

Cretan Turks at the End of the 19th Century: Migration and Settlement

19. Yüzyılda Girit Türkleri: Göç ve Yerleşim

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Abstract

The Cretan Turks (and now their descendants) are a group of people who originally had lived in the Island of Crete till 1923 when the Obligatory Population Exchange Agreement signed between Turkey and Greece. Through almost the entire 19th century, as a result of Greek revolts one after another in different times in history and the public order on the island was disrupted, the Cretan Turkish population in fear of their lives left their living places, became refugees and the demographic structure of the island changed in favor of the Orthodox Christians. Among those migrations, the biggest and the most decisive on the political future of the island is the *Heraklion Events* that started in 1897 which resulted in the migration of at least 40,000 Turks. This population movement is particularly important as it caused the expansion of Cretan Turks to very different regions. The present existence of a Cretan community in Turkey, Lebanon, Syria, Libya, the Rhodes and Kos Islands of Greece, along with (albeit few) Egypt, Jordan, Tunisia, the Island of Cyprus and Palestine happened due to this immigration movement. This article approaches the immigration and settlement process that happened at the very end of the 19th century as a result of a revolt in Crete, in a sudden and involuntary manner, in a period where the Ottoman Empire suffered from political, economic and social difficulties. Tracking the official records and by fieldwork where and how immigrants settled, how many and where new settlements were founded for them were analyzed with the methodological approaches of history and historical anthropology.

Keywords: Historical Anthropology, Crete, Turk, Muslim, Migration, Settlement

Öz

Girit Türkleri (ve onların torunları), Türkiye ile Yunanistan arasında Zorunlu Nüfus Değişimi Anlaşması'nın imzalandığı 1923 yılına kadar Girit Adası'nda yaşayan bir grup insandır. Neredeyse 19. yüzyıl boyunca, tarihin farklı dönemlerinde ve birbiri ardına gerçekleşen Yunan isyanları ve adadaki asayişin bozulması sonucunda Giritli Türk nüfusu, can korkusuyla yaşam alanlarını terk etti, mülteci oldu ve böylelikle adanın demografik yapısı Ortodoks Hristiyanlar lehine değişti. Bu göçler arasında adanın siyasi geleceği açısından en büyük ve en belirleyici olanı, 1897'de başlayan ve en az 40.000 Türk'ün göçüyle sonuçlanan *Kandiye Olayları*dır. Bu nüfus hareketi, Girit Türklerinin çok farklı bölgelere yayılmasına neden olduğu için önem arz eder. Türkiye, Lübnan, Suriye, Libya, Yunanistan'a bağlı Rodos ve Kos adalarında ve (az da olsa) Mısır, Ürdün, Tunus, Kıbrıs Adası ve Filistin'de bir Girit toplumunun mevcut varlığı, bu göç hareketi nedeniyle gerçekleşmiştir. Bu makale, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun siyasi, ekonomik ve sosyal sıkıntılardan yaşadığı bir dönemde, 19. yüzyılın sonrasında Girit'te çıkan isyan sonucunda ani ve gönülsüz bir şekilde meydana gelen göç ve iskân sürecini ele almaktadır. Resmi kayıtlar ve alan araştırmasıyla, göçmenlerin nereye ve nasıl yerleştiği, onlar için kaç tane ve nerede yeni yerleşimlerin kurulduğu, tarih ve tarihsel antropolojinin metodolojik yaklaşımı ile analiz edilmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Tarihsel Antropoloji, Girit, Türk, Müslüman, Göç, İskân

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Introduction

The dissolution of the Ottoman Empire caused various social changes in the region it covered, as well as political and military ones, and the demographical structure of the region was deeply affected by these events. This period is, therefore, a history of migrations. The Muslim population living in territories secluded from the Empire (in the Balkans, Crimea, Caucasia, Middle East and Africa) settled or asked to settle in places they deemed to be safe/that seemed to be safe, and Anatolia remained at the core of this population circulation. Among those who came to Anatolia from different regions of the Empire, there were also Cretans who stood out with their distinctive features. At the very end of the 19th century, the Cretan Turkish population (or *Cretan Muslims, Muslim Cretans; or Giritli, Girit Türkleri, Giritli Müslümanlar* in Turkish or *Tourkokritiki, Tourkokrites* in Greek language) who were affected by the Greek revolt on the island, opted for leaving Crete and took refuge in safe regions, particularly in modern Turkey.

Voluntarily or forced, collective or individual, long term and permanent or temporary, because of political, economic causes or natural disasters, domestic or external; regardless any definition or classification, every population movement, without a doubt, leaves traces in the territories left, passed and settled. These traces can be surely found in the collective memory, official papers, local or national press, as well as personal memories that shed light on the period. The treatment, analysis and interpretation of the immigration phenomenon with scientific methods is related to the closeness of the event to the present time, its vitality in memories and how well it was recorded. Therefore, interpreting a population movement that takes place in earlier times, engagement areas, political uncertainty and social turmoil brings notable difficulties.

This article approaches the immigration and settlement process that happened at the very end of the 19th century as a result of a revolt in Crete, in a sudden and involuntary manner, in a period where the Ottoman Empire suffered from political, economic and social difficulties. Tracking the official records, by fieldwork and oral history, where and how immigrants settled, how many and where new settlements were founded for them were analyzed with the methodological approaches of history and historical anthropology.

1 Crete Under Ottoman Administration and the Immigration of the Muslim Population

Crete, which had gone under Ottoman administration in 1669 after a long and challenging process, joined Greece in 1913 with the Treaty of London signed after the Balkan Wars (Tukin, 1945; İşın, 1945; Hülagü, 2000). In Crete, which was comprised of five sandjaks (administrative regions) of Candia (Heraklion), Chania, Lassithi, Rethimno and Sfakia (varying over time), Heraklion and Chania stood out administratively, economically and culturally (Sezen, 2000). Crete, with its Greek-speaking population of Orthodox Greeks, Muslim Turks, Catholics and Jewish people, and a few Armenians, is an example of multiethnic and multicultural structure of the Ottoman society.

Through almost the entire 19th century, as a result of Greek revolts one after another in 1821-29, 1858, 1866-69 and 1896-98, the public order on the island was disrupted, the Cretan Muslim population in fear of their lives left their living places, became refugees and the demographic structure of the island changed in favor of the Orthodox Christians (Karpat, 2003; Şenışık, 2014).¹ Among those migrations, the biggest and the most decisive on the political future of the island is the *Heraklion Events* that started in 1897 which resulted in the migration of more than 40,000 Muslims (Çelik, 2012; Menekşe, 2018).² The city of Heraklion that had been the core of the economic and social

¹The Muslim population constituted 90,000 of the total Cretan population of 210,000 in 1872, 74,000 of 250,000 in 1894 and 33,496 of approximately 302,000 in 1900. In 1911, there were only 27,852 registered Muslims left on the island (Beyoğlu, 2000).

²Different Greek sources mention that also Orthodox population left the island and took refuge in the Greek mainland at the same period. It should also be mentioned that not all the population that went to Anatolia were

life in Crete, became the field of confrontation between the Orthodox and the Muslims starting from the last quarter of the 19th century. Especially the Muslim population living in rural areas left their villages starting from the year 1897 and moved massively to the city centers. These people residing in the city inn, Bektashi lodge, and the port region temporarily left the island soon after as they could find a vehicle. Of these 40,000 immigrants, about 30,000 reached Anatolia, mainly to the port of İzmir, in a very short period of time such as two years, and they were later sent to different cities in Anatolia. This population movement is particularly important as it caused the expansion of Cretan Muslims to very different regions. The present existence of a Cretan community in Lebanon, Syria, Libya, Rhodes and Kos Islands of Greece, along with (albeit few) Egypt, Jordan, Tunisia, Cyprus and Palestine happened due to this immigration movement (Çinar, 2004; Kara & Çelik, 2014; Bekraki, 2017; Menekşe, 2018; also see Sepetcioğlu, 2014 for details of Muslim refugees leaving Crete at that period and settled in aforementioned locations, as well as their socio-economic, political and demographic features today). The migration of Muslims from Crete continued after the foundation of the Republic of Turkey. In 1923, 22,812 persons except Italian and French passport holders left Crete due to the *Obligatory Population Exchange* signed between Turkish and Greek governments during the Lausanne Negotiations on 30 January 1923 and the registered Muslim population on the island ended consequently (Ari, 2003).



Photo 1. Details of a Century-Old Refugee House in Melemez Village, Mersin Turkey

2 The Refugee Settlement Policy During the Period of Sultan Abdulhamid II

For the Cretan refugees rushing in at the very end of the 19th century -just like for the other refugees that came before them-, *Refugee Commissions* were established, public awareness was to be created by protests, charities were organized, the catering and settlement needs of the refugees were tried to be covered by activities like lotteries and charity sales (Yılmaz, 2000; Özbek, 2002; Damalı, 2005). However, settlement was an issue that required diligent and tedious work and had to be handled rapidly in order to avoid social and economic distress. Therefore, the Ottoman state had a distinctive refugee policy and had a set of steps to take during refugee village construction. Concerning the general settlement policy of the Ottoman state, the refugees were taken to a decided settlement location with determined vehicles in an order, houses were built with the funds raised, and the

Muslims. For example, a woman named Irini Psaropoulou from the Greek Orthodox community took refuge in Izmir along with her mother. Psaropoulou and her mother who had no safety in Crete were settled by the Ottoman state in Izmir, and they were allocated a salary due to "their excellent services" (Sepetcioğlu, 2015).

refugees settled in an organized manner. The four steps of the settlement policy following the refugees' dispatch to a location were roughly; the Sultan's decree, the determination of the settlement location, the mapping and the construction of the houses, and finally naming of the settlement (Sepetcioğlu, 2011). According to this plan, villages and houses were constructed for refugees in several locations, they were given fields to cultivate, and provided with necessary tools and seeds for agricultural activities. They were even exonerated from taxes and military service -for the male population- in order to facilitate their adaptation to the new settlement areas, women and children also received special treatment.

It is evident that the Ottoman state, under the difficult conditions of the period, tried to help the refugees as much as it could. However, the sudden and unexpected nature of immigration, high numbers of migrating population, the limitedness of state's economic resources, the lack of adequate and capable officers to deal with immigration matters, and the immigration from different places such as Bosnia, Crimea and Caucasia along with Crete prevented these policies to be materialized. Therefore, it would not be accurate to claim that all these policies were implemented fully in every part of the Ottoman territories. In some places, during the construction of villages, refugees took shelter under very difficult conditions; some had grave problems with the local population regarding property issues. Therefore, it would be useful to examine micro level examples to define the policies implemented for Cretan immigrants in the Abdulhamid II period, the differences between regions, and whether the settlement policies were successful or not.

3 "Old" Cretans

In order to distinguish the 19th century refugees that immigrated under harder conditions in comparison with the immigrants that came to Anatolia due to the Population Exchange Agreement in a more organized manner, in daily language, the former are called *Old Cretans* (without any cultural, ethnic or other connotation, just chronologically). The *New Cretans* are the ones who came to Turkey in the Republican period with the Population Exchange; the "Old Cretans" are also called "*Sultanis*" as a reference to their immigration dating back to the Ottoman period (Sepetcioğlu & Sansar, 2017).

While the refugees that left the island with any vehicle they could have found were not given the chance to settle in any region they wished, they were dispatched to regions of the Empire that were deemed to be safe. The refugees arriving mostly to Izmir city were later sent to different cities in Turkey. However, refugees were also sent to regions which are outside of Turkey today, such as Lebanon, Syria, Libya, and the Dodecanese (see Menekşe, 2018 for detailed information)³. There were also people immigrating to Egypt under British administration at that period. The regions marked on *Map 1* are the territories where the Muslim refugees that had to leave their homeland due to the Greek revolt at the end of the 19th century in Crete, the *Old Cretans*, were sent by the Ottoman administration. The vast majority of refugees settled in a method called "free settlement" which meant the settlement of refugees in given locations with their own means. However, in 46 different settlement units, refugees settled with "organized settlement." Among these 46 units, 37 are in Anatolia, one (albeit not decisively) in Libya, one in Lebanon, two in Syria quite, five in Greece (two of which are in the Rhodes and two in Kos, one in Thessaloniki). As studies progress, this number is likely to increase.

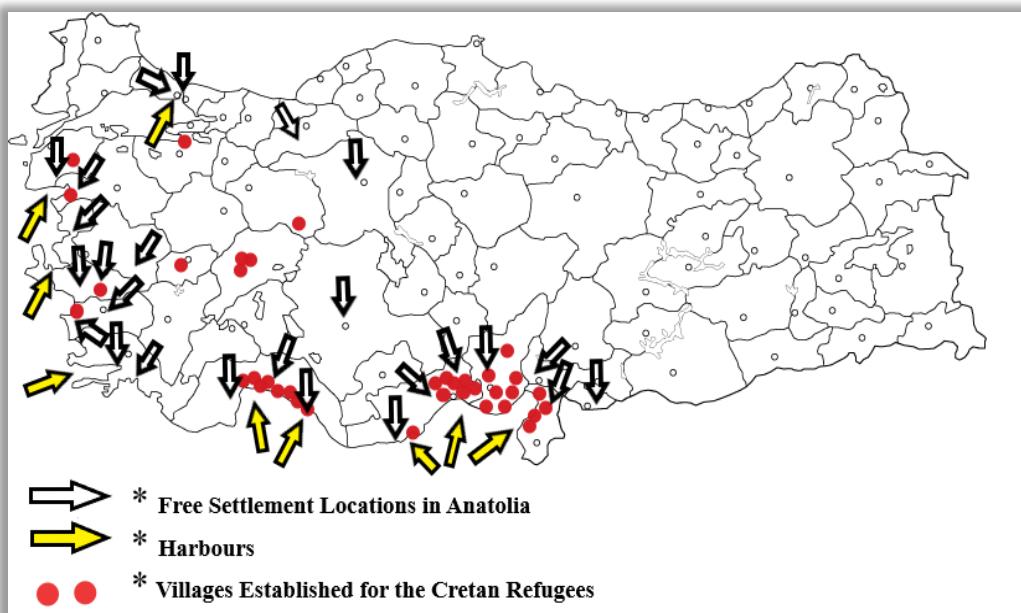
³ There are lots of documents in the Ottoman Archives of Turkey upon the migration and settlements in Lebanon, Syria, Libya and the Aegean Islands of Greece (see COA. DH.MKT. 2223/6; COA. İDH. 1373/1317.Z.02; COA. Y.A.HUS. 394/10; COA. DH.MKT. 2231/21; COA. A.MKT.MHM. 507/16; COA. I.ML. 34/1317.C.25; COA. DH.MKT. 1150/24). According to the Ottoman archive documents, Cretan refugees were sent to a county called *Katrin* in Central Macedonia of today's Greece (COA. A.MKT.MHM. 514/23). However, there is no information on their fate. It is uncertain whether they stayed or not, or whether they had to immigrate again after the Population Exchange Agreement.



Map 1. Routes of Migration and Settlement locations of Cretan Refugees

"Old Cretans" are spread mostly to the Aegean and Mediterranean shorelines in Turkey, to the central neighborhood of Izmir such as *Eşrefpaşa*, the counties of *Menemen*, *Çeşme*, *Urla*, *Selçuk* and *Tire*, few to the city center of Aydin and especially to the *Kuşadası* and *Söke* counties, the center of Manisa and the counties of *Alasehir* and *Turgutlu*, especially to *Bodrum* in Muğla and the *Milas* county, central Antalya and the *Alanya* county, central Adana and the *Ceyhan* county, the *Döertyol* and *İskenderun* counties of Hatay, central Gaziantep around the fortress, central Mersin and the counties of *Tarsus*, *Mut* and *Silifke*, and the cities of Afyon, Konya, Ankara, Bolu, Çanakkale, Balikesir and Bursa. While the exact number is not given, the majority of this immigrant population was subject to free settlement and built their houses with their own means.

The locations marked by arrows on *Map 2* are the settlement locations of the Cretan refugees that came to Anatolia at the end of the 19th century. The initial ports or bays that refugees landed in Anatolia were the locations closest to the Island of Crete. Accordingly, especially the port of Izmir and the piers of Kuşadası, Bodrum, Çeşme, Urla were the most popular in Western Anatolia. They were later sent from here to more interior regions by railway or land route, to *Milas*, *Söke*, *Selçuk*, *Torbalı*, *Tire*, *Menemen*, *Akhisar*, *Turgutlu*; even to *Afyon*, *Konya*, *Ankara* and *Kozan*. The refugees who were dispatched from Izmir or denied by Western Anatolian ports had to land on *Antalya* and *Alanya* ports or used *Mersin*, *Silifke*, *Mut*, *Tarsus*, *Yumurtalık* and *İskenderun* piers in further east. The refugees, who landed on Mediterranean ports, if they did not settle there, were dispatched to the interior parts of *Antalya* and *Mersin*, as well as *Adana* and *Gaziantep*. One group of refugees could reach *Çanakkale* and *Balikesir*, another small group was dispatched to *Bursa*, some Cretan refugees were even sent to *Istanbul* in a disorganized manner. Some of those who were sent to *Istanbul* were later dispatched to *Bolu*. Other than this aforementioned free settlement, -as far as it could be detected- 37 settlement units were established in Anatolia, close to free settlement locations. There were no refugee village establishment in *Muğla*, *Manisa*, *Antep*, *Bolu*, *Ankara* and *Istanbul* (even if there were, there has not been any indicator of them in the archive material yet). In the Ottoman archives, there are numerous petitions and reports on the conditions of those who settled in those villages and neighborhoods which were inadequate compared to the incoming immigrant population.



The locations marked with *red dot* on Map 2 are places where those 37 villages were located. It is surprising that; even though the highest number of refugees preferred to land on the province of Aydin closest to the island and Izmir, the center of appeal at that period, only two villages (*Kuşadası Osmaniye* and *Tire Hamidiye*) were built in that region. There are reasons why the Ottoman administration did not like the idea of settling Cretans permanently to Izmir, the center of the Aydin Province (e.g. security, international pressure, etc.) (see Sepetcioğlu, 2011, for discussion; see also Georgelin, 2008). Also, while two villages were established in Afyon, refugees left this region as they deemed Afyon's climate and vegetation to be unsuitable for their modes of production. The Konya province stands out with eight villages regarding settlement. The villages which were established in the Antalya sandjak of the province, in locations with Mediterranean climate and mostly close to the sea shore were called *Hamidiye (Osmaniye)*, *Kadirîye*, *Ahmediye*, *Mecidiye*, *Selimiye*, *İhsaniye*, *Sultaniye* and *Burhaniye*. Below in Table 1, the names and locations of villages established for Cretan refugees in Anatolia are given.

Ottoman Province		Present-day City	Present-day County	Village / Neighborhood
1	Adana	Adana	Yüreğir	Şarkiyeye (Misis/Yakapınar)
2	Adana	Adana	Kozan	Şevkiye
3	Adana	Adana	Ceyhan	Rahimiye
4	Adana	Adana	Ceyhan	Umran
5	Adana	Adana	Ceyhan	Değirmendere

6	Adana	Adana	Ceyhan	Ahmediye
7	Adana	Adana	Ceyhan	Akpınar
8	Adana	Hatay	Erzin	İmraniye (Turunçlu)
9	Adana	Hatay	Dörtyol	İcadiye (Altınçağ)
10	Adana	Hatay	İskenderun	Muhacirköy (Çınarlı)
11	Adana	Hatay	Arsuz	Pirinçlik
12	Adana	Mersin	Akdeniz	Hebilli
13	Adana	Mersin	Akdeniz	İhsaniye
14	Adana	Mersin	Akdeniz	İhsaniye (Melemez/Bağcılar)
15	Adana	Mersin	Tarsus	Şükraliye
16	Adana	Mersin	Tarsus	Reşadiye
17	Adana	Mersin	Tarsus	Pirice
18	Adana	Mersin	Silifke	Mukaddem
19	Adana	Mersin	Taşucu	?
20	Ankara	Eskişehir	Sivrihisar	Hamidiye (Çandır)
21	Konya	Antalya	Muratpaşa	Hamidiye (Osmaniye)
22	Konya	Antalya	Serik	Kadriye
23	Konya	Antalya	Serik	Ahmediye (Boğazkent)
24	Konya	Antalya	Manavgat	Hamidiye (Mecidiye)
25	Konya	Antalya	Manavgat	Selimiye (Side)
26	Konya	Antalya	Aksu	İhsaniye
27	Konya	Antalya	Alanya	Sultaniye
28	Konya	Antalya	Alanya	Burhaniye
29	Aydın	Aydın	Kuşadası	Osmaniye

30	Aydın	İzmir	Tire	Hamidiye (Turgutlu)
31	Hüdavendigar	Bursa	Orhangazi	Mamure (Gölyaka)
32	Hüdavendigar	Afyonkarahisar	Merkez	Hamidiye (Gazlıgöl)
33	Hüdavendigar	Afyonkarahisar	Merkez	Hamidiye
34	Hüdavendigar	Afyonkarahisar	Sinanpaşa	Reşadiye (İğdeli)
35	Hüdavendigar	Uşak		Hamidiye
36	Hüdavendigar	Çanakkale	Yenice	Mamure
37	Hüdavendigar	Balıkesir	Edremit	Hamidiye İskelesi

Table 1. Villages Established for Cretan Refugees in Anatolia (1899-1909)⁴

But, why was Anatolia considered to be suitable for refugee settlements and preferred for settling refugees? a) The primary reason for that is the proximity of Anatolia to the island of Crete and most refugees had already been to Anatolia. The refugees who mostly landed on the Izmir port were dispatched to locations close to port cities that were easy to access and to railway routes. All locations that Cretans settled were either close to ports or railways. b) The second reason is the favorability of Anatolia concerning agriculture and livestock and the existence of wide lands that had not been opened to production yet. The population was not sufficient to cultivate in these lands. With the refugees, these lands would be opened for agriculture; the production would increase, as well as the population. There has not been distinctive documentation for the Ottoman state to settle the population coming from the Balkans to the regions where non-Muslims were populous, under a planned population policy. However, it is observed that Cretan refugees settled in coastal areas with high non-Muslim population. Here, it should be noted that the climate and vegetation of the coastal areas are the same with the Crete Island, and these regions were suitable for the immigrants' modes of production, facilitating their adaptation to Anatolia. c) The third reason is related to the construction material. Almost the entire Cretan villages were located in places where the construction material for refugee houses could be easily procured. These villages were constructed either in forest lands or near ancient cities that would easily provide with material for housing. In this sense, Anatolia offered a wide range of capacity. d) Another reason for the selection of Anatolia is the appreciation of *Provincial Refugee Commissions'* exemplary works and experience on successfully settling refugees coming from the Balkans, Caucasia and Crimea before the Heraklion Events, by the Ottoman state. The local officials and local people were used to immigrants. Immigration started at the beginning of the 19th century, for instance, hundreds of thousands of Muslims from Crimea, Caucasia and the Balkans took refuge in Anatolia after the 1877-78 Russian-Turkish war. It should be noted that the majority of these refugees settled successfully bearing in

⁴ In 2015 at the time when i and Dr. Sansar did a research on a Cretan village in Adana region called "Şarkiyye", we could reach only 21 settlements (2017; For details of Muslim refugees leaving Crete at that period and settled in aforementioned locations, as well as their socio-economic, political and demographic features today, see Sepetçioğlu, 2014). The list of the Cretan Turks villages and neighbourhoods in Turkey (or places where the refugees were resettled) was compiled thanks to Dr. Menekşe's PhD thesis (that is one of the great studies on this subject) and with the help of Mr. Yunus Çengel, the Chairman of the Cretans Federation in Turkey. I owe thanks to him. The list may probably exclude some villages and places which were not known at the time this study's been completed.

mind the conditions of that period. Because of all these reasons, Anatolia appeared as a suitable location for immigrants.

4.1 From Crete to Konya, a Central Anatolian City

The refugees who left Crete by ferries they could find landed mostly on the port of Izmir, Western Anatolian coasts like *Bodrum* and the islands of *Rhodes* and *Kos* due to their proximity to Crete. However, in the Aydin province⁵ where refugees crowded together, especially the provincial administrative center Izmir, the Aegean coasts and also on the islands of Rhodes and Kos, settlement of large numbers of refugees was not permitted. The principal reason for that was the claim by the English and also the Greek government of "the demographic structure of the region being changed by the Ottoman government by the settlement of Cretan Muslims." Therefore, the Ottoman administration decided that the immigrant population in these regions was taken to the central parts of Anatolia, and the safe regions such as Libya, Syria and Lebanon (Sepetcioğlu, 2011). Accordingly, thousands of refugees in Izmir were taken to other locations. The stories of those who could reside in the Aegean coast or those who had to migrate again have dramatic features.

Moving again from Izmir to other places, especially to locations with different climate and vegetation than Crete was difficult to accept for refugees, even though those locations were also Ottoman territories. The refugees, who took shelter in Izmir's suburbs such as *Kadifekale* outskirts and *Eşrefpaşa* which heavily featured immigrants, did not want to leave the city and appealed to the administration repeatedly (Sepetcioğlu, 2013). One of these appeals took place at the beginning of the year 1899. The case of 6,000 refugees among the 30,000 coming from Crete to Izmir being sent to the province of Konya or Hûdavendigar caused great panic among immigrants; as they wanted to stay in Izmir, which had a similar climate with Crete and offered great opportunities compared to other Anatolian cities, they sent a telegram to the capital expressing their request (Sepetcioğlu, 2016).

The aforementioned petition is important as not only it reveals the refugees' psychology, but it also shows the comparison they made between Izmir and Konya regarding climate and economy, as well as to what extent the international aspect of the Cretan issue was followed by the refugees. For them, being sent to the Konya province was a big mistake; because Konya's winters were extremely cold, and the summers were hot, they could have survived in Izmir's climate. Furthermore, Konya was economically underdeveloped comparing to Izmir; the city population would even go to Izmir to work as manual labor force every year. Therefore, it would be meaningless to settle in a place where people emigrated seasonally to work. Meanwhile, at the same period, there was an international meeting in Rome regarding the recent events on the island and the provincial decree drafted by the Cretan General Assembly, which would discuss the Cretan issue. Had this meeting, attended by the ambassadors, resulted in their favor, the Cretans would then be able to reclaim their properties on the island. However, if they moved to Konya during a "potential" Rome Agreement, they would not be able to afford their relatives' travel costs. If negotiations in Rome did not bring a solution, on the other hand, the other Muslims in Crete would immigrate as well. The refugees would not be able to meet their relatives coming from Crete if they were sent to Konya. Because of all these reasons, in their view, it would not be a right decision to send them from Izmir to Konya.

All these facts and requests expressed by the refugees in their petition was treated by the commission in charge of refugees' settlement and dispatch on 3 April 1899. In a different document bearing signatures (seals) of commission's head member Es-Seyyid Hüseyin Riza and other members Edhem Nuri, Mehmed Behcet, Es-Seyyid Salih Vahid bin Mehmed Necib; as it was referred from the capital to the province of Aydin and later to commission, it was requested that a considerable number of

⁵ With the Provincial Administration Law of 1867, the administrative structure of the Aydin Province, the center of which was Izmir, included Izmir, Aydin, Saruhan (Manisa), Denizli and Menteşe (Muğla) Sandjaks (Sürgevi, et al., 2010).

Cretan refugees coming to Izmir would be sent to Konya or Hüdavendigar provinces, the commission thusly decided 6,000 refugees' dispatch to Konya, and the capital sent a notification to the provinces of Aydin and Konya accordingly. However, after a second and thorough examination made by the commission, they hesitated that it was a right move and the final decision was yielded to Istanbul (COA. Y.MTV. 188/119-1).

How did this petition result? Were the refugees' requests approved by the Ottoman administration?

Yes, it should be made approved. Because, there has been no indication of these 6,000 refugees being settled in Konya. A very few number of families settled in the western part of the city, in the *Sekermurat Neighborhood*, yet it was found in the archives and also detected by the fieldwork conducted in 2013 at the region that they left Konya because of geography not being suitable for Cretans' sources of income, climate, other cultural reasons, and they went to Aegean and Mediterranean coasts for family reunification. The issue of being dispatched and settled in Konya is a primary example of how a petition could prove effective. Another example of "successful" petitions is the petition written by the Cretan refugees landed on the Kos Island of today's Greece, addressed to Istanbul (also see Sepetcioğlu, 2016).



Photo 2. Conversation in Cretan Dialect at a Coffee Shop in *Imraniye* Village, Hatay Turkey

4.2 Cretan Turks in Kos Island

The primary ports that the Cretan refugees arrived after leaving the island, other than the line from the port of Izmir to *Bodrum*, were the *Rhodes and Kos Islands* due to their proximities. However, the flow of immigrants to these two islands were so high that they might have been dispatched to other locations. The Ottoman administration planned to send the refugees arriving to Kos from different parts of Crete but especially from the *Spinalonga Island*, to Anatolia through the *Anamur Bay*, to be settled in the province of Adana. However, when the Cretans there learned that they would be sent to Anatolia, they sent a petition to express their will to stay in Kos and gave information on their reasons to leave Crete, the conditions and the duration of their stay in Kos, their views on the Ottoman administration, and the solution suggestions for their problems, which is important regarding the social aspects of the 19th century Ottoman immigration history.

On 16 April 1899, in the petition addressed to the capital Istanbul, bearing 77 Cretans' names, 15 of whom with personal seals -which documents how this petition was collectively supported-, the refugees expressed that they had to leave Crete leaving their properties in a period full of clashes and fire, because of the tyranny by the enemies of the religion and immigrated to Kos (COA. A.MKT.MHM.

507/16-4). After arriving in Kos, they could survive by the aid donated by Gazi Sultan Abdulhamid II that they called "the protector of the oppressed and the weak". However, after they were ordered to go to the *Anamur Bay* in order to be settled in the Adana Province, they would fall into a huge disappointment. According to them, it was impossible that they could adapt to the Anatolian weather as they were from the island and they were used to the island climate. Furthermore, as they could not speak the Turkish language, they would be unable to communicate with the local Adana people. It is known that the mother tongue of Cretan Muslims that live in the rural areas outside of big cities such as Heraklion, Chania and Rethymno was Cretan, the island dialect of the Greek language. That was why they would never want to go to Anatolia. However, as they believed they would not be permitted to stay temporarily in Kos that "they were fed" for long, they offered a solution to the Ottoman administration regarding permanent settlement. There was a dilapidated, abandoned fortress in the *Kardamena* village of Kos. They believed that the stones of that fortress were sufficient to build settlements for twice as many of refugees. Besides, there was enough land for agriculture and farming. The grafted and ungrafted olive groves that belonged to the treasury might have sustained hundreds of families. If they were permitted to settle in that region, they would all be grateful for life (also see Sepetcioğlu, 2016).

That petition expresses how the Muslim population that had to flee the clashes leaving all of their belongings behind in fear of their lives and took refuge in Kos, one of the closest locations, in their own words. The refugees with a strong allegiance to the Ottoman sultan, receiving aid from the government, give important information on the "island culture," "being from the island" and their emphasis on their mother tongue. The solutions that they created for the permanent settlements in Kos that they would handle themselves such as using converted stones and breeding olive groves prove that they observed their environment and made a feasibility study. The gentle language of the petition and the tone of "begging" in expressing the request show the helplessness of the community.

How did this petition result? Were the wishes of the refugees granted by the Ottoman administration?

As the following events suggest, their request was accepted, they were not sent to Anatolia and managed to stay in Kos. Even though not in the *Kardamena* village, houses were built in the *Taşlik* and *Kumburun* locations of the island and the refugees settled there. According to the fieldwork conducted in July 2015 on the island, a considerable part of the Muslim population in Kos Island of today's Greece is comprised of the grandchildren of these refugees.



Photo 3. Two Attached Refugee Residences in *Taşlik* Location, Kos Island Greece

Conclusion

The Cretan Turks (or Cretan Muslims and now their descendants) are a group of people who originally had lived in the Island of Crete till 1923 when the Obligatory Population Exchange Agreement signed between Turkey and Greece during the Lausanne Negotiations. Through almost the entire 19th century, as a result of Greek revolts, Cretan Turkish population began to leave their homes behind. However, the *Heraklion Events* that started in 1897 resulted in the migration of at least 40,000 Turks. This population movement is particularly important as it caused the expansion of Cretan Turks to very different regions like Turkey, Lebanon, Syria, Libya, the Rhodes and Kos Islands, Egypt, Cyprus, Jordan, Tunisia and Palestine. The refugees settled largely along Turkey's the Aegean and the Mediterranean coasts from Edremit Gulf at the north to Iskenderun Gulf at the south. While other internal and external migrations took place after the initial settlement, Cretan refugees still exist in different countries.

If we have to mention particularly, 8,000-10,000 Cretan refugees in Lebanon live in Tripoli, at the Refugees' Street located in Al-Mina and Al-Tabbane. Cretan refugees in Syria settled rather in the west of the country, among Nusayri/Alawi communities. While Ottoman archive documents confirm that refugees settled in Damascus, Aleppo and Al-Hamidiyah, there is no Cretan community in today's Damascus and Aleppo. It is possible that people sent to these places returned back to Anatolia later. Al-Hamidiyah, meanwhile, with 5,000 Cretans among the total population of 8,000 is the only Syrian location where Cretans live as a community. However, the fate in civil war conditions is uncertain.⁶ After the French administration, this community remained silent because of the oppressive regime and it is –along with the community in Libya- the community with least information, due to the political structure in the country. The highest number of refugees settled in Libya, after Turkey. The principal reason behind this move is the geographical proximity of the country to Crete. While the exact number is unknown, this crowded community may be considered to be the most fortunate refugee community regarding the opportunities they were provided with (housing, fields, gardens). However, after settlement, some serious confrontations with the local people regarding land ownership also took place. In today's Libya, about 10,000 Cretans are estimated to live, 5,000 of whom in Benghazi; and 3,000-5,000 in Derna and Susa (for the ways the Cretans were settled in Lebanon, Syria and Libya, their population, the issues that they faced and the solutions for those issues, see Kayam, 2014). Besides, in a couple of locations in today's Greece such as Rhodes and Kos, Cretan refugees settled. These two islands being geographically the closest to Crete and the similarities regarding climate and vegetation make these places suitable for refugees. Nevertheless, the capacity of these islands of hosting refugees was limited; therefore, the number of refugees settled there remained low. Villages were built for the refugees coming to Rhodes and Kos at the beginning of the 20th century, just like other several refugee groups. These islands were occupied by Italy in 1911 and left the Ottoman administration, and in 1946, they were annexed to Greece after the Second World War. The Cretan refugees on these two islands, along with the Turkish-speaking Muslim communities already living there, remained as Greek citizens. The Cretan refugees settled in Rhodes and Kos preferred to establish relationships with the Turkish-speaking Muslim community as well. Today, on these two islands of Greece, the number of Cretan refugees is below 1,000. The Cretan refugees that were affected by the Turkish-Greek tension, like any other Turkish community in Greece, most immigrated to Turkey. Cretans who mostly preferred to live in Aegean coasts such Bodrum and İzmir, also live in the Nazilli county of Aydın where they went to work in the Sümerbank Chintz Factory. Another country that the refugees went or had to go was Egypt; however, this did not happen under an established state policy on settlement or by any encouragement by the Egyptian administration. There were a couple of reasons for refugees to choose Egypt which was under British administration at the beginning of the 20th century. Primarily, at the beginning of the events on the

⁶ I would like to thank Dr. Ali Bekraki for the information on the present day conditions of Cretan refugees in Lebanon and Syria.

island, the refugees sought for any port that would accept them while the Ottoman administration that did not favor the migration from the island did not permit the ferries to dock on Anatolian shores. One of those ports was the port of Alexandria. Also, there was already established transportation between Crete and Egypt, due to the strong commercial ties between two regions. The probable destinations of the refugees who often had no belongings with them seeking for a ferry taking them out of Crete were primarily Izmir, then Istanbul and Alexandria. The Cretan refugees going to Egypt arrived there in a disorganized manner. Therefore, there is no exact information on the number of refugees going to this country. There was also no government aid (like housing or land allocation) in Egypt. The majority of people having gone to Egypt somehow came to Turkey later.

Today, it is difficult to estimate the number of Cretans in Turkey, which hosted the highest number of Cretan refugees. Because the Cretan diaspora in Turkey, unlike in other countries, did not establish a closed community, and blended with other immigrants and the local people as they were diversely spread, followed the citizenship patterns of the newly-founded Republic. In Turkey, Lebanon, Syria, Libya, Greece and Egypt, and other places where the descendants of the refugees live, the historical evolution of Cretans after having settled there happened differently. As an example, the language they speak, just like Cretans in the Arab regions having been affected by the Arabic language, the Cretans in Turkey were affected by Turkish. The main reasons of these differences is that these countries each have different political structures, have followed different policies on multiculturalism, and each country has had particular cultural features. Therefore, it is impossible to claim for the Cretan diaspora that they are a group with a common historical experience, and political, cultural, ideal features. Yet, no matter where they settled and they live today, *being Cretan* is an identity. That identity is based on their *marginalization* in any socio-cultural environment they have lived for 150 years. The *other* for the Orthodox Cretans, were the Cretan Muslim people who talked like them, ate like them, entertained themselves like them but 'not believed like them.' This *marginalization* resulted in the immigration, has endured in the locations refugees settled, such as Turkey, as well as Lebanon, Syria and Libya.

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