

My Cretan Lemon Tree: An Analysis of Fraction Between Religious Communities In The Eastern Mediterranean

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Abstract

Muslim Cretans were forced to leave Crete and were settled in Turkey following the Turco-Greek Exchange of Populations which was signed in 1923. Already before that date, many of them escaped from Crete due to persecutions at the hands of some Christian Cretans before, during and after the Greek uprising in the mainland Greece (1821-1830). There were many nationalist uprisings and ethnic conflicts in the Balkans to which Crete could be included in the age of nationalism. Nevertheless what made Crete different from other areas in the Balkans was that Muslims and Christians in the island had real fraternal bonds since Ottoman administration never sent a Muslim population to its last conquest Crete from other parts of the Empire; but some of the native Cretans converted to Islam. There were various reasons of change of religion. Also, Ottoman officials promoted conversion. For this very reason, Muslim Cretans and Christian Cretans had same language and culture. According to official accounts, there were such cases that a Christian person could have had a Muslim brother. Additionally, Muslim Cretans were mainly urban dwellers who occupied military and administrative posts whereas Christians were usually peasants. In accordance with these information, this article examines how religion and social class lighted a fuse that exploded into an ethnic conflict and how people got nationalized through the lens of nationalism literature.

Keywords

Crete, Muslim Cretans, nationalism, conversion, exchange