
The Rhodope Balkans

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oldest Fellows, and one of the great early pioneer explorers of Australia. Among our Honorary Corresponding Members we have to deplore the loss of such distinguished explorers and geographers as Baron Von Richthofen, Major Von Wissmann, M. de Brazza, and perhaps greatest of all Elisée Reclus.

I commenced my address with a tribute—necessarily brief and inadequate—to the work performed by my predecessor, Sir Clements Markham, during his twelve years' tenure of the Presidential chair. I wish to conclude the address with a similar tribute to the indispensable work performed by Dr. J. Scott Keltie during the first year of my presidency, as, indeed, during the fourteen years that he has filled the post of secretary to the Society, throughout all of which period I have been in a position, as a member of your Council, to follow and appreciate his invaluable services. I do not, of course, imagine that any words of mine can add materially to the firmly-rooted reputation of Dr. Keltie, either in our great Society or amongst geographers of all nationalities. He is too widely known to need commendation from me. But I claim, as one of my privileges, to remind you of the fact which must be patent to many of you, that by far the greater part of such work of the Society as appears to be performed by me—including even the more solid material of this address—is really the work of our untiring, our zealous, our deeply experienced secretary.

THE RHODOPE BALKANS.*

By Lieut.-Colonel F. R. MAUNSELL, C.M.G., R.A.

THE Rhodope Balkans is the name given to the series of ranges along the southern frontier of Bulgaria which shut off that country from access towards the Mediterranean. They form a part of European Turkey curiously little known, although the traveller in the Orient express to Constantinople skirts the foothills of the range on the north, and may admire its bold line of snowy summits, and also the coast to Salonica along the Ægean follows its southern slopes and traverses some of its gorges. Yet the actual country is seldom penetrated by travellers, and since the stirring times of the war of 1878, when some of the Turkish columns retreated through its passes, and its feudal beys organized a force to descend on the Russian line of communications, the country has remained forgotten.

The name "Balkan" in Turkish is a generic term referring to a range or mass of wooded hills with pasturage and meadowland on their slopes, rather than to a "dagh," or mountain, a name applied oftener

* Read at the Royal Geographical Society, March 12, 1906. Map, p. 9.

to the wild rocky ranges with inaccessible peaks and rugged slopes more common in Asiatic Turkey.

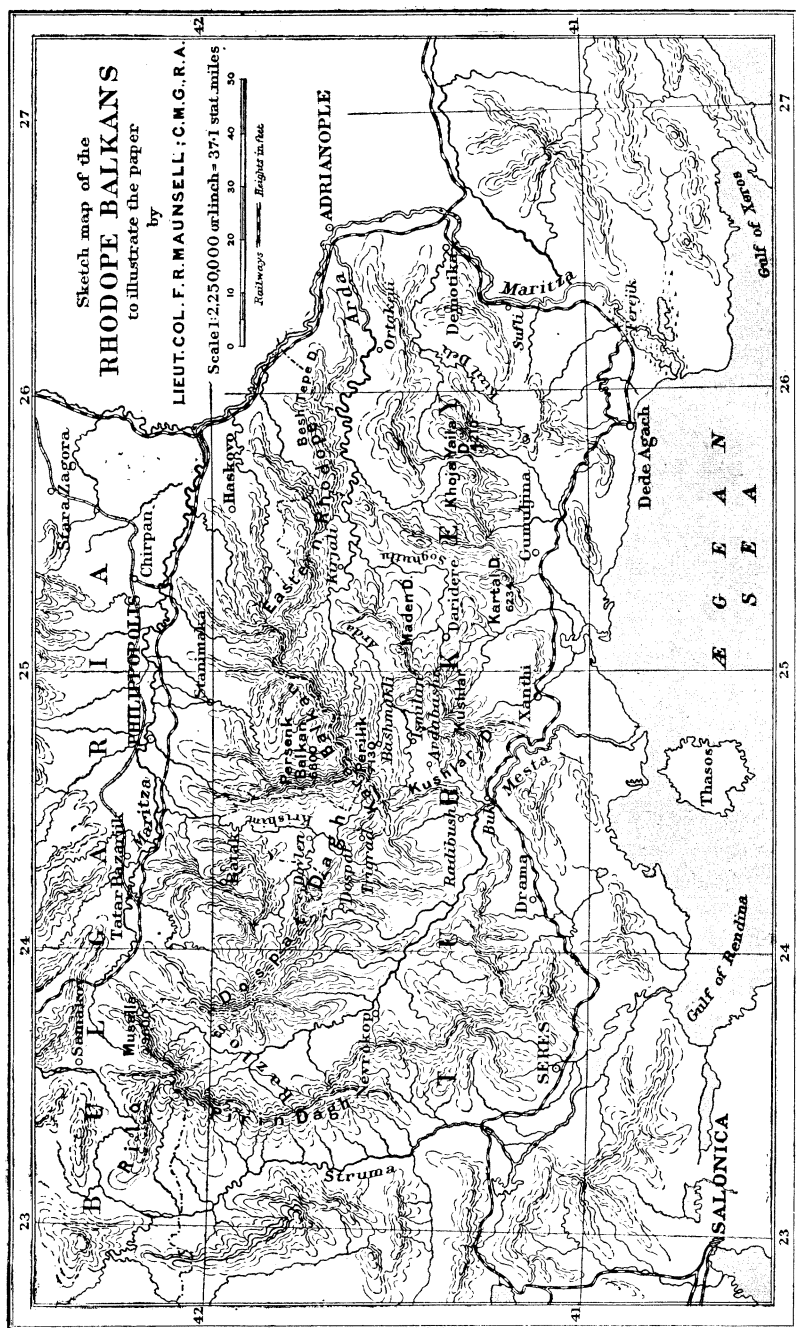
The main range of the Balkans which gives its name to the peninsula is known to the Turks as the Khoja Balkan, or "Father of Balkans;" the central mass of the Rhodope is known as the Kara, or Black Balkan, probably from the dark masses of pine forests along its summit ridges. The high mass of the Rilo mountains is the Altun, or Golden Balkan, while another very beautiful and picturesque range is the Stranja Balkan along the Black sea from the Bosphorus up to the Bulgarian frontier—hills of no great height, but with densely wooded slopes and deep winding glades, affording very delightful scenery of a kind somewhat rare in Turkey.

The Rhodope Balkans commence on the west as a continuation of the Rilo mountains, a fine mass of hills which form the southern buttress of the Sofia plateau, and rise in the Musalla peak to 9600 feet. A sharp dip with a rugged col separates the Dospat range, which forms the north-west end of the Rhodope Balkans, from it, after which the general trend of the range is to the south-east, though at an elevation very much lower, of about 5500 feet. The central part of the range, the Kara Balkan, is to be found along the Bulgarian frontier south of Philipopolis, where the principal peaks are the Persenk, rising to 6800 feet, and the Perilik, at the turning-point of the frontier, to 7130 feet. Eastward of this the range practically divides into two long offsets, which enclose the valley of the Arda, one following the line of the Bulgarian frontier, and gradually getting lower until its foothills approach the Maritea near Adrianople, and another, a well-defined series of ridges which skirt the coast plain of the Ægean and trend to a central knot in the Khoja Yaila Dag, which rises to 4210 feet, and sends out spurs to the coast at Dede Agach, as well as towards the Maritza on the east and the Arda on the north.

The many small streams on the northern slopes of the Rhodope emerge from their narrow valleys and gorges into the wide plain of southern Bulgaria, and there form tributaries of the Maritza, the great river of the principality most famous in national song and story, which leaves Bulgaria near Adrianople, and sweeps round the eastern end of the Rhodope to enter the sea near Dede Agach. The Arda is the chief river of the Rhodope, as it rises in the central part of the range, and flows between the two lines of hills forming the eastern end, receiving many tributaries on either bank, and finally escapes through a narrow gorge to join the Maritza just above Adrianople town.

The Kizil Deli Chai, or "mad red river," is a large mountain stream which drains into the Maritza from the eastern side of the Khoja Yailo Dag, and is a rushing torrent throughout its course, which quite justifies its name.

On the south are no streams of any size flowing into the Ægean



from the coastal ranges of the Rhodope, the largest being the Yardimlu from the southern side of the Khoja Yaila, which traverses a wide cultivated plain east of Gumuljina, with meadow-land and patches of forest, on its way to the sea. At Xanthi a stream emerges just above the town from a rocky gorge, but it scarcely exists in summer, as its waters are used up for the town and the belt of gardens surrounding it, its shingly bed being dry.

Along the west side of the Rutodope is the wide basin of the Mesta, a large stream rising in the Rilo, and formed of many affluents from its foothills and the Pirin and Dospat ranges. It passes in a deep-cut valley through Razlog, and enters the little plain of Nevrokop, but soon resumes its character of a mountain torrent, forcing its way along a deep tortuous channel through a V-shaped valley between spurs from the Rhodope and some high ranges about Drama, towards the *Ægean*. At the little station of Buk, the Salonica-Constantinople railway crosses the river and follows its bank, traversing a small open basin at Buk, and then winding along a picturesque rock gorge through tunnels or in a cutting closely overhanging the water. It is only in the last few miles, when it has left the gorge and turned towards the sea, which it enters opposite Thasos, that the river is able to spread itself over a wide sandy delta and escapes from its mountain gorges. The Turkish name of the river is Kara Su, but as this is also applied to the Struma and many other streams, it seems best to retain the name Mesta, its former Greek name, which is also known to the Turks.

The general outline of the Rhodope presents no prominent peaks of striking grandeur rising above the general chaos of wooded or brown summits, but its chief beauty, especially in the centre and west, lies in its pine-clad summits and slopes, enclosing pleasant valleys, upland meadows watered by many rills, along which are villages of log-built houses, whose wooden roofs and general outline would remind one of the Tyrol, were it not for a certain irregularity of shape that must be oriental, and for the wooden tower of the minaret above the trees. These pasture lands along the slopes and the forests constitute its principal source of riches of the country, and form a pleasing contrast to the bare cultivated plains of the Maritza and the *Ægean* coast, which are scorched in summer and have few trees. There are no lakes at all in the Rhodope, and in this it loses somewhat in picturesqueness compared with the fine lakes of Okhrida and Prespa among the Albania mountains, or even with those of the Pirin Dagh close by, which has several beautiful lakelets on its summit plateaux. The Dospat Dugh, at the north-west end of the Rhodope, sends out a long spur into Bulgaria, which circles round over Batak, the principal village on that side of the frontier.

All these summits are thickly covered with pine forest, occasional open glades being available as pasturage, while the streams soon

disappear in deep narrow gorges choked with forest, or bordered by crags overhanging the stream tumbling over the boulders below, the district being extremely wild and picturesque, with few habitations outside Batak itself. The spurs to the north terminate abruptly over the plain of the upper Maritza, and the streams as they emerge are used to irrigate the rice and maize fields of the lower levels.

On the Turkish side the chief centre is Dospat, a large village of some three hundred houses, close round which approach the dense pine forests, although these probably will disappear in a few years if the present reckless system of cutting is continued. The place is still, however, famous for its sawmills, picturesque wooden buildings along the borders of the stream, which winds along below the town and supplies the necessary water-power to work the primitive machinery. The



SUMMIT OF KARA BALKAN, SHABANITZA UPLANDS.

southern slopes overlooking the Mesta valley are almost bare of trees. The Central Rhodope is the most picturesque part of the range, and is known at its western end as the Chadir Kaya, and at the east as Shabanitza, forming part of the Kara Balkan, and running up to the Perilik peak. The frontier of Turkey at this point projects forward as a long triangular tongue which reaches to Tumrush, only six hours from Philipopolis, and from the hills round which the Maritza plain can easily be overlooked. This is the Rupchuz "kaza," or district, and has its centre of government at Dovlen, a scattered place of some three hundred wooden houses at the bottom of a deep valley.

The Krishim stream drains this district towards the Maritza, being made up of a large tributary from Trigrad, and another from the hills over Batak, which emerges just above Dovlen from a splendid gorge bordered with towering crags, and filled with a dark thicket of forest

growth. If the track along the broad ridge of Shabanitza is followed, a succession of fine panoramas unfold themselves northward over Rupchuz, eastward over all the valley of the upper Arda, and westward towards the gorges of the Mesta and Nevrokop. Far away to the north in the shadowy haze is the long line of the main Balkan chain, with the Shipka pass and other historic features of the 1878 war. Below it is the fertile plain of the Maritza, with the corn and rice fields watered by the streams which struggle over the plain after leaving these hills. The middle distance is a tumbled mass of peaks, some bare and craggy, and some thickly forested, the black pine-clad peak of Persenk rising higher than the others; while many deep gorges trend down to join the Krishim stream, which can just be traced winding northward at the foot of a narrow V-shaped valley. Along the several heights can be traced the double line of huts and posts forming the frontier of Turkey and Bulgaria.

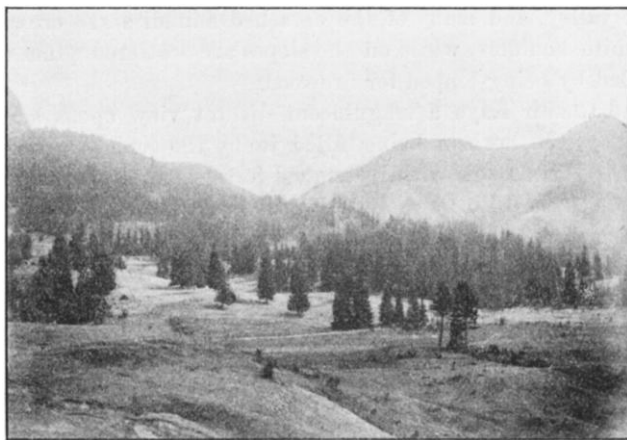
At our feet are dense masses of pine and beech forest, severed by open grassy uplands and glades, through which flow many small streams, which unite lower down to form the river of Trigrad. A glimpse of the wooden roofs and minarets of the village can be obtained, as well as its outlying farms and sheepfolds, which are occupied for the summer pasturage, and are dotted about the slopes in little clusters where the best grazing can be found. Just beyond Trigrad the stream enters a deep narrow gorge some 6 miles long, bordered by limestone crags and cliffs several hundred feet high, clothed with patches of beech and pine forest—a very striking bit of scenery in the middle distance. Winding along the slope near the top, and overlooking the gorge, is the narrow path which leads out of Trigrad towards the villages to the north. The more distant hills have almost lost their forests, and appear bare and brown; and the reckless way in which the trees are cut tends very rapidly to destroy their principal beauty.

Turning eastward, a splendid panorama of mountain scenery open out over the succession of wooded ridges and pleasant valleys down which flow the streams forming the headwaters of the Arda, and some of the roofs and minarets of Ardabashi ("the head of the Arda"), where are the principal springs which give rise to the stream, can be seen in the deep valley below. Farther north is the long line of the frontier ridge, with the valley of Bashmakli just below us, dotted with many small villages and mills along its stream. Immediately below us the slope of Shabanitza falls away very rapidly in a number of craggy spurs thickly clothed with beech and pine forest and a tangle of brushwood. About midway down open glades and meadowland appear, with the roofs of detached farms and sheepfolds, occupied in summer by people from villages out of sight in the deeper valleys beyond. Several sharply defined ridges, also well wooded, run out eastward as spurs,

enclosing the many small valleys which trend down to the Arda. Water-meadows extend along the streams, little clusters of pretty wooden-roofed houses, and here and there a water-mill, easily recognizable by the long wooden trough or shoot which carries the water from the upper channel down to the rim of the wheel.

Beyond these, in the middle distance, the forests almost cease, and bare shaly spurs with patches of red and yellow earth dip steeply from the brown summit of the Maden Dagħ towards the Arda, and enclose the district of Egridere, or the "crooked valley." In the far distance the frontier ridges can be traced above Kirjali, with the bare rocky mass of the Khoja Yaila which overlooks the mouth of the Maritza, and also of the Karlik Dagħ along the edge of the coastal plain.

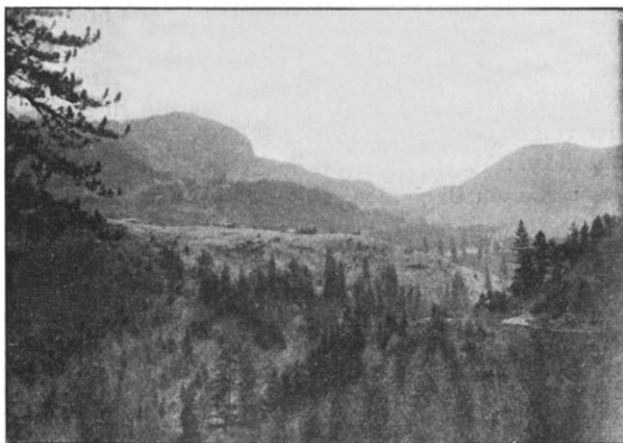
Looking southward towards the Ægean, a belt of shimmering haze indicates the sea, and the high mass of Thasos island stands out boldly, with a mass of minor ranges on the mainland near it. A high wooded ridge runs out as a spur towards Xanthi, and rises again to the Kushlar Dagħ and other ranges which trend eastward. The narrow gorge of the Mesta can be traced by a dip in the hills, but the stream is not visible. The scenery of this slope differs greatly from the others, as the grassy uplands give way to sharp stony spurs, with a forest of Scotch fir on the upper levels, but only scattered stunted oaks and brushwood lower down. Here the streams tumble over rocks and boulders or thread through narrow rifts and gorges on their hurried



CENTRAL RHODOPE UPLANDS NEAR TRIGRAD.

way towards the Mesta. Paths narrow and tortuous lead down these valleys, and are scarcely traceable among the stones except here and there. The stream is crossed by a picturesque stone bridge of one high pointed arch with a very narrow slippery roadway, and no side

walls to prevent the unwary traveller from falling into the torrent below. These tracks trend towards the station of Buk, on the Salonica railway, which has become the principal trade centre for this district since the line was opened. Looking westward along the summit of



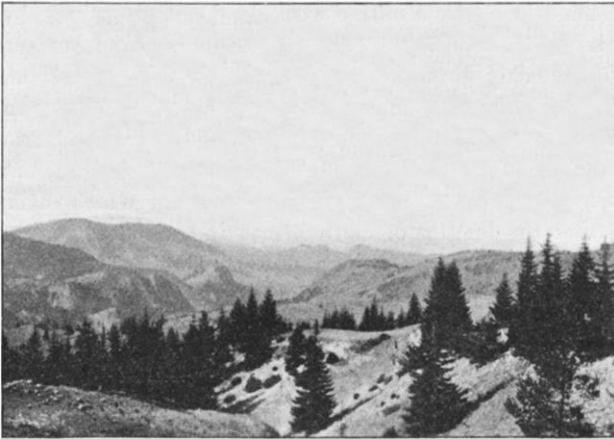
CENTRAL RHODOPE : TRIGRAD VALLEY.

the range is the Chadir Kaya plateau, once well wooded, but now with only some scattered patches of trees. Its undulating slopes have a few patches of rye and barley cultivated by men from the hamlets far down the valley, and many of the detached summits are crowned by huge granite boulders, while on the slopes are scattered pines stunted and gnarled by being lopped for firewood.

Beyond Chadir Kaya a magnificent distant view opens across the Mesta valley, the horizon being filled in by the long sharply defined range of the Pirin Dag with its rugged forest-clad slopes, while away to the north is the Rilo Dag and Musalla peak, the highest summit in this country, just touched in October with the first snow. The actual stream of the Mesta is still invisible in its deep narrow gorge, but in the Nevrokop a few reaches glimmer in the sun, and the white houses of Nevrokop show up in a belt of gardens against the hills on the far side of the plain.

The population of the Rhodope is almost entirely Moslem, the Eastern Rhodope exclusively so, except for a few Christian Bulgarian villages in the Bashmakli valley, while the long tongue of Turkish territory forming the Rupchuz district is also all Moslem; indeed, at one time it formed part of Bulgaria, but owing to the strenuous resistance of its inhabitants to Christian rule, the frontier was readjusted and the country restored to Turkey. On the Bulgarian side of the frontier, with the exception of a few scattered Moslem villages, the inhabitants are Christians. The most interesting section of the population are the

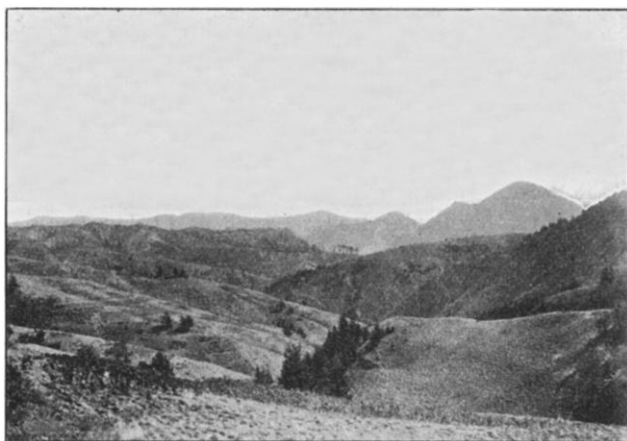
Pomaks, or Moslem Bulgarians, people who became Moslem at the time of the Turkish conquest in the fourteenth century, and who form the principal part of the inhabitants of the Central Rhodope, and numbering some 100,000 throughout European Turkey, where they occupy districts along the Vardar as well as these hills. It is among the mountains that the people can best be studied, as in other districts in the Vardar valley they have become more merged in the general Moslem population. Here they inhabit all the Ahi Chelebi district, all the central range and the Rupchuz district, as well as the Dospat ridge to the west. In Ahi Chelebi there still remain some of the Pomak "derebeys," or feudal leaders, such as at Ismilan lives Salih Pasha, a celebrated hero of the 1878 war, who, when the Russians were moving past Philipopolis, raised an irregular corps from his retainers, and carried on a guerilla warfare against the Russian communications. Another of the same family is Hassan Pasha, who received me in quite the ancient style. His servants and retainers lined the avenue of approach to his house, picturesquely situated among meadows by a stream; he himself stood in the gateway to receive the guest, and his sons pressed round to wait. But, as in other parts of Turkey, independence among these "derebeys" is discouraged, few now remain with any power, and the ordinary civil government generally obtains. The Pomaks wear no distinctive dress, except that the women of particular districts in the mountains have special fashions in clothes, like in most of the



CENTRAL RHODOPE: VALLEY OF KRISHIM RIVER.

districts in Bulgaria over the frontier. Those of the Rupchuz generally dress in red, with a black cloak edged round with yellow braid, and a white kerchief on their head. Their language is a dialect of Bulgarian which they call Pomakje, or, better still, Airanje for choice, although the derivation of the latter term is rather obscure.

There are several dialects in the hills, and those in the Central Rhodope say they cannot understand the Bulgarian of those of Nevrokop, and so on. In the valley just below Bashmakli, on a tributary of the



CENTRAL RHODOPE : CHADIR KAYA RIDGE.

Arda, is a compact group of villages of Christian Bulgarians, comprising Raikovo, Chatak, Vlahova, and others, a very thriving settlement, interested in manufacturing woollen cloth of all kinds in small primitive mills worked by the water-power of their stream. It is woven in their homes on hand-loom from native wool, dyed various colours by natural dyes; it is then taken to mill, steeped in water, and submitted to a kind of hammering process which improves the texture, making it closer. The machinery of the mill is almost entirely of wooden beams; an overshot waterwheel supplies the power which drives a wood axle, projections on which make rise and fall, through a distance of about 18 inches, heavy beams fixed nearly vertically, and which hammer and press together the lengths of cloth placed in a wooden trough beneath them. The heavy throbbing sound of these hammers makes a strange noise as one passes up the valley to Raikovo and Bashmakli, and in the secluded valleys of the Central Rhodope. The Christians of Raikovo manage to turn out quite excellent tweed and woollen cloths of all kinds by these mills. Many of the inhabitants are tailors, who carry the goods to various towns on the Ægean coast, and even the Greek islands, and make up suits from it. Others of the inhabitants are builders and carpenters, who monopolize this kind of work in Gumuljuia, Xanthi, and other coastal towns, so that the little settlement gets on well.

The Moslem Pomaks in other parts of the district make their cloth in these mills, but only of the coarser kind for cloaks ("abbas"), which find a market in Constantinople. In the Dospat Dagh and the Central

Rhodope, and in the village of Dospat especially, are many small saw-mills, with primitive machinery worked by water-power for sawing logs into planks. The logs are only some 6 feet long and 2 feet diameter, and are cut into planks, which are transported on mules to the coast ports, caravans of these being frequently met with winding along the mountain tracks. A curious feature is the semi-nomad population of usually called Kutzo-Vlachs, locally known as "Karakachans," who spend the summer on these hills of the Central Rhodope, and winter in the plain country about the mouth of the Maritza and near Gumuljina. They are said to have come about one hundred years ago from the Southern Pindus, when they formed one of the tribes or parties during the great struggle of the famous Ali Pasha of Yanina against the Turks in the beginning of the last century; and when that old chieftain was being brought to bay in his fortress of Yanina, these people betrayed him and went over to the enemy. On a settlement being effected they found it impossible to remain, and had to fly to the Rhodope, where they remain in a kind of permanent exile ever since. They own large flocks of sheep, ponies, and cattle, speak Greek, and belong to the orthodox Church. They form parties or tribes of a combination of fifteen to twenty families under a recognized leader, and build themselves in summer a sort of log hut or wigwam out of boughs and branches, lengths of pine bark being used as a carpet on the floor. They number altogether about 5000 in Central Rhodope, and parties were met on their migration to the plain about the middle of October. Their dress is that of the Greek peasants. Other parties are found in the Kirjali district further east, where they can also obtain grazing. These mountains produce little for export, except it be some timber, wool, and cloth of local manufacture. The logs are either sawn in short lengths for mule transport, or are thrown into the Krishim stream, down which they drift until they reach the Philipopolis plain, where they are collected by men employed by Bulgarian contractors. The finest timber, in large logs 20 to 30 feet long and 20 inches or more in diameter, is obtained from the forests round the headwaters of the Mesta, and these are also thrown into the river to float down until opposite the Buk railway-station, where they are caught by grapnels as they pass and brought to bank.

The Scotch firs on the south slope of the central range are cut for railway sleepers, and floated down a stream to Buk also. The forests along the actual summit are of larch chiefly, and some beech with thick undergrowth, while lower down the Trigrad stream more oak and beech appear. On the Chadir Kaya are some thick low patches of dwarf juniper—some of the large juniper—birch, wild pear, and apple trees. There are some fine walnut trees in the lower valleys. Resin, or "katran," is boiled out from the pine wood in large pans, where it is burnt with charcoal, the resin running out of a hole at the bottom. Rye, oats, and barley are grown on the higher slopes, and

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maize in the lower valleys, while round Trigrad is a large production of potatoes (called "kompir" by the Pomaks), which form the principal food of these, and are also exported. The districts of Xanthi (Eskeje) and Drama on the coast plains are celebrated for the fine quality of cigarette tobacco produced, and it is also grown in the minor valleys on the southern slope of the Rhodope, but the quality of leaf deteriorates rapidly as higher levels are reached.

No minerals are actually worked, and the hills have never thoroughly



VALLEY NEAR BUK, SOUTHERN SLOPE OF
KARA BALKAN.

been explored, although traces of gold and silver lead are said to exist near Trigrad, and also at Radibush on the southern slope is said to be copper or zinc. In the island of Thasos, in the Ægean, close by is one of the richest zinc-mines in the world, worked by a German company. The general formation of the summit range of the Central Rhodope is of granite, much disintegrated, leaving rounded slopes, with an occasional boulder showing; while on the lower spurs both to the north and south sandstone and limestone appear. Some big game is to be found, but is extremely difficult to dislodge from the dense forests, and an army of beaters has to

be employed to drive them across the open glades. As each arrives armed with some ancient weapon of his own and determined to have his share in the sport too, uncertain and dangerous elements are introduced. Grey bears (*Ursus syriacus*) and the brown variety are to be found, also the red deer of Anatolia, but they are scarce and difficult to obtain. Wolves are numerous, and pig also. The badger, the fox, and the tree marten are also to be found, but the last named is becoming rare now, owing to the price obtained for its fur. Excellent trout-fishing is obtained in the upper Arda, the Trigrad, and other small streams at the higher elevations.

Of minor animals may be remarked some huge black lizards with bright yellow spots, which appeared in some numbers after a heavy shower, and waddled about the path, their legs seeming too short to allow them to run. The zeptieh's story regarding them, which he

repeated with solemn assurance, was that they had just then dropped from the clouds; in reality, the rain coming after a long spell of dry weather had apparently attracted them from their holes and hiding-places.

There is, I think, no trace of ancient remains of cities or settlements in this part of the Rhodope, but on the road from Trigrad over the pass leading south to the railway in the Mesta valley, known as the Meshatli Gedik, is the tradition, which seems general, of a great battle which took place over a thousand years ago, but the names of the combatants are now forgotten.

The country of the Eastern Rhodope is less picturesque than the central range which I have just described, as the forest has largely disappeared, the summits are bare or nearly so, and the slopes are so steep as to afford no room for the pleasant meadows and pasture-land of the higher ranges. As all the streams flow inwards towards the Arda, and this flows eastward to the Maritza at Adrianople, it follows that the country remains quite isolated and shut in by high ranges both north and south. Only a few minor streams drain into the *Ægean*, and no convenient valleys exist which would afford access from southern Bulgaria towards the *Ægean*, and thus that country has to find access to the southern sea by the railway along the Maritza valley to the port of Dede Agach.

The wall of coast ranges continues in spurs of the Central Rhodope to the Kushlar Dagħ over Xanthi, which is apparently one mass of rock with only a few patches of vegetation, owing to deforesting



CENTRAL RHODOPE: GROUP OF POMAKS OF MIKHALOVO.

but one result is that most of the earth has washed down to the lower foothills, and on these are the most valuable fields for growing tobacco.

A very picturesque track winds up the valley north of the Xanthi,

and soon enters the wooded country, crossing two high ridges among oak, ash, and beech forest, on its way Ahi Chelebi and Bashmakli, the seat of the kaimakam, or local governor. This is the best way to reach these districts from the railway, and affords comparatively easy access. Farther east, along the line of hills which appears as a continuous wall of grey rocks from the coast, is the prominent peak of the Karlik Dag, which rises nearly sheer out of the plain, and is 6200 feet at the summit.

The road from Gumuljina, the local capital of all the Eastern Rhodope, passes over a wooded col at the east end of the Karlik Dag after a long ascent, passing the ruins of an old stone castle which once barred this route, which is the principal way into the Arda basin from the south. Farther along, the mountains curve northwards to the Khoja Yaila mount, whose rocky summit forms the last principal outlier of the Rhodope to the east, overlooking the valley of the Maritza. Rugged spurs covered with oaks radiate in all directions from it, and run down towards the sea at Dede Agach, the whole of this part of the Eastern Rhodope forming a very wild and impracticable tract draining by the Kizil Deli stream into the Maritza.

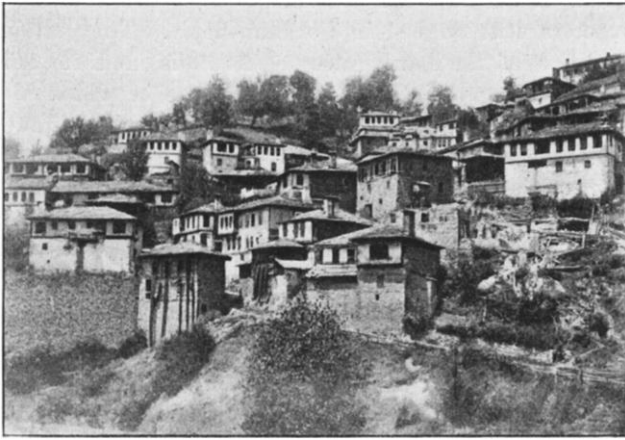
The Arda is the great river of the Eastern Rhodope, rising, as we have seen, in the Kara Balkan at the springs of Ardabashi, flowing at first through pleasant meadows and past pine-clad slopes, and turning many primitive mills, until it reaches the end of the Maden Dag, and there it enters a narrow difficult gorge with steep slopes of loose shale and rock, nearly bare, except for a few scattered trees and brushwood, and along which rough paths gain only a difficult foothold, until the basin of Kirjali is reached and the valley widens. Here the stream is usually rapid over a wide bed of shingle and stones, subject to violent freshets, which have several times carried away the wood trestle bridges by which the road crosses to Kirjali, the principal centre of the northern part of the district.

Just here two large tributaries join from the south, besides many small streams from the frontier hills. One is the Soghutlu, which rises in an intricate wooded district on the east slope of the Kushlar Dag and enters Daridere, or the "narrow valley," a very appropriate name, as very steep slopes of shale and earth rise on either hand, and the habitations and strips of cultivation occupy a very narrow strip alongside the rushing stream. The Soghutlu sweeps round the bare mass of the Maden Dag and enters the long valley of Mastanli, spreading out over a wide bed of shingle like the parent stream, but having a considerable extent of maize cultivation, orchards, and gardens dotted with homesteads now on either bank.

The other southern tributary is the Burgas Chai, which is formed from many streams of the Karlik Dag and hills east of it, the slopes here being wooded along the summit, but bare lower down and

enclosing very deep narrow valleys, the narrow strip of green orchards and cultivation, with an occasional small village, showing the course of the stream far down below. The stream rapidly increases and enters the district of Sultan Yeri, a very fertile area, the shingly bed of the stream being now bordered by trees and cultivation in a wide belt.

As it leaves the Kirjali basin the Arda enters a long winding gorge between wooded hills before it finally reaches Adrianople plain. The slopes are so narrow and steep that foothold is only obtainable for the merest tracks, and this district is very wild and impracticable. The frontier ridge, here known as the Besh Tepe, or Five Hill range, is densely wooded, and game abounds in it, but is, as usual, difficult to obtain without organizing a large drive.



AHI CHELEBI DISTRICT: VILLAGE NEAR BASHMAKLI.

On the steep slopes and spurs cultivation is generally in terraces, with some patches of woodland; maize and tobacco of inferior leaf being grown. There are no regular villages, but isolated houses or hamlets of stone with a roof of rough slates are dotted about in the most accessible places on the steep hillsides.

The most fertile part of the country lies in the wider parts of the valleys as they approach the Arda in the districts of Mastanli or Sultan Yeri, or the "Sultan's Place," so-called because of its fertility. Here the cultivation, trees, and orchards completely fill the valley, except for the wide strip of shingle of the stream-bed, and the mass of dense dark green foliage, relieved occasionally by the walls of a little white hamlet or a slender minaret towering over the trees, forms a pleasant contrast to bare steep border-slopes of the valley. The hamlets are very scattered up the valleys, and there are few villages of any size; but Kirjali, on the Arda, is the principal seat of government. The

district exports very little surplus produce, except, perhaps, a little corn and maize and an excellent kind of apples for which its orchards are famous, and little from the outside world disturbs its peaceful valleys. One useful product is the very fine breed of mules obtained in this district, and which are disposed of at the annual fairs held at Gumuljina and other places in the hills, usually in the spring. The only part of this country which has thick forests is along the deep valley or gorge of the lower Arda on the Bulgarian side, where is a wooded district, with many scattered farms along the Besh Tepe Dag. The population of the Eastern Rhodope is exclusively of Turkish origin, and few, if any, of the Pomaks, or Moslem Bulgarians, are to be found.

The Eastern Rhodope was settled by immigrants from Asia Minor at the time of the first Turkish invasion in the fourteenth century under Sultan Murad I., when Adrianople was their capital, and the Greek emperors still reigned in Constantinople. They retain many of the qualities of the hardy races of Anatolia, and are quiet and peaceable, cultivating their little terraces of rye or wheat along the hill slopes, or tending their maize-fields and orchards in the valleys. A general exodus of the men takes place in the early summer towards the plains of Adrianople or Gumuljina, to be employed as labourers to gather the harvest just ripening there, and when that is done they troop back to reap their own harvest, which is some weeks later at the higher elevations. There is no Christian population in the actual basin of the Arda, but in the hilly country extending down to the sea at Dede Agach are many villages of Bulgarians. In the coast towns and in Xanthi and Gumuljina are a considerable number of Greeks, generally engaged in shipping or in the trade of the coastal plain, but very few penetrate into the mountain districts.

The eastern slopes of the range overlooking the lower Maritza valley has a belt of fertile foothills, although the slopes are generally rough and steep, and covered with patches of sparse forest and brush-wood. Ferejik, Sufi, and Demotika are small towns at the base of the hills along the railway. Sufi, or Sofali, contains four thousand inhabitants, mostly Greeks, and is surrounded by a wide belt of mulberry gardens, for the place joins with Adrianople as a silk-producing centre, while on the near slopes are extensive vineyards which produce a rough red wine. Demotika is a place of eight thousand inhabitants, mostly Moslems, very picturesquely situated at the mouth of the valley through which the Kizil Deli river emerges from the hills, and is built like an amphitheatre at the foot of a cliff, on the summit of which are the ruins of an old castle, probably of Byzantine origin, but chiefly famous as having been used in 1709 as a prison for Charles XII. of Sweden, who fled to Turkey after the battle of Poltawa, and was detained here about a year by Sultan Ahmed III. Another very pleasant little town at the foot of these hills is Ortakeui,

connected with Adrianople by a good driving road, and used as a summer resort by the people of that place, while the hot sulphur baths at Ilije close by are also found beneficial.

The wooded spurs and foothills, which rise above the town to the east and over the gorge of the Arda as it emerges into the plain, form a very effective background to the little town built halfway up their sides, surrounded with mulberry gardens and orchards on the lower slopes, and with vineyards planted in the rich red earth of the higher levels. On the summit of a prominent conical hill a few miles west of the town are the ruins of an old castle of Hissarlik, just traceable, probably of Byzantine or even earlier origin, as the summit offers an ideal site for a watch-tower over all the country towards the Maritza,



THRESHING SCENE IN THE KARA BALKAN.

with the great plain of the Ergene river extending almost to the horizon. It guarded also the principal entrance into the Eastern Rhodope country from this side.

Through Ortakeui a good path now leads into Sultan Yeri and Kirjali, and is a picturesque road to follow, as the road, after ascending through the vineyards of Ortakeui, which cling to the steep slopes for some way above the town, follows for several miles the nearly level ridge of a spur which affords an extensive view for several miles over most of the Eastern Rhodope country. Along the ridge is a fair amount of cultivation and many small villages, generally a very scattered collection of small slate-roofed houses surrounded by a few trees.

To the south a succession of very fine panoramas unfold themselves. The principal object is the long stony ridge summit of the Khoja Yaila, which has abundant pasture land midway up its slopes,

as the name "Father of Pasturages" would imply. In front is an extensive view over the many ridges which fill up the country along the Arda, apparently a tumbled mass of brown hills, although a closer approach affords a view into the fine valley of Sultan Yeri with its mass of dark green orchards; in the distance is the Maden Dagħ, and beyond the higher summits of the Kara Balkan.

The view towards the north, over the Arda gorge into Bulgarian territory beyond, is over a mass of dark wooded hills, rising sharply to a line of comparatively low summits which form the frontier ranges. Here and in the district round Kirjali on some of the higher ridges, is some good pasture in woodland glades between the forest like the Central Rhodope.

As regards minerals, these districts of the Eastern Rhodope have never been thoroughly explored for that purpose; but probably, from the name Maden Dagħ, or Mine mountain, some old workings must have existed there—in fact, there are traditions to that effect—while in recent years it is known that there are several places where petroleum may be found in the southern spurs of the Khoja Yaila Dagħ leading down towards Ferejik, but no workings have yet commenced. The winter climate of all the elevated districts is necessarily severe, and the snow remains from the end of November to the beginning of April as a rule, but in summer the hills are a pleasant refuge from the malaria and heat of the coast plains along the *Ægean*, although in some of the deep narrow valleys along the Arda considerable heat is felt too.

The whole district of the Rhodope Balkans, from the fact that it is naturally so shut in and without easy avenues of approach, remains a country quite apart, and it is subject to no disturbance to the even tenour of the life of its inhabitants, who are generally peaceable and supply some of the best soldiers that the Sultan has in his European battalions. Neither has it a history, either ancient or modern, as its mountains afford no passage from north to south, and it has always lain apart from the track of invading and conquering armies on their way towards Constantinople or along the *Ægean*, and its mountains have acted as a shelter to various races who have drifted aside from the general tide. Yet its pine forests, pleasant uplands, and meadows by its streams, with its little alpine villages of wooden chalets, have a picturesque charm rather rare among the wild mountain scenery of the rest of the peninsula, and would well repay the traveller a visit.

Before the paper, the PRESIDENT: Colonel Maunsell is an artillery officer, who twelve or fourteen years ago travelled in Kurdistan and gave us a valuable address, the more valuable owing to his excellent map. Some years afterwards he filled a consular position in Turkey in Asia for about two years, during which time he travelled extensively. He gave us a second address upon southern Kurdistan, also illustrated by a map based on his own surveys. He also contributed to our