

Summary

The Settlement Areas of the Varsaks: The Varsaks in the Province of Antalya

In this article, the author gives an account of the Varsaks, members of the Üç-ok (Three Arrows) tribe of the Oğuz nation and mentioned in the ancient sources as “Varsak, Varsah, Farsak” and “Farsah”, who started settling in the provinces of İçel and Tarsus in the 13th century. They caused endless trouble for the Anatolian Seljuk and Ottoman states, by cooperating with the Mamluk state and the principality of Karaman, the rivals to the Ottomans, mainly by providing considerable numbers of troops to the armies of Karaman during the Ottoman-Karaman clashes. Following the Karamanid defeat, they continued causing trouble by offering protection and shelter to the Karaman Beys (Lords) in the mountainous areas under their control.

Under the legal rulings of the Ottoman sultans Mehmet the Conqueror and Bayezid II, the Varsak community was dispersed, primarily around Çukurova, but also all over the country. Among the territories they were forced to resettle to in Anatolia were Maraş, Çorum, Kırşehir, Sivas, Kayseri, Saruhan, Aydın, Hamid and Tekke.

Towards the end of the 15th century, the Varsaks moved to Antalya, in order to find new pastures for their herds and to escape the oppression of the Ottomans. There, they choose the antique site of Lyrboton Kome situated to the north of Antalya for their winter dwelling, and the tableland to the north-east of Korkuteli, which later came to be known by their name as “Varsak Plateau”, as their summer pasture ground. In addition to the chronicle, an account, according to the registers from the year 1530, of the Varsak communities living in Teke fiefdom, plus tables, based on the annals kept between the years 1480-1644 are given, which show the Varsak settlements in Anatolia.

The Varsaks were subject to permanent residence on the southern slopes of Lyrboton Kome as ordered by the firman issued in 1732. This commanded the nomads to settle in the centers of “winter or summer” locations. Having been registered under the status of a village in the administrative records following the declaration of Tanzimat (Ottoman Reform), Varsak township became a borough with the organization of its municipality in 1973.