

# **From a Multiethnic Empire to Two National States: The Economic Activities of the Greek Orthodox Population of Istanbul, ca. 1870–1939**

*Maria Christina Chatziioannou and  
Dimitris Kamouzis*

One of the aims of this edited volume is to examine the economic processes of incorporating or excluding the “other” in an urban fabric. Our chapter will discuss this aspect of the book in connection with the strong and continuous presence of non-Muslim minorities in Istanbul from the foundation of the Ottoman Empire. How did the Ottoman Empire deal with urban diversity in relation to the different ethno-religious groups residing within its realm? Why was the exploitation of the economic potentials of religious and ethnic diversity difficult in the framework of Ottoman and Turkish Istanbul? Is it possible to identify similarities with regard to official minority treatment in different historical phases?

In an attempt to provide historical evidence and interpretations relating to these issues the chapter will focus on the economic development of the Greek Orthodox community—and minority after the 1923 Lausanne Treaty<sup>1</sup>—of Istanbul from the nineteenth century to the eve of World War II. The case of the Constantinopolitan Greeks is placed in the historical, political, and ideological context of the period. The chapter argues that the modernization of the Ottoman Empire/Republic of Turkey, the emergence of Greek and Turkish nationalisms, and the state of Greek-Turkish

relations in the course of this period affected the decisions and financial orientations of the Greek Orthodox population.

Ethnic and religious diversity communicated in economic terms constitutes part of broader discussion on the disintegration of great empires and their reorganization into national states. Political upheavals, wars, population growth, and intensification of the economy conditioned the changing patterns of economic activities during each stage of the transition from the multiethnic Ottoman Empire to the Turkish national state and determined a nonlinear path towards the formation of different and antagonistic ethnic middle classes. Examining the history of the Greek Orthodox community/minority of Istanbul vis-à-vis official state policies and exploring the impact of these policies on intercommunal financial relations will reveal how the economic activities of the non-Muslims adapted to constantly altering sociopolitical environments.

### **1. The *Tanzimat* Reforms, the Galata Bankers, and the Emergence of the Middle-Class Strata (1839–1908)**

There were several factors that forced the Ottoman policymakers to proceed to a reform program towards the Westernization and modernization of the state. The infiltration of the ideas of liberty and nationalism into the Ottoman Empire had a major influence, especially on its Christian subjects who complained more frequently about their lack of equality with the Muslim population. This provided the Great Powers with the opportunity to assume the role of protector for each of the Christian millets and to put pressure on the Ottoman government to take measures to improve their living conditions (Davison, 1990, p. 113). In many cases however, this right of intervention was used as a pretext by both the traditional enemy of the empire Russia and by naval and commercial powers like Britain and France to intervene in the affairs of the Ottoman state in order to promote their own political and financial interests in the region (Alexandris, 1980, p. 366; Alexandris, 1992, pp. 24f.; Berkes, 1998, pp. 51, 96).

In addition, the revolutionary movements in Serbia and Greece were an indication to the Ottoman statesmen that the secession of territories and the possible dismemberment of the empire was a threat they had to face before it was too late (Karal, 1982, p. 388; Stamatopoulos, 2006, p. 256). In an effort to reduce the dependence of their state on the West and avert further Great Power intervention and the outbreak of more revolutions, the reformers—influenced by the ideas of European liberalism—committed themselves to the principle of egalitarianism (Akşin, 2007, pp. 29f; Alexandris, 1980, p. 366; Davison, 1990, p. 113; Findley, 1982, p. 339; Stamatopoulos, 2003, p. 35).

The principles of the Tanzimat were proclaimed in 1839 with the decree of *Gülhane (Gülhane Hatt-ı şerif)*, and were reaffirmed with the Reform Edict (*Islahat Fermanı* or *Hatt-ı Hümayunu*) of 1856 (Hurewitz, 1987, pp. 113–116, 149–153). These two imperial rescripts declared protection and respect for the life, honor, and property of all the subjects of the Sultan and guaranteed their equality in the eyes of the law, regardless of their religion. The political expression of the whole reform program was named Ottomanism (*Osmanlılık*) and aimed at creating common Ottoman citizenship for all the peoples of the empire without distinction. The notion of egalitarian citizenship was employed as a means of achieving the homogenization of society and of bringing about a sense of fraternity and solidarity among its members: a concept of Ottoman patriotism (Alexandris, 1980, p. 366; Anagnostopoulou, 1997, pp. 271f.; Davison, 1990, pp. 114, 117–119; Deringil, 1999, pp. 44f.; Kanner, 2004, p. 25).

However, the rapid expansion of European capitalism in the Ottoman Empire during the eighteenth and nineteenth century and the subsequent movement of people in the region altered the demography and the social stratification of the lay strata residing in the capital and brought new forces to the foreground. This fact combined with the gradual politicization of the different ethno-religious groups of the empire along national lines condemned the efforts of the Ottoman reformists to failure.

On the eve of the twentieth century it is estimated that almost 1,000,000 people were resident in Istanbul, making the city one of the most populous of its time (Table 6.1) (Dündar, 2003, pp. 126, 139; Karpat, 1985, pp. 158f.; Shaw, 1979, 266f.; Soteriadis, 1918, p. 6; Venizelos, 1919, pp. 19, 35). Indigenous inhabitants and migrants intermingled, forming a large multiethnic, multireligious and multilingual local society (Table 6.2) (Dündar, 2003, pp. 126, 139; Karpat, 1985, pp. 158f.; Shaw, 1979, pp. 266f.; Venizelos, 1919, p. 35). The demographic growth reflected the development of Istanbul as a major port city and a manufacturing and industrial center in the Ottoman Empire and, afterwards, in the Turkish Republic.

**Table 6.1** Population of Istanbul (1844–1935)

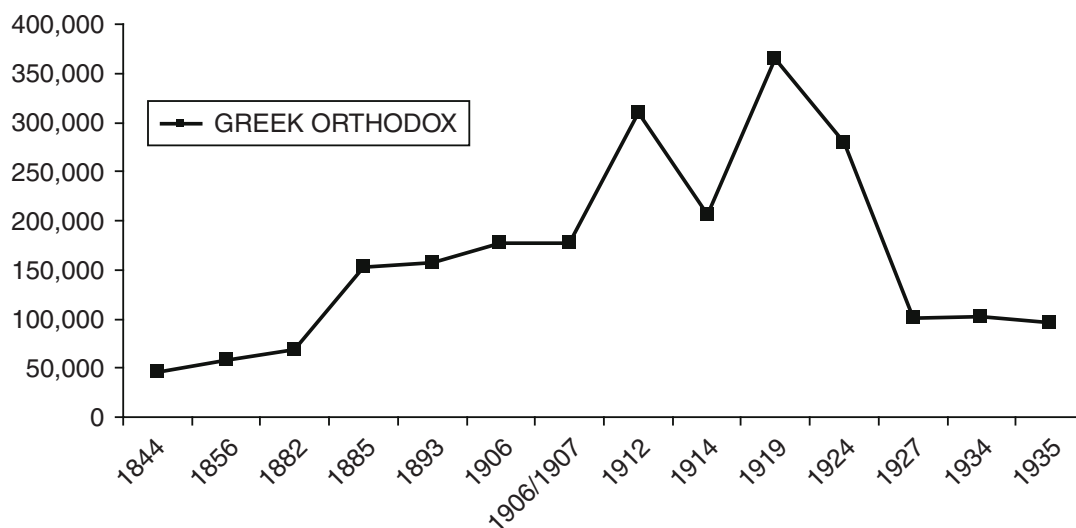
<i>Year</i>	<i>Total population</i>	<i>Source</i>
1844	213,992	Ottoman census (Male only)
1896	1,030,234	Ottoman census
1919	1,173,673	Greek statistics
1927	794,444	Turkish census
1935	883,599	Turkish census

*Sources:* Soteriadis, 1918, p. 6; Venizelos, 1919, pp. 19, 35; Shaw, 1979, 266f.; Karpat, 1985, pp. 158f.; Dündar, 2003, pp. 126, 139. (Table compiled by the authors).

**Table 6.2** Population of Istanbul—Ethno-Religious Distribution (1856–1935)

	1856	1896	1919	1927	1935
Population	213,992	1,030,234	1,173,673	794,444	883,599
Muslims (%)	47.5	50.5	38	69	75
Greek Orthodox (%)	25	16	31	12.5	11
Armenians (%)	19	15	13.5	6.5	5
Jewish (%)	5.5	4.5	4	6	5.5
Others (%)	3	14	13.5	6	3.5

Sources: Venizelos, 1919, p. 35; Shaw, 1979, pp. 266f.; Karpas, 1985, pp. 158f.; Dündar, 2003, pp. 126, 139.

**Figure 6.1** The Greek-Orthodox Population of Istanbul (1844–1935).

Sources: Soteriadis, 1918, p. 6; Venizelos, 1919, pp. 19, 35; Pentzopoulos, 1962, pp. 30, 32; Karpas, 1978, p. 273; Shaw, 1979, p. 266; Karpas, 1985, pp. 155, 158f., 162f., 168f., 188f.; Alexandris, 1992, pp. 142f.; Dündar, 2003, pp. 126, 139. (Figure compiled by the authors).

An accurate estimate of the Greek Orthodox population residing in Istanbul throughout this period has not been possible, due to the different figures provided by various sources. One reason for this was the reluctance of non-Muslims to register with the civil authorities in order to avoid taxation. Another reason was the difficulty of officially recording Greeks living in Istanbul on a temporary basis, Greek nationals (Hellenes) that had migrated to the Ottoman Empire and former Ottoman Greeks, who had acquired Greek nationality or in some cases the nationality of other foreign powers (Svolopoulos, 2003, pp. 38–40). The demographic data presented in Figure 6.1 and Tables 6.3–6.6 were therefore compiled from eight sources of various origins and depict the general picture of the Greek Orthodox population in Istanbul during the period 1844–1935 (Alexandris, 1992, pp. 142f.; Dündar, 2003, pp. 126, 139; Karpas, 1978,

**Table 6.3** Ottoman Census 1856—Ethno-Religious Division of the Population in Istanbul

<i>Group</i>	<i>Population</i>	<i>%</i>
Muslims	112,162	47.5
Greek Orthodox	58,516	24.8
Armenians	45,040	19
Jews	13,222	5.6
Catholics	5,410	2.3
Latin Origin	1,417	0.6
Protestants	329	0.1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>236,096</b>	<b>100</b>

*Source:* Ottoman census of 1856 (Shaw, 1979, pp. 266f.).

**Table 6.4** Ottoman Census 1896—Ethno-Religious Division of the Population in Istanbul

<i>Group</i>	<i>Population</i>	<i>%</i>
Muslims	520,194	50.5
Greek Orthodox	161,867	15.7
Armenians	158,131	15.4
Jews	45,369	4.4
Catholics	6,636	0.6
Latin Origin	3,253	0.3
Protestants	1,668	0.2
Bulgarians	6,364	0.6
Foreigners	126,752	12.3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,030,234</b>	<b>100</b>

*Source:* Ottoman census of 1896 (Karpas, 1985, pp. 158f.).

**Table 6.5** Turkish Census 1927—Division of the Population in Istanbul According to Religion

<i>Group</i>	<i>Population</i>	<i>%</i>
Muslims	547,126	68.9
Greek Orthodox	100,214	12.6
Armenians	53,129	6.7
Jews	47,035	5.9
Catholics	23,930	3
Protestants	4,421	0.5
Other Christians	16,696	2.1
Other religions	1,229	0.2
Atheists	664	0.1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>794,444</b>	<b>100</b>

*Source:* Turkish census of 1927 (Dündar, 2003, p. 126).

**Table 6.6** Turkish Census 1935—Division of the Population in Istanbul According to Religion

<i>Group</i>	<i>Population</i>	<i>%</i>
Muslims	664,937	75.3
Greek Orthodox	95,956	10.9
Gregorian Armenians	43,589	4.9
Armenians	5,320	0.6
Jews	47,444	5.4
Catholics	19,990	2.3
Protestants	3,959	0.5
Other Christians	718	0.08
Other religions	1,384	0.2
Unknown religions	148	0.02
Atheists	194	0.02
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>883,639</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Turkish census of 1935 (Dündar, 2003, p. 139).

**Table 6.7** Social Stratification of the Greek Orthodox in Istanbul

<i>Upper Class</i>	<i>Middle Class</i>	<i>Lower Class</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Neo-Phanariots</li> <li>• Wealthy merchants</li> <li>• Bankers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Guilds of Istanbul</li> <li>• Professionals (doctors, lawyers, architects, teachers, engineers)</li> <li>• Employees in banks, railways, public utilities and industries</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small traders</li> <li>• Craftsmen</li> <li>• Skilled workers</li> </ul>

Source: Author's compilation.

p. 273; Karpat, 1985, pp. 155, 158f., 162f., 168f., 188f.; Pentzopoulos, 1962, pp. 30, 32; Shaw, 1979, p. 266; Soteriadis, 1918, p. 6; Venizelos, 1919, pp. 19, 35). It is important to point out that from 50,000 persons in 1844 the Greek Orthodox population grew to 360,000 people in 1919, that is, a sevenfold increase.

The group of bankers and wealthy merchants was first formed in the 1840s, when its members pulled out of the guilds of Istanbul<sup>2</sup> and took advantage of the trade opportunities created in the Ottoman Empire after the Anglo-Turkish commercial treaty of 1838. Using their connections in Russia and Western Europe, they became wealthy from the international commerce of raw materials and food. Furthermore, they were able to shift their business interests from commerce to banking and to challenge the monopoly of the Armenian bankers because after the Crimean War (October 1853—February 1856) the immediate financial needs of the

Ottoman state were to cover its public debt (Exertzoglou, 1997, p. 160; Stamatopoulos, 2003, p. 66). By the end of the 1860s Istanbul had thus become an important financial center because of the rapid incorporation of the Ottoman Empire into Western capitalism. The major private banking establishments belonged to members of this Constantinopolitan upper class (Eldem, 1999a; Exertzoglou, 1989, p. 19; Exertzoglou, 1996, p. 18). During the 1870s the bankers of Galata, as they came to be known, became involved in Ottoman state borrowing and after the arrangement of the Ottoman public debt in 1881 they limited their activities strictly to banking and commercial business (Exertzoglou, 1997, p. 160). Direct links with foreign banking houses in London, Paris, and Vienna were established by a number of non-Muslim merchant bankers.<sup>3</sup>

The example of Andreas Syggros demonstrates the prime economic power and prominent position these individuals held in the Ottoman capital. The personal narration of this nineteenth-century Constantinopolitan entrepreneur, a successful exponent of the late Ottoman Empire's business culture in the Greek Kingdom, offers a vivid picture of economic conditions in Turkey. He provides detailed descriptions of the financial and banking affairs of the Greeks, Armenians, and Jews in Istanbul. He also writes extensively on the Ottoman state loans as well as on leading Constantinopolitan Greek and Jewish businessmen and important Ottoman and Greek politicians. His view and commentary of economic and social conditions in the Ottoman Empire, Greece, and Europe were deeply influenced by his experiences in Istanbul. Syggros established himself in the Greek state in 1872 and became mainly involved in the financing of public works, in dealings on the Stock Exchange and in the exploitation of mines. The business experience and reputation he gained in Istanbul allowed him to form dense and reciprocal relations with the Greek government as well as with the royal court (Angelou and Chatziioannou, 1998).

Middle class is a term difficult to define, originating from a three class model of English society (upper, middle, working class) and often emphasizing religious and gender characteristics, apart from economic criteria (see Gunn and Bell, 2003, pp. 8–18). In our case, middle classes are mainly defined by liberal professions, shopkeepers, and petty manufacturers, who earned their living in nineteenth-century Istanbul and were socially differentiated from workers and street vendors on the one hand and the upper bourgeoisie on the other. They were ethnically defined in the tradition of the millet system<sup>4</sup> and they were forged through institutions of education, civic, and professional associations, and charitable foundations. Specifically, the economic development of a Greek Orthodox middle class can be traced

through the involvement of its members in various professional activities and businesses, and through their participation in numerous educational and cultural associations established in Istanbul between 1861 and 1922.<sup>5</sup>

The Greek Orthodox middle class was composed of the leaders of the traditional guilds of Istanbul. These included professionals such as doctors, lawyers, architects, and engineers who emerged from the increasing demand for Western educated and skilled people in specific fields during the reforms, and also employees in banks, railways, public utilities, and industries (Issawi, 1982, p. 261). The main reason behind the development of an ethnocentric proclivity among the middle class was that the political framework formed during the reforms did not allow its members to participate substantially in the administration of the Orthodox millet (Stamatopoulos, 2003, pp. 81–83). Furthermore, a significant proportion of this group was educated either in Europe or in Greece and was the vehicle of national ideologies that were reproduced at the time in these academic circles. As a result, they played a more active role in the cultural life of the community, especially in the establishment and activities of institutions, associations, and schools where Greek culture and education became dominant (Exertzoglou, 1996, p. 55).

A considerable number of them also had dual citizenship, Ottoman and Greek, due to the frequent movement of populations between the Ottoman Empire and the Greek Kingdom. As a result, they were in a very privileged position, because as Ottoman citizens they were able to involve themselves in financial activities not usually practiced by foreign citizens and as Greek citizens they were exempt from the taxation imposed on Ottoman citizens. The fact that their financial interests were protected by the Greek state, owing to the system of capitulations, pushed them into progressively identifying with it in political terms as well (Anagnostopoulou, 1997, pp. 311, 317).

The formation and financial evolution of the Constantinopolitan Muslim and non-Muslim middle-class strata is reflected in the documents of the *Imperial Ottoman Bank*, an institution that gave new perspectives to Ottoman finance during the period 1863–1914 (Eldem, 1997, pp. 53–98; Eldem, 1999a, p. 60). In addition, the various *Annuaire Oriental* edited in Istanbul from the late nineteenth century onwards, and the advertisements of Greek shops, products, and services provided by the Constantinopolitan Greeks, offer invaluable and still unexploited information on this issue (Figures 6.2 and 6.3).<sup>6</sup>

Despite the lack of a more profound quantitative and qualitative inquiry on this subject, it can safely be argued that the dominating economic presence and the consequent upward social mobility of the Greek Orthodox as well as the other non-Muslim middle classes during the



nineteenth century constituted one of the main reasons for the adoption of a Turkish nationalist economic policy by the Young Turk regime from 1912 until the end of World War I.

## **2. The First Stage of Turkish Economic Nationalism: The Period of the Young Turks (1908–1918)**

The ultimate aim of the Young Turk<sup>7</sup> revolution in July 1908 was to save the Ottoman state from the dangers that threatened it (Ahmad, 1969, p. 16; Lewis, 1961, p. 208). Economic subordination to the West that could eventually result in the partition of the empire was one of them. Indebted to European banks, exploited by the capitulations system, and divided into economic spheres of influence by the Great Powers, the Ottoman state had sunk into a semicolonial financial position. The Young Turks deeply resented the loss of their country's economic and political independence, which they perceived as a consequence of the absolutist rule of Sultan Abdülhamid II (August 1876–July 1908). In order to remedy this situation they initially pursued a liberal financial policy with the hope that the European states would cooperate with the Ottoman government and renounce their capitulatory privileges. In this context, they tried to encourage the growth of trade and industry, attract foreign investments, import foreign management skills, improve the tax collection system, and modernize legislation on transactions and ownership of land.

However, the response of the foreign powers was not as positive as they expected. Especially Great Britain and France were not willing to discuss any modifications to the capitulations system. On the contrary, in an effort to gain further concessions and privileges, both countries exerted additional pressure on the Ottoman state by refusing to continue their financial assistance. By 1912, the Young Turks had realized that economic independence was the only means to achieve national independence and avert the dismemberment of the empire. The nationalization of the economy through the creation of a Turkish middle class gradually became one of the basic preconditions for the success of this national goal (Berkes, 1998, pp. 333–335, 427; Zürcher, 1994, pp. 127–129). As Yusuf Akçura, a prominent Young Turk ideologue and editor of the journal *Türk Yurdu* (Turkish Homeland) wrote in 1914 (cited in Berkes, 1998, p. 425):

The Turkish national awakening in Turkey is the beginning of the genesis of the Turkish bourgeoisie. And, if the natural growth of the Turkish bourgeoisie continues without damage or interruption, we can say that the sound establishment of the Turkish state has been guaranteed.

**ΒΑΦΕΙΟΝ**  
**ΓΕΩΡΓ. ΑΝΔΡΕΑΔΟΥ**

*Τοπχανέ. Γιαγχανέ σοκιάκ, αρ. 6.*

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Τὸ ἀρχαῖον τοῦτον βρεῖον ἀναδέχεται τὸν καθαρῶς καὶ βαρῆν  
παντὸς εἶδους ὑφάσματος. Αἱ δὲ πρὸς τοῦτο ἐργασίαι γινόμεναι κατὰ  
τὸν εὐρωπαϊκὸν τρόπον, μετὰ τέχνης καὶ φιλοκαλίας δεδοκιμασμένης,  
καθιστῶσιν ἀξιοσύστατον τὸ κατάστημα τοῦτο.

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**ΤΙΜΑΙ ΜΕΤΡΙΑΙ**

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**Γ. ΝΟΜΙΚΟΣ**

*77, — Μουμχανέ, ὑπὸ τὸ Οὐντζιλάρ χάν, — 77*

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**ΕΡΓΟΣΤΑΣΙΟΝ**  
**ΛΟΥΚΟΥΜΙΩΝ, ΧΑΛΒΑΔΩΝ ΚΑΙ ΔΙΑΦΟΡΩΝ ΑΛΛΩΝ ΖΑΚΧΑΡΩΤΩΝ.**  
**ΠΡΩΤΙΣΤΗΣ ΠΟΙΟΤΗΤΟΣ**

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**ΥΠΟΚΑΤΑΣΤΗΜΑ**

*ἐν Γενὶ Βαλιδὲ χάν, ἔναντι τῆς γεφύρας, αρ. 2.*

**Figure 6.2** Advertisements of Greek Businesses in Istanbul.

Notes: Advertisements of Greek businesses in Istanbul (a dye house for cloths and a patisserie).

Source: *Almanac of the Orient* (1885). Istanbul.

## ΞΕΝΟΔΟΧΕΙΟΝ

# Ο ΠΑΡΑΔΕΙΣΟΣ

Ἐν Κωνσταντινουπόλει, παρὰ τὸ Σουλτάν Χαμὰμ,  
διευθυνόμενον ὑπὸ τῶν ΑΔΕΛΦΩΝ ΒΑΦΕΙΑΔΩΝ.



Ἐκλογή φαγητῶν ἀρίστη, μαγειρικὴ τεχνικωτάτη, ἐπιμέλεια καὶ καθαριότης ἀνεπίληπτοι, κατέστησαν τὸ ξενοδοχεῖον τοῦτο τὸ δημοτικώτατον μὲν πάντων ἐκ τῶ κέντρω τῆς ἐμπορικῆς ἀγορᾶς τῆς Σταμπούλ, περιήκουστον δὲ καὶ ἐν Γαλατᾷ, ὅθεν οὐκ ὀλίγοι σπεύδουσι τὴν μεσημβρίαν εἰς Σταμπούλ ἵνα δοκιμάσωσι τῶν Ἀδελφῶν Βαφειᾶδων τὴν διαρρημιζομένην μαγειρικὴν τέχνην, δι' ἧς δικαίως κατέκτησαν τὴν πολυἀριθμον καὶ ἐκλεκτὴν αὐτῶν πελατεῖαν.

Ἐπὶ πᾶσι ΤΙΜΑΙ ΜΕΤΡΙΩΤΑΤΑΙ.

## ΑΔΕΛΦΟΙ ΙΩΑΝΝΙΔΑΙ ΚΑΙ Σ<sup>z</sup>

(Fratelli JOANNIDI & C<sup>ie</sup>)

Κατάστημα ὑφασμάτων  
παντοειδῶν (μεταξωτῶν, μαλλίνων, βαμβακερῶν, λινῶν,  
ἐριούχων, κτλ., κτλ).

## ΠΩΔΗΣΙΣ ΧΟΝΔΡΙΚΩΣ

ΑΝΤΑΠΟΚΡΙΣΙΣ ΜΕΤΑ ΤΩΝ ΠΡΟΤΙΣΤΩΝ ΕΥΡΩΠ. ΕΡΓΟΣΤΑΣΙΩΝ

Ἐν Κωνσταντινουπόλει, Σουλτάν Χαμὰμ, 3.

Οἶκος ἐν Μαγγεστρία

JOANNIDI BROTHERS & Co, Oxford Street, 6, Hall-Street

**Figure 6.3** Advertisements of Greek Shops in Istanbul.

Notes: Advertisements of Greek shops in Istanbul (a hotel and an import merchant house for Manchester cloths).

Source: *Almanac of the Orient* (1885). Istanbul.

According to Akçura, the survival of Turkish society depended on the formation of this Turkish middle class, since the existing bourgeoisie, namely the Greeks, the Armenians, the Jews, and the Levantines,<sup>8</sup> had acted as the agents and middlemen of European capital in the Ottoman Empire ever since the Tanzimat reforms (Berkes, 1998, p. 426).

In fact, from 40 private bankers listed in Istanbul in 1912, 12 were Greeks, 12 were Armenians, 8 were Jews, and 5 were Levantines (Issawi, 1982, pp. 261–285). At the same time, Greeks and Armenians constituted the majority of the officially registered merchants in Istanbul, while Muslim merchants were identified as only 10 percent of the total. In addition, two-thirds of the largest textile importers then active in Istanbul were Armenians while just one-seventh were Turks (Quataert, 1994, p. 840).

The resentment of the Turks with regard to the accumulation of wealth by non-Muslims was to a certain degree justified. Throughout the nineteenth century a constantly increasing number of people belonging to non-Muslim communities took advantage of the personal, juridical, and economic privileges granted to them by foreign powers under the provisions of the regime of capitulations. As a result, they managed to improve their social position, promote their own economic interests and dominate the industrial and commercial sector of the empire (Aktar, 1996, p. 265; Issawi, 1982, pp. 273f.; Svolopoulos, 2003, pp. 38–40; Thayer, 1923, pp. 211f., 215).

The ideas of Turkish economic nationalism started to gain ground from the time of the Balkan Wars (October 1912—August 1913) onwards. For the Young Turks the wars constituted the final proof of the non-Muslims' loyalty to foreign powers and their reluctance to be part of the Ottoman state as they envisioned it. During this period the Ottoman state suffered heavy territorial losses in European Turkey. This resulted in the rapid de-Ottomanization of the empire, which lost territories containing large non-Muslim populations. Ottomanism thus became far less important as the means to bring political unity. With the mass migration of Muslims from the Balkans to Anatolia, a Turkish ethnic core was formed in the region. The existence of this ethnic core reinforced the nation-building policy of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) who aimed to transform the ethnic Turks into a Turkish nation. The Turkification of the economy was the first step in this direction.

In 1914, the Young Turks launched the program of “National Economy” (*Milli İktisat*). The program targeted the non-Muslim entrepreneurs and especially the Greeks and the Armenians, who dominated the trade sector in the big cities (Aktar, 1996, pp. 267f.; Alexandris, 1992, pp. 43f; Zürcher, 1994, p. 130; Zürcher, 2010, pp. 220f.). In the case of the Greek Orthodox population of Istanbul anti-Greek economic boycotts, introduced for the first time during the period 1912–1913 (Aktar, 1996, pp. 266f.), became

much more general and systematic. On February 25, 1914 the Ecumenical Patriarchate<sup>9</sup> sent a letter of complaint to the Ministry of Justice and Religious Affairs, claiming that these boycotts were openly supported by Ottoman officials and were promoted through sermons and public speeches in the mosques, markets, and public squares. In some cases Muslims who were willing to continue their financial transactions with Greeks were threatened or physically obstructed from doing so, while goods belonging to Greeks were destroyed during their transport from one place to another (*Μαύρη Βίβλος*, 1919, pp. 323–325).

With the outbreak of World War I the Young Turks were able to pursue their national goal without the fear of international restrictions and sanctions. As a result, in August 1914 the Porte suspended payment of the national debt and two months later unilaterally abolished the capitulations (Zürcher, 1994, p. 129; Zürcher, 2010, p. 70). The effort to replace non-Muslim with Muslim entrepreneurs was intensified during the war period. Economic boycotts, open state favoritism towards Muslim merchants, intimidation of Greek and Armenian businessmen, confiscation of capital, deportations and expulsions of Greeks and Armenians from strategically sensitive areas were all employed in an effort to undermine the economic supremacy of non-Muslims (Alexandris, 1992, p.44; Bloxham, 2007, pp. 63f.; Emmanouilidis, 1924, pp. 59f.; *Les Persécutions Anti-helléniques*, 1918, p. 23; Mavropoulos, 1960, pp. 77, 80f.; *Persecution of the Greeks*, 1919, pp. 27, 130; Zürcher, 1994, p.130; Zürcher, 2010, pp. 219–221; *Μαύρη Βίβλος*, 1919, pp. 54f.; for the Armenians see Bloxham, 2007).

The implementation of these measures was seen by the Turkish nationalists as forming the basis for the survival of Turkish society and for the building of a country belonging to the Turks. In the words of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, however, it equated with the “absolute paralysis of our [the Greeks’] national and communal autonomy” and the “complete elimination of the Greek element of the empire” (*Μαύρη Βίβλος*, 1919, pp. 54, 324f.). These two diametrically opposed assessments of the Young Turks’ financial program was one more expression of the mutually antagonistic nature of Turkish and Greek nationalisms. The national fragmentation of Ottoman society would be completed during the Greek-Turkish war of 1919–1922, which shattered the lingering multiethnic facade of the empire.

### 3. The Interlude of Greek Irredentism in Istanbul (1918–1922)

Overall the response of the religious and lay leadership of the Greek Orthodox community to the nationalist policies of the Young Turks was rather compliant, despite the problem of the deportations that had caused

the indignation of the Greek population (Emmanouilidis, 1924, pp. 290–292, 309–320; Mavropoulos, 1960, pp. 74–78, 83–85, 89f.). The main objective of the new communal authorities that took over after the overthrow of Patriarch Germanos V in October 1918 became the severance of the community's ties with the Ottoman state and the systematic manifestation of their desire for unification (ένωσις) with Greece. Alienated by the harsh measures of the CUP and disillusioned by the passive response of the previous leadership the Greek Orthodox of Istanbul welcomed this change of stance and identified with the Greek Prime Minister Eleftherios Venizelos and the irredentist plan of the *Megali Idea* (Great Idea) (Emmanouilidis, 1924, pp. 283f.; Papadopoulos, 1978, p. 82).

The Greek middle class recognized new opportunities and prospects in the defeat of the Ottoman Empire and its possible partition. Several examples indicate that the merchants and entrepreneurs of Istanbul were overwhelmed by the Greek nationalist fervor that swept the city after the signing of the armistice at Mudros on October 30, 1918. Renaming their shops and assuming Greek symbolic names like *Parthenon* and *Panellinion* (Pan-Hellenic) or hoisting Greek flags at the entrance of their establishments were some of the various public manifestations of Greek national sentiment in Istanbul (Avramidis, 1921). In June 1920, during the clearing operations of the Greek army against the forces of Kemal, the Greek Chamber of Commerce communicated the following telegram of gratitude to the Prime Minister of Greece (*Chronos*, 10 June 1920):

The Board of the Greek Chamber of Commerce representing the Greek commercial population of Constantinople expresses its gratitude and dedication with all due deference to You, the Liberator of the Unredeemed Hellenism and wishes you health and longevity in order to accomplish your great work.

Less than a month after Venizelos' defeat in the national elections of November 1920 the Association of Greek Merchants of Istanbul sent a similar telegram to the Greek politician (*Chronos*, 1 December 1920). Furthermore, most of the members of the Venizelist Committee of National Defense, who organized a separatist plan for the creation of an autonomous government in Izmir prior to August 1922, were prominent figures of the middle strata of Istanbul, including the majority of the board of the National School of Languages and Commerce.<sup>10</sup>

In 1922, a survey contending scientific qualities was published with the title *Constantinople to-day*, under the direction of a professor of sociology in the famous Robert College. In the section "The Greek community in Constantinople" it argued that "of the three leading nationalities of

Constantinople—Turk, Armenian, Greek—the Greek alone claims kinship with the founders of the city” and further down in the “Evidences of Greek Influence in Modern Constantinople”, the survey assessed the Greek presence in the city:

The casual visitor to Constantinople who is not alert to detect evidences of Greek life and influence in the modern city, will hardly gather the impression that it is in reality a great center of Greek life. He will notice many Greek flags and Greek names on ships, big and little, in the harbour; he will hear Greek spoken on every ferry, tram, and in most streets; he will notice several Greek newspapers on the newsstands; he will be constantly reminded of the commercial activities of the Greek merchants, particularly the small shopkeepers and wine dealers; but he will measure the full scope of Greek influence only where he begins systematically to probe deeper. (Johnson, 1922, pp. 19, 31)

However, these extreme expressions of pro-Greek feelings intensified ongoing inter-communal tensions and antagonisms. In contrast to the Greeks and the Armenians, the Jews lacked a foreign power acting as their external protector. This encouraged the Jewish community towards a policy of cautiousness and cooperation with the CUP from 1911 until the end of World War I (see Ahmad, 1982, p. 426; Hanioglu, 1994, p. 519; Kayali, 1994, p. 511; Levy, 1994, pp. 115f.; Rodrigue, 1990, p. 125; Rozen, 2005, pp. 108f., 121f.). During 1918–1922 the Jews remained loyal to the Ottoman state and did not attempt to promote their own secessionist plan, despite the resignation of the conservative Chief Rabbi Hayim Nahum in March 1920 and the ascendancy of the Zionists to power (Rodrigue, 1995, pp. 254f.; Rozen, 2005, pp. 127–130; Toktas, 2005, pp. 396, 421). According to Soner Cagaptay, “Turkish nationalism, which formed anti-Greek and anti-Armenian sentiments through its struggles with Greek and Armenian nationalisms, nurtured a neutral, if not positive, attitude toward the Jews” (Cagaptay, 2006, p. 24).

Turkish tolerance towards the Jews was also expressed in economic terms. Throughout World War I the Jewish entrepreneurs of Istanbul benefited alongside the Turks at the expense of Greek and Armenian businessmen, who constituted the main target of the Young Turks’ program of financial Turkification (Alexandris, 1992, p. 44). In a similar fashion, according to the official Greek reports of April 1922 a group of Jewish merchants took the initiative to boycott Greek businesses with the approval of the Ottoman authorities and donated money to the national struggle of the Kemalist army. In return they requested Turkish support for specific Jewish businesses that wanted to import goods freely in the Near East (GMFA 1922 92/3). The economic opportunities presented by

the imminent defeat of the Greek army could not be ignored. The Jewish entrepreneurs intended to occupy the financial vacuum that had already started to emerge as a result of the misfortunes of World War I for the other two major non-Muslim communities (Bali, 2005, p. 40).

There was at the same time a greater danger to be found in the hatred of the Turks caused by the overt nationalism of the Constantinopolitan Greeks. At the end of April 1922, the Greek local newspaper *Chronos* reported that the issue of the Greek nationalists was discussed at the Grand National Assembly in Ankara and it was decided to draw up catalogues with the names of the Ottoman Greeks participating in these activities, in order to account for their crimes against the state after the end of the war (*Chronos*, April 21, 1922). A few months later the Public Committee of Unredeemed Greeks submitted a memorandum to the Greek government arguing that these catalogues comprised the names of all the notables and the most prominent Constantinopolitan Greeks in terms of education, commerce and wealth (GMFA 1922 3/2).

In September 1922, this growing feeling of insecurity transformed into panic when the news of the entrance of the Kemalist forces in Izmir and the acts of violence committed against the non-Muslims reached Istanbul. From the moment the Greek population became convinced that failure to migrate would result in imprisonment or even death, fleeing to survive seemed the only option. This widespread belief resulted in a significant wave of migration. During the period October–December 1922, approximately 40,000 Constantinopolitan Greeks belonging to the wealthier classes fled Istanbul and temporarily settled in Greece (Alexandris, 1992, pp. 82f., 101, 104; Pallis, 1937, p. 167).

#### **4. The Second Stage of Turkish Economic Nationalism: The Consolidation of the Newly Founded Republic of Turkey (1923–1939)**

The victorious war of independence against the Greeks, carried out under the leadership of Mustapha Kemal, necessitated the building of a state *of and for* the Turkish nation (see Brubaker, 1996, p. 6). Thus from 1923 onwards Turkey would undergo a process of nationalization, assuming nationalizing policies in order to promote the language, cultural flourishing, demographic predominance, economic welfare, and political hegemony of the Turkish nation (see Brubaker, 1996, p. 83).

The first step in this direction was achieved by the signing of the Convention concerning the Exchange of Greek and Turkish Populations. This agreement signed at Lausanne on January 30, 1923 provided Turkey



with a higher degree of national homogeneity. The only ones exempted from the compulsory population exchange were the Greek inhabitants of Istanbul and the Muslim inhabitants of Western Thrace (Article 2) (Parliamentary Papers, 1923, Treaty Series No16. Cmd. 1929, p. 175).

With regard to the new state's finances, Ankara reintroduced the economic practices of the Young Turks aiming in the same way at the Turkification of the economy and the creation of a Turkish middle class. During the First Economic Congress held in Izmir in 1923, Kemal publicly endorsed the idea that national sovereignty would be achieved through economic sovereignty (Bali, 2005, p. 41). In the same year the National Turkish Commercial Union was founded in an attempt to replace non-Muslim merchants, commissionaires, and representatives of foreign companies with Muslims. The Union also played a major role in the purchase of commercial establishments owned by the departing Greeks (Alexandris, 1992, p. 106; Bali, 2005, p. 41).

Several similar measures followed throughout the 1920s and 1930s. From 1923 to 1926 the authorities put official pressure on companies to replace foreign and in some cases non-Muslim personnel with Muslim Turks. In addition all commercial affairs, documents, and correspondence were by law to be conducted in Turkish, a measure that forced a lot of non-Muslims out of work due to their lack of proficiency in the language (Aktar, 2009, pp. 40–42; Alexandris, 1992, pp. 108–111; Bali, 2005, pp. 42f.).

The most important restrictions were applied in relation to specific professions and trades. Kimon Diamantopoulos, the Greek consul in Istanbul, wrote in his annual report for the year 1925 (GMFA 1927 92.2/1):

The Greek element in Istanbul feels the considerable financial consequences of the internal policy followed by the Turkish government. A big part of businesses falling under the category of private limited companies, where the Greeks and the Greek capital dominated, are now owned by Muslims. Their involvement in these businesses resulted in the replacement of thousands of Greeks,—mostly lower personnel—, by Muslims. This persecution also takes place in other fields of the local economy, like banks, factories, hotels, the public sector and even in small trades. Although the official policy stipulates the replacement of foreign citizens, and especially Greeks, with Turkish citizens, in reality they are replaced by Muslim Turks.

In 1926 foreigners were officially not allowed to exercise specific small trades (Apogevmatini, 18 January 1926; Apogevmatini, 11 February 1926; Apogevmatini, 14 February 1926; Apogevmatini, 24 August 1926). Six years later Law No. 2007 made a wide number of liberal professions and

trades available only to Turkish citizens. These included clothing, cap and shoe manufacturers, barbers, photographers, construction, iron and wood industry workers, etc. (Aktar, 2009, pp. 44–46, 51–52; Alexandris, 1992, p. 185; Bali, 2005, p. 44;). In both cases the members of the Greek minority more seriously damaged by these laws were the ones holding Greek nationality. By 1926 over 5000 Greek nationals had been dismissed from European companies operating in Istanbul (Alexandris, 1992, p. 110). Similarly, the implementation of the 1932 law resulted in 9000 Greek nationals losing their jobs and migrating to Greece, thus reducing the percentage of Greek nationals in the Greek Orthodox population from 26.3 percent to 18.3 percent (Table 6.8) (Aktar, 2003, pp. 92–93; Aktar, 2009, pp. 46–47; Alexandris, 1992, pp. 184–185).

An example of the impact of Turkish economic nationalism on foreign citizens is the textile industry, an economic sector once controlled by non-Muslims. Table 6.9, based on the data provided by the Turkish Annual Statistics (*Istatistik Yıllığı*, 1936) of 1935–6, shows that a mere four years after the implementation of the law only 7.2 percent of textile business owners and 3.3 percent of employees were foreigners.

**Table 6.8** The Greek Nationals Residing in Istanbul (1912, 1927, 1935)

<i>Year</i>	<i>Greek Orthodox population (total)</i>	<i>Greek nationals</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Source</i>
1912	309,657	65,000	21	Statistical data of the Ecumenical Patriarchate
1927	100,214	26,431	26.3	Turkish census
1935	95,956	17,642	18.3	Turkish census

*Sources:* Alexandris, 1992, pp. 184–185; Aktar, 2003, pp. 92–93; Aktar, 2009, pp. 46–47. (Table compiled by the authors).

**Table 6.9** Turkish Annual Statistics 1935–1936

<i>Categories of personnel</i>		<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Sub-Total</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Percentage (%) of foreign owners &amp; employees</i>
Owners	Turks	1,570	46	1,616	1,742	7.2
	Foreigners	109	17	126		
Employees	Turks	665	1,353	2,088	2,144	3.3
	Foreigners	56	14	70		

*Note:* Composition of personnel in 2,459 businesses occupying more than 4 people in the industry of textiles

*Source:* *Istatistik Yıllığı*, 1936, p. 247.

Especially in the case of the Greek nationals of Istanbul this fact becomes apparent by comparing the *Annuaire Oriental* of the years 1930 and 1934, which means directly before and directly after the implementation of the 1932 Law No. 2007. Tables 6.10 and 6.11 take as a sample five different businesses related to the textile industry. The Greek firms have been singled out on the basis of the Greek names appearing in these catalogues (*Şark Ticaret Yıllığı: Annuaire Oriental 1934*, 1934, pp. 468–472. 475; *Ticaret Yıllığı: Annuaire Commercial*, 1930, pp. 577, 581f., 588f.).

By comparing the data of the two tables it becomes clear that in four of five cases Greek establishments decreased between 1930 and 1934, which means that these shops were most probably owned by Greek nationals. However, in the case of hat imports the number of Greek shops was reduced by four, while the total number remains the same. Therefore, the first question that arises is who benefited from these measures? Was it only Muslim Turks or also other non-Muslims holding Turkish citizenship? In addition, in all five businesses Greek owners continued to have a strong presence and retain a high percentage of the economic activity. Would it be safe to assume that, despite the efforts of the state apparatus

**Table 6.10** Sample of Five Greek Businesses in the Textile Industry (Annuaire Commercial 1930)

<i>Type of business</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Greeks</i>	<i>%</i>
Knitting & Sewing Goods Imports	63	12	19
Hat Imports	22	11	50
Shoe Shops	54	11	20.4
Shirt Imports	35	16	46
Hides & Skins	60	15	25

*Source: Ticaret Yıllığı: Annuaire Commercial*, 1930, pp. 577, 581f., 588f. (Table compiled by the authors).

**Table 6.11** Sample of Five Greek Businesses in the Textile Industry (Annuaire Oriental 1934)

<i>Type of business</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Greeks</i>	<i>%</i>
Knitting & Sewing Goods Imports	59	8	13.6
Hat Imports	22	7	32
Shoe Shops	41	9	22
Shirt Imports	36	17	47
Hides & Skins	31	8	26

*Source: Şark Ticaret Yıllığı: Annuaire Oriental 1934*, 1934, pp.468–472, 475. (Table compiled by the authors).

and contrary to the reports of Greek diplomatic circles, Greek Orthodox holding Turkish citizenship were not really affected by the law? These questions need detailed and much more extensive qualitative and quantitative research in order to draw some safe conclusions. At this point it is only possible to hypothesize that with regards to the official restrictions on professions during the 1920s and 1930s, people holding Turkish citizenship, Muslims and non-Muslims alike, were not influenced by the policy of Turkish economic nationalism.

### Conclusion

The economic expansion of the Greek Orthodox population in Istanbul was conditioned by efforts to modernize the Ottoman Empire, the emergence of Greek and Turkish nationalisms, the establishment of the Greek state, the infiltration of European capital into the region, population growth, wars, intercommunal antagonisms, and—predominantly—the building of a national Turkish state: the Republic of Turkey (1923).

From the mid-nineteenth century onwards the Greeks of Istanbul, as well as the other non-Muslim communities, managed to gradually improve their social position, promote their own economic interests and dominate the industrial and commercial sector of the city. However, the formation of different ethnic middle classes laid the foundations of an antagonistic economic environment along national lines and created insurmountable problems with regards to intercommunal relations, especially between Muslims and non-Muslims. The Ottoman state was unable to benefit financially from the religious and ethnic diversity of the society, because of the economic interference of foreign powers in its affairs. The dominating financial presence and the consequent upward social mobility of the non-Muslims, a direct outcome of their transactions with European capital and their capitulatory privileges, constituted one of the main reasons behind the adoption of a Turkish nationalist economic policy by the Young Turk regime from 1912 until the end of World War I.

The ideas of Turkish economic nationalism started to gain ground during the Balkan Wars, which as far as the Turks were concerned provided final proof of the non-Muslims' disloyalty and unwillingness to be incorporated in a common Ottoman homeland. The program of "National Economy" (*Milli İktisat*), launched by the Young Turks in 1914, was an exclusionist nationalist policy targeting non-Muslim entrepreneurs, particularly Greeks and Armenians who controlled commerce in the big cities. Economic boycotts, open state favoritism towards Muslim merchants, intimidation of Greek and Armenian businessmen, confiscation

of capital, deportations, and expulsions of Greeks and Armenians from strategically sensitive areas were all employed in an effort to undermine their economic supremacy.

The interlude of the Greek-Turkish war of 1919–1922 and the overt nationalism of the Greeks of Istanbul reinforced the anti-Greek feelings of the Turkish establishment. Therefore, although the Treaty of Lausanne (July 1923) granted equal rights with the rest of the population to the exempted Greek Orthodox minority of Istanbul, the Kemalist regime resumed the discriminatory nationalist economic policies of the Young Turks in an effort to create a Turkish middle class. In this context, the application of harsh economic measures and methods of exclusion targeting non-Muslims combined with the issue of Greek citizenship, which was employed as a pretext for forcing members of the Greek Orthodox minority to leave Turkey, led to the establishment of a migration trend to Greece in the 1920s and 1930s. Even though the current situation of the Greeks of Istanbul is beyond the scope of this chapter, it can be ascertained that in the decades that followed the same pattern is identifiable, which to a certain degree explains the significant numerical and financial decline of the minority up to the present day (Alexandris, 2003, pp. 118f.).

### Notes

1. The Treaty of Lausanne (July 1923) redefined the legal status of the Constantinopolitan Greeks exempted from the compulsory exchange of populations between Greece and Turkey. The Greek Orthodox community of Istanbul was officially recognized as a non-Muslim minority and its rights were placed under the protection of the League of Nations (see *Parliamentary Papers, 1923, Treaty Series No16. Cmd. 1929, 1923*).
2. The guilds (*esnaf*) were professional associations representing a variety of professions.
3. Baltazzi, Tubini, Zarifis, Camondo and Syggros were among these powerful bankers (see Clay, 2000, pp. 18–19; Seni, 1994, pp. 663–675). For the activities of the Greek bankers during 1871–1881 see Exertzoglou (1989).
4. Religion was the main criterion of social differentiation in the Ottoman society. The primary division of the population was between Muslims and non-Muslims, and—within the latter—between Orthodox Christians, Gregorian Armenians, Jews and Catholics. In the nineteenth century this religious communal system was officially recognized as the millet system. At the time, the term millet meant a religious community that was under the spiritual jurisdiction of a religious leader and officially recognized by the state (see Konortas, 1998, p. 299; Konortas, 1999, p. 173).
5. In 1861 the “Greek Literary Association of Constantinople” (*Ελληνικός Φιλολογικός Σύλλογος Κωνσταντινουπόλεως*), the first and most important

educational association of the Constantinopolitan Greeks, was established in Istanbul. The establishment of the GLAC inspired the creation of numerous educational and cultural associations in Istanbul. During the period 1861–1922 approximately 500 associations were formed in different parts of the Ottoman capital, a phenomenon called at the time “club-mania” (“συλλογομανία”) (see Mamoni, 1990, pp. 215f., 222, 230).

6. We would like to thank Professor Edhem Eldem from Boğaziçi University for providing us with the *Annuaire Oriental* of specific years. The data contained in these sources are still being processed. For the advertisements see, for example, Thomas and Palaiologos (1879); Palaiologos (1885); Ελληνική Εμπορική Σχολή Χάλκης. Εσωτερικά Διατάξεις (1892); Κανονισμός του εν Κωνσταντινουπόλει Ελληνικού Εμπορικού Επιμελητηρίου (1894); Ημερολόγιον του έτους (1905); Εθνικά Φιλανθρωπικά Καταστήματα εν Κωνσταντινουπόλει (1905). A large collection of almanacs, charters and regulations are held at the Centre for Asia Minor Studies in Athens.
7. The Young Turks were a group of modern educated bureaucrats and officers, who became active in the 1890s and organized the constitutional revolution of 1908 in an attempt to modernize and strengthen state and society on the basis of a positivist and increasingly nationalist set of ideas (see Zürcher, 1994, p. 4).
8. Europeans living in the Ottoman Empire.
9. In the framework of the millet system the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople was the highest religious and political authority of the Greek Orthodox population residing in the Ottoman Empire.
10. For the separatist movement see Llewellyn-Smith (1998, pp. 184–189, 219–220, 237–239, 248–249, 252–254, 265, 271–272) and Giannoulououlos (1978, pp. 189–200).

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