

Language, Religion and Identity in Ottoman Cappadocia (and beyond)

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Cappadocia has been a multicultural and multilingual region from ancient to modern times. It was the homeland of the Hittites in the 2nd millennium BCE, Hellenised in the final quarter of the 1st millennium BCE, Christianised in the first half of the 1st millennium CE, and finally conquered by the Seljuk and Ottoman Turks in the 1st half of the 2nd millennium CE. The NIA Annual Lecture is about the history and languages of the Orthodox Christians who lived in Cappadocia during the Ottoman Empire and were deported to *Ionanistan* under the Population Exchange between Greece and Turkey in 1924. Some were Turkish-speaking with a rich literature in Turkish written in the Greek alphabet (*Karamanlidika*), others were Greek-speaking, but their Greek had been Turkicised to the point of being incomprehensible to their new compatriots. Cappadocian Greek faded away in the new fatherland, until it was believed to have died out in the 1960s. In 2005 it turned out to be still spoken in a few Cappadocian villages in Northern and Central Greece. The language is a living testimony of the symbiosis of two very different peoples, the Muslim Ottoman Turks and the Orthodox Christian Greeks.

The lecture will be followed by the documentary “Last Words” (seriousFilm, 2014), about the last speakers of Cappadocian Greek. The documentary has been selected for screening at the 15th International Short Film Festival (Lanzarote), Ethnografilm 2015 (Paris), the 5th International Festival of Ethnographic Film (Sofia) and the 14th RAI International Festival of Ethnographic Film (Bristol).

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