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## Phanar Greek Orthodox College (Constantinople)

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The Phanar Greek Orthodox College, known as ‘Patriarchal Great School of the Nation’ (Πατριαρχική Μεγάλη του Γένους Σχολή *Patriarxikí Meyáli tu Génus Sxolí*), is the oldest Greek educational establishment in Istanbul after the Ottoman conquest. It is situated close to the Ecumenical Patriarchate in the Phanar (Gk. Φανάρι *Fanári*; Turk. *Fener*). It became the main place of instruction for the powerful Phanariot Greek aristocracy, and then for the Istanbul Greek bourgeoisie. Nowadays, the number of pupils has dramatically diminished. Due to various sociolinguistic reasons, the use of Turkish as the main common language among the students increases, while the use of Greek in and outside the classrooms is increasingly reduced.

The Phanar Greek Orthodox College in Istanbul is also known as ‘Patriarchal Lycée at the Phanar’, ‘Patriarchal Academy’, and, from the 17th century, as “Patriarchal Great School of the Nation” (Πατριαρχική Μεγάλη του Γένους Σχολή *Patriarxikí Meyáli tu Génus Sxolí* – where ‘nation’ is intended in the sense of the Ottoman *millet*, i.e. as the religious community of Orthodox Greeks) ( Gritsopoulos 1966:72–73). Various Ottoman and Turkish names include *Mekteb-i Kebir* (‘The Great School’) and *Fener Rum Kebir Okulu* (‘Great Phanar Greek School’), while the official denomination today is *Özel Fener Rum Ortaokulu ve Lisesi* (‘Private Phanar Greek Secondary and High School’). Its



founding goes back to 1454, being thus the oldest Greek educational establishment in Istanbul after the Ottoman conquest, and it developed into the main place of instruction for the powerful Phanariot Greek aristocracy, being annexed to the Ecumenical Patriarchate in the Phanar (Gk. Φανάρι *Fanári*; Turk. *Fener*), and, subsequently, for the rising Ottoman Greek bourgeoisie. In 1803 it was transferred to Kuruçeşme (Ξηροκρήνη *Ksirokríni*) on the shores of the Bosphorus in an attempt by influential Phanariots to dislocate the education of the youth from the Patriarchate; however in 1850/1852 it was re-established in the Phanar. Overcoming its decline in the first half of the 19th century in the aftermath of the Greek revolution, it was rebuilt in its present form in 1881 thanks to the contribution of wealthy Istanbul Greeks (Alexandris 1983:46–47). The large red building, which dominates today the Golden Horn, was planned by the architect Konstantinos Dimadis, who was himself a graduate from the school. The list of teachers and directors includes some of the most salient names of Greek intelligentsia, such as Theófilos Korydaléfs (director from 1621 to 1639), Aléxandros Mavrokordátos (director 1663–1671), and Evgénios Vúlgaris (teacher 1660–1661) (Büyükkarcı 2003:120–121; cf. the website of the school: <https://fenerrumlisesi.k12.tr/tarihce/>). Turkish language as a subject in Ottoman minority schools was introduced in 1895 (Alexandris 1983:46); today Turkish is the language of instruction for various subjects, such as history, geography, and sociology. At the beginning of the 20th century, a pedagogical department was instituted (1902), and the former Helleno-Christian humanistic mission of the school was re-oriented towards a professional one, not only for future school teachers, but also in view of commercial training (Ziogou-Karastergiou and Foukas 2004). Since 1988/89, the school also takes in female pupils due to the closure of the nearby Ioakímio (Ιωακείμειο) School for Girls. However, the number of pupils has dramatically diminished since the mid-1960s, mainly because of the general decline of Istanbul Greeks, but also because parents often prefer to send their children to other foreign or Turkish private educational establishments. This has also to do with the general sociolinguistic scenario of language attrition and, eventually, shift due to a lower status, and thus a decreasing vitality, for the Greek variety of Istanbul among young speakers (see [Constantinopolitan Greek](#)). Since the late 1970s, Arabic-speaking Christian children have also begun to enter the school ([Greek and Arabic, 2. Late Contacts](#)), reaching more than 50% of the pupils, which additionally increases the use of Turkish as the only common language among the students and reduces the use of Greek in and outside the classrooms (Markou 2009:28, Rompopoulou 2016:8–9).

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