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5. Schools, Clubs, and Enterprise

Clusters of Social and Religious Coexistence in Ottoman Salonica

Andreas K. Bouroutis, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece

Abstract

By the turn of the twentieth century, considerable change in several aspects of social life was obvious in the Levantine ports, stemming largely as a result of developments in the Ottoman economy and expansion of trade in the eastern Mediterranean region. Salonica (modern-day Thessaloniki), one of the main commercial hubs of Balkan trade, profited greatly by this development. As a result, the establishment of the first European schools in Salonica, in 1888, signaled a major turn in the outlook of the city, and provided evidence for the fact that a sufficient number of people were ready to entrust the new environment with their children's western education and exposure to different cultures. Along with the rise of international schools a rising number of clubs were established, confirming that a new and diverse bourgeois class had been shaped, enjoying expanded ties through social contacts and economic networks. When the first labor strikes broke out in 1908, there was no ethnic or religious component, only a class distinction. Whether Jew, Muslim, or Orthodox Greek or Bulgarian, or others, workers of all stripes united for their rights in demanding better wages and working conditions. The aim of this paper is to present a transnational approach to life in Salonica at the beginning

of the twentieth century, tracing the interactive limitations among various communities during the rise of religious and ethno-nationalism.

Keywords: Coexistence, bourgeoisie, working class, international schools, enterprises, religion, ethno-nationalism

Introduction

> . . . Few weddings have been of so composite a character as ours. My brother-in-law was a Roman Catholic, His Holiness (delivering the marriage) was the head of the Orthodox (Greek) Church, we were members of the Church of England, and our two witnesses were Mohammedans (Blunt and Wemyss: 64-65).

This brief paragraph from Fanny Sandison Blunt's memoirs, in which she describes her wedding in Uskub (modern-day Skopje), allows one to catch a glimpse of what the Balkan religious and ethnographical field looked like during the late nineteenth century. The wife of Sir John Blunt, English consul in Salonica from 1873–1899, Sandison Blunt provides a vivid account of the daily life of a westerner in the Balkans. She describes the mixture of languages, religions, and different communities in the Macedonian geographical region as a "salade Macedoine," a Macedonian salad (133). This salad would not be bland, given the gradually escalating nationalistic fervor in the region, as Ottoman rulers tried – sometimes with arms – to maintain a grasp over their declining empire. At the same time, it would become obvious that as capitalism expanded throughout the empire, and as foreign and local capital invested in, exploited, and profited throughout, a new era was emerging – one that promised mutual profit and prosperity to anyone willing to surpass community borders and limitations. It therefore comes as no surprise that by the end of the nineteenth century Thessaloniki rose to become the most important maritime and commercial hub of the Balkans, bridging East and West and hosting a polyglot mosaic of great diversity owing to the coexistence of many communities in its urban environment (Mazower). The aim of the article is to examine the processes, developments, and motives for coexistence among the many different ethnic and religious communities of Ottoman Salonica (hereafter, Thessaloniki), demonstrating how economy was a vital factor towards lessening or deepening their communal differences. In addition, taking a transnational approach will explore the common spaces for social comingling, at the same time acknowledging the complex factor of religious and ethnic nationalism then on the rise in the Balkans.

Around the turn of the twentieth century Thessaloniki met all criteria for being considered a full-blown Levantine port. Like Alexandria, Beirut, and Smyrna, this robust city was a crossroads of trade and commerce in the Balkans, a booming market, a place where the blend of different cultures and languages was obvious, and where Greeks, Jews, Turks, and Europeans lived together and prospered (Mansel: 177-78). One should keep in mind that despite Thessaloniki's integrative economy, significant divisions existed long before, as a result of the Ottoman Islamic system that divided people according to religious beliefs (Quataert 2005: 175-77). Nevertheless, at the turn of the twentieth century, Levantine ports such as Thessaloniki operated as port-states and places of lodgment, with pockets of diversity and flexibility that permitted nearly everyone to act and work, sheltering any person who could contribute to the city's extroverted outlook, regardless of his/her religion and ethnic

background. Therefore, commerce, trade, and profit were the common ground for prosperity in all the Levantine ports, which would drive away for years the ethnic differences that in the end would prevail, and in cases such as Smyrna, have devastating effects upon its inhabitants. Nevertheless, cosmopolitanism and nationalism, two extremely important factors in the Mediterranean, as well as in Europe, though contradictory to one another, would be present in the Levant ports history and would even flourish together, carefully striking some balance.

To be sure, it was their strategic location that helped them thrive – whether Smyrna, on the coast of Asia Minor, bridging the Mediterranean with Anatolia and Asia; or Thessaloniki, on the other side of the Aegean, bridging the Mediterranean with the Balkan peninsula and Europe. In the case of Thessaloniki, one sees the combination of a thriving port in the hands of a foreign capital supporting naval commerce in the Mediterranean, along with the active involvement of a great number of foreign maritime companies (French, Italian, German, Austrian, Greek), and three different railway lines connecting it with both Europe and Constantinople (Mazower: 224-31).

To understand what is meant by the "new era" in the Ottoman city, it is necessary to understand a few things about the imperial structure. The mosaic of ethnic communities within its domain was kept in control by the fact that they were segregated by religion under the millet system. The Rum millet was established for Orthodox Christians, along with a Jewish millet, a Muslim millet, and so on. This discriminating tool resulted in real ethnic segmentation at first, especially satisfactory for Muslims, who enjoyed various privileges and assisted in tax collection and overseeing the different communities. In the long run, however, this division turned against the Ottomans when "national ideas" began to take shape (Göçek: 513-18). The eventual outcome was the establishment of Christian nation-states throughout the Balkans, following various uprisings and revolutions against the Ottoman Empire during the long nineteenth century (Quataert 1994: 766-67). In a desperate effort to alternate the course of events and mitigate the involvement of the Great Powers in their internal affairs, others claiming the contrary with the support of the Great Powers (Quataert 1994: 765-66), the Ottomans proceeded to enact a series of reforms known as the Tanzimat ("Reorganization"). Even so, the Ottoman stance was ambivalent, with concessions and privileges to, for instance, Greek subjects on the one hand, but also distrust and intervention on the other hand (Ortayli: 162).

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Thessaloniki, which was still part of the Ottoman Empire, had become the leading commercial city in the Balkans and the third greatest port of the empire after Constantinople and Smyrna (Izmir), handling almost eleven percent of the total Ottoman import-export trade (Quataert 1994: 831). The main commercial hub of Anatolia, Smyrna was financially controlled primarily by the Greeks, and secondarily by the Armenians and Jews (Fragaki: 17-19). This was a common feature in Levantine ports, where minorities – Greeks, Jews, Armenians, Lebanese Maronites, and other non-Muslim communities – were the leaders of trade in the new era, and the people with which foreign companies preferred to negotiate.

Following the period of conquests, the Ottoman Empire entered a protracted period of crisis; thus, it comes as no surprise that when the time came all infrastructure in the leading commercial points of interest, including Thessaloniki, was in the hands of foreign companies

and international creditors. The construction of the city's port was assigned to Edmond Bartinol of the Société Ottomane d'Exploitation du Port de Salonique, which would exploit the port. Also in the hands of the French was the railway line connecting Thessaloniki with Constantinople, the Junction Thessaloniki–Constantinople (Jonction Salonique – Constantinople, JSC). Revealing the Great Powers' local antagonism, two other railway lines connected Salonica with Monastir (Salonique – Monastir), a major point for the Ottoman administration, and with Europe (Salonique – Uskub – Mitrovitza). The Oriental Railways Company (Chemins de fer Orientaux), primarily an Austro-German capital investment company, was instrumental in reaching the heart of Europe by way of connecting lines (Dagas: 90-98). The same situation obtained in other Levantine ports. It is the case that the port cities of the eastern Mediterranean reflected the prevalence of liberalism in world trade in the second half of the nineteenth, beginning of the twentieth century, a piece of concrete proof of the expansion of capitalism beyond the borders of the West and in the new markets of the East.

Consequently, it is not surprising that a small, but economically strong European colony was established in Thessaloniki. The Franks, as they were called, coined the name of their neighborhood in the center of the city, while maintaining direct social contact with the local bourgeois. This social class included wealthy financiers like the Jewish Allatini and Modiano families, as well as new white-collar professionals, merchants, tradesmen, doctors, and engineers. Jews, Orthodox Greeks, and Dönme[1] – were active participants in the new cosmopolitan environment.

A significant place to begin a discussion of this new era is with the establishment, in 1873, of Thessaloniki's first Gentlemen's Club, the famous Cercle de Salonique. The community gathering of its founding members gives insight into the composition of Thessaloniki's upper crust, which included wealthy Jews, like Hugo Allatini and Samuel Modiano; the Greek, Pericles Hatzilazarou, who would serve as the honorary U.S. consul in Thessaloniki; the Levantine banker, John Chasseuad; the British consul, John Blunt; and the Vali of the Vilayet, Galib Pasha, as Honorary President (Molho: 104-5).

The newly established club promoted an innovative socializing model for Ottoman standards, namely one where anyone could socialize with others based on his economic status, irrespective of one's religious or ethnic background. It should be noted that just a few years later, in 1876, an incident occurred known as the Slaughter of the Consuls, in which the French and the German consuls where butchered by a Muslim mob, thus revealing weak areas as cosmopolitanism and coexistence sought to establish ground (Mansel: 178). Nevertheless, by 1888, Le Cercle de Salonique was flourishing, boasting as many as 142 members, among which were top members of emerging and established professions, including twenty-one doctors, nineteen bankers, fourteen merchants, seven industrialists, and eleven landowners, representing a variety of religious and ethnic groups: sixty-three Jews, fifteen Orthodox Greeks, fourteen Italians, and eleven Dönme Turks (Molho: 106-7). Members of the Dönme community were among the most extroverted and business-oriented of the Turkish elite, like the Kapantzi family whose mansions still decorate the city today, and Ahmed Hamdi Bey, an

[1] Dönme, or Dönmeh, refers to a sect of Jewish converts to Islam who followed the conversion of Sabbatai Zevi (1626–1676), founder of the messianic Sabbatean movement.

entrepreneur and great reformer who served many years as mayor (1893, 1901–1907, 1907–1908) (Baer: 33-36). Thus, Le Cercle de Salonique provided a way for the more prominent members of society to mingle and prosper – like Dr. Dimitris Zannas, of the Greek community, and Husni Bey, Thessaloniki's future mayor. Anyone could see that it was a straightforward road to the future, from yesterday's separated neighborhoods and community constraints to the new mixed neighborhoods, with their art-nouveau mansions and joint business ventures. Moreover, this new bourgeois elite challenged the power of the old leaders and guilds of their respected communities, who kept their authority based on traditional values, religion, and conservatism within community boundaries.

Urban development, as mentioned above, was evident as the city expanded beyond the perimeter of the old walls surrounding it, a great part of which would be demolished. The Boulevard Hamidie was constructed along the line where the east city walls used to be, and a new tram line, the most innovative urban transportation means of the period, linked the center of Thessaloniki with the new quarters of the east side and the *Grand avenue des Campagnes* (Kolonas: 37-78). Along this magnificent road, the bourgeoisie of Thessaloniki – consisting of Jews, Orthodox Greeks, Dönme, and Turks – built its mansions and introduced this new period of urban development with mixed neighborhoods, in which social stratification, not ethnic identity would be the rule (Mazower: 249). For example, at the very end of the Rue de la Campagne and the Countryside Quarter one could see Italian architect Vitaliano Poselli's famous Villa Allatini, a mansion built in 1898, and of such caliber that it would host the Sultan of the empire, Abdul Hamid, after he was dethroned by the Young Turks in 1908 and kept there under house arrest with his harem. In nearly the same area, closer to the seashore, Poselli also built the Allatini Mills, which was the largest flourmill in the Balkans (Kolonas: 180, 336-46).

Without a doubt, the Allatini were the patrons of the new bourgeoisie. They were industrialists, entrepreneurs, bankers, landowners, and arguably the wealthiest family in the Ottoman Empire. The crowning family of Thessaloniki's elite, they succeeded in establishing an economic dynasty of enormous magnitude. Moreover, the Allatini family acknowledged the responsibility of its status and social responsibility, becoming involved in charity work beyond community boundaries in order to help and improve the life of Thessaloniki's citizens (Hekimoglou 2012: 18-25). Their influential work was a leading mark for Thessaloniki's future. Unfortunately for the family, the Italo-Turkish war over the lands of Tripolitania (Libya) in 1911, forced them to flee their birth city, since as Italian citizens they would be expelled by the Ottomans. This was a signal that politics and nationalism were becoming dividing forces in the socio-religious and cultural mix of Thessaloniki.

As expected, the new era of the city would usher in a European air, with the establishment of department stores (including Stein, Orosdi Baeck, Tiring, and others), cafes, restaurants, theatres, and clubs like the Deutscher, which would become the primary place for Germans and Austrians to socialize (Bouroutis: 279-80). Despite the fact that antagonism among the Great Powers was escalating dangerously at the beginning of the twentieth century, the European colony managed to thrive by coming together. Local and international companies had a mixture of personnel and executive staff from the local communities, along with their French, German and Austrian managers. The Allatini Mills company was run by a Frenchman named Privé, while the Allatini family's Olympos Brewery was operated by Matias Mueller, a

German. The Austrian owners of the Orosdi Baeck department store chain entrusted its management to a French executive officer (280).

Similarly, the multi-religious and ethnic outlook of the city was clearly seen in the nationality of the employees of the private sector. In order to offer effective services, the large corporate banks and companies recruited personnel from all the different local communities, irrespective of ethnic origin or religious background. The most significant evidence of diversity in the working place comes from the great enterprises like the railway companies, where Jews, Turks, and Orthodox Greeks, Serbs, and Bulgarians all joined together in embracing company mission ideals and values.

One should note here that this mingling of the bourgeoisie did not necessarily mean that its members were not also respected and ardent patriots of their own communities. The famous Greek architect Xenophon Paionidis, one of the great trinity of engineer-architects (along with Vitaliano Poselli and Pietro Arigoni), introduced Thessaloniki to the new architectural art-nouveau eclecticism. Paionidis was a notable member of the Greek Orthodox community; he served for years on the board of Papafion orphanage and other local Greek schools. At the same time, he was assigned the construction of various communal and private buildings, such as schools for the Greek community, the mansion of the Jewish merchant Jeborga (known as Villa Salem), the house of the high-ranking Turkish military officer Seifullah Pasa (known as Villa Mordoch) and the villa of Hassan Pristine, who was an Albanian Kosovar politician (Kolonas). It is important to point out that Paionides, like many other professionals in Thessaloniki, had an extroverted personality, allowing him to work and socialize beyond community borders. As a matter of fact, he was also a member of the Association of the German Schools of Thessaloniki, and he designed and constructed the main building of the school, as well as further expanding the new gym, for which he received the quite handsome sum of 3,979 Turkish liras (Bouroutis; Anastasiadou: 272-74, 513).

In addition to the social mobility and mingling of the bourgeoisie of Thessaloniki, there was great progress with respect to the introduction of European education. Since the millet system of the Ottomans accorded responsibility for education to the various communities, it soon became obvious that the schools operating within local community borders – like the thriving French Alliance Israélite Universelle schools in the Jewish community – were unable to attract pupils from the other communities despite having an international profile. Nevertheless, the European schools became one of the most important clusters of coexistence in the city. For the most part, whether religious or secular, these schools encouraged the mingling of children of different communities and envisioned the prospect of a common life without borders. In the case of the international schools, the crucial aim was to imbue the society of Thessaloniki with the cultural ideals and values of their respective nations (Bouroutis: 280; Anastasiadou: 260).

The first European schools made their appearance in Thessaloniki back in 1888. In that year, we have the establishment of the German School; the French missionary schools established by the De La Salle Freres (for boys) and the Sœurs de la Charité (for girls); and the Italian schools, including elementary, high school, and commercial-vocational institutions (Mazower). The simultaneous establishment of the international schools also demonstrates the competition of the Great Powers, as a different attribute of education was acknowledged:

namely that education could be a valuable tool of influence and cultural predominance. Specifically, France would become the leading country in terms of this policy, funding numerous educational and non-educational activities throughout the Ottoman Empire. These originated from missionary efforts, but also from secular initiatives, like the Mission laïque, which was established in Thessaloniki in 1906 with ample funding by the French state, witnessing to the importance of the city as a Balkan economic and multicultural center (Bouroutis).

The Deutsche Schule, or German school, is considered to be one of the most important cases this article examines because it is the one that supported an innovative conception, linking education to economy. This is especially so since the latter was the main purpose of coexistence in the Levantine ports, and the reason why social mingling had flourished. The old familiar adage "Money makes the world go round" was especially true here because economic sector gave rise to the prospect of prosperity among the local religious and ethnic communities.

One may wonder why the German school was such a special case. The answer is quite important: it is because the German School of Thessaloniki was established by the biggest economic enterprise in the Balkans, the Chemin de Fer Orientaux (hereafter CO). Being the greatest economic investment in the Balkans, the CO exemplified the magnitude of the Industrial Revolution around the world, and the reason the Ottoman Empire was eventually conquered by the Great Powers and their capitalism. With stocks introduced in more than five different markets (Frankfurt, Berlin, Zurich, Geneva, and, Basel) and one bank carrying its name (Orientalische Eisehnbahnen, based in Zurich), the CO paved – literally, with iron – the pathway of trade throughout the Balkans, connecting Constantinople with Europe, and establishing Thessaloniki as the most important import-export center of the Balkan peninsula.

Among its economic and business networks, the CO expanded its activities by entering another important sector of human activity, namely, education. Schools were established with generous support from the CO, with headmasters and executive board made up of top executives of the company. Case in point, Emanuel Steiner, the Austrian director of CO operations in the Balkans, also served as president of the school (Mazower: 236).

Originally, the school was established to educate the children of families employed by the CO, especially those who came from Austria and Germany. However, it soon became apparent that the school had to open itself up to the main communities of the city in order to be successful and, of course, profitable. The interesting curriculum placed French, the Lingua Franca of that time, as the primary language, which was taught along with German. The fame the German education system had, along with the discipline it demanded, expanded its reputation, attracting more students, allowing it and the CO to expand their influence.

Among this influx of new students, a considerable number came from the Jewish and Orthodox Greek communities, which obviously predominated the city's multicultural society. Muslim pupils were also present, but in smaller numbers, which does not come as a surprise given that many Muslims were suspicious of western education, preferring the Ottoman schools where they could enjoy privileged status and greater opportunity for a career in the Ottoman administration system and military. The most significant fact is that the German school received all communities and, on the eve of the First World War, managed to rank

among the most important and influential European establishments in the region. Its activities transcended community lines and constraints and the school was embraced by a broad audience made up of middle- and upper-class citizens, irrespective of religious persuasion or ethnic origin (Bouroutis).

The following table of German school enrollment effectively illustrates the diversity of Thessaloniki's population according to religion:

Table 1. German School – Students according to religious beliefs[2]

Religion	School Year 1897–1898	School Year 1901–1902	School Year 1905–1906
Catholics	38	27	30
Protestants	30	29	27
Orthodox	71	39	27
Armenians	2	2	4
Jews (Israelites)	55	78	47
Muslims	6	12	17
Total	202	187	152

As the table shows, the level of participation among all religious groups (with the previously noted exception of Ottoman Muslims) was high. It is worth underlining the importance of the enrolment of Jewish and Greek Orthodox students. Belonging to the most important and extroverted communities, along with the Muslim one, Jews and Greeks were the undoubtedly pioneers and leaders of commerce in Thessaloniki. Although competition and rivalry were high in some fields, the presence of both groups in one educational institution witnesses to cooperation in areas of common interest. The same obtained in the economic sector; for example, the largest Greek banks in Thessaloniki, such as Banque d'Orient and Banque d'Athens, had a significant Jewish clientele and strong economic affiliations with Jewish bankers of that community. This was evident in many cases, especially during the economic crises of 1907 and 1911.

The expulsion of all Italian citizens as a result of the Italian-Turkish war in 1911, caused an economic turmoil in the Jewish community in particular, since the Allatini family and other important Jewish financial stakeholders like the Modianos, were also Italian citizens. Thus, the expulsion of prominent Italian citizens brought about the collapse of the Modiano Bank, as well as several smaller credit bureaus, or sarrafs, which usually extended credit and provided other financial services of the community (Hekimoglou 1991). The smaller agencies managed to survive the first years of the twentieth century, even after the official opening of large corporate banks such as the Banque Imperiale Ottomane (mainly of French and British capital) and the Bank de Salonique, of which the Allatini were important shareholders. The economic

[2] Jahresbericht (Yearbook) 1897-98, Bundesarchiv (hereafter BA), File R907-39704, 110. Jahresbericht 1901-02, BA, File R901-39705, 6. Jahresbericht 1906-06, File R901-39705, 28.

crisis of 1911 had an impact on the entire banking sector, proving the interconnection of large and small players. High ranking officials like Cleon Hatzilazarou, who was the manager of the Greek Banque d' Orient, played a significant role in mitigating the tension within the financial market and helping it return to a state of normalcy, as was readily acknowledged by Turkish officials (Hekimoglou 1991).

Table 2. German School – Students according to primary language[3]

Mother tongue	1897–1898	1901–1902	1905–1906
German	49	53	37
Italian	25	9	11
English	6	1	4
French	4	8	8
Sephardic	38	59	40
Bulgarian	5	1	4
Serbian	1	3	
Greek	64	36	26
Armenian		5	4
Turkish	7	10	15
Albanian	3	2	2
Russian			1
Total	202	187	152

It is also quite interesting to view the primary language table of the German school (Table 2), which lists pupils of eleven different linguistic backgrounds, thus confirming the thesis just advanced, that schooling was a significant place of coexistence, offering students the necessary benefits of maintaining a cosmopolitan life for the future. It is of equal importance to realize that the same outlook more or less obtained in other European establishments, like the French missionary schools.

When the secular schools of Mission laïque officially opened, their futures were still at stake, because in Thessaloniki and throughout the eastern Mediterranean, secular education was welcome only to some relatively small extent. The ideas of the French Revolution that informed the French Third Republic were still vivid. Claims for equality and liberty could not be easily perceived, especially since these are societies with great inequalities which, beyond the new era and open social behavior of the members of the new elite, were still quite conservative and sensible in social and moral matters. Furthermore, even after the opening of the Mission laïque, many people expressed concerns about the possibility of moral

[3] Jahresbericht (Yearbook) 1897-98, Bundesarchiv (hereafter BA), File R907-39704, 110. Jahresbericht 1901-02, BA, File R901-39705, 6. Jahresbericht 1906-06, File R901-39705, 28.

degradation.[4] The fact is that western education, whether offered by the French missionary (Table 3) or the German school, was innovative – modern in light of the new curriculum and vocational training, but free of social references potentially liberal or socialist ideas. Moreover, the German system was well known and respected for its sense of authority and the emphasis on discipline.

Table 3. Students according to religious beliefs in the French Missionary Schools (Archives)[5]

Religion	de la Salle Frères		Souers de la Charité	
	1904–1905	1905–1906	1904–1905	1905–1906
Catholics	60	78	182	205
Orthodox	40	48	34	36
Jews	43	51	27	30
Muslims	12	15	2	1
Protestants				3
Total	155	192	245	275

Table 4. Students according to religious beliefs in the three Mission laïque schools (Archives)[6]

Religion	1909–1910
Jews	297
Muslims	67
Orthodox	86
Armenians	11
Catholics	39
Protestants	6
Total	506

[4] Articles from the Greek newspaper Φάρος της Μακεδονίας. Traced in MAE–CADN, File B83 (Fond Salonique Consulat/Serie B/ 604PO/B/83, Thessaloniki, February 6, 1910.

[5] For the de la Salle Frères school year 1904-05: Statistic board, March 1, 1905. For the de la Salle school year 1905-06: Statistics board, March 1, 1906. For the Souers de la Charité school school years 1904-05 and 1905-06: Statistic board of the Souers de la Charité school, n.d., Ministère des Affaires Étrangères – Centre des archives diplomatiques de Nantes (hereafter MAE – CADN), File B83 (Fond Salonique Consulat/Serie B/ 604PO/B/83).

[6] For the Mission laïque schools in Thessaloniki: Annual Report for the Mission laïque schools in Thessaloniki, from the French consul of Thessaloniki to the French ambassador in Constantinople, dated 31 January 1910, MAE-CADN, File 691 (Ambassade de France a Constantinople/ Écoles françaises en Turquie /Serie E/ 166PO/E/691).

The official opening of Mission laïque schools (elementary, course secondaire for girls, and high school; Table 4) would turn out to be a great success for the French sector that would dominate Thessaloniki's educational resources over subsequent years, combining the secular (Mission laïque), missionary (De La Salle Freres, Sœurs de la Charité), and communal (Alliance Israélite Universelle) instructional approaches.

Table 5. Students by nationality in the three Mission laïque schools (Archives).

Nationality	1909–1910
Ottomans	327
French	36
Germans	2
Americans	2
English	4
Austrians	16
Belgians	1
Bulgarians	13
Danish	2
Spanish	22
Greeks	22
Dutch	5
Italians	33
Montenegrins	3
Romanians	2
Russians	1
Serbians	10
Swedish	1
Swiss	4
Total	506

Evidently, the participation of all religious groups would be obvious in the case of secular French education, too. Even more, one now notices a considerably higher participation of Muslim students, proving that a number of families from the Muslim community trusted private European schooling under certain circumstances. Interestingly, additional research in the French archives reveals that a large majority of the Muslim students of Mission laïque belonged to the discrete group, the Dönme. This fact confirms the previous remarks about the extroversion of the specific community and its openness towards new ideas and towards socializing with members of the other communities. Apparently, it was also a French achievement that created the necessary ties to successfully appeal to the Dönme community.

As demonstrated, Mission laïque would also be linked with Terraki, the Dönme communal school, providing it with its French principal and teacher (Bouroutis).

Table 5 offers significant insight into the great pluralism of participation in a European school. Although most students carried Ottoman citizenship, we see nineteen different nationalities in all contributing to the mosaic of a robust religious and ethnic Levantine port city.

In sum, the common conclusion drawn here is that European educational institutions successfully addressed all the diverse communities of Thessaloniki, becoming the most significant models of coexistence in Thessaloniki's multi-religious and multi-ethnic society. Still, one must keep in mind the longstanding rivalries between the Balkan states and the Ottoman Empire. The national aspirations of one Balkan state against the other had a common target, namely the declining Empire. This was confirmed by the Balkan Wars a few years later, at which time the Ottomans were defeated on all fronts, losing most of the European territories that had been under their occupation for nearly five hundred years. For the time being, the Ottoman Turks were attempting to safeguard their power as rulers of the territory. Thus, the "belle époque" atmosphere of the port cities did not actually reflect the general outlook of the region, where tensions and clashes were part of the daily agenda.

Returning to the field of education, it is critical to point out that attendance in any European school required families to pay very high tuition fees, which meant that only families from the middle and the upper classes could afford to enroll their children. This leads to the conclusion that the widely-used term "cosmopolitanism" carried with it class symbolism, since it was only the bourgeoisie who could afford to mingle with fellow citizens, whether Jew or Greek. At the bottom of the class pyramid, the laborers and the poor worked hard to make ends meet and did not have the luxury of social contact with other communities. For them, poverty in was their common ground.

This is not to say that the working class was not being transformed along with the bourgeoisie, for social stratification was a logical consequence of economic and industrial development. One could not find a better place than the multi-religious, multi-ethnic mosaic of Thessaloniki to showcase this. With the temporary liberalization of the Ottoman regime following the Young Turks Revolution of 1908, a wave of strikes broke out, demonstrating the power of a united working class to effectively reveal the harsh working conditions and low wages characteristic of various local industries. One of the largest factories, the Reggie industry, which monopolized the Empire's tobacco industry from the western part of the city, employed a high percentage of Jewish women from the poorer neighborhoods. These women participated en masse in the strikes that blurred the otherwise shining image of the economic miracle of the city (Hadar).

One of the masterminds of the labor strikes was an ardent socialist named Avraam Benaroya. Previously a teacher, Benaroya established the Federation of Socialist Workers, which turned out to be one of the most influential union organizations in the Balkans. His efforts were a prelude to the empowerment of the labor class movement for many years, encouraging the establishment of other Balkan socialist parties. The Federation leaders inspired creation of the Workers Socialist Party in Greece, which eventually became the Greek Communist Party.

At first, Benaroya looked for comrades in the large Jewish community pool and enlisted young men, some of whom were alumni of the liberal Alliance Israelite schools (Benaroya). However, the most important result was that the Federation (the name intentionally coined to federate or unite labor activists) successfully addressed all workers, irrespective of religious or ethnic identity, as class identity was the worker's only real social marker. To mitigate counter arguments, it was stated: ". . . for these ethnic and philological reasons we believe it is best to form an organization to which all the nationalities can adhere without having to abandon their language or culture" (Mazower: 287-90).

The workers' union published *Laboradod* (Εφημερίδα του Εργάτη), a newspaper in four languages: Greek, Bulgarian,[7] Ladino (the Judeo-Spanish language), and Turkish. As a result, the working class of Thessaloniki, made up of Greeks, Bulgarians, Serbs, Jews, Turks, and even Europeans, came to trust the Federation openly (Marketos), even while voicing their concerns from within their own communities. The wave of strikes in Thessaloniki surprised community officials and leaders, since they originated from what was thought to be a "voiceless people," who despite their sizeable population lacked power and authority in the city.

The fact that various companies – including the CO (Issawi) – capitulated to the demands of the strikers attests to the power of the united multi-religious, multi-ethnic labor movement. Although one can highlight the importance of the CO in the economy of the Balkans, one must not underestimate the help it received by the same mechanisms that controlled the economic and social development in the area. When the great strikes broke out in 1908 and 1909, the CO's railway network was paralyzed. Confirming the great ties among members of the city's elite, the newly-elected mayor Osman Adyl Bey, a rich and extroverted mason, Dönme, and son of the reformist former mayor Ahmet Hamdi Bey, intervened to help Emanuel Steiner, Operations Director of the CO and president of the German School, to solve the problem of the strikes (Issawi). The actions of the Dönme mayor were crucial to a win-win scenario. Practically, that means that the prosperity of the city relied on close relations and activities among all important actors. By helping Steiner deal with the deadlock of the strike in the railways, Osman Adyl Bey also secured his position as one of the most important figures of Thessaloniki in his time.

In conclusion, the important contribution of religious and ethnic co-existence in Thessaloniki at the turn of the twentieth century cannot be overstated. Ranked one of the most important trade hubs of the eastern Mediterranean, Thessaloniki was an arena for finding common ground among diverse religious and ethnic communities, plebian or elite. From the bourgeoise Cercle de Salonique to the workers' Federation, neither religious nor ethnic orientation was a significant distinction; however, class placement was. The European schools operated for their own benefit, but their openness and encouragement among diverse populations supported coexistence.

This transnational situation lasted even after the Greek army annexed the city in 1912. A year later, Thessaloniki officially became part of the Greek territory. It would take the Great War, the Great Fire of 1917, and the great catastrophe of 1922 – the forcible population

[7] The Bulgarians were pioneers of the socialist ideas influenced by their Russian comrades.

exchange between Greeks and Turks – to shred this integrated cosmopolitan layer. Still, the presence of the Jewish community remained significant, an important factor in upholding multiculturalism in a rapidly changing city. Unfortunately, all of this came to an end in 1943, with the deportation by the Nazis of the once thriving Jewish community, and the elimination of 96 percent of Thessaloniki's Jews to the death camps of Auschwitz and Bergen-Belsen. But that is another story to be told.

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