της Βουλής...*, vol. 2, 1852, 660–661, 758–759. A similar rhetoric (“Greek in spirit”) would be repeated a few years later in the case of Gioupēs Dritsakos from Laconia (see also Katsikas and Dimitriadis 2021, 313).

¹¹⁸ Particularly indicative is a case from 1860, when a recently baptized woman, hailing from Crete, was handed over to the Ottoman authorities, causing a backlash in the Senate (*Πρακτικά των Συνεδριάσεων της Γερουσίας...* 1860, 851–858).

¹¹⁹ Baltiotis 2017, 189–207; Vogli 2008, 200–204.

¹²⁰ Baltiotis 2017, 189–207.

in the beginning of the 19th century. However, it became more and more prevalent during the Greek War of Independence. Thus, apart from the well-known mass conversions to Christianity in Livadeia and the subsequent “return” to Islam by many of the converted afterwards, there were many other similar cases which point to a “violation of the rules.” This “violation” continued after the end of the conflict, when certain individuals –even some who had fought on the side of the insurgents– chose to leave Greece, and others sought their relatives to take them to the Ottoman Empire and thus convert them back to Islam.¹²¹

Undoubtedly, conversions, both in rural and urban communities, were of great importance for both the Greeks and the Ottomans. Conversions were not strongly facilitated by common or similar practices in everyday life, by common ideas, ceremonies, or religious rituals of the groups concerned. Similarities between the various religious and ethnolinguistic groups in any given territory were rather the rule in the Ottoman Empire, but simultaneously, it should not be taken for granted that the boundaries of religious belonging were permeable.

The social integration of *Neofotistoi* in the first place, was undoubtedly connected with the religious definition of the Greek nation. However, this is an issue that stands as separate and distinct from religious conversions in general, or from shifts between Christian denominations or competing Orthodox Churches, i.e., processes which have afflicted the Balkans from the third quarter of the 19th century, that is, since Balkan nationalisms were dominant and national ideas had sufficiently disseminated in the communities.

Through this particular case study and the issues that were touched upon in this paper -i.e., the partial acceptance of the tiny number of Muslims and Jews, and the inclusive practices of granting citizenship- emerge certain liberal political choices during the period in question which subvert, to some degree, our perception of the Greek state during

¹²¹ For example, a woman arrived in 1835 from the Ottoman Empire in Aegina to collect her daughter, while that same year two unbaptized children were sought in order to be returned to their relatives, a boy of 14 and a girl of 9 from Tripolis (*DHAMFA*, Central Office, 1835, 68.1 A).

the 19th century. As has been shown by other studies¹²² and as it has also been suggested by the author,¹²³ until the demise of Greek irredentism –known as *Megali Idea*– the policies of integration and inclusion followed were more flexible. In other words, the civic nation was not absent in Greece during the 19th century. It appears, however, that many of our perceptions of Greek nationalism are based on a very narrow notion of the Greek nation, which became prevalent much later, after the collapse of the *Megali Idea* and the population exchanges that followed, and especially after the Greek Civil War.

¹²² Such as Christopoulos 2012.

¹²³ Baltiotis 2017, Baltiotis 2022 (forthcoming).

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