



Summary :

Settlement in Cappadocia, also known as Prokopi. The one third of its 15,000-20,000 inhabitants were Greek-Orthodox, spoke Turkish and were involved in agriculture, stock breeding and commerce. Many had emigrated to Constantinople. Several major communal and educational institutions were established in Ürgüp, while educational and charitable clubs were also based there.

Other Names

Prokopi

Geographical Location

Central Asia Minor

Historical Region

Cappadocia

Administrative Dependence

Mutasarrıflık of Niğde, vilayet of Konya

1. Anthropography – Historical Background

Settlement in Central Asia Minor, built on a plateau at an altitude of 1,200 m above sea level. It lies near the confluence of four tributary rivers of the Alys River (Kızılırmak), which flows to the north of Ürgüp, within about 10 km from the settlement. The climate of the region is dry, with heavy and cold, snowy winters and hot summers. Within a short distance from the settlement there were two hot springs, quarries of marble, sulphur, firestone, granite and soft stone, used for building houses.

The largest part of the settlement is amphitheatrically built on two huge cliffs. On top of the one cliff there was an old stronghold and, as a result, Ürgüp was also called "kastro" (castle) and its inhabitants "kastrinoi" (people of the castle). As it happened in several other [Cappadocian](#) settlements, the older houses were built underground, carved on soft rock. The later ones were often built above the ground and were carved on rock as well. In the course of time most of the carved houses were abandoned and replaced by independent buildings above the ground. Many of them were quite luxurious. They were houses of immigrants who had returned home after their retirement.

It has been claimed that the word Ürgüp is the Turkish version of the Greek name Prokopi. The latter is supposed to refer to St. Prokopios, although there is no evidence suggesting the existence of a namesake church. Levidis supported that the ancient name of the settlement was Osiana, which the foreign traveller Texier adopted as well.¹

Ürgüp was inhabited by Muslims, Turkish-speaking Greek-Orthodox and some Armenians. Several conflicting opinions have been stated about the population. Farasopoulos talks about 15,000 Muslims and 5,000 Christians.² According to an article published on the journal *Xenofanis* in 1905, there were 10,000 Muslims and 5,000 Christians in Ürgüp.³ According to an inventory carried out by the state in 1919, Ürgüp was inhabited by 12,500 Muslims, 6,000 Christian-Orthodox and 15-20 Armenian families.⁴ Kontogiannis reports 10,000 Muslims and 4,000 Christians.⁵ Finally, the Christians who came to Greece as refugees amounted to 585 families comprising 2,321 people.⁶ Each ethnoreligious group lived separately in 5 Christian and 12 Muslim quarters. However, this separation was not strict as there were a few Muslim houses in the Christian quarters.⁷

After the [Exchange of populations](#), immigrants from Ürgüp settled in the wider area of Athens-Piraeus, Thessaloniki and Euboea (in the specially expropriated land where the village of Neo Prokopi was founded, in Chalkida and in Psachna).



2. Economy

Whether it was their only or main occupation, the largest part of the population was involved in agriculture and stock breeding. They cultivated vineyards, orchards, sesame, flax, Roman rocket, millet, wheat, barley, pulses, vegetables, garden staff and fruit. Raisins and dry apricots were not intended exclusively for domestic use, but were sold outside Ürgüp as well. Large amounts of opium, gum as well as seed oil, pasturma, sausages and raki were also produced.

Several people from Prokopi were involved in commerce, while others in handicraft. In Ürgüp there were 211 stores owned by Muslims and about 230 owned by Christians.⁸ The stone dresser was a very common occupation, involving the people who quarried and dressed stone and marble and made buildings. Lots of people worked in tanneries, while in the first decades of the 20th century the textile industry achieved a significant growth, involving mainly women who wove cotton items and handmade rugs.

Some preferred to [emigrate](#) first to Constantinople and then to other developing cities of the Ottoman Empire, such as [Smyrna](#), [Samsun](#), [Adana](#) and [Mersin](#), where they were involved in commerce. They first appeared in the capital of the empire in the 18th century as caique owners and grocers.

3. Administration, Social Stratification

Ürgüp was the seat of the namesake [kaymakamlık](#), which was under the [mutasarrıflık](#) of Nigde and the [vilayet](#) of [Ikonio \(Konya\)](#). The kaymakamlık was governed by a nine-member council under the [kaymakam](#). There were four permanent members and four elective, two Muslims and two Christians. The one elective member of each national-religious group should by no means hold a religious post. He was the each time [müftü](#) and the metropolitan's commissary respectively. The other two elective members of the council held secular posts.

Together with the council of the kaymakamlık there were also the sheer communal bodies, which dealt with matters of the Christian community of Ürgüp. The dimogerontia (eldership), the nine-member elective board that served a two-year term stood above them. The eligible elderly should be respectable members of the local society, quite educated, Turkish-speaking and, of course, wealthy. Their primary responsibility concerned moral matters of its members and, in general, the smooth operation of the community. They judged according to the unwritten customary law and advised the parties involved by suggesting the advisable solutions. They also appointed the priests and recorded engagements and marriage contracts.

The elective six-member ephorate, which served a two-year term, managed the communal property, donations and endowments and aimed to serve community needs. They also observed educational matters, chose and paid the teachers, supervised the progress and conduct of students and, generally, saw to the smooth operation of schools. Various projects carried out at the community's expenses, such as the building of schools, churches and roads, were also proposed by them. Furthermore, they dealt with charity matters and took care of poor children, the elderly and the impoverished. Both the dimogerontia and the ephorate were elected by the community assembly, which included all members above twenty years old that had neither committed any serious offence nor had been expelled from the church because of some serious violation of the religious law.

Finally, as regards administrative matters, it should be mentioned that each of the five Christian and twelve Muslim quarters elected its own [muhtar](#), who saw to quarter matters, aided by his seven advisors. The muhtars served a two-year term as well.

4. Religion

Ürgüp was under the [diocese of Caesarea](#). There were three churches used regularly: St. George, [St. Basil](#) and [St. John the Russian](#), where the relics of the Saint were kept, while his cult was spread over the nearby area among both Christians and Muslims. Apart from the above major churches there were several minor ones as well as chapels.

Anyone who afforded the journey wanted to make a pilgrimage to the Holy Land and be awarded the title of [chatzis](#). The pilgrims



from Ürgüp usually travelled in groups to Jerusalem before Christmas and returned after Easter. The pilgrims awarded the title strengthened the bonds within the local religious community by setting an example to their compatriots.

5. Education

The earliest information available about the operation of schools in Ürgüp dates from 1834, when a small school, attended by only 25 students, was built beside the newly built church of St. Basil.⁹ However, the level of education remained low in the following decades as well because the operation of the school was frequently interrupted. Finally, on the initiative of the metropolitan of Kaisareia, a new school was founded in 1856, which operated without particular problems until 1872, when its operation was suspended; it operated again in 1874. A boys' school of that functioned according to the **monitorial system** and a girls' school operated in Ürgüp this period; the total number of both male and female pupils amounted to 250.¹⁰ In 1904 both schools had been upgraded. There was a civil seven-grade boys' school with 230 pupils and a six-grade girls' school with 120 pupils, while there was also a nursery school with 250 infants. Apart from the curriculum prescribed by the Patriarchate, the children were also taught Turkish and French from the fourth grade on, while in 1917 Turkish history was included as well. Physical education and singing were also included, while the last grade of the boys' school was taught accounting principles and all grades of the girls' school did handwork activities.¹¹ The funds required for the operation of the schools came mainly from contributions by citizens and immigrants from Prokopi.

6. Clubs

The institution of club was in its heyday in Ürgüp in the second half of the 19th century.¹² An odd brotherhood named 'Evangelismos of the Virgin Mary' was founded in 1859; it included hereditary members but its objects are unclear. The next club was founded in 1875 and had educational purposes. Unluckily, there is no further information about its activities. **Club 'Orthodoxy'** was founded in 1898¹³ and operated at least until 1913. It was supported by endowments and donations from locals and immigrants from Prokopi and was very active in charitable and educational matters. In 1918 the people from Prokopi in Constantinople founded there a club named "Areti" (Virtue). Its main purpose was to raise money and financially support the schools of Prokopi. In order to accomplish its purposes the club collaborated closely with the ephorate of Prokopi. Several brotherhoods that largely corresponded to the various guilds of Ürgüp were also founded. They often had educational and charitable purposes as well.

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2. Φαρασόπουλος, Σ., *Τα Σύλατα: Μελέτη του νομού Ικονίου υπό γεωγραφικήν, φιλολογικήν και εθνολογικήν έποψιν*, (Athens 1895), pp. 94-95.

3. 'Επαρχία Καισαρείας', *Xenophanes* 2 (1905), p. 230.

4. Ασβεστή, Μ., *Επαγγελματικές ασχολίες των Ελλήνων της Καππαδοκίας*, (Athens 1980), p. 147.

5. Κοντογιάννης, Π., *Γεωγραφία της Μικράς Ασίας*, (Athens 1921), p. 155.

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11. Ευπραξιάδης, Λ., *Το Προκόπι η Πατρίδα μου: Ιστορία και Λαογραφία*, (Thessaloniki 1974), pp. 287-288.
12. About the clubs of Ürgüp, see Μαμώνη, Κ., 'Η σωματειακή οργάνωση των Ελλήνων της Μικράς Ασίας. Γ΄ Σύλλογοι της Καππαδοκίας και του Πόντου', *Δελτίο Κέντρου Μικρασιατικών Σπουδών*, 6 (1986-1987) pp. 166-168; Μαμώνη, Κ., - Ιστικοπούλου, Λ., 'Σωματειακή οργάνωση του ελληνισμού στη Μικρά Ασία. Δ΄ Σύλλογοι Κιλικίας, Μυσίας και Παφλαγονίας. Προσθήκες στα δημοσιεύματα Α΄, Β΄, Γ΄. Επίλογος', *Δελτίο Κέντρου Μικρασιατικών Σπουδών*, 14 (2004) p. 101 and Ευπραξιάδης, Λ., *Το Προκόπι η Πατρίδα μου: Ιστορία και Λαογραφία*, (Thessaloniki 1974), pp. 73-75.
13. Ευπραξιάδης, Λ., *Το Προκόπι η Πατρίδα μου: Ιστορία και Λαογραφία*, (Thessaloniki 1974), p. 74, supports that this club was founded in 1894.

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Glossary :

	kaymakam
An Ottoman official, governor of the administrative unit that succeeded the kaza in the late Ottoman period.	
	kaymakamlık
Ottoman administrative unit that replaced the kaza during the late Ottoman Period, after the administrative reforms of 1864.	
	monitorial system
Teaching method developed by Joseph Lancaster, under which the older students (in Greek: "protoscholoi") taught the smaller children some skill or activity.	
	müfti
A specialist on the interpretation of the Islamic sacred law. He comments on matters of religious law by issuing fetvahas.	



muhtar

Elected communal official, head of a quarter or a village community.



mutasarrıflık

A medium-sized Ottoman administrative unit that replaced the sancak during the Late Ottoman Period, after the administrative reforms of 1864.



vilayet (valilik)

The larger administrative unit in the Ottoman provincial administration system. The large provinces of the Ottoman Empire were previously called eyalet. The new regulation of 1864 introduced the vilayet as an equivalent of the French département - albeit of smaller size. The governor of the vilayet was called vali and had extensive authority.

Sources

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