

ORTA ÇAĞ ve ERKEN OSMANLI'DA KOMANA: ÖN ARAŞTIRMA SONUÇLARI

Re-visiting the Medieval and Early Ottoman Settlement at Komana: Preliminary Results¹

Burcu ERCİYAS²

Maxime DUROCHER³

Özet

Tokat bölgesinde bulunan Komana'da 2009 yılından bu yana sürdürülmekte olan kazı çalışmalarında Geç Kalkolitik Çağ'dan Osmanlı'ya aralarında kırsal bir Bizans yerleşiminin de bulunduğu uzun bir yerleşim tarihi ortaya çıkarılmıştır. Bizans dönemini takiben Türklerin Anadolu'ya girişleri ve sonrasında bölgenin Danişmend kontrolüne geçmesi ile devam eden süreçte de Komana'da yerleşimin izlerine rastlanmıştır. Danişmend ve Selçuklu dönemlerinde Hamamtepe olarak adlandırılan ve Komana'nın merkezinde yer alan höyükte seramik ve bakırcılık önde olmak üzere birçok alanda üretim yapan endüstriyel bir merkez kurulmuş, daha sonra üzerine, Osmanlı döneminde, mütevazı evler yapılmış, tepe Komana'nın bir mahallesi haline gelmiştir. Komana'da devam eden transdisipliner çalışmalar Komana'nın çevresi ile birlikte özellikle de yazılı kaynaklarda adının geçmeye başladığı 12-15. Yüzyıllar arasındaki gelişimini/değişimini anlamayı hedeflemektedir. Alandaki mimarinin ön değerlendirmesi ve arkeolojik buluntular, Komana'nın Tokat ve Niksar arasında önemli bir stratejik konuma sahip olduğunu göstermiştir. Komana'yı güneydeki ana yola bağlayan köprüler ve höyük çevresinde tanımlanan kamusal yapılar (hamam, bir zamanlar bir zaviye ile bağlantılı olduğu anlaşılan türbe ve olasılıkla cami), epigrafi ve yazılı kaynaklar ışığında (vakfiye ve tahrir defterleri) çalışılmakta ve tüm veriler CBS ortamına aktarılmaktadır. Bu bildiride bütüncül belgeleme çalışmaları yardımıyla Komana'nın Geç Orta Çağ'da konumuna dair elde edilen ön sonuçlar paylaşılacak, böylece Geç Orta Çağ'da Anadolu'da kırsal yerleşimler konusuna da katkı sağlanacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Orta Çağ, Selçuklu, Osmanlı, Komana, Bizans

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² Professor, Graduate Program in Settlement Archaeology, Middle East Technical University, berciyas@metu.edu.tr <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0842-5172><https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0842-5172>

³ Associate Professor, Department of Archaeology and History of Art, Sorbonne University, maxime.durocher@sorbonne-universite.fr <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8722-7619>

Abstract

The ancient site of Komana, located in the region of Tokat, has revealed a long settlement history, from the Late Chalcolithic period to the Ottomans, including a rural fortified site during the Byzantine Period. The settlement continued after the arrival of the Turks in Anatolian land and the establishment of the Danishmendids. The excavations conducted since 2009 focusing on Hamamtepe, the central fortified hill of the site, have shed light on a workshop (including pottery and copper production), active during the Danishmend/Seljuk periods, which was later replaced by houses in the Early Ottoman times. Ongoing transdisciplinary research at the site aims to understand the settlement patterns of the broader site and its evolution during the Late Medieval Period (12th-15th centuries), when Komana appears in literary and archival sources as a rural town. Architectural survey and archaeological material already suggested that the site had a strategic location on the road from Tokat to Niksar and benefited from the resources of the surrounding plain. Bridges connected Komana to the southern road leading to Tokat and several public buildings have been identified on the northern slopes of the hill: a hammam, a mausoleum formerly attached to a zaviye and possibly a mosque. This material evidence is also being studied in the light of epigraphy and textual documentation (including vakfiyes and tax registers), and all the data are gathered in a GIS. Based on this complementary documentation, this paper will present the preliminary results of this research, aiming to map and characterize Komana and to contribute to the larger understanding of rural towns in Late Medieval Anatolia.

Keywords: Medieval, Seljuk, Ottoman, Komana, Byzantine

Komana is located along the Yeşilırmak river in north central Anatolia 10 km northeast of modern day Tokat, on the road to Niksar (Neocaesarea) then to Ünye on the coast of the Black Sea (Figure 1). Hamamtepe mound which constitutes a small yet significant part of Komana has been a site of continuous habitation from the Late Chalcolithic period until the Ottoman times (D.B. Erciyas 2019). The attraction of this mound primarily derives from its superb position in the middle of a very fertile plain which was known as Dazimonitis in the ancient times; a plain, today known as Kazova, that still continues to be a source of wealth for Tokat and its environs. Komana was the site of a sacred sanctuary which was dedicated to the goddess Ma and its main source of income was agriculture and its market place during the bi-annual festivals (Strabo *Geographica* 12.3.36). It was one of the three sanctuaries of the Kingdom of Mithridatids. During the Roman period Komana retained its sacred status and the sanctuary continued its function while it gained *polis* status in the first half of the 1st century CE. Komana was included into different provinces during the various stages of administrative re-organizations in northern Anatolia by the Romans (T.Bekker-Nielsen 2017,

39; C.Marek 2017, 431). The sanctuary at Komana must have lost its religious significance with the spread of Christianity, but continued to exist as a *polis*. Alexander the Charcoal-Burner (ca. 250s C.E.) was the first bishop appointed at Komana (D.B.Erciyas and E.Sökmen 2010; G.Heil 1990). Komana survived as a modest settlement through the Byzantine period. During the reign of Michael VII Doukas (1071-1078), northern Anatolia began to be raided by various Turkmen groups. Danishmendids gained control of the Black Sea region where they ruled until the second half of the 12th century. In the process, Komana or Sisiyye as it is called in the epic *Danishmendname*, fell under their control (I.Melikoff 1960, ; N.Demir 2020 Vol.2, 128-134). Ottoman sources indicate that settlement at Komana continued through the 19th century. It is mentioned as a city (nefs-i şehir) in 1455 (BOA TD 2, 176) and was a *nahiye* of Tokat until 1562, a *kaza* of Sivas between 1855-1866 and again in 1520 (BOA TD79, 51), and appears as a *nahiye* of Tokat until the 19th century (see for instance, BOA NFS.d.2585 and Erciyas 2019, 5). Today the village is named Gümenek (deriving from Komana, Komanak, Kumanat...) and is a village of around 120 households.

Archaeological explorations at the site began in 2004 with surveys in the wider territory of Komana comprising the Merkez province of Tokat today (D.B.Erciyas 2012). Within the survey area around 45 sites dating between the Early Bronze Age and the Ottoman period were recorded, some of which were revisited through the years. Excavations at Hamamtepe and the hexagonal pool near Bula began in 2009, following a more comprehensive and intensive survey at the site of Komana itself (D.B.Erciyas 2019). The excavations concentrated on the central part of the mound as well as the fortifications with the intention to understand the extent, character and chronology of the fortifications and open wide areas at a central part of the mound in order to identify the settlement history (Figure 2). The excavations immediately revealed ruins of an Ottoman neighbourhood, preceded by a Danishmend/Seljuk workshop building. In the 15 years of excavations at the site, a settlement history of about 6000 years was uncovered with extensive remains of a Middle Byzantine cemetery including two adjacent chapels, and public and domestic quarters of the Roman period settlement. In the meantime, the excavations at the hexagonal pool which is a couple kilometres away from Hamamtepe demonstrated the magnitude of the Roman settlement (Figure 3). The monumental pool/fountain is a strong testimony to a complex water management system at the site during the Roman period which functioned into the 1950s.

In this paper, we will be focusing on the post-Byzantine era at the site from the reign of the Danishmendids to the Early Ottoman period with the intention to better understand and reconstruct the medieval landscape of Komana. Recently a project was developed as a collaboration between the Middle East Technical University and Sorbonne University to study the Islamic archaeology at the site

more comprehensively.⁴ In the context of this project, different sorts of data is being assembled in order to achieve a holistic understanding of this complicated settlement during the Late-Medieval and Early Ottoman Period (12th-16th centuries), to better comprehend the larger process of Islamization of Anatolia and the transformation of rural landscape during this politically disturbed period. Indeed, the Late-Medieval and Early Ottoman periods correspond to drastic changes in the religious life of Anatolia but also, and maybe more importantly, to the transformation of political, social and economic structures, (Aillet 2011; Nef 2016).

In this perspective, the site of Komana and the surrounding plain, with its continuity of settlement documented archaeologically and by textual and epigraphic sources until the 19th century, constitute an exemplary case-study to understand the evolution of rural landscape and society in the Black Sea Region.

Since the beginning of the project in the summer of 2023 various types of data have already begun to be collected and we will be bringing together this preliminary set here primarily to introduce the site during the 12th-16th centuries and share the goals and expected outcomes of our project.

Komana presented a complex stratigraphy and valuable data for a very long chronological span as mentioned above, however, the period shortly after the introduction of the Turks into the Anatolian land, the 12th-14th century levels, has especially provided ample information on this very little understood period of Anatolian archaeology. The excavations on Hamamtepe revealed a fortified settlement site where industrial activity dominated (Figure 4) (D.B.Erciyas 2019, 5-10). During this period, the Late Roman/Early Byzantine fortifications were reused to enclose a production facility characterized by small adjacent units with several tandır ovens, storage and garbage pits. It has previously been suggested with caution that there may have been three or four buildings however without the entrances it is still very difficult to differentiate between buildings. This complex must have been built rather hastily with whatever construction material was available on the hill and functioned for about hundred years between the end of the 12th to the early 14th century. The difficulties with the architectural plan aside, this complex has been a very important source of information for us since we were able to identify pottery production (glazed and unglazed), coppersmithing, glass craftsmanship at the site in addition to ample amounts of information on foodstuffs and food production. The pottery workshop proved to be a significant center from which craftsmen travelled to Sivas in the south and to Crimea in the north conveying their crafts by establishing new shops (Figure 5) (Y.E.Karasu 2020). The copper objects likewise are an important testimony to the copper-smithing in this area already in the late 12th and 13th centuries as the forerunner

⁴ (<https://www.orient-mediterranee.com/program/peuplement-et-paysage-a-komana-aux-epoques-tardo-medievale-et-ottomane/>) The project is also hosted by IFEA, with authors as Associate Researchers <https://ifea-istanbul.net/index.php/fr/recherche/archeologie/fouilles-et-prospections/4154-peuplement-et-paysages-a-comana-komana-aux-epoques-medievale-et-ottomane>

of infamous coppersmithing in Tokat during the Ottoman period continuing well into the 20th century.

Excavations were carried out on the outside of the walls encircling the crown of the hill with the hopes of understanding the extent of extra-mural settlement in different periods. In HTP04, to the north of the hill, the Ottoman neighbourhood continued on the plain, possibly spreading across the area of the modern village of Gümenek. Likewise, remains of the Danişmend/Seljuk period were reached under the Ottoman houses where ovens characterized the layers (Figure 6). On the southern section of the excavation grid, a facade of a fairly large building (at least 9m long) was unearthed. This wall was built of large rubble but the corners were supported by spolia of considerable size (Figure 7). There is a doorway on the east side close to the eastern section suggesting that may be only half of the facade is visible. In front of the building under the foundation level a sewage or a drainage system was excavated. The masonry of this building, including the use of spolia at the corner and the door frame indicates a late medieval (12th to 15th) century dating for this fairly large public building. The location of the façade at the north fit with the orientation of the whole building toward the south, i.e. the kible, making it possible to suggest a religious building. Until further excavations, it is however impossible to identify precisely its functions, maybe a Sufi lodge (zaviye) or a mosque. During summer 2023, the trench at the south of this façade has been excavated. An undated Ottoman waterpipe system has been discovered and further research during the next seasons will aim to reach the interior of this building.

The extent of the Late medieval settlement is also readable through the remains of a so-called Hamam building (giving the mound its name) and three bridges (one long lost, two still intact) one crossing Yeşilırmak, another on its tributary Honideresi and a third smaller on over a seasonal stream. All three were arched bridges (Figure 8). The first of them which crossed over Yeşilırmak was still standing as seen on a black and white photograph from 1900s. This bridge must have been built over an earlier post-Roman bridge, the foundations of which are still visible under the water regulator built by DSİ (State Hydraulic Works) in 1970s and had 4 arches. The road coming from Tokat and leading towards Niksar arrived at this bridge crossing over a smaller bridge to the southeast on Honideresi. This bridge has two arches and is very well preserved but it is not in use today since it remained in the picnic area of the Gümenek park. A concrete bridge was built over Yeşilırmak before Honideresi. The third bridge is the smallest of all and the road crosses over it on the west side of Yeşilırmak. The single arched bridge is also well preserved and it is in use under a secondary road. The two preserved bridges share the same construction style and materials and can be loosely dated to the Seljuk/Ottoman periods.

Regardless of their exact date, the three bridges indicate that Komana had a rather pivotal position at a crossing point between Tokat and Niksar. The hammam

building we mentioned earlier was across from the main bridge and must have provided a rest stop for travelers and caravans. Elements of the masonry of this hammam, better preserved until the early 20th century, are now visible in the private garden of a village house (Figure 9). The masonry of rubblestones and bricks, with elements of waterpipes visible in the walls, suggest again a late Medieval dating (14th-15th century). Its presence at this very location suggests that similar public buildings such as hans and mosques must have also existed in this vicinity. Unfortunately, we are not able to observe these due to continuous habitation at Kumanat/Gümenek. However, further studies on the outskirts of Hamamtepe in the HTP04 area may prove to be informative in this aspect.

There is still one building which connects well with the rest of the site. To the southeast of Hamamtepe, in the close proximity of a rock-cut tomb which is sometimes associated with St. John Chrysostomos, there are the ruins of a mausoleum/türbe (Figure 10). The mausoleum is a small square-planned building with a crypt and a brick dome relaying on a transitional zone with so-called Turkish triangle. The building is entered through a doorway on the north and there are windows on the other three sides. Despite its state of preservation, the masonry and some ornamental elements (like the stoned arches of the bays and the muqarnas-like pattern in the south window) reveals a very fine architecture. Black and white photographs from 1906 suggest that it was not a single building but part of a complex which can be identified as a zaviye (Cumont 1906, 253). Unfortunately, only the mausoleum survived and the rest of the building complex was lost. The walls must have been deliberately dismantled but geophysics planned for 2024 excavation season is expected to provide information on the plan of the zaviye. Previously the türbe was dated to the 15th century (Gündoğdu, 2006), but an inscription identified to have belonged to the mausoleum was published in the 1980s (Tokat Museum inv. 487). While the editing of the inscription shows problem of syntax in the reading (Çayırdağ, 1984-1994), this inscription mentioned the date of 1301 (700 Hijri) and the name of Gazan Khan, the mongol ruler of the Ilkahnid empire between 1295 and 1304 (Fig. 11). In 2023 we had a chance to see and photograph the inscription in the storage of Tokat Museum so we hope to study it more closely with a fresh interpretation. The architectural feature of the mausoleum fits with the early 14th century date mentioned in the inscription (1301) and, for now, the patron of the building could be indentify as Hoca Nasr ibn Abdallah, an unknown local figure most probably. The terminology used in the inscription, mentioning the decease as *qutb al-‘arīfīn* related him to Sufi circles, reinforcing the identification of the mausoleum as a zaviye.

In the vicinity of Komana, in the villages of Çamağzı (Cincife) and Çöreğibüyük there were two other zaviyes. The Çöreğibüyük zaviye had a mausoleum for someone called Pir Havend and was dated to 1453 (857 Hijri) thanks to its inscription (Fig. 12). Cincife mausoleum, built in fine cut-stones on the top of a hill, dominating the Komana plain, could be dated back, at least, to the 15th century

or maybe 14th century, according to its masonry techniques (Fig. 13). These two sites could be identified as Sufi lodges thanks to the earliest Tahrir Defter of the region, written in 1455. This register mentions indeed the zaviye of Pir Havend in the village of Çöreğibüyük as well as the name of Shaykh Hasan Bey as the timar of the nahiye of Cincife/Çamağzı (BOA TD 2).

Another inscription from the Tokat Museum is of importance for us as it is known to have originated from Komana (Tokat Museum, inv. 812). It mentions the construction of a small mosque (mescit) and the date of 1326-1327 (727 Hihri). This unpublished inscription also requires further study, it was seen and documented in 2023.

Several other inscriptions were recorded during the 2023 season at Komana. Two of these inscriptions are today in the old cemetery of Bula, and have been used as the head and foot stone of a so-called martyr grave. These inscriptions are in fact not tomb stones but rather foundation inscriptions of two other buildings, reshaped for a new use as tombstones at an unknown date. These are very exciting discoveries because they suggest construction of two public buildings in Komana or its direct vicinity during the end of the 13th century or early 14th century, according to their layout and calligraphies. One of them even mention the reign of Ghiyath al-Din Masud (Giyaseddin Mesud), one of the last Seljuk sultan who ruled during the last quarter of the 13th Century. These evidences fall very comfortably and nicely with other evidence documenting a quite intense architectural activity during the last decades of the 13th century in the Komana plain. Indeed, another inscription of a fountain, built in Cincife in the 1274-1275 (672 Hijri), also mentions the same sultan. In addition to this, several cenotaphs and tombstones, dated to the 14th and 15th century, were also seen in the depots of Tokat Museum as well as in different villages of the plain. These will need close examination in the coming months.

All these epigraphic evidences suggest, together with the results of excavations at Hamantepe, as well as the preserved zaviyes in Çöreğibüyük, Cincife and Komana, a larger settlement developed during the 14th and 15th century in Komana and the surrounding plain. At this period, Komana had an important role as a rural settlement in this area between Tokat and Niksar and there were several rural zaviyes in the territory of Komana. These zaviyes were very important for, of course, the spread of Islam but more importantly as social and economic structures that regulated the cultivation and taxation of rural lands (Durocher 2018). Therefore, the evidence from Komana is very important for a more comprehensive understanding of Islamization process of the Anatolian land. As mentioned in the introduction of this paper, these processes though should not be reduced, as it is mostly the case in literature, to the question of conversion of local population to Islam and the migrations of Turko-Islamic elements but must be understood more comprehensively and from a sociological perspective (Aillet 2011; Nef 2016; Peacock, 2017) encompassing the establishment of new legal apparatus and land-ownership, the changes of built landscape, the evolution of onomastics as well as the transformation of sacred topography.

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Fig 3



Fig 4



Fig 5



Fig 6



Fig 7



Fig 8



Fig 9



Fig 10



Fig 11



Fig 12



Fig 13