

OTTOMAN GREEKS IN DISPUTE: BUREAUCRATIC STRIFE IN IZMIR (1860-1910)

[Griegos otomanos en disputa:
conflicto burocrático en Esmirna (1878-1910)]

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ABSTRACT

Greek-Orthodox community of Izmir had a complex and conflicting administrative structure in the mid-nineteenth and the early twentieth century. Since the eighteenth century, the Council of Elders was the only lay authority, that was comprised of Ottoman Greek individuals to conduct administrative affairs of the Greek-Orthodox in Izmir. Following the modernization efforts in the Empire in the early nineteenth century, a new body, Central Committee was established in the town, which was composed of non-Ottoman Greeks. These two institutions then went into a long-lasting conflict and power struggle over the community matters and responsibilities that in time stratified; the Ottoman state authorities, Patriarchate, the elites and the press also became the parties to the problem. In 1910, after the Young Turks Revolution, changing political system and attitude towards the Greek-Orthodox united the contradictive actors.

KEYWORDS: Izmir, Greek-Orthodox, Council of Elders, Central Committee.

RESUMEN

La comunidad greco-ortodoxa de Esmirna tenía una estructura administrativa compleja y conflictiva a mediados del siglo XIX y comienzos del XX. Desde el siglo XVIII, el Consejo de Ancianos era la única autoridad laica, compuesta por griegos otomanos encargados de los asuntos administrativos de los greco-ortodoxos de la ciudad. Con las reformas de modernización emprendidas en el Imperio a principios del siglo XIX, se creó un nuevo organismo, el Comité Central, formado por griegos no otomanos. Estas dos instituciones entablaron un prolongado conflicto y lucha de poder en torno a las competencias y responsabilidades comunitarias, que con el tiempo se estratificó; las autoridades otomanas, el Patriarcado, las élites y la prensa pasaron también a formar parte del problema. En 1910, tras la Revolución de los Jóvenes Turcos, el cambio de sistema político y la nueva actitud hacia los greco-ortodoxos lograron unir a los actores antes enfrentados.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Esmirna, Greco-Ortodoxo, Consejo de Ancianos, Comité Central.

Izmir has been a unique commercial spot since the Roman Empire that was even denoted by the title *Protos Asia* ('First of Asia') attached to its name (Cadoux 1938, 291-292 *apud*. Zandi-Sayek 2001, 5). Under the rule of the Ottoman Empire, starting in the late sixteenth century, as a port city, it became an attraction point for the (im)migrants who changed the ethno-religious structure of Izmir. Even though there was a fair influx of Jews and Armenian dwellers into the city, the Greek-Orthodox outnumbered the rest of the communities as they were economically prosperous and that attracted many others to Izmir. By the seventeenth century, European traders were attracted to Izmir as it stretched towards the most productive hinterland soils. By the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries, as one of the empire's most dynamic cities, it served as a hub for international trade finance and diplomacy linking Anatolia to European markets and political currents (see Achladi 2023).

Due to their intensive trade activities, though, the Greek-Orthodox distinguished themselves from the other ethno-religious communities and spearheaded the economic and social progress in the city. In the nineteenth century, Izmir was a city of diversity, which brought about power struggle between different actors. Especially, Ottoman provincial authorities, non-Muslim merchants and the European diplomats competed to dominate the sociopolitical sphere in the city. The competition was further triggered by the non-Ottoman Greek traders, who held Hellenic nationality from the Hellenic Kingdom and wanted to take an active part in the urban politics.

Starting from 1839 with the *Tanzimat* Edict,¹ modernization and centralization efforts bore fruit in the periphery and created a polyphonic yet not harmonic environment in Izmir. In 1864, by *Vilayet Nizamnamesi* (Provincial Regulation), Izmir became the capital of the Aydin *vilayeti* (province) and in the newly established administrative councils, the Greek-Orthodox was granted same number of seats as Muslims (Ortaylı 1985; Shaw & Shaw). In 1868, the city witnessed the formation of the second municipality² within the Empire, designed for the emerging elites, particularly merchants, who sought to access the urban amenities they had long desired. This new establishment would serve as a refuge for the business elites who did not have Ottoman citizenship and thereby were

¹ It consisted of reforms that were implemented between 1839 and 1876 to modernize the old, ill-functioning state system to keep the Empire from demise. It guaranteed safety and security of all subjects of the Empire regardless of their ethno-religious origins. Taxation and conscription were standardized; a secular schooling system was introduced, provincial assemblies were established, and criminal and commercial law were separated from Islamic council (*ulema*). For detailed information, see Davison 1963; Berkes 1964; İnalçık & Seyitdanlıoğlu 2006; Ortaylı 1983 y Ortaylı 2000.

² The first municipality was Istanbul Şehremaneti that was established in 1855.

precluded from participating in the communal management despite their connection to Catholic or Orthodox faith (Serçe 1998).

Furthermore, in 1876, the Empire witnessed the establishment of its first Parliament (*Osmanlı Meclis-i Mebusanı*), which commenced operations under the oversight of liberal elites who were invigorated by a fervent desire to challenge the authority of the Sultan (*padişah*). The Parliament was operational for only two years, during which it enacted several laws, including the Municipality Law for Istanbul and the Provinces (*Dersaadet ve Vilayet Belediye Kanunu*) of 1877 by which the power and authority of the Council of Elders (*Ihtiyar Meclisi*),³ the local administrative body of the Greek-Orthodox community was challenged by the establishment of another local administrative institution, Central Committee (*Heyet-i Merkeziye*), whose members were composed of non-Ottoman Greek-Orthodox individuals, namely the Hellenic nationals. The latter, having more liberal and Hellenic tendencies, was granted with more duties and responsibilities concerning community affairs. Thus, throughout the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century, on socio-political grounds, Greek Smyrniots witnessed a clash between the traditional and the modern; the Council of Elders, founded by the Empire itself, was in favor of status quo while the Central Committee was bearing relatively progressive and modern attitudes. Despite the discontent among members of the Greek-Orthodox community, on 15 September 1878, the Committee was officially established.

The Committee was granted rights which were previously belonged to the Council. They had equal number of seats in the assembly that was to be convened by the Metropolitan, the high Greek-Orthodox religious authority in Izmir, for the administration of the Greek-Orthodox institutions such as churches, schools, orphanage and hospital.⁴ The implications the new law suggested that the Committee would exercise comprehensive authority over the institutions of the Greek-Orthodox community in Izmir.⁵ All financial steps taken by the communal institutions were bound by a prior approval from the Committee.

How would the Committee be financed? The contribution would be derived from religious ceremonies, predominantly funerals, weddings, and baptisms. The subsequent challenge would eventually arise: which institution would be responsible for collecting the money for the religious services rendered? In light of the recent regulatory changes, the

³ Councils of Elders, known as *dimogerontia* in Greek, was founded in the seventeenth century. It was basically a council comprised of lay individuals to administer taxes, education, charities. It was liable to the Ottoman authorities.

⁴ *Organic Regulation of the Orthodox Community in Izmir*, 5.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 21.

entitlement that was previously held by the Council was now transferred to the Committee. Individuals intending to engage in such religious events ought to remit the requisite amount to the Committee, subsequently presenting the invoice to the bishop conducting the ritual. This would empower the Secretary of the Committee to devise a comprehensive registration plan, ensuring that each event is meticulously documented and accessible. Ultimately, it emerged as a framework essential for the proper operation of the entire community mechanism.

All these regulations show the secularization and modernization in the Greek-Orthodox community overall by placing the Committee over the Council, which represented the old, traditional administrative structure, and over the church authorities which were representing the religious, traditional side of the Greek-Orthodox society. Emergence of the Committee as an authority which would be a decision maker in religious matters had the following outcomes: it institutionalized a «tax system» imposed on the community members that they could not escape. Furthermore, it instituted a subtle mechanism of coercion over the members of the community via the collection of personal data and receipts.

The *millet* system characterized by the delineation of communities through religious principles,⁶ as fostered an environment in which members were compelled to engage in the observance of religious ceremonies for the sense of belonging to the community, relied on active participation in such gatherings. The Committee enhanced its authority and solidified its status within the Greek-Orthodox community of Izmir by claiming dominance over such events. Izmir thus emerged as a prominent provincial example of the implementation of state-driven modernization initiatives triggered by *Tanzimat* reforms, as well as the General Adjustments issued by the Patriarchate⁷, and thus the

⁶ The Ottoman Empire had *millet sistemi* (community system), which was classifying the non-Muslims into *millets*, self-governing religious groups. Orthodox Christians (*Rum milleti*), Armenians, and Jews were the *millets* each of which had a *millet başı* (head of the community) as political-religious authority. For the Orthodox, it was the Ecumenical Patriarchate that acted as the representative of the Orthodox community to the Empire. For more information, see Braude 2014.

⁷ It would serve as the primary circular addressing matters pertinent to the Greek-Orthodox millet. Indeed, it transcended the nature of a mere circular; it represented a *petit constitution* bestowed as a right upon a society, duly recognized by the state itself. The Regulations indicated that the amendments were to be submitted on an empire-wide scale; their implementation was mandated not solely in the periphery but also at the center. It served as a guide for the rudimentary co-determination of the populace in the decision-making process, albeit restricted to a determined group of individuals, as dictated by the provisions of the regulation that enabled communities to fortify their

consequences of the secularization of religious institutions. Nonetheless, duality within this system was apparent. The Ottoman authorities sought to establish a framework grounded in «civic» principles, which would exclusively involve the Ottoman subjects in the processes of decision-making and administration. Yet, the composition of the Committee reveals that the Greek-Orthodox community was considered through an ethno-religious lens rather than a civic one. The criteria, therefore, did not pertain to the possession of Ottoman citizenship but rather to the identification as Greek-Orthodox. Consequently, the process of secularizing *millets* was undertaken through acknowledgment of the ethno-religious identity of the community in question, specifically the Smyrniot group in this context.

The authority and influence that the Committee established within the Greek-Orthodox community in Izmir was disrupted by the 1888 Regulation.⁸ The initial article of the Regulation articulated that the two principal communal institutions, the Council and the Committee, were to be regarded as equally paramount entities within the Greek-Orthodox society, both subject to the overarching authority of the Metropolitan. As a result, the Committee's previously preeminent role diminished. Furthermore, while the financial support allocated to the clerics and the funding for national institutions like schools and philanthropic organizations fell under the purview of the Committee, it was no longer permitted to operate autonomously and was now constrained by a preliminary investigation conducted by the Council. On the other hand, in Article sixteen, the definition of the *Rum milleti* is altered from Greek-Orthodox community to Hellenic-Orthodox, which clearly indicates a shift from purely religious descriptive criteria to a hybrid framework that integrates both secular and religious principles.

The New Role of the Council of Elders

Following the 1881 Regulation, the Council assumed duties intrinsic to the management and local judicial framework. The principal responsibility of the Council was to allocate the tax that non-Muslim Ottoman subjects were required to pay in order to be exempted from military service (*bedel-i askeri* tax). Consequently, each one hundred and eighty men was counted as one group, and each was required to contribute five thousand *kuruş* annually. The church authorities, economically disadvantaged community members, individuals with mental and physical

own community echelons. Simultaneously, it established a connection between the societies of the Empire and the secular Empire administration.

⁸ Organic Regulation of the Orthodox Hellenic Community in Izmir, in amendment to the one voted in 1878.

disabilities, children aged up to fifteen, and male members of society over the age of seventy-five were exempted from this tax. Yet, this arrangement imposed an additional burden on society, as the amount not paid by the excluded groups would be compensated by the taxpayers of the community. This circumstance resulted in a reduction in the group from one hundred eighty to one hundred, concurrently increasing the financial obligations they were expected to fulfill.

The Council, serving as the decision-making mechanism, would delineate the proportion of the districts within the overall supply, while the churches would retain the contributions from community members, acting in their capacity as executive authority. Yet, in the report of the Council in 1902,⁹ there was a clear imbalance among the districts; in the areas where the exempted individuals were high in number, the affluent members of the community were compelled to shoulder greater financial responsibility. This ultimately elucidates the reasons behind the residence of affluent and established Greek-Orthodox families in Izmir in either the same or adjacent neighborhoods.

According to the 1902 report, the inhabitants of Crete and Samos islands showed resistance to the proposed taxation. Remarkably, people born in regions other than Crete and Samos would be required to remit the appropriate amount. The allocation designated for those aged fifteen and under was disseminated among the previously mentioned one hundred eighty individuals. Concerning Izmir, as indicated in the resources, approximately six hundred children were encompassed within this classification. To put it differently, a taxpayer from Izmir was obligated to a) fulfill his own financial contributions, b) cover those of his sons, c) compensate for the disabled, impoverished, and elderly individuals, and finally d) compensate for the children arriving from Samos, Crete, or Istanbul to Izmir.¹⁰

The report also revealed that the church officials, tasked with the responsibility of collecting payments, faced numerous challenges as well. The imposition of sanctions and alterations in policy fostered a sense of discontent within the Smyrniot community, prompting the Council to reevaluate the allocations distributed among the dwellers in certain instances. The irregularities and anomalies present in the payment lists allowed many community members to evade their financial contributions

⁹ *Report on the deeds during the period of duty of the Council of Elders March 1900-November 1902, submitted during the election assembly of December 23, 1902, convened by the Patriarchal Exarch, the Bishop of Chios, 7.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 8.

for an extended period. Consequently, the Greek-Orthodox community of Izmir was persuaded to seek a loan to settle the debts accrued up to 1887.¹¹

This precision in the Council's registration system was essential not merely due to financial considerations, but also because the Council bore responsibility to state authorities; they were obliged to maintain accountability, transparency, and exactness regarding the data they would furnish to the state officials when necessary. The new regulation would ensure robust protection of the rights of the Ottoman Greek subjects. It, furthermore, redefined the registration system, encompassing not only the Patriarchate but also the Ottoman authorities.¹² Relying on this recently established framework, the Council urged the religious officials to reconsider the bureaucratic network in alignment with the new proposals.

The 1902 report illustrates that the Council also assumed judiciary responsibility. It served as a «magistrates' court» when Greek-Orthodox individuals sought resolution for judicial matters or disputes. From 1900 to 1902, the Council, functioning as a court, dealt with over two hundred cases that addressed the contradictions arising both within the Greek-Orthodox community and between Greek-Orthodox individuals and members of other *millets*. The Council found itself unable to reach a definitive conclusion regarding every judicial dispute, prompting the new Council to recommend the drafting of a report that designates a mediator. This mediator should ideally be a community member of considerable repute, one whom neither party involved in the conflict could dismiss.¹³

Conflict in Religious Institutions

The Council, in addition to the aforementioned responsibilities, was also tasked with the obligation to establish and convene the Mixed Ecclesiastical Court to address and deal with issues inherent to the civil aspects of religion (e.g. inheritance). Nevertheless, the General Adjustments prescribed by the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Istanbul indicated that participation in Court would be limited to two members of the Council.¹⁴ In the periphery, however, this was not put into effect and in some cities different practices were carried out. The new setting, thus, could not exert a direct and profound influence over areas other than the capital. Thus, dissemination of the changes uniformly required more solid steps.

A preliminary effort was initiated by Joakim III during his initial tenure as Patriarch from 1878 to 1884 accordingly, but the efforts were

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹² *Ibid.*, 11.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 12.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

encapsulated in the document «Directives» issued by Patriarch Constantinos V in 1899. The document proposed no involvement of any cleric in the Court while designating four individuals to take part in it. «Directives» possessed legal efficacy, having been authorized by both the Patriarch and the Permanent Mixed Council¹⁵ that was conferred by the Ottoman state officials with this authority to conduct the implications of the General Regulations in the cities.

In the year 1901, Joakim III was re-assigned to the Council of the Great Church.¹⁶ He urged the Metropolitan of Izmir, Vassilios to promptly enact the regulations. Joakim III is of great importance in the historical narrative of the Ottoman Greeks. In 1878, he assumed the position of head of the Council of the Great Church for the first time. In the meantime, the Bulgarian community was among the Ottoman authorities for the establishment of a distinct Exarchate, a request that incited considerable ire among the Ottoman Greeks, especially within the Patriarchate. Interestingly, Joakim III exhibited a flexible stance on the matter, leading to him being labeled as pro-Russian and as a result, he found himself at odds with both centers, Athens and Istanbul. His resignation from office in 1884 was a direct response to Sultan Abdülhamid II's proposal to revoke the long-standing concessions granted to the Patriarchate. Simultaneously, his relationship with Harilaos Trikoupi, the Prime Minister of the Hellenic Kingdom, deteriorated due to the perceived «inappropriate» appointments of metropolitans in Macedonia, as these candidates aligned with British interests. The multitude of conflicts resulted in Joakim III's exile that exceeded a decade.

Nevertheless, the intensifying conflict between supporters of the Patriarchate and those aligned with the Exarchate in the Balkans prompted the reinstatement of Joakim III as a foundational authority in 1901. With the negotiations initiated by the Hellenic Kingdom, he stood poised to

¹⁵ It was established by the General Adjustments in 1863. It was an executive and legislative body, overseeing education, finances and general administration of the Greek-Orthodox community.

¹⁶ The Council of the Great Church (Jera Council of the Great Church) was established in 1763 through a ferman, which resulted in the division of the Patriarch's bind into four parts, thereby granting control to three Metropolitans to exercise shared governance. The quantity of Metropolitans subsequently rose to seven. The involvement of non-clerical individuals in the election of the Patriarch had already been established with a similar decree. Nevertheless, it assumed a structured nature when the provisional National Assembly, convened in Fener in 1858 to discuss the revised General Regulations, was formalized as the Permanent Mixed National Council (*Diarkes Mikto Ethniko Symvoulío*). The council was composed of the Council of the Great Church participants along with twelve lay representatives. Konortas 1997, 139-141.

reclaim the patriarchal throne. His objective was to establish a federation for Orthodox communities that could transcend the nationalist tensions existing among various Orthodox factions. He preferred a religious unity over an ethnic division. He inadvertently fostered a division among the Metropolitans, highlighting those who endorsed Joakim III from those who opposed him.

Under Constantinos V, the Patriarchate (1897-1901), initially supported Joakim III but subsequently shifted to an opposing stance against him. He maintained amicable relations with the Ottoman authorities in Istanbul and was a passionate advocate for the execution of the General Adjustments. Consequently, he was appointed as *locum* and later ascended to the position of Patriarch during the conflict between the Ottoman Empire and the Hellenic Kingdom in 1897. The announcement of his appointment elicited a sense of elation among the Ottomanist Greek factions, particularly those in Izmir.

The Metropolitan of Izmir, Vassilios, aligned himself with Joakim III, leading to a conflict with Constantinos V. Over time, Vassilios came to the conclusion that a compromise regarding the implementation of the regulations was necessary to alleviate the prevailing tension. Vassilios's willingness to reach a deal was not unconditional; he insisted that two members of the Court be chosen among the Committee's members. It was evident that the Council would reject it, as it was in direct conflict with the General Adjustments and the longstanding tradition of *Rum milleti* in Izmir.¹⁷ The report articulated the Council's response in the following:

Every discerning individual, every law-abiding citizen who holds a deep affection for their nation and homeland, understands that it would constitute a grave act of political irresponsibility to overlook the General Adjustments, which serve as the foundational law of Turkey.¹⁸

Institutional Contradiction and the Role of the Central Committee

In the meantime, the Committee demonstrated notable dynamism, particularly on a social level. As previously noted, the Committee was also required to present reports, one of which, prompted in the middle of 1901,

¹⁷ The mention of the 'old tradition' appears with notable frequency, serving as an adjunct to the references made to Ottoman legislation, the Regulations, and similar texts. Although it may appear as an archaic approach to asserting authenticity, it is intrinsically linked to a distinctly modernly created customs, not limited solely to Izmir or the Greek-Orthodox.

¹⁸ *Report of the Council of Elders*, 16-17.

explicitly delineated the boundaries of its operations after nearly twenty-five years since its establishment. Thirteen individuals were appointed to the Committee for a term of three years, with the possibility of re-election for the subsequent term as well. The Committee was evidently committed to the welfare and advance of the Greek Smyrniots. In a report, the Greek-Orthodox individuals were defined as ignorant of the challenges and inquiries that emerged within the community, which ultimately contributed significantly to individuals' hesitance to engage in the decision-making processes concerning community matters.¹⁹

Nonetheless, a series of incidents that may provide insight into the discord among communal institutions, led to an increase in the participation of individuals in the institutional decision-making process, reflecting the growing enthusiasm among the Greek Smyrniots. The report indicates a more communal inclination in juxtaposition to that of the Council; it was more focused on the populace, which, in turn, subtly and inherently fostered a sense of collective identity rather than emphasizing individualism. The Committee expressed a readiness to assume a role, aspiring to embody the «ideal» by asserting that

every citizen engaged in collaborative endeavor is expected to contribute to the common good and the advancement of the communal framework, with the hope that it will motivate other Orthodox communities.²⁰

It is also important to note that the report regarded the latest General Adjustments as superfluous and obscure, which often undermined the functionality of the Committee.

The Committee swiftly initiated measures for the formation of a modest board dedicated to the establishment of a nursery. Its concern serves as evidence of its emphasis on specific matters, including public health and the welfare of vulnerable infants. The construction of this new nursery was achieved seamlessly, thanks to the financial support of individual community members. It is commendable for its extensive inclusiveness; it was thoughtfully designed to accommodate any infant who is being cared for in a hospital, regardless of their ethno-religious background.

The idea of a new nursery was inherent to ethnic inclinations; such establishment would indeed function to nurture Greek progeny within the community, thereby reestablishing control over the population who might

¹⁹ *Report of the Central Committee of the Orthodox Community of Izmir*, (July, 25 1902, Izmir).

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 3.

otherwise be susceptible to «outside» influences. Indeed, a comparable institution had already been established in both Izmir and Istanbul, driven by the initiative of women. The nursery aimed not to eliminate the prior initiative but rather to enhance it by offering temporary refuge for abandoned infants who may require medical attention. This institutional diversity did not inherently imply a gap in the management of communal affairs. The Committee itself advocated for this multi-institutional network and the harmony among all these institutions.

In addition, the Committee was tasked with handling the administration of all the assemblies of all Greek-Orthodox institutions through its own secretary. By that year, Georgios Grigorakis, who also held the position of secretary of the Aghia Fotini Church, was entitled to that role. His credentials were highly regarded, and additionally, his engagement would be financially advantageous for the Committee, as his remuneration would consist solely of a modest increment to his existing income from the Church. Nonetheless, a report indicates that he, in conjunction with the Church's accountant, delayed the disclosure of the funds they had amassed, leading to the revelation that they had preempted that amount. A prompt measure was implemented to close and seal the registrations of both the Church and the Committee. This engendered a profound upheaval within Greeks. Consequently, a committee was established for the purpose of investigation, bolstered by the Council. The final report unveiled corruption, yet its outcomes were not irreversible. The amount that the Committee acquired was scant and sufficient solely to cover the daily expenditures. «The funds remained after all expenses are too little to corrupt much», the investigative report articulated, attempting to downplay the repercussions of the incident among the Greek Smyrniots.²¹

In this instance of corruption, the two competing institutions, the Council and the Committee, worked together to restore the financial losses that had been inflicted upon society. The Church and the Empire's administrative officials in Izmir collaborated on this matter as well. In the course of scrutinizing the circumstances and evaluating the conclusive report, the Secretary departed from Izmir. Ultimately, these occurrences revitalized the enduring hostility between the two principal institutions of the Greek community in the city, the Council and the Committee. In a paradoxical twist, it became the beacon of the fierce competition and tension that would erupt between these two institutions.

²¹ *Report of the Central Committee*, 7-8.

The Quest for Orphanage

In 1901, a conflict erupted between two influential Greek Smyrniot figures: Evrypidis Sekiaris, founder of the newspaper *Nea Smyrni* and Miltiadis Seizanis, editor of the newspaper *Armonia*. In the report that investigated the financial transactions between 1895 and 1901 indicated that the Brotherhood,²² an organization established for the purpose of monetary donations and the backing of communal institutions, provided an insufficient amount of financial support to the Greek-Orthodox Orphanage, in spite of various activities, including lotteries and bazaars, organized during that time. However, as the Orphanage could claim tract, several members of the Brotherhood were involved in the administrative structure and had a constant position in the institution, such as Sekiaris: he could manage to obtain and maintain his place in the Orphanage and even attack people whom he saw as a rival within the institution. Owing to his administrative power, many treated him as a man who «knew» how to have a steady post. Investigators held one-to-one sessions with the affiliates of the Orphanage cabinet and almost all of them were bothered by the ongoing plight along with the excessive influence of the Brotherhood on the Orphanage. Besides, out of all the information provided in the report, the Orphanage had a huge negative balance in its fiscal books for the year 1901. Thus, the investigation team implied that the cabinet members had better be selected outside the circles of the Brotherhood. Sekiaris responded to the investigators' report with a dismissive note released in his media outlet.

In the newspaper *Proodos*, it was noted that Sekiaris subsequently penned an apology for his previous demeanor (Stamatiadis 1903), and by the end of April, another newspaper, *Amaltheia* allocated a section for him within its pages. However, the position of *Amaltheia* was not remarkable; its editor, Sokratis Solomonidis, exhibited a rather reticent attitude towards engaging with the issue at hand. The stance taken by *Amaltheia* drew criticism from Lazaros Stamatiadis of *Proodos*, who subtly mocked the newspaper's prudent approach, aiming to avoid disapproval in the public eye.

The complexities inherent in the relationship between newspapers and their potential to influence institutional and administrative matters through the use of press propaganda are discernible. Stamatiadis acknowledged the need to recover the misappropriated funds and asserted that the perpetrator

²² It was solely within the confines of the Orphanage that the participants of the Boards were required to be selected from among the «brothers», and this, evidently, became a significant cause of dissatisfaction that eventually culminated in dispute.

of this wrongdoing should face appropriate consequences. He also criticized *Amaltheia* for its repetitive and indirect attempts to reintroduce the incident into discussions. Significantly, he also noted that the individual who got involved in corruption, the Secretary, during the appointment process was endorsed by a person connected to *Amaltheia*, which consequently implicated the newspaper in the corruption. In relation to the Adjustment that was operational at that time, a committee was established for the purpose of inspection.

Their rivalry for dominance resulted in a disjunction within the institutional hierarchy, necessitating a thorough rehabilitation of this structure. Sekiaris, while recognizing the complexities of the matter, advocated for the preservation of the existing state of affairs. Sekiaris and Solomonidis asserted that should the status quo undergo a radical transformation, the institution would be governed on behalf of the Committee, a position that was contested by Stamatiadis, a member of the Committee. Furthermore, Solomonidis was depicted as a pragmatic individual who understood the situation and leveraged it to his advantage while disseminating misinformation to the Patriarchate. He faced criticism for his passive attitude during these tumultuous years, as the enactment of a new Adjustment would contradict his own interests (Stamatiadis 1903).

The disputes remained unresolved, yet they were temporarily set aside for over a decade. In 1901, Joakim III resuming his role as Patriarch marked the upcoming period by the emergence of a new controversy. According to the documents of the Hellenic Consulate, the Patriarch served as a vicar of bray; despite his close ties to the Hellenic state, his stance on the ongoing discord in Izmir consistently aligned with that of the Ottoman authorities, thereby contrasting with the positions held by Vassilios and the Hellenic subjects.²³ In his capacity as leader of an Ottoman institution, the Patriarch was primarily focused on his own interests; he sought to avoid any discord with the Ottoman state authorities, which was also a matter of concern for the Greek state. Thus, the Patriarch gave up on his all-pervading, ecclesiastical role (he was also a fervent supporter of Russia previously) and turned more of a political instrument of the Hellenic state to develop a proper affinity with the state authorities as dictated by the Hellenic Kingdom (Kent 1996) whilst not overseeing the Ottoman Greeks - those with whom he shared an organic connection in the very territory where his institution was based.

The majority of the Greek community in Izmir was not happy with either the excessive intervention of the Patriarchate or with the appointment of a proxy. Initially, the problem had stemmed from the so-

²³ P.A. Code A'/ 78, December 2, 1905, 321-322.

called implicit competition over the administration of Brotherhood and the Orphanage between the Committee, pro-Committee Vassilios and the Council of Elders; however, all involved in the conflict were pushed aside by the central authority, the Patriarchate, which decided on the «victor». There was also another actor that was not content with the «resolution»; the Consulate of the Hellenic Kingdom expressed their dissatisfaction with the latest regulations for it would reduce the Consulate's influence in the Orphanage.²⁴ As seen in a note released by the Patriarchate, the Patriarchate itself and the Embassy in Istanbul were the ones who took stances the first regarding the latest developments in Izmir.²⁵

By 1909, the Central Committee and the Council of Elders established a commission to pen a new regulation. The final draft of a new Adjustment was ultimately approved and disseminated in 1910. Nevertheless, the power of the consulate of the Hellenic Kingdom remained intact, as the individual occupying that position was inherently a «distinguished» associate of the Brotherhood. This tradition had been upheld since the Brotherhood's foundation, serving as the Guardian Authority of the orphanage and leading ordinary and extraordinary meetings, in accordance with the prevalent adjustments.²⁶ Upon the conclusion of the Cabinet's term, the findings of the investigative group were to be sanctioned by Vassilios and the consular authorities, and subsequently disseminated to the members of the Brotherhood.²⁷ The incremental transformation in all facets of social structures (communities, the regulations within their institutions etc.) following the 1908 Young Turk Revolution explains the initial erosion of the Brotherhood's and the consulate's authority over the Orphanage, and the dominance of the Patriarchate over the local quests. Subsequently, the Orphanage and the Brotherhood sought to establish a cooperative relationship, highlighting their intention to collaborate while underscoring the concept of a «power balance». Upon closer examination, it becomes evident that the recent Adjustment reflects a solution aimed at ensuring communal administrative survival through adaptation to the conditions established by the 1908 Revolution. For the administrative body to endure, it is essential that all its components operate in harmony, despite their varying aspirations and tendencies.

²⁴ PA Codex A'/ 78, 3654, June 13, 1905.

²⁵ *Ibid.* I can also say that the center's takeover brought a «national» dimension to the matter while discarding its «local» characteristic.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, art. 9, 5.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, art. 67, 20.

The New Community Regulation: A Matter of Agreement or Conflict?

The impasse that characterized the administrative framework, particularly during the latter years of Abdulhamid II's reign, persisted unresolved and consequently endured as the Young Turks ascended to power and proclaimed the Second Constitutional Period in 1908. In 1909, the Committee and the Council relinquished their positions, compelling the Metropolitan to appoint *ex officio* members in their stead. Concurrently, the Metropolitan sought the authority to convene an assembly tasked with the formation of a group aimed at addressing the forthcoming adjustments. In response, the Patriarchate argued that the process had been duly executed and a new regulation had been enacted; nevertheless, the Metropolitan would be entrusted with this authority, with the anticipation that he would deliver a rational and satisfactory resolution to the longstanding issues in administration.²⁸ The rationale behind the Patriarchate's consent for Vassilios' demand stemmed from the fact that, following nearly ten years of turmoil, the various factions within the administrative framework and Vassilios himself exhibited a strong willingness to work together for resolving the issue at hand. This optimism and enthusiasm were partly a fruit of the changing socio-political environment that was introduced by the Young Turks. One year later, Vassilios passed away, and death of Joakim III followed in 1912. After the establishment of the constitutional regime, Emmanouilidis and Solomonidis found an opportunity to engage in political negotiations and decision-making processes; the former also secured a position in the newly convened parliament as a delegate. They upheld their Ottomanist perspective to secure a favorable position within the emerging system, which simultaneously afforded them the chance to exert greater control over communal matters. The Young Turk regime, however, was excessively stringent in its inability to accommodate crises within the *millet* system, compelling the Council and the Committee to unite and establish a mutually beneficial agreement in the sociopolitical realm, should they wish to maintain their influence (Anagnostopoulou 1997, 340-341).

The crisis arose from the fragmentation of the community, as two opposing factions were grounded in fundamentally different doctrinal frameworks. One perspective viewed the community in its entirety, perceiving it as a uniform entity that adhered to traditional mechanisms aligned with the boundaries established by Ottoman central authorities. In contrast, the other perspective embraced a more contemporary and dynamic understanding of the community as a unit capable of fostering integrity through the ideological reproduction of a national-religious

²⁸ P.A. Codex A'/ 83, January 16, 1909, 13.

identity. Clearly, the intention of the latter was to limit the authority of the Council while enhancing the reach and impact of the Committee, which would represent the newly formed urban middle class—one of the outcomes of the *Tanzimat*, which fostered significant developments from the nineteenth century onward (Anagnostopoulou 1997, 342).

In order to have a clear-cut understanding of the above-mentioned ideological differences, 1910 Adjustment offers a unique example. This regulation were characterized as a compromise but it failed to arise from a genuine balance between two administrative bodies, having been formulated with little regard to the Council and favoring the emerging powers (Anagnostopoulou 1997, 342). Consequently, the community institutions were established to address the requirements of this stratified community, while simultaneously taking into account the requirements of a particular «class» that, through its prevailing status in society, sought to reinforce its legitimacy. The new system, along with the robust emergence of a new class, Greek bourgeoisie, enabled the Committee to function as a state-like mechanism, operating independently from Istanbul. Its legitimacy was derived from its ability to establish a network of units that foster balance across divergent factors, thereby reinforcing the cohesive identity of the community in its entirety. The Committee endeavored to establish a «national» entity derived from an ethno-religious community, aiming to embody more secular and contemporary inclinations. The ancient institutions, including the Council and the Church, would be maintained to ensure the Greek-Orthodox community's continued functioning within the Ottoman framework (Morroni 2004).²⁹

However, simplifying the crisis to a mere ideological clash between modern and traditional factions fails to elucidate the underlying motivations for the compromise that the parties of the conflict agreed on. There arises a question: if it was a clash between the traditional and the modern, why did a component of the «traditional», the Metropolitan Vassilios choose to side with the Committee instead of the Council? On the other hand, the most significant catalyst for dominance of the Committee within the community administration was not the adjustment of 1910 but that of 1878. On the other hand, several members of the Greek-Orthodox community under Ottoman

²⁹ In the meantime, both media outlets bore the identical name, one originating from Volos and the other from Izmir. The Smyrniot publication is brought forth by Dimitrios Kotzamanis and Mehmet Mecdet Bey and they played significant roles, in laborer movements following the Young Turk Revolution. Morroni has effectively illustrated that, notwithstanding their asserted socialist objectives and the alignment with an Ottomanist narrative reflective of Young Turk laws, the editors, in numerous instances, sought to direct and train rather than genuinely articulate the grievances of the laborers.

rule gained advantages from the restrictions placed on the involvement of non-Ottoman individuals in administrative affairs, as endorsed by the central authorities following the Greek-Ottoman War in 1897. This allowed them to challenge the dominant role of the Committee and non-Ottoman individuals. The 1910 Adjustments, more an agreement than an adjustment, put forward a negotiation that granted the Committee a dominant role in communal matters, especially when juxtaposed with the previous regulations. However, this did not imply a discard of the Council or the Church; the Metropolitan and individuals like Solomonidis continued to hold their importance within the community. Their characters and networks transcended the confines of the community, enabling them to leverage the innovations brought forth by the constitutional regime to articulate their own views on the inclusion of the Ottoman Greeks in parliament. In the period preceding the Young Turk Revolution, the absence of a parliamentary framework rendered dominance over the administrative bodies of the community paramount. In the post-revolutionary period, however, the Greek-Orthodox community could no longer remain as «confined» as it had been accustomed to and introducing the community to external influences could jeopardize its cohesion and autonomy. The entire endeavor of integrating Ottoman Greeks into the Ottomanist framework was orchestrated by Ottomanists, which, paradoxically, appeared to defy traditional norms. The constitutional era established various frameworks for socio-political recognition, wherein classifications such as conventional, contemporary, and forward-looking ought to be acknowledged and integrated.

The protracted discrepancy assumed a new dimension during the assembly convened in 1909. This modification was intrinsically linked to the contextual shift; on this occasion, it was the populace who scrutinized and elucidated the discontent with the depicted framework. Greeks' vocality regarding the community matters could be interpreted as a consequence of the socialist activities that intensified during the post-revolutionary era. In the socialist journal, *O Ergatis*, an unnamed article, released in the early days of 1909, sharply criticized the socio-political behaviors of the populace. It is asserted that the populace was endowed with the authority to select their governors and deputies, to designate delegates from within their ranks, and they are now even empowered to elect individuals to represent them in parliament, as stipulated by the constitution itself. It is difficult to comprehend why some individuals seek to regard others with a sense of deference.³⁰

³⁰ *O Ergatis*, 22.

The newspaper reported that during parliamentary gathering, the Ottoman-Greek representatives raised the issue of communal re-regulation; however, a number of fraudulent «scientists» belittled the attendees and proceeded as they wished. Should a new regulation be drafted, what public involvement in the process was needed? It is these individuals who contributed taxes for communal necessities, thereby necessitating the designation of the Council, the Metropolitan, and other community institutions. Thus, there exists no credible justification for the public's exclusion from this mechanism.³¹ The article continues with a critical examination of the adjustments:

Those (adjustments) were necessitated by the interests of politicians who simultaneously impeded individuals from exercising their rights. They are not true to their words, and they will ultimately fall, despite the endeavors of the Patriarchate and other authoritative figures. The individuals are the ones responsible for selecting the committee members of community establishments, as well as those of the Council and the Committee. Thus far, the members of the Committee have engaged in a mutual election process; they have established a scheme of deception to safeguard their financial interests derived from the parishes.³²

Subsequently, the article critiques several individuals present at the meeting for their hypocrisy, as they repeatedly invoked the notion of «nationalism». These did not shy away from using the constitution as a weapon to intimidate others, thereby summoning the «legal armed forces» to intervene and strip them of their liberties.³³ Subsequently, the author embraced a more confrontational and retributive tone:

[...] those who undertake significant roles within esteemed institutions will ultimately fade away, entombed in the annals of the community's history, much like the Yıldız Sarayı. The tyranny has also met its demise, and we shall likewise illuminate flames in remembrance of their counterpart, totalitarianism.³⁴

It constituted an element of the socialist propaganda that was being disseminated within the Greek-Orthodox community. It is quite bizarre to build a framework wherein middle-class are the emblem of the modern and forward-thinking faction, while simultaneously being labeled as counterfeit

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*

scientists. This group mobilized the non-qualified and uneducated members of the community, highlighting their unjust exclusion from administrative bodies and the decision-making processes. Furthermore, the aforementioned faction alludes to the crisis of 1902, which arose from the initiatives of the pro-Ottomanist faction, aimed at revitalizing the empire to bolster their position against the Committee. Despite the establishment of factions based on divergent ideologies, a shared enthusiasm for the constitutional framework was evident among both the socialist and pro-Ottomanist groups, as clearly illustrated in the writings of the newspapers such as *O Ergatis* and *Amaltheia*. In the end, employing terms like modern, traditional, progressive, and conservative proves to be ineffective and even superfluous in elucidating or scrutinizing the motivations and characteristics underlying the socio-political framework of the Greek-Orthodox community.

The issuance of the adjustment coincided with the designation of Chrysostomos as the new Metropolitan of Izmir in 1910. The 1888 Adjustment served as the foundational framework for the subsequent iteration; however, the innovations introduced in the 1910 version also contributed to a transformed context. The initial development contained the establishment of parish congregations. It was scheduled to be biennially convened at the parish church or school. The distinguished assemblies shall be convened at the request of the church committee or upon the petition of no fewer than twenty-five parish voters transmitted to the Metropolitan (Solomonidis 1960, 302). Four conditions were delineated, in addition to being Orthodox, for one to qualify as a voter within the congregation:

- 1-A requisite of no less than two years of domicile in Izmir,
- 2- Residing in the area where the parish is situated for a minimum of six months prior to the announcement of the lists,
- 3- Having a minimum of twenty-one years of age
- 4- An annual donation of ten *kuruş* to the church's repository

For those who did not meet these criteria to be a voter, two exceptional conditions were established: a. annual donation of twenty *kuruş* and b. the minimum age of thirty.³⁵

³⁵ Individuals, ineligible for election included paid staff of community officials, congregations, and educational institutions, those with criminal convictions, individuals who filed for insolvency and have not yet regained their financial standing, as well as people who have gotten a rebuke notification (*epitimio*) from the Patriarchate.

The assemblies possessed the capacity to organize contributions of money to the church following consultations with the ecclesiastical officials in Izmir, and they bear the responsibility of overseeing philanthropic organizations and schools.³⁶ Plenary sessions were to convene every three years primarily for two objectives: the presentation of the investigation findings and the selection of the Council members (Solomonidis 1960, 302-303).³⁷ Yet participation in these proceedings was restricted solely to the Ottoman citizens.

The Council members were to be elected from among those individuals who held Ottoman citizenship and possessed an impeccable reputation, in accordance with the *Vilayet Nizamnamesi* of 1864. In the 1910 Regulation, it was stipulated that any male resident of Izmir, who had been registered in that particular parish a decade ago, was able to participate in the elections. This development facilitated the involvement of new residents in the upper echelons of the Greek-Orthodox, as registry in the locale became linked to churches rather than *loncas*, thereby allowing all Orthodox to join, irrespective of their occupation.

The responsibilities of the Council include an active participation in the Mixed Ecclesiastical Council, with a specific stipulation: the Council shall address any matters pertaining to the Orthodox individuals, contingent upon a request for collaboration from the Ecclesiastical Council (Solomonidis 1960, 307).³⁸ Indeed, it emerged as a consequence of the

³⁶ The councils are designating boards comprising five individuals in the absence of institutions of learning, or boards of seven individuals in case the educational institutions are present as well. Three individuals of the board, along with two members of the Educational Commission, assume responsibility for the management of the school, encompassing all pertinent tasks, including oversight of the instructional staff in relation to the curriculum, enrollment of pupils, and medical matters.

³⁷ The institutions are meticulously delineated and classified into three separate classifications: the churches, the nonprofit organizations, and educational institutions. Of the final entities, the Evangelical school stands out prominently, having been under British mandate. This position enabled the Greek-Orthodox officials to exert influence whereas remaining accountable to the Ottoman officials.

³⁸ The configuration of this Tribunal emerged as a point of dispute between the two management entities. The New Regulation explicitly delineates that the tribunal shall consist of four lay individuals, presided over by the Metropolitan. The appointment of these is scheduled to occur biennially within a body that includes not only those of the Council and the Ottoman nationals of the Committee but also an alternate from each town of Izmir. This individual may either be the Elders' Council or a distinguished dweller of Izmir, appointed by the relevant Council. Consequently, the assertion that two of the Committee ought to be involved in the court proceedings is rejected. Concerning the attorneys permitted to attend, the Regulation stipulated that they must be acknowledged by the Empire officials and duly registered within the local Ottoman tribunals.

new regime, as the judicial system underwent significant renovation alongside the courts following the revolution, driven by a desire for extensive institutionalization so that the members of the community would not feel obligated to present the issues to the Council. Conversely, the Committee's control over fiscal matters and the church committees intensified, attributable to the fact that investigations would be conducted every three months. The Committee and the Council, in addition to convening independently on a weekly basis, would unite once each week. Following nearly ten years of strife, the Council and the Committee started to be recognized as equal entities of the «*Rum millet*i of Izmir». Both were integral components of the same organism (Solomonidis 1960, 308).

The recent regulation further delineated the roles and organization of the general congregations, in addition to outlining the electoral procedure.³⁹ It states a distinction between «excellent contributors» and «contributors» within Greek society. The former pertains to those individuals who contributed five hundred liras, while the latter refers to those who contributed fifty liras. The remaining individuals who provided contribution on an annual basis were also acknowledged. Every donor, irrespective of the quantity of their contribution, was afforded the opportunity to secure a seat in the congregation. In addition to these individuals, members of associations were also granted the privilege to actively participate in the congregations, as they were regarded as exclusively Orthodox (Solomonidis 1960, 304). In other words, the involvement in the decision-making process was entirely contingent upon the contributions made. Although this practice was initiated with the 1888 Regulation, where the amount was set at three liras, it evolved in the latest regulation to become the most fundamental rule of engagement.

It appears that the committees achieved a degree of autonomy from the conventional community authorities; nonetheless, they instituted a framework that allows these authorities to maintain their influence over the neighborhoods. While the emphasis on financial contributions as a primary condition for participation appeared to promote communal democracy and equality irrespective of residential origins —previously a source of administrative discord— it was, in fact, predicated on a different form of inequality. The system permitted participation solely for affluent individuals, thereby excluding a significant portion of the community that lacked the means to contribute such sums. Their integration into the system

³⁹ In addition to the Elders, the Central Committee, and the various Committees and Boards of all parishes, those eligible for involvement included the Committees of the Metropolitan Church of Aghia Fotini, the Central Girls School, the Holy Cemetery, the Nursery, the Fund for the Poor, the Educational Committee, and any community establishment that was to be established in the future.

was facilitated by more emotive narratives such as philanthropy and solidarity, in which they remained distinctly apathetic (Anagnostopoulou 1997, 343, 346-347).

In the midst of all these innovations, a singular aspect persisted, unwavering and beyond contestation. Those of Ottoman descent consistently held a more favorable position, as their inherent proximity to the Ottoman officials allowed them to readily challenge the Committee and exert influence over community matters. It is entirely reasonable that the groups lacking Ottoman citizenship sought to implement new electoral principles aimed at obstructing and constraining the hegemony of the Ottoman bourgeoisie. Nonetheless, in light of the current socio-political context, they recognized the necessity of refraining from direct confrontation with the Ottoman populace, as the latter proved to be more adept at addressing external threats, a consequence of the prevailing stagnation in the socio-political landscape. In the end, the recent regulation held considerable significance in the community affairs as it had the potential to set aside the power struggle and foster a harmonious collaboration between these two factions.

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