

## 5. The role of fraternal associations

**A** *delphotetes* (fraternal associations) and *patries* (associations of individuals from the same “fatherland”) played an important role in the organisation and development of the Greek Communities in Egypt. Fraternal associations can be defined as *sui generis* associations with philanthropic aims. They represented a distinct cultural entity and promoted social and humanitarian agendas. Their establishment was based on national-local criteria within the framework of the overall community. Members originating from the same “fatherland” or native place, the strengthening of ties amongst compatriots, and the provision of mutual material and moral support are the main characteristics of fraternal associations and their activity.

The successful activity of fraternal associations was dependent upon internal solidarity. Mutual support and proactive interaction within a defined group were always considered to be of great importance, as were the commitment to providing steady and constant support to schools and hospitals. At the same time, fraternal associations fulfilled a societal function by nourishing “good neighbourly relations and coexistence” within the wider Egyptian environment.

Fraternal associations and some of their more prominent members also supported Muslim charitable organisations, demonstrating an interest in the welfare of individuals who did not necessarily share their specific ethnic and religious origin. In this way, they broadened their prevailing ethnocentric views and expressed a wider, more cosmopolitan social conscience. This is also discernible in the 1860 regulations for the administration of the *Abeteios Schole* (Abet School) in Cairo, founded with a bequest provided by the brothers Ananias, Raphael and Georgios Abet. The regulations consist of 26 articles, which are intended to remain “unassailable and invariable.” Article four reads: “[The school] is intended as an educational institution for boys of the Orthodox faith. However, those of other nationalities or religious beliefs are not excluded. All are to be educated free of charge, without any religious or racial discrimination.” According to the terms of their bequest, the Abet brothers also intended the school to function

as “a means of encouraging a stronger ethical bond and a closer relationship between the native people [of Egypt] and the other communities [established there], through education and the exposure to and acquisition of [new] customs and languages.”<sup>22</sup>

In the wills of prominent Egyptian Greeks who belonged to fraternal organisations representing their native places, we also find bequests to Muslim charitable organisations in both Egyptian pounds and pounds sterling. For example, in the will of Evangelos K. Achillopoulos we read: “I leave to the Muslim Charitable Organisation of Cairo bonds amounting one thousand Egyptian pounds.” Likewise, in his will, Constantine M. Xenakis states: “I leave eighty pounds to the Muslim Charitable Organisation of Cairo.” This indicates the degree to which the Greek communities had been integrated into the wider social and religious environment of Egypt.

It is interesting that the income from bequest of stocks and bonds was often intended to be “distributed at Easter and Christmas to fellow Greeks who are destitute or unfit to make their own living.”<sup>23</sup> This form of support was also tangibly expressed in the field of benefaction.

Fraternal associations therefore represent a historical, *sui generis* form of national-local solidarity for expatriates, as well as an environment where harmonious relations with the broader Egyptian receiving culture were cultivated. It is also important to emphasise that fraternal associations were active in all Greek communities abroad during the 19th and 20th centuries.

Beyond solidarity, mutual support and social assistance, fraternal associations also served as a fertile environment for the charitable activities of individual members. They facilitated the emergence of a model for individual support for public benefit initiatives, the most exemplary incarnation of which is the phenomenon of benefaction.