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THE TRANSFORMATION OF OTTOMAN CRETE

Revolts, Politics and Identity in the Late Nineteenth Century

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Dedicated to my father
Mehmet Rıza Şenışık

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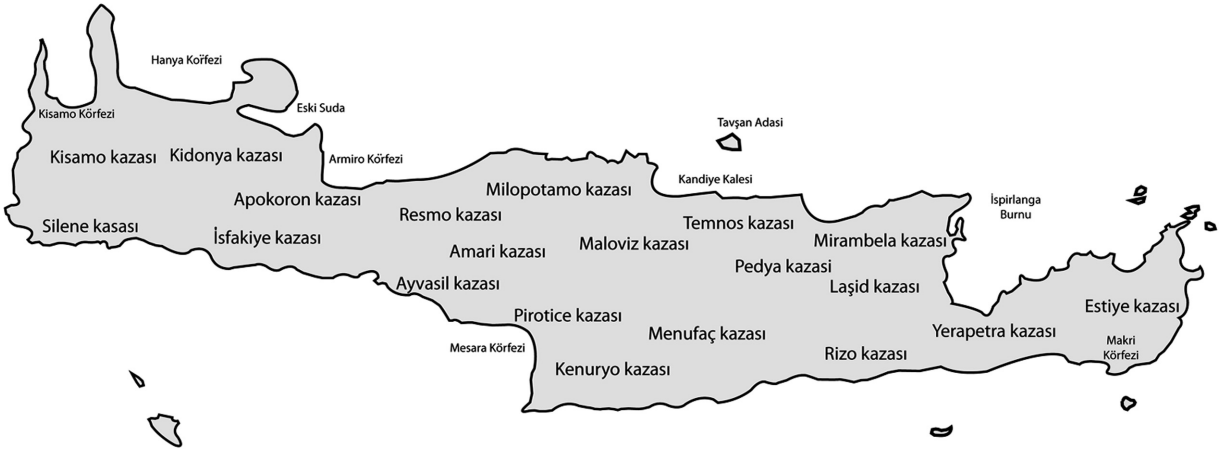
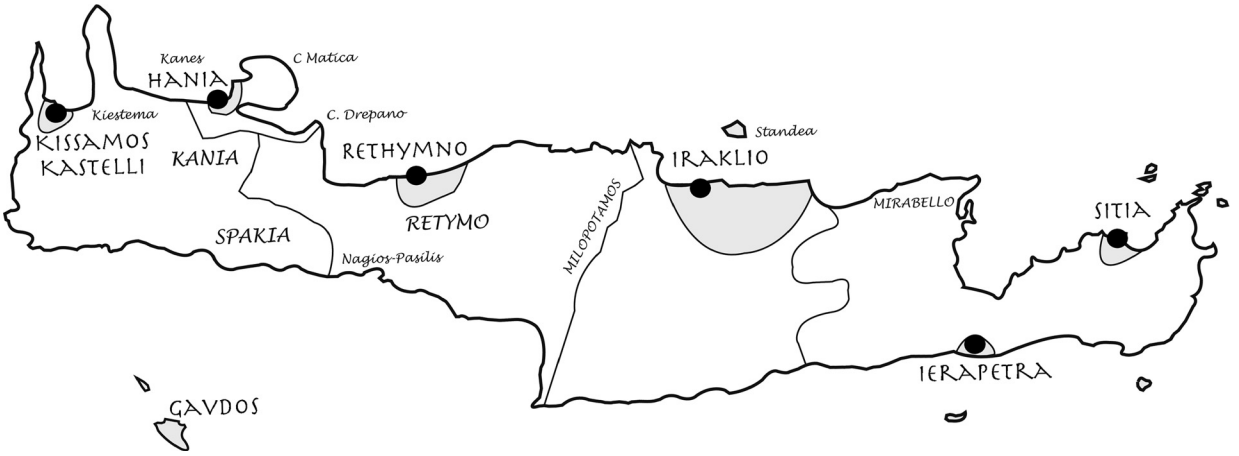


Map 1 Map of Crete, 1307 (1889)



Map 2 The occupation of the major Cretan cities by the European Powers, 1897

INTRODUCTION

This book is about the transformation of 'Ottoman Crete' into 'independent Crete' during the late Ottoman Empire (1895–98); just before it finally became a 'province of Greece' in 1908. It examines the Cretan revolts of 1896 and 1897 in detail, and then analyses the establishment of the autonomous government and the withdrawal of the Ottoman troops from the island. The main purpose of this book is, therefore, to discuss the overall *raison d'être* of these revolts as well as the causes of the unsatisfactory conditions within Cretan society, and their direct social and political effects on the lives of Cretans. It also aims to demonstrate how the situation was perceived by Ottoman statesmen and what kind of counter-measures were proposed and employed by the Ottoman administration. However, this book is not concerned with explaining all the political and social dynamics affecting the island during this period. In other words, it does not claim to include and cover every detail of Ottoman rule of the island in the late nineteenth century. Rather, it explores one of the most sensitive and turbulent years by focusing on the underlying reasons and determining factors that led the Cretan Christians to rebel against the Ottoman administration in 1896 and 1897. Therefore, the basic aim of this book is to examine the last three years of actual Ottoman rule in Crete by placing special emphasis upon the Cretan revolts of 1896 and 1897 so as to arrive at a more comprehensive understanding. At the same time, this book not only provides a detailed picture of the power relations, both at local and imperial levels, but also depicts the relationship of the late Ottoman state to its Cretan subjects.

The book seeks to provide a profile of the so-called 'nationalist liberation struggle' of Cretan Christians and attempts to analyse how

they were politicised and nationalised, and why they engaged in rebellious activities. Furthermore, it argues that the Cretan revolts of 1896 and 1897 dramatically altered the *status quo* and laid the groundwork for the *transformation* of the local structure and the establishment of autonomous government in Ottoman Crete, and then for the separation of the island from the Ottoman Empire. In other words, these revolts altered the internal dynamics within the island, and the relationship between the island and the Ottoman state, and shaped the post-Ottoman era. To understand the causes behind the conflict and violence at that time, this book seeks to find answers to the following questions: How were the Cretan Christians politicised and nationalised? What did the list of Cretan Christians' grievances include? Why did they include a national context? How did the revolts happen? How were the revolts financed? What kind of government did the insurgents desire? Where did the revolts occur (rural or urban areas)? What was their scope (wide-spread or local and limited)? How long did they last? When did the Cretan Christians rebel? Why did they choose that particular time? What were the effects of these revolts on the Cretans?

This book concentrates primarily on how Ottoman statesmen evaluated the internal conflicts within the island and the kind of measures and policies they proposed. It is my contention that the Ottoman statesmen were aware of the dangers threatening the survival of the Ottoman Empire and the sovereignty of the Ottoman Sultan Abdülhamid II. I argue that they responded in various ways and made great efforts to avert the marginalisation of Ottoman power in Crete. Among the most important findings in the Ottoman archives have been materials documenting the long reports and memoranda of Ottoman statesmen, which reveal much about how these statesmen perceived the internal conditions and inhabitants of Crete. The variety of the material which has been provided goes beyond the information and findings available from the other sources and will make an exclusive contribution to the literature.

Unlike the existing literature, by arguing that the developments in Ottoman Crete were essentially unique, this book suggests that it is necessary to understand both coexistence and violence in Ottoman

Crete within the context of the nineteenth-century Ottoman Empire. In other words, the Cretan revolts and inter-communal relations in Ottoman Crete are to be analysed through an integrative approach in which both local and imperial dynamics have to be considered. As was the case in other multi-ethnic empires, Muslims and non-Muslims lived side-by-side in the Ottoman Empire, with common and mutual economic, social and political interests and goals. Despite their seemingly irreconcilable differences, they maintained integrated social and economic lives due to their common interests. It is important to keep in mind that inter-communal relations in Ottoman Crete were both unique and part of a broader world. This approach enables us to understand the dynamics of Cretan society and at the same time to better evaluate the broader causes behind the Cretan revolts.

By examining this period, this book also aims to reveal the extent to which Ottoman Crete was incorporated into the fold of the Greek mainland. It is interesting to note that after the establishment of the Greek Kingdom (1830), the infiltration of Greek national ideology into Cretan society helped shape the trajectories of politics and led to the gradual transformation of the island into part of the Greek world. The Greek state's irredentist policies and ideological and cultural infiltrations played a vital role in introducing the modern Greek identity to Ottoman Crete. In other words, the Cretan Christians were gradually indoctrinated by the idea of belonging to an 'imagined community'. As was the case in many other modernising societies of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, schools emerged as an important means for indoctrinating the Christian pupils with the concept of 'Greekness'. The circulation of journals, periodicals and pamphlets contributed *par excellence* to the formation of modern Greek identity among the Christian inhabitants of the island. The following chapters will also demonstrate that *ad hoc* committees, both on the island and in Greece, were crucial in this process. Ideological and financial backing for the Cretan revolts was organised by the members of Cretan and Greek committees in Athens. The assistance of those committees, in certain cases in cooperation with the Greek government, provided the material and financial resources of the Cretan insurgents.

Theories of Nationalism and Conceptual Framework

Until the 1960s, primordialism[1] was the dominant ideology in the Balkan nationalist historiography. Accordingly, in this context, conventional writings on Balkan nationalism often considered the Ottoman period as 'dark age', and the model applied for the writing of history was the confrontation and conflict between the 'ruler' and 'ruled'; between the 'oppressor' and the 'oppressed'. The sufferings of the region's Christians were regarded as 'tales of martyrdom', 'national resistance', and 'the heroism of the Christians' against 'the infidel Muslim oppressor'.[2] Moreover, this conventional view did not provide a detailed perspective on the structure of Ottoman governance but merely generalised Ottoman rule in the Balkans under the name of *Tourkokratia* ('Ottoman rule'). On the basis of such stereotypes, the motivations for the rise of nationalism and nationalist, separatist movements in the Balkans have been variously explained by conventional historians. Many books on Balkan nationalism, for instance Seton-Watson's *The Rise of Nationality in the Balkans*, simply demarcated the Ottoman Empire along religious lines, Muslims and non-Muslims, and ethnic and religious factors were seen as the main reasons for the rise of nationalism in the Empire.[3] In other words, ethno-religious factors have typically been viewed as the primary reason for the rise of nationalist movements and the events have been seen as a confrontation between two religious groups. Those scholars understood and described these movements in ethno-religious terms and interpreted them as reflections of 'primordial hatreds', and instituted certain projects that sought to address nationalist movements according to these terms.[4] The conflicts that prevailed throughout the Ottoman Balkans were analysed within the context of the 'national-awakening' paradigm, and nationalist historians attempted to explain the underlying reasons for these conflicts as the reflections of the 'awakening' of the 'subjugated' peoples.[5] In addition, some contemporary historians claim that the wars which took place in the Balkans in the 1990s were nothing more than 'ethnic conflicts'. Maria Todorova, for instance, has argued that the so-called 'ethnic conflicts' between the Balkan peoples were the result of the Ottoman legacy.[6]

In a similar vein, Greek conventionalist historiography has typically depicted Ottoman rule as a 'period of tyranny and slavery' for the Greek nation. It was a 'period of vicious and inhumane slavery, which lasted for four centuries, during which the Greeks lost every sense of civilization, as they were subjected to brutality.'[7] All the blame was cast on the shoulders of Ottoman rule, which was referred to as 'the Turkish yoke': 'Greece was the first Balkan country to achieve independence ... from the Ottoman yoke. This was the product of a long and arduous struggle against the conqueror.'[8] And what is more, the Ottoman Sultan was referred to as a 'tyrant'.[9] In this context, the Ottoman period in the Balkans in general and on the island of Crete in particular has been regarded as a 'source of cultural pollution' and the Ottoman Empire has been perceived as non-Western and Islamic. Thus, its domination is considered to have been of an imitative and derivative nature.

Needless to say, this sort of historiography has been discredited for decades. As noted by James Gelvin, nationalist studies have been subjected to various alterations in the last two decades. New methodological approaches and comparative analyses have been introduced and essential categories such as 'nation', 'nationalism', and 'national identity' have been studied within the framework of unconventional analytical methods. Contemporary scholars in the field of nationalist studies made various attempts to deconstruct teleological approaches of state-sponsored nationalisms and official nationalist histories. In this way, new phrases such as 'the invention of tradition', and 'peasants into Frenchmen' became commonplace in the academic discourse on nationalism. Today, it is common for historians to argue that identity is not 'fixed',[10] but rather a 'fluid, historically rooted construct; boundaries created between groups and loyalties cultivated to groups frequently shift and change'.[11] In addition, the shift from primordialist to constructivist theories of nationalism opened the way for the 'belief that nations are created and a relatively new phenomenon in world history'.[12]

Unlike the primordialists, Ernest Gellner has remarked that 'nationalism is a very distinctive species of patriotism, and one which becomes pervasive and dominant only under certain conditions, which

in fact prevail in the modern world, and nowhere else'.[13] He argues that nationalist movements create nations and not vice-versa. In other words, nations do not create nationalism. For Gellner, 'nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness: it invents nations where they do not exist'.[14] It is clear that nationalism is an entirely modern phenomenon and the product of the modern industrial world.[15] The transition from agrarian societies to modern industrial ones is the key factor in understanding the emergence of nationalism. The replacement of 'low' by 'high' cultures played a crucial role in this transition. Gellner asserts that 'high culture' is inculcated through a mass, standardised and academy-supervised education system and defines a nation 'as a society with a high culture that is a specially cultivated, standardized, education-based, literate culture'.[16]

Benedict Anderson has located the origins of the modern nation historically at the junction of three developments in the Western European world. These are: the decline of religious communities and of dynastic realms, and a fundamental change in the conceptions of time. Finally, the advent of large-scale commercial book publishing, or what Anderson calls 'print-capitalism', made it possible more than anything else 'for rapidly growing numbers of people to think about themselves, and to relate themselves to others, in profoundly new ways'; that is, in 'national' terms.[17]

What follows, first, is the presentation of the contemporary problematic which is generally related to ethnic and national conflicts or minority and autonomy rights. Then, in order to be able to address the related questions as to whether 'nationalisms' should be understood as 'inherited' and 'real' or as 'invented' and 'imagined', and how we should understand the ways in which nationalisms manipulate history, Anderson's concept of nation as an 'imagined community' and its 'cultural roots' will be explored. Finally, in reference to the actual problematic, some conclusions will be inferred from the perspectives presented.

Benedict Anderson argues that nationalism emerged towards the end of the eighteenth century as a result of the 'spontaneous distillation of a complex "crossing" of discrete historical forces', and that, once created, they became models which could be used in a great variety of

ideologies.[18] However, a persuasive explanation of nationalism should not confine itself to specifying the cultural and political factors that facilitate the growth of nations. Rather, the real challenge lies in showing why and how these particular cultural artifacts have aroused such deep attachments 'that makes it possible, over the past two centuries, for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willingly to die for such limited imaginings'.[19] In other words, the crucial question is: 'what makes the shrunken imaginings of recent history ... generate such colossal sacrifices?'[20]

Before addressing this question, Benedict Anderson tries to offer a workable definition of 'nation' (and therefore nationalism). This is because there is, according to Anderson, a terminological confusion surrounding the concept of nation or nationalism which is partly caused by the tendency to treat it as an ideological construct. Things would be easier if it is seen as belonging to the same family as 'kinship' or 'religion'. Hence, his definition of the nation is 'an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign'.[21] It is *imagined*, because 'the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion'.[22] It is imagined as *limited*, because each nation has finite boundaries beyond which lie other nations. A person ascribes unlimited sovereignty and features to the *de facto* limited community. It is imagined as *sovereign*, because it was born in the age of Enlightenment and Revolution, when the legitimacy of the divinely ordained, hierarchical dynastic realm was rapidly waning: the nations were dreaming of becoming free, and this meant possessing a sovereign state. Finally, it is imagined as a *community*, because 'regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship'.[23]

According to Anderson, it is ultimately this sense of fraternity that makes it possible for so many millions of people to willingly lay down their lives 'for such limited imaginings'.[24] He criticises Gellner for identifying 'invention' with 'fabrication' and 'falsity', rather than with 'imagining' and 'creation'; with the intention of showing that nationalism masquerades under false pretences. Such a view implies that

there are 'real' communities, which can be compared advantageously to nations. However, all communities larger than small villages with 'face-to-face contact (and perhaps even these) are imagined'.[25] Hence, Anderson concludes, communities should not be distinguished by their falsity or genuineness, 'but by the style in which they are imagined'.[26]

Emphasising the political aspect of nationalism, Eric Hobsbawm has contended that nations are the products of nationalism, which is a political programme aiming to create a nation-state. According to Hobsbawm, the nature of nations can be understood by analysing national traditions, which are examples of 'invented traditions';[27] i.e. 'traditions actually invented, constructed and formally instituted'.[28] These are quite recent inventions, often deliberately constructed to serve particular ideological ends. The very expression 'invention of tradition' is somewhat redundant, since all traditions, as products of human behaviour and human imagination rather than the result of natural forces, are invented in one way or another. Hobsbawm alleged that the period between 1870 and 1914 was the apogee of invented traditions. This period, for him, was also important for the incursion of the masses into politics, which created problems for rulers in retaining the obedience and loyalty of their subjects. At this point, 'the invention of tradition' was put on the agenda by the ruling elites to cope with these problems. The development of primary education, the invention of public ceremonies, and the mass production of public monuments were the three main innovations of the period.[29] As a result of this, 'nationalism became a substitute social cohesion through a national church, a royal family or other cohesive traditions, or collective group self-presentations, a new secular religion'.[30]

These theories emphasise 'macro-historical forces'[31] such as the connection between industrialisation and nationalism, the growth of the state, mass education, print capitalism, cultural factors, the role of politics, and power struggles.[32] They argue that nationalism emerged under certain conditions as a result of 'discrete historical forces'.

To understand the emergence of feelings of nationalism in Ottoman Crete, one should examine the specific conditions which flourished on the island and try to answer the question of when and how the situation became fertile for the emergence of nationalism in an island where certain

features and elements of nationalisation were not present. In this respect, the politicisation and nationalisation process of the Orthodox Christian community of the island is a very significant point to be examined. Moreover, one should also ask what made the Cretan Christians decide to sacrifice their lives or 'willingly to die'[33] in the so-called 'nationalist liberation struggle' for an abstract entity, or an 'imagined community'. In this sense, it is fair to note that 'nationalism is a discourse that constantly shapes our consciousness and the way we constituted the meaning of the world. It determines our collective identity by producing and reproducing us as "nationals".'[34] And thus, the nationalist discourse became a key element in uniting the Cretan Christians, who used this discourse to explain and legitimise their actions.

I argue that the Greek War of Independence (1821–29) became a model and provided the impetus for developments on the island in terms of nationalist revolts of the Cretan Christians. In other words, the Greek War of Independence and the infiltration of modern Greek identity into the island manipulated the rebellious history of Crete and became a necessary precondition for the politicisation and nationalisation of the Orthodox Christian community of the island. Molly Greene's words illustrate the importance of the creation of a Greek identity and the Greek War of Independence in terms of the change in the vision of the Cretan Christians:[35]

> Daskolyiannēs' uprising [1770] was part of that long-term process, although its vision was not a national one but rather one in which Christian Orthodox Russia would replace the Ottoman Turks in Constantinople and the East in general. ... Daskolyiannēs' exclusivist vision, of course, was the one that finally triumphed in Crete and throughout the Greek world. It was in the rural areas that fight against the Ottomans was launched and finally won, and thus to the peasant's traditional enmity toward urban life was added the powerful tonic of a national vision that exalted the authentic country-side over the corrupt Ottoman city.

The available sources focused on the union of Crete with Greece and interpreted it as the *absolute* political and national aim of the Christian

insurgents and *the* major reason for the Cretan revolts. Indeed, Christian insurgents aimed to change the political, economic and social structure of Cretan society and to seize power by overthrowing the Ottoman administration and forcing the evacuation of Ottoman troops from the island. In other words, Christian insurgents attempted to transform the existing Cretan society into a new one, in which Christians would be dominant. In this respect, for example, if we use Antonio Gramsci's words, the Cretan Christians' aim can be interpreted as a 'hegemonic struggle'. Gramsci defined hegemony as 'intellectual and moral leadership (*direzione*) whose principal constituting elements are consent and persuasion'.[36] According to Gramsci, a social group or class assumes a hegemonic role in order to articulate the cultural and ideological belief systems of a society. In this approach, the revolutionary party attempts to transform society and 'conducts a hegemonic struggle to undermine the legitimating institutions of bourgeois society'.[37] This 'hegemonic struggle' is relevant to the Cretan case in that the subordinate group (Christian community) endeavoured to become the dominant one.

There is no doubt that union with Greece (*enosis*/*ένωσις*) was very often put forward by the Christian insurgents of Crete, but it is important to remember that those insurgents sometimes turned their faces to Russia, their Orthodox co-religionists, to get support for their insurgent activities in order to overthrow the Ottoman administration. Moreover, the following chapters will explain that while certain Cretan Christian insurgents were in favour of the establishment of an autonomous government on the island, others promoted the unification with Greece.

This book suggests that the Cretan revolts of 1896 and 1897 are to be examined not only within the context of separatist nationalist movements of the nineteenth century, but also that of the local structure of Ottoman Crete.[38] According to Liah Greenfeld, 'every nationalism was an indigenous development', but at the same time 'the development of national identities ... was essentially an international process, whose sources in every case but the first lay outside the evolving nation'.[39] From this perspective, the specific nature of Cretan society and specific internal conditions, and at the same time 'international process', became essential in formulating the matrix of

these revolts. It is important to remember that nationalism was the most powerful ideology in the nineteenth century and that it shaped the course of subsequent world history. The nationalist movements in the Ottoman Empire had their counterparts in other *ancien régime*s like the Habsburg and Russian Empires, and were able to radically alter the multi-ethnic structures of these empires, leading to the establishment of nation-states. In this period, the Christian subjects of the Ottoman Empire rebelled against the Ottoman administration and succeeded in establishing new independent 'quasi-nation-states' in the Balkans. The establishment of the Greek Kingdom became the crucial model for the other Balkan peoples.

However, the establishment of the Greek Kingdom had particular importance for the course of Cretan history since it diverted the general course of the socio-cultural dynamics by politicising and nationalising the Orthodox Christian population of Ottoman Crete, which intensified the conflicts within the island. The indigenous developments also shaped the scope of the Cretan revolts. The local Cretan Christians were struggling to achieve their own demands and desires. In other words, these local Cretan Christians mobilised and voiced their own demands. For that reason, the involvement of the local Christian population in the national movements was the decisive element in the Cretan revolts.

Miroslav Hroch examined and defined nationalism among the small states of Europe and divided the national movements into three fundamental phases: Phase A, the period of scholarly interest, Phase B, the period of patriotic agitation, and Phase C, the rise of a mass national movement.[40] Phase A is essential in that it 'is marked by a passionate concern on the part of a group of individuals, usually intellectuals, for the study of the language, the culture, the history of the oppressed nationality'.[41] Phase B, according to Hroch, is the decisive phase for the small state and 'the fermentation process of national consciousness'. In this stage, a group of patriots who were discontent with the existing conditions aim to raise the national consciousness among the people. In the last stage, Hroch considered that 'national consciousness has become the concern of the broad masses'.[42] Hobsbawm also divided the history of national movements into three phases: Phase A is 'purely

cultural, literary and folkloric'. In Phase B, militants are active in promoting and campaigning 'the national idea'. In Phase C, 'nationalist programs acquire mass support, or at least some of the mass support that nationalists always claim they represent'.[43]

According to Hroch, these three processes are crucial in the transformation of intellectual activity into a movement: a social and/or political crisis of the old order accompanied by new tensions and horizons; the emergence of discontent among significant elements of the population; and a loss of faith in traditional moral systems, above all a decline in religious legitimacy, even if this only affects small numbers of intellectuals.[44] For Hroch, a successful national movement includes four elements: first, a crisis of legitimacy, linked to social, moral and cultural strains; second, a certain amount of vertical social mobility (some educated people must come from the non-dominant ethnic group); third, a fairly high level of social communication, including literacy, schooling and market relations; fourth, nationally relevant conflicts of interest.[45] In this framework, the patriotic agitation in Ottoman Crete started after the Greek War of Independence, which played a stimulating role for the Cretan Christians. This patriotic agitation gained momentum by the infiltration of Greek national ideology through various means such as education and communication and the discontent of the Cretan Christians with the existing system. In other words, the indoctrination of the Cretan Christians with Greek national ideology increased the pace of ethnic and national consciousness among the Cretan Christians as it politicised and nationalised the Orthodox Christian population of the island. In addition, discontent among the Cretan Christians with the existing system played a significant role in the emergence of a mass movement on the island. Put another way, when the infiltration of the Greek national ideology was fused with the local discontent, the Cretan Christians found themselves right in the midst of the wave of nationalism and became involved in the nationalist movements.

The shift in the relationships between the Christian and Muslim communities of Ottoman Crete and the politicisation and nationalisation of the Christian demands are also examined within the theoretical framework of Charles Tilly. According to Tilly, at the beginning of

the nineteenth century, conflicts between different social groups were defensive, local and backward. Tilly defines these types of conflicts as 'reactive conflicts', such as tax rebellion and food riots. For him, after the victories gained by the state, proactive forms of collective action became the standard settings for collective violence. They are 'proactive' rather than 'reactive' since 'at least one group is making claims for rights, privileges, or resources not previously enjoyed'.[46] In the case of Crete, the continuous attempts of the Cretan Christians to end Ottoman rule on the island and their fierce struggles to seize the institutions of the state and to gain social, economic and political privileges are 'proactive'. In other words, they attempted to destroy existing social-structural arrangements and tried to disestablish the value system of the Ottoman administration.

However, it is important to note that although I use certain points of the above-mentioned theories in conceptualising my framework, unlike certain contemporary studies, for example Ussama Makdisi's work on Mount Lebanon,[47] I have not relied strictly on any theoretical perspectives as a guideline of historical analysis. In his book, Makdisi examines the sectarian practices among Maronite Christians and Druze Christians in Mount Lebanon. Makdisi strictly adopted Edward Said's critique of Orientalism as an explanatory framework in his textual analysis of sectarian practices. However, my aim is not to discredit these approaches. Instead, this book is concerned with explaining the Cretan case more widely than through one theoretical assumption.

Available Literature on Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Crete

In spite of its significance for the past and present, Ottoman Crete has not been studied in much depth and scholars have devoted very little attention to the island, partly because it requires a thorough knowledge in different fields and languages, and partly because many people have preconceived ideas about what happened in the past, influenced by the present. By interpreting the Cretan revolts simply as reflections of religious tensions, the available literature fails to understand the dynamics of Cretan society. Partly as a result of this,

it has produced superficial explanations for the period under scrutiny and instituted certain projects that sought to address revolts along these terms.

As one of the oldest and most well-structured ancient civilisations of the Eastern Mediterranean, the island of Crete has long attracted attention from Western European travellers. For that reason, travel accounts are a major source of detailed information on the history, customs, topography, geography and people of the island.[48] William Miller, for instance, devoted part of his book to describing his findings and observations on the internal situation, particularly the European occupation of the major towns of the island in 1898, evaluating events from the British imperial perspective.[49] He focused on the picturesque and 'cosmopolitan character' of Chania, stating that 'all nationalities meet, all tongues are spoken, all currencies pass muster'.[50] Miller interpreted events from the Orientalist point of view. While he was proud of Western civilisation, he considered Crete to be an underdeveloped island that lacked the elements of modernity.

In addition to travel literature, eyewitness accounts by Western European and Ottoman journalists contributed to the literature.[51] On the other hand, *Devlet-i Âliyye-i Osmânî ve Yunan Muhârebesi 1314*, written by Süleyman Tevfik and Abdullah Zühtü, both correspondents for the Ottoman daily *Sabâh*, provides details of the Ottoman–Greek War of 1897 and the Cretan issue, and is helpful in elucidating how Ottoman journalists transmitted the events.[52]

Western European academic literature has conceptualised the events in Ottoman Crete in terms of the 'Cretan Question'. From the standpoint of the 'Eastern Question' paradigm, for instance, the Ottoman administration in Crete was considered a 'corrupt and impecunious Oriental Government',[53] and the 'Cretan Question' was seen as an aspect of the 'Eastern Question'.[54] It is my contention that the term 'Cretan Question' is inappropriate in the case of nineteenth-century Ottoman Crete. The term 'Cretan issue' seems more appropriate to refer to the developments that took place on the island, because things were somewhat different from the way they were perceived by the European states. In this book, for that reason, I prefer to use the term 'the Cretan issue'.

The 'disintegration theory' explains that active religious and ethnic groups became 'aware of their national consciousness' over time and began to rebel against their 'theocratic oppressive ruler'. This theory claims that those groups were able to gain their independence through armed struggles. In this context, it was generally argued that the Ottoman Empire had a theocratic system which was not able to control ethnic and religious groups within the empire. Accordingly, these groups found a fertile ground for achieving their independence from the Ottoman Empire through armed struggle and rebellious activities. It was often claimed that Ottoman Crete was one of the worst-governed provinces in the Ottoman Empire during the nineteenth century: 'Crete had for long been one of the most ungovernable parts of the Ottoman Empire'.[55] This school of historiography has, explicitly and implicitly, considered the Ottoman administration as passive, static and incapable of establishing law and order on the island and meeting the demands of the Cretans: 'the revolt which broke out there ... was more than a mere protest against misgovernment'.[56]

Available Greek nationalist literature in Western European languages viewed the events that occurred in Ottoman Crete in the nineteenth century from their own nationalist perspective. The Cretan revolts were portrayed as 'a matter of religion. [They were] Christians against Turks.'[57] A writer of this genre claimed that the Cretan revolts were reflections of 'never-ending hostility between the Cretans and Turks'. It was also asserted that

> to the Cretan, the Turk was a cruel master; he might be checked, temporarily, but could not be associated, in any way, with the code of civilized societies. Between Turk and Greek, particularly the Cretan Greek, there was a deep hostility and enmity; between the despot and the dependent, between Christian and Infidel, between two races so opposite, that fusion was impossible.[58]

In the same vein as Theodore Tatsios, another Greek nationalist historian, Theocharis Detorakis, has treated the Cretan issue as the 'Cretan Question' which was seen as part of the 'Eastern Question'. Within a similar framework as above-mentioned nationalist historians,

Detorakis wrote that 'the clear nationalist character of the Cretan Question ... as events developed ... began to occupy European diplomacy as an important part of the Eastern Question'.[59] He also claimed that Muslim inhabitants of Crete were not in favour of the reforms and that they 'continuously sought [their] abolition'.[60] He noted the drastic increase in the Christian population after 1821. He emphasised the demographic superiority of the Christians by giving details about the population trends of Crete throughout the nineteenth century, arguing that 'the Christians were now able to influence decisively the course of historical events'.[61]

On the other hand, Ottoman and modern Turkish national historiography has devoted little attention to Ottoman Crete. While some scholars have paid special attention to Crete's symbolic importance for the Ottoman state as the last conquered territory of the Ottoman Empire, others have portrayed it as a 'burden' for the Ottoman state.[62] Moreover, Turkish historiography has understood the disturbances that took place on the island simply as the outcome of European states' political intrigue.[63] At this point it should be noted that, as Karakasidou eloquently remarked, 'these are looking-glass histories. They search backwards over the hills and valleys of historical events to trace the inexorable route of a given (or "chosen") population to the destiny of their national enlightenment and liberation. They transform *history* into *national history.*'[64]

Contrary to what the Greek and Ottoman nationalist historiographies have portrayed, throughout the nineteenth century the Ottoman Empire tried to strengthen its position by carrying out reforms to meet the current needs of the day. When analysed from a historical perspective, it can be seen that the Ottoman modernisation process began to cope with changes going on within the empire and the world. Hence, the reform process began way before the *Tanzîmât* reforms. During the reign of Sultan Mahmud II, fruitful attempts were made to transform the rigid structure of the Ottoman Empire into a better-functioning and modern state structure. Many reforms were made in the bureaucracy and military, including the formation of a modern Western-style army. This was a response to changes in technology and in modern warfare. Similarly, reforms were made to cope with radical external

changes.[65] Although these reforms marked a break with the Ottoman tradition, 'they did not envisage a fundamental transformation of Ottoman society, or even ... of state; rather, they sought to stabilise the existing state and to equip it for survival in a radical altered external environment'.[66] This also became evident during the reign of Sultan Abdülhamid II, in which the ultimate aim of the reform process was saving the main pillars of the state. The existence and the maintenance of the central Ottoman bureaucratic system were supplemented with various ideological methods so as to facilitate the legitimacy of an empire facing cultural and diplomatic isolation. In its relations with the European states, the Ottoman Empire desperately tried to present itself as a Western state.[67] But it is important to note that wherever the reforms did not suffice, various attempts were made at 'fine-tuning' policies.[68]

An important study on late nineteenth-century Ottoman Crete in the Turkish language is Ayşe Nükhet Adıyeke's detailed book, which provides valuable insights regarding the history of Ottoman Crete between 1896 and 1908. Adıyeke is mainly concerned with the administrative structure of Ottoman and autonomous Crete, focuses on rules and regulations and describes the major events that occurred between 1896 and 1908. However, in her narrative, Adıyeke has pointed out that Ottoman Crete was somehow *sui generis* and had a very privileged status when compared to the other provinces of the Ottoman Empire. Throughout her book she places a special emphasis on the privileged status of the island.[69] It seems evident that Ayşe Nükhet and Nuri Adıyeke depicted the Cretan society from the standpoint of tolerance and coexistence and considered the Muslim segment of the society, as well as the Christian one, as a homogenous community– disregarding the class differences, complex networks, and various webs of interaction which tied the Cretans together.

In this sense, it is interesting to note that, as Çağlar Keyder has pointed out, before the nineteenth century, Muslims and non-Muslims lived in isolated villages or well-defined neighbourhoods in the cities, and their material and social differences were not problematic. Through the accelerated pace of economic alterations and urbanisation, ethnic groups came into contact with each other and the 'social

schismosis' came onto the scene. Keyder further stated that 'not only religious practice, but also schools and community organization, patterns of consumption and levels of Westernization, material culture and life-styles increasingly diverged'.[70]

At this point, Ussama Makdisi's words regarding Mount Lebanon also deserve to be quoted at length here:

> as members of religious communities, Druzes and Maronites did not tolerate as much as fully accept each other with the understanding that neither side would encroach on the other's sacred territory; they respected, acknowledged, and often participated in the various Christian and Muslim feasts, ceremonies, and customs that marked a living multicommunal society.[71]

Here, my aim is neither to deny tolerance and coexistence within Cretan society nor to draw a picture of violence and hatred. The typologies attributed to Crete as an island of coexistence or violence were not analytically relevant ones. This book suggests that tolerance, coexistence, violence and hatred are to be evaluated within the framework of the empire-wide dynamics in the nineteenth century.

It is important to keep in mind that the *fin-de siècle* Eastern Mediterranean witnessed profound political and socio-economic transformations. Within this context, negotiations and conflicts in Ottoman Crete are well worth considering, not only for understanding the dynamic relations between Muslim and Christian communities of Crete but the larger themes of the Eastern Mediterranean region as a place where Christianity, Islam, *ancién regime*s and nation-states interacted and intersected throughout human history. To be more specific, I propose that the Cretan revolts of 1896 and 1897 should be examined within the context of the nineteenth century; a time when nationalism was the dominant ideology throughout the Balkans and Eastern Mediterranean. This book portrays social, political and ideological currents in Ottoman Crete within the context of local (Ottoman Crete), imperial (Ottoman Empire), nation-state (Greece) and colonial (European Powers) levels, all of which had crucial impacts on the events that took place in Crete at that time. In other words, this book

attempts to explain the social, political and ideological transformation of Ottoman Crete and the genesis of these revolts within the nationalist context of the nineteenth century.

A Note on the Primary Sources

This book relies mainly on Ottoman, British and American archival sources, which are supplemented with the published British Parliamentary documents and various Ottoman, Greek and Western journals. The vast body of Ottoman archival documents related to my subject in the Prime Minister's Archives in İstanbul were used, among which the Yıldız Palace Archive and the Girid İrâdeleri are the two vital categories in understanding late nineteenth-century Ottoman Crete and the way in which Ottoman statesmen perceived the Cretan revolts.

The Yıldız Palace Archive contains a large volume of documents including imperial edicts, extensive reports of Ottoman administrators, correspondence of the governors with the centre, memoranda, petitions, complaint letters and grievances of the Cretans, and indicates how the Ottoman state understood the political, diplomatic, economic and social realities of Crete in the last phase of the nineteenth century. The Girid İrâdeleri is a very special collection within the Prime Minister's Archives housing hundreds of documents regarding Ottoman Crete between the years 1839 and 1909. This collection also provided me with a plethora of information and insight on my subject, and its careful examination reveals much about the language of Ottoman governance, the perceptions of the Ottoman statesmen, the realities of Ottoman Crete including social, cultural and economic life, education, trade and immigration, and about the internal workings of the island in the nineteenth century.

The other category of Ottoman archival documents consulted in this book is the holdings of the Ottoman Bank Archives and Research Centre, which includes quite rich records of the Muslim Council of *Evkaf* (pious foundations) and Orphans in Ottoman Crete. Those documents offer a different perspective from the Ottoman state documents and are very helpful in capturing the socio-economic life of