

Impacts of Transition from an Official Greek Viewpoint: The Case of the Turkish Muslim Minority in Western Thrace-Greece (1923-1933)

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Abstract

In the beginning of the 20th century, the dissolution of great empires in Europe resulted in formation of new nation states. Millions of people were forced to move from one place to another while others remained on their own historic lands. As the Ottoman *Millet* system collapsed together with the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, ethnic and religious differentiation among communities throughout the former Ottoman lands started to be promoted by new nation states of the post-World War. In this respect, those belonging to the core nation were given an advantaged position compared to the 'minorities' living in the same nation state who used to enjoy being members of the *Muslim Millet* under the Ottoman Empire. Therefore, the Muslims across the Balkan Peninsula, regardless of their ethnic origins, became one of the main groups who suffered from the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire.

The case of the Muslim Turkish minority of Western Thrace in Greece seems to be one of the significant case studies that would help to understand how reflections of the transition process from Ottoman to the Republic of Turkey affected the gradual transformation of a conservative Islamic community into a minority members of whom identify themselves with ethnic Turkish identity and Islam promoted by the Turkish Presidency of Religious Affairs, *Diyanet*.

In this framework, this paper seeks to shed light on the first decade of transition after 1923 analyzing issues of religious, educational, administrative autonomy of the Minority enshrined in the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne. In particular, it aims to show how this process was interpreted by Konstantinos Stilianopoulos, the Inspector of Minorities - the highest Greek authority responsible for minorities in the Interwar Greece. By analyzing the two comprehensive official reports prepared by Stilianopoulos after paying two visits to the region in late 1920s in order to observe continuities and changes in lives of the Turkish Minority in Western Thrace, this study provides an official Greek viewpoint for the establishment of the minority regime in the north-eastern periphery of Greece after 1923.

Key words: Greece, Western Thrace, Muslim Turkish Minority, Stilianopoulos Reports, Traditionalists vs. Modernists.

1. Introduction

The incorporation of Western Thrace into Greek territories and the population exchange between Greece and Turkey had a tremendous impact

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on the ethno-religious and cultural composition of both Greece and Turkey. With the arrival of approximately 1.5 million Greeks from Asia Minor², the presence of ethnic Greek and Orthodox Christian identities started to dominate almost all spheres of life across Greece. During the 1920s, there was a significant number of Turks, Tsam Albanians, Jews and Slavic speakers (either Macedonian, Greek or Bulgarian) especially in Northern Greece. Nevertheless, the population exchange with Turkey and Bulgaria in 1920s, the exodus of Tsam Albanians in the aftermath of the Second World War and the persecution of Jews by Nazi forces invading Greece in 1941 resulted in the elimination of various non-Greek ethnic groups, which contributed to the homogenization and Hellenization of the country.

Among the aforementioned communities, the Turks of Western Thrace still survive in Northeastern Greece. Their appearance in the region goes back to the 14th century when the Ottoman Empire started expanding towards the Balkans. Indeed, before the arrival of the Ottomans there were some nomadic and pagan Turkic communities who had previously migrated from inner Asia in the 6th century and settled all over the Balkan peninsula. (Anderson 1974: 285-287).

Until the Turkish-Greek territorial arrangements at the 1923 Lausanne Conference, Turks in Western Thrace used to live as members of the Müslim majority benefitting from the advantages of the Ottoman Millet system. However, as nation states, like Greece, started to declare their independence from the Ottomans in the 19th century, the borders of the Ottoman Empire gradually shrank across the Balkan Peninsula. In this respect, the process of Greek independence, which started in 1821, was almost completed with the inclusion of Western Thrace in 1923³. After the demarcation of the Turkish-Greek borders at the Lausanne Conference, Western Thrace was given to Greece and Turks living in Western Thrace gained Greek citizenship⁴.

Exempted from the population exchange between Greece and Turkey (1922-1923) Turks in Western Thrace remained in their own territories, which they had inhabited for centuries. Nevertheless, they found themselves on the 'wrong' side of the newly-drawn borders between Greece and Turkey. That is to say, they were not part of the titular Greek nation but they were citizens of Greece. On the other hand, they affiliated themselves with

² For more information on the compulsory exchange of populations between Greece and Turkey see Pentzopoulos 2002; Hirschon 2003; Clark 2006; Yildirim 2006.

³ The Greek territorial expansion was completed with the incorporation of the Dodecanese Islands in 1947.

⁴ From the end of the Balkan Wars (1912-1913) until the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne, Western Thrace was ruled by different powers. Between the 1913 Treaty of Bucharest and 1919 Treaty of Neuilly, the region was under the control of Bulgaria. (Papathanasi-Mousiopolou 1990) In 1919, it was transferred to the Allied Powers headed by France. At the referendum conducted in May 1920, people living in Western Thrace voted for Greek control of the region, and with the Treaty of Lausanne, the region became an official territory of Greece.

the nationality of their external homeland, Turkey, but they were not Turkish citizens.

Looking from a broader perspective, being left on the ‘wrong’ side was not something peculiar to the Minority of Western Thrace. According to the League of Nations regime, between 20 and 35 million people were turned into minorities and started to be governed by elites who were different from them in terms of language, ethnicity, religion and/or culture. (Cowan 2010:279; Mazower 1998:41)

In this context, the major transformation in post-Lausanne Western Thrace can be observed in the status of the community under study. Under Articles 37-45 of the 1923 Lausanne Treaty⁵, the Turks of Western Thrace and the Greeks of Istanbul, Imbroz (Gökçeada) and Tenedos (Bozcaada) islands were given minority status. Also, both countries were obliged to ensure the ethnic, cultural and religious survival of these two communities. Thus, the Turks in Western Thrace became an officially-recognized national minority by the Greek state, whose human and minority rights are still protected under the Greek constitution, and the bilateral and international treaties and protocols that Greece has signed and ratified since 1923⁶.

Initially, it was very difficult for the Turks to adapt to the changing environment of the region, as was the case for other historical and imperial minorities living in Europe. However, this was their only chance if they wanted to survive in the region. Although a number of Turkish notables, elites and major landowners escaped the region and fled to Turkey, the vast majority of Turks became Greek citizens and continued living in Western Thrace.

From a wider perspective, the transition from a ‘privileged’ majority under the Ottoman regime to a ‘disadvantaged’ minority under the Greek administration turned out to be a long and painful process. Especially in the first decade of Greek rule that this paper aims to cover (1923-1933), the clash for power and authority between the officials of the Greek state and the elite of the Minority over various issues of the Minority under study was frequently reflected in the everyday life of Turks. As it is analytically reflected upon in the following sections, on the one hand Greece tried to control different phases of Minority life, while Minority members resisted Greek intrusion into the internal affairs of the Minority. At this point, newly-formed Turkey started to appear as a significant actor in the Minority’s matters resulting in the formation of a triadic relationship in the southernmost corner of the European continent. Thus, the intertwined relationship between these three main actors played a key role in the process of the minoritisation of the Turks in Western Thrace after 1923.

⁵ The Lausanne Treaty was ratified and published in the Greek Official Gazette on 25 August 1923. (FEK A’ 238, 25.8.1923). For the Articles 37-55 of the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne see Martin (1924: 970-973).

⁶ For detailed study on the historical evolution of the Minority regime in Western Thrace between after 1923 see Chousein (2005).

1.1. Formation of Schism Inside the Minority: Tradinionalists vs. Modernists

Born from the ashes of the Ottoman Empire, the Republic of Turkey turned out to be the key external actor for the survival of the Turkish Muslim minority in Western Thrace after 1923. Despite accepting the minoritisation of its brethren in neighboring Western Thrace, Turkey never refrained from playing the role of the kin state and the main guarantor of the 1923 Lausanne Treaty. In this respect, one year after 1923 the Turkish Consulate was established in Komotini, the main city where the majority of Turks still live. Along with its diplomatic duties the Consulate also had a symbolic meaning in the minds of the Minority, that Turkey was closely following developments and cared about the continuity of the Muslim Turkish presence.

Besides acting as the guarantor country, Turkey also had a tremendous impact on the changing internal dynamics of the Minority. As shown in the following sections in detail, short and long term effects of the reforms introduced by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in the second half of 1920s (Lewis 1968: 256-283; Mango 1999:361-456) started to be observed also in Western Thrace. However, these values like secular Islam imported from Turkey started to clash with traditional and historical Ottoman culture in the region as there was an accumulation of knowledge and tradition regarding the basic values of Islam in Western Thrace. Thus, the vast majority of Turks in Western Thrace continued their strong affiliations with Islam after 1923. And the Greek state preferred to see a more conservative Islamic community in Western Thrace than a more secular one following values promoted by the Republic of Turkey.

Indeed, the Islamic way of life was so vibrant in Western Thrace that Mustafa Sabri - the last Şeyhülislam, the highest religious authority of the Ottoman Empire and the head of the 150s⁷, found refuge there. After the dissolution of the Empire he was highly welcomed not only by the Greek state but also by the Minority. It is beyond any doubt that the active presence of him in the region for almost a decade⁸ also contributed to the strengthening of the Minority's religious affiliation and its conservative Ottoman way of life.

In this context, as Kemalist reforms in Turkey started to appear in Western Thrace in the late 1920s a significant schism gradually started to occur resulting in the formation of two main camps inside the Minority:

⁷ 'The one hundred and fifty' is a list of 150 Ottoman elites, persona non grata to modern Turkey, who opposed the formation of the Turkish Republic, so they escaped to other countries before the official proclamation of the Republic of Turkey in 1923. Among the 150 people, Dede (2009:2-3) provides a list of 13 people, including Mustafa Sabri, who settled in Western Thrace.

⁸ In October 1931, Mustafa Sabri and those who accompanied him were removed from Greece in the positive climate between Greece and Turkey of the 1930s (Divani 1995:189).

Modernists/Kemalists versus Conservatives/Traditionalists. The former, headed by journalist Mehmet Hilmi turned out to be staunch supporters of the reforms introduced by Atatürk and defined themselves by their secular Islam promoted by Turkey. The latter, under the leadership of Mustafa Sabri, insisted on the continuity of the conservative way of life in the region and clung tighter to their Ottoman identity. In a short period of time, the great schism inside the Minority started to spread across the region, resulting in the polarization of the community by the beginning of the 1930s.

Initially, members of both camps printed and promoted their own newspapers, *Yeni Ziya* and *Yarın* respectively, through which they were trying to disseminate their way of thinking. In relation to the education of their children, Traditionalists wanted to continue instruction in the Ottoman script while Modernists favored education with the new Turkish-Latin alphabet⁹. Also, while the former insisted on the continuity of Friday - the holy day for Muslims - as the holiday of the week, the latter agreed on Sunday. Furthermore, Modernists started to reject wearing the Ottoman fez and instead preferred to wear a hat. Thus, the everyday lives of the followers of each camp gradually diverged.

From a wider perspective, it becomes clear that both Modernists and Conservatives started to get support from Ankara and Athens respectively, which made Western Thrace a new arena for the clash of the two growing, antagonistic nationalisms across the Aegean after 1923. Turkey actually seemed to be satisfied with promulgating the ideas of the modern Turkish nation in a region outside of its national territories. As for Greece, it tried to show a neutral stance towards both groups. Nevertheless, it becomes apparent from the two official reports of the Greek Inspector of Minorities, which I elaborate below, that Greek authorities, both those in Athens and local administrators in Western Thrace, actually tried to support the Conservative camp vis a vis the Modernists without completely turning their back on the latter. In this respect, the enhancement of Greco-Turkish relations in the early 1930s was also beneficial for the growing rapprochement between the Greek state and the Modernists in Western Thrace.

Moving from the micro to the macro level of analysis, this study underlines that the League of Nations became the first suprastate mechanism dealing with the rights of minorities at the international level during the Interwar period. Under the minority protection scheme of the League, different rights were introduced for minorities whose survival was directly linked with the protection and promotion of the post-First World War international order in Europe (Malloy 2005:28-29; Cowan 2010:270-290; Preece 1998:67-95).

⁹ For more discussion about their debates over the teaching of modern Turkish and Ottoman script see Bonos (2008).

Taking into account the growing emphasis on the treatment of minorities at the European level, Greece also introduced a new institution that would care for minorities living on Greek soil; the Inspectorate of Minorities started to deal with different issues of Slavic-speakers/Macedonians, Tsam Albanians, Vlachs, Jews, Armenians and Turks¹⁰. Out of all of them, it was only the Turkish minority in Western Thrace whose rights were under the protection of an international agreement, the 1923 Lausanne Treaty. This was one of the primary reasons why Greece felt more obliged to care for the Minority's survival in Western Thrace.

In the given context, the Greek Prime Minister Eleftherios Venizelos, anxious about the coexistence of the Turkish and Greek population in Western Thrace, ordered the Inspector for Minorities in Greece, Konstantinos Stilianopoulos, to visit Western Thrace in order to prepare a comprehensive report about the social, political and economic issues of the Minority that would also highlight the initial years of the adaptation process of the Minority after 1923.

Thus, Stilianopoulos paid two visits to Western Thrace where he spoke both with Turks and with Greeks in the region, as well as with local state authorities and local Minority elites. In both reports, he makes frequent references to the schism between Modernists and Traditionalists in addition to its impact on different issues of the Minority. Finishing his observations and analysis, he also provides some suggestions to the Greek Prime Minister about the necessity for a common and comprehensive Minority policy by Athens in Western Thrace.

In this context, the main aim of this paper is to reflect upon the major points raised in both reports, analyze and finally determine the official Greek interpretation regarding basic issues of the Minority under study during their initial years of transition from Ottoman to Greek rule. It also aims to show the close link between the impacts of the schism inside the Minority and the transition process itself which lasted until the early 1970s. In this way, the main contribution of this paper is to reveal the official interpretation of the highest Greek authority responsible for minorities in Greece regarding fundamental issues of the Muslim Turkish minority in Western Thrace in the late 1920s.

As for the structure of this study, the following two sections explain the main issues of the Minority as they were originally reflected in the two reports prepared by Stilianopoulos. The article finishes with a brief analysis of both reports, as well as concluding remarks about reflections of the Western Thracian Turks' transition from Ottoman to Greek administration in the 1920s.

¹⁰ For more information about the treatment of ethnic and religious minorities in Greece during the Interwar years see Divani 1995; Divani 1997: 171-205; Mavrogordatos 1983: 227-272.

2. An Analysis of the Greek Inspector's Reports

Before going deeper into the contents of these two reports, I want to begin questioning why it is essential to explore Stilianopoulos's reports when one talks about the Muslim Turkish minority in Western Thrace within the wider discourse of transition from Ottoman to Greek rule of the region. First of all, both of these reports were prepared by the Inspector of Minorities, the highest Greek authority responsible for minorities in Greece. Formed under the Venizelos government of 1928 and inspired by the League's minority protection scheme, the Inspectorate was responsible for the issues of all minority communities living in Greece.

Secondly, both reports are unique in terms of being the most comprehensive reports prepared by official Greek authorities during the Interwar years exclusively covering various issues of the Minority. Thirdly, both reports were prepared by the Inspector himself after he paid two visits to Western Thrace where he met not only with Greek local officials but also with leading figures and the elite of the Turkish minority. Therefore, the content of the reports shows both majority and minority perspectives on various issues of the Minority.

Technically, the first report is divided into two main parts. The first part is a general evaluation of his visit of 1929 where he provides a synopsis of Minority issues¹¹, while the second part goes deeper and elaborates the issues of the Minority in detail¹². The second report, the product of his second visit to the region in 1930, continues to reflect on Minority issues and finishes with underlining the need for a new minority policy in Western Thrace. Furthermore, both reports submitted to the Greek Prime Minister constitute an archival source of 129 pages that are written in Katharevousa (purified Greek), a form of old Greek language that combines linguistic elements from both Ancient and modern Greek languages, official usage of which was halted in 1976. It is worth noting that Stilianopoulos never uses the term 'Turkish' while referring to the Minority under study. Rather, he prefers the term 'Muslim', although the Greek state officially used both terms interchangeably while referring to the Minority until the early 1970s. Therefore, when I explain those reports in the following section the religious identification of the Minority is used. But this does not reflect my personal identification of the Minority¹³.

¹¹ 12 July 1929: National Research Foundation "Eleftherios K. Venizelos", Digital Archives, [hereafter AEB] MM/AEB/053/34-35, Έκθεση Περί τής Μουσουλμανικής Μειονοτήτος Δυτικής Θράκης - Α' [Report about the Muslim Minority of Western Thrace-Part 1]. Available online at <http://venizelos-foundation.gr/archive> (accessed on 22 August 2009).

¹² 30 September 1929: National Research Foundation "Eleftherios K. Venizelos", Digital Archives, [hereafter AEB] MM/AEB/053/56, Έκθεση Περί τής Μουσουλμανικής Μειονοτήτος Δυτικής Θράκης - Β' [Report about the Muslim Minority of Western Thrace-Part 2] Available online at <http://venizelos-foundation.gr/archive> (accessed on 24 August 2009).

¹³ I prefer to use the term 'Muslim Turkish' while referring to the Minority in Western Thrace as both the religion and ethnicity of the Minority has been highly intertwined since 1923.

Lastly, this study underlines that Greece in the 1920s and 1930s was in a political and social turmoil facing a number of coup d'état attempts which culminated in the advent of the Metaxas dictatorship (1936-1939), followed by the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939. (Clogg 1997: 100-125; Featherstone et. al. 2011:45) In this context, the office of the Inspectorate of Minorities introduced under the Venizelos government of 1928 could not deal effectively with minority issues across Greece, and when Venizelos lost the elections in 1932, the Inspectorate of Minorities ceased to exist.

2.1 The First Stilianopoulos Report of 1929

In the late 1920s, Stilianopoulos notes a Muslim minority in Western Thrace with a population between 95,000 and 105,000. It was a predominantly agrarian community whose members obeyed the Greek law and were devout followers of Islam¹⁴.

At the beginning of his visit, he tried to put an end to local rumors of the possibility of a second population exchange¹⁵ of the two minorities exempted from the Turkish-Greek population exchange, i.e. Turks in Western Thrace and Greeks in Istanbul, and on Imbroz and the Tenedos Islands¹⁶. According to the Inspector, although the region became a Greek territory in the early 1920s, Muslims still did not love Greeks nor trust the Greek authorities. Muslims thought that they could survive under the regime of Greece only if Turkey closely followed developments in Western Thrace or if Greece had an international obligation to protect the Minority regime in Western Thrace. Also, they were interested in the treatment of the Greek Minority in Istanbul by Turkish authorities, due to the principle of reciprocity enshrined in Article 45 of the Treaty of Lausanne¹⁷.

As for his analysis of Greek local administrative units, Stilianopoulos observed the lack of close cooperation and coordination between them regarding issues of the Minority. He complained about the activities and functioning of Greek administrative units after being informed about various cases of clientelism between Greek and Turkish local elites that were simply ignored or underemphasized by local Greek officials. Thus, he contends that the general demands and expectations of the Muslim minority were generally falling on deaf Greek ears, which contributed to the formation of a negative image of Greeks among members of the Minority. As a result, he underlines weak communication between the core (Athens) and the

¹⁴ MM/AEB/053/56: 56.

¹⁵ Indeed such rumors about a second exchange continued for a long time after 1923. Especially in the case of major controversies between Greece and Turkey, arguments for a possible exchange were stipulated by members of both minority and majority communities in Western Thrace (Andreadis 1956: 59).

¹⁶ MM/AEB/053/34-35: 1.

¹⁷ Ibid., 3.

periphery (Western Thrace) and recommends development of communication between the Greek Ministries, particularly the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and local Greek authorities in Western Thrace, which would also help the latter be regularly informed about the Turkish treatment of the Greek minority in Istanbul¹⁸.

After providing general observations about the Minority in the introduction, Stilianopoulos starts elaborating the major issues of Muslims in the following 72 pages of the first report, which is devoted mainly to matters of religion, education and administrative issues that I try to summarize in the following section.

2.1.1. Islam and the Religious Elite

Islam in Western Thrace was of primary concern to the Inspector. He begins explaining the religious autonomy of Muslims by underlining the significant roles that muftis played in all three major cities, Komotini (Gümülcine), Xanthi (İskeçe) and Didimotihö (Dimetoka). According to the application of Shari'a/Islamic Law in Western Thrace, muftis were the heads of the Islamic courts and entrusted with some judicial rights to make judgments in cases of Muslims' marriage, divorce and inheritance. Along with muftis, the Inspector notes there were almost 300 mosques and mesjits where Muslims could freely exercise their religion. Also, there were 667 imams functioning at these mosques. Moreover, five religious schools/madrasahs (medrese) were functioning with 83 students and seven teachers serving the religious education of the Minority students¹⁹.

One of the main points he raised about muftis was about the dilemma of their election by the Minority or appointment by the Greek state. From 1923 onwards, muftis in all three prefectures were appointed by the General Administration of Thrace (hereafter GATH), the highest local Greek administrative authority in Western Thrace. For Stilianopoulos, the appointed muftis as well as local Greek authorities refused any kind of election because in case of an election, the Modernist wing of the Minority, whose impact was gradually growing upon the Muslim minority in the late 1920s, could promote the election of a figure who would be closer to Ankara than Athens. Thus, it becomes apparent that concerns for the election of a Modernist mufti became one of the major fears of the Greek authorities; a mufti closer to Turkey would be more likely to contribute not only Islam promoted by the religious authority of Turkey, Diyanet, but also for strengthening the ethnic Turkish identity among the Muslims of Western Thrace.

¹⁸ Ibid., 4-9.

¹⁹ MM/AEB/053/56: 19.

Taking into account concerns of Greek authorities on the one hand and the Law No. 2345/1920²⁰ together with the Lausanne Treaty of 1923 on the other, Stilianopoulos made clear that the appointment of muftis violated the religious freedom of Muslims and conflicted with the provisions of treaties that Greece had signed and ratified. Thinking reciprocally, it also clashed with the Greek Minority in Istanbul electing their own patriarchate. Thus, he concluded that the election of muftis was unavoidable and the process of their election should take place as soon as possible²¹.

Nevertheless, regarding the process of election the Inspector points out that muftis should not be elected by all registered adult members of the Minority, but rather by a small group of religious clerics, including all imams, hatips and ulemas who were teaching at madrasahs²². He clearly explains that the main reason to do so was to minimize the impact of the Modernists as well as Turkey on the election process of muftis. For him, a great number of these clerics were followers of Islam, supporters of the Traditionalists' camp, who pretended to be in close cooperation with the Greek state. Thus, in the case that a mufti was elected by Muslim clerics, then Greece would probably achieve the election of Traditionalist muftis who would be inclined to cooperate more with the Greek state authorities than the ones of neighboring Turkey²³.

In fact, the Inspector observed the clash between the two camps over the Office of the Mufti during his visit to the region. For example, he noted that the Mufti of Komotini, a significant figure of the Conservative camp, refused to deal with the religious matters of those Modernist Muslims supporting religious reform in Western Thrace. He went even further, arguing that those Muslims within the Modernist group should not be buried in the Muslim cemeteries of Komotini, as if they belonged to a different religion²⁴. Therefore, those Modernist Muslims of Komotini needed to apply either to the Mufti of Xanthi or Didimotihon in the event of religious issues like Islamic marriage, which complicated the authority of the mufti and his domain of responsibilities.

To illustrate, the Mufti of Xanthi did not have authority to marry two people who were registered in Komotini. It was only the responsibility of the Mufti in Komotini to marry them. Henceforth, Stilianopoulos overtly condemns the aforementioned stance of the Mufti in Komotini and rejects any kind of discrimination from muftis towards the followers of the

²⁰ It incorporates provisions of the 1913 Athens Treaty, signed between Greece and the Ottoman Empire, into the Greek law regulating the religious matters of the Minority in Western Thrace. It also provides the right for Muslims to elect their own religious leaders, muftis. For the content of this law see the Greek Official Gazette, FEK A'148, 3 July 1920.

²¹ MM/AEB/053/56: 5.

²² By 1929, the total number of these clerics in all regions of Komotini, Xanthi and Didimotihon who should vote for election of muftis was 380. *Ibid.*, 6.

²³ MM/AEB/053/56: 4-7.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 20.

Modernist camp. In fact, it is noteworthy to put here that Stilianopoulos suggests better treatment of Modernist Muslims by muftis. But he also adds that, as well as hindering the active functioning of Turkish policies in the region, such internal anomalies within the Minority work for the national interest of the Greek state. Therefore, Greek state apparatuses should refrain from any kind of intervention seeking to put an end to the strife between members of the Traditionalist and Modernist camps²⁵.

2.1.2. Administration of the Islamic Charitable Organizations

Islamic charitable organizations/waqfs started to play a vital role in the socio-economic and cultural survival of both Turkish and Muslim identities under the Greek regime after 1923. Waqfs were pious endowments administered by Commissions for the Management of Muslim Properties, Vakıflar İdaresi, (hereafter waqf boards) that were headed by the Mufti. As a legacy of Ottoman rule, waqfs in Western Thrace owned a significant number of properties inside and outside of Minority localities. Particularly the ones functioning in the main cities of the region were also responsible for the administration of medrese as well as Minority primary schools in their neighbourhoods. Therefore, the schools' expenses as well as the teachers' salaries were largely covered by the waqf boards. Stilianopoulos notes that, in the late 1920s, along with the unregistered ones, there were 357 registered waqf properties in the major cities of the region, whose value was approximately 7 million drachmas, with an annual income of 600,000 drachmas²⁶.

Similar to the internal controversies over Muftis, Stilianopoulos also underlines the growing dispute between Modernist and Traditionalist Muslims over the administration of waqfs. Fearing the growing impact of the Modernists in the region, GATH had appointed all five members of the waqf boards, all of whom belonged to the Conservative camp. However, this created resentment among Muslims who preferred to elect members of these boards²⁷.

Disputes between the two groups increased when the Komotini waqf board, governed mainly by Conservatives, started to refuse enrolment of some Muslim students at Minority primary schools. The reason was quite simple; their fathers were wearing hats, like the ones in Turkey, rather than an Ottoman fez. Thus, some of these Modernist families protested against the decision of the Komotini waqf board either by educating their children at home or sending them to the Jewish school in the city²⁸. This example given by the Inspector also shows how interrelated the administration of waqfs was with matters of Minority education in Western Thrace.

²⁵ Ibid., 8.

²⁶ Ibid., 17.

²⁷ Ibid., 14-18

²⁸ MM/AEB/053/34-35:8

After reflecting on various complaints of Muslim elites, Stilianopoulos proposes to Venizelos that members of Muslim waqf boards should not be appointed but rather elected by Minority members. This would comply not only with the provisions in the 1923 Lausanne Treaty but also with the Turkish policy over the Greek Minority. He reminds that the Greeks in Istanbul could freely elect the boards of their organisations and churches. Reciprocally, Greece should also provide Muslims the right to elect the members of the administrative boards of their waqfs. However, at the time of an election Stilianopoulos warns that the Greek authorities should be vigilant about the plausible influence of Modernists on Minority candidates' election to these boards, thus minimizing the Kemalist impact that functioned against the Greek national interest in Western Thrace²⁹.

2.1.3 Provision of Basic Bilingual Education to the Minority Students

After elaborating muftis and waqf boards, Stilianopoulos focuses on different matters of Minority education in Western Thrace. During his visit, the Inspector of Minorities reported that there were 241 Muslim primary schools among which only two were ideal for primary education being composed of six classrooms. 217 of these schools were composed of a single classroom where students of all levels were taught together. The vast majority of school buildings were old and dilapidated. As a result, the Inspector confessed that it was out of question to discuss either the quantity or the quality of education provided to Muslim students in Western Thrace as it is was quite low compared to education provided at Greek public schools³⁰.

For instance, visiting the central Turkish primary school in Komotini, Stilianopoulos was actually shocked by the picture that he witnessed inside the classroom. Although the region officially became a Greek territory almost ten years ago, only a few students in the fifth class of the school were able to communicate with him. A great number of them could not even understand the basics of the Greek language and most of them were unable to write in Greek. For him, it was a big disappointment witnessing that after five years of education at their own bilingual Minority primary schools, Muslim students were at an even lower level than second year Greek students attending public primary schools³¹.

During his analysis of the miserable educational facilities of the Minority, he concentrates on some major issues that I reflect on in the following paragraphs.

²⁹ Ibid., 14-19.

³⁰ Ibid., 25-32.

³¹ MM/AEB/053/34-35: 12.

Firstly, he underscores that the overall level of education of Muslims was quite low and the great majority of Muslims demonstrated almost no concern for educating their own children. For Stilianopoulos, Muslims rather interpreted schools as places where they could leave their children who were too young to work. Even the ones enrolled in primary education were generally taken in the middle of the academic year for the sake of helping their families on the farm³². At this point, he underlines that Modernists started to put more emphasis on the improvement of the standards of Minority education, while Conservatives seemed to be comfortable with the low educational profile of their children. Therefore, Greek authorities should be careful when responding to educational demands raised by Modernist Muslims³³.

Secondly, he emphasizes problems with the teachers of the Turkish curriculum functioning at Muslim primary schools. Stilianopoulos goes on to underline that there were 277 Minority teachers at the 241 schools. However, only four of them were graduates of teaching academies in Turkey. Twenty teachers had pedagogical training, while the remaining 253 teachers were graduates of madrasahs and primary schools with very low educational profiles³⁴. During his visit, he was also informed that there were some Muslim teachers at Minority schools who could act as possible 'agents' of Turkish propaganda, disseminating the basic principles of Kemalism to Muslim students, "poisoning [sic] children's minds", and damaging the regional security and stability of Western Thrace. Therefore, he strongly suggests that local Greek authorities should identify the pro-Kemalist teachers and remove them from Minority primary schools³⁵.

Underlining problems about Muslim teachers with low educational backgrounds, Stilianopoulos also proposes the establishment of a Greek *Ipodidaskalio*³⁶ that would satisfy the increasing need for Muslim teachers with pedagogical training. However, he is also suspicious that such a Greek institution could violate the educational autonomy and distinctive character of Minority education protected under the Treaty of Lausanne. Because these institutions operated in different parts of Greece, they functioned only with teachers of Greek origin and all the instruction was in the Greek language. Thus, a Muslim *Ipodidaskalio*'s formation could be interpreted by the Minority as another device of Greek propaganda that would discourage them sending their children to such institutions. As a result, the Inspector concludes that no *Ipodidaskalio* should be established for the Minority in Western Thrace and Muslim students would have no alternative but to

³² MM/AEB/053/56: 25.

³³ *Ibid.*, 32.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 34.

³⁶ It was a kind of teacher-training school aiming to cover the increasing need for teachers of Greek primary education. It provided a one-year education for those who finished primary school so that they could teach or help teachers at primary schools all over Greece.

continue being instructed by Muslim teachers the vast majority of whom had no pedagogical training. Thirdly, he focuses on problems with textbooks. Inside Minority schools, there were major problems with both Turkish and Greek textbooks. All of the Turkish textbooks were printed in Istanbul. Yet, they needed the final consent from the Greek Ministry of Education before their distribution to students.

Indeed, the major problem with the textbooks of the Turkish curriculum was the language they were written in. That is to say, Modernists demanded books prepared in the new Turkish alphabet while Conservatives insisted on the continuation of textbooks written in the Ottoman script. In this debate over the language of textbooks, Stilianopoulos mentions that Greece should continue keeping a neutral stance by allowing distribution of both types of books.

Nevertheless, the Ministry should be careful inspecting books printed in modern Turkish as some sections contained phrases, images and passages about Turkey that could threaten the Greek national interest. To get rid of such anti-Greek materials, the Ministerial officials were tearing out those pages of the book and then distributing the ‘censored’ books to Muslim students. However, Stilianopoulos warns that the aforementioned method of tearing out pages of Turkish textbooks could also have a negative impact on the students as well as their families; they could interpret it as a policy of Greek censorship that was likely to make them even more suspicious about the content of the missing pages³⁷.

As for textbooks of the Greek language, he clearly underlines that neither the methodology of teaching nor the content helped Muslim students of non-Greek ethnic origin to learn the Greek language. These were the same books prepared for native Greek speakers and distributed at Greek public primary schools; none of them were designed to teach Greek as a second language. Therefore, a number of chapters contained different, Christian values that could provoke Muslim parents’ criticism, reaction, and resentment. As a result, Stilianopoulos underlines that teaching students the Greek language at Muslim schools turned out to be a tough experience with an insufficient number of Greek teachers and inappropriate teaching methods³⁸.

Fourthly, along with highlighting the ignorance of Minority families about the education of their children, Stilianopoulos also notes the growing indifference of the Greek state towards the education of the Muslims in Western Thrace. In the aftermath of 1923, the local Greek authorities actually started to promote the educational development of the Minority. For this purpose, Muslim primary and religious schools were financially supported by the local Greek authorities. Also, teachers of the Greek curriculum were paid by these authorities, while the ones teaching in

³⁷ Ibid., 34-37.

³⁸ Ibid., 41-43.

Turkish were either financed by the families of students or the waqf boards³⁹.

However, according to the Inspector, Greek local authorities started to adopt an indifferent attitude towards matters of Minority education in the late 1920s. In this context, Muslims who refused teaching in the Greek language at Muslim primary schools were not brought to trial or punished. Also, Muslim teachers were allowed to use the Turkish or old Ottoman script while sending official documents to the GATH and they were not obliged to use the Greek stamp. Even the Inspector of Minority Schools, the highest local Greek authority responsible for matters of Minority education in Western Thrace, used a Turkish and Greek bilingual stamp for official purposes and he showed almost no concern for the promotion of the learning of the Greek language among the Muslim students. In other words, among the 241 Minority primary schools, Greek language instruction was achieved at only 20 schools in the late 1920s. Students studying at the remaining ones were not given the opportunity to learn the titular language, i.e. Greek⁴⁰.

In this respect, Stilianopoulos points out that indifference from the two highest local Greek authorities, i.e. GATH and the Inspector of Minority Schools, towards the education of the Minority could result in the formation of a negative perception of Greece among its Muslim citizens, of a country unwilling to cope with educational demands, needs and problems of the Minority. More importantly, it could even increase the Minority's suspicion that Greece was deliberately trying to keep the Muslim Turkish students in the darkness of illiteracy at the northeastern margins of the Greek peninsula. In the event that the Greek indifference continued, the anti-Greek propaganda, promoted mainly by the Modernists' camp, would likely flourish among the Muslims, which would work against the Greek national interest in the long run⁴¹.

2.1.4. Social, Cultural and Economic Life

Stilianopoulos notes that Muslim families in Western Thrace were patriarchal, and a great number of them subsisted on farming and shepherding. Being bound mainly to the land, they were a closed community with limited contact with the outside world⁴². Indeed, the geography of the region also helped in their isolation. The majority of Muslims lived in the remote villages of the Rhodopi Mountains while Christians mainly inhabited

³⁹ Stilianopoulos notes that for the 1927-1928 academic year, 150,000 drachmas were sent to the GATH, 100,000 of which would be distributed among Minority primary schools in Komotini and Xanthi while the remaining 50,000 drachmas would go to Jewish schools in Western Thrace. However, he still warns Venizelos that Athens should closely follow and inspect whether the money was distributed according to the directives of Athens (or not, as in case of misuse by local Greek authorities). MM/AEB/053/56: 45-47.

⁴⁰ MM/AEB/053/56: 41-42.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid., 51.

cities and municipalities in the lowlands. There were also Muslims living in cities together with Christians, but their numbers were lower than those living in highlands.

For Stilianopoulos, Muslims' economic life was not actually too bad. But, he points out that after the settlement of refugees from Asia Minor in Western Thrace in the mid-1920s, some major problems started to develop between the 'old' and 'new' communities. A number of Greek refugees were temporarily settled either on land belonging to Muslims or places close to those of Muslim localities, thus causing lands used by Muslims to shrink⁴³. Although most of these lands were gradually returned to their Muslim owners, disputes between these two groups continued endangering the harmony and coexistence of the communities in Western Thrace⁴⁴.

Regarding the Minority press, he emphasizes that both Modernists and Traditionalists were free to print and distribute their weekly gazettes in which they tried to impose their own ideologies. The former group printed the newspaper, *Yeni Adım*, while the latter printed *Yarın*. Both groups got the support of Ankara and Athens respectively and identified the Minority in two different ways. In *Yeni Adım* Muslims were referred to as 'Turks', while in *Yarın* there were only 'Muslims' in Western Thrace⁴⁵.

Labeling *Yeni Adım* as a propaganda mechanism controlled by the Turkish Consulate in Komotini, the Inspector underlines that arguments promoted by this newspaper endangered public order in the region and created hatred of Greeks and the Greek nation. Therefore, he suggests that newspapers printed by Modernists should be carefully inspected by Greek authorities and censorship for the Minority press should be introduced, and those Muslim journalists who insisted on referring to the Minority as 'Turkish' should be tried and punished⁴⁶.

Complaining about the inattentiveness of Greek authorities towards newspapers printed by Modernists, he explains that even books and magazines printed in Turkey were freely sold in the region regardless of any control by Greek authorities. He ironically concludes that during his visit to the region it was a frequent phenomenon to hear Muslims talking in Turkish on the streets, which made him feel as if he were not on Greek soil but rather walking in the streets of Istanbul⁴⁷.

As for the socio-cultural life, Stilianopoulos observes that Muslims in Thrace did not demonstrate a need for the formation of different unions and organizations. The existing mosques and coffee shops seemed to be sufficient for meeting and socializing. Nevertheless, some organizations

⁴³ Ibid., 47-50.

⁴⁴ Similar arguments between the Muslim Turkish and Asia-Minor Greeks were among the most frequent stories that I was told during my childhood in Western Thrace in the 1980s.

⁴⁵ MM/AEB/053/34-35: 26.

⁴⁶ MM/AEB/053/56: 53-54.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 54.

started to be formed in the second half of the 1920s. The Home of Xanthi Turkish Youth (renamed as the Xanthi Turkish Union in 1936) was the first Turkish association opened in 1927, while the Komotini Turkish Youth Union opened one year later in 1928.

For Stilianopoulos, Modernists were closely affiliated with the formation and functioning of both unions. Therefore, the organization of different social, music and sporting activities by these unions actually contributed to the strengthening of links between Muslims and neighboring Turkey. In this respect, he gives the example of a Turkish union selling lottery tickets to raise money for the Turkish armed forces in 1928. Nevertheless, the local Greek authorities preferred to remain silent and not to intervene in the activities of Turkish unions in Komotini and Xanthi. Thus, he strongly advises that Turkish unions as well as newspapers printed by the Modernists should be under the close scrutiny of Greek authorities. In the case of any anti-Greek activity they should definitely be tried and punished⁴⁸.

Concluding his intensive report on the Muslim minority in Western Thrace, Stilianopoulos stresses Greek inefficiency in the region and proposes the formation of a new ‘unified system’ for the administration and organization of the Minority⁴⁹. In this framework, he proposes 72 measures⁵⁰ that should immediately be applied reminding that:

“They (Muslims) will never love the Greek land, neither will they be assimilated. We should show them that we are interested in solving their anomalies, dealing with their religious, family and educational matters in a systematic way, settling disputes over land expropriations, and promoting the teaching of our Greek language. Only then, can they come closer to the Greek state, increase their cooperation and communication with the Greeks of the region, and adapt themselves to the changing environment of the region that regulates their lives and interests”⁵¹.

2.2. *The Second Stilianopoulos Report of 1930*

One year after the first report, Stilianopoulos paid another visit to Western Thrace and prepared a second report on the Minority⁵². According to his own clarifications, the main aim of the second visit was to discuss the draft law prepared by the GATH regarding various administrative issues of the Minority in Western Thrace. He also sought to gather more information

⁴⁸ MM/AEB/053/34-35: 23-25.

⁴⁹ MM/AEB/053/56: 72.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 54-72.

⁵¹ Ibid., 59-60.

⁵² 15 January 1930: National Research Foundation “Eleftherios K. Venizelos”, Digital Archives, [hereafter AEB] MM/AEB/107/4, Έκθεση Περί τής Μουσουλμανικής Μειονότητος Δυτικής Θράκης εκ τής Β’ Μεταβάσεώς μου εις Δ. Θράκην [Report about the Muslim Minority of Western Thrace after my second visit to Western Thrace]. Available online at <http://venizelos-foundation.gr/archive> (accessed on 25 August 2009).

about Muslims that would help him fulfill his duty as Inspector of Minorities⁵³.

The second report is mainly dedicated to issues of religious freedom in Western Thrace. Stilianopoulos begins by explaining a number of specific problems about Muftis in all four localities of Xanthi, Komotini, Alexandroupolis and Didimotihon. He refers to Muslims' complaints about the abuse of power by the muftis of Xanthi and Didimotihon. Later, he mentions problems between the head of the waqf board in Xanthi appointed by GATH, and Muslims of the city⁵⁴.

Explaining issues regarding muftis, he also concentrates on major disputes between Muftis and the Greek local authorities. As in the case of the appointed mufti in Xanthi, Stilianopoulos emphasizes that he was unable to carry out his duties and needed to be elected. However, in the case of Didimotihon, although GATH had a number of problems with the Mufti the latter had not opted for any kind of anti-Greek action and always worked in close cooperation with Greek authorities. He gives the example of how the Mufti had kindly donated part of the Muslim cemetery in Didimotihon, which was a previous waqf property, to the Greek state for the purpose of building a Greek primary school. For Stilianopoulos, this was proof of the pro-Greek attitude of the Mufti in Didimotihon, so he should remain in office until the elections would be carried out. On the other hand, Stilianopoulos also comments that the main reason behind the loyalty of the Mufti towards the Greek state was not his love of Greece but rather his personal interest in keeping his post as the religious leader⁵⁵.

Secondly, he reflects on the waqf boards, underlining how members of these boards appointed by GATH acted in harmony with Greek local authorities. In order to illustrate this, he mentions members of the Didimotihon waqf board who sold waqf land to the Greek state at a much lower price than its real value⁵⁶.

Thirdly, he stresses the continuation of problems regarding various issues of Minority education. Respectively, he gives the example of the Muslim primary school in Alexandroupolis, underlining that the school was unable to function properly as Greek local authorities temporarily confiscated part of the school building and rented it to a Greek merchant at quite a low price. Minority families living in the city protested against the decision and henceforth started sending their children to the Greek primary schools⁵⁷.

Fourthly, the financial contribution to Minority schools in the region was also increased; 200,000 drachmas were provided exclusively for

⁵³ Ibid., 1.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 9.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 11.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 14.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 17.

Minority education for the 1929-1930 academic year⁵⁸. However, he underlines that although the money necessary for the functioning of the schools was provided by local administrative councils, GATH continued to act indifferently towards appointing teachers of the Greek language at Muslim primary schools; it was almost December and Greek teachers were still waiting to be appointed. Given the ignorance of the highest local administrative authority of the region, Stilianopoulos suggests that Greek soldiers who finished the Military Academy could be appointed by GATH and they could start teaching the Greek language to Muslim students⁵⁹.

For him, teaching the titular language was highly significant because most of the problems and misunderstandings between the Greek administration and the Minority emerged since he latter was unable to speak the Greek language. Henceforth, increasing their knowledge of the Greek language would also, in the long run, contribute to the development of their communication and dialogue with the Greek majority in Western Thrace⁶⁰.

After taking into account the draft law prepared by GATH, which provided information about administrative issues of Muslims in Western Thrace, the Inspector of Minorities concluded his second report underlining two basic points of the new system of administration he proposed, which aimed to regulate every issue of the Muslim Minority in Western Thrace. Thus, muftis in all three localities should be elected. Nevertheless, the right to vote should not be provided to all adult male and female Muslims as stated in Law No.2345/1920. Only the clerics should have the right to vote for the Mufti. In this respect, the former and existing imams functioning at mosques, heads and teachers of medrese, former muftis and those having the qualifications of imams would be the only Muslims who could vote for the Mufti.

Regarding the election process, he also underlines that although there were a number of Modernists among the Muslim clerics, the vast majority of them were devout followers of the Conservative camp⁶¹. Taking into account the judicial power of the Mufti under the Islamic Law, Stilianopoulos also proposes the formation of religious councils at each office of the Mufti in all three localities. This body would be composed of three Muslims appointed by the GATH, and act as a supervisory body evaluating the decisions of the Shari'a Courts and secondly, members of waqf boards, unlike Muftis, should be elected normally by the Minority members registered to vote⁶².

Notably, although issues of education were studied in detail in both reports, almost no reference is made to a solution to Muslims' educational problems under the new scheme of administration proposed by the

⁵⁸ Ibid., 19.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 20.

⁶¹ Ibid., 22.

⁶² Ibid., 23-24.

Inspector. Thus, it seems that Greece in the early 1930s had no major plans to increase the overall level of Minority education as well as their fluency in the Greek language, which would have contributed to the development of the Minority regime at the southeastern periphery of Europe.

3. Analysis of Stilianopoulos's Reports and Concluding Remarks

Reading Stilianopoulos's Reports of 1929 and 1930, first of all, the great anxiety of the Inspector regarding the ineffectiveness and imbalance of Greek local authorities controlling various issues of the Muslim Turkish minority becomes blatant. That is to say, on the one hand he frequently complains about local state apparatuses, particularly GATH, being deeply involved in some issues of the Minority while turning a blind eye to some other ones. Furthermore, he observes that there was a significant lack of systematic communication and coordination between Greek authorities in Athens and Western Thrace, as a result of which the latter took initiatives regardless of the former, which resulted in anomalies in the official Minority policy of the Greek state in Western Thrace.

Secondly, Stilianopoulos frequently draws attention to the schism between Modernists and Traditionalists and its effects on various issues of the Minority under study. In this debate, he observes that Modernists were supported by Turkey. Henceforth, Greece should give more support to the Conservative camp but in a covert and indirect way. Doing so, he did not want Greece to get a reputation as a country violating the basic principle of equal treatment of its citizens. Also, in the case that Greece sided more with the Conservatives, then the Modernists and their followers were likely to get even closer to Turkey and secular Islam. Nevertheless, analyzing the schism inside the Minority and its impact on the transition process in Western Thrace, Stilianopoulos never stipulates that Greece should either work to promote the internal cohesion of the Minority or introduce different affirmative actions that would end the schism and the anomalies between members of the two camps.

In the given framework, this paper stipulates that the reason for the Greeks' unwillingness to put an end to the aforementioned schism was twofold: Firstly, it was less preferable for the Greek state to have a strong and monolithic non-Greek ethno-religious community struggling for their rights and better living standards in the region of Greece bordering Turkey. Rather, the Greek state favored a polarized and inward-looking minority isolated from the outside world. And secondly, by promoting the schism between Modernists and Traditionalists, Greece tried to keep the impact of Turkey at the lowest level possible in Western Thrace, so that the Greek national identity could find suitable ground on which to grow and strengthen among the Minority.

Thirdly, Turkey constitutes one of the key issues in both of Stilianopoulos's reports. According to the Inspector, the Republic of Turkey, one way or another, gradually increased its impact among Minority members after 1923 aiming to use them as a tool of Turkish propaganda against Greece. Interpreting Turkish-Greek disputes over Western Thrace as a zero-sum game, Stilianopoulos usually emphasizes the need for necessary measures to be taken by the Greek state for the sake of curbing the growing Turkish influence in Western Thrace. Otherwise, the Minority in Western Thrace would get closer to Ankara than Athens, in the long run constituting a possible threat to the unity of the Greek state. Reading both reports, from time to time the reader might think that the different measures proposed by the Inspector sought not to develop the post-Lausanne regime of the Minority but rather to prevent the growing influence of neighboring Turkey in Western Thrace.

Fourthly, although he never uses the term 'Turkish' to refer to the Minority, he frequently recalls the vibrant Ottoman, Muslim and Turkish identities on the one hand, and the ineffectiveness of the Greek local authorities promoting Greek national identity among the Minority members in Western Thrace on the other. In my opinion, both of these two factors actually contributed to the ghettoization and isolation of the Minority, and they also strengthened the survival of the Muslim and Turkish identities in Western Thrace in the long run.

After elaborating on the two reports prepared by the Inspector of Minorities, this paper concludes that the transition from the Ottoman to the Greek regime in Western Thrace was directly affected by the establishment of the Republic of Turkey and reforms carried out under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. Such reforms in neighboring Turkey during the second half of the 1920s were primary reasons for the development of polarization within the Muslim Turkish minority. Thus, the transition from Ottoman to Greek administration in Western Thrace can largely be equated with the development of debates between Modernists and Conservatives that began in the late 1920s and faded in the early 1970s, when the last newspaper of Conservatives printed in Ottoman script ceased to exist⁶³, making Western Thrace "the only place in the world where the Ottoman language was still visible almost half a century after its official demise." (Hüseyinoğlu 2010:12).

Throughout the first decade of transition that this study covers, Greece and Turkey were the two main actors in Western Thrace. Greece supported Conservatives in a covert way, but it also responded to the major needs of the Modernist group, like the usage of the Turkish alphabet at Minority

⁶³ During my fieldwork in Western Thrace I came across a rich collection of Minority newspapers, some of which were printed in Ottoman script, covering the period between 1920s and 1960s. They are still available at the Culture and Education Foundation of Western Thrace Minority (C.E.FOM/BAKEŞ) in Komotini.

primary schools. Therefore, Greece tried to give the impression of balancing the two groups, though it favored the growth of the Conservatives in the Minority over that of the Modernists. However, from a broader understanding it seems that Greece was in political, economic and social turmoil between the 1920s and the 1940s. In this context, Greece had neither sufficient power nor willingness to tackle the various issues of the Minority in Western Thrace, which the Minority widely interpreted as proof that Greece wanted to keep them illiterate, backward and underdeveloped.

The aforementioned turmoil in Greece actually helped Turkey to play an active role in matters of the Muslim Turkish minority. As the kin-state and the guarantor country of the 1923 Lausanne arrangements, Turkey became the primary actor regarding the aforementioned process of transition in Western Thrace. After the 1930s, the ideas of the Modernists continued to flourish and contributed to the strengthening of the ethnic Turkish identity in Western Thrace. From the 1950s onwards, Greece gradually increased its control and hegemony over issues of the Minority as well as its support for the Conservatives. Nevertheless, it was late to promote the schism between the two camps. The values of Turkey-backed Modernists were gradually accepted by the vast majority of the Minority under study, thus enabling both Modernist and Conservative segments of the last Ottomans to feel closer to Ankara than Athens. As a result, the polarization between the two camps was gradually eliminated in the early 1970s, signaling the end of the fundamental issue of the transition process in Western Thrace.

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Özet

Yunan Resmi Söyleminde Osmanlı'dan Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'ne Geçişin Etkileri: Yunanistan'da Yaşayan Batı Trakya Müslüman Türk Azınlığı Örneği (1923-1933)

20. Yüzyılın başlangıcında Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun dağılması sonucu yeni ulus devletler ortaya çıkmıştır. Bu bağlamda milyonlarca insan bir yerden başka bir yere göç etmek zorunda kalırken, bazıları da yıllardır yaşadıkları topraklarda hayatlarını devam ettirmeye çalışmışlardır. Birinci Dünya Savaşı'nın sonrasında Osmanlı İmparatorluğu ile birlikte din temelli Millet Sistemi'nin de sona ermesiyle, yeni oluşan ulus devletler kendi sınırları içerisindeki eski Osmanlı toprakları üzerinde yaşayan topluluklarda etnik ve dini ayırım politikalarını körüklemeye başlamışlardır. Dolayısıyla, bir tarafta bu ulus devletlerde yaşayıp temel ulusun bir parçası olma avantajlarından faydalanan bir grup oluşurken, diğer tarafta Osmanlı döneminde Müslüman çoğunluğu oluşturan gruplar genelde bu ulus devletlerin 'azınlıkları' haline gelmişlerdir. Balkan yarımadasında yaşayan bu topluluklar, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun parçalanması sonucu etnik kökenleri fark etmeksizin mağduriyete uğramış grupların başında gelmektedirler.

Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'ndan Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'ne geçiş süreci çerçevesinde Yunanistan'da yaşayan Batı Trakya Müslüman Türk Azınlığı, bölgedeki İslam öğeleriyle bezenmiş bir Müslüman topluluğun, zaman içerisinde kendisini etnik Türk ve Türkiye'deki Sünni İslam anlayışıyla tanımlamasına önemli bir örnek teşkil etmektedir.

Bu bağlamda makalenin amacı, 1923 sonrası dönemde bu geçiş evresinin Lozan Barış Antlaşması ile koruma altına alınmış Azınlığın dini, eğitim ve yönetim özerkliği konularına ışık tutmaktadır. Bunu yaparken, yukarıda belirtilen değişim sürecinin Yunan devletinin azınlıklardan sorumlu en yüksek merci konumundaki Azınlıklar Koordinatörü Konstantinos Stilianopoulos tarafından nasıl yorumlandığını ortaya çıkarmayı amaçlamaktadır. Batı Trakya Türk Azınlığı adına bölgedeki süreklilik ve değişimleri gözlemlemek nedeniyle 1920'lerinin sonunda yapılan ziyaretler sonrası Stilianopoulos tarafından bizzat hazırlanmış iki kapsamlı resmi raporu analiz eden bu çalışma, Yunanistan'ın kuzey doğusundaki azınlık rejiminin 1923'de oluşması ve ilk on yıl içerisindeki gelişimi hakkındaki Yunan resmi söylemini ortaya koymaktadır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Yunanistan, Batı Trakya, Müslüman Türk Azınlık, Stilianopoulos Raporları, Gelenekçiler – Modernistler.