

On ancestral language and origin: Perceptions of the descendants of refugees from Kizderbent

Abstract

This paper focuses on the descendants of the 1923 refugee population from Kizdebent of Vithynia, today in the region of Kocaeli, a population also known as Trakatroukides. What is most interesting about the approximately three thousand inhabitants of the pro-exchange Kizderbent is their language, which was not Greek, nor Turkish, but south-Slavic. A part of them was re-established in central Greek Macedonia, in the region of Paeonia of the former prefecture of Kilkis, next to other Slavic speakers, whose national consciousness was put under question by the Greek state. In this paper the floor is given to the nowadays inhabitants of the villages Ryzia, Polypetro and Valtotopi, since the research was conducted with the use of a questionnaire, in order to investigate the up-to-date situation of this language and to facilitate the exploration of the collective consciousness of the Trakatroukides. The topics that concern us here are their beliefs about their language and their origin as a group. The answers to the relating questions demonstrate the devaluation of their language as a communication tool in the Greek territory and the effort to alienate any correlation with the local Slav-speaking population, underlining the 'greekness' their forefathers demonstrated and held dear in their Minor Asian homeland. Moreover, it is obvious that they hold the memory of Kizderbent in an extremely high esteem, as an idealized cradle of descent.