



## Summary :

The Orthodox communities were organized on the basis of two parallel administrative mechanisms: the provincial administration of the Empire and the Orthodox ethno-religious community (millet). An important role in the case of Cappadocia was played by migration and the resulting parallel operation of community institutions in Cappadocian settlements and the areas where immigrants settled.

## Date

19th - 20th century

## Geographical Location

Cappadocia

## 1. Communities with simple internal organisation

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century and until the [exchange of populations](#) between Greece and Turkey, the ethno-religious groups ([millet](#)) were the main divisions on which the communal organisation of [Cappadocian](#) settlements was based. Head of the community and, in the case of larger settlements, of each quarter (mahalle), was the [muhtar](#), who came from the same ethno-religious group and was elected by the members-inhabitants. As regards Christians, the assembly that elected him comprised the adult male members of the community, the youngest being between 20 and 25 years old. The election was validated by the senior administrative authority. The muhtar usually served an annual, and sometimes a two-year, term.

During his term he was assisted by the board of muhtars, an elective office as well, who served the same term. Its members came from the community as well and they were elected at the same election with the muhtar. Their number ranged between 4 and 7. They were called *azades* (in Ottoman Turkish: *aza*), *tsorbatzides* (in Ottoman Turkish: *çorbacı*), *teskilet* (from the Ottoman Turkish *teşkil*, organization) and *metzilides* (from the Ottoman Turkish *meclis*, council).

The muhtars and their boards belonged to the administrative mechanism of the state, being an organic part of it. They were responsible for observing security and order, distributing and collecting taxes, registering the newly-born boys for the collection of the military tax - or for the recruitment of soldiers after 1909- and, finally, for keeping the land register. They were often assisted by community officers, either paid or unpaid, such as night watchmen and field guards. However, it should be underlined that there were many exceptions to the rule. Considerable variations have been recorded in different settlements. In any case, the communal organisation described so far is more or less traditional and already known in the Ottoman Empire since the previous centuries, long before it was officially established in the period of [Tanzimat](#).

## 2. Communities with complex internal organisation

In parallel with the muhtars –sometimes in competition with them– there was another communal administrative mechanism, much more concerned about the internal affairs of Christians, under the respective metropolitan, either of [Caesarea](#) (Kaisareia, Kayseri) or [Ikonio](#) (Konya), as the case may have been. The supreme communal authority was the eldership (*dimogerontia*). Its elective members served an annual term, which could be extended to either two or three years in special cases. As it happened with the muhtars and their board, the candidate members of the eldership belonged to the powerful strata of the community, being socially prestigious and economically prosperous. However, these credentials were not always sufficient, as in some settlements the members of the eldership had to be literate and be fluent in Ottoman Turkish. The above were often coupled with a rather advanced age, especially in communities with high rates of [migration](#).

The number of the *dimogerontes* varied depending on the population of the community and was usually between 4 and 12. They



were also elected by the assembly of the adult male members of the community. The election was then validated by the relevant metropolitan, who sent the respective document validating the election.

The duties of the board of muhtars and the eldership often overlapped. Thus, the eldership was often assigned the duty of observing community order as well as distributing and collecting some taxes, mainly the military tax, which the Christians had to pay in lieu of military service. Apart from the above, they also were responsible for the keeping of the unwritten moral codes that determined the correct behaviour of the members, which was particularly important in communities with a high migration rate, where the migrants' families still lived in the settlement. Finally, they settled disputes among community members, aiming to reach a compromise and avoid entanglements with the Ottoman judiciary. They also observed social coherence by dealing with charity matters and, lastly, they supervised the operation of the churches and schools.

The last two issues were practically assigned to the relevant specialised committees of the church and schools, the last being often called *eforia ton scholeion* (school board) or *eforoepitropi*. The members of these committees were usually elected by the assembly of the community members, although occasionally they were directly appointed by the eldership. Their number varied according to the population of each community. There were cases when the eldership was directly responsible for the supervision of education and accordingly changed its name into *eforodimogerontia*.

The church committee was responsible for keeping the churches clean and for observing their smooth operation, as well as for their financial management. The *eforia ton scholeion* (schools committee) had to preserve school buildings in good condition and construct new ones, whenever necessary and feasible, find and pay teachers, supervise the progress and behaviour of students as well as aid poor students. It also had to manage school property and find the necessary financial resources. At the end of their term both the church and the schools committee reported to the eldership on the economic management and balanced the cash.

Not all Cappadocian settlements had an eldership, for in some cases it was either incorporated with or absorbed by the board of muhtars. This usually happened in settlements with a brief and recent tradition of communal organisation and in settlements with more traditional economic activities and, as a result, low migration to the cities of the Ottoman Empire. Besides, the church and schools committees could operate independently of the existence of an eldership, the above being rare in the case of school committees.

In lots of Cappadocian communities there was increased migration to the cities of the Empire and particularly [Constantinople](#) (Istanbul), where the most active and economically powerful part of the active male population often lived. As a result, a special mutual collaboration and interdependence between the "colony" and the place of origin was established. Their collaboration in matters concerning education in the immigrants' places of origin should be examined in this context. The established form of this collaboration was the operation of another school committee in the migrant colony, mostly in the capital of the Empire, together with the local committee in the place of origin. These two committees were in close collaboration, with the committee of Constantinople actually taking precedence in most cases.

Quite often the immigrants, either individually or through guilds at first and clubs later, backed the schools of their place of origin, supported charity and, finally, sponsored the publication of books. There were also educational and charitable clubs based in the Cappadocian settlements.

In any case, all communal posts gave social prestige and, thus, they were in great demand. As a result, lots of major or minor intracommunal disputes arose at times, originating in the appointment of communal officials.

### 3. The regulation of the communities of the province of Kaisareia

It has already been underlined that at least from the period of the Tanzimat reforms the communal authorities of the provinces were under the administration of the relevant metropolitan. When Gervasios was metropolitan of Caesarea and, more specifically, on 5 December 1903, a competent committee published the 'Regulation of the Communities of the Province [diocese] of Caesarea' in the [Caramanli dialect](#).<sup>1</sup> This document defines in detail the qualifications of the candidates and the way the members of the eldership



should be elected as well as their duties. It also defines the process for appointing the rest of the communal administrative bodies supervised by the metropolitan, that is, the church and the schools committees, as well as their duties.

The editors of the document probably used a similar document of the archbishopric of Constantinople, dated 10.10.1892,<sup>2</sup> as their model, while the "Themelioidis Kanonismos" the relevant regulation on the operation of communities,<sup>3</sup> issued by the Patriarchate of Constantinople in 1902, may have influenced the editors as well. This document became the regulatory framework for the operation of Cappadocian communities until the [exchange of populations](#), although it did not manage to ensure their uniform operation by eliminating their numerous local differentiations.

1. The text of the regulation in its initial language is preserved in Codex 205/319, which is kept at the Greek General State Archives (GAK). Its Greek translation is published in Τσαλίκουλου, Ε., *Ελληνικά εκπαιδευτήρια και ελληνορθόδοξοι κοινότητες της περιφέρειας Καισαρείας: Βάσει των εις τα Γενικά Αρχεία του Κράτους Κωδίκων* (Athens 1976), pp. 61-65.

2. Τσαλίκουλου, Ε., *Ελληνικά εκπαιδευτήρια και ελληνορθόδοξοι κοινότητες της περιφέρειας Καισαρείας: Βάσει των εις τα Γενικά Αρχεία του Κράτους Κωδίκων* (Athens 1976), p. 65.

3. On the regulation ("themelioidis kanonismos") of 1902 see Αναγνωστοπούλου, Σ., *Μικρά Ασία, 19ος αι.-1919. Οι Ελληνορθόδοξες Κοινότητες: Από το Μιλλέτ των Ρωμιών στο Ελληνικό Έθνος* (Athens 1997), pp. 330-331.

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## Glossary :

	<b>millet</b>
The millet system was based on the division of the Ottoman subjects according to religion. The millets were the central communal institutions for the members of the respective ethno-religious groups, in particular for the non-Muslim subjects of the Empire. The millets had its own institutions and functions concerning self-administration, religion, education, justice, and social coherence. Although the division of the subjects according to their religion had always been fundamental in the Empire, the millets in their fully organized form originate in the end of the 18th century. In the 19th century, in particular during the period of the tanzimat reforms, the millets became the main institutions through which the non-Muslim subjects were incorporated in the Ottoman Empire.	
	<b>muhtar</b>
Elected communal official, head of a quarter or a village community.	
	<b>tanzimat</b>
The 19th-century reforms in the Ottoman Empire, which were inaugurated in 1839 with the edict of Hatt-i Şerif and came to an end with the Constitution of 1876. The reforms, which were considered an effort for the modernization and liberalization of the state, concerned every aspect of the	



political, social and economic life in the Empire. Of particular importance were the ones that equated legally Muslim and non-Muslim subjects.