

Economy and society in the Aegean province of the Ottoman empire, 1840-1912

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Abstract

This article attempts to shed light on administration, demography, economy and society in the Aegean province (*Cezair-i Bahr-i Sefid Vilayeti*) of the Ottoman empire from approximately 1840 to 1912. The 1840's marked the beginning of the implementation of Tanzimat reforms in this province. The period under discussion ends with the termination of Ottoman rule over the Islands province in the aftermath of the First Balkan War.

I argue that Ottoman rule was generally on the defensive in the islands off the coast of Asia Minor. While certain measures which were aimed at drawing the islands more closely to the centre and imposing a more effective control, had only a limited impact, other Tanzimat reforms led to an economic upturn of not inconsiderable parts of the Greek population. This, however, did not result in a closer identification with the Ottoman state.

The article utilizes Ottoman archival and narrative sources, provincial year books (*salnames*), British consular documents as well as travelogues.

Keywords

Ottoman empire, Aegean province, Tanzimat, economy, society, demography, education

1. Geography and administrative units: the map of the province

The Aegean Sea, called *Archipelago* in Byzantine and Venetian sources and "White Sea" (*Bahr-i Sefid, Ak Deniz*)¹ by the Turks, is strewn with innumerable islands. Many of these islands have been considered as forming certain natural, historical or administrative groups. The names designating these island clusters are by no means consistent. In the West and in the centre of the

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¹ Both also mean Mediterranean, whereas only the term *Cezair-i Bahr-i Sefid* refers to the Aegean proper: Beckingham, C.F., "Djazâ'ir-i Bahr-i Safid", *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd edn., H.A.R. Gibb *et al.* (ed.) (Leiden: Brill, 1960-2006) [hereafter *EF*], vol. II, pp. 521-2, and Dunlop, D.M., "Baħr al-Rūm", in *EF*, I, pp. 934-6.

Aegean are the Cyclades (*inter alia* Andros, Tinos, Mykonos, Delos, Syros, Kea, Kithnos, Serifos, Kimolos, Milos). The southern Cyclades (Paros, Naxos, Ios, Thira/Santorini and others) are sometimes, however, included in the Sporades ("scattered", as the name suggests, around the Cyclades). In the East, Lesbos/Mytilene, Chios, Samos and Ikaria belong to the Sporades, in the north-west Skyros, Skiathos and Skopelos. In the south-east Patmos, Lipsos, Leros, Kalimnos, Kos, Astypalaia, Nisiros, Symi, Tilos, Halki, Rhodes, Karpathos and Kasos form the "Twelve Islands" (Δωδεκάνησα, Dodecanese). Occasionally, this group is also called the Southern Sporades. Despite its name the Dodecanese always numbered more than twelve islands.²

The islands of the Aegean Archipelago, with a few exceptions, came under Ottoman rule in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The province which they constituted was called *Cezair-i Bahr-i Sefid* or *kapudan paşa eyaleti*, since its administration was in the hands of the admiral of the fleet.³ The term "Province of the Islands of the Aegean Archipelago" was imprecise, as it included mainland regions as well. Thus, not only were Andros, Naxos, Cyprus, Rhodes, Kos, Chios, Mytilene and Limnos, to name just the more important ones, subdivisions (*sancaks*) of the province, but also Gelibolu/Gallipoli (including the *kaza* Galata), Kocaeli (capital İzmid) and Suğla (capital Söke) in Asia Minor as well as Lepanto (Turkish: Aynabakhtı, Greek: Nafpaktos). Whereas several districts such as, for example, Euboea/Chalkis (Turkish: Eğriboz) belonged continuously to the province from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century, others such as Misistire (Greek: Mistras in the Peloponnese/Morea) were only temporarily attached to the Province of the Islands.

The Ottoman empire ceded sovereignty over many parts of the Province in the course of the nineteenth century. The Cyclades, Eğriboz (Negroponte, ancient Euboea) and several other districts were incorporated into the Greek

² Soucek, S., "On İki Ada", in *EP*, VIII, pp. 172-3; see also the articles for the various islands in *EP*.

³ Birken, Andreas, *Die Provinzen des Osmanischen Reiches* (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 1976), pp. 101-10; Özbaran, S., "Kapudan Pasha", in *EP*, IV, pp. 571-2. Zeki Arıkan explores the Islands Province in the light of the *salnames*, "La situation administrative, démographique, économique et sociale du *vilayet* des îles de l'Archipel ottoman dans la seconde moitié du XIX siècle", in *The Kapudan Pasha. His office and his Domain. Halcyon Days in Crete IV. A Symposium held in Rethymnon, 7-9 January 2000*, Elizabeth Zachariadou (ed.) (Rethymnon: Crete University Press, 2002), pp. 223-39. For earlier periods of the province see the articles by İdris Bostan, "The establishment of the province of Cezayir-i Bahr-i Sefid", in Zachariadou, *The Kapudan Pasha*, pp. 241-51, and Feridun Emecen, "Some notes on *defiers* of the *Kaptan Pasha eyaleti*", in *ibid*, pp. 253-61.

Kingdom in 1829/30.⁴ Thasos (Turkish: Tashoz), the northern-most island in the Archipelago, was under Egyptian rule from 1813 (until 1902) when it was given as a gift to Muhammad Ali, the Ottoman governor of Egypt.⁵ Samos (Turkish: Sisam) enjoyed autonomy under a Christian governor after 1832, but was obliged to pay a tribute to the Sublime Porte.⁶ The affiliation of Cyprus to the Province was particularly varied; a separate *eyalet* after its conquest in 1571, it formed a *sancak* of the Province from 1670 to 1703 and 1785 to 1850, when it became again an *eyalet* until 1854;⁷ from 1855 to 1871 it was a *sancak*, from 1871 to 1876 it was an independent *sancak* and from 1876 to 1878 again an ordinary *sancak*. Even during British occupation (from 1878) Cyprus was formally attached to the Province as a *sancak*.⁸ When the *kapudan paşa*⁹ ceased to be responsible for the territorial administration in the 1840's, the Province consisted of the following six *sancaks*: Biga (capital Çanakkale), Rhodes, Chios, Mytilene (Turkish: Midillü), Lemnos (Turkish: Limni) and Cyprus.¹⁰

⁴ Birken, *Die Provinzen des Osmanischen Reiches*, p. 103.

⁵ Bakalopoulos, Apostolos E., *Thasos. Son histoire, son administration de 1453 à 1912* (Paris: Boccard, 1953); Soucek, Svat, "Tashoz", in *EF*, X, pp. 352-3. There is also another date (1824) given for the donation which would be more consistent with the explanation that the island was given to Muhammad Ali because of his support of the Ottomans in the Greek War of Independence.

⁶ The dual affiliation of Samos was expressed in the flag, on which both Greek and Ottoman affinities were illustrated by a white cross against a blue background and a red stripe: Ritter zur Helle von Samo, A., *Das Vilajet der Inseln des weissen Meeres (Bahr i sefid dschezatri), das privilegerte Beylik Samos (Sysam) und das Mutessariflik Cypern (Kybris)* (Wien: Gerold&Comp., 1876), pp., 109-10.

⁷ With the peculiarity that the head of administration was not called *vali*, but *kaimmakam-i mir-i miran*, see Aymes, Marc, "L'Accent de la province. Une histoire des reformes ottomans a Chypre au XIXe siècle", 2 vols., unpublished doctoral dissertation, Aix-en-Provence, 2005, vol. I, p. 358. Cf. also the articles by the same author, "Chypre en archipel: d'une modernité insulaire des réformes Ottomanes au milieu du XIX siècle", *Cahiers de la Méditerranée* 68 (2004) (<http://cdlm.revues.org/index658.html>) and "The voice-over of administration: reading Ottoman archives at the risk of ill-literacy", *European Journal of Turkish Studies* 6 (2007) (<http://ejts.revues.org/index1333.html>).

⁸ Birken, *Die Provinzen des Osmanischen Reiches*, pp. 104, 109.

⁹ The office of *kapudan paşa* or *kapudan-ı derya* was renamed *bahriye nazırı* in 1867: from 1881 to 1908 the old name of *kapudan-ı derya* was used, Kunalp, Sinan, *Son Dönem Osmanlı Erkân ve Ricalî (1839-1922). Prosopografik Rehber* (Istanbul: İSİS, 1999), p. 2.

¹⁰ Beckingham, "Djaza'ir-i Bahr-i Sefid", in *EF*. Birken, *Die Provinzen des Osmanischen Reiches*, pp. 101-9, based mainly on the provincial and imperial almanacs (*salname*), has these *sancaks*: Bozca Ata/Tenedos (1846-67), Kos/İstanköy (1846-80), Lemnos (1846-67), Mytilene, Rhodes (since 1849 *merkez* or *paşa sancağı*, i.e. the *sancak* where the capital of the province was), Chios/Sakız, Cyprus (Turkish: Kıbrıs, Greek: Kypros) (1840's-1850). The statement of Ubicini, quoted by Karpas, Kemal, *Ottoman Population 1830-1914. Demographic and*

The Provincial Law (*Vilayet Nizamnamesi*) of 1864 was put into practice in the Province starting in 1867, bringing a new structuring of the Ottoman dominions in the Aegean. Now the Province was divided into the following *sancaks*: Biga (*kazas*: Biga, Lapseki, Ayvacık, Ezine, Bozca Ada, Lemnos); Mytilene (*kazas*: Midillü, Molova); Chios (*kazas*: İpsara/Psara, Kos/İstanköy (*kazas*: Kos, Kalimnos, Patmos/Patinos; to the *sancak* of Kos also belonged, with the status of *nahiye*, the islands of Nisiros, Astypalaia, Leros/Leryos and Nikaria/Karyot); Rhodes (*kazas*: Rhodes, Kastellorizo/Meis, Symi/Sömbeki, Kasos/Kaşot, Karpathos/Kerpe) and Cyprus.¹¹ In 1877 Biga was joined to the province of İstanbul so that now the name of the Islands Province corresponded to its geographic nature. This administrative organization was changed slightly several times until the end of Ottoman rule over the Aegean province. In 1879 a separate *sancak* of Lemnos (including the neighbouring islands of Ayios Efstratios/Bozibaba and Imvros/İmroz) was established. In 1880 the *sancak* of Kos was eliminated and the island was attached to Rhodes; this resulted in the four *sancaks*: Rhodes, Chios, Mytilene and Lemnos,¹² an administrative structure which lasted until the end of Ottoman rule of the Province. Although the Sublime Porte periodically considered transferring the capital, Rhodes was the seat of the governor (1877-80, 1888-1912) apart from the period 1880 to 88 when Chios was the capital.¹³

2. Implementation, reactions to and effects of Tanzimat reforms in the Aegean Province

An early reference to the introduction of Tanzimat reforms in the province – still under its old name *kapudan paşa eyaleti* and referring to the *sancak* of Cyprus – appeared in instructions issued on the occasion of the appointment

Social Characteristics (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), p. 14, according to which the capital of the province was Larnaca is incorrect.

¹¹ Ritter zur Helle, *Das Vilayet*, pp. 103-5.

¹² Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi [hereafter BOA], Bab-ı ali Evrak Odası, Sadaret evrakı, Meclis-i vükela mazbataları II, Dosya 36, Belge 25, 23 Muharrem 1306/September 29, 1888.

¹³ Arıkan, “La situation administrative”, pp. 227-8; BOA, Bab-ı ali Evrak Odası, Sadaret evrakı, Meclis-i vükela mazbataları I, Defter 26, Belge 35, 4 Rebiülevvel 1305/November 20, 1887; Cuinet, Vital, *La Turquie d’Asie*, vol. I. (Paris 1892-1894), p. 350. Before the Provincial Law of 1864 became effective in the Aegean Province, Mytilene was briefly the seat of the governor: General report on the Consular district of Rhodes 1862, The National Archives [hereafter TNA], FO 78/1768; BOA, Bab-ı ali Evrak Odası, Sadaret evrakı, Meclis-i vükela mazbataları III, Defter 79, Belge 97, 9 Şevval 1311/April 15, 1894.

of a “tax collector” (*muhassıl*, de facto governor) for the island in the year 1840.¹⁴ The document announced the implementation of the *Tanzimat-i hayriyye* (“beneficial reorganizations”), but allowed for the continuation of the old way of financial administration for another year: this was in line with delays due to local resistance. The abolition of tax-farming (*iltizam*) led to the temporary halt of many reforms, until at the end of the 1840’s a new offensive was undertaken, this time focussing on certain provinces as model provinces.¹⁵ Sultan Abdülmecid’s visit to several islands of the province in 1844 was likely aimed at reaffirming his reform intentions and securing popular support for them.¹⁶

When Musa Safveti Paşa assumed office in spring 1849 as the first “civil” governor of the province,¹⁷ now called *Vilayet-i Cezair-i Bahr-i Sefid*, he stated that the principles of the Tanzimat had been applied for the first time in 1256/1840-41. This confirms the date of the above-mentioned instruction for implementing the edict.¹⁸ He declared that the security of persons and property would be guaranteed and personal honour protected. Furthermore, no government official would be allowed to violate individual rights and all subjects of the empire would receive equal treatment. In essence, these statements paraphrased several of the promises of the *Hatt-ı şerif* of 1839.

In his circular Safveti Paşa explained also that administrative affairs would be dealt with by assemblies (*meclis*) applying majority decisions (*ekseriyet-i ara*).¹⁹ He described the subjects he was to rule as “savage people” (*vahşi adamlar*) who must be treated carefully and wisely to avoid frightening them so that

¹⁴ Reproduced in İnalçık, Halil, “Tanzimat’ın Uygulanması ve Sosyal Tepkileri”, *Belleten* 28/112 (1964) 623-90, here, pp. 675-6; cf. Aymes, “L’Accent de la province”, I, pp. 272-3, 337-41.

¹⁵ Reinkowski, Maurus, *Die Dinge der Ordnung. Eine vergleichende Untersuchung über die osmanische Reformpolitik im 19. Jahrhundert* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 2005), pp. 43-4 (Südosteuropäische Arbeiten, 124).

¹⁶ Davison, R.H. “Tanẓimāt”, in *EP*, X, pp. 201-9. Danişmend, İsmail Hami, *İzahlı Osmanlı Tarihi Kronolojisi*, vol. IV (Istanbul: Türkiye Yayınevi, 1971-72), p. 132.

¹⁷ Although the province was now no longer subject to the control of a military commander and although Safveti Paşa is being characterized as a “ausgemachter Zivilist” (“a complete civilian”), by Thomas Scheben, *Verwaltungsreformen der frühen Tanzimatzeit: Gesetze, Massnahmen, Auswirkungen von der Verkündigung von Gülhane bis zum Ausbruch des Krimkrieges 1853* (Frankfurt u.a.: Lang, 1991), p. 345, he bore the title of a *müşir*, a contradictory usage of military titles for civilians which happened not infrequently until the end of the nineteenth century, Aymes, “L’Accent de la province”, I, p. 342; Reinkowski, *Die Dinge der Ordnung*, pp. 43-4.

¹⁸ BOA, İrade Dahiliye 11188, reproduced in Aymes, “L’Accent de la province”, I, p. 308; II, pp. 549-61.

¹⁹ Aymes, “L’Accent de la province”, I, p. 285.

they could become familiar with the sultan's government.²⁰ The propaganda in favour of the Kingdom of Greece among Ottoman Greeks, many of whom adopted Greek nationality, was a persistent problem for Ottoman officials in the province.²¹ This is apparent from Safveti Paşa's instructions concerning Ottoman Greeks who had placed themselves under the protection of Greece or other states. In such cases, Safveti demanded, officials should discreetly and diligently determine the names of those individuals, the dates of their admission as protégés of a foreign state, and the extent of their property including their ships. These individuals should – through their *kocabaşıs* – be advised to relinquish foreign protection in favour of the sultan's guaranteed protection. In the case of those who adopted foreign protection for commercial motives, the governor of the province should be informed in order to seek a favourable arrangement. If advised in this way these people should renounce foreign protection.²² Related to the problem of Ottoman subjects seeking foreign protection was the agitation for Greece. In 1851 the Sublime Porte requested that the governor of the Islands Province, Halil Rıfat Paşa, prohibit any publications relating to "Greek claims" (*Yunanilik iddiaları*).²³ Most probably it was

²⁰ Aymes, "L' Accent de la province", I, p. 290.

²¹ Davison, Roderic H., *Reform in the Ottoman Empire 1856-1876* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), pp. 262-3; Turgay, A. Üner, "Trade and merchants in nineteenth-century Trabzon: elements of ethnic conflict", in *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire. The Functioning of a Plural Society*. Vol. I: *The Central Lands*, Benjamin Braude and Bernard Lewis (eds.) (New York London: Holmes&Meier, 1982), pp. 287-318. Greeks of Istanbul, on the other hand, only rarely sought Greek nationality, Exertzoglou, Haris, "The development of a Greek Ottoman bourgeoisie: investment patterns in the Ottoman empire, 1850-1914", in *Ottoman Greeks in the Age of Nationalism: Politics, Economy, and Society in the Nineteenth Century*, Dimitri Gondicas and Charles Issawi (eds.) (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), pp. 89-114, here p. 91.

²² Aymes, "L' Accent de la province", I, p. 308.

²³ Aymes, "L' Accent de la province", I, p. 113. With special reference to Midillü, BOA, Bab-ı ali Evrak Odası, Sadaret evrakı, Meclis-i vükela mazbataları III, Defter 74, Belge 54, 26 Şaban 1310/March 16, 1893. See also BOA, Yıldız Esas Evrakı, Cezair-i Bahr-i Sefid vali muavini Mehmed Tefvik Begin layihası, Kısım 14, Evrak 213, Zarf 126, Kutu 7, dated 23 Şaban 308/21 Mart 307/April 3, 1891. For an analysis of this document and the biographical background of its author see Strohmeier, Martin, "Meşmed Tefvîk Bey, companion and collaborator of Nâmiğ Kemâl during his years in the Aegean Province", *Archivum Ottomanicum* 23 (2005/06), *Mélanges en l'honneur d' Elizabeth A. Zachariadou*, pp. 269-84. In the covering letter of his memorandum Tefvik had used the expression "mülga Bahr-i Sefid vali muavini" which made me assume that by the time he wrote his memorandum he was no longer assistant governor. In the light of a document which I came across in the National Archives, London, later, it turned out that the suspicion was not unfounded, as "...the central Government wished to abolish the post of assistant (muavin) at Rhodes but in compliance with the earnest representation of His Excellency Akif Pasha they consented to allow Tefvik Bey to retain his post", TNA,

the problem of agitation for Greece which led Safveti Paşa to his assertion that the conditions in the Islands Province were not comparable with other provinces of the empire.²⁴

The Tanzimat regulations were perceived as boosting the property of the Greeks. However, it is difficult to ascertain the extent of improvement; moreover, conditions differed from island to island. On the one hand, the rise in affluence was attributed to the greater security of property, a fact which was demonstrated in the newly found ease of making bequests.²⁵ Certainly, the Greeks were seen by their Turkish co-islanders as profiting at the latter's expense.²⁶ On the other hand, there are indications that property was by no means as secure as the Edict mandated.²⁷

FO 195/1656, Francis Jones to White, June 8, 1889. However, it seems that the protection of his superior was not enough and that his post was eventually abolished. The afore-mentioned Akif Paşa is Mehmed Akif who served as *vali* of the province from 1886 to 1893, Kunalalp, *Son Dönem*, p. 28.

²⁴ Aymes, "L'Accent de la province", I, p. 389.

²⁵ Newton, Charles, *Travels and Discoveries in the Levant* (London: Day&Son, 1865), vol. I, p. 275, mentions the large bequest of a rich Greek inhabitant of Mytilene in favour of the foundation of a hospital and comments: "A bequest of this nature could hardly have been made before the Tanzimat was established; a Greek would not have been allowed either to accumulate so large a sum, or to dispose of it after his death as he liked, at least not in Mytilene".

²⁶ "It appears...that the Turkish population here [Mytilene], especially in the villages, is extremely fanatic and ill-disposed towards the Greeks. They have for a long time seen their own prosperity decreasing, while that of their more busy and able fellow subjects has increased. Ever since the Tanzimat their houses and lands have gradually passed away from them and now, by far the greatest part of the productive portion of this island, all its commerce and nearly all its money is in the hands of the Greeks. In many places as much as seven eighths of the land belong to the Christians...and [in a certain part of the island] not more than twelve years ago half the land belonged to the Turks while now the Greeks possess nineteen twentieths of it. The Greeks are said not only to have enriched themselves by industry and commerce but by the unpopular practice of lending money at large interests, especially before the interest on money was legally regulated, and therefore the Turks who had to do with them were rapidly ruined", TNA, FO 195/477, Grenville Murray to de Redcliffe, November 3, 1853. This distribution of land was to last until the end of Ottoman rule in the province, Σαμάρα, Π., "Τα τελευταία χρόνια της τουρκοκρατίας στη Λεσβο (1908-1912)", *Λεσβιακά* 4 (1962) 102-88, here pp. 102-3. Cf. also Alexander Conze: *Reise auf der Insel Lesbos* (Hannover: Rümpler, 1865), p. 1 (with regard to Tenedos): "Mit dem Grundbesitz geht es jetzt hier wie auch sonst in der griechischen Türkei; Häuser und Ländereien gehen immer mehr in die Hände der Christen über und diese behaupten, dass sogar eine bemerkliche Verminderung der türkischen Bewohner stattfinden [sic], welche sich bei abnehmendem Wohlstande nach dem asiatischen Festlande, wo sie mehr unter sich sind, zurückzögen".

²⁷ "But as there is no certainty in the administration of justice, such securities [to lend money on security of land] cannot be made as safe as the law makes them in most parts of Europe. The debtor, if he enjoys the protection of some powerful member of the Mejlis, evades the foreclosing of a mortgage, contrives a fraudulent bankruptcy, and, not unfrequently, denies his own

Economic success aroused the covetousness of the state in the form of more or higher taxes. The *kaimmakam* in Mytilene who, in the mid-fifties, urged Greeks to make voluntary payments to the treasury in view of the financial weakness of the empire, seemed to feel that the Greeks did not adequately contribute in proportion to their wealth. To be sure, tax evasion was widespread.²⁸ Therefore, it is understandable that the primary task for the Tanzimat administrators was to secure taxation needed for the envisaged restructuring of the empire. A dozen or so years later it was not a *kaimmakam* “urging” the making of voluntary contributions, but a *vali* fortified by the presence of Ottoman warships who demanded payment (see below, p. 176).

With the arrival of the Tanzimat arbitrary government was, if not halted, at least reduced.²⁹ Despotic behaviour such as that of a certain *paşa* in Rhodes was no longer acceptable. This *paşa*, disguised as a Frank, had “confessed” to a Greek priest that he had killed a Turk. The priest, expressing satisfaction, was hanged. Such incidents were seen in the 1850’s as characteristic of “... the good old times before the Tanzimat”.³⁰

signature with unblushing effrontery. The natural results of this speculative style of trading are a very low standard of commercial morality, an exorbitant rate of interest, ranging from 12 to 24 per cent., and a passion for petty litigation”, Newton, *Travels*, I, p. 265. Newton’s impressions are confirmed by a consular report: “There is little security for property. A decree may have been issued in an affair say for land, the Ilam or Title may appear to be in perfect order, nevertheless it often happens that a claim for this land is made by another party, many years afterwards, when suborned witnesses are produced, and the decision is generally in favor of the claimant with the longest purse. The consequence is that the greater part of the Island of Rhodes remains uncultivated as well as most of the other fertile Islands of the Ottoman Archipelago”, TNA, FO 198/13, General Report on the Island of Rhodes, 1854-1858. A similar situation prevailed in the *sancak* of Biga in 1860: “Their [the Christians’] pecuniary means being larger than those of the Mussulmans, they are constantly purchasing property from the latter. I understand however that formerly Christians were restricted from so doing; but the prohibition as regards this province was abolished some years ago, mainly through the instrumentality of Mr. Consul Calvert”, TNA, FO 78/1525, quoted by Charles Issawi, “The transformation of the economic position of the *millets* in the nineteenth century”, in Braude and Lewis, *Christians and Jews*, pp. 261-85, here p. 276.

²⁸ TNA, FO 195/477, Grenville Murray to de Redcliffe, November 15, 1853.

²⁹ Newton, *Travels*, I, p. 48: “This arbitrary government has ceased since the Tanzimat, and the present Pasha [İsmail Paşa Kulaksızade of Mytilene] reigns over his paternal dominions not, perhaps, according to strict constitutional forms, but with some check from public opinion and the fear of an appeal to Constantinople”.

³⁰ Newton, *Travels*, I, p. 256. Cf. also Newton, *Travels*, I, p. 254: “...the Greek peasantry do not appear discontented with the present state of affairs. Their physical and moral condition has certainly improved under the guarantee of the Tanzimat, especially in places where its action can be enforced by consuls, and where constant communication by steam with Constantinople and Europe brings the force of public opinion to bear upon the local abuses of places, such as Rhodes and Mytilene, which formerly were governed by petty tyrants...”.

The like of Manoli the Cassiote, constable cum murderer who terrorized the very community which he was supposed to protect, became a relic of the past, now that insular communities were "...slowly emerging out of lawlessness and crime into the state of order engendered by regular industry and commercial prosperity...".³¹

Despite such progress, Ottoman administration seriously lacked method and continuity and was hampered by bribery.³² The cooperation of officials and elected councils did not always function; *kaimmakams* of larger islands whose area of jurisdiction included smaller islands in the vicinity, and the municipalities there acted without consulting each other.³³ Elected bodies and notables occasionally acted in collusion, defying the law. When the provincial authorities tried to find the whereabouts of a law-breaker in Patmos,³⁴ the islanders, with the municipality and the Archbishop at their helm, feigned ignorance. The local *mudir*, the only Turkish official in the island, was so intimidated that he did not dare tell the visiting British vice-consul, Biliotti, where the fugitive was, although he knew very well that the person sought was hiding in the Archbishop's house. Newton uses this incident to demonstrate "...that maladministration in Turkey is not exclusively confined to Turkish officials".³⁵

³¹ Newton, *Travels*, I, p. 327.

³² "Nothing can be more deplorably bad than the Government of the Islands in every department, and in every respect. All is anarchy and confusion. It cannot be otherwise as neither Archives, Registers or Records of any kind are kept. All official documents received at the Conac whether from Authorities of Constantinople, from those of the different Islands, or from the foreign Consuls are crammed indiscriminately into bags, some of which bags with their contents are carried off by each successive Governor General, when he is appointed to another Post, a frequent occurrence, four different Governors General having been at Rhodes during the last five years. The consequence is that a Governor General here, aware that the tenure of his post will be brief and not wishing to raise a host of enemies, takes no interest in the affairs of the country and allows the functionaries to do just as they please, his chief care being to secure his salary of £7,000 Sterling a year, enormously out of proportion to the salaries of the others. These functionaries do not hesitate to obtain money by the most illegal and arbitrary means. Bribes are unblushingly taken by them in almost every affair brought to the Conac...", TNA, FO 198/13, General Report on the Island of Rhodes, 1854-1858.

³³ TNA, FO 78/1534, Campbell to Bulwer, Rhodes, July 17, 1860.

³⁴ Newton, *Travels*, I, p. 219: "...an island full of monks and pirates".

³⁵ Newton, *Travels*, I, p. 222: "In those islands of the Turkish Archipelago where the Greeks are allowed to administer their own affairs, they too often abuse their municipal rights by protecting brigands, pirates and every description of rogue. In such islands it is not so much the Pasha but the Greek Primate who is looked on by the people as their oppressor. Iniquity is a many-headed monster; formerly, the whole guilt of the administration rested on the Turkish governor, and the evil was removable whenever the Sultan thought proper to remove his head from his shoulders. Now, the Greek primates in those islands where the Greek population

The introduction of new institutions took time. By 1858 a commercial court had been installed in Rhodes “in name only”.³⁶ Even in 1900, the partial and arbitrary working of justice in Rhodes was deplored.³⁷ One of the authorities on Mytilene, the Austrian consul Bargigli, wrote in 1873 that the assignment of several administrative and judicial affairs to councils which before the Provincial Law had been managed by the governor had led to considerable delays in decision-making.³⁸

Although Tanzimat regulations were postponed, resisted, carried out half-heartedly or not all, they were not a “dead letter”. There were observers who blamed local notables rather than the government for the failure of reforms, as the former had little interest in change.³⁹

predominates set the mandates of the Pasha at defiance, unless he backs these mandates by measures not quite reconcilable with the Tanzimat”. This pejorative view of Greek de facto self-administration contrasts Krumbacher’s opinion (Krumbacher, Karl, *Griechische Reise: Blätter aus dem Tagebuch einer Reise in Griechenland und in der Türkei*. (Repr. Athens: Dion. Karavias, 1979) (first published Berlin: August Hettler, 1886), p. 135) according to which Greek islands flourished if they were left alone by the government: “Welch treffliches Bild einer self-made Gemeinde ist diese kleine und unbekannte Insel [Leros], die alles aus sich selbst heraus geschaffen hat, während die Regierung ihr nicht nur kein anregendes Beispiel, keine Initiative und keinen Schutz gewährt, sondern häufig noch Schwierigkeiten in den Weg legt”.

³⁶ TNA, FO 198/13, General Report on the Island of Rhodes, 1854-1858.

³⁷ TNA, FO 195/2090, Report on the Administrative and Economic state of the Smyrna Consular District (November 1900).

³⁸ “Mittheilungen über die Insel Mytilene, von Dr. Bargigli”, in von Scherzer, Carl, *Smyrna* (Vienna: Hölder, 1873), p. 261.

³⁹ “Inutilité de réformes Gouvernementales, nécessité d’améliorer l’Etat moral des Insulaires. Depuis les promulgations du Hatti Humayoun, la Porte ne cesse d’établir des réglemens ayant pour but d’assurer l’égalité par devant la loi des sujets Ottomans, sans distinction de race ni de religion. Les heureuses dispositions législatives loin d’être une lettre morte en cette île [Mytilene], y ont été dès le principe parfaitement comprises et nulle part peut être dans tout l’Empire, leur mise à exécution n’a rencontré moins de difficultés. La proximité de la Capitale d’une part, de l’autre le petit nombre de musulmans qui habitent l’île comparativement aux Grecs, expliquent cet état des choses. En conséquence, si la justice n’est pas toujours impartialement rendue par les tribunaux du pays, si les impôts ne sont pas régulièrement répartis, et ils present plus sur le pauvre que sur le riche, la faute n’en est pas aux institutions ni aux agents du Gouvernement, mais au représentants de la population au près des Conseils Municipaux. Elus par leurs concitoyens, afin de veiller à l’exécution des lois et à la juste repartition des impôts, ces homes profitent de leur influence pour protéger leurs parents et leurs amis, au prejudice des interest les plus légitimes. En un mot c’est l’esprit de parti qui régné dans l’île et non celui de justice. Le mal est d’autant plus grand qu’il n’y a peut être pas en encore un représentant de la population qui ait agi autrement. Toutefois, la cause de ce mal est facile à comprendre; c’est à l’absence de tout sentiment de probité chez les Insulaires qu’il faut l’attribuer”, TNA, FO 78/1534, Rapport quinquennal sur l’île de Metelin 1854-1858.

Indeed, change was something which for many was unwelcome. An insight into this attitude can be found in reactions towards Tanzimat regulations in Greek quarters of the Ottoman population. When a traveller on a visit to the island of Astypalaia⁴⁰ asked the inhabitants their opinions regarding the *Hatt-ı şerif* of Gülhane, he was laughed at. One of the islanders told him that he had bought a printed copy of the official Greek translation on a recent journey to Rhodes. When he gave it to the members of the community council (*δημογεροντία*), they tore it to pieces saying they did not need such a “clownish act” (*μασκαραλίκι*).⁴¹ To be sure, they neither needed nor wanted it, as they were quite satisfied with the large degree of de facto-autonomy and the minimal intervention of provincial or central authorities in their affairs. Outright contempt for the Tanzimat was not confined to Greeks, but exhibited also by Muslims in Mytilene, where in 1842 a Mevlevi *şeyh*, Abdülkadir Efendi, and a *müderris* by the name of Mustafa even tried to incite the population against Tanzimat regulations.⁴² There were Greeks, however, especially those in Istanbul and in Anatolia, who approved of the reforms.⁴³

The reaction of the Church which still retained considerable control over the Greek-Orthodox *millet*, was at first supportive. The newly elected Patriarch Anthimos, on the occasion of his assumption of office in 1841, called on all clerics to obey and pray for the “kingdom instituted by God” (i.e., the kingdom of Abdülmecid) and fulfil their *reaya* duties (*ρραγαλίκιον*) as being the most important means for spiritual and physical [sic] salvation.⁴⁴ The Edict of 1856 was received less diplomatically. Now the Church faced a loss of power (not only in its role as the first among churches, but also the greater participation of laymen, e.g. in the holy synod) reportedly causing the metropolitan

⁴⁰ Turkish Astypalaia, the easternmost island of the Sporades; no Turks lived on this island.

⁴¹ Ross, Ludwig, *Inselreisen. Reisen auf den griechischen Inseln des ägäischen Meeres* (Nachdruck der Ausgabe Halle: Niemeyer, 1912, Hildesheim: Olms, 1985), Teil 2, 54 (Klassiker der Archäologie, I).

⁴² İnalçık, “Tanzimat’ın Uygulanması”, p. 636.

⁴³ A certain Yanko, an Ottoman Greek from Istanbul, praised the reforms: “Nowadays the Greek millet has so much freedom...Everybody supports the Sultan. If this had been the case before, the people of the Morea wouldn’t have fought the war and perished like that. They would continue to be the subjects of the Ottoman state”, reproduced by Cengiz Kırılı, “Balkan nationalisms and the Ottoman empire: views from Istanbul streets”, in *Ottoman Rule and the Balkans, 1760-1850. Conflict, Transformation, Adaption. Proceedings of an International Conference held in Rethymno, Greece, 13-14 December 2003*, Antonis Anastosopoulos and Elias Kolovos (eds.) (Rethymno: Crete University Press, 2007), pp. 249-63, here p. 254. Yanko’s statement possibly indicated an allegiance among non-Muslims strengthened by the *hatt-ı şerif*.

⁴⁴ Ross, *Inselreisen*, Teil 2, p. 111.

bishop of İzmit to remark when the *Hatt-ı hümayun* was put back into its pouch after the reading at the Porte: “İnşallah – God grant that it not be taken out of this bag again”.⁴⁵

Obviously, reactions to the Tanzimat varied. The disdain of the inhabitants of Astypalaia, who had practically run their island themselves, may have been due not only to the threat of intrusion, but also to the language of the Edict which introduced unfamiliar political terms (the rights of the individual, the equality of all subjects of the *padişah* regardless of their religion).

When the lofty Edicts were put into concrete form threatening local interests, reactions could take the form of violent demonstrations. Such was the case when the Tanzimat reforms entered a more vigorous phase with the application of the Provincial Law (*vilayet nizamnamesi*).⁴⁶ There is no question that this Law was one of the most important instruments in the implementation of Tanzimat regulations in the provinces.⁴⁷ It was part of an attempt to link the islands more closely with the Turkish mainland by means of administrative centralization, economic reform, a more effective system of taxation and improvements in communication and education. But most attempts to intensify government control met with resistance which was particularly strong in the Sporades. This had to do with the privileges these islands had enjoyed ever since the conquest in the sixteenth century. These privileges consisted mainly of paying minimal taxes, the so-called *maktu* (fixed tax).⁴⁸ The communities could more or less rule themselves with only nominal control of the state. Thus, Kayserili Ahmed Paşa, who became governor of the Islands Province in 1867, had difficulty implementing the Law.⁴⁹ Although he promised that the

⁴⁵ Quoted by Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire*, p. 59.

⁴⁶ The Law underwent modifications in 1867 and 1871; the best overview of the Law is provided by Carter Findley, “The evolution of the system of provincial administration as viewed from the center”, in *Palestine in the late Ottoman period*, David Kushner (ed.) (Jerusalem-Leiden: Yad Izhad Ben-Zvi, 1986), pp. 3-29.

⁴⁷ Rogan, Eugene, *Frontiers of the State in the Late Ottoman Empire: Transjordan, 1850-1921* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 48

⁴⁸ Emecen, “Some notes on *defters*”, pp. 257-8.

⁴⁹ Perhaps it was no coincidence that the task of implementing the Law in the province fell to him. He had already been governor of the province for almost four years (1859-63), an unusually long period as Ottoman governors normally alternated at short intervals. He was to stay the similarly long period of six years to supervise the changes introduced by the Law. Perhaps one of the reasons for his long stay was that he married into Mytilene’s wealthiest Turkish family, the Kulaksizzade. Interestingly, after his governorate in the province Ahmed Paşa was appointed *babriye nazırı*, by that time a faint echo of the former identity of both offices, Kuneralp, *Son Dönem*, p. 59.

government did not intend to reduce the islanders' privileges, he had to bring in warships and blockade Symi and Kalymnos for 40 days to enforce recognition of the *kaimmakam*. Despite his promises, the same customs and tax duties that were required of other subjects of the empire were imposed on the islands, if not always successfully enforced. Custom duties were required for European products, and tax offices were set up to collect the gradually introduced taxes on salt, stamps, alcohol, and sponges.⁵⁰ In particular, a new tax, levied on sponge boats, introduced in 1876, resulted in large protests.⁵¹ In the 1880's the population of several Dodecanese islands, especially Symi, resisted the census for tax purposes, with the result that they were exempted from certain taxes due to their poverty.⁵²

3. Demography, equality and society

The evaluation of the Tanzimat reforms and their effects in the Aegean province hinges to a not insignificant degree on the interpretation of the demography of the region. The population statistics presented below are based on several censuses as well as state and provincial almanacs (*salnames*). On the whole, the picture throughout the period under discussion is clear: a very large to overwhelming majority of Greek-Orthodox against a relatively small to tiny minority of Muslim Turks. But the devil is in the detail. Karpat explains the rapid rise of the Greek population in the Aegean islands as being the result of the "favourable conditions created by the edicts of 1839 and 1856"; but he also remarks that "...unable to find employment, many migrated to western Anatolia and settled there".⁵³ Indeed, there is considerable evidence for such

⁵⁰ Μπινικός, Θεόλογος, "Τα προνόμια και η αυτονομία των Σποράδων Νησών του Αιγαίου στην Οθωμανική αυτοκρατορία" [The privileges and autonomy of the Sporades islands under Ottoman rule], *Δωδεκανησιακά Χρονικά*, 2 (1989) 257-68, here p. 263; Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire*, pp. 158-9.

⁵¹ Issawi, Charles, *The Economic History of Turkey 1800-1914* (Chicago-London; the University of Chicago Press, 1980), pp. 358-9.

⁵² BOA, Bab-ı ali Evrak Odası, Sadaret evrakı, Meclis-i vükela mazbataları I, Defter 4, Belge 26, 29 Ramazan 1302/July 12, 1885; BOA, Bab-ı ali Evrak Odası, Sadaret evrakı, Meclis-i vükela mazbataları II, Dosya 43, Belge 62, 4 Şevval 1306/June 3, 1889.

⁵³ Karpat, *Ottoman Population*, p. 47. See also Clogg, Richard, "The Greek Millet in the Ottoman empire", in Braude and Lewis, *Christians and Jews*, pp. 185-207, here p. 195 for the "unusual demographic growth"; Richard Clogg, *A Concise History of Greece*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 78, points out the migration from the Aegean islands to Egypt.

migration: Rhodes, for example, lost about one third of its population between 1836 and 1850.⁵⁴

A thorough analysis of statistical data would require a separate study. My intention here is merely to point out three features of the demography-Tanzimat link which make for a confusing picture of the demography of the province. The first aspect is that the data before 1881/82 contain only the male population. Ritter zur Helle attempted to correct the estimate by doubling the number of males, a method which is approved by scholars like Karpas.⁵⁵ However, this calculation is problematic because population figures are much higher in the pre-1881/82 censuses and estimates, namely between 650,000 and 350,000 between the 1830's and the 1880's. It is almost impossible to offer a satisfactory explanation for this disparity, as we do not have numbers for each and every year in which such changes would have taken place. It is, however, striking that the first census including males and females (the one of 1881/82) arrived at considerably lower numbers which are a hundred thousand souls fewer than the numbers provided in a provincial almanac of 1294/1877, i.e. five years earlier.⁵⁶ A possible explanation for the lower number might be that in 1881/82 the relatively populous *sancak* of Biga⁵⁷ was no longer included in the province.

The second issue is population changes in the Aegean province towards the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century. The increase of the Greek population from 1895 to 1896 by almost 30,000 stands out, while the Turkish population showed a minimal decrease. There is a remarkable gain of almost 78,000 within the decade 1897-1906: while the numbers of Muslims increased by roughly 7,000, the number of Greeks grew by 63,776. Although this increase is dramatic, the proportion of Greeks to Turks hardly changes; the increase of Turks between 1897 and 1906 is exactly 23 percent, while the increase of Greeks is slightly higher with approximately 25 percent. Therefore, we can conclude that since the census of 1881/82 the proportion of Turks in the total population was always at about ten percent,⁵⁸

⁵⁴ Issawi, *The Economic History of Turkey*, p. 156.

⁵⁵ Karpas, *Ottoman Population*, p. 10.

⁵⁶ Karpas, *Ottoman Population*, p. 119.

⁵⁷ Numbering roughly 50,000 in 1292/1875; doubling the number would result in 100,000.

⁵⁸ The distribution of Muslims throughout the islands was very different. While there were islands without any Turks (e.g., Imbros/İmroz, Psara/İpsara, Leros/Leryoz, Karpathos/Kerpe and Symi/Sömbeki for the year 1875, Ritter zur Helle, *Das Vilajet*, pp. 102-5), the island with the highest percentage of Turks was Rhodes with almost one fifth of the total population, followed by Mytilene (approx. 15 per cent of the entire population). An island with a very small number

while the overwhelming majority of the population (almost 90 percent) were Greeks.⁵⁹

The third and most momentous aspect of the demography of the province is the one of equality, a key pledge of the Tanzimat.⁶⁰ Equal status should have encompassed participation in local and regional administration. However, here the figures were in inverse ratio to the population; Greeks were strongly underrepresented in the administrative apparatus. In fact, the names of Greek officials in a *sancak* or *nahiye* could be counted on the fingers of one hand. Going through the *salnames* of the province which were published between 1870 and 1903, it appears that the higher the post the less likely it was to be held by a Greek. The highest rank in provincial administration entrusted to a Greek was that of deputy governor (*vali muavini*) held by a certain Aristidis Ikiadis in 1899. But when the governor was absent, it was not his deputy who stood in for the *vali*, but the *defterdar*.⁶¹ From time to time one encounters a Greek *kaimmakam*,⁶² but these were rather exceptions to the rule. A stronger Greek presence could be found in offices such as the quarantine and agriculture departments. There were, of course, no Greeks in the military except the odd doctor or pharmacist.⁶³ In sum, the administration was almost as

of Turks was Chios with a percentage of roughly four percent of the total population, Strohmeier, "Mehmed Tevfik Bey", pp. 279-81. Local distribution was also very uneven: whereas a village such as Sigri in Mytilene was inhabited solely by Turks in 1855 (Kolodny, Emile: *La population des îles de la Grèce. Essai de géographie insulaire de la Méditerranée Orientale*, vol. I. (Aix-en-Provence: Edisud, 1974), p. 223; cf. also Conze, *Reise*, p. 25) or Kapi in the same island mainly by Turks (early 1850's, Newton, *Travels*, I, p. 347) and 81 per cent of the inhabitants of Rhodes *intra muros* were Turks in 1888 (Kolodny, *La population des îles de la Grèce*, p. 252), the *nahiye* of Plomari in Mytilene did not include any Turks (Ritter zur Helle, *Das Vilajet*, pp. 102-3). On the other hand, a very even distribution of Turks and Greeks was to be found in the town of Çanakkale, the capital of the *sancak* of Biga, for the year 1875 (Ritter zur Helle, *Das Vilajet*, pp. 102-3).

⁵⁹ Karpat, *Ottoman Population*, pp. 130-1, 148-9, 152-3, 158-9, 160-2, 168-9, 190; Cuinet, *La Turquie d'Asie*, pp. 350-1.

⁶⁰ Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire*, p. 42; Reinkowski, *Die Dinge der Ordnung*, pp. 45-6.

⁶¹ TNA, FO 195/2065, Biliotti to Cumberbatch, May 15, 1899, speculating that the mistrust might have something to do with the Greco-Turkish War of 1896/97. Ikiadis had been Ottoman consul in New York.

⁶² Tansel, Fevziye Abdullah (ed.), *Namık Kemal'in Hususi Mektupları*. Cild III: VI. *Midilli Mektupları-II*. (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1973), p. 245 [hereafter Tansel III]. Another high-ranking Greek official was the *Rum* James Aristakis who, as chief engineer of the province, drove forward road construction under Namık Kemal's *mutasarrıflık* of Mytilene, Tansel III, pp. 41-4; *Bahr-i Sefid Vilayet Gazetesi*, no. 45, 4 Safar 1301/December 5, 1883; Özgül, Metin Kayahan, *Ali Ekrem Bolayır'ın Hâtıraları* (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı, 1991), p. 295 ff.

⁶³ The *salnames* of *Cezair-i Bahr-i Sefid* are available as part of the Ottoman History Sources Digitization Project (OHSDP): defa 1-defa 19 (1287/1870-71-1321/1903-04).

completely in Turkish-Muslim hands as in regions with a predominant Turkish-Muslim population.

That does not necessarily mean that the central government followed a policy of excluding Greek administrators. Rather, it was the case that there were hardly any Greeks willing or adequately trained to take up a post in administration. Although there was a quota of 33 percent for Ottoman non-Muslims at the “College for Civil Servants” (*Mülkiye Mektebi*),⁶⁴ for roughly half a century (1860-1908) just 25 of the 1,220 graduates of the *Mülkiye* were Greeks, i.e. two percent.⁶⁵ Of course, there were other career paths and educational institutions whose graduates could enter public service, but it is unlikely that they constituted a significant number.⁶⁶

To be sure, there was considerable representation of Greeks in the different councils (*meclis*), one of the core institutions of Tanzimat reforms. In this way, administrative and legal issues were discussed and decided by Turks and Greeks at various levels, from the highest, the *meclis-i idare-i vilayet* (with the Greek metropolitans having the status of an ex-officio member, *aza-i tabiiyye*); other ex-officio members were the governor, the treasurer (*defterdar*), the chief secretary (*mektubcu*), the mufti and the director of pious foundations (*evkaf müdürü*), down to the *nahiye meclisi*. Since most of the ex-officio members of councils were Turks, there was always a Turkish majority guaranteed; of the four elected members (*aza-i müntahabe*) two were Muslims and two non-Muslims.⁶⁷ If we relate these numbers (the usually two members to represent Muslims and non-Muslims) to the population figures, we get the following picture: in 1872, for example, two Muslim members represented 95,044 Muslims, whereas two Greek members represented 347,991 Greeks. In other words, two Muslims represented ten percent of the population and two Greeks represented 90 percent of the population. Besides, the election procedure for

⁶⁴ Ortaylı, İlber, “Greeks in the Ottoman administration during the Tanzimat period”, in Gondicas and Issawi, *Ottoman Greeks in the Age of Nationalism*, pp. 161-7, here pp. 163-4.

⁶⁵ Çankaya, Ali Mücellidoğlu, “*Son Asır Türk Tarihinin Önemli Olayları ile Birlikte*” *Yeni Mülkiye Tarihi ve Mülkiyeliler: Mülkiyeliler Şeref Kitabı*, vol. III (Ankara: Mars Matbaası, 1969-1971). The number of Greek-speaking Turkish graduates was much higher than the number of Greek graduates proper.

⁶⁶ Findley, Carter V., “The acid test of Ottomanism: the acceptance of non-Muslims in the late Ottoman bureaucracy”, in Braude and Lewis, *Christians and Jews*, pp. 339-68, here pp. 347-8, did not find any graduates from the *Mülkiye* among the non-Muslim members of the Ottoman Foreign Ministry.

⁶⁷ In reality, there were exceptions to the rule, see e.g. *Cezair-i Bahr-i Sefid Vilayeti Salnamesi*, defa 10 mükerrer [12], sene 1310/1892-93, Rodos, pp. 46-7; *Cezair-i Bahr-i Sefid Vilayeti Salnamesi*, defa 3, sene 1289/1872-73, Kale-i sultaniyye, p. 22.

councils provided for the elimination of a third of the candidates by the *mutasarrıf* (in the case of a *sancağ*) who in this way had a decisive influence on the selection of the members.⁶⁸ The regulation that candidates for membership in councils had to know the Turkish language further limited the participation of non-Muslims.

At grass-roots level, i.e. the community council (*δημογεροντία, ibtiyyar meclisi*, council of elders) and municipal council (*belediye meclisi*), the presence of Greeks was, as a rule, stronger; occasionally, these councils were in the hands of a Greek majority, although the secretary (*katib*) was still a Turk. Therefore, even if Greeks were hardly represented in the bureaucracy, they nevertheless had a voice in administration. Apart from that, there were other ways to exert influence such as bypassing local councils or officials by taking recourse to other power channels in the capital of the province or in Istanbul or by bribing government agents and judges in courts.⁶⁹

The Greeks of the Ottoman empire were by no means a homogenous community. In the middle of the nineteenth century, according to Abdolonyme Ubicini, there were two main groups: the one, by far the largest, was led by the Phanariote elite and consisted of the higher clergy, government officials and wealthy merchants. This group, conscious of its economic power, favoured the status quo and worked for the dissemination of Greek culture under the wings of the empire. They believed that the Ottoman empire, like the Roman empire before, would gradually be Hellenized. The second group included persons with a university education (doctors, advocates, teachers) who supported the "...irredentist policies of the Greek state...".⁷⁰ But what were the attitudes and views of the fishermen, sponge-divers, peasants, small shopkeepers, and day labourers in the islands? It is difficult to say when their primarily Christian

⁶⁸ Kornumpf, Hans-Jürgen, "Zur Rolle des osmanischen Meclis im Reformzeitalter", in Idem, *Beiträge zur osmanischen Geschichte und Territorialverwaltung* (Istanbul: İSİS, 2001), pp. 317-23, here p. 320.

⁶⁹ TNA, FO 198/13, Rapport quinquennal sur l'île de Chio, 1854-1858: "L'île est gouvernée part un Caïmacam, qui depend du Gouverneur Général de Rhodes, et qui est assisté dans ses fonctions par un Conseil composé de douze membres dont neuf Turcs [ex-officio and elected members]...et trois Grecs, ayant le titre de Dimogherondes. En réalité ce sont ces trois membres Grecs qui gouvernent le pays...il y a aussi la circonstance suivante qui contribue puissamment à donner de l'influence aux Dimogherondes au detriment des membres Turc. La communauté Grecque entretient à grands frais à Constantinople au moyen de contributions volontaires et depuis plus de 30 ans, un certain Jean Bichard [?] home de basse condition, qui soit par habilité soit au moyen de largesses, jouit d'une certain influence à Constantinople auprès des hautes fonctionnaires de la Sublime Porte".

⁷⁰ Clogg, "The Greek Millet in the Ottoman empire", p. 197.

identity was superseded by the sense of Hellenism being propagated at the growing number of Greek schools founded by the communities. Certainly, despite rising literacy, the numbers of those engaged in manual labour who enjoyed more than a perfunctory education, were limited. In any case, those who had been educated certainly were exposed to Hellenism, as the community-funded schools were not strictly supervised by Ottoman authorities. Moreover, foreign powers such as France and Italy competed regarding the spread of their languages, so that by the 1890's, the islands had become a hotbed of "foreign actions" and "secret ideas". A sympathy towards Greece was especially marked in Chios, but also present in Mytilene. Although Ottoman territory, the inhabitants of Psara had been given the right to vote in Greek elections. There existed also a tendency towards conversion to Christianity (*tanassur*) among the Turks of Rhodes, Kos and Lemnos.⁷¹ Under these circumstances it is no surprise that a commitment to the principle of Ottomanism did not arise.⁷²

But the two groups mentioned by Ubicini were, on the one hand, rather ideal types, and, on the other hand, there were social differentiations and power struggles within the groups. Let us look at the situation in Kalymnos in 1841. Here, as in other parts of the empire, the influence of Greece was felt. Local students went to study at high schools and at the university in Athens. The middle class, consisting of well-to-do ship-owners and small traders, included around one hundred people with Greek nationality. This group had collected a considerable sum for the establishment of a school. But this initiative was opposed by the notables (*αρχόντες*) with the Bishop of Leros, a Kalymniote by birth, at their head saying: "What shall we do with a lot of letters? They have harmed us and with them we are lost! Let us educate ourselves with the sponges as our fathers did".⁷³ There were also material causes for the dispute which divided the population into two hostile camps and culminated in violence which cost the lives of five or six people. Finally, the disputing parties turned to the *paşa* of Rhodes who sent two gendarmes to the island. Ross, who relates the story, was told by a Kalymniote that these events would not have happened with the presence of ten gendarmes, a statement which might

⁷¹ BOA, Yıldız Esas Evrakı, Cezair-i Bahr-i Sefid vali muavini Mehmed Tevfik Begin layihası, Kısım 14, Evrak 213, Zarf 126, Kutu 7, dated 23 Şaban 308/21 Mart 307/April 3, 1891.

⁷² Clogg, "The Greek Millet in the Ottoman empire", p. 199.

⁷³ "Τί τα θέλομεν τα γράμματα τα πολλά; Αυτα μας βλάπτουσι, με αυτα χανόμεσθε! Άς πολιτευόμεθα και ημεις με το σφογγάρι, καθως οι πατέρες μας", Ross, *Inselreisen*, Teil 2, pp. 80-1. Kalymnos was one of the centres of sponge diving.

by interpreted as a desire for law and order, even if this involved the intervention of Ottoman authorities.

Another cause for divisions in the *Rum milleti* were family feuds which in the sparsely populated islands quickly spread to the entire population. Newton tells us about one such long-standing blood vendetta which divided the tiny island of Kassos into two hostile camps and came to court in Rhodes. Turkish officials tried artfully to avoid confrontations, as they could not resolve them permanently.⁷⁴ A phenomenon indicative of differences among Greeks was that of a "...small state mentality, exaggerated local patriotism and the accompanying provincial narrowness...". The inhabitants of each island were prejudiced against each other and also mainland Greeks to such an extent that "the Kalymniote sees in his native island every positive and reviles the harmless inhabitants of neighbouring islands as if they were no Greeks, but Turks and pagans".⁷⁵

With regard to Mytilene, there were a "native aristocracy" as well as "...no very rich merchants, but a *bourgeois* class, most of whom are land proprietors"; to this group belonged several people who had become rich during the Greek revolution by issuing forged money or by piratical activities.⁷⁶ By far the most influential figures among the Greeks were the two archbishops of Mytilene and Molivos.⁷⁷

According to Namık Kemal, the Greeks of Mytilene were in favour of administrative autonomy (*muhtariyet-i idare*) as it existed in Eastern Rumelia. He commented that they even preferred such autonomy to a unification (*iltihak*) with Greece because "...they are very stingy and timid, they cannot put up with the military service and the heavy taxation of the Greek state, but as they do not dare to express their aim openly, they try at least to strengthen the power and influence of the council of elders...The greatest supporter of the idea of autonomy and leader of the enemies of the state" was the bishop of Mytilene.⁷⁸

The most powerful and wealthy Turkish family in Mytilene was the Kulaksızzade, who had established themselves at the time of the father of İsmail Kulaksızzade. İsmail Paşa, the highest representative of the Sublime Porte on the island in the 1840's and 1850's was, by the late 1870's, although

⁷⁴ Newton, *Travels*, I, pp. 140-6.

⁷⁵ Krumbacher, *Griechische Reise*, pp. 141-3, writing in the 1880's.

⁷⁶ Newton, *Travels*, I, p. 56.

⁷⁷ Newton, *Travels*, I, p. 64. Bargigli in Scherzer, *Smyrna*, pp. 258-9.

⁷⁸ Tansel, Fevziye Abdullah (ed.), *Namık Kemal'in Husûsî Mektupları*. Cild IV: VII.-VIII. *Rodos ve Sakız Mektupları* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1986), pp. 24-9 [hereafter Tansel IV].

at an advanced age and no longer an official, still recognized as the “natural chief of the Muslims in Mytilene”.⁷⁹ The third generation of this family was politically prominent during Namık Kemal’s stay on the island. Mustafa was a member of the administrative council of the *sancak*. He was married to a daughter of Kayserili Ahmed Paşa. Halim was the youngest of the three brothers who chaired the agriculture committee in the *sancak* during Namık Kemal’s term of office. According to Namık Kemal, Halil Razi, the oldest of the brothers, had squandered much of the family’s fortune.⁸⁰ The wealth of the Kulaksızzade rested mainly on the large land-holdings and the “monopoly of the oil-trade”.⁸¹ In the countryside of Mytilene there were Turkish *ağas* who were “a sort of reduced copy of the great Pasha of his [a Turkish *ağa* in the village of Agiasos] island, and his konak is a rude imitation of the konak of the capital”.⁸²

Finally, there were perhaps half a dozen Levantine (mainly of Smyrniote origin) families who had established themselves in Mytilene as merchants and consular agents and, notwithstanding their size, exerted considerable influence.⁸³

How did Greeks and Turks bridge the language gap? At the official level there were interpreters with whose help administrative and judicial affairs could be settled. The man in the street, the small trader, be he Greek or Turk, probably knew enough of the other language to do his business; the Turk in a mixed village with a dominant Greek population certainly had enough knowledge of Greek in order to work for and with his Greek neighbour. For the Turks as a small minority it was much more important to know Greek than for Greeks to know Turkish. In the towns both communities lived more or less in separate quarters as, for example, in Mytilene and Rhodes.⁸⁴ Namık Kemal complained that in general the Christians did not know Ottoman; among 100 Greeks one would find hardly anyone to speak that language; furthermore, there was a lack of capable interpreters in the courts.⁸⁵ Bargigli claimed the

⁷⁹ He had held various posts, for example he served as *kaimmakam* in 1266/1849, Özgül, *Ali Ekrem Bolayır’ın Hâtıraları*, pp. 64-5; Newton *Travels*, I, pp. 47-8.

⁸⁰ Tansel IV, pp. 35, 40, 51, 83, 111-12, 160-3.

⁸¹ The extensive land holdings dated back to the time before the Tanzimat when, according to Newton, it was easy to confiscate land, a practice which was stopped by Tanzimat legislation, Newton, *Travels*, I, pp. 47-8.

⁸² Newton, *Travels*, I, pp. 87-8.

⁸³ Newton, *Travels*, I, pp. 55-6: e.g., the Bargiglis and Robolis. Dr. Bargigli was the vice-consul for Austria-Hungary, while his son acted as vice-consul for the Netherlands. Dr. Bargigli’s son-in-law, Roboli, was the vice-consul of France and Britain, cf. Tansel IV, pp. 63-4.

⁸⁴ Newton, *Travels*, I, pp. 50, 57. Kolodny, *La population des îles de la Grèce*, p. 252.

⁸⁵ Tansel III, pp. 481-2.

opposite, namely that the dominant language was Greek, but that most inhabitants (i.e., the Greeks) spoke Turkish as well.⁸⁶

As for the issue of coexistence versus communal strife, there do not seem to have been serious incidents threatening public order and endangering social life. However, the strengthening of the economic power of the Greeks as a result of Tanzimat policies apparently led to a feeling of marginalization in the Turkish populace.⁸⁷ A mutiny among the troops in Rhodes in 1860 caused by delayed payment of salaries of soldiers and arbitrary exemptions from military service for favourites of the local commander, threatened public security in general and, more specifically, created apprehension among the Greeks as the massacres of Christians in Damascus had taken place only recently.⁸⁸ It appears that the authorities acted in a responsible way to avoid arousing the emotions of the Greek majority.⁸⁹ Perhaps the most violent incidents took place rather between Greeks and not between Greeks and Turks.⁹⁰

4. Economy, communication and education

There is a lot of evidence that Greeks were well off in the empire, a fact which impelled many subjects of the Greek state to move to western Anatolia and to have a share in the prospering economy, the Ottoman sultan offering a “greater field for commercial enterprise” than the Greek king Otho.⁹¹ The Islands Province had the highest per capita income of all provinces in the empire.⁹² However, it should not be forgotten that economic conditions varied significantly from island to island.⁹³ There were several islands, especially among the

⁸⁶ Bargigli in Scherzer, *Smyrna*, p. 259.

⁸⁷ “This [the economic superiority of the Greeks] has created a strong feeling of hostility between the two races and many of the Turks unable to explain the causes of their ruin and believing still in their power, say that the time is now come for vengeance and they are preparing to take it”, TNA, FO 195/477, Grenville Murray to de Redcliffe, November 3, 1853. Newton, *Travels*, I, p. 323 mentions that Turks menaced Greeks in Rhodes in 1854.

⁸⁸ TNA, FO 78/1534, Campbell to Bulwer, 7 August 1860.

⁸⁹ After the capture of Sebastopol by the allies during the Crimean War the *paşa* of Mytilene fired guns from the castle to celebrate, but did not illuminate the town (as would have been the tradition) in order not to provoke the Greeks who had sided with the Russians, Newton, *Travels*, II, pp. 15-16.

⁹⁰ By this I refer to the so-called “little civil war” in Symi in 1884 (see below) and the events in Kalymnos mentioned above.

⁹¹ Kinglake, Alexander William, *Eothen* (Repr. Marlboro: The Marlboro Press, 1992), p. 41.

⁹² Karpat, *Ottoman Population*, p. 225.

⁹³ For the economic upturn in the second half of the nineteenth century and the migration of Greeks from the Kingdom to Asia Minor cf. Clogg, “The Greek Millet in the Ottoman empire”,

Dodecanese islands, which had difficulty meeting their own basic nutritional needs. Even islands such as Rhodes, which had a thriving horticulture, could not always subsist from the soil.⁹⁴ Since the outbreak of a tree disease, production was laid low. Part of the required grain was imported. Although livestock in Rhodes amounted to thousands of goats and sheep, meat had to be imported from Anatolia.⁹⁵

Several islands stood out thanks to their wealth in certain plantations. Whereas Chios owed its Turkish name to mastic (*sakız*),⁹⁶ Mytilene was known as “the garden of the Ottoman empire”.⁹⁷ Here it was the olive tree which constituted the basis for numerous products. Admittedly harvests were subject to fluctuations due to pests and adverse weather conditions. Apart from the processing of vegetable (olive oil, soap) and animal products there was little trade.

The most lucrative activities in the arid islands of the Dodecanese were sponge fishing and shipping as well as ship construction.⁹⁸ Shipbuilding flourished during the first three decades of the nineteenth century, but declined in Rhodes till 1845 to the point of becoming almost extinct, although it continued on the smaller islands (Kastellorizo, Kassos, Symi). In the middle of the nineteenth century Rhodes and several neighbouring islands such as Kassos and Symi possessed almost 200 vessels, constructed on the islands using wood from Asia Minor. One fourth of these ships were operated under the Greek flag. The Greek-flagged ships tended to be the larger and more profitable of

pp. 195-6; for the seasonal migration of workers from the islands to Anatolia see Krumbacher, *Griechische Reise*, p. 83; a summary of the economic conditions of Mytilene in the middle of the nineteenth century is offered by Βακαλόπουλος, Κωνσταντίνος, “Η Μυτιλήνη στα μέσα του 19ου αιώνα” [Mytilene in the middle of the nineteenth century], *Ελληνικά* 32 (1980) 299-308.

⁹⁴ TNA, FO 195/2090, Report on the economic and administrative condition of Rhodes 1900.

⁹⁵ Ritter zur Helle, *Das Vilajet*, pp. 170, 176; Hafız Arif, *Rodos Ceziresi Hakkında Malumat-ı Muhtasare* (n.p.p.: Mekteb-i Tibbiye-i Şahane matbaası, 1294/1877), pp. 20-2. In cases of economic hardship the government reacted often by exempting the population from taxes, as happened in the case of a disease of silkworms in Rhodes, BOA, Bab-ı ala Evrak Odası, Sadaret evrakı, Meclis-i vükela mazbataları II, Defter 33, Belge 21, 7 Şevval 1305/June 17, 1888.

⁹⁶ Kiel, Machiel and Hedda Reindl-Kiel, “Kaugummi für den Sultan. Ein Beitrag zur Wirtschaftsgeschichte der Insel Chios im 17. Jahrhundert”, *Osmanlı Araştırmaları* 11 (1991) 181-214.

⁹⁷ Conze, *Reise*, p. 3.

⁹⁸ Λογοθέτης, Μιλτ. Ιακ., “Πληροφορίες για την οικονομία και κοινωνία της Δωδεκανήσου στα τέλη του 19^{ου} αιώνα απο τα ημερολόγια της Νομαρχίας Αρχιπελάγους”, *Δωδεκανησιακά Χρονικά*, ΙΑ (1986) 91-117.

the island vessels. The Porte was alarmed by the military potential for use in hostile actions of Greeks against the empire. Therefore, it prohibited foreign and Greek nationals from cutting timber in the Anatolian hinterland of the Aegean coast as well as building vessels in the islands unless the owner guaranteed that the ship would fly the Ottoman flag forever. These measures led to an almost complete halt of shipbuilding. Now Ottoman subjects (Muslims and Christians) bought the timber, declared Ottoman ports as destination whereas in reality it was shipped to Greek ports (Piraeus, Syra). The shipbuilders on the islands emigrated there, with Rhodes losing approximately one third of its population between 1836 and 1850. From the middle of the century shipbuilding picked up leading to a launch of many vessels in 1856. Just when recovery was in sight, the government issued a halt to shipbuilding on the grounds that builders had not complied with regulations concerning the size of the ships and had sold vessels to foreigners contrary to the ban. At the same time, the prohibition of the export of timber from Anatolia was reaffirmed, although it continued to be bypassed by Ottoman subjects who sold it mainly to Greek subjects with the tacit connivance of the authorities. The result was that the Ottoman government lost an important source of taxes for the state and of income for the population. In 1863 ship construction was again permitted to compensate for the negative impact of the earthquake of April 1862 on the economy of the region.⁹⁹

The fishing of and trade in sponges constituted the other main line of business in the Dodecanese islands (Kastellorizo, Symi, Leros, Kalymnos). The survival of the population depended to a very large degree on the proceeds from the sale of the sponges. If the harvest of sponges of first quality turned out well, livelihood for one year was secured. In a bad year the profit hardly covered everyday needs.¹⁰⁰ The work of the sponge divers involved numerous privations and great dangers to life and limb. Work followed the rotation of seasons. In March preparations were started and the ships repaired. In April or May, but never before Orthodox Easter, the fishing fleets of one or two dozen boats sailed to the sponge beds in the Aegean and Mediterranean. The richest beds were located on the south coast of Asia Minor, on the coasts of Syria and North Africa and around Crete and Cyprus. A larger escort ship served as a

⁹⁹ Issawi, *The Economic History of Turkey*, pp. 155-6; TNA, FO 78/1534, Annual report Rhodes [1859]; TNA, FO 78/1534, Annual report for the district of Rhodes 1861; TNA, FO 78/1830, Annual report on the Vice-Consular District of Rhodes 1863; TNA, FO 198/13, General report on the island of Rhodes, 1854-1858.

¹⁰⁰ Habibzade Ahmed Kemal [İlkul], *İspora Ataları ve Tarihçesi* (n.p.p., 1331/1915), p. 26.

floating storage.¹⁰¹ Before the autumn storms the sponge vessels returned to their home ports, their crews often decimated by loss of life due to diving accidents.¹⁰² In the autumn sponges were dried and cleaned. The sales methods varied; at times they were sold by quantity, at times by weight. The latter method often led to fraud as they could be filled with sand. Sponges were purchased by local merchants who sold them, as a rule, to İzmir or Syra, from where they were resold to Europe. Both the divers and the captains of the boats who were often also the ship owners, frequently became indebted to the traders who would lend them the money to finance their seasonal venture, pay for their sponge taxes or make repairs on their ships. Debts were then paid off by selling sponges, with debtors making only a small profit. In Symi the sponge trade was controlled by five or six dealers who were characterized as “profiteers” due to their lending money at usurious rates of interests.¹⁰³

In the second half of the nineteenth century sponge-fishing was revolutionized by the introduction of a breathing apparatus consisting of a helmet connected by a tube to a pump in the boat.¹⁰⁴ Up to that point net fishers, a method of sponge-fishing called *kangava* and divers without any respiratory equipment (also called “naked divers”) had done the work. Now the “machines”, as they were called in the Ottoman documents, made it possible to dive deeper and stay underwater longer. Whereas an unequipped diver might bring in as many as 1,200 fine sponges (*ψιλό σφογγόρι*) and 6,000-7,000 coarse ones (*χοντρό σφογγόρι*) a season, a diver with a breathing apparatus could harvest from up to 8,000 fine and 10,000-12,000 coarse sponges. In proportion to the bigger returns of the “machines” the higher taxes were of little

¹⁰¹ Habibzade Ahmed Kemal, *İsporad Ataları ve Tarihçesi*, pp. 25-6; Ross, Ludwig: *Reisen auf den griechischen Inseln des ägäischen Meeres*, vol. III (Stuttgart and Tübingen: Cotta, 1845), p. 22; Anon., “Samos, Chios, Mytilene und Rhodus”, *Österreichische Monatsschrift für den Orient* 40/3-6 (1914), p. 154.

¹⁰² *Cezair-i Bahr-i Sefid Vilayetine Mahsus Salname*, defa 11, Rodos 1311/1893-94, p. 309 ff.; Habibzade Ahmed Kemal, *İsporad Ataları ve Tarihçesi*, pp. 25-6; *Bahr-i Sefid Vilayet Gazetesi* no. 30 (18 Şevval 1300/22 August 1883).

¹⁰³ Habibzade Ahmed Kemal, *İsporad Ataları ve Tarihçesi*, pp. 25-6; Newton, *Travels*, I, pp. 291-5. At least in one case the merchants had difficulties raising the money in advance because they had purchased sponges at high prices and sold them at low prices the previous year, TNA, FO 78/1768, General report on the Consular district of Rhodes 1862; TNA, FO 78/1830, Annual report on the Vice-Consular district of Rhodes 1863; TNA FO 198/13, General report on the island of Rhodes 1854-1858. It is true that the population in general benefitted from the lively sponge industry; but it must be pointed out that wealth was concentrated in the hands of a very few; elegant villas overlooking the harbour of Symi attest to the prosperity of some people.

¹⁰⁴ *Iskafandar* from the French *scaphandre*.

consequence.¹⁰⁵ In the middle of the nineteenth century Kastellorizo sent out approximately 80 boats, Leros about a dozen, Kalymnos and Symi each 140 boats. If one adds boats from smaller islands, one arrives at a number of approximately 400-500 sponge-fishing vessels.¹⁰⁶ In 1862, 600 boats with 4,600 men were employed in the sponge fishery.¹⁰⁷ By 1900 the number of sponge boats had decreased, but not necessarily the number of divers. A large boat with breathing equipment had a crew of 25-35 men, while the small unequipped boats usually employed eight men. The number of machines did not change considerably.¹⁰⁸

Shortly after the introduction of the *iskafandar* it was banned by the Ottoman government on the grounds that it threatened to fish dry the seabed or even destroy the sponges. The ban proved difficult to enforce and the result was that the unequipped divers had to pay taxes, the ones with the machines used them covertly and thus did not pay taxes or only the tax which was due for unequipped divers.¹⁰⁹ This presented a threat to the livelihood of the divers who did not possess the equipment. The tensions between the *scaphandre* haves and have-nots mounted, until in June 1883 the have-not divers, turning into a kind of Aegean Luddites, forced their way into the shops of the machine dealers, shouting “we do not want machines” (“makine istemeyiz”, as quoted in the document), and destroyed around 30 of them. The crowd then set fire to the government building and threw stones at the gendarmes, forcing the *mutasarrif* of Rhodes, a predecessor of Namık Kemal, and his entourage who had come to restore order, to flee. Passions cooled down in the following week and the “little civil war” of Symi was ended.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁵ Around the end of Ottoman rule over the islands the taxes for divers using machines amounted to 32 pounds, for divers without machines to ten pounds and for net fishers to four to five pounds, Anon., “Samos, Chios, Mytilene und Rhodus”, p. 154; Issawi, *The Economic History of Turkey*, pp. 358-9. The sponge tax constituted a contentious issue throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, evidence of which can be found in many documents in the BOA and TNA.

¹⁰⁶ Ross, Ludwig, *Kleinasien und Deutschland* (Halle: Pfeffer, 1850), p. 6; Idem, *Reisen auf den griechischen Inseln des ägäischen Meeres*, vol. II (Stuttgart and Tübingen: Cotta, 1843), p. 104, 117; vol. III, pp. 46, 114.

¹⁰⁷ TNA, FO 78/1768, General report on the Consular district of Rhodes 1862; TNA, FO 198/13, General report on the island of Rhodes 1854-1858.

¹⁰⁸ In 1900 there were 50 machines, of which 28 were based in Symi, 20 in Kalymnos and two in Kastellorizo. In 1910 there were 47 machines: 20 on Symi, 15 in Kalymnos, six in Halki and six in Kastellorizo Anon., “Samos, Chios, Mytilene und Rhodus”, p. 154.

¹⁰⁹ TNA, FO 78/1534, Annual report for the district of Rhodes 1861; Tansel III, pp. 419-23; Tansel IV, pp. 135-40.

¹¹⁰ BOA, Yıldız Mütenevvi Maruzat Evrakı, Defter 14, Numara 55, 22 Şaban 1300/June 28, 1883; Tansel III, pp. 419-20; Tansel IV, p. 241; Krumbacher, *Griechische Reise*, p. 188. Details

Namık Kemal who, as *mutasarrıf* of Rhodes from October 1884 to December 1887, had to deal with the aftermath of these events, urged that the ban be lifted as the government was losing revenues because of the surreptitious use of the machines. Also the islands stood to lose an important source of income as there was large competition from Greeks of the Kingdom who worked illegally in Ottoman waters with their machines, and were able to offer their wares at cheaper prices on the international markets. The Porte finally lifted the ban in May 1885, although it is unclear if this led to recovery.¹¹¹ In both cases, shipbuilding and sponge diving, the government cut off its nose to spite its face, damaging the economic livelihood of its population.

Commerce in the Aegean was hampered by piracy, although on a small scale, throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, because the “peculiar state of Greece and the restless feeling which at present pervades the Greek population of the Archipelago have probably induced lawless individuals to consider the present moment as opportune for acts of piracy”.¹¹² Pirates were especially active between Patmos and Rhodes using the many uninhabited islands there as hiding places. Therefore, boats tended to leave Rhodes in convoys of three or four vessels so that they could help each other in case of a piratical attack. What made it difficult for the authorities to chase pirates was that vessels which were attacked or had communication with pirates did not report these encounters because such a boat would have been subject to a fortnight’s quarantine. Another reason for the difficulty in identifying and arresting pirate ships was that some of them traded and committed piracy whenever the opportunity arose. Even an Ottoman war schooner did not take up the search for pirates who had attacked ships nearby since the captain was afraid of engaging with pirates as long as he had the considerable sum of 300,000 Turkish pounds on board.¹¹³ Although there were many boat masters who did not shy away from committing piracy, the number of “professionals” was rather small. But even for most of these “professionals” piracy was a kind

about the “little civil war” (Krumbacher, *Griechische Reise*, p. 188) in Sympy in Strohmeier, Martin, “Nāmık Kemāl und die Schwammtaucher in der Ägäis”, in *Das Osmanische Reich in seinen Archivalien und Chroniken. Nejat Göyünç zu Ehren*, Klaus Kreiser and Christoph K. Neumann (eds.) (Istanbul: Franz Steiner, 1997), pp. 241-59.

¹¹¹ BOA, Bab-ı Ali Evrak Odası, Meclis-i Vükela Mazbataları, Defter 3, Belge 87, 12 Şaban 1302/May 27, 1885.

¹¹² TNA, FO 78/1768, Callander to Admiral Martin, Rhodes, January 13, 1863.

¹¹³ TNA, FO 78/1534, Campbell to Russell, Rhodes, May 5, 1862; TNA, FO 78/1534, Campbell to Russell, Rhodes, May 16, 1862; TNA, FO 78/1534, Campbell to Hobart, Rhodes, May 26, 1862.

of seasonal labour from spring to autumn. One of them, the notorious Koutsoura, was for many years a plague for shipping in the Dodecanese before his arrest in 1860.¹¹⁴

In spite of these problems, there were signs of doings and dealings as well. Proof of that were the many shipping companies which sprang up in the second part of the nineteenth century and the many connections which were established between harbours in the Aegean and beyond, creating an intense traffic on the “great highway between the Dardanelles and Rhodes”.¹¹⁵ Between 1852 and 1872 the tonnage of ships sailing between the Islands Province and Istanbul more than doubled.¹¹⁶ The increase of shipping, particularly steam shipping, could not have been brought about without an improvement in the conditions of shipping such as, for example, the construction of light-houses.¹¹⁷ On the other hand, these light-houses were often not properly maintained. The state of the harbours in the Province was particularly deplorable. Many ports could not function effectively since they were too shallow or silted up by neglect so that big ships had to anchor outside the harbour and goods as well as passengers had to be disembarked by small boats.¹¹⁸ Improvement in transport and communications occurred not infrequently at the initiative of the population.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁴ TNA, FO 198/13, General report on the island of Rhodes 1854-1856; TNA, FO 78/1534, Campbell to Russell, Rhodes, December 17, 1860.

¹¹⁵ Newton, *Travels*, II, p. 162. Austro-Hungarian, Russian, British, French, Greek and Ottoman companies with their steamers competed with each other in the long-distance traffic (e.g., from the harbours of the Black Sea or from İzmir to Alexandrette/İskenderun), these steamers also calling at Mytilene and Rhodes, *Cezair-i Bahr-i Sefid Salnamesi*, defa 10 mükerrer [12], Rodos 1310/1892-93, pp. 109-12; TNA, FO 198/13, General report on the island of Rhodes 1854-1858; Hafız Arif, *Rodos Ceziresi Hakkında*, pp. 4-5; Tansel III, pp. 477-8.

¹¹⁶ Ritter zur Helle, *Das Vilajet*, p. 166.

¹¹⁷ Construction of light-houses started at the end of the 1850's. By the mid 1860's there existed approximately 32 light-houses or other maritime signals between the Dardanelles and Rhodes, Ritter zur Helle, *Das Vilajet*, p. 212 ff.

¹¹⁸ TNA, FO 78/1534, Annual report for the district of Rhodes 1861; TNA, FO 78/1830, Annual report on the Vice-Consular district of Rhodes 1863; Newton, *Travels*, I, pp. 50-1, 227.

¹¹⁹ As in the case of Kalymnos where the inhabitants built a pier in the mid-fifties, Newton, *Travels*, II, p. 45. On the other hand, the lack of infrastructure was not always due to the neglect of the authorities. When confronted with the question why they did not build proper roads in Chios, two Greek notables responded “...that they thought that the roads which were good enough for their ancestors were good enough for them; whereupon the Pasha [the vali of the Islands Province, İsmail Rahmi] asked whether Adam invented steam and the electric telegraph, - question which puzzled them considerably, and which, I thought, was rather a creditable remark for a Turk to utter”, Newton, *Travels*, I, p. 216.

The telegraph secured the speedy transmission of news and orders from Istanbul and in this way promoted the centralization of power. But the telegraph was not a one-way street as it also gave the provinces the opportunity to make their grievances known.¹²⁰ In the 1850's the first underwater cables were installed and upgraded later.¹²¹ Telegraph offices were established first in the centres of the *sancaks* and then also in the centres of the *kazas*.¹²²

Likewise, the educational system as envisaged in the Tanzimat regulations was intended to establish state presence in the provinces and to inculcate in the population a loyalty to the sultan. The *Hatt-ı hümayun* of 1856 referred to the admission of all Ottomans to the state schools, but gave the *millet*s simultaneously the right to establish their own schools under the supervision of the "Council for Public Education".¹²³ The foundation of schools with secular subjects under state supervision not only encountered resistance by the *ilmiyye*, but also the non-Muslim communities. Both were determined not to have their monopoly on education disputed. In the constitution of 1876 the inviolability of the schools of the religious communities was laid down, although this conflicted with the introduction of government control of all schools.¹²⁴

According to the "Law on Public Education" (*Maarif-i umumiyye nizamnamesi*) separate middle (*rüşdiyye*) and secondary schools (*idadiyye*) in regions with mixed or predominant Christian populations should have been established, but were actually never realized.¹²⁵ Therefore, contrary to Tanzimat aspirations, there was little if any intercommunal education.¹²⁶ As a rule,

¹²⁰ Rogan, Eugene, "Instant communication: the impact of the telegraph in Ottoman Syria", in *The Syrian Land: Processes of Integration and Fragmentation. Bilād al-Shām from the 18th to the 20th Century*, Thomas Philipp and Birgit Schaebler (eds.) (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1998), pp. 113-28.

¹²¹ TNA, FO 78/1534, Annual report Rhodes 1859. BOA, Bab-ı Ali Evrak Odası, Meclis-i Vükela Mazbataları II, Dosya 31, Belge 18, 4 Şaban 1305/April 16, 1888.

¹²² In Mytilene, the town of Molivos was connected to the grid in 1887, BOA, Bab-ı Ali Evrak Odası, Meclis-i Vükela Mazbataları I, Dosya 24, Belge 60, 10 Muharrem 1305/September 28, 1887. Telegraphers (*memurin-i telgrafıye*) were appointed to the post offices, e.g. *Cezair-i Bahr-i Sefid Salnamesi*, defa 1, Kale-i sultaniyye 1287/1870-71, p. 32.

¹²³ Shaw, Stanford J. and Ezel Kural Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey. Vol. II: Reform, Revolution, and Republic: The Rise of Modern Turkey, 1808-1975* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), p. 124 ff.

¹²⁴ Devereux, Robert, *The First Ottoman Constitutional Period. A Study of the Midhat Constitution and Parliament* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1963), p. 76.

¹²⁵ Somel, Selçuk Akşin, *The Modernization in Public Education in the Ottoman Empire 1839-1908. Islamization, Autocracy and Discipline* (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2001), pp. 112-13.

¹²⁶ Somel, *The Modernization in Public Education*, p. 12. The impression that there was no intercommunal education is reinforced by the list of schools in the province in *Cezair-i Bahr-i Sefid Salnamesi*, defa 10 mükerrer [12], Rodos 1310/1892-93, pp. 241-2.

schools for the Greek-Orthodox were self-run, albeit under the supervision of the authorities, the extent of which is unclear.¹²⁷ Books and curricula could be monitored, but not what the teachers actually taught in the classroom.

Inequality existed concerning the distribution of the “Educational contribution tax” (*Maarif hisse-i ianesi*) paid by Muslims and non-Muslims alike, “a rule that angered non-Muslims, when the EdC [Educational contribution tax] paid by them were spent on government schools attended predominantly by Muslim students”; i.e. the Christian population was de facto doubly taxed, by their communities and by the government. This led the inhabitants of Mytilene in 1887 to request the government use the taxes they paid only for local needs such as education.¹²⁸ The “Provincial Educational Councils” (*vilayet meclis-i maarif*) which should have included representatives of the non-Muslim population as well, consisted for the most part of Muslims.¹²⁹

One of the criteria to measure the spread of education is the ratio of students in the population. The percentage of students in the general population in the Islands Province was 10.4 percent which gave it sixth rank among the 27 provinces and five *sancaks* with a special status in the empire in 1903.¹³⁰ In 1894/95 illiteracy in our province amounted to about 37 percent of the population over ten years of age, a rank slightly above-average.¹³¹ In 1898 there were seven *idadiyye* and *rüşdiyye* schools in the province with 340 pupils (most probably all of them Muslims), while there were 44 elementary and middle schools for non-Muslims with altogether 6,750 pupils.¹³² In 1890 there were 47 schools (among them four high schools, *idadiyye*) for Muslims, 230 schools (three high schools) for the Greek-Orthodox, five schools (of which three were high schools, all of them in Chios) for the Catholics and two schools for Jewish children. The distribution of schools throughout the islands was very uneven; especially in Rhodes, the number of schools for Greeks was very low.¹³³

¹²⁷ “...not until the end of the nineteenth century did the Ottoman authorities begin to restrict educational propaganda among the ‘unredeemed’ Greeks”, Clogg: *A Concise History of Greece*, p. 49. On the other hand, it is claimed that a stricter control took place, Ortaylı: “Greeks in the Ottoman Administration”, p. 161-7, here p. 163.

¹²⁸ Somel, *The Modernization in Public Education*, pp. 147-8.

¹²⁹ Somel, *The Modernization in Public Education*, pp. 102-3.

¹³⁰ *Tanzimat’tan Cumhuriyet’e Türkiye Ansiklopedisi*, vol. II (Istanbul: İletişim, 1985), p. 460, based on the 1903 *Maarif Salnamesi*, altıncı sene. The statistics do not differentiate between Muslims and non-Muslims, elementary school and high school students.

¹³¹ Karpat, *Ottoman Population*, p. 221.

¹³² *Tanzimat’tan Cumhuriyet’e Türkiye Ansiklopedisi*, II, p. 474, on the basis of the 1898 *Maarif Salnamesi*, birinci sene.

¹³³ Cuinet, *La Turquie d’Asie*, pp. 354, 372.

In spite of the fact that the government practically only funded state schools for Muslims, there was nevertheless an acute lack of schools and teachers, so that illiteracy was high. To improve the situation, Namık Kemal established the “Scientific Society” (*Cemiyet-i ilmiyye*) which in Mytilene opened about 20 elementary schools with donations from the population within eight months.¹³⁴ Even more significant were the advances in the school system in Rhodes which are associated with the name of Ahmed Midhat, another political exile. Ahmed Midhat followed a new avenue in the programme against illiteracy.¹³⁵

In 1880 Namık Kemal assessed the educational level of Christians as being only marginally better than that of the Muslims.¹³⁶ This assessment is surprising as most contemporary observers gave the Christians a clear lead in education. For example, as early as 1852, Newton praised the zeal shown by the inhabitants of Mytilene “...in promoting education by the establishment of schools all over the island. These schools are supported by local rates levied on the several communities”.¹³⁷ Other islands such as Patmos and Rhodes, however, lacked proper school buildings or teachers due to a lack of funds.¹³⁸ Education in general, not only in the sense of the existence of schools and teachers, was fostered particularly in the reading rooms (*λέσχη*), centres for the “better class of people”.¹³⁹

At the Greek community schools graduates of the Pedagogical Academy in Athens taught according to curricula and school books produced in Greece with its Hellenizing tendencies.¹⁴⁰ When the youth of the Aegean Province aspired to higher education, most of them went to Athens returning “...as doctors, merchants or schoolmasters to stimulate others by their example. They have an ardent love and yearning for liberty, a deep-seated intolerance of foreign rule, and, if the present movement continues for another fifty years, a political question of the highest interest and importance will arise for

¹³⁴ Tansel IV, pp. 35-7, 107-23, 157-63.

¹³⁵ Ahmed Midhat, *Medrese-i Süleymaniye. Tedrisat-i İbtidaiyye. Rehnüma-i Muallimin*, 2 vols. (Istanbul, 1305-06); Hafız Arif, *Rodos Ceziresi Hakkında*, p. 25.

¹³⁶ Tansel III, pp. 34-5.

¹³⁷ Newton, *Travels*, I, pp. 69-72. His opinion is seconded by Bargigli who writes in 1873, Bargigli in Scherzer, *Smyrna*, pp. 259-60. Cf. also TNA, FO 78/1534, Rapport quinquennal sur l'Île de Metelin, 1854-1858.

¹³⁸ Krumbacher, *Griechische Reise*, pp. 108-10, 178-9. Details about Greek schools in Rhodes, Παπαχριστοδούλου, Χ.Ι., *Ιστορία της Ρόδου* [The History of Rhodes] (Athens: Στέγη γραμμάτων και τεχνών Δωδεκανήσου, 1972), pp. 493-503.

¹³⁹ Krumbacher, *Griechische Reise*, p. 193.

¹⁴⁰ Krumbacher, *Griechische Reise*, pp. 133-4.

solution".¹⁴¹ It took just 30 years for a solution: an incorporation of the Islands Province into the Kingdom of Greece in the case of the north-eastern Aegean islands in 1913 and, after the intermezzo of the *Possedimento delle Isole Italiane dell' Egeo*, of Rhodes and the other Dodecanese islands in 1947.¹⁴²

5. Conclusion

In the *Cezair-i Bahr-i Sefid Vilayeti*, as in other provinces, corruption, underdevelopment, local power struggles, and the intervention of foreign powers were among the factors draining the empire of revenue and influence. The Tanzimat reforms were an effort to counteract these factors and encourage identification with *Osmanlılık*.

It would be wrong to attribute responsibility for the failure of the reforms solely to the state. As in many of the complex events involving modernization or reform, resistance was enmeshed in strategies for survival, local power struggles and the faulty assessments and measures of the government. What the government perceived as a success (the expansion of its control, for example to more remote islands), the local population regarded as an encroachment; without the involvement and collaboration of notables it was difficult, if not impossible for the state to implement its policies. If the leaders of the local population blocked reforms and measures, the state was largely powerless in the Islands Province.

Many Greeks in the Islands Province were the winners of the Tanzimat economically, as they were able to strengthen their hold on property. Increased prosperity and security and the improvement of their legal status, however, did not translate into a feeling of loyalty to the Ottoman state. In fact, the identification with their Greek brethren in the Kingdom of Greece intensified.

This can partly be attributed to the failure to fulfil the Tanzimat pledge of equality in the field of administration and participation thus ensuring that Ottoman rule was perceived as foreign domination. More importantly, the

¹⁴¹ House of Commons, *Accounts and Papers*, 100/44 (1881), p. 287 (Wilson to Goschen), cited in Karpat, *Ottoman Population*, p. 47.

¹⁴² The eastern Aegean islands were taken by Greece in late 1912 (Lemnos, Lesbos, Chios) and spring 1913 (Samos); they were awarded to Greece in the Treaty of London (May 1913). The Dodecanese islands were occupied by Italy in 1912 in order to force the Ottomans out of Tripoli and the Cyrenaica.

government was unable to assert control over education, one of the most essential tools in building a national identity. Instead of teachers fostering identification with the *devlet-i aliyye-i osmaniyye* in order to overcome *millet* divisions, educators were able to promote Hellenization, thus further alienating the island Greeks.

With the growing intensity of Greek irredentist policies and European support for the Greeks the impotence of the Ottoman administration increased. The central government as well as the provincial administration were not able to effect a reversal of the separatist tendencies which were plaguing most of the peripheral areas of the realm. In 1864, before his posting in the Aegean, Namık Kemal had complained about Istanbul Greeks openly singing anti-Turkish songs.¹⁴³ Neither he nor other administrators were able to silence these provocative voices. The Tanzimat goal of drawing *millets* closer to Ottomanism did not achieve its purpose. It seems that long before the *Cezair-i Bahr-i Sefid* were awarded to Greece, they had slipped away from Ottoman control.

¹⁴³ Mardin, Şerif, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought: A Study in the Modernization of Turkish Political Ideas* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962), p. 27.