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## Claiming “Imagined Property”: *Ṭasfiye Ṭalebnāmes* and the Lost Material World of Migrants after the Greek-Turkish Population Exchange of 1923–24

### Abstract

According to the exchange convention signed in Lausanne in January 1923, all people who were ‘subject to the exchange’ between Greece and Turkey were entitled to compensation in the receiving country with property of a value equal to that they left behind. In 1925, the Mixed Commission asked ‘exchangees’ in Turkey to fill in ‘applications for property liquidation’. These documents provide a wealth of information about ‘exchangees’ that was previously unavailable.

This article studies a sample of these applications (*ṭasfiye ṭalebnāme*) that were drawn up in 1925 in western Turkey in order to find out how the applicants described their houses, living conditions and belongings back in Greece. Utilizing theoretical approaches from anthropological literature, the article analyses these standardised forms as places of encounter between the bureaucracy and those who were subject to the exchange convention. The property listed is conceptualized as “imagined”, i.e., lost property that people had to present in certain ways in order to be compensated for it. The paper traces different presentation strategies in the documents, showing how social status, bureaucratic literacy and narrative content were utilised in this endeavour.

**Keywords:** Greek-Turkish population exchange, Turkey 1922-, property liquidation, memory, material culture, mixed commission

### 1. Introduction

Who were the people who were forced to migrate to Turkey in the course of the so-called population exchange? We know hardly anything about them: scholars studying the Turkish side of the story have done so mostly by working with settlement records in which individual “exchangees” appear with little more than their names and their places of origin. We therefore know next to nothing about the individuals who were settled in Turkey, and even less about the circumstances they lived in, neither in Greece nor in Turkey. The one autobiographical account written by an adult exchangee that I am aware of narrates the experience of a member of the late Ottoman elite and is probably not very representative of the average exchangee’s experience.<sup>1</sup> Oral

1 For example, the autobiography of Reşat D. Tesal, a former deputy to the Greek parliament: Tesal 1998.

history projects among exchangees in Turkey only started in the late 1990s, with elderly interview partners who had immigrated when they were children.<sup>2</sup> By contrast, the Centre for Asia Minor Studies in Athens started to collect the memories of Greek Orthodox exchangees as early as the 1930s, while surviving Armenians in various countries were already writing “book[s] of memories” (*houshamadyan*, plural *houshamadyanner*) about their communal life in Anatolia in the 1920s.<sup>3</sup>

As far as we know, Muslim exchangees in Turkey did not write memory books resembling *houshamadyanner*. However, starting in 1925, they were asked to draw up lists of the movable and immovable property they had left behind in Greece. These applications for liquidation or *taşfiye talebnāmes*, though written for the purely bureaucratic purpose of establishing compensation claims, can be read against the grain in order to gather information about the material culture, professions and class background of exchangees, both prior to and shortly after their forced migration to Turkey. The present article analyses the ways in which exchangees presented the property they had lost with regard to two issues. On the one hand, it traces how the description of material culture differs from person to person by comparing the lists of objects in selected *talebnāmes*. On the other, it shows how class background, language skills, educational level and access to social networks, and thus the context in which the documents were filled in, were inscribed in the text. The article has three parts: the first is devoted to an explanation of the historical context, the state of the art and to methodological questions. The second provides a detailed description of five selected *talebnāmes* in order to show which strategies the applicants used in their bureaucratic struggle for compensation. The third part is comprised of two thematic sections that discuss several documents at once, with regard to the information they provide about the organisation of social space and markers of social status among the applicants. The article ends with a conclusion of its findings.

## 2. Historical Context: The ‘Population Exchange’ and the Mixed Commission

On 30 January 1923, representatives of the Greek and Turkish governments at the Lausanne peace conference signed the convention on a mutual and compulsory population exchange between the two countries. With this document, they sealed the fate of more than a million Greek Orthodox people from Anatolia and Thrace who had been forced to leave their homeland in 1922. In addition, they forced about 300,000 Muslims who were still living in Greece, including Crete, to migrate to Anatolia and Eastern Thrace, and about 300,000 Christians still in Anatolia to leave for Greece. The convention included an ambitious scheme for property compensation: every ex-

2 The oral history literature about exchangees is extensive; selected early titles are Özsoy 2007 and Gökaçtı 2004.

3 For a study based on the memories collected by the Asia Minor Center, see Doumanis 2013. For the genre of *houshamadyan*, and reconstructions of Armenian town and village life, see <http://www.houshamadyan.org/home.html> (accessed: 30.10.2019).

changee migrant would be entitled to compensation for the movable and immovable property he or she would (or had already) left behind. Exchangees would be compensated with property of equal value rather than money. Those who had migrated since the beginning of the First Balkan War were included into this scheme. Ownership of the property in question would only pass to the respective government once a comprehensive appraisal had been completed, and the country ending up with more would have to pay the difference in gold currency to the other one. The convention merely stated this principle, leaving the details of appraisal, recording and subsequent assignment of equal-value property to be worked out by a Mixed Commission (henceforth: MC), an international institution that would be set up soon.<sup>4</sup>

The compensation scheme may have looked good on paper, but in practice it was simply impossible to accurately appraise, record and re-assign houses, fields and other property owned by roughly 1.5 million people. Apart from the sheer numbers involved, there was also the problem that houses and fields, especially those in Turkey, had already been left behind and quickly been taken over by neighbours and other locals long before the migrants arrived.<sup>5</sup> It turned out that it was relatively easy to transfer people, but much harder to find shelter for them. Soon, their compensation also became a major headache for the Turkish state. Referring to the compensation process in Greece, a contemporary observer noted that ‘the scheme would only work at a time when it is improbable that anyone would think of putting it into practice[,]’ – in times of peace.<sup>6</sup> In a post-war setting the efforts of the MC were bound to fail, and scholars of the population exchange have shown that it did indeed fail.<sup>7</sup>

Its eventual failure notwithstanding, the MC (which operated until 1932) produced a great number of important sources. This is particularly true for applications for the liquidation of property left behind in the respective home country. These documents were distributed and filled in between 1925 and 1929 both in Greece and in Turkey. In Turkey, they were known as *taşfiye talebnāmes*. They were drawn up as a result of one of the follow-up agreements between Greece and Turkey, which upheld the idea of individual appraisal of all property involved in the exchange, and were supposed to be checked against the imperial land register (*defter-i bâkānî*) in Istanbul. By January 1929, MC staff had merely started to classify the documents according to regions of origin, classes of property and amounts claimed. Only 20,100 applications out of 1,022,000 submitted from both countries had been classified between November 1928 and January 1929. A report drawn up at that time did not mention the possibility of checking them against *tapu* registers, but discussed schemes for *in situ* appraisal.<sup>8</sup>

4 To this day, the most detailed account of the work of the Mixed Commission is provided by Ladas 1932. For the follow-up agreements concerning property compensation, see Yıldırım 2006. For a detailed study of property compensation in the province of Izmir, see Morack 2017.

5 Morack 2016.

6 Eddy 1931, 228.

7 Yıldırım 2006, 176; Ladas 1932, 460.

8 Ladas 1932, 559.

This idea was abandoned in 1930 with the so-called Athens agreement, which officially ended the exchange between the two countries. The *tasfiye talebnāmes* were shelved. While both countries eventually compensated their exchangees, it took decades, rather than years, to perform this task, and most people ended up deeply disappointed with the results.<sup>9</sup> The documents, which became available in Turkey only in the 2010s, thus testify to an aborted and unsuccessful bureaucratic procedure.

### 3. State of the Art

So far, only two scholars have worked with *tasfiye talebnāmes*.<sup>10</sup> The first was Erhan Çelebi, who, back in 2006, stated that the documents would ‘allow scholars to gain insights into the personal details of exchangees, their professions, places of origin, first places of settlement in Turkey, to learn more about the movable and immovable property they owned, and thus their economic power’.<sup>11</sup>

When Çelebi wrote his article, the actual *talebnāmes* were not yet available to researchers, who still had to contend themselves with a 21-volume (!) paper catalogue of the documents. It may be for this reason that he (wrongly) assumed that most *talebnāmes* were drawn up in Greece. They should indeed have been filled in by sub-commissions of the MC, which were supposed to provide the migrants with documentation of their property *prior* to their departure. In practice, however, most documents were filled in years after the applicants’ departure from their homelands.

Today, scans of the documents that were submitted in Turkey are available both at the Ottoman Archive (BOA) in Istanbul and in the Republican Archive (CA) in Ankara, but terms of use may be subject to change.<sup>12</sup> The electronic catalogue entries clearly show that most *talebnāmes* were filled in in Turkey.<sup>13</sup> The electronic catalogue, which contains abstracts for every single *talebnāme*, allows us to search for certain professions, places of origin and other statistically important data within the impressive number of 140,000 documents. Ayşegül Şentürk has done exactly that for those 494 *talebnāmes* that were submitted from Çanakkale. The information she provides remains limited to the data available in the electronic catalogue (places of origin, settlement locations, professions), suggesting that she did not read the actual documents. The present study differs from Çelebi’s and Şentürk’s in that it actually deals

9 For the Greek case, see Pentzopoulos 1962, for the Turkish one, Morack 2017.

10 Çelebi 2006; Şentürk 2018.

11 ‘Tasfiye talebnāmelerinden yola çıkılarak mübadillerin kimlik bilgilerini, mesleklerini, geldikleri yerleri, Türkiye’de ilk olarak nerelere yerleştirildiklerini, sahip oldukları menkûl ve gayr-i menkûl malları ve bu mallardan yola çıkarak ekonomik güçleri hakkında çeşitli bilgiler öğrenmek mümkündür’; Çelebi 2006, 43.

12 The sample I discuss here was collected in 2011, as photocopies, from Ankara. The documents have since been scanned and were available in electronic form in Istanbul in August 2019.

13 The catalogue entries follow the standard pattern: ‘(xxx) livasından gelip, (yyy) ili (zzz) ilçesinde iskan edilen (profession) (name)’ye ait tasfiye talepnameşi.’

with the messy, handwritten details recorded in the *taşfiye talebnāmes*: houses, fields, trees, household items, clothing and even stories about the circumstances in which they were lost have a great deal to tell about their former owners and the setting in which these lists were drawn up.

#### 4. Methodology

My following analysis of selected *taşfiye talebnāmes* is informed by anthropological literature dealing with two problems: The first concerns the conceptualisation of bureaucratic encounters as places in which the very experience of “the” state is engendered in ordinary people’s lives.<sup>14</sup> The definite article is put in quotation marks here because the state is, even in modern times, not usually a monolithic structure that works according to one coherent principle, but rather can best be described as an agglomeration of different institutions that more often than not follow different, and at times mutually contradictory, policies.<sup>15</sup> In bureaucratic encounters, these contradictions may at times help applicants to make their claims, creating some space for manoeuvring. I am interested in traces of such manoeuvring that may have been recorded in the forms.

Standardised forms can be conceptualised as places where people encounter and experience “the” state.<sup>16</sup> Documents may be described as ‘unstable actors in struggles for power’ because their possible ramifications can never be fully controlled by those in power.<sup>17</sup> Generally speaking, documents are often also completed in the company of other people who face a situation similar to that of the applicant: in waiting lines, antechambers, waiting rooms and offices. It is these very places in which ordinary people start to make sense of the state’s institutions, rules and practices.<sup>18</sup> Though it is usually true that they do not have much of a say when these rules are made, they always find ways to deal with them more or less creatively. This tendency is facilitated by the fact that no rule lives up to the ideal of complete unambiguity, forcing local officials to come up with their own interpretations. It is this in-between space of ambiguity in which people encounter the state.<sup>19</sup> It is important not to overlook or to downplay the power relations in which these encounters take place: Ordinary people

14 See, for instance, Yoltar 2009.

15 For an analysis of such contradictory state policies, see Morack 2016.

16 In this case, the documents were issued by the Mixed Commission, an *inter-state* agency, and one might therefore argue that this was not “the” state. However, it is highly likely that the actual work of distributing the forms and filling them in was performed by the local offices of the Turkish settlement offices, which were part of the Turkish Ministry of the Interior. Eventually, and both in theory and in practice, it was the Turkish state that compensated people.

17 Trundle and Kaplonski 2011.

18 One example of such a practice of making sense are perceptions of corruption. See Gupta 1995.

19 Yoltar 2009.

can usually only manoeuvre within the spaces provided by official ambiguity. When things are less ambiguous, “the” state usually wins the game.<sup>20</sup> In the case at hand, we know that most exchangees who came to Turkey were eventually compensated by the Turkish state, which applied criteria very different from the ones the MC had tried to come up with. Eventually, most exchangees ended up deeply disappointed, as they received much less property in compensation than they had hoped for.<sup>21</sup> When the *talebnāmes* were filled in, however, most applicants were presumably still hoping for a compensation that matched their property in Greece, and therefore eager to answer the questions asked as accurately and comprehensively as possible. However, the range of things that could be said and claimed in the document was limited by the questions asked and the way that answers were organised. An applicant could only claim more if he or she found a way to say more or something else than what was asked for – but in a way that remained within the limits of legibility. To a large degree, this ability to play the game while quietly altering the rules certainly depended on the applicants’ literacy and their ability to speak Turkish, ideally complemented by familiarity with bureaucratic procedures (I suggest we can refer to this skill as “bureaucratic literacy”), which people may also have used to help others. As I show below, traces of all these varieties of saying more, of manoeuvring and of skillful interpretation of the rules can be traced in the *talebnāmes*.

The second problem concerns the conceptual difference between imagined and imaginary property. It is possible, and indeed likely, that applicants, consciously or unconsciously, exaggerated when they described the material conditions they had been living in. This, however, will not concern us here, as it is beyond the scope of this study to establish whether or not the information provided was correct. But more importantly, people were invited to make claims based on property that they *de jure* owned, while they *de facto* did not: most *taşfiye talebnāmes* were filled in in Turkey, far away from the places they described. This was a deviation from the exchange convention, which stipulated that property would be appraised *in situ*, prior to the emigrants’ departure, and that, upon completion of this task, all the property involved would then pass into ownership of the country in which it was located. In practice, however, most property lists were drawn up in the receiving country, where the applicants could only describe what they had left behind. Since the property had not been expropriated, and the appraisal foreseen in the exchange convention had not been completed, they *de jure* still owned that property. In this respect, the situation in Turkey very much resembled that in Pakistan and India during and after the partition of 1947-48:

(...) a cornerstone of the evacuee property agreement was that the displaced maintained a right in their properties left behind – people had moved, and their proper-

20 Here, I agree with Rifa’at Abu-El-Haj’s critique of the postcolonial studies school (and many scholars influenced by it); Abou-El-Haj 2000.

21 For a study of exchangee petitions and compensation policies, see Morack 2017.

ty that had not, remained tied to each other, albeit in what would come to be called “imaginary ownership”.<sup>22</sup>

Vazira Zamindar uses the term “imaginary ownership” only once, citing it from a document written in 1952. She points out that the legal fiction of continued ownership, which denied the fact that “evacuees” were actually not allowed to return, greatly complicated the politics of refugee housing and the negotiations concerning overall property values between both governments. The same has been shown for the negotiations between Turkey and Greece.<sup>23</sup>

At the level of bureaucratic practice in Turkey, 140,000 exchangees had to describe the real estate they owned in order to be compensated for it. Conceptually speaking, the bureaucratic procedure required them to *imagine* the houses, objects and fields (which we conveniently, but not quite correctly, refer to as “property”).<sup>24</sup> These houses, fields and objects, unless they had been destroyed, were real. The *imaginary* part of the procedure was performed not only by the exchangees, but also by the two governments and the MC: up to the Ankara agreement of 1930, they maintained the legal fiction that the exchangees continued to enjoy their property rights. These rights, however, were *imaginary* insofar as they were no longer enforced.

## 5. Bureaucratic and Legal Context

In order to learn more about the people who submitted selected *taşfiye talebnâmes*, it is necessary to first explain the bureaucratic context in which the documents were drawn up: both before and after the Ankara agreement of 1930, property allotment in Turkey was performed by specialised commissions that reviewed a wide range of documents in order to establish the claims of exchangees. The work of the MC largely ran parallel to this endeavour. Turkish policies of refugee compensation were characterized by an inherent conflict between the financial interest of the state (represented by the treasury), which wished to give as little as possible to the exchangees, and the refugees themselves (represented by the settlement directorate), who wished to get as much as they could. This conflict could not be fully expressed, because both objectives (wealth for the state and wealth for the people) were supposedly identical and mutually dependent. We know today that the Turkish authorities in charge of compensating exchangees viewed *taşfiye talebnâmes* with relative suspicion compared to other documents: *tapu senedis* (titledeeds) dating back to Ottoman times were valued much higher. A law issued in 1928 for the *tapu* registration of property previously allotted to refugees (No. 1331) mentioned that 20 per cent of the values recorded in ‘documents of guarantee

22 Zamindar 2007, 124.

23 See Morack 2017.

24 Here, I follow Morris Cohen: ‘Whatever technical definition of property we may prefer, we must recognize that a property right is a relation not between an owner and a thing, but between the owner and other individuals in reference to things.’; Cohen 1978 (1927), 159.

[*kefâletnâme*] that were drawn up according to *taşfiye talebnâmes*’ would be considered as legitimate claims.<sup>25</sup> This suggests that not the *talebnâmes* themselves, but the results of their scrutiny (*kefâletnâme*) by the MC were accepted – at only 20 per cent of the stated value. (By contrast, 40 or 50 per cent of *tapu* values were accepted, depending on the kind of *tapu* document). Not one of the files I have seen at the Republican Archive, however, contains such a document, and only one *talebnâme* is stamped as ‘expedié’, along with a hand-written date of its consideration.

## 6. The Sources

### 6.1 General Description

The sample I have worked with is comprised of 29 applications. 12 of these were submitted by exchangees from the island of Chios/Sakız who had settled down in the nearby coastal town of Çeşme, a district (*każā*) of the Izmir province, apparently in 1913. As people who had left Greece after the beginning of the First Balkan War, they were eligible for property compensation according to the exchange convention. Twelve *talebnâmes* in my sample were submitted by people from three Cretan villages who were settled in Çirkince (present-day Şirince),<sup>26</sup> a mountain village in the district of Kuşadası, and one by a man who was settled in Ayasuluk (the present-day town Selçuk), the bigger village (*nâhiye*) that Çirkince was attached to. One application was submitted in Karşıyaka, a suburb of Izmir, by an exchangee who was originally from the town Kandiye/Hanya on Crete. The catalogue of the Republican Archive lists 6421 applications that were submitted from the province of Izmir. This number is quite low considering that up to 90,000 exchangees have been reported to have ended up in that province.

The standard *taşfiye talebnâme* form contained 7 pages, which could be supplemented by an unlimited number of additional documents. On page one, the applicants formally stated their desire to have their property liquidated by the MC in accordance with the exchange convention signed in Lausanne. They declared that the information given in the document was correct, and acknowledged that any attempt at providing incorrect information would have negative repercussions for them-

- 25 ‘Mübadiller yed’indeki vesai ki tasarrufiyeden kıymetli tapulara mukabil kendilerine verilen veya verilecek olan emval yüzde elli den, kıymetsiz tapulara mukabil yüzde kırktan ve taşfiye taleplmelerine müsteniden kefaletnamelere mukabil yüzde yirmiden fazla olamaz’; Art. 1, law number 1331, [http://www.tbmm.gov.tr/tutanaklar/KANUNLAR\\_KARARLAR/kanuntbmmc006/kanuntbmmc006/kanuntbmmc00601331.pdf](http://www.tbmm.gov.tr/tutanaklar/KANUNLAR_KARARLAR/kanuntbmmc006/kanuntbmmc006/kanuntbmmc00601331.pdf) (accessed 14.04.2019).
- 26 Çirkince/Şirince: Today the village is commonly known as Şirince (“pleasantly”) and indeed is a very pleasant place to be at (once the truckloads of tourists leave). The name Çirkince means “ugly” and constitutes one of the many cases in which something pleasant is named to the very contrary, probably in an attempt to protect it from the evil eye.

selves.<sup>27</sup> The rest of the page provided information on the name and father’s name of the applicants, their place of origin (including the name of the province, district and village), present place of residence and occupation. In some cases, this page also bore a photograph of the applicant. The progress of work on the documents can be deduced from the number of stamps on this first page: All documents were stamped by the MC, which recorded the register number and the date of registration. The personal details were usually, but not always confirmed (*muşaddıkdır*) and stamped by the respective district administration (*mutaşarrıflık*) in Turkey. Almost all were also stamped as ‘translated’ to the Greek (*METEΦΡΑΣΟΗ*). Only very few bear the stamp ‘expedié’ which is in only one case complemented by a handwritten date.

Pages two and three contained charts that asked for detailed information about the immovable property that the applicant had left behind when he or she departed: how many houses, gardens, fields? How many *dönüm* or *arşın* did they cover? Where exactly, in which village, street and house number, were they located? If they were fields or gardens, which crops had been grown on them? How had the applicant come into possession of the place, by purchase (*ferāgat*), inheritance (*intikāl*) or bestowal (*hibe*)? When had *tapu* records or other documents of possession – copies of which would be attached to the application – been issued, and what were their register numbers? In whose name had the property been registered? What was the value of the property according to the *tapu* register? What was its value according to the appraisal performed by the local district governor (*mutaşarrıf*)? (Both values had to be provided in Turkish gold liras).

Pages three and four asked about the value of movable property, i.e., household goods, merchandise and animals. The last two had to be specified and counted. On page five, the applicants were asked if any of their property had been expropriated since the beginning of the first Balkan war. If it had, the form asked about the exact time of the expropriation, whether or not the applicant had received financial compensation, and what the estimated value of the property was. Page six was devoted to the same questions with regard to seized property. It also asked for the average income generated from these between 1909 and 1914. On page seven, the exchangees were asked about property they had sold prior to their departure (all the *talebnāmes* I have seen left this page blank). Page eight provided room for a (facultative) proxy statement, so people could send someone to make their declarations in their name.

The forms were organised in such a way that people would be able to simply fill in numbers and words, coming up with a chart rather than a text. The data was organised in a way that would have allowed MC staff to check them against the respective registers (either in the country of origin – which may be the reason why the documents were translated) or against the imperial copies held in the registrar’s office in Istanbul. In that sense, the forms testify to the MC’s attempt at a comprehensive reorganisation of property relations from an Ottoman, imperial context to a post-

27 ‘İhtâr: eşhâb-ı mürâca‘atın yanlış veya mübâlağalı beyännâme i‘tâ etmemesi ve ‘aksi hâlin kendi zararını mücib olacağı ihtâr olunur.’

Ottoman, national one in both countries: in some areas such as Thessaly, the most recent comprehensive land registration campaigns had been performed as far back as the 1860s. *Tapu* documents issued that long ago were indeed frequently considered in the compensation process in Turkey.

The applications submitted on behalf of the villagers of Çirkince differ from the others in several important respects: the applications were made on handwritten, rather than printed, forms. Judging from the handwriting, both the forms themselves and the data in them were written by the same person (who indeed wrote faithful copies of the original forms). Most villagers stamped, rather than wrote, their names, indicating that they were illiterate, and thus unable to judge if the form that someone else was filling in for them was actually a “real” one, let alone if the scribe was writing what he said he was. Those villagers who had come from Crete were also by all likelihood Greek-speakers who had to depend on an interpreter (if there was one at all). None of the applications from Çirkince contain any attachments to prove the villagers’ claims. The following discussion of the sources pays special attention to the ways in which people “played by the rules” and to differences in their ways of describing their property in Greece. As I show, these differences are indicative of social status and access to non-material resources such as education. They help us to form an idea of the material conditions in which exchangees lived in Greece, as well as of the circumstances in which they completed the forms (or had them filled in by someone else).

## 6.2 *Two Grecophone Villagers from Crete*

Some documents are as short as that of a certain Ali Labiraki bin Mercan, an agricultural labourer (*rençber*) from the district of Kandiye, which merely listed the following information: ‘house: 1, olive grove: 1, area covered by the olive grove: 20 *dönüm*, value of the house: 400 Turkish lira, value of the olive grove: 500 lira’. The form was filled in on 24 July 1925, and stamped with Ali Labiraki’s seal.<sup>28</sup> The information given stays within the confines of the form. Ali Labiraki clearly was a man who was not very good at the task of manipulating an official. His fellow exchangee Ali Cemilaki, who could also not provide any documentation, at least succeeded in having it recorded that the *tapus* for his property in Crete (whose value he declared to be 1,240 lira) were still kept, and therefore available, in Kandiye.<sup>29</sup> This remark may be read as a small, if unsuccessful, attempt at pointing towards Ottoman documents supporting his claims. (The *tapus*, by all likelihood, dated back to Ottoman times on Crete).

28 CA 130.16.13.02/ 101.439.15.

29 CA 130.16.13.02/ 101.439.13.

### 6.3 *A Petition-Writer from Crete*

Compared to the applications from Çirkince, the one submitted by Bozzade Mustafa Tefvik bin İbrahim radiates confidence, education and dignity.<sup>30</sup> The document has survived complete with a photograph of the applicant, showing a middle-aged man, formally dressed in a white-collared shirt, striped tie, suit, and a (probably woollen) coat with wide lapels. Mustafa Tefvik sternly looks into the camera, sporting a moustache, wearing glasses and a fur *kalpak*. A couple of months later, a man eager to demonstrate his loyalty to the Turkish government would have been better advised to wear a European hat – in May 1925, however, a *kalpak* was a headdress that safely marked its owner as a modern Muslim man of nationalist inclinations. The first page of his *talebnâme* gives his place of origin as Crete, Hanya, and his profession as petition-writer (*arzuḥālcı*). His current address is recorded as Raykan street number 23 in Karşıyaka, a suburb situated across the gulf of Izmir. An Ottoman registration note gives the date of registration of his application as Kanunisani/January 28, 1341/1925. The registration at the MC took place on May 1 of the same year, under file number 21320. The file is stamped as translated, but not as completed.

As immovable property, Mustafa Tefvik listed three privately owned houses in Hanya. He described all three by providing the name of the neighbourhood, street and house numbers (Hünkar/Siplanciya mahallesi, Tabya avenue, numbers 36, 34 and 32). Two of these he claimed to have bought himself in 1906 (he used the Christian calendar here), and provided the numbers of their entries in the *tapu* register. The third house, he wrote, had been bought by his father, Bozzade İbrahim Kapdan, in 1889, and he said that he had inherited 248 of the 870 lira that the house was worth now. The differences between the values listed in the *tapu* register and the sums that he listed as their actual value were considerable: 25 gold lira *tapu*/300 appraised value for the first house, 42/700 for the second, and 106/870 for the third house. (Why the difference was relatively small for house number three remains unclear).<sup>31</sup>

Mustafa’s list of movable property was rather short: he did not list any animals or merchandise, merely stating the total value of his movable property in Greece as 152 Turkish lira. His *talebnâme* contains copies of two purchase contracts by which he had bought two of the houses in Hanya, tax receipts for the years 1912 and 1913, and two documents intended to clarify the ownership situation of the third house: Apparently, ownership of his father’s house had originally been divided between his mother Emine and his siblings Mehmed Refet, Hasan Tahsin, Ali Cevad, Ayşe and Hamide. Several of these siblings had later passed away. Mustafa Tefvik submitted a document issued by the *nā’ib* of Seferihisar and Çeşme in 1313/1897, stating the division of shares between the family members, as well as a copy of a *fetva* which had approved of this division (in which the sisters ended up with much smaller shares than the brothers). Copies of Turkish documents (i.e., the purchase contracts) were produced and verified by

30 CA 130.16.13.02/ 41.17.7.

31 CA 130.16.13.02/ 41.17.7, 2-3.

the judicial scribe's office in Izmir. Those requiring translation (the *fetva* from the Arabic, the tax receipts from the Greek) bear the stamp of the settlement office at the Izmir provincial administration. Unfortunately, the pages containing information on a seizure or expropriation of Mustafa's property have been lost. Along with all these documents, Mustafa Tevfik submitted a document issued by the Izmir settlement office which stated that he had not left Greece before the beginning of the first Balkan war and was therefore subject to the population exchange. On the lower part of the page, the Greek embassy in Izmir confirmed the signature of Ali Bey, the official at the settlement office who had issued the document.<sup>32</sup>

If we assume that an applicant's merit was determined by their ability to produce documentation for their claims, Mustafa certainly seems to qualify as a "good" applicant. However, the documents he provided were not *tapu* records, but ranged from contracts drawn up in accordance with Islamic law to a *fetva* and tax receipts issued by the (Greek) municipality in Hanya. He also provided documents that were not asked for, such as the one confirming his exchangee status, which might indeed have helped to make his claim. The latter document also indicates that Mustafa Tevfik (who, being from Crete, was most probably bilingual) was both able and willing to use the bureaucratic apparatus of both countries in order to make his claims. He had probably only migrated to Turkey after the Lausanne convention had been signed. This was an important difference between him and the applicants in Çeşme, who had arrived as early as 1913.

The *taşfiye talebnāmes* submitted by exchangees in Çeşme who had come from the nearby island of Chios/Sakız are special in several respects. Most remarkably, the majority of the files contain copies of *tapu* records. Sakız had been part of the district (*kazā*) of Çeşme throughout late Ottoman times, being ceded to Greece only in 1913, at the end of the First Balkan War. The refugees who would only later become exchangees had therefore, unusually, moved *towards* the place where official documentation of their titles was available rather than *away* from it. Moreover, Çeşme was not only very close, but must have been familiar to the migrants. It seems that the exchangees moved already in 1913, and thus belonged to those Balkan War refugees who were later included in the exchange. It is also likely that they were settled there in place of those local Greek Orthodox people that were driven out in the course of the Young Turk campaign for a "Turkification" of the coast in 1913.<sup>33</sup> The Chios-Çeşme documents are also remarkable for including a supplementary document in which at least four other exchangees from Chios confirm the information given by an applicant. All those men who served as witnesses for others also submitted their own applications, but witnesses only rarely served for each other. In some cases, up to ten others testified in order to support information that a fellow applicant could not otherwise prove. Unsurprisingly, it was men with white collar jobs who served most often as witnesses for the others. All applicants

32 I would like to thank Ileana Moroni (Amsterdam) for providing me with an abstract of the Greek text.

33 For a detailed discussion of this campaign, see Emre 2016, 110–162.

seem to have been literate: they signed with their names (rather than seals), further identifying themselves as ‘propertied persons’ (*eşhâb-ı emlakdan*).

#### 6.4 A Clerk from Chios

Osman Efendi Kaptanzade Hüseyin from the town of Sakız on Chios gave his profession as scribe in the tithe office at the public debt administration in Çeşme (*Çeşme düyün-ı ‘umûmiye idâresi çarşı d’sâr kâtibi*).<sup>34</sup> He served as witness for at least six other exchanges. He listed four houses, one field and a fourth of a garden as immovable property. Osman explained that house number one was registered in his name (*tapu* value: 5 lira, appraised value: 300 lira), number two and three in his deceased wife’s (*tapu* value: 3 and 10 lira, appraisal: 150 and 30 lira), and the garden/orchard had been turned into a religious endowment by his father-in-law. He declared that he had inherited his wife’s property rights. As dates of the respective registrations, Osman gave the years 1325/1909-10 (house 1), 1322/1906-07 (house 2 and 3) and 1296/1880-81 (the garden).<sup>35</sup> He supported this information with verified copies of the following documents: a receipt of the legal council (*medis-i hukûk*) of Sakız that indicated that a certain Halil Efendi had paid a fee in order to turn a property into a pious endowment (*vakf*) in 1291/1874, one issued by the agricultural bank stating that Osman had paid back a loan of 600 lira (which he had earlier secured with the aforementioned orchard), the *vakfnâme* of that orchard and two *tapu senedis*, one for a house, and one for a field. He claimed to have built a house on that field, and that the value of the property was therefore much higher than that stated in the *tapu* register. In order to prove this point, Osman Efendi submitted a declaration signed by ten fellow exchangees from Chios. In this document, they referred to a regulation (*ta’limâtname*) that the Turkish council of ministers had accepted on December 8, 1924, stating that the aforementioned property belonged to property that ought to be appraised by ten people. The ten men declared the actual value of the house to be 120 Turkish lira.<sup>36</sup> Osman further explained that all his im-

34 CA 130.16.13.2 / 35.260.7.

35 As these are dates of administrative documents issued by state institutions, I assume that the dates refer to the Rumi, rather than Hicri, calendar.

36 ‘Sakız ceziresi mübâdil muhâcirlerinden Çeşmede muķim düyün-ı ‘umûmiye çarşı kâtibi ‘Oşmân Efendi İbn Hüseyn Efendi bilâda muhârriren Kandıla mevķi’inde kâ’in vâlidisi Sa’ide Hanımdan irsâ’en intikâl eden tarla bedeli muķayyed ise de üzerine mûmâileyh ‘Oşmân Efendi tarafından inşâ edilmiş hâneniñ kıymet ve bedeli muķayyed bulunmadığı sened-i hâķāni mahtûtatından anlaşılmış. Ve binâ’enaleyh bu gibiler (...) eşhâb-ı emlak laaķil? on kimse tarafından kıymet edilmesi hey’et-i vekilece sekiz teşrinievvel 1340 târihinde kabûl edilen ta’limâtnameyiñ beşinci maddesi aħķāmı iktizâsından bulunmaķla tarafımızdan işbu hâneniñ üyüzyigirmisekiz senesinde bilâda gösterildiği vecdle yüz-yigirmi Türk Lirası kıymeti olduđu bi-t-taşdıķ işbu veşika neticesi olarak mûmâileyh çarşı kâtibi ‘Oşmân Efendiye ifâ kılıldı. 12 teşrinisâni 1340, eşhâb-ı emlakdan Sakız mübâdil muhâcirlerinden Çeşmede muķim: ‘Abdullaţifzâde Maħmûd, Baķķâl Bekir, Maħmûd Efendizâde Mûsâ Halil, ‘Ali Efendizâde da’vâ vekili İsmâ’il Hâķķı, Orman Memûru

movable property had been seized by the Greek government when Greek forces occupied the island of Sakız/Chios on 11 January 1328/1913, and that he had not received any rent payments ever since. Likewise, the movable property in his hometown had been 'looted completely by Greeks and local Christians' on the day of the Greek occupation.<sup>37</sup>

### 6.5 *A Lawyer and Petition-Writer from Chios*

Osman's declaration with regard to his property's seizure and looting very much resembles those given by İsmail Hakkı, a lawyer and petition-writer who served as witness not only for Osman, but also for numerous fellow exchangees in Çeşme. Rather than give the total sum of it, he provided a detailed list of his belongings. In the first column, which provided space for household items (*eşyâ-yi beytiye*), he wrote:

1 desk (5 lira), 1 armchair (5 lira), 6 stools (3 lira), 1 document closet (2 lira), 1 chest for storing documents (2 lira), 1 copy machine (1 lira), 1 copper ... (2 lira), (...?), 1 iron case for keeping money (10 lira), 20 years' issues of the gazette of jurisdiction (20 lira), the *fetvas* of Ali Efendi, with histories, (2 lira), Mecelle (compilation of codified Islamic law) and commentary by Hayri Efendi (5 lira), *mecelle* commentary by Atif Bey, commentary to the land code by Haydar Efendi, commentary to the land code by Za... efendi, commentary to the code of procedure and commentaries (10 lira), commentary to the code of procedure and (...) (10 lira), mirror of *mecelle* commentary (1 lira), book of legal formulas (*tuhfetü's-şükûk*) (2 lira), various laws from the fields of religious, public and trade law, various commentaries (60 lira), files of completed lawsuits (100 lira), seized documents and papers of varying values (200 lira), 6 ordinary chairs (1 lira).

The second column asked about trading goods, of which he declared not to have had any (*yokdur*). Below this, he continued the list provided in the first column, this time also providing digits behind the comma:

Material losses suffered and items stolen from the house when Greek soldiers broke the door (5,00 lira): Official Ottoman taxes ??(2,00 lira), geographical maps of Rumelia and Anatolia (2,00 lira), geographical maps of Europe, Asia, America, Australia (2,00 lira), 1 stolen pair of boots (1 lira), destroyed and stolen woollen cushions (2 lira), various small items (3,00 lira).

Emin, Hâcî Kâzım 'Osman, Kahraman Hüseyin Beyzâde Şıdki, Çelebi Ağazâde (...)' CA 130.16.13.2 / 35.260.7, 8.

37 'Cedvelinde irâ'e olunan emvâl-i gayrimenkûle-i mezkûreye Sakız ceziyesinin kuvve-i Yunâniye tarafından târih-i işğâl olan 11 teşrinîşâni 1912/1328 târihinde hükümet-i Yunâniye tarafından tamâmen müşâdere edildiği gibi târih-i mezkûrdan i'tibâren icârâtı dahî kezzâlik hükümet-i Yunâniye me'mûrları tarafından vaz'iyetle taşîl edilmektedir.'

Below this, he summed up the material value as 467 lira, followed by the additional statement that ‘my immaterial losses exceed 1000 lira’.<sup>38</sup>

İsmail Hakkı played by the rules insofar as he listed the value of his belongings (though only after describing them in great detail). But he also managed to include a lot of information that the form had not asked for, most notably by calculating the immaterial losses he had suffered as even higher than the material ones. Moreover, by listing the furniture of his office, his working materials, and in fact his library, he made a statement about his professionalism as a lawyer: İsmail Hakkı clearly presented himself as a learned man who regularly dealt with all fields of law. By listing his armchair and six stools, he described how he had received his clients: sitting comfortably in an armchair while letting his customers sit crouching on stools, surrounded not only by the standard works of reference for an Ottoman legal professional, but also by maps that demonstrated his awareness of and familiarity with the greater world. On page 6, he explained in more detail what had happened to his office:

In the days of the occupation, a great number of people, both Greek soldiers and local Christians, broke the door of the office, looting and destroying everything [they found] in there. İsmail Hakkı’s official permission to work as a lawyer was [also] destroyed. Likewise, a mob comprised of Greek officers, soldiers and local Christians attacked and intruded the house located within the city walls of Sakız, in the neighbourhood of Asmalı Çeşme, where İsmail Hakkı lived with his wife Safvet and his family, breaking the door, looting and stealing several items from the house.<sup>39</sup>

By providing a detailed list of his movable property (rather than just the total monetary value), İsmail Hakkı could point at the significance it had both for him and for the Ottoman state. In fact, it seems that the monetary value of such objects as books merely served to stress the symbolic value they carried. Quite significantly, the lawyer provided hardly any information on the personal belongings stolen from his private home. He rather stressed the loss of all those items that connected him to the Ottoman state: legal codes, compilations of *fetvas*, maps (some of which depicted the borders of the Ottoman state) and his diploma. All these symbols of Ottoman sovereign-

38 CA 130.16.13.2/ 34.25.11.

39 ‘iŝgâl günü yazıhâne-i mezkûre kapalı kilidli bulunmakta olduğu hâlde iŝgâlin üçüncü günü gerek ‘asâkir-i Yunâniyeden ve gerek yerli ahâliden bir kısmı cemm-i gafir [overwhelmingly strong body of soldiers] olarak yazıhâne-i mezkûreye bi-l-hücüm kapuyu ve kilidi kırmak ŝretiyle (...) yazıhâne-i mezkûrede mevcûd bi-l-cümle eşyasını yağma ve gâret eylemişlerdir. (...) muhâkeme-i istinâfdan da‘vâ vekâletine me‘zûniyeti hâvi-yi isti‘mâl eylediği ruhsatnâmesini dahî ziyâ‘a uğramışdır ve kezâlik mümâileyh İsmâ‘il Hakkı Efendi Saķızda kal‘e derûnunda Aŝmalı Çeşme mahallesinde kâ‘in hânede zevcesi Ŝafvet Hanım ve ‘â‘ilesi halkı ile ma‘an muķim iken iŝgâl günleri (...?) gerek zâbitân ve gerek efrâd-ı ‘asâkir-i Yunâniye ve gerek yerli ahâli-yi Hıristiyanıye tarafından hâne-i mezkûrede bildükân? Ve düçâr-i tecâvüz olarak hâne-i mezkûrenin kapusu dahî tüfenk ve ...leri ile kırılmış olduğunu ve hâne-i mezkûreden dahî ba‘zı eşyası ahz ve yağma edilmiş ve düçâr-i zarar olmuşdur.’ CA 130.16.13.2/ 34.25.11.

ty had not merely been left behind, but they had been stolen by a mob, comprised of Greek soldiers and local Christians, who broke the doors and looted his belongings. His account mentions the exact day of these attacks: the third day of the Greek ‘occupation’ (i.e. the day when sovereignty over Chios passed from Ottoman to Greek hands). This date, along with the information that it was Greek soldiers and Ottoman Christians who committed these acts of violence, (and the Ottoman character of the items they destroyed or stole) symbolically links his own, private story of loss to that of the Ottoman state. In this sense, İsmail Hakkı’s application was crafted in a way that completely rejected Greek sovereignty over his former home. In this, his document is remarkably different from the one submitted by the petition-writer Bozzade Mustafa from Crete, who had probably spent most of his adult life first in the Cretan state under merely nominal Ottoman suzerainty (from 1898) and then, after 1908, under Greek rule. İsmail Hakkı’s application may at first seem old-fashioned for stressing his loyalty to a state that no longer existed. However, it is important to point out that local administrations regularly stamped the *taşfiye talebnâmes* with Ottoman stamps, along with new, republican ones (İsmail’s is an exception in not bearing any stamps). In this sense, bureaucratic practice attested to the Turkish state’s Ottoman legacy.

İsmail Hakkı’s account may have been important in another respect. Several accounts of exchangees mention that the refugees were often confronted with a local population in Turkey who looked down on them for not having suffered from (or fought in) the 1919-22 war with Greece. A female exchangee publicly rejected such views in 1924. Speaking in the course of a public demonstration in Istanbul, she said: ‘when the blood of the people of Anatolia was flowing, so was that of the Turks of Rumelia. The victory that has been accomplished does not belong to one population or the other, but to the whole Turkish nation.’<sup>40</sup>

İsmail Hakkı’s account of the looting of his office and private house made the same point. Indeed, it seems that, by arriving at Çeşme already in 1913, he and his fellow islanders could claim to have experienced a Greek occupation twice, once on Chios, and once in Çeşme in 1919. He was not the only one to tell a story of suffering by Greek hands.

### 6.6 *A Housewife from Chios*

Fatma Hanım was a compatriot of İsmail Hakkı and Osman Efendi who, like them, had ended up in Çeşme. Her application gives her father’s name as Hacı Mahmud ibn Çeşmeli Mehmed Ağa, indicating that her migration reversed that of her grandfather. Her occupation is stated as ‘housewife’ (*umûr-ı beytiyye ile meşgûle*).<sup>41</sup> Fatma Hanım listed 10 pieces of immovable property on Chios, five of which she claimed to have

40 ‘Anadolu insanının kanı akarken, Rumeli’de de Türk’ün kanı akmıştır. Elde edilen zafer şü veya bu halka değil tum Türk milletine aittir (...); Gökaçtı 2004, 219.

41 CA 130.16.3.2/ 34.25.11.

inherited as one of three adopted daughters from a certain Ra’ife Hanım (therefore owning a third of each): a house and a piece of land in the Asmalı Çeşme neighbourhood, a workshop for slippers and three citrus gardens in a suburb called Lidavia. Her actual mother had left her a house and a citrus orchard in a village called Kandila, and the neighbour, a certain Mehmed Bey and former police officer (Ra’ife’s husband), had left her another citrus orchard and three fields on which rye, wheat, chick peas and okra had been grown. As for the dates and numbers of the *tapu* records (which she declared to be registered in the name of Ra’ife Hanım), Fatma explained that they had been sent to the Greek government (i.e., from the registrar’s office in Çeşme to Chios) with a certain Sakızlı Kahraman Hüseyin Beyzade Seyyid Ağa. On his way back he had been attacked by pirates and killed. The circumstances of Fatma’s inheritance, as well as the story about the pirates was backed by a two-page witnesses’ declaration (*şehâdetnâme*) which seems to have been written by the lawyer İsmail Hakkı, dated January 4, 1341/1925 and signed by ten (male) fellow exchangees. This document provides some more details to the story:

We hereby testify that (...) the *tapu* documents exist. When the Greek government performed a census, the hero Hüseyin Beyzade Seyyid Ağa brought them to Chios and had them recognised by the Greek government. When he went back to Çeşme in his boat, he was followed by Greek bandits, who killed him, destroyed the boat and stole all the cash and other valuables he had on him. In the course of this, the *tapu* records of Fatma Hanım, as well as her documents pertaining to her inheritance, were lost. They are, however, still kept at the land records office on Chios as well as the tax offices there.<sup>42</sup>

Why would Fatma Hanım register her property rights on Chios with the Greek authorities there? The only plausible explanation is that she wanted to enjoy her property rights from nearby Çeşme, as an absentee landowner. It is indeed possible that somebody at Chios administered her property for her, sending the rents to Çeşme. Legally speaking, this would have been possible until 1930, when all exchange property in Greece was officially transferred to the Greek government. Fatma Hanım’s *şahâdetnâme* is the only one suggesting that the applicant may have continued to enjoy

42 ‘*tapu* senedâtları mevcûd olup bundan muqaddem Yunân hükümetiniñ vaz’ edylediği (...) –i mu’ayyene zarfında senedât-ı mezkûreyi Çeşmede muqim Sakız muhâcirlerinden Kahramân Hüseyin Beyzade Seyyid Ağa ile Sakıza göndererek merkûm Seyyid Ağa ol-vechle Sakızda senedât-ı mezkûreyi hükümet-i Yunâniyeye kayd etdirerek senedât-ı mezkûreyi (...) kayık ile Çeşmeye ‘avdet ederken eşkıyâ-yi Yunâniye râkib olduğu kayığa hücum ile kendisini şehid ve kayığı garğ ve berâberinde bulunan nukûd ve mâlını (...) ve gâret eyledikleri cihetle bu meyânda mezbûre Faṭma Hanımın emlak ve arâziye dâ’ir olan *tapu* senedâtı ve evrâk-ı mişliye-i sâ’iresi dahı mahv ve ziyâ’a uğradığını ve ancak Sakız hâkâni ve ma’â tahîrî vergü idâreleri kuyûdâtında dahı ol-vechle muqayyed bulduklarını işbu elem-i vaz’iyetimizle maqâm-ı şehâdetde taşdik ve beyân ederiz.’ CA 130.16.3.2/ 34.25.11, 13.

her property rights in Greece even after her migration to Turkey. However, the information given in her documents is not conclusive.

It is clearly impossible to establish whether or not the pirate story was true. One might also ask how the people of Chios/Çeşme could know what had happened when Seyyid Ağa had apparently been sailing alone. But regardless of its disputable faithfulness, the story can be read as a rather ambiguous statement about Fatma Hanım's position vis-à-vis the new Greek administration on the island, and, by implication, as a way of positioning herself in the new, Turkish nationalist administration under which she and her witnesses were now living. The story was obviously related in order to explain why she did not submit the relevant documents, and, being part of the witnesses' statement, was intended to provide an alternative way of proof. This point, however, could just as well have been made with a much simpler story (such as 'the documents have been lost'). The first version of the story told in the list of property indeed merely stated that Seyyid Ağa had been attacked and killed by robbers. The longer version told in the witnesses' statement, however, related that the robbers had been Greeks, and more specifically, mainland Greeks (*eşkiyâ'-ı Yūnāniye*). Up to this point, the story may well be read as contributing to the greater narrative of Greek betrayal and Muslim loss. However, it was mainland Greeks rather than local ones (*Rum*) that attacked the boat. The purpose of Seyyid Ağa's trip to Chios had been to 'have the documents registered by the Greek government on the island', a task he had reportedly accomplished. He had, in other words, succeeded at having property rights of Muslims recognized by an administration which, in another part of the same *taleb-nāme*, was depicted as merely being an occupational force (*işgāl-i Yūnāniye*). Fatma had recognized that very administration by having her documents transferred to the island. The *şehādetnāme* stressed that copies of the relevant documents were available on Chios (since Seyyid Ağa had successfully transferred them), thus implying that their journey could be reversed. This time, however, it would be the MC that would have to go and deal with the Greek authorities. The geographical distance between Chios and Çeşme had obviously not changed, and the traditional trade of smuggling in the area had certainly not ended either. The problem was not a physical, but a political one: the existence of two nation-states and that of the exchange agreement between them hindered Fatma from obtaining the very documents she had only years ago transferred in the other direction.

## 7. Social Space

The application documents also contain very detailed descriptions of the physical space that exchangees had left behind in their homelands. The petition writer Mustafa Tevfik from Crete closely followed the requirements of the form when describing the location of the houses he (fully or partly) owned. All of them were located in Hanya, in the neighbourhood of Hünkar/Siplanciya, Tabya avenue, house numbers 32, 34

and 36.<sup>43</sup> This description, though clearly in accord with the requirements of the form, is unusual. Most other applicants described their immovable property very differently. Fatma Hanım, for instance, answered the question ‘explain the kind of property’ for her orchards and fields (numbers 8-10 on her application) as follows:

One field of private property (*mülk*), which faces a field owned by Ömer Ağa Maḥzûmi Mustafa Ağa to the east. To the west lies a road (*tarik*). To the north lies a field owned by Kasab Ḥalil Ağa. To the south it borders on a field owned by the Pazarbaşı [family]. A third of a field of *mülk*, bordering on: a road to the east, a field owned by Ömer Ağa Maḥzûmi Mustafa Ağa to the west, a field owned by Hüseyin Beyzade Seyyid Ağa, the hero [the man who had reportedly brought her documents to Chios], to the north, and a road to the south. A third of a field of *mülk*, bordering on Fatma Hanım’s field to the east, another field owned by Fatma to the west, to Marko’s field to the north, and to the road to the south.<sup>44</sup>

Where the form asked about the *location* of her property (town, neighbourhood, street, street number) she merely stated that all three were located in Kandila on Chios.

In describing her fields like this, the applicant provided a lot of information that, though not asked for, helps us to understand the network of relationships she had been living in on Chios: her adoptive father had been a neighbour of her mother’s. Seyyid Ağa, the ‘hero’, who later went to Çeşme in order to fetch her (and probably his own) documents, had been a neighbour of her adoptive family. The mode of description employed in Fatma’s application was completely relational. It provided a description of both property and space as essentially social categories: a certain space (here: a field) could only be described with reference to owners of other fields around it. Far from being peculiar to Fatma, this way of description in fact was the one employed in 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century title deeds (*tapu senedi*).<sup>45</sup> For instance, a certified copy of a *tapu* deed submitted by Osman Efendi from Chios explained that an orchard of seven fathoms he owned was ‘bordered to the east by an orchard owned by the heirs of Molina Hasan Kaptan to the west by a *vakf*-orchard of butcher Halil Ağa [who was also described as a neighbour in Fatma’s document], to the north by the stream, and to the south by a private road’.<sup>46</sup> A Molina Hasan Kaptan appears as the father of another applicant, who was also called Osman.<sup>47</sup>

43 CA 130.16.13.02/ 41.17.7.

44 CA 130.16.3.2/ 34.25.11, 3.

45 For a detailed discussion of the wording and style of Ottoman *tapus* and the significant changes they went through over time, see Minkov 2000.

46 ‘Defter-i ḥakānî , Cild 46, varaka 18, ...numerosu: 162, livası Sakız, kazası Sakız, Haziran 325 Defter Şehri: ‘Defter-i ḥākānî, Cild 46, varaka 18, ...numerosu: 162, livası Sakız, kazası Sakız, Haziran 325 Defter Şehri: Dâ’ire-i Belediye. (...) hudûdu: Şarḳen Molina Ḥasan Kaptan vereseşi Bâğçesi garben Kaşşâb Halil Ağa vakf bâğçesi şimâlen dere cenûben tarik-i hâşşî’; CA 130.16.13.2/ 35.260.7, 13.

47 See *talebnâme* CA 130.16.13.2/ 33.238.16.

This system of *social* references in the recording of property rights might have worked well within existing communities, but it was prone to break down in the event of a crucial number of people leaving a place. The *tapu* registers of abandoned villages and towns would certainly have enabled the MC to verify the information given in *ṭalebnāmes*. But when it came to a new appraisal of the property in question, the documents must at least have posed considerable difficulties for the Mixed Commission's work: in order to appraise the present value of Fatma's (or Osman's) fields, one would have had to find them first. This must have been a very tricky thing to do, since one first had to know the location of at least three other fields, which again could only be located if their neighbours could be found, and so on, *ad infinitum* (or at least up to the shores of the Aegean). If Greek officials had indeed tried to triangulate the position of these fields, the only name that might have offered a clue for them would have been that of Fatma Hanım's neighbour Marko, who, judging from his Christian name, may have continued to live on Chios. On the other hand, he also was the most likely to seize his neighbours' fields and thus a person who might have been unwilling to cooperate in such an effort.

In the light of this former system for spatial references, it comes as no surprise that both the Greek and the Turkish nation-states started to draw up cadastres (which worked with maps, rather than social references) in places that had been almost completely re-settled with exchangees.<sup>48</sup> In places such as Chios, the migration of the Muslim community must have destroyed a crucial part of local bureaucratic knowledge. By drawing up cadastres in the 1920s and 30s, both governments secured the property rights of the existing population (eliminating the need for them to refer to prior neighbours, especially those whose property they had more or less illegally appropriated) effectively establishing a system that would continue to work in the event of future migrations.<sup>49</sup>

## 8. Social Status and the Meaning of Small Things

Almost all *taşfiye ṭalebnāmes* submitted on behalf of Chios exchangees in Çeşme were written in the same hand, apparently that of İsmail Hakkı, the lawyer. It therefore comes as no surprise that the wording of the documents is almost identical in certain

48 Examples for such cadastres, which provided detailed maps of individual plots in Samsun, can be found in Sarısakal 2007.

49 Alain Pottage has discussed this advantage of cadastres over older systems: 'the problem for any reform scheme, was that registration required an efficient and simple scheme of indexing. Minimally, this required the provision of a stable reference point which would, on the one hand, enable purchasers to detect any existing interests adverse to the estate they were buying while, on the other hand, allowing the owners of those adverse interests to advertise their presence to purchasers. Simply to have used an owner's name as an index would have been disastrous because as the ownership of the land changed, many of the adverse interests which concerned buyers would have remained attached to the names of previous owners and might therefore have been undiscoverable'; Pottage 2004.

parts (such as the account of the island’s occupation by Greek forces and the subsequent looting of people’s houses). Moreover, İsmail Hakkı seems to have advised his compatriots (customers?) to follow his example in providing not only the total monetary value, but also detailed lists of their movable property. I see these lists as the applicants’ small attempts to insist on the emotional and social significance of these items for their lives (and livelihoods), a dimension that could neither be represented nor compensated with money.

The shoemaker Osman Efendi, son of Molinazade Hasan Kaptan (another neighbour of Fatma Hanım’s), listed the complete content of his shoemaker’s shop:

two sewing machines (each worth twelve lira), sixty unfinished and twenty ready-made pairs of shoes, iron tools, stools and leather, of a total value of seventy-nine lira.

He also stated that ‘a mirror, six chairs, a bed and blanket, two askarfino (?)’ and ‘various household items’ (total value: 100 lira) had been looted from his house.<sup>50</sup>

The other Osman Efendi, who worked as a clerk at the public debt administration in Çeşme, provided a much more impressive list of belongings:

three layers of broadcloth for suits (30 lira), one lined oil-cloth raincape (*müşemmal kapuğa ma’a çizme*, 10 lira), a set of porcelain plates (20 lira), matching knives, forks and spoons (10), a dozen napkins made of linen (*keten peşkir dozina*, 5 lira), an iron bedstead (*demir karyola*, 10 lira), underwear and long undershirts (*iç çamaşırler ve fanelalar*) (10 lira).<sup>51</sup>

This list clearly omits such essential items as cups, pots, socks, bedding and furniture. Osman Efendi probably listed only those items that were markers of a middle-class consumer culture. The lack of a dining table (whose use in today’s Turkey continues to mark the difference between “modern”, i.e. upper middle class people, and those who continue to eat on the floor) in his list is curious – he might have owned a locally produced dining table that he did not consider worth mentioning, or he may have eaten from a *tepsi* and tablecloth spread on the floor like everybody else. The other possibility is that porcelain plates, cutlery and napkins served purposes of decoration in his house and were not used on a regular basis.

The importance of social distinction by lifestyle becomes even more apparent when we compare the lists from Chios/Çeşme to those submitted by exchangees from Crete. Cemali Ağakaki bin Ahmed (who worked as a farm hand (*reuçber*)) and his wife Fatma bint Hüseyin Reciyaki from the village of Kurna (present-day Kournas?) in the province of Kandiye listed three houses ‘with everything inside’ (*ma’a müstemelât*), fourteen fields, ten olive-groves, three vineyards with fields, two gardens with fields, one garden and one vineyard. They also listed 240 trees in their orchards plus 361 olive-trees. They

50 CA 130.16.13.2/ 33.238.16.

51 CA 130.16.13.2 / 35.260.7.

also listed one fig tree, four apple, Moucmula<sup>52</sup>, 23 (???), five plum, 18 quince, four pomegranate and 22 pear trees. Judging from their *talebnâme*, Fatma and Hüseyin had been a well-to-do rural couple back on Crete. The profession given on the application, on the other hand, suggests that they had not (yet?) received land of their own in Çirkince, and that Hüseyin was therefore forced to work on other people's land. As movable property, they listed twelve blankets, twelve bedsheets, one broadcloth suit for men (*çoha erkek elbise-i takım*), one silken girdle, twenty-four napkins, one silken overgarment (*çarşaf*) for women, two pairs of boots (*botin*) and twelve beds.<sup>53</sup> They gave the total value of these items as 103 lira. The Cretans' list appears to have not included a single commodity imported from abroad (at least it did not stress this point by frequently using foreign terms). The silk may have been produced locally or close by in the Ottoman realm. The only European-derived word used was 'botin' (from the French *bôtes*). Instead of luxury items, the Cretans listed objects they had quite obviously used, such as twelve beds and a matching number of blankets and sheets (indicating ten more household members) and a number of more valuable pieces of clothing. The total value of the listed items, as well as such objects as a silken *çarşaf*, however, do not mark the family as particularly poor, but rather as rural, and living in a relatively traditional way.

## 9. Conclusion

In this article, I have used a small sample of *taşfiye talebnâmes* in order to trace how exchange migrants in Turkey dealt with the bureaucratic challenge to list the property they had left behind on the islands of Chios and Crete. I have conceptualised this property as "imagined" property whose description in the course of a bureaucratic procedure was supposed to help them to be compensated for their losses. As I have shown, *taşfiye talebnâmes* provide at times detailed descriptions of this "imagined" property and thus offer insights into the social and material world that the migrants had left behind: one family hailing from a rural area included the number and kind of fruit trees in the description of their land. By contrast, several urban exchangees from Chios listed fruit orchards, but did not provide the number of trees, suggesting comparably less familiarity with their property. While some applicants stay within the confines of the document, others list precious imported goods, work materials and pieces of clothing, and in one case manage to list 'immaterial losses'. These differences are markers of social status that indicate different levels of bureaucratic literacy among the exchangees. Moreover, it is possible to observe social networks of witnesses between the exchangees in Çeşme, which seem to have helped even the less educated among them to present their case as favourably as possible: class, cultural and social capital, but also factors like access to the local administration in Çeşme played out in the sup-

52 'Moucmula' may either refer to medlar (*mespilus germanica*) or to loquat (*eriobotrya japonica*), which is known in contemporary Greek as 'mousmoula.'

53 CA 130.16.13.2/ 110.501.3.

posedly objective, standardised forms distributed by a modern bureaucracy. Judging from their professions in 1925, urban migrants from Chios, who already arrived in 1913, seem to have fared better than the rural ones from Crete. In order to really compare the applicants’ former lives to their new ones, however, it would be necessary to match *taşfiye talebnāmes* to the respective families’ data in the Turkish settlement records.

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