

# Chapter 8

## The Greek-Orthodox Community of Mersin (Mid-Nineteenth Century to 1921)



Evangelia Balta

**Abstract** This article is an overview of the history of the Greek-Orthodox community of Mersin and its surrounding villages, retrieved from unpublished archival material to be found in Greece. More specifically, the material from the 11 Mersinian codices that were saved and transported to Greece with the Exchangeable refugees and are today kept in the General State Archives (Athens). The codices record the history of the communities (births, marriages, baptisms, deaths, decisions made by community authorities, the running of schools, trade unions, etc.), any activity in which the inhabitants of the Mersin area were involved from the mid-nineteenth century until 1924. This information was supported by refugees' testimonies from the Oral Tradition Archive at the Centre of Asia Minor Studies in Athens. Lastly, consular reports from the Archive of the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs are presented, which include a description of the conditions prevailing amongst the Greek element in the city of Mersin and its environs at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Mersin is the proud testimony of the progress made in the sandjak of Adana in the second half of the nineteenth century. Until 1841, just a few huts of farmers and fishermen stood on the site of the town that bustled with life in the first decade of the twentieth century. We read in the Greek literature that the emergence of Mersin can be traced back to the year 1842, when Rums from Cappadocia and the Greek islands arrived in this backwater and became its true founders. By 1865, Mersin was already an important trading post in the Mediterranean. The imperial government recognized its potential and soon separated it from Tarsus, in 1867. Thus, within a few decades, the insignificant coastal settlement of the mid-nineteenth century grew into a town of over 15,000 inhabitants, from the harbour of which, and nearby Yumurtalık (Ayaş), commodities to the value of about 40,000,000 gold francs were exported in the early twentieth century. Detailed lists of the ships, by nationality, recording the value and quantity of the products loaded as cargoes at the port of Mersin in the years 1904, 1905 and 1906 have been published (Anonymous 1909). Moreover, the railway line

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linking Mersin with Adana and Baghdad established it as a communications node for trade over land, until the Haydarpaşa-Konya line reached Ereğli, after which most of the products of domestic trade were conveyed to Istanbul via Ereğli.

In this period, Russia and France sped to establish consulates in the port. Greece was the last to follow suit. Around 1908–1909 Mersin had a population of 15,000. The exact number of Rums is not known, but must have been between 3,000 and 4,000 souls. From my research in the registers of the Greek-Orthodox community of Mersin, I ascertained that most of the Rums were incomers from various parts of Asia Minor and Greece: Istanbul, Smyrna, Kula, Sokya, Kastamonu, Aydin, Konya, Bursa, Sivas, Manisa, Kayseri, Deneş, Antalya, Ulukışla Mines, Çorlu, Ovaçık, Kirşehir, Ankara, Niğde, Ereğli, Samos, Chios, Kastellorizo and elsewhere. From the interviews with refugees, deposited in the Archive of the Centre for Asia Minor Studies (CAMS), we learn that the majority were settlers from Cappadocia (Mutalaski/Talas, Androniki/Endülük, Zincidere, Niğde, Bor, Kayseri, Gölçük). In files in the Archive of the Foreign Ministry of Greece, the decisive contribution of Cappadocia to the demography of Mersin, Adana and Tarsus is stressed. The Greek consuls estimate that there were about 350 Cappadocian families in Mersin (Centre for Asia Minor Studies, Mersina, file no 3). There were also 100–150 Chiot families and about the same number of Cypriot ones. Greeks from Lesbos and Crete, as well as Greek citizens from the Cyclades (Santorini, Syros-Hermoupolis, Tinos), Piraeus, Paxoi, had also settled in Mersin, which fact confirms the communication between the commercial centres of the Mediterranean. The refugee Anastasios Andreadis, in an interview with collaborators of the Centre for Asia Minor Studies, mentions that several inhabitants of Pontus made their home in Mersin, about 100 families from Buğa Maden, Berekteli Maden, Akdağ Maden, who had emigrated and settled there because there were mines in the region. In addition to the Rums, however, there were also Arab-speaking Orthodox Christians, whose church was dedicated to Archangels Michael and Gabriel. In 1920, according to the estimates of refugee informants of the CAMS, about 1,000 Europeans, 2,000–3,000 Armenians who had survived thanks to the presence of the foreign consulates, 2,000 Arab Orthodox Syrians, several hundred Fellahins and 10,000–12,000 Turks were living and working in Mersin. According to refugee informants of the CAMS, the population of Mersin in 1919–1921 was about 20,000 people. The population of the entire *mutasarrıflık* of Mersin was 72,000. ‘*I know this because they told us so in our geography lesson*’, the refugee Lazaros Avramidis told CAMS collaborators in 1965.

I should like to stress the following points: Although native Orthodox communities had existed in Adana and Tarsus since time immemorial, their demographic development during the nineteenth century was due to immigration. On the contrary, the community of Mersin was from the outset made up of immigrants, since the town itself was newly founded. The predominant language was Turkish and the predominant script *karamanlı* (*karamanlica*), which denotes that by the second half of the nineteenth century at least, the native populations, although demographically weaker, had imposed their linguistic expression.

The history of the Greek-Orthodox community is not unrelated to the economic and cultural conditions shaped in this region in the mid-nineteenth century. And its

prosperity should undoubtedly be seen in parallel with the development of the other communities created in the town and the sandjak of Adana as a whole. Furthermore, in order to follow the short-lived history of the Greek-Orthodox community of Mersin it is, in my view, essential to put it in the context of the history of the Rum communities of the sandjak of Adana as a whole—that is the old Roman province of Cilicia—because these are interdependent and interrelated, since they were located in the same territory. So, let us take a brief look on the map at the locations of Greek-Orthodox communities in the district of Mersin.

I begin from the capital of the sandjak, Adana, where there was a flourishing Greek-Orthodox community of 4,000 persons, locals and incomers from Cappadocia, Cyprus, Laodikia and elsewhere. Adana was a metropolitan see, even though from the beginning of the first decade of the twentieth century this was dormant, on account of the Antioch Question, about which I shall speak later on. In Karataş there was a Greek-Orthodox quarter with 25 families and one church of St Nicholas. In Tarsus, with a population of 35,000, the Rum numbered 2,000 and their church was dedicated to the Apostles Peter and Paul. This has been restored recently and is now a tourist attraction. The community's schools, with their few pupils, had difficulty in competing with the corresponding missionary schools. Half an hour's journey out of Tarsos, near the waterfalls of ancient Kydnos, was Skilitsi, where 60 Rum families were living. Close to Mersin was Hıristiyanköy—literally Christian village—an older settlement than Mersin, with Turcophone Greek families living around the church of St Nicholas. The little school at Hıristiyanköy was maintained by the Mavrommatis Trading House. There were Rums in other settlements as well, most of them on the coast. There were about 600 Turcophone Rums at Selefke, who maintained the church of St Basil and a five-grade school with 120 pupils. Then there were çiftlik with a sizeable community of about 350 people, Bağçe, Ark Arası, Skala (*Iskele*) or *Taş Ucu*, Mar, Mut (ancient Claudioupolis), Ala-Kilise with the church of St Alexios, and last *Gulnar* (ancient Keleneris), where some 250 Rums lived alongside the Turks (Georgiadis 1896; Kalphoglous 1899; Katapotis 1899; Anonymous 1909; Kontogiannis 1921).

I have mentioned the Rum communities in the sandjak of Adana because their historical fate was interconnected. The mercantile and manufacturing activity of the Orthodox Rums whose names will be mentioned as inhabitants of Mersin extended throughout this region, regardless of their place of domicile, and all the Orthodox Rums in the sandjak of Adana benefited from their economic power, in that they were recipients of philanthropy or benefactions and donations.

At Adana, there were the factories (cotton gins, textile mills, flour mills) of Trypanis and sons, under the trade name “Hamidiye” (BOA, Irade Maarif: 1.N. 1333). Aristidis Symeonoglu and Co. ran a large spinning and weaving mill with 1,500 looms. Kosmas Symeonoglu and Poduroglu had a flour mill and a cotton gin. D.M. Kokkinakis, a Cypriot of British nationality resident in Mersin also had a cotton gin, which rivalled the German firm Deutsche-levantinische Baumwollengesellschaft. Industry in Tarsus was in the hands of Konstantinos Mavrommatis, who hailed from Cyprus. Under the trade name ‘Kydnos’, his firm owned a spinning mill, a large flour mill and a cotton gin. The Mavrommatis Trading House made substantial financial

contributions to the flourishing Greek communities of Adana, and of Mersin in particular. Ch. Paraskevas also had two flour mills at Adana. A. Lykiardopoulos ran the automated flour mill at Mersin, while E. Yaropoulos and Co. operated a confectionery factory in the town (Anonymous 1909). Refugees interviewed by the CAMS also speak of the İngiliz fabrikası (English factory), a large flour mill under British ownership, which was later bought by Bodosakis Athanasiadis from Bor in Cappadocia. As an aside, I should mention that when the Turkish-speaking Bodosakis Athanasiadis came to Greece, after the Asia Minor Catastrophe, he became the wealthiest industrialist in the country. In the early twentieth Century, he had settled at Mersin and had built on the road leading to Hıristianköy, at the locality Mezarlık and Yoğurt Pazarı, the largest flour mill that supplied the Germans during the First World War.

The Rums of Mersin did not live in specific neighbourhoods or mahalles; they were dispersed throughout the town, as the refugee informants mention. *‘Mersin was a small place and we all knew one another. We’d say, “Where do you live? At Trapeza or at Moskoff (the Russian consulate)?” Only one Rum quarter had a name, the Kypriotika. It was near the schools, where mainly Cypriots were living’*, they recall in their interviews. Most of the Rum were gathered in the *Yeni Mahalle*, behind the law courts, around the Kızırız Çarşı and the *Yoğurt Pazarı*, in *Mezarlık Mahallesi*, Tarla Mahallesi. Mahalle of specific ethnic groups were Arap, Fellah, *Giritli Mahallesi* with 200 families of Greek-speaking Turkish Cretans, the *Efrenk Mahallesi* where the French lived and there was a French school. The neighbourhood of *Camii Şerif* was a purely Turkish *mahalle*.

The Rums had only one church, dedicated to St George. The first church, a wooden building erected in 1870, was demolished in 1885 and a magnificent stone-built church in the Byzantine order with dome and two bell-towers put up in its place. The expenses of rebuilding were met by the community, and Konstantinos Mavrommatis, who was essentially the founding father of the Greek-Orthodox community of Mersin, was a generous donor. He and his sons, Antonis and Andreas, also made donations to the town’s schools. There was an eight-grade Boys’ School at Mersin, where Turkish and French were taught in addition to the Greek curriculum. The expenses of running the school were covered by fixed subscriptions of members of the community and it had been endowed with properties, which it let, as is ascertained from a register in the General Archives of Greece, in which the land property of the *‘Arrenagogeion’* is inventoried. The Girls’ School was a gift of the Mavrommatis Firm and accordingly named the *Mavrommation Parthenagogeion*. It had seven grades and a kindergarten, and the 200 girls who attended were taught sewing and foreign languages as well as the regular lessons. It was founded in 1893 and from 1903, as we learn from the minutes of a session of the Council of Elders (*Demogerontia*) was maintained exclusively by the Mavrommatis family, so that the community was only responsible for the costs of running the Boys’ School. The Mavrommatis family also undertook the upkeep of the school in the village of Christiankioy. In a file in the Foreign Ministry of Greece, of 1912, I located consular documents concerning the award of a diploma and decoration of the Gold Cross of the Knights of the Royal Order of the Saviour to Antonis Mavrommatis for his family’s donations to the educational institutions of Mersin (Archive of the Foreign Ministry of Greece

1910, file 83/4). Furthermore, the community's gratitude to the Mavrommatis family is indicated by the decision of the *Demogerontia* to bury Konstantinos Mavrommatis inside the precinct of the church of St George General (Archive of Greece, no 402, V, 100: 19 February 1903).

The proceedings of the scrutinizing committee for the schools and the corresponding one for the *Demogerontia*, testify to the Greek-Orthodox community's concern for maintaining its schools and monitoring the quality of the teaching, in order to prevent '*the mass attendance of Greek children at foreign schools*', that is the schools run by missionary societies that had long been active in Cilicia. The teachers came from Greece. In the Archive of the Foreign Ministry of Greece, there is a file with the contracts that the community signed with the teachers in the years 1909–1910 (Archive of the Foreign Ministry of Greece 1912, file 97/6).

The Greek-Turkish War of 1897 and the Cretan Question were the cause for many Greek subjects in the region of Mersin to take in Ottoman citizenship since they were under pressure from Ottomans for taxation reasons. As Greek citizens they were tax-exempts and many went to Greece (Anagnostopoulou 1997).

In 1901, the Rum Orthodox community of Mersin founded a religious brotherhood called '*Orthodoxia*', whose purpose was to promote Greek education in the region and which built the '*Korais*' *Anagnostirion* (Library-Reading Room), where lectures and concerts were given. The board of the Brotherhood in 1909: Achilles Symeonoglou, Leonidas Arsanoglou, Ananias Zevaoglou, Abraham Kazgatzoglou, Josef Kyriakides, Gregoire Karageorgiou, Georges Michaelides, M. D. Arsanoglou and Math. I. Oikonomides. In 1909 it produced a calendar, which includes among other things a study of the current state of the Greek communities in Cilicia. The outbreak of the First World War in 1914 and the entry of Turkey into this conflict brought upheavals in the commercial life of the port of Mersina. Throughout the war, all activity of the brotherhood was at a standstill and after the Asia Minor Catastrophe this was dissolved. In 1927 it was reconstituted, based in Athens and with a board of distinguished members of the community of Mersin prior to 1921. Its aim was to assist the studies of indigent pupils originating from the region of Mersin and Adana. The members of the board of the Brotherhood '*Orthodoxia*' which reconstituted in Athens: Achilles Symeonoglou, Konstantinos Kokkinakis, Averkios Averkiadis, Achilles Choursoglou, Ioannis Paulopoulos, Alexandre Kessiosoglou and Ananias Zevaoglou. Its sponsors were Antonis Mavrommatis and Bodosakis Athanasiadis.

In the General Archives of Greece there are 11 registers—that is those that survived—pertaining to the Greek-Orthodox community of Mersin (Diamantis 1972). The earliest (n<sup>o</sup>. 398, I, 105) bears the title '*Register of the pious and Orthodox Christians born and baptized in the city, beginning from 20 October 1858 to 1916*'. The existence of an organized community by 1858 confirms the presence of Rums in Mersin at least since the mid-nineteenth century. In the next register (n<sup>o</sup>. 399, II, 102) the entries of births and baptisms continue, and cover the years 1915–1921 (a total of 291 births). In the register of marriages (n<sup>o</sup>. 400, III, 101), 133 weddings are noted, celebrated between 1917 and 1921. Codex n<sup>o</sup>. 401, IV, 103 is a register of deaths for the years 1917–1923, in which the place of the deceased's origin is entered beside the name. From the book of minutes of the sessions of the *Demogerontia* (n<sup>o</sup>. 402, V,

100), which is written in Turkish with Greek characters, we learn that in 1902 three of the ten members of the *Demogerontia* of the Greek community were Muslims. In the brief proceedings that follow, the responsibilities of the *Demogerontia* are defined as the prompt collection of municipal taxes from the Rum citizens resident in Mersin and in general the legal conduct of every state case relating to the Greek-Orthodox community. Entered by family in the same register are the males subject to military tax in March 1918 (146 in all). The 305 individuals who died in an epidemic rife in 1919–1920 are recorded by name in Osmanlı. Register n° 403, VI, 99 records for the same period—1919–1920—the management of the immovable property of the church of St George, which owned houses and bakeries that it let to Greeks, Armenians and Turks. These properties were located in the neighbourhoods of *Mahmudiye*, *Nusradiye*, Frankomahalla (= *Efrenğ Mahallesi*), *Bahçe Mahallesi* and the cemetery (*Mezarlık Mahallesi*). Recorded in the same codex is the immovable property of the Boys' School. Among the registers in the General Archives of Greece are two ledgers of the Demogerontia (n°s 404, VII, 104 and 405, VIII, 106) with the management for the years 1918–1921 and two ledgers of the church of St George (n°s 406, 352, and 407, 353) for the corresponding period. Last, entered in register n°. 408, 380 is the income from alms collections on behalf of the poor, in the years 1918–1920, and their management.

We note here that this archival material is extremely rich in information and merits further study. Indeed, if the information is cross-checked against interviews with refugees recorded by the Centre for Asia Minor Studies and the files in the consular archives of the Foreign Ministry of Greece, the history of the Greek-Orthodox community of Mersin, which has not been investigated to date, can be pieced together. Ecclesiastically it belonged to the Metropolis of Tarsus and Adana, in the Patriarchate of Antioch. '*Germanos was the last metropolitan, whom they didn't want at all*', declared the refugee Evrydiki Kyriakopoulou, '*the two rich men, Antonakis Mavrommatis and Lykiardopoulos. They brought an Arab bishop (she means Arab-speaking) from Beirut, and that's why we threw eggs and lemons at his car. He was the Bishop of Antioch from the Patriarchate of Antioch. We wanted one from Constantinople*'. This testimony of the CAMS informant, which confuses events, echoes the climate created by the well-known Antioch Question, which broke out in 1897, causing tension in the Greek-Orthodox communities of Cilicia. The Antioch Question stemmed directly from the resignation of the Patriarch of Antioch, Spyridon, in 1897 and the enthronement of the Arab-speaking Meletios Dumani in 1899. The issue was anything but ecclesiastical. In reality, it was mainly a diplomatic issue, in which the Russian intervention was decisive, as well as that of the Western Churches that had developed proselytizing activity in the region, with strong economic interests in parallel (Exertzoglou 1995–1996). Mavrommatis was considered responsible because he was Vice-Consul of Russia at Mersin. The subject certainly requires investigation, and I believe that data are to be found in the reports of the Greek Vice-Consul at Mersin. The Greek Vice-Consul in Mersina was opposed to the appointment of Antonis Mavrommatis as the Vice-Consul of Russia in this region and stressed in this reports that he should be removed because he was threat to the interests of the Greek community (Anagnostopoulou 1997).

After the First World War, in November 1919, Cilicia was conceded to the French army and remained under French influence until October 1921, when France signed the Ankara Agreement or Fraklin Bouillon, ceding Cilicia to Turkey in exchange for new concessions to French economic interests (Paul de Véou 1954). The signing of the agreement signalled the mass exodus of the Christian element, since the French declared themselves incapable of protecting the Greek population. Essentially, 1921 marks the end of the history of the Greek-Orthodox community in Mersin. On the basis of data of the French Foreign Ministry, estimated 6,500 Rums left Cilicia. They were transported in Greek ships—refugee informants of the CAMS mention the *Konstantinos*—to Greece, while many made their way to Syria, Egypt, Beirut and France, where they settled. Several Greeks went to Cyprus, because of its proximity, but only those with British nationality or relatives on the island were accepted by the British authorities. They were sent by ship to Smyrna, where they encountered the same problem. The High Commissioner of Greece, Aristeidis Stergiadis prohibited the landing of refugees for two reasons: the inability to provide housing and employment, and the avoidance of a smallpox epidemic in the ranks of the Greek army, since there were cases of the disease among the passengers. Thus, the refugees from Mersin were brought to Greece and scattered to various regions, from Preveza and Igoumenitsa to Corinth and Piraeus. The Centre for Asia Minor Studies has published accounts of refugees from Mersin about their exodus from their homeland and the conditions of their settlement in Greece (Mourellos 1982; Çelik 2000).

A few years later, in 1925, the harbour at Mersin was the last post for Rum refugees from Anatolia, from where they embarked on the voyage to Greece, when, according to the terms of the Treaty of Lausanne, they were forced to leave the '*land of their fathers*'.

## Appendix

Presented below are reports submitted to the Greek consul at Mersin, Antonis Mavrommatis. They include responses to a directive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to all the consuls of Greece in Asia Minor to collect data on Greek communities there for a book on the history of Hellenism in Asia Minor. In the file of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Central Service 1912/file 60/sub-file 4), four reports were discovered for the area of Adana, reproduced below in English translation. The first and most complete was drawn up by Michael Kapsilis, with detailed information on the Greek communities. Located in the same file is the circular sent by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, essentially a questionnaire/guide for the collection of data needed for the completion of the planned book.

## I

Michael Capsalis  
Adana

Adana, le 24 / September 1911

His Excellency

Antonis Mavrommatis

Willingly responding to your letter of the 21st inst., I hasten synoptically to relate to you the information requested regarding our Community.

Churches. The Orthodox community of Adana, consisting of about 600 permanently resident families and an itinerant population of about 4,000, has only one church, dedicated to St. Nicholas. The chapter of this church includes one graduate of Theology (the head of our community and preacher), together with three other priests, two choristers and a candle-lighter. The priests are unpaid, as in the past; the supervisor Archimandrite is paid 130 lb a year, one of the choristers 50 and the other 30 lb, and the candle-lighter 24 lb per annum, namely a total salary of about 250 lb.

Schools: For some 15 years, the community, actively concerning itself with School affairs, founded a Boys' School with seven classes, a Girls' School, and a well-run Kindergarten.

Staff: The staff of the Boys' School consists of one Director, three graduate teachers and others for foreign languages, Turkish, French; and the superintendent, in all 6 persons with a per annum cost of 300 lb. Girls' School. This consists of a Director and three graduate teachers, and an assistant, costing about 250 lb.

Kindergarten. A director, graduate of the Froebelian method, an assistant and a superintendent, with an annual cost of 110 lb.

Pupils. 140 in the Boys School. 130 in the Girls' School and in the Kindergarten 132 male and 113 female, in total. 272 males and 243 females, costing 670 lb, added [to which sum] are various one-off expenses and repairs. The total expenses of the Schools come to 750 Turkish pounds, which added to the churches comes to a total round figure of 1,000 ottoman pounds.

Benefactors. The foremost benefactor of the Community was the late Constantine K. Symeonoglou, in whose memory the Symeonoglou Estate founded, at a cost of 500 lb, the Communal Kindergarten. Next comes the late George Trypanis who made a donation of 140 lb; Char. Petridis, who likewise in his will left 100 lb to the Community. Portraits of all three previously mentioned [benefactors] have been placed in the meeting hall of the Schools. A portrait of the late doctor Lyropoulos also hangs [in the hall] to commemorate his public work. Finally, the brothers Hatziaslan and Iordanis Sioukouroglou, who provided a plot of land estimated by the Municipality at a value of 150 Turkish pounds, were recognized as Benefactors of the Community.

Associations. Prior to the massacre at Adana, the Greek Library "Hermes" was founded with 120 members, and had just begun operation when its activity ceased because of the catastrophe. It is hoped that it will be re-founded next March, together with a Gymnastics association.

Professional people. We have 2 lawyers, 4 doctors, 3 chemists, many mechanics, and an agriculturalist who has migrated. We lack learned persons and writers.

Photographs. There was no opportunity to photograph the Educational foundations and consequently, I cannot respond to your request. I shall send photographs of the benefactors and the school groups soon.

I look forward to supplying you with any further information you may request about our community.

With all due respect

Signature: M. Kapsilis

## II

### Province of Tarsos and Adana

**Adana** is a metropolitan see. The main communities are Adana, Mersin, Tarsos and Seleukeia. The throne comes under the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Antioch, but has been widowed for eleven years, since 1901, the authorities having expelled the last Greek Metropolitan, the much-admired Germanos Chourmouzos because he did not recognize the legitimacy of the blessing of the first Syrian Patriarch Meletios. Many times, the Patriarchate of Antioch has attempted to appoint a foreign language speaking metropolitan, but the province, being exclusively Greek, rejected this [man] and now is at odds with him. In the churches, the Patriarch of Constantinople, Joachim, is mentioned [in prayers].

**Greek community of Mersin.** The community of Mersin numbers over 400 households. It has one church dedicated to St. George; the other dedicated to the Archangel Michael is of the Syrian Orthodox, who constitute a separate community numbering some 250 families.

### Schools

Boys' School. A public school consisting of six classes and numbering 150 pupils. The school is maintained by donations of the community and has a budget of some 350 Turkish pounds.

The Mavrommateion School is maintained by the offspring of the great Benefactor of the community Constantine Mavrommatis and directed by his second son, the cultivated Andreas Mavrommatis. It numbers eight classes, with an added kindergarten. There are 200 female pupils, fifty boys in the kindergarten. The school's budget amounts to about 400 Turkish pounds per annum.

### Associations and Fraternities

The Association "Orthodoxy". founded in 1901 with the objective of providing profitable estates for the Greek schools.

Cypriote Fraternity, having philanthropic objectives.

### Newspapers

There are no local newspapers or periodicals.

## Professional persons

*There are three graduate doctors from Athens University. One engineer of the Ecole Centrale in Paris, and many similar practical staff working for the workshops of the Mersin-Adana Railway and private industrial concerns. One chemist and no persons learned in letters.*

## Communal property and benefactors.

*Reproduced below are the occasional votes of thanks of the community, placed on the narthex wall of the church of St. George*

*I. "During [the reign of] the Metropolitan of Cilicia Germanos Chourmouzos, in the year of the saviour 1892, the sixteenth of the month of October, a meeting having been held of the commissioners of the Church of the Triumphant St George the Great Martyr and of the ephors of the teachers and the elders of the Greeks of Mersin under Germanos Chourmouzos the Archpriest: Given that Constantine Mavrommatis generously provided the Orthodox Greek residents of Mersin with many good works, especially the building of the church of the triumphant St George at the expense of six thousand gold pounds, and a hospital, and a house and garden donated to the public... Mavromattis is to be thanked, extolled and recognized as a benefactor of the community. A marble plaque to be placed on the church's outer wall, and paid for by the Municipality, will record this decree regarding his good works."*

*II. "During [the reign of] the Archpriest of Cilicia Germanos Chourmouzos, in the year of the saviour 1892, the sixteenth of the month of October, passed by the Greek-Orthodox resident in Mersin. Joseph Makarios of Caesaria gave to the church of St George 500 gold pounds, used to build two houses on the road leading to the neighbourhood of the Cypriotes, as it is called. The yield will be used annually for the education of the Orthodox in Mersin. A marble plaque is to be erected to commemorate the benefactor.*

## Great Benefactors

*a. Kali Roussos of Ioannis, donated a plot of land to the church of St George with its garden, and another plot to the holy metropolis of St George, and a third to the Hospital.*

*b. Yiekov Parpour of Tripoli, a Syrian. A plot of land opposite the church of St George, worth 300 lb.*

*c. Aikaterini Makastsi, of John, from Hagios Konstantinos in Caesaria. A two-storey house, workshop and a plot of land by the Railway Station all in all worth more than 1000 Turkish pounds.*

*d. Symeon Siniosoglou donated 100 Turkish pounds.*

*At a distance of half and hour from Mersin is the Greek village called **Christianochorion**. It numbers 70 families, has a church dedicated to St Nicholas and mixed [boys and girls] elementary school.*

***Tarsos.** The community of Tarsos numbers 120 Greek families, has one church of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul, in which the Syrians also worship, who total some*

*one hundred families, having their own priest in this church and a special elementary school with ten pupils.*

Schools

*Boys School with seven classes and some 90 pupils and an annual budget of 200 Turkish pounds.*

Professional people.

*Four doctors, three of them graduates of the Medical School in Athens and the other of Beirut. There are no persons of letters here. There are no fraternities, philanthropic institutions or communal benefactors.*

**Skilits.** *A Greek village about an hour distant from Tarsos on the left bank of the Kyndos river. It numbers 70 families and has churches and an elementary school.*

**Christianochorion.** *A small settlement consisting of 15 families, about half an hour from Tarsos. It has churches in the area of the town's cemetery.*

**Seleukeia.** *The community of Seleukeia numbers 130 Greek families and has a church dedicated to St Basil.*

*Schools. A Boys' School with seven classes and 75 pupils. A Girls' School with four classes and 50 pupils. The budget for both schools comes to 200 Turkish pounds paid for by subscription.*

**Tas Outzi.** *Subordinate to Seleukeia, it numbers 50 Greek families, has a church and an elementary school.*

**Tsiftlik.** *One hour's distance from Seleukeia, it numbers 80 families, and has only churches.*

**Bağçe.** *Half an hour from Seleukeia. It numbers 40 families, and has only churches.*

**Tsiftlik Abiddin Pasha.** *One and a half hours from Seleukeia, it numbers 30 families, who attend church in adjoining villages.*

**Ark Arasi.** *Half an hour from Seleukeia. It has 40 families, churches and an elementary school.*

**Ala Kilise.** *9 h from Seleukeia. It numbers 30 Greek families, has a church and an elementary school.*

**Mut.** *18 h from Seleukeia. It numbers 50 families, has a church and an elementary school.*

**Mara.** *15 h from Seleukeia. It numbers 40 families, has a church and an elementary school.*

**Kylindrios.** *A coastal town. It numbers 80 Greek families, and has only a church.*

**Anamur.** *Small coastal town. Seat of a deputy governor. It numbers 80 Greek families, has a church and an elementary school.*

*The Greeks of Seleukeia and its surroundings all speak Turkish, but are devoted to the [traditions of] their fathers. Generally, the population, especially of the villages, are very poor. Many work on the lands of the Turkish agas and live with difficulty, and remain distant from all cares of the nation.*

### III

*The nome of Adana, eighteen Greek communities small and large, constitutes a single ecclesiastical periphery, the metropolis of Tarsos and Adana. There are no monasteries. Churches along with many elementary schools exist in all the communities*

(with the exception of Hamidie and Ayia). Tarsos and Mersin are distinguished by relative elegance and magnificence.

The original inhabitants of the area have not survived. The communities mentioned above were formed beginning early last century. Possibly the oldest is Iskliniki (probably a corruption of 'in Cilicia', cf. Istanbul, Istandköy etc.).

The residents came from the Ionian coast [= the region of Smyrna], the Aegean islands, and especially from Cyprus, and came under the protection of the strong family of the Melementzoglou, after the example of the Terebeys of that time, who populated the land under its control with Christian farmers and skilled persons. Individual families spread, however, into the countryside amongst the Ottomans, and early on lost their native tongue, which they did not manage to relearn even when they later gathered into communities.

The most important of the communities are:

A. Adana. At the beginning of the last century, the approximately one hundred and fifty families increased due to immigration from the interior of Anatolia of many merchants and skilled persons. From the middle of the century onwards, there also arrived [immigrants] from the Greek islands and Greeks from other areas, who helped establish a thriving community numbering about seven hundred families. There is a Boys' School of six classes with 142 pupils, a Girls' School of seven classes with 130 pupils, and a mixed kindergarten with about 300 children. There are 13 teachers all in all. The budget amounts to over 600 lb.

B. Tarsos. The core of the community is based in the above-mentioned village of "Iskliniki" and the village of Christianochorion one hour south of the city. These were settled at the beginning of the last century by merchants, especially from Chios, from the East and Cyprus. They established the foremost flourishing Greek colony in Tarsos. After the growth of Mersin, the numbers fell to some 200 families, including the Arab-speakers (one-third of the population). There is a Boys' School with 80 pupils and 2 teachers. A Girls' School of five classes with one teacher and 58 pupils. The budget amounts to about two hundred pounds.

C. Mersin. The settlement was founded in about the middle of the last century by Greek merchants from Tarsos, followed by persons from Cyprus and merchants and other skilled persons from the East. In only a few dozen years, and with the arrival of other nationalities, the town became one of the most vigorous in Turkey. The Greek community, apart from the Arab-speakers, numbers three hundred and fifty families. The town has a Boys' School with seven classes and 160 pupils and five teachers, a Girls' School with seven classes and 120 pupils and five teachers. A kindergarten with two teachers and 125 children. The budget amounts to 700 lb, of which the 350 for the Girls' School and the kindergarten are paid for by the Mavrommatis family.

D. Seleukeia. The Greek community of Seleukeia consists of a few persons from the surrounding villages and merchants from the East who arrived in the middle of the last century. The community numbers about 150 families, and has a Boys' School of five classes with about 60 pupils and two teachers, a Girls' School of four classes, one teacher and 30-40 pupils. The budget amounts to about 120 lb.

E. Other communities worthy of note are the small coastal towns of Anemourion and Kylandriai, seats of deputy governors, with schools on an irregular basis. The

remaining communities number less than 50 families of farmers, and maintain an elementary school run by priests on an irregular basis.

Two associations and clubs exist only in Mersin. A fraternity with the name "Orthodoxy" is of an educational nature, and the "Fraternity of Ladies" concerns itself with philanthropic works.

Five doctors, graduates of Athens and Beirut, exist in Adana, four in Tarsos, three in Mersin and one in Seleukia.

Five lawyers from Constantinople and Athens in Adana, one in Mersin, all graduates of the appropriate schools.

Learned persons, writers, etc. are not in evidence. Newspapers and published writings are unknown. No worthy monuments of archaeological nature are preserved. There are no buildings of note. Philanthropic institutions such as hospitals, etc. do not exist for the Greek community. Serious benefactors, apart from Mavrommatis, are not evident.

The communities, independent of each other, are governed in a patriarchal manner.

There are no regulations or laws defining the duties or the rights of the leading members of the community and the led. Consequently, the communities are unorganized in every sense of the word.

#### IV

In Tarsos, 27 / 10 December, 1911

His Excellency A. K. Mavrommatis

In Mersin

Dear Mr Antonakis,

Replying promptly to your kind letter of the 21/4 inst., I hasten to convey to you the requested statistical information regarding the Greek community here, according to the outline you have provided:

Churches. There are three churches in Tarsos, one in the main city dedicated to Sts Peter and Paul. Until 1863 this was of wattle, but in that year was rebuilt in stone with the generous contribution of the Greek and Arabic speaking members of the Community under the supervision of Saima. The uncomplicated and simple style makes this one of the most spacious and beautiful churches in the province. Then there is the church in Christianochorion, under the jurisdiction of Tarsos, dedicated to St Nicholas, and the third – small and newly built – in another town, Skinikion. Each has one priest.

Organization of the Community.—Tarsos, seat of Cilicia, has for many decades been deprived of an Archpriest because of the well-known question of the Antiochene throne. The Orthodox Greek community there consists of about 120 Greek-speaking families, most of them having moved there from Cyprus, Chios, the rest of the Archipelagos islands and the province of Caesaria; and 60 other Arabic speakers from Syria. A five-member council of elders governs the community, made up of the worthy and prominent members of the community. A nine-member Supervisory Com-

*mittee elected every two years concerns itself with Ecclesiastical and Educational matters of the community.*

*Educational institutions.—The Greek Educational institutions are some twenty years old. These initially were of an elementary nature, each according to the prevailing system. These were reformed into an Urban School for Boys and a Kindergarten. The Boys' School has seven classes, three teachers under the programme of the Archbishopric of Constantinople, including Turkish and French. The Kindergarten consists of five classes and one teacher with an assistant hired this year under the same programme to teach and offer training in handcrafts. The budget for both schools is more than 170 lb, and is almost completely funded by the generous annual subscriptions of the Greek community alone, since our Educational institutions completely lack permanent sources of money. The Arab-speakers send their children to the propagandistic schools. The registered pupils each pay a single fee per school year of 23 silver grossia. Pupils of indigent families do not pay. Despite the poverty of the School's funds, the Community wishes to secure as far as possible a sum to assist the School to buy various instruments, pictorial material and necessary material for supervised teaching. Thus the Schools of Tarsos has an elementary collection of instruments for chemistry classes, a collection of pictures on Natural History (published by the Beneficial Book Club), pictures from the Old and New Testament (Hachette publications), a collection of Froebelian gifts for the children of the kindergarten, and other items. All this is achieved without fanfare by the generous love of the muses shown by the members of the Community. Together with the present report, I send two pictures of our groups of pupils, one of the Boys School and another of the Kindergarten-Girls' School.*

*Philanthropic institutions.—These are lacking in our community. We have in our town a Municipal state Hospital, the foundation of which was facilitated by generous contributions from the Greek Community, which does not cease to contribute an obol to all philanthropic causes.*

*Clubs and Associations.—Under the name "Progress", there operated for a short time an educational and Charitable Fraternity which did much good work, but unfortunately this has ceased to operate two years now.*

*Merchants, manufacturers, professional persons.—The Community here, despite being a minority numerically, proudly includes distinguished landowners, merchants, manufacturers, four doctors with professional training, one of which is from the National University in Athens and one from the English Medical School in Beirut. There is also a graduate chemist.*

*I remain yours*

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