

The First Ottoman Parliamentary Elections on Crete and the Cretan Deputies to the *Meclis-i Mebusan*¹

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Among the events leading to the opening of the first Ottoman parliament in Istanbul in March 1877, the Cretan provincial parliamentary elections represent a particularly interesting case, since the island's non-Muslim population – enjoying special privileges since 1868 – uncompromisingly refused any participation in the electoral process. The Cretan reaction to the Sublime Porte's attempts to hold parliamentary elections on the island was certainly one of the strongest and most open resistance movements against the elections in the Empire. While Robert Devereux dedicated about three pages to the discussion of the Cretan case (mainly on the basis of consular reports), other comprehensive studies of the first Ottoman parliamentary period, especially those of Turkish origin (such as İlhan Güneş's contribution to *Türk Parlamento Taribi*), tend to omit the reaction of the Cretan non-Muslims as well as the election's results and sometimes do not even mention the non-Muslim deputy elected on the island at all. In return, Greek nationalist historians dealing with the 1877 events on Crete tend to overemphasize the role of "their" candidate who finally refused to accept his seat in the *Meclis-i mebusan*.

Until today, no detailed study of the two Cretan deputies' lives and careers has been published. While both Western and Turkish studies dealing with the 1877 elections tend to focus on the political, social and legal conditions under which the provincial elections were held on the island, a considerable number of similar Greek publications show a tendency to interpret the Ottoman elections as a mere trigger for the following Cretan uprisings. If these studies mention the elected deputies at all, biographical "hard facts" only play a subordinate role. If biographical sketches of the Greeks involved in the electoral process are part of these studies, they mostly represent attempts to depict the electors as well as the deputy himself as upright fighters for Greek and Cretan independence.

This lack of detailed and unbiased information both on the electoral process and the elected Cretan deputies serves as the starting-point for this article. It aims equally at establishing a chronology of the Cretan events of January – March

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1877, extending the narrative offered by Devereux, and at compiling usable biographical data on the two Cretan deputies, one of whom never undertook the journey to Istanbul.

Towards the Elections: 19th Century Crete

When in March 1821² the Greek rebellion broke out in the Peloponnese, the seed of uprising soon spread beyond the borders of the Greek “mainland” to the islands of the Aegean.³ A few months later, it already reached the shores of the island of Crete,⁴ where agents of the *Philiki Etaireia* had already tried to prepare the ground for a revolutionary movement of the local Greek population.⁵ These uprisings were to be the beginning of the end of a long period of political and social stability on Crete, whose Greek population had remained relatively untouched by nationalist ideas until the end of the 18th/beginning of the 19th century.⁶ An uprising of the Cretan Christians was far more difficult to organize than similar revolutionary movements on the mainland. Revolutionary and nationalist ideas had only recently arrived on the island, and the experience of several decades of relative political tranquillity and coexistence still proved to be a vital factor in intercommunal relations.⁷ Further, it was a difficult task to transport weapons and

² For an overview of the events that led to the Greek revolt of 1821 and of the general intellectual climate among the Greeks of the Ottoman Empire at the beginning of the 19th century, cf. Richard Clogg, *A Concise History of Greece*, (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1992), 29-47.

³ Cf. Cemal Tukin, “Girit,” in: *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Araştırmaları Merkezi, 1988ff) [henceforth *TDVİA*]; vol. 14 (1996), 85-93, here: 89.

⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, 89 and Leonidas Kallivretakis, “A Century of Revolutions: The Cretan Question Between European and Near Eastern Politics,” in: Paschal M. Kitromilides (ed.), *Eleftherios Venizelos: The Trials of Statesmanship* (Edinburgh 2006 [Repr.]), 11-36, here 11.

⁵ Members of the *Philiki Etaireia* who were of Cretan origin, such as Emmanouil Bernardos, who became a member of the society in September 1816, periodically travelled to Crete under various pretexts in order to get an impression of the political and social circumstances on the island and to spread revolutionary ideas. A short overview of the pre-revolutionary activities of the *Philiki Etaireia* in Crete is given in Θεοχάρη Δετοράκη: *Ιστορία της Κρήτης* (Ηράκλειο, 1990), 298 *passim* – a work characterized by its sometimes rather disturbing Greek nationalist tone.

⁶ As Molly Greene has convincingly shown in her study *A Shared World: Christians and Muslims in the Early Modern Mediterranean* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 2000), the interpretation of Muslim-Christian relations in the Mediterranean up to the 19th century as a continuous series of mutual hostilities in the framework of a nationalist liberation struggle of the non-Muslim populations must be revised. She stresses, with special regard to the circumstances on Crete, the high degree of permeability of the different religious communities, intensified through the exceptionally strong conversion movements and their linguistic consequences (cf. especially 39-44). Cf. also Tukin, “Girit,” *TDVİA*, 14:89.

⁷ Cf. e.g. Greene, *A Shared World*, 206-209.

additional troops to the island without being noticed and intercepted by Ottoman naval forces.⁸

However, the uprisings that broke out at the end of Ramazan 1236 (July 1821) were of such violence that Mahmud II saw himself forced to summon the governor of Egypt, Mehmed Ali Paşa, to restore order on the island.⁹ For almost a decade, Crete now was the scene of a series of repeated revolts, mutual hostilities and atrocities which led to great losses on both sides. When in 1830 the European Powers decided not to include Crete in the newly founded Greek state, new revolts broke out on the island.¹⁰ After another intervention by Egyptian troops, the island was finally put under Ottoman suzerainty, but from now on was administered by Egypt. In order to stabilize the political situation on the island, Mehmed Ali Paşa made certain concessions to the Christian population, such as installing mixed assemblies of Muslims and Non-Muslims to deal with local affairs in the island's major cities (Iraklion, Chania, Rethymno).¹¹ This policy resulted also in an alteration of the island's settlement structures, as the Muslim population now concentrated itself even more than before in the hinterland of the costal towns where Ottoman military and administrative infrastructure was especially well developed.¹² Mehmed Ali remained ruler of the island until 1841, when the Treaty of London explicitly forbade him to make any claims on Crete.¹³ Only a short time later, in February 1841,¹⁴ new revolts broke out on the island, incited and supported by Cretan nationalist leaders expatriated in 1830 as well as nationalist propagandists from Greece.¹⁵

From this first uprising until the union of the island with the kingdom of Greece, 19th century Cretan history presents itself as a series of periodic uprisings of the local Greek population against Ottoman rule and the local Muslim minority. The ideological ground for this chain of rebellions which aimed to unite Crete with Greece¹⁶ was paved mainly by Greek nationalists.¹⁷

After another series of upheavals had shattered the island in 1858, it was finally in the year 1866 that a long series of intermittent uprisings occurred that had con-

⁸ Δετοράκη, *Ιστορία της Κρήτης*, 301.

⁹ Cf. Tukin, "Girit," *TDVIA*, 14:89.

¹⁰ Cf. Kallivretakis, "A Century of Revolutions," 16.

¹¹ Cf. R. Mantran, "Ikritish: Ottoman Period", in: *Encyclopaedia of Islam*. New Edition. 12 vols. [henceforth *EI*], 3:1086-1087, here 1086.

¹² Cf. Robert Holland and Diana Markides, *The British and the Hellenes: Struggles for Mastery in the Eastern Mediterranean 1850-1960* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2006), 82.

¹³ Cf. Mantran, "Ikritish: Ottoman Period", *EI*, 3:1086.

¹⁴ Cf. Δετοράκη, *Ιστορία της Κρήτης*, 334.

¹⁵ Cf. Tukin, "Girit," *TDVIA*, 14:89; Δετοράκη: *Ιστορία της Κρήτης*, 334 *passim* and Kallivretakis, "A Century of Revolutions," 17.

¹⁶ For a concise overview of these uprisings cf. Tukin, "Girit," *TDVIA*, 14:89 *passim* and Clogg, *A Concise History of Greece*, 69.

¹⁷ Cf. Holland/Markides, *The British and the Hellenes*, 83-84.

siderable influence on its political and administrative structure.¹⁸ When the Cretan rebels, once again supported by Greek troops, realized that the Ottoman government was not able or not willing to meet their claims,¹⁹ they proclaimed the *enosis* (union) of the “Great Island” with the kingdom of Greece and installed an independent intermediary government on September 2, 1866. The idea of a union of the island with Greece, as propagated by the Cretan rebels, received open support from Greece, Russia and France. The “Cretan Question” had finally become – in every respect – an international problem, part of the greater “Eastern Question.” The long chain of uprisings with which the Ottoman state obviously was not able to cope provoked a series of interventions by the Great Powers in the strained relations between the local population and the Ottoman Porte.²⁰ The unrests of the following years and the intermittent European interventions in Cretan affairs finally led, in 1868, to a fundamental modification of the island’s administrative system, granting its Christian population far-reaching privileges.²¹ Local responsibilities were, from now on, more equally shared between Christians and Muslims and an administrative council (*meclis-i idare-i vilayet*) comprising five Christian and five Muslim members was installed on the *vilayet* level in order to assist the governor. In addition, all official posts from now on were to be shared equally between the two religious communities.²² This reorganization brought a certain *détente* to the more than tense relations between the local religious communities, but was insufficient to provide a final solution to the island’s social and political troubles. Mutual mistrust, encouraged in the ensuing years by the ongoing agitation of Greek nationalist propagandists among the local population, along with the unwillingness of the European Powers to unify Crete with the kingdom of Greece, were the two major factors stressing Christian-Muslim relations on the island. Also, large parts of the Christian population were still unsatisfied with the results of the 1868 administrative reforms, primarily emphasizing that Greek Christians were still underrepresented in the local political bodies and that therefore at least the governor of Crete should be a Christian.²³

¹⁸ Cf. Kallivretakis, “A Century of Revolutions,” 19-20.

¹⁹ The Cretan rebels demanded *inter alia* considerable tax reductions as well as far-reaching educational reforms on the island and a fundamental modification of its administrative system. Cf. Tukin, “Girit,” *TDVIA*, 14:89.

²⁰ Cf. Mantran, “*İkrîtîsh*: Ottoman Period”, *EP*, 3:1086.

²¹ On Crete’s organic law of 1868 cf. Kallivretakis, “A Century of Revolutions,” 21-22.

²² The island was divided into five *sancaks* (Hanya, İsfakya, Resmo, Kandiye and Laşid). The *mutasarrıfs* of İsfakya and Laşid were to be Christians. Those of the *sancaks* of Kandiye and Resmo, however, were Muslims. Each *mutasarrıf* saw himself assigned an assistant belonging to the opposite faith. Furthermore, each *mutasarrıf* had to deal with a newly composed *meclis-i idare* composed of three Muslim and three Christian members elected by the local population. The posts of the *kaza kaimakamları* were from now on to be allocated according to the religion of the local population majority. Cf. Tukin, “Girit,” *TDVIA*, 14:90.

²³ From the very beginning of the Cretan resistance to Ottoman rule, the Christians put special emphasis on the fact that although they represented the vast majority of the island’s

The Elections

It was this climate of tense exhaustion and subliminal mutual mistrust in which the first Ottoman parliamentary elections were announced, planned and carried out during the first months of 1877.²⁴ Several articles published in *The Times* during this period clearly illustrate the extent to which Christian-Muslim relations on Crete were strained and the extent to which they worsened as the plans for the parliamentary election became more concrete.²⁵

The general conditions under which the first Ottoman parliamentary elections were held in the provinces were not favourable to the already tense atmosphere on Crete either. After the promulgation of the *Kanun-i esasi* in 1876, the Ottoman government wanted the first parliamentary elections to be held as soon as possible in order to prove Ottoman goodwill to the European Powers.²⁶ The first Provisional Electoral Regulation, already drafted during summer 1876 by a subcommittee of the constitutional Drafting Commission, was, however, rejected by the sultan. A new committee – this time consisting of only four members – revised the draft, taking into consideration the sultan's objections which mainly concerned the ratio of Muslims and non-Muslims to be elected in the different provinces of the Empire. The new draft, comprising seven articles, differed only slightly from the first version and was officially promulgated on October 28, 1876, then sent immediately to the governors of the Empire's provinces. Yet, several of its articles contained regulations that were not received with great enthusiasm by the majority of Crete's Christian inhabitants.²⁷

Their objections especially concerned article 2 of the new regulation, which stipulated that the deputies to the new parliament should not be elected directly

population, they were denied adequate participation in local political affairs. They in fact represented about two thirds of the island's total population. According to Şemseddin Sami in his *Kamusu l-a'lam*, the total population of the island numbered 294,192 inhabitants towards the end of the 19th century, of which only 88,487 were Muslim. Apart from negligible minorities of Protestants, Catholics and some 650 Jews, the remaining 204,781 inhabitants of the island were Orthodox Christians (cf. "Girid" in: Şemseddin Sami, *Kamusu l-a'lam*, 6 vols. (Istanbul: Mihran Matbaası, 1306-1312), 5:3851-3857, here 3852). For a detailed overview of the demography of Crete and the demographic developments on the island from the 17th to the 20th century, cf. Emile Y. Kolodny, "La Crète: Mutations et évolution d'une population insulaire grecque," in: *Journal de géographie de Lyon* 43,3 (1968), 227-290, for the period from 1870 to 1881 cf. especially 253-264. The 1881 census established a total population of 277,768 inhabitants of whom 204,156 (73.5%) were Christians, while only 72,691 (26.2%) were Muslim (cf. *ibid.*, 262); cf. also: Kallivretakis, "A Century of Revolutions," 13 *passim* on conversion movements and Christian land acquisitions.

²⁴ Cf. Holland/Markides, *The British and the Hellenes*, p. 84.

²⁵ Cf. e.g. *The Times* (London), January 20, 1877, 5; January 22, 1877, 5; January 30, 1877, 5; February 12, 1877, 5; February 13, 1877, 3; March 5, 1877, 12.

²⁶ Cf. Robert Devereux, *The First Ottoman Constitutional Period: A Study of the Midhat Constitution and Parliament* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1963), 123.

²⁷ Cf. *ibid.*, 124.

by the local population, but by the members of the different administrative councils in the provincial capitals and the various *sancaks* and *kazas*.²⁸ The underlying idea was that these assemblies had already been elected by popular suffrage and that their decisions therefore had “the same value as that which the direct suffrage of the nation imparts.”²⁹

Along with article 2, another part of the October 28 regulation was a major obstacle for a regular implementation of the electoral process on Crete: according to article 4, it was to be the Sublime Porte who held the exclusive right to determine the number of deputies to be elected in each province. This fixed number of deputies was to be communicated to the provincial governors (in the case of Crete Ahmed Muhtar Paşa (January – February 1877), followed by Hasan Samih Paşa (March 1877))³⁰ who were supposed to inform the local councils while indicating at the same time how the total number of deputies was to be distributed to the different religious communities.³¹

It was mainly these two articles that caused great discontent among the Cretan non-Muslim population. The Christians not only considered themselves deprived of their direct participation in the electoral process, but also attacked the ratio of Muslim versus non-Muslim deputies as fixed by the provincial governor by emphasizing that, as Christians represented about two-thirds of the local population, this ratio did not at all reflect the island’s actual demography³². In a formal protest addressed not only to the governor, but also to the Cretan consuls of the European Powers, the Christians strongly rejected the fixed ratio and demanded that the Christian population be allowed to send more than one representative to the assembly in Istanbul. As the text of the protest to Thomas Backhouse Sandwith (British consul to Crete in Chania from 1870 to 1885)³³ clearly shows, the rejection of the two mentioned articles of the provisional electoral regulation was certainly not the only factor leading to the strong resentments of the Cretan Christians against the elections in general. Although demographic questions occupied a prominent place in the dissenters’ line of argument, the fear of loss of

²⁸ Cf. *ibid.* and İhsan Güneş, *Türk Parlamento Tarihi: Meşrutiyete Geçiş Süreci: I. Ve II. Meşrutiyet*, vol. 1 (Ankara: Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi Vakfı Yayınları, 1998), 76-77.

²⁹ Quoted according to Devereux, *The First Ottoman Constitutional Period*, 124.

³⁰ Cf. Sinan Kuneralp, *Son Dönem Osmanlı Erkân ve Ricâli (1839-1922): Prosopografik Rehber* (İstanbul: Isis 1999), 31. For a concise summary of Hasan Samih Paşa’s biography and career, cf. İbrahim Alâettin Gövsa, *Meşhur Adamlar: Hayatları – Eserleri*, 4 vols. (İstanbul: Simavi 1933-1936), 4:1419.

³¹ Cf. Devereux, *The First Ottoman Constitutional Period*, 124 and Güneş, *Türk Parlamento Tarihi*, 1:76-77.

³² Cf. *Hansard’s Parliamentary Debates (3rd series)*, vol. 233 (March 16, 1877 – April 26, 1877), 551, where the objections of the Christian protesters are summarized in an answer by M.P. Bourke.

³³ For a short summary of Thomas Backhouse Sandwith’s (1831-1900) biography and career cf. *Who was Who. Containing the Biographies of Those Who Died During the Decade [1897-1916]* (London: Black 1920).

privileges achieved through the organic law becomes obvious on various occasions.³⁴ Many Christians feared that the Ottoman government could use the fact that, as a result of the new constitution, the religious minorities were now represented in parliament to argue that from now on local privileges, such as those achieved by the Cretans through their charter of autonomy, would become obsolete. This argument resulted in the total rejection of the Sublime Porte's right to order any kind of parliamentary election on Crete, since the island, in the eyes of the non-Muslim protesters, was no longer an integral part of the Ottoman Empire.³⁵ The Cretans' criticism of the Constitution was certainly one of the most open opposition reactions to the new order embodied in the electoral process and the parliament itself.³⁶

It is interesting to note that, although the Cretan Greeks had for years rigidly opposed the organic law as insufficient and unjust, the same organic law served throughout the course of the electoral quarrels as a positive counter-image to the new, and in the eyes of the Cretan Greeks even more inequitable order: the parliamentary regime. In January 1877, when it became obvious that the Cretan opposition to the electoral process was fundamental, the Sublime Porte replaced Mehmed Rauf Paşa³⁷ (governor since January 1876) as governor of Crete and appointed Ahmed Muhtar Paşa³⁸ who arrived on the island some days before February 10, 1877.³⁹ Shortly after his arrival, he ordered "two battalions of infantry, with some Artillery, to Sphakiá and Apocorona"⁴⁰, where about 4000 Greek nationalist volunteers had begun to gather. In doing so, he carried out his explicit mission to ensure that the elections would be held without any further disturbances. The appointment of Ahmed Muhtar Paşa, who was considered a "hard-liner" in "minority questions" and thus enjoyed a doubtful reputation among the Cretan population, did not help to ease the tensions between the two religious communities. Rather it made things worse:

"Affairs looked threatening when the dreaded Mukhtar Pasha, although appointed to a command in Asia, arrived as Governor-General. The object of his visit soon became

³⁴ Cf. Great Britain, House of Commons: *Accounts and Papers* 91 (1877): *Turkey no. 25 (1877): Further Correspondence Respecting the Affairs of Turkey*, 15.

³⁵ Cf. Devereux, *The First Ottoman Constitutional Period*, 129 and *Journal des débats politiques et littéraires*, March 22, 1877, 3.

³⁶ Cf. e.g. *The Times* (London), March 5, 1877, 12.

³⁷ Cf. Kuneralp, *Son Dönem Osmanlı Erkân ve Ricalı* (1839-1922), 31. For a short summary of Mehmed Rauf Paşa's biography and career, cf. Gövsa, *Mesbir Adamlar*, 4:1316-1317.

³⁸ For detailed information on the life and career of Ahmed Muhtar Paşa, cf. Feroz Ahmad, "Mukhtar Pasha," in: *EP*, 7:525-526; İbnülein Mahmud Kemal İnal, *Osmanlı Devrinde Son Sadriazamlar*, 3 vols. (İstanbul: Maarif Matbaası, 1940) 3:1805-1868 and M. Cavid Baysun, "Muhtar Paşa," in: *İslâm Ansiklopedisi. İslâm Âlemi, Tarih, Coğrafya, Etnografya ve Bibliografya Lugati*. 16 vols. (İstanbul: Millî Eğitim Basımevi, 1950-1986), 8:516-532.

³⁹ Cf. *The Times* (London), February 12, 1877, 5; *Journal des débats politiques et littéraires*, February 12, 1877, 1 and Kuneralp, *Son Dönem Osmanlı Erkân ve Ricalı* (1839-1922), 31.

⁴⁰ *The Times* (London), February 13, 1877, 3.

known. He has gone there to conduct the elections for the Parliament of the Empire granted by the 'Constitution'. In a moment, the sentiments of the mountaineers were changed, they forgot the evils of the organic law, and now are ready to fight for its maintenance rather than submit to the institutions of the new charter.⁴¹

As a direct answer to the objections of the Christians, the Grand Vizier himself sent a letter to the protesting members of the administrative councils in the first days of February 1877 in which he explained that the local privileges stipulated in the island's organic law would remain untouched by the election of parliamentary representatives and that a boycott of the electoral process would rather carry a number of considerable disadvantages for the Christian population of the island:⁴²

"L'élection des représentants à l'Assemblée générale de Constantinople ne saurait porter la moindre atteinte aux règlements existants. Au contraire, le régime représentatif augmentera pour les sujets du Sultan les bienfaits de la liberté. [...] L'idée de ne pas se faire représenter est mauvaise. Faites donc des représentations à qui de droit. Quant au mode d'élection, comme il n'est pas nécessaire, d'après l'article 4 du règlement provisoire sur l'élection des députés, de faire une distinction entre les nationalités, chaque membre doit élire un chrétien et un musulman."⁴³

However, the attempts of the Grand Vizier to scatter the doubts concerning the election were not successful. In their direct reply to the Grand Vizier's dispatch dated February 12, 1877 and presented first to the provincial governor who then communicated it to Istanbul, the Christian members of the administrative councils once more refused to take part in the elections as ordered by the Ottoman government:

"Excellence,
Ayant pris connaissance du circulaire vénérable qui nous charge du soin d'élire des députés au Parlement qui va se réunir prochainement à Constantinople, nous vous répondons que la loi organique en vertu de laquelle nous avons été élus conseillers administratifs ne nous confère nullement ce droit. Aussi nous trouvons nous dans la nécessité de refuser le mandat qu'on veut nous confier, dans la crainte de nous heurter aux dispositions de la loi organique de notre île. Nous croyons devoir vous faire observer en outre que le mode d'élection n'est pas basé sur l'égalité proclamée, mais sur des préférences religieuses. [...]"⁴⁴

⁴¹ Report of the Athenian correspondent (dated February 25, 1877) in: *The Times* (London), March 5, 1877, 12; cf. *The Times* (London), February 12, 1877, 5: "Mukhtar Pasha has arrived in Crete. A certain amount of political excitement prevails among the Christian inhabitants of the island [...]." A French version of the same report is contained in *Journal des débats politiques et littéraires*, February 12, 1877, 1: "Mukhtar Pacha est arrivé en Crète. On annonce une certaine agitation parmi les Crétains chrétiens [...]."

⁴² Cf. Devereux, *The First Ottoman Constitutional Period*, 129.

⁴³ *Journal des débats politiques et littéraires*, March 22, 1877, 3.

⁴⁴ *Journal des débats politiques et littéraires*, March 22, 1877, 3.

Despite the general opposition of the Christian council members to the elections,⁴⁵ the Porte and the provincial governor decided to pursue the elections as planned, setting March 10, 1877 as election day.⁴⁶ While the 51 Muslim members of the administrative councils unanimously participated in the elections, the provincial authorities – although they exerted massive pressure on the Christian voters – only succeeded in bringing six out of 58 Christian council members to the ballots.⁴⁷ The result of this electoral round (i.e. the election of one Christian and one Muslim deputy as intended by the Ottoman government) was promptly contested by the local Christian population, who called into question the election's legitimacy⁴⁸ by pointing to the fact that almost half of the council members entitled to vote had chosen not to attend the election.⁴⁹ Finally, the Christians ended up refusing openly even to send the elected non-Muslim deputy to Istanbul, an attitude that only intensified the intercommunal tensions on the island. On March 24, 1877, *The Times* published a short report on the worsening political climate in the Cretan towns:

“The inhabitants of Crete persist in refusing to send a Deputy to the Parliament at Constantinople on the ground that they possess special privileges. In consequence of this attitude much excitement exists among the Turkish population of the island, as they entertain apprehensions of impending insurrection.”⁵⁰

In the days and weeks following the contested ballot, the division lines between Christians and Muslims quickly became more and more apparent as nationalist tendencies among the Greek Christians of the island grew rapidly stronger.⁵¹ Both sides took measures to prepare for an eventual escalation of the conflict. According to European observers,

“[...] the mountaineers, to the number of some thousands, have sanctified an oath of fealty to the cause of independence with the sacred rites of the Church and have expressed its import by war cries and salvos of musketry. This they have done under the guidance of their priests, to whom alone, in temporal as well as spiritual matters, they pay willing obedience. The Christian peasants, anxious for their future, have retained

⁴⁵ Cf. *The Times* (London), February 26, 1877, 6.

⁴⁶ Cf. Devereux, *The First Ottoman Constitutional Period*, 129.

⁴⁷ Cf. Devereux, *The First Ottoman Constitutional Period*, 130 (numbers based on: Sandwith to Derby, March 31, 1877 in: Great Britain, House of Commons: *Accounts and Papers* 91 (1877): *Turkey no. 25 (1877): Further Correspondence Respecting the Affaires of Turkey*, p. 15). According to a Greek pamphlet distributed in Athens during March 1877 (published in *The Times* in English translation), the number of Christian voters participating in the elections was seven (cf. *The Times* (London), March 31, 1877, 7).

⁴⁸ Cf. *The Times* (London), March 17, 1877, 7.

⁴⁹ Cf. Sandwith to Derby, March 31, 1877 in: Great Britain, House of Commons: *Accounts and Papers* 91 (1877): *Turkey no. 25 (1877): Further Correspondence Respecting the Affaires of Turkey*, 16.

⁵⁰ Cf. *The Times* (London), March 24, 1877, 7.

⁵¹ Cf. Leonard Courtney, “Our Eastern Policy,” in: *Fortnightly Review* 21.125 (May 1, 1877), 604-626, here 606.

their seed-corn for the wants of war rather than sow it, perhaps, for the enemy. The Mussulmans, their apostate fellow-countrymen, have begun to take refuge within the castles [...]”⁵²

The preparations for an uprising were morally and materially supported by Greece.⁵³ On the political level, the relations of the Cretan Christians to the Sublime Porte remained strained and grew worse from day to day. Meanwhile the debates among the Cretan Christians adopted a more and more nationalistic tone.⁵⁴ After the election of the two Cretan deputies, both Cretan and Greek nationalist circles started to put the elected non-Muslim deputy under massive pressure,⁵⁵ boldly refusing at the same time to send a representative to the *Meclis-i mebusan* in Istanbul.⁵⁶ The tensions caused by the parliamentary elections and intensified by the political reactions of the Ottoman government to the Cretan boycott of both the electoral process and the Parliament finally culminated – in the context of the beginning of the Russian-Ottoman war⁵⁷ – in the outbreak of the well known Cretan unrests of 1877/78, which altered the administrative system and political status of the island once more.⁵⁸

The Deputies: a Bio-bibliographical Approach

The two deputies elected on Crete were for the Muslim community Halil Rami Efendi and for the Christians Stephanos Nikolaides.⁵⁹ The following section is an attempt to compile both scholarly literature and historical sources mentioning Halil Rami Efendi and his Christian counterpart as well as to retrieve basic biographical data on the two Cretan deputies and – to the extent that it is possible – to retrace, based on these findings, their political biographies. This bio-bibliographical approach, which does not primarily seek to establish a complete bio-

⁵² *The Times* (London), March 31, 1877, 7.

⁵³ According to a report published by *The Times* (London) on March 19, 1877, 5: revolutionaries stationed in Athens sent circulars containing nationalist propaganda to revolutionary committees in Iraklion, Rethymno and Sphakia “reminding the patriots that nothing can be obtained without sacrifice.”

⁵⁴ Cf. e.g. the protest of the Cretan Christians to the governor as given in: Sandwith to Derby, March 31, 1877 in: Great Britain, House of Commons: *Accounts and Papers* 91 (1877): *Turkey no. 25 (1877): Further Correspondence Respecting the Affaires of Turkey*, 15.

⁵⁵ Cf. *The Times* (London), March 31, 1877, 7 and Devereux, *The First Ottoman Constitutional Period*, 130.

⁵⁶ Cf. *The Times* (London), March 17, 1877, 7: “It seems quite obvious, meanwhile, that Crete will send no Deputies to the Chamber. The disaffection in this island is said to be very general, and more than 200 families have been reported as lately emigrating to Greece.”

⁵⁷ Cf. Δευτολάκη, *Ιστορία της Κρήτης*, 360.

⁵⁸ Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 360 *passim* and Mantran, “*İkrîtîsh*: Ottoman Period”, *EP*, 3:1087.

⁵⁹ Names mentioned e.g. in: *The Times* (London), March 31, 1877, 7; Hakkı Tarık Us (ed.), *Meclis-i mebusan 1293–1877 Zabit Ceridesi*, 2 vols. (İstanbul: Vakit Matbaası, 1939–1954), 2:18; Devereux, *The First Ottoman Constitutional Period*, 129–130; Güneş, *Türk Parlamento Târîhi*, 2:12.

graphical narrative of the two deputies' lives, seems to be the only way to cope with the various problems and difficulties posed by Ottoman biographical and prosopographical research. The major difficulties that researchers experience in the field of Ottoman biography and prosopography have already been outlined by Sinan Kuneralp in the introductory chapter to his *Son Dönem Osmanlı Erkân ve Ricali*.⁶⁰ As the author shows, even basic questions of a biographical nature such as "when did a certain person hold what office?" or "who held the office of governor in a certain province at a certain time?" cannot always be answered clearly because the scholarly literature as well as the Ottoman sources themselves frequently contain contradictory or ambivalent information.⁶¹ These difficulties – not to mention the general lack of sources of a more individual and personal character such as private letters or diaries that would allow insights into the author's inner world⁶² – do not only occur when considering minor historical personalities. Even the biographical data concerning major statesmen of the Ottoman Empire or major provincial notables are frequently unreliable.

Thus it is not especially astonishing that very little biographical data are available concerning Halil Rami Efendi, the Muslim deputy. It initially seems paradoxical that biographical sources are to a much larger extent available in the case of Stephanos Nikolaides, who did not even undertake the journey to Istanbul. This paradox becomes less striking, however, if we take into consideration the observations made by Michael Ursinus, who states in his discussion of the general lack of autobiographical sources originating from Muslim authors in the Ottoman Empire up to the 19th century:

"Die Betonung liegt hier auf 'muslimisch'. Denn es ist beim derzeitigen Forschungsstand noch keineswegs abschließend geklärt, wieweit dies auch für die *nicht*muslimischen Parallelgesellschaften des Osmanischen Reiches gegolten hat, allen voran die der armenischen und der orthodoxen Christen. Wahrscheinlich ist es jedoch kein Zufall, daß Zeugnisse autobiographischen Charakters aus der Feder christlicher Autoren [...] so deutlich selbst für das IX. Jahrhundert [sic] noch gegenüber entsprechenden Beispielen von muslimischer Hand überwiegen [...]."⁶³

Yet, not one of the comprehensive studies dealing with the first Ottoman constitutional period mentions much more than the names of the two Cretan deputies.⁶⁴ The lack of detailed information in this very special case cannot be explained by the general state of Ottoman biographical research alone. That very little is known,

⁶⁰ Cf. Kuneralp, *Son Dönem Osmanlı Erkân ve Ricali* (1839-1922), XI-XXXV.

⁶¹ Cf. *ibid.*, XI-XIV.

⁶² This is at least true up to the 19th century. Cf. Michael Ursinus, "Osmanische Autobiographien vor dem XIX. Jahrhundert: 'the most Interesting Books Never Written?'," in: Walter Berschin and Wolfgang Schamoni (eds.): *Biographie – "So der Westen wie der Osten"? Zwölf Studien* (Heidelberg: Matthes, 2003), 93-111.

⁶³ Michael Ursinus, "Osmanische Autobiographien vor dem XIX. Jahrhundert," 95-96.

⁶⁴ Cf. e.g. Devereux, *The First Ottoman Constitutional Period*, 129-130 and Güneş, *Türk Parlamento Tarihi*, 2:12 (where the Christian deputy's name has been omitted).

especially about the life of Halil Rami Efendi, can also be explained by the general tendency among Greek historians dealing with 19th century Cretan history (who were most likely to have taken notice of the persons in question) to overemphasize other aspects in the course of events during the years 1877/78 and to characterize the Ottoman parliamentary election as a phenomenon of only secondary importance – a mere trigger for yet another stage in Crete's legitimate struggle for independence. If Greek historians refer to the first Ottoman parliamentary elections on Crete at all, they usually emphasize the general Christian boycott of the election as well as the fact that the Christian deputy decided to renounce his mandate.⁶⁵ Likewise, most Western studies and sources – in the case of this study, consular reports, parliamentary minutes and periodicals – only casually mention the elected deputies and focus rather on the general relations between the two religious communities through the course and aftermath of the elections.

Halil Rami Efendi

In the case of Halil Rami Efendi, the Muslim deputy, biographical information other than that concerning his activities as a member of the *Meclis-i mebusan* is especially scarce. An initial clue to his life story is provided by a short article published in the March 31, 1877 issue of *The Times*. In this report, the newspaper's Athenian correspondent dealing with the general situation on Crete after the parliamentary elections mentions the coastal town of Canea (Chania) as Halil Rami Efendi's "constituency." We can therefore conclude with considerable certainty that Halil Rami Efendi had already been a resident of Chania for a rather long period, for the Provisional Electoral Regulation according to which the provincial elections were carried out stipulated that the deputies had to be elected from among the local population possessing the qualifications for election. These qualifications were: Candidates had to 1. enjoy a certain public esteem, 2. prove a certain proficiency in the official language of the Empire, 3. be at least 25 years old, 4. enjoy full civil and political rights and 5. possess tax-paying property.⁶⁶ Although we cannot be certain that Halil Rami Efendi held public office in the province's administration prior to his election, the first and the last prerequisite for election mentioned suggest that Halil Rami Efendi was at least as a member of that group of provincial propertied notables enjoying large public recognition that Kemal H. Karpat describes in his discussion of the social significance of the 1877 elections.⁶⁷ If it is taken into consideration that, although the Provisional Electoral Regulation

⁶⁵ Cf. Δετοδάκη, *Ιστορία της Κρήτης*, 359.

⁶⁶ Cf. Devereux, *The First Ottoman Constitutional Period*, 125, 145, *passim*.

⁶⁷ Cf. Kemal H. Karpat, "The Ottoman Parliament of 1877 and its Social Significance," in: id., *Studies on Ottoman Social and Political History: Selected Articles and Essays*, (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 75-89, here 76-80.

stipulated that the deputies were to be elected from the local population in general, the provincial governors often intervened in the selection of the candidates prior to the election, and that in the last instance a large number of provincial deputies were chosen from among the members of the administrative councils of their *vilayet*, it is possible to identify Halil Rami Efendi by consulting the contemporary *Salnames*. And indeed, the 1293/1876 *Salname-i Vilayet-i Girid* lists a Halil Efendi among the elected members of the *meclis-i idare-i vilayet*, which at that time assembled in Chania.⁶⁸ That this Halil Efendi is indeed the same person is supported by the fact that on March 21, 1877⁶⁹ Halil Rami Efendi was elected along with three other deputies,⁷⁰ *katib-i sani* (second secretary) of the *Meclis-i mebusan*, an office which was filled by rather highly educated deputies who already possessed a certain familiarity with administrative procedures and who were experienced in the field of public speaking.⁷¹ As one of the four second secretaries of the assembly, his duties were, according to the Internal Parliamentary Regulation, to “maintain [...] the register of deputies who had indicated a desire to speak on a certain topic, [to] edit [...] the minutes, and [to] read [...] at each sitting the minutes of the preceding sitting.”⁷² The minutes and summaries of the parliamentary sessions compiled in the *Zabit Ceridesi* show him more than once carrying out this office.⁷³ Unfortunately, the *Zabit Ceridesi* does not contain any concrete evidence of Halil Rami Efendi’s other political activities (such as transcripts of his contributions to political debates) which would enable the reconstruction of his concrete political standings and viewpoints on certain questions. Further, due to the political developments in Crete in the aftermath of the elections, Halil Rami Efendi was not a member of parliament during the second session, so the second volume of the *Zabit Ceridesi* does not provide any further material.

Stephanos Nikolaides Efendi

In regard to Stephanos Nikolaides Efendi, the Christian deputy, considerably more sources are available providing rather detailed insights in the deputy’s life and career. This may mainly be due to the fact that his open rejection of the parliamentary mandate in 1877 made him an object worthy of closer interest not only for contemporary European observers of the 1877 events, but also for later Greek nationalist historians – although both groups tend to focus on the wider political and

⁶⁸ *Salname-i Vilayet-i Girid Sene 1293*, def'a 2, (Hanya: Girid Vilayet Matba'ası, 1293 [1876]), 39.

⁶⁹ Cf. Devereux, *The First Ottoman Constitutional Period*, 164.

⁷⁰ The other three second secretaries of the first session were: Hasan Fehmi (Istanbul), Nafi' Efendi (Aleppo) and Sebuh Efendi (Istanbul), cf. *ibid.*, 164.

⁷¹ Cf. Us (ed.), *Meclis-i meb'usan 1293=1877 Zabit Ceridesi*, 1:24.

⁷² Cf. Devereux, *The First Ottoman Constitutional Period*, 164.

⁷³ Cf. Us (ed.), *Meclis-i meb'usan 1293=1877 Zabit Ceridesi*, 1:90, 105, 116, 269 and 303.

social implications of the Christian reaction to the elections rather than on the individuals involved in the historical process. The sources in question consist not only of contemporary European consular reports and newspaper articles as well as, to a far lesser extent, Ottoman periodicals, but also the “Historical and Biographical Notes” (Ιστορικά καὶ βιογραφικά σημειώματα) of Stephanos Nikolaides himself – a series of autobiographical notes in chronological order covering the years 1821 to 1893. These notes, although only fragmentarily preserved, have been edited by Menelaos G. Parlamas in *Kretika Chronika*, vol. 3 (1949), together with a short biographical introduction by the editor.⁷⁴

Stephanos Nikolaides, appearing in Ottoman sources (e.g. the journal *Müsavat*) as İstefanos Efendi, was born in the village of Agies Paraskies (Αγιες Παρασκιές),⁷⁵ located in proximity to Iraklion, in 1817.⁷⁶ The son of Nikolaos Trochakakes and Adriana Nikoletakes, who was the sister of Meletios Nikoletakes, metropolite of Crete between 1830 and 1834⁷⁷, and of Georgios Nikoletakes, medical doctor and renowned editor of several ancient Greek manuscripts,⁷⁸ Stephanos grew up both in his native village and the town of Iraklion, where he received his (primary) education during the 1820s and early 1830s.⁷⁹ His family held large estates around Agies Paraskies⁸⁰ and belonged to the educated and wealthy stratum of 19th century Cretan society. From the very beginning of his childhood, his uncle, member of the highly educated class of the local Orthodox clergy, fostered his education wherever possible and encouraged him to pursue his vivid interest in fine arts. Due to the political instability of those years, however, Nikolaides was

⁷⁴ Cf. M. G. Παρλαμας, “Ιστορικά καὶ βιογραφικά σημειώματα τοῦ Στεφανοῦ Νικολαΐδου,” in: *Kretika Chronika* 3 (1949), 293-350. The original manuscripts of Stephanos Nikolaides’ notes are preserved in the library of the Iraklion museum as codices no. 23 and 64. M. G. Parlamas refers to them as A (no. 23) and B (no. 64). No. 23 is a small booklet of 42 pages containing Nikolaides’ “Historical and Biographical Notes,” a title chosen by S. Chanthoudides, who collected the remains of the author’s belongings scattered during the Cretan revolution. While Nikolaides’ notes concerning the years 1821-1860 partly rely on oral accounts of other Cretans and chronological order is not always respected, the notes concerning the period after 1860 exclusively derive from Nikolaides’ own experiences and have been collected much more systematically. (For a more detailed description of the manuscripts cf. *ibid.*, 293-297. In this article, Nikolaides’ notes are cited according to Parlamas’ edition. First, the number (A1 to A42 or B1 to B4) of the note in question is given followed by the page number of the edition in brackets.)

⁷⁵ Today, Agies Paraskies is part of the municipality of Nikos Kazantzakis (Νίκος Καζαντζάκης) in the prefecture of Herakleion (about 900 inhabitants).

⁷⁶ Since no written documents have been preserved indicating the exact birth date of Stephanos Nikolaides, we mainly rely on oral information from his father contained in his uncle’s writings. Cf. Παρλαμας, “Ιστορικά καὶ βιογραφικά σημειώματα,” 298, n. 18.

⁷⁷ Cf. Theocharis Detorakis, “Brief Historical Review of the Holy Archdiocese of Crete” accessible via www.orthodoxresearchinstitute.org/articles/church_history/detorakis_brief_historical_review.htm.

⁷⁸ Cf. Παρλαμας, “Ιστορικά καὶ βιογραφικά σημειώματα,” p. 297-298 and A25 (p. 333).

⁷⁹ Cf. *ibid.*, 298.

⁸⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, 303.

unable to attend school on a regular basis, and thus had to become self taught. During this period, his uncle, the above-mentioned Meletios Nikoletakes, acted as the young boy's teacher, introducing him not only to Ancient Greek and arithmetic, but also familiarizing him with the tradition of Byzantine sacred music.⁸¹ At the same time, he gained a certain proficiency in Turkish and began to learn French.⁸² Other persons temporarily involved in Stephanos Nikolaides' education were the local teachers Gregorios Megalovrysanos and Nikolaos Parasyris.⁸³

Around 1833, after he decided that his primary education was complete, Nikolaides devoted his further educational efforts entirely to the art of iconography, with Michael Polychronides as his first teacher.⁸⁴ His vivid interest in music, painting and other fine arts (e.g. literature) was, according to his own literary self-portrait as well as to different members of his family, one of the most dominant traits of his character.⁸⁵ Furthermore, Nikolaides also showed a certain interest in botany, collecting and cultivating different varieties of trees on the estate of his family.⁸⁶ His self-image as a learned and cultured artist of sophisticated manners⁸⁷ is very well reflected in his biographical notes, where he states that he had decided to change his family name – which he considered to be far too “ordinary” for a person of his educational rank and talent – from Trochalakes to Nikolaides, using the diminutive form of his father's name.⁸⁸

During the following years – and up until his death in May 1907 – Nikolaides made his living as an iconographer and teacher.⁸⁹ Some of his works can still be seen in the churches of Agios Minas, Agios Titos and Agia Zoni in his native village.⁹⁰ In his artistic work, Nikolaides tried to combine the style of traditional Orthodox iconography with contemporary European influences. Sometimes he even added an almost political dimension to his works by including certain details and scenes taken from the political life of 19th century Crete in his paintings in order to indirectly criticize certain Ottoman administrative practices.⁹¹ In other do-

⁸¹ From 1836 onwards, Nikolaides composed sacred music (e.g. his 1836 mass). Cf. *ibid.*, 300.

⁸² Cf. *ibid.*, 298-299.

⁸³ Cf. *ibid.*, 299-300.

⁸⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, 300 and A7, 317.

⁸⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, 300-301.

⁸⁶ Cf. *ibid.*, 303.

⁸⁷ Cf. his self-portrait reproduced in: *ibid.*, plate between pp. 304 and 305 showing him as a cultured man with dark hair, a neat moustache and fine clothing. According to other members of his family, Nikolaides belonged to “the best looking men in Iraklion” and enjoyed “high esteem among the educated circles of the town” (cf. *ibid.*, 307).

⁸⁸ Cf. *ibid.*, 297.

⁸⁹ According to contemporary Cretan observers, Nikolaides' paintings were very popular during his lifetime and assured him a considerable income. Cf. *ibid.*, 300.

⁹⁰ Cf. Stergios Spanakis, *Crete: A Guide to Travel, History and Archaeology*, Iraklion [ca. 1965], 80.

⁹¹ Cf. e.g. the reproduction of Nikolaides' painting *Παρηλθεν η σκιά του νόμου* (*Arrival of the shadow of the law*) in the Agios Titos church in Iraklion containing the portrayal of a

mains of interest, Nikolaides' sympathy for certain (cultural) aspects of Greek nationalism also shows through: On his family's estate, Nikolaides is said to have arranged the trees, which he had imported from abroad, in long rows lining paths and roads. These "avenues" he named later on after famous figures of ancient and modern Greek history.⁹² Despite these perhaps rather cultural than political attitudes, Nikolaides never became an active fighter for the Cretan nationalist cause. According to his own testimony, it was mostly the fact that a rebel's life in the mountains was hard and full of privation which "prevented" him from taking an active part in the Cretan resistance movement. A certain fundamental conservatism – which he also ascribes to himself – may also have contributed to his somewhat passivist attitude and to the fact that, at various moments of his career, he even openly opposed the armed resistance of his compatriots.⁹³

Nonetheless, Nikolaides actively took part in the *political* processes of the island, especially during the first half of his life. As early as the 1840s he had negotiated several times with the local Ottoman authorities on behalf of the Christian population and of several churches in the district of Iraklion.⁹⁴ In September 1858 (one of the most active years of his political career), he was elected member of the local *meclis-i idare*⁹⁵ and was sent, some days later, to Chania to represent the local council before the provincial assembly and the island's governor.⁹⁶

Both in 1856 and 1858, Nikolaides undertook extensive journeys to Istanbul and to different Greek cities in order to broaden his horizon (and, according to his autobiographical writings, to gain a broader and deeper understanding of the "Greek nation").⁹⁷ During his first journey, after having spent some time in Istanbul, he visited the cities of Athens, Izmir and Patras. In October 1856, he returned to Iraklion.⁹⁸ His second journey to Istanbul as a representative of Crete lasted from November 1858 to July 1860.⁹⁹ Shortly after his return to his native island, Nikolaides was elected supervisor of the Christian schools in the *sancak* of Iraklion, an office that he held until 1865, when İsmail Paşa (governor from May 1861 until December 1867)¹⁰⁰ suspended him because of certain decisions he had taken in the course of the conflict between the district of Iraklion and the local

member of the Muslim *ulema* (reproduced in Παραλαμῆ: "Ιστορικά καὶ βιογραφικά σημειώματα," plates between pp. 296 and 297).

⁹² Cf. *ibid.*, 303. He is furthermore said to have imported different varieties of trees (up to that time unknown on the island) to Crete.

⁹³ Cf. his own statements regarding his character in: *ibid.*, p. 304 and A11 and A12, 320-321.

⁹⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, 302. These political actions seem to have contributed to his popularity among the local Christian population (cf. *ibid.*, 302) who – after he had been arrested in May 1845 – liberated him from prison (cf. *ibid.*, 302).

⁹⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, 303.

⁹⁶ Cf. *ibid.*, 303.

⁹⁷ Cf. *ibid.*, 302 and A7, 316-317.

⁹⁸ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 302 and A7, 316-317.

⁹⁹ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 303 and A9, 318-319.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Sinan Kuneralp, *Son Dönem Osmanlı Erkân ve Ricali*, 31.

Orthodox monasteries regarding the distribution of revenues in the educational sector.¹⁰¹ As official reason for Nikolaides' disposal, the Ottoman administration emphasized the fact that he was still unmarried and therefore not fit for such a high-ranking office. Nikolaides, despite his close relationship to religious and clerical circles, had supported the local administration against the claims of the Orthodox monasteries, a conflict which finally culminated in the dissolution of the local administrative council.¹⁰² Nonetheless, Nikolaides had to leave the island in the aftermath of the 1865 events to avoid further prosecution. He took refuge first in Istanbul, then in various Greek cities such as Athens. He returned to Crete only on June 16, 1869¹⁰³ after the insurrections had come to an end.

The most evident sign of open resistance to the Ottoman administration of the island in Nikolaides' career is certainly the fact that he refused to accept his mandate as representative of the island in the 1877 *Meclis-i mebusan*. The precise circumstances under which he refused his election, however, are somehow unclear. At least, different accounts of the incident exist, each of which differently evaluates the role patriotic feelings and nationalist adherences played in Nikolaides' decision: While the correspondence of Thomas Backhouse Sandwith dated March 1877 (one of the more detailed sources on the events in question) suggests that Nikolaides resigned under the immense pressure of Cretan nationalist circles rather than out of his own conviction, other sources, such as a pamphlet distributed by Greek nationalists in the streets of Athens and some Cretan towns a few days after the elections, depict him as a more passionate fighter for Cretan independence and claim that he voluntarily chose not to accept his mandate out of national consciousness. This last version corresponds to the image later Greek nationalist historiography has preserved of Stefanos Nikolaides.

The fact is that Nikolaides was made candidate of the non-Muslim population of the island by the provincial governor at the end of January/beginning of February 1877.¹⁰⁴ Sandwith's report dated March 31, 1877 contains the text of a protest made by the islanders in which not only the six (seven) Christian members of the administrative councils who voted in the election are depicted as traitors of the national cause, but in which the protesters openly express their hope that the "deputy, so illegally chosen"¹⁰⁵ would refuse his mandate¹⁰⁶ – a decision obviously not yet made by the elected candidate. The mere fact that Cretan national-

¹⁰¹ Cf. Παρλαμένη, "Ιστορικά καὶ βιογραφικά σημειώματα," 302 and 304 and A11 and A12, 320-321.

¹⁰² Cf. *ibid.*, 304-305 and A11 and A12, 320-321.

¹⁰³ Cf. Παρλαμένη, "Ιστορικά καὶ βιογραφικά σημειώματα," 305.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 305.

¹⁰⁵ Sandwith to Derby, March 31, 1877 in: Great Britain, House of Commons: *Accounts and Papers* 91 (1877); *Turkey no. 25 (1877): Further Correspondence Respecting the Affairs of Turkey*, 15-16.

¹⁰⁶ *ibid.*, p. 15-16. Extracts from the protest made by the Christian Cretans have also been published in: Devereux, *The First Ottoman Constitutional Period*, 130, n. 18.

ists still had to “express their hope” may hint at the fact that Nikolaides was not an entirely convinced partisan of “national liberation” or, as the autobiographical sources suggest, that he put his trust in other forms of “resistance” rather than in open and armed rebellion.

In slight contrast to this description stands the “Protest made by the Greeks of Heracleion in Crete”¹⁰⁷ published in the March 31, 1877 issue of *The Times*. According this report, the protesters’ *manifesto* was sold in the streets of Athens the weeks following the elections. Although its authenticity can be contested (the correspondent himself suggests that it was “an Athenian fiction”), the mere fact that it provides us with a (slightly) different perspective on Stephanos Nikolaides’ motives makes it worth being taken into consideration. The passage concerned with the Cretan deputies runs as follows:

“[...] But our just remonstrances were not attended to, and two Deputies were elected – namely, Haleel Effendi, of Canea, and Stephanos Nikolaides, a Christian, of Heracleion, who, as he has formerly shown sufficient proofs of sincere patriotism, will not, we believe, accept an honour by which the freedom of his Fatherland is destroyed.”¹⁰⁸

Although the pamphlet’s authors could obviously not yet be sure of Nikolaides’ final decision in regard to his mandate, they mention nonetheless certain “proofs of sincere patriotism” and, by this means, construct an undefined nimbus of national consciousness around “their” unwanted candidate.

Finally, the August 7, 1908 issue of the Cretan newspaper *Elpis* published – in memory of Nikolaides’ death – a reproduction both of the Ottoman administration’s telegram to Stephanos Nikolaides informing him of his election, as well as a copy of his response to the island’s governor.¹⁰⁹ The official letter dated February 28, 1877¹¹⁰ and addressed to Stephanos Nikolaides Efendi, not only informs its recipient that he had obtained a clear majority in the ballot, but also that he was supposed to travel first to Chania for a preparatory meeting with the provincial governor, then to Istanbul to take his seat in the new parliament. All travel expenditures, the telegram further states, would be covered by the provincial government in order to ensure the deputy’s immediate departure.¹¹¹ Nikolaides’ response – suspiciously short and dry – is undated, but clearly expresses his feeling that he could not accept a mandate entrusted to him against the will of the ma-

¹⁰⁷ *The Times* (London), March 31, 1877, 7.

¹⁰⁸ *ibid.*, 7.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. *Ελπίς* no. 193, August 7, 1908. Also given in: Παραμονή: “Ιστορικά και βιογραφικά σημειώματα,” 306.

¹¹⁰ The date of this letter only seemingly contradicts Devereux’s dating of the Cretan elections (March 10, 1877), since the telegram to Nikolaides in its Greek version is dated according to the Julian calendar. A conversion of the Julian date (February 28, 1877) results in the Gregorian date March 12, 1877.

¹¹¹ Cf. Παραμονή, “Ιστορικά και βιογραφικά σημειώματα,” 306.

jority of his compatriots.¹¹² Yet his answer lacks all sign of passion and displays throughout a conspicuously sober tone. It may therefore be possible that Sandwith's vision of the candidate's refusal is to be preferred when it comes time to deciding to what extent Nikolaides was motivated by "sincere patriotic feelings." Especially if the autobiographical evidence of Nikolaides' political strategies and his general conservative attitude combined with his "respect for the law" are taken into consideration, it may be concluded that – at least – his decisions cannot simply be reduced to patriotic resistance.

In the years following the Cretan insurrection of 1878, Stephanos Nikolaides did not take part anymore in the political affairs of the island as he had before.¹¹³ Becoming a follower of the conservative *Karavanades*-party,¹¹⁴ he concentrated from now on mainly on his artistic work.¹¹⁵ In 1897 he fled the island once more and took refuge in Greece during the Cretan revolution. On his return, he found his house and estate destroyed, his large collection of manuscripts and books scattered.¹¹⁶ On May 23, 1907, Stephanos Nikolaides died in Iraklion at the age of 90.¹¹⁷

Conclusion

As has been shown above, the 1877 parliamentary elections on Crete were held in an extremely tense and unstable atmosphere. It was mainly the clear and fundamental rejection of the parliamentary elections by the local Greek population which posed major problems to the Ottoman administration on the island. It is therefore not surprising that the Sublime Porte's reaction to the Cretans' rejection of the ballot was exceptionally strong. Nonetheless, a closer look at the events of February/March 1877 also shows that things were much more complicated than the established historical narratives of the events suggest. Notably, the role of the elected Christian deputy seems to have been a rather ambivalent one. Nominated – despite the already existing tensions and certainly not without reason – by the

¹¹² The Greek text of his rejection as given in *Ελπίς* no. 193 (August 7, 1908) and runs as follows: "Σεβαστὴν Νομαρχίαν Κρήτης – Χανιά. Ελαβον ἐπίσημον τηλεγράφημα περὶ εἰκονῆς μου ὡς βουλευτοῦ Κρήτης. Λυποῦμαι μὴ δυνάμενος ἀποδεχθῆναι τὴν εἰκονὴν ταύτην, ἵνα ἀπεποιήθοσαν ἐκ τῶν προτέρων οἱ χριστιανοὶ συμπατριῶται μου διὰ λόγους τοὺς ὅποιους πληρούστατα συμμερίζομαι. Διατελῶ μετὰ τοῦ προσήκοντος σεβασμοῦ – Στέφανος Νικολαΐδης."

¹¹³ Cf. Παρλαμαᾶ, "Ιστορικὰ καὶ βιογραφικὰ σημειώματα," 309.

¹¹⁴ Cf. Kallivretakis, "A Century of Revolutions," 25 *passim*. His affiliation with the *Karavanades* group, a political faction rather composed of those influential circles of society profiting from the *status quo*, suggests once again that Nikolaides certainly was not a militant partisan of subversive nationalist movements.

¹¹⁵ Cf. Παρλαμαᾶ, "Ιστορικὰ καὶ βιογραφικὰ σημειώματα," 309-310.

¹¹⁶ Cf. *ibid.*, 309-310.

¹¹⁷ Cf. *ibid.*, 311.

island's Ottoman governor, Stephanos Nikolaides apparently was not a passionate adherent to the local population's revolutionary ideas and the armed resistance movements. As a member of a propertied, educated and rather influential local family and already disposing of certain administrative skills acquired while holding different official posts within the provincial administration, the profile of Stephanos Nikolaides corresponds to a large extent to the general set of characteristics established by Kemal H. Karpat in his study on the social implications of the 1877 elections and confirmed by other case studies in this volume. Furthermore, Nikolaides, who entertained close relations to Orthodox clerical circles as well, represented a group among the local notables not primarily interested in a total restructuring of the island's political status and administrative structure. These political viewpoints equally fit into the general picture of the first Ottoman parliamentary deputies, who to a large extent were nominated by members of the local administration (if not by the provincial governor himself), who had no great interest in the election of truly "independent" candidates (although, as can be stated, many deputies later on proved to be much more independent than expected). In any case, the vision that Cretan nationalist historians have developed of Nikolaides as a passionate fighter for Cretan independence must be at least partly revised.

Although the available biographical and autobiographical material has been able to establish a rather detailed picture of the non-Muslim deputy, almost no valuable information could be retrieved regarding Halil Rami Efendi, who represented the Cretan Muslims during the first session of the Ottoman parliament in 1877. This illustrates once more the fundamental difficulties faced by researchers in the field of Ottoman biography and the extent to which Ottoman biographical and prosopographical research remains a veritable Sisyphean task, often rewarded with only modest success.