



Summary :

Settlement of Cappadocia with Greek-Orthodox (mainly) and Muslim population. In the end of the 19th century the population was 4,000-5,000 people. The men of Sinassos immigrated massively to Constantinople, where they monopolized the profession of caviar sellers and had control over the respective guild in the capital in the 19th century. With their contribution, there was significant activity in establishing schools and clubs in Sinassos.

Other Names

Synassos, Sinassun, Mustafapaşaköy

Geographical Location

Central Asia Minor

Historical Region

Cappadocia

Administrative Dependence

Kaymakamlık of Aravisos, mutasarrıflık of Niğde, vilayet of Konya

Geographical Coordinates

Latitude 38° 45', 32° 40' east of Paris

1. Anthropogeography

Sinassos is in [Cappadocia](#) in central Asia Minor and, in particular, on a plateau of the Taurus Mountains, 12 hours to the southwest of [Kaisareia](#) (Kayseri).¹ The settlement is also known under the names Sinassun² and Synassos, while its present Turkish name is Mustafapaşaköy.³

Sinassos was a mixed settlement comprising approximately 700 houses, 600 of which were inhabited by Christian Orthodox and 100 by Muslims.⁴ The Christians of Sinassos were Greek-speaking and they used an archaic dialect heavily influenced by the Turkish language.⁵ According to estimates, the Christian population of the settlement fluctuated as follows: 4,500 people in 1890, approximately 3,000 in 1900 and 878 in 1924, according to the 'Committee of Population Exchange' ("Epitropi Antallaksimon"), while the refugees talk about 1,200 people. The decline in the Christian population should be related to the increasing [migration](#) of the particular group to [Constantinople](#) (Istanbul) and other cities of the Empire. Unlike Christians, the number of Muslims in Sinassos increased, estimated at approximately 600 people in 1890 and 1,000 people during the [population exchange](#).⁶ Slightly different estimates attempt to guess the exact population. According to Browning, the Christian population of Sinassos in the 19th century fluctuated between 3,000 and 4,000 people, while Kontogiannis cites 3,000 Christians and 1,000 Muslims and, finally, Farasopoulos increases the number of Christians to 4,000, while he agrees with the previous author as regards the number of Muslims.⁷

2. Historical Background

Nothing is known about the exact year of the settlement's foundation, which seems to be quite old. In the mid-14th century Sinassos was occupied by the Ottomans. According to available information, the new occupants did not force the Christian inhabitants to embrace Islam. At the same time the settlers were relieved from the burdens of previous periods resulting from the passage of troops and frequent raids. After the Ottoman occupation the settlement experienced a period of relative stability, good administration and calm.



Problems arose again in the 17th century because of the arbitrary rule of the powerful local governor Saphaz Ağa. According to the local tradition, in order to get rid of their oppressor, the inhabitants secretly sent delegates to Constantinople in 1694 and laid their problems before the Sultan. He sent to Sinassos a secret agent-general ordered to investigate the situation. When the inhabitants' story proved to be true, Saphaz Ağa was arrested and sentenced to death, law was restored and prosperity returned to the city.⁸

The Greek Orthodox inhabitants were forced to abandon the settlement permanently in 1923. When they came to Greece some refugees from Sinassos settled in Euboea, where they founded New Sinassos near Aidipsos.⁹

3. Economy

3.1 Agricultural Production

In Sinassos, as in several other Cappadocian settlements, there were few prospects for the development of an efficient agriculture. The area produced mainly wheat, barley, rye, grapes, apricots, walnuts, apples, alder, gum and opium.¹⁰ The low production from the poor and rocky soils was mainly intended for local needs. The wheat of Sinassos was of poor quality and could not be used for bread-making. The only hope for some development and commercialization of the agricultural production remained viniculture. The wine produced was intended, of course, mainly for local needs and only a small proportion was directed to the market. A small increase in the cultivated land coincided with the construction of the [railway line](#) Ankara-Kayseri (Kaisareia). There was much hope that the improvement of the road system would boost market activities and favour the distribution of products in the market. Some hoped for a decrease in large-scale migration, but they were disappointed.¹¹ The establishment of a silkworm farm towards the late 19th century by the churchwardens of the St. Nicholas monastery aimed to restrict migration as well. According to plans, the particular product could provide a solution to unemployment, thus restricting migration. However, this attempt was in vain as well.

The Christians gradually abandoned farming, which was then practiced by Muslim sharecroppers under agreements with the Christian owners. Christian farmers were mainly engaged in viniculture. The proportion was still low and included mainly women and the men who remained in the settlement.¹² Domestic stock-breeding was developed in Sinassos, intended for family needs as well.

3.2 Handicrafts, Trade, Emigration

According to available evidence, in the last quarter of the 19th century the market of Sinassos developed in the site Mesochori, in the centre of the settlement. Towards the end of the century it had about 30 establishments, all serving local needs. There were some general shops and drapery shops, but mainly there were groceries, butchers' shops, shoemakers' shops', carpenters' workshops and watermills, while wheat merchants, builders, painters, wall painters, blacksmiths, tailors and goldsmiths are reported to have worked in Sinassos. According to literature on the subject, except for the few local craftsmen and merchants, Sinassos attracted professionals from the nearby area, many of which settled permanently and got married there.¹³

However, the vast majority of men resorted to migration.¹⁴ The main reason for migration, as in other Cappadocian settlements, was the increased population coupled with infertile soil. People from Sinassos were initially engaged in [linseed oil production and trade](#), thus seasonally being on the move over a great part of Asia Minor. They moved during winter and spring, returning to their homeland to cultivate their land.

Their [settlement in Constantinople](#) is evidenced already from the period of Sultan Mehmed II the Conqueror, although migration increased dramatically in the late 18th century and continued in the 19th century. After they had settled in the capital of the Empire, most of them became engaged in the production of linseed oil and sesame oil, while others became grocers and fishmongers. The latter salted the unsold fish and sold it later as stockfish. Apart from stockfish they also traded caviar, fish roe and the like, highly demanded especially during fasts. Due to the nature of their job they settled in Galata and other coastal quarters of Constantinople. Over time, they owned almost all the shops, resulting in their control over one of the capital's guilds, the caviar sellers.¹⁵ As long as



the restrictions favouring guilds were in force, the migrants from Sinassos did that particular job. After the severe restrictions concerning guilds were partially lifted and the job of the caviar seller was not as profitable, many of them engaged in trading colonial products and fabrics, while others became grocers and drysalters. In the late 19th century people from Sinassos settled in [Mersin](#) and [Ankara](#) as well.

Men usually migrated at a relatively early age, immediately after they left school, at the age of 15-16.¹⁶ In Constantinople they were welcomed by their compatriots, already settled there, who employed them and, in general, supervised them until they came of age. After they had completed their apprenticeship, they started their own business, usually in partnership with a compatriot of them. Then they returned to their homeland, got married and after a few months' stay they went back to Constantinople to work their business again, managed by their partner during their absence. Such trips to their homeland were regularly repeated for different reasons, depending on the particular needs at the time.

The emigrants departed and returned in groups. It was a major event of ritual character for the emigrants, their relatives and the entire settlement. Before the improvement of transport thanks to the extension of the railway line, the journey lasted 25-30 days and was made under adverse and dangerous circumstances.

In Constantinople the migrants from Sinassos formed a relatively insular group, who, apart from trade transactions, did not associate with local people. The disputes between them were settled by representatives of the eldership of Sinassos in Constantinople, while the migrants in their turn strongly influenced the management of [community matters in Sinassos](#). Besides, they never broke off their relations with their homeland, since their families still lived there and the migrants would eventually return to Sinassos when, at the age of 45-50, they would have retired and received a secure income.¹⁷ After all, they made considerable investments in building luxurious houses, which changed the settlement's look.

4. Communal Organisation and Social Stratification

Sinassos belonged to the [kaymakamlık](#) of Aravisos, in the [mutasarrıflık \(sancak\)](#) of Niğde and the [vilayet](#) of [Konya](#) (Ikonio).¹⁸ Towards the end of the 19th century Sinassos was governed by an eight-member eldership ("dimogerontia"), elected yearly by all the male population over 20. The eldership usually comprised members of the upper social strata, including the families of "tsorbatzides" (from the Turkish *çorbacı*, meaning potentate).¹⁹ The election of its members was affirmed by the Ottoman state in order to be in force.

Tax collection and delivery of the money to the state treasury were among the eldership's duties. They were also responsible for public order, while they had to inform the government about anything happening in Sinassos and report any rioters. In addition, they guarded the property and honour of the migrants' families and settled any disputes sparked between the members, either migrants or not, before they resorted to Ottoman courts. The disputes were meant to be settled within the community, yet this became increasingly difficult towards the late 18th century, possibly due to the dramatic increase of migrants. The disputes were settled during the meetings of the eldership at the so-called "systima" (system), that is, the community court in the quarter of Kapalos. Finally, the eldership supervised churches, schools and other community institutions, appointed and kept control over churchwardens, school boards, and representatives of the eldership in Constantinople. The duties of the eldership, the priests, the churchwardens, the trustees and all community members were clearly defined by the community regulation, revised every five years.²⁰

The relations of the community with the migrants in Constantinople were not restricted to the supervision of their affairs by the eldership and their representatives. The migrants in their turn, both individually and jointly, intervened in matters concerning the community. Charitable and educational fraternities, clubs and committees associated with Sinassos were established in Constantinople. The migrants made personal donations and backed their homeland's schools and institutions through organised efforts. Finally, in the capital there was a delegation from the school board of Sinassos,²¹ while the community's regular revenue included income from real estate owned in Constantinople.



5. Religion

As regards ecclesiastical matters, Sinassos belonged to the [diocese of Caesarea](#). The settlement had two churches. The older [Church of St. Constantine and St. Helen](#) was in the quarter of "Kipos" near the market square. According to the local tradition, it was built in 1729 within only 80 days, which was equal to the deadline set by a relevant *ferman* (sultanic order). The church was restored in 1850 at the inhabitants' expense. The more recent [Church of the Taxiarchs](#) was in the new quarter on the hillside of the same name. It was erected in 1840 and the internal decoration was completed in 1889, at the inhabitants' expense. Apart from the two churches, there were lots of chapels, in and outside the settlement, many of which were chiselled out of rock. Finally, there was a monastery dedicated to St. Nicholas. The monastery, apart from its particular significance for the local population as a place of worship, maintained a guesthouse in the settlement, where food and accommodation were provided to the destitute; the monastery also supported financially the poor families of Sinassos. The inhabitants were unofficially meant to contribute to the monastery's charities, by including it in their wills.

In conclusion, a brief reference should be made to "[chatziliki](#)" (from Ottoman Turkish "hacılık"), the pilgrimage to the Holy Land, which seemed to be an established practice widely spread among both genders, though it primarily concerned men. The pilgrims departed together on the first day of Lent, on Monday before the Shrove Tuesday. Before they departed, an invocation took place at church, where the remaining community members and the pilgrims forgave each other for their sins. The pilgrims headed for Mersin, where they boarded the ship to Palestine. The pilgrims celebrated Easter in the Holy Land, were baptized in the waters of Jordan River and bought indulgences, their shrouds and gifts for relatives and friends. They returned from Jerusalem on Low Sunday.²²

6. Education

Before the first organised school was established in 1821, education in Sinassos was provided by either the parish priest or a teacher, who taught the students writing, reading and arithmetic. The amount of money required for the foundation of the school was 15,000 kuruş, collected through donations by the well-known benefactor Ioannis Varvakis and 15 caviar sellers, as well as by permanent inhabitants of Sinassos.²³ According to the school's Articles of Association, Polykarpos, Patriarch of Jerusalem, was the patron and general warden of the school, while the members of the dimogerontia functioned as local wardens and, as a result, virtual directors. They appointed four trustees, two in Sinassos and two in Constantinople, who were responsible for economic management and submitted a yearly report to the school board.

The reputation of the school spread beyond Sinassos and until the [school of Zincidere](#) was established, children from the provinces of Kaisareia (Kayseri) and [Ikonio](#) (Konya) studied there. In 1840 the school moved to a new, larger building with 10 classrooms, library and assembly room, built at the inhabitants' expense. Studies at the boys' school involved nine classes: four in primary school, three in the so-called "ellinikon" school and the first two classes in high school. The students were taught languages (Greek, Turkish and French), Mathematics, Religion, History, Natural Sciences (Physics and Natural History), commercial subjects and crafts. Education was free but compulsory, while poor students were given the books and, sometimes, their food without charge.

Until 1872 girls received only minimal education. A priest taught the few girls reading, writing and arithmetic. It was that year that the first girls' school was established in Sinassos and two years later (following a fund-raiser in which people from Sinassos living in Constantinople participated actively), a new building was built, and the new school moved there. It operated as a four-class primary school until 1893, when it was upgraded to a full seven-class school. The girls were taught Greek, Religion, Household Arts, History, Nature Study, Mathematics and crafts.

7. Community and Charitable Institutions

The guesthouse is the first in a series of community institutions. Built in the settlement's centre, next to the market, in 1869, it was funded by Christos Loukas Feggarrinas and aimed to shelter the increased market activities. The revenues supported the Poor Fund. The so-called "kaffeion" was also on the market square and was built in 1890 at the inhabitants' expense. It had seven shops, rooms and a café, which functioned as a reading room as well, where the inhabitants could read Greek newspapers. The income from the



rents backed the school budgets. The revenues from the baths, built in 1893, were intended for the same reason as well. Finally, school budgets were backed by the rents of the slaughter houses and the pharmacy, which also belonged to the community.

8. Clubs

The construction and maintenance of school and other public community buildings demanded a lot of money. In order for the adequate resources to be found, various clubs were established, both in Sinassos and in Constantinople. Some of these clubs were disbanded after they had accomplished their purpose. That was the case in the *Fraternity of the School* ("Adelphotis tis Scholis", Constantinople 1838-1860), which aimed to collect money for the completion of both the boys' school and the "System", as well as in the *Fraternity of the Girls' School* ("Adelphotis tou Parthenagogeiou", Constantinople 1872-1875). Another category was the educational clubs, which aimed at organising lectures, giving money for the smooth operation of schools, providing financial aid to poor students and, finally, training teachers, infant school teachers, apothecaries and midwives, who had to follow their occupation in Sinassos after their graduation. This category includes the *Educational Club* ("Filekpaideftikos Syllogos", Sinassos 1867), the [Educational Fraternity St. John Prodromos](#) ("Filekpaideftiki Adelfotis Agios Ioannis Prodromos", Constantinople 1870-1892) and the club *Progress* ("Filekpaideftiki Adelfotis Proodos", Constantinople 1878-1892). The club "Adelfotis Eleos" was of a mixed character, both educational and charitable (Constantinople 1886-1892), while the *Charitable Society of All Saints* ("Agathoergos Adelfotis ton Agion Panton", Sinassos 1870), the Poor Fund ("Tameion ton Ptochon", Sinassos),²⁴ the [club St. Nicholas](#) ("Agios Nikolaos", Sinassos 1877) and the *Incorporated Stock Banking Company* ("Anonymos Metochiki Trapezitiki Etaireia", Sinassos 1874) were of a rather charitable character. As in other areas, all the above were established after the changes brought by the **Tanzimat** reforms in the Ottoman Empire, which provided the framework for the [organisation of the subjects in clubs](#). It should also be pointed out that the establishment and operation of clubs in Sinassos, most of which were based in Constantinople, clearly outlines the relations between the community of migrants in Constantinople and their place of origin.

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13. Σαραντίδης-Αρχέλαος, Ι., *Η Σινασός ήτοι θέσις, ιστορία, ηθική και διανοητική κατάστασις, ήθη, έθιμα και γλώσσα της εν Καππαδοκία κομοπόλεως Σινασού* (Athens 1899), pp. 34-35; Φαρασόπουλος, Σ., *Τα Σύλατα: Μελέτη του νομού Ικονίου υπό γεωγραφικήν, φιλολογικήν και εθνολογικήν έποψιν* (Athens 1895), pp. 96-98; Ασβεστή, Μ., *Επαγγελματικές ασχολίες των Ελλήνων της Καππαδοκίας* (Athens 1980), p. 152.
14. We do not possess accurate data regarding the number of immigrants. However, the bibliography agrees with this estimate.
15. Σαραντίδης-Αρχέλαος, Ι., *Η Σινασός ήτοι θέσις, ιστορία, ηθική και διανοητική κατάστασις, ήθη, έθιμα και γλώσσα της εν Καππαδοκία κομοπόλεως Σινασού* (Athens 1899), p. 32.
16. Σαραντίδης-Αρχέλαος, Ι., *Η Σινασός ήτοι θέσις, ιστορία, ηθική και διανοητική κατάστασις, ήθη, έθιμα και γλώσσα της εν Καππαδοκία κομοπόλεως Σινασού* (Athens 1899), pp. 76-77.
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18. Κοντογιάννης, Π., *Γεωγραφία της Μικράς Ασίας* (Athens 1921), p. 153. According to a different view, Sinassos was a müdürlük within the kaymakamlık of Ürgüb (Prokopi), which belonged to the mutasarrıflık of Nigde in the vilayet of Konya. Σταματόπουλος, Κ., «Η καθημερινή ζωή στη Σινασό της Καππαδοκίας», in Ποιμενίδη, Φ. (ed.), *Η Σινασός της Καππαδοκίας*, Agra Publications (Athens 1986), p. 40.
19. We also find this term at other settlements in Cappadocia.
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21. Μακρόπουλος, Η., *Υπό την σκιά των προγόνων: Ιστορικά σημειώματα της καππαδοκικής πόλεως Σινασού και της εν αυτή οικογενείας Μακροπούλου* εκξ οικογενειακών πηγών συλλεγέντα και καταρτισθέντα υπό Ηλία Μακροπούλου, χάριν δε των ιδίων απογόνων εκδοθέντα (s.l. 1948), p. 11.
22. Σταματόπουλος, Κ., «Η καθημερινή ζωή στη Σινασό της Καππαδοκίας», in Ποιμενίδη, Φ. (ed.), *Η Σινασός της Καππαδοκίας*, Agra Publications (Athens 1986), pp. 79-80.
23. Σταματόπουλος, Κ., «Η καθημερινή ζωή στη Σινασό της Καππαδοκίας», in Ποιμενίδη, Φ. (ed.), *Η Σινασός της Καππαδοκίας*, Agra Publications (Athens 1986), p. 46.
24. We do not know the exact period in which the society was active.

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Glossary :

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