



Summary :

The Diocese of Crene, with Çeşme (Crene) as its seat, occurred through the division of the bishopric of Crene and Anea, which included the region of Erythrai, in 1903. The persecution and the expulsion of the Greek-Orthodox in 1922 ended the short-lived existence of the Diocese.

Other Names

Geographical Location

Western Asia Minor

Historical Region

Ionia (peninsula of Erythrai)

1. The area – historical background

The old historical precedent of the ecclesiastical authority of Çeşme can be identified with the bishopric and later diocese of Erythrai which was established during the reign of Emperor Leo VI the Wise with Erythrai as its seat. The ecclesiastical authority of Çeşme of modern times, however, was founded centuries after the area was included in the territory of the diocese of Ephesus. Initially the district of Erythrai came under the united bishopric of Crene and Anea, founded at the beginning of the 19th century (1806), and came under the auspices of the [Diocese of Ephesus](#) during the reign of the metropolitan [Dionysius Kalliarches](#).¹

The re-establishment of the bishopric had been decided by the aforementioned metropolitan and the patriarch [Gregorios V](#) in order to cover the needs of a growing flock in the two districts (the Erythrai peninsular and the Sokya district) after the arrival of [migratory tides](#) from the Peloponnese and the Aegean islands.² The bishopric was later divided; the Çeşme area was raised to the Diocese of Crene in 1903, while the Sokya area evolved into the bishopric, and later, [Diocese of Anea](#).³ Its first metropolitan was Theokletos of Cydoniae.⁴ The official name of this particular ecclesiastical province is formed through the Hellenization of the seat's placename, i.e. [Çeşme](#) (= Crene in Greek), and does not reproduce a historical precedent.

The short "list" of bishops of Crene included, apart from the aforementioned Theokletos (1902/03-1914), who had already served as bishop of Crene for twenty years (since 1883), Kallinikos Byzantios, who was the last metropolitan (1920-1922). Between 1914 and 1920 the metropolitan throne was vacant.⁵

The territories of the [kaza](#) of Karaburun and Çeşme were included in the Diocese of Crene.⁶ Main cities and towns included Çeşme (Crene) – also known from the Russian-Ottoman naval battle in 1770 that resulted in the destruction of the Ottoman fleet –, [Alaçata](#) (10 kms. from Çeşme), [Kato Panagia](#) and Agia Paraskevi, as well as a number of smaller settlements.⁷ On the north coast of the Alaçata isthmus existed hot springs, known already from Antiquity.⁸ The seat of the Karaburun kaza was the settlement of Ahırlı, while on the northwest edge of the peninsular, at the kaza's boundaries, there existed several Greek-Orthodox and Muslim villages.⁹

2. Population information

The Diocese of Crene, according to the census printed in *Xenophanes*, the journal published by the [Club of Anatolian Greeks "Anatoli" in Athens](#), numbered 57.315 Christians. According to S. Antonopoulos, the kaza of the Karaburun had approximately 10.000 Greek-Orthodox – several of which were Turkish-speaking. The kaza of Çeşme included a population of 60.000, of which around 8.000 were Muslims and the rest were almost entirely Greek-Orthodox. The town of Çeşme had 12.000 Greek-Orthodox and 5.000 Muslims, while Kato Panagia, an entirely Greek-Orthodox settlement, had 3.500 or, according to *Xenophanes*, 6.000 inhabitants.¹⁰



According to a different source, the inhabitants of Çeşme were 17.000, of which 2.000 were Muslims and the rest Greek-Orthodox. Alaçata had 15.000 inhabitants; Kato Panagia had 5.000 and Agia Paraskevi 4.000 inhabitants. Finally, Ahırlı had 1.000 inhabitants, mainly Greek-Orthodox . P. Kontogiannis notes that many Greek-Orthodox villages had Turkish names, something which suggests the penetration of Greek-speaking populations into villages which were previously Turkish.¹¹

3. Economy

The main product of the Erythrai peninsula was undoubtedly raisins, but also noteworthy were the production of grains and oil. The mountainous regions supported stock-raising activities; however, the most important exploitation took place at coastal areas with the large fishing fleets and advanced shipping. There were also quarries and a variety of mines, such as the mercury mine at Ahırlı,¹² the lead, zinc and zinc sulphate mines south of Kimitouria (which were only exploited for a short time), while zinc deposits existed near Mavrogianni on the Karaburun peninsula.¹³ The kaza of Karaburun, moreover, produced the “finest” raisins of Erythrai.¹⁴ Before the disaster caused by phylloxera at the end of the 19th century, Çeşme exported 12.000 to 15.000 tons of blond and black raisins to European countries. Also exported were agricultural products such as aniseed, sesame, but also melons, pomegranates, almonds, locust-beans and, from fishing activities, sun-dried octopus.¹⁵

Çeşme was the centre of intense shipping activity, centred mainly on the raisin trade (exported mainly towards the ports of Marseille, Trieste, Odessa and Varna). Alaçata was known for its carpet manufacturing, miniature craftsmanship and textiles, known as *alatza*. Kato Panagia had about one hundred sailing boats, and its inhabitants were active in aniseed and [raisin production](#), while in Agia Paraskevi the inhabitants were mainly fishermen.¹⁶ Agia Paraskevi is said to have had 300 fishing boats which brought in an annual profit of 400 Ottoman lira.¹⁷ At the hot springs, Greek businessmen had become involved in the hotel industry.¹⁸

60 per cent of land in the kaza of the Çeşme was occupied by big landowners and the rest by small holders, while in the kaza of the Karaburun big landowners occupied all the land. In Çeşme, the overwhelming majority of landowners were Greek-Orthodox , while in Karaburun 2/3 were Greek-Orthodox and 1/3 were Muslims.¹⁹

4. Education – culture

In 1911, 42 community schools with 83 teachers and 4.243 pupils came under the auspices of the Diocese of Crene, while during the same period more than 20 associations and societies functioned in the kaza of Çeşme.²⁰ S. Antonopoulos mentions that during the year 1900-1901 330 boys, 320 girls and 150 nursery children attended schools in Çeşme.²¹ Ambitious educational initiatives began during the last quarter of the 19th century. The building of the "Crene Boys' School", which housed nursery classes, full primary school and some gymnasium classes, was built in 1879 with provisions for its expansion and upgrading. A few years later, the "lavish" "Crene Girls' School" was also completed.²²

At various times, the town also accommodated four societies: the “Society for the Promotion of Education of Crene” (1873), the [Club "Athena" of Çeşme](#) (probably re-established in 1877), the “Muses Society for the Promotion of Progress” (1894), and the “Charitable Society” of Crene.²³ There were also several musical groups with varied repertoire as well as local traditional music, establishing Çeşme as a centre of musical production.²⁴

The inhabitants of Alaçata were said to have a tendency towards priesthood, as several metropolitans and bishops came from there. The first community school began functioning there in 1806. The town’s schools, as mentioned by S. Chatzibeis, had eight teachers for 850 male pupils and 7 teachers for 720 female pupils. In Kato Panagia, the boys' school had 190 pupils and the girls' school had 130 pupils.²⁵

The “Erythraia” Club was founded in Alaçata in 1884; it promoted education and later covered broader activities until it was abolished in 1893. The “Ladies Charitable Society of Alaçata” was established in town in 1900. The societies “[Argemnon](#)” (1878)



and “Omonoia” (1899) were founded in Kato Panagia; these were also abolished by the Ottoman authorities for supporting Greek nationalist activities.²⁶

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Glossary :

	kaza
The basic grade of the Ottoman provincial administration. It included the surrounding region of a city or a town. During the late Ottoman Period it is identified with the kaymakamlık.	