

THE ISLAMIC GRAVESTONES OF OTTOMAN RETHYMNO: PRELIMINARY REMARKS AND THOUGHTS ABOUT THEM

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RETHYMNO (OTT. RESMO) WAS CONQUERED by the Ottoman army in 1646, and this event marks the beginning of the formation of the Muslim community of this town and its hinterland. Muslim presence persisted for almost three centuries and was brought to an abrupt end by the 1923 agreement between Turkey and Greece on the exchange of populations, with Muslims departing from Rethymno in 1924. Demographic information and data from the nineteenth century suggest that at least throughout this period the town of Rethymno, with a total population of a few thousand people, was heavily dominated by Muslims.¹

Apart from archival and literary sources, several monuments, artefacts, and architectural features from the Ottoman period still survive today in Rethymno. Among the most neglected are the gravestones of the former Muslim cemetery, which was situated to the south of the town, outside the walls, in the area now occupied by the Municipal Garden (*dimotikos kipos*) and around it.²

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- 1 According to Sieber, who visited Crete in 1817, Rethymno had about 4,000 inhabitants; F. W. Sieber, *Travels in the Island of Crete, in the Year 1817* (London 1823 [repr.: Athens 1975]), 48. According to Pashley, who was in Crete in 1834, the population of Rethymno exceeded 3,000 inhabitants, with only about 80 families being Christian; R. Pashley, *Travels in Crete*, Vol. 1 (Cambridge and London 1837 [repr.: Athens 1989]), 104. According to the census of 1881, Rethymno and its environs had a population of 9,274 inhabitants, of whom 6,691 were Muslims and 2,444 Christians; N. Stavrakis, *Statistike tou plethysmou tes Kretes* [Population Census of Crete] (Athens 1890 [repr.: Athens 1978]), 4 (Part II), 78 (Part III).
- 2 On Bonneval's late-eighteenth-century map of Rethymno, the cemetery does not seem to extend to the west of what must be today's Dimitrakaki Street; Ph. De Bonneval and M. Dumas, *Anagnorise tes nesou Kretes: mia anekdote mystike ekthese tou 1783* [Reconnaissance of the Island of Crete: An Unpublished Secret Report of 1783], ed. and trans. Y. V. Nikolaou and M. G. Peponakis (Rethymno 2000), 168-169. But if the information, communicated orally, that a gravestone in fragmentary condition was discovered at a rather elevated and distant spot to the south of the town (high up on the hill called Mastabas, today part of the town of Rethymno)

An on-going research project which is funded and carried out by the Institute for Mediterranean Studies/FO.R.T.H., with the assistance of the 28th Greek State Ephorate of Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Antiquities, has resulted so far in the recording of more than 330 gravestones from Rethymno.³ Almost half of these gravestones bear inscriptions, and, as far as those which have a date are concerned (fewer than a hundred), they cover the period from 1692 to 1900; of these, about 8% were erected prior to 1760, almost 60% come from the years between 1760 and 1820, and the remaining 32% from the period 1820-1900. Most gravestones belong today to the Ephorate of Antiquities, while a few are owned by local people. Their state of preservation varies, but many have survived only in part or, even, are no more than a small fragment of the original, or their inscriptions have suffered considerable damage.⁴

The Muslim cemetery most likely ceased to exist in or around 1919,⁵ when it was taken over by the Municipality of Rethymno, which justified its decision on the grounds of protection of public health, the embellishment of the town, and recovering land for public utility works and buildings;⁶ the existence of a so-called ‘new Muslim cemetery’, situated to the east of the town (on the road connecting Rethymno with Perivolia, today a suburb of the town), was reported in the local press in 1922.⁷ The transformation of the former cemetery into a Municipal Garden was inaugurated in 1925-1926.⁸ The cem-

is accurate, maybe then the cemetery or at least some graves gradually extended over a rather wide area.

- 3 For a brief description of the project, see A. Anastasopoulos, ‘Islamic Tombstones of Rethymno, Crete’, in S. Güvenç (ed.), *Common Cultural Heritage: Developing Local Awareness Concerning the Architectural Heritage Left from the Exchange of Populations in Turkey and Greece* (Istanbul 2005), 222-223. Collaborators on the project include Ms Photeini Chaireti, Ms Eirini Kalogeropoulou, Ms Marianna Liaskou, Ms Katerina Limnidi, Dr Marinos Sariyanis, Ms Niki Spanou, Ms Maria Varoucha, Dr Athanasios Vionis, and Mr Zois Xanthopoulos. I wish to thank them all for their conscientious work, as well as Dr Nicolas Vatin of the CNRS – EHESS, who was kind enough to visit Rethymno and help us with checking our readings of the epitaphs of the gravestones.
- 4 The database of the Islamic gravestones of Rethymno has been incorporated in the ‘Digital Crete: Mediterranean Cultural Itineraries’ project and webpage of the Institute for Mediterranean Studies (<http://digitalcrete.ims.forth.gr>). However, it is sadly still (December 2008) unavailable on-line, because the Greek Ministry of Culture has not yet granted the required permission, even though the relevant application was submitted in 2006.
- 5 According to documents kept in the Ottoman Bank Archives and Research Centre in Istanbul, the Prefecture of Rethymno asked for the transformation of the cemetery into a public model farm (*dimosion agrokypion*) as early as in 1917, and the expropriation by the Municipality took place in 1918. I would like to thank the Ottoman Bank Archives and Research Centre, and in particular Ms Lorans Tanatar Baruh, for the permission to use these documents.
- 6 Ch. Papadakis, *Ta Chasapia tou Rethymnou kai ochi mono* [The Butchers’ Shops in Rethymno and More] (Rethymno 2005), 179 (according to Papadakis, what was expropriated in 1919 was “the largest part of the Muslim cemetery”); cf. Rethymno’s newspaper *Kretike Epitheoresis* [Cretan Review], issue No. 602 (24 December 1921), 2.
- 7 *Kretike Epitheoresis*, No. 612 (7 March 1922), 3.
- 8 Papadakis, *Chasapia*, 179-180; the creation of a ‘Municipal Garden’ was decided upon in 1923

etry's exact size is unknown, but, according to a newspaper item from 1931, the area taken over by the Municipality amounted to about 70,000 square metres (c. 17.3 acres).⁹ In Heraklion (Candia, Ott. Kandiye), a much bigger town, the Muslim cemetery occupied in the early twentieth century an area of several hundreds of thousands of square metres, according to a contemporaneous testimony.¹⁰

There is no concrete information about the provenance of most of the surviving Islamic gravestones, that is, whether they all come from one or more urban or village cemeteries, or, as may be the case, from the courtyards of mosques.¹¹ For instance, a gravestone belonging to el-Hac Kara Musa Paşazade Ali, dated 1170/1756-1757,¹² stood, before the restoration works in this monument (2008), in the courtyard of the mosque which bears the name of his ancestor, Kara Musa Paşa;¹³ however, we do not know if it was

(*Kretike Epitheoresis*, No. 668 [1 July 1923], 2), but was mentioned as early as in 1921 as one of the original purposes of the expropriation of the cemetery (ibid., No. 602 [24 December 1921], 2); works in the 'Garden' began in 1926 (ibid., No. 1089 [19 June 1932], 3). For the disappearance of Ottoman cemeteries, cf. M. Kiel, 'Little-Known Ottoman Gravestones from Some Provincial Centres in the Balkans (Eğriboz/Chalkis, Niğbolu/Nikopol and Rusçuk/Russe)', in J.-L. Bacqué-Grammont and A. Tibet (eds), *Cimetières et traditions funéraires dans le monde islamique/İslâm Dünyasında Mezarlıklar ve Defin Gelenekleri*, Vol. 1 (Ankara 1996), 319.

- 9 *Kretike Epitheoresis*, No. 1040 (5 May 1931), 1. According to the same item, the Municipal Garden occupied more than 25,000 square metres, that is, only part of the area which was expropriated.
- 10 S. Xanthoudidis, *Chandax – Herakleion: historika semeiomata* [Chandax – Heraklion: Historical Notes] (Heraklion 1927), 136-137. Lady Mary Montagu commented about Istanbul that "the burying fields about it are certainly much larger than the whole city"; M. Wortley Montagu, *The Turkish Embassy Letters* (London 1994), 99.
- 11 Cf. Xanthoudidis, *Chandax – Herakleion*, 135-136; N. Vatin and S. Yerasimos, *Les cimetières dans la ville. Statut, choix et organisation des lieux d'inhumation dans Istanbul intra-muros* (Istanbul and Paris 2001); E. Eldem, *Death in Istanbul: Death and its Rituals in Ottoman – Islamic Culture* (Istanbul 2005), 20. In Istanbul some people were even buried in the gardens of their houses (N. Vatin, 'L'inhumation intra-muros à Istanbul à l'époque ottomane', in G. Veinstein (ed.), *Les Ottomans et la mort: permanences et mutations* [Leiden-New York-Köln 1996], 159).
- 12 Gravestone No. 168; for an Ali Odabaşı, descended from Kara Musa Paşa, in 1749, see N. Stavrinidis, 'Kara Mousa Pasas, ho santzak vees tes Rethymnes' [Kara Musa Paşa, the *Sancakbeyi* of Rethymno], in *Pepragmena tou III^{ou} Diethnous Kretologikou Synedriou (Rethymnon, 18-23 Septemvriou 1971)*, Vol. 3 (Athens 1975), 309-310. In Istanbul, burials within the city walls were relatively rare prior to the last quarter of the eighteenth century; on the other hand, el-Hac Kara Musa Paşazade Ali met the legal criteria to be entitled to be buried in the courtyard of the mosque of his ancestor (Vatin, 'L'inhumation intra-muros', 163-166).
- 13 The establishment of this mosque is often attributed to Kara Musa Paşa, *kaptan-ı derya* from late January to June 1647; see, for instance, A. Malagari and Ch. Stratidakis, *Rethymno: hodegos gia ten pole kai ta perichora tes* [Rethymno: A Guide to the City and its Environs] (Athens 1991 [3rd ed.]), 31. However, Nikolaos Stavrinidis' argument that this mosque bears the name of a late-seventeenth-century governor of Rethymno is more convincing; Stavrinidis, 'Kara Mousa Pasas', *passim*, esp. 298 n. 17.

placed there originally, or was transferred in recent decades by the Ephorate of Antiquities, or, maybe somewhat earlier, after the dismantling of the Muslim cemetery. The gravestones of Kara Musa Paşa himself, dated 1692/1693, and of another Kara Musa Paşazade, dated 1261/1845, lie at a storage area of the Ephorate in Misiria, several kilometres away from both the cemetery and the Kara Musa Paşa Mosque, and had previously been in the courtyard of the Venetian Loggia, then the Archaeological Museum of Rethymno and in the Ottoman period also a mosque.¹⁴ Another offspring of a prominent family whose gravestone stands in the courtyard of the Kara Musa Paşa Mosque is a certain Mehmed from “the rose garden of the illustrious Köprülü family” (*hanedan-ı Köprülü'nin gülistanından*), who died in 1134/1721-1722 on the way to Bursa.¹⁵ Here again, we do not know whether Mehmed was buried by the mosque (if the grave is not actually a cenotaph¹⁶) instead of in the public cemetery. Recent excavations (2007-2008) around the former Gazi Deli Hüseyin Paşa (Neratze) Mosque brought to light 20 gravestones of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but it is again unknown if they lay there originally or were transferred from the old cemetery; on the one hand, there is evidence of graves and burials around the mosque, but, on the other, we know that gravestones of the former main cemetery were transferred in around 1920 to the Muslim Girls' School, very near the Gazi Deli Hüseyin Paşa Mosque.¹⁷

The destruction of Rethymno's Muslim cemetery poses a serious problem to research, since we are obliged to study the gravestones as isolated artefacts and texts, really out of the context that their placement within a cemetery provides. Actually, in most cases we are unable to even match the head and foot gravestones of a given grave. Moreover, we are prevented from studying the ‘social distribution’ of graves across the cemetery, but also between the cemetery and the mosques; for instance, we do not know if prominent families were buried together in a specific section of the cemetery or if social stratification was reflected on the spatial arrangement of the cemetery, as happens elsewhere.¹⁸ And obviously, we are unable to follow the historical development of the cemetery through time.

All surviving gravestones are made of marble, with the exception of extremely few made of local limestone, a material which is much less durable than marble. We do not

14 Gravestones Nos 231 and 233; Stavrinidis, ‘Kara Mousa Pasas’, 297-298.

15 Gravestone No. 150.

16 See, for instance, E. Eldem and N. Vatin, *L'épitaque ottomane musulmane (XVI^e-XX^e siècles). Contribution à une histoire de la culture ottomane* (Paris-Louvain-Dudley, Mass. 2007), 11.

17 Information on the graves and burials comes from Mr Kostas Yapitsoglou, archaeologist of the 28th Ephorate of Antiquities; information on the storage of gravestones in the Girls' School comes from a document of 1924 kept in the Ottoman Bank Archives and Research Centre in Istanbul.

18 On the arrangement of graves according to the social importance of the deceased in the Sokollu Mehmed Paşa cemetery in Istanbul, see J.-L. Bacqué-Grammont, H.-P. Laqueur and N. Vatin, *Stelae Turcicae II. Cimetières de la mosquée de Sokollu Mehmed Paşa à Kadırga Limanı, de Bostancı Ali et du türbe de Sokollu Mehmed Paşa à Eyüb* (Tübingen 1990), 15. Cf. Eldem and Vatin, *L'épitaque ottomane*, 11.

know where the marble came from, but in all probability it was not local. Apparently buying and having a marble gravestone carved entailed a cost which the poorer social strata could not meet. According to a late-nineteenth-century foreign visitor to Rethymno, “the poor content themselves with a plank fixed on the ground or a post, on which they fasten a few strips of discoloured cloth, yellow, red, or light blue”.¹⁹ Thus, the surviving gravestones mirror the taste, ideology, conventions and social etiquette of the middle and upper social strata, and cannot be taken to be representative of the total of the town population.²⁰

The gravestones constitute historical sources both as objects and as texts through their inscriptions. In this short paper I will not dwell on gravestones as objects, valuable as they clearly are in this respect as well. But a few comments on this subject are in order here. For instance, what is very noticeable in terms of the appearance of gravestones is their evolution over time. More specifically, there are considerable differences in terms of size, shape, and decoration between gravestones of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries and those of the middle and late nineteenth century; for instance, a comparison between the rather modest gravestone of el-Hac Musa Paşa, the governor of Rethymno, of 1692/1693 and the 1878 lavish gravestone of a young boy from one of the notable families of Rethymno is rather telling in this respect (Ills 1-2).²¹ Of course, not all nineteenth-century gravestones were lavish or extravagant, but the general tendency was towards bigger gravestones and longer and more origi-



Ill. 1: Gravestone of el-Hac [Kara] Musa Paşa (1692/1693) (photo by Efi Moraitaki).

19 *Krete – 1893. Hoi periegetikes anamneseis tou Vittorio Simonelli* [Crete, 1893: Vittorio Simonelli's Travel Memoirs], trans. Ioanna Phountoulaki (Rethymno 1996), 122. Cf. W. J. J. Spry, *Life on the Bosphorus: Doings in the City of the Sultan; Turkey, Past and Present Including Chronicles of the Caliphs from Mahomet to Abdul Hamid II* (London 1895), 105, and Eldem and Vatin, *L'építaphe ottomane*, 84.

20 Cf. Bacqué-Grammont *et alii*, *Stelae Turcicae II*, 17 and n. 36, 18. Bacqué-Grammont notes that marble became accessible to large segments of the population in the course of the eighteenth century; J.-L. Bacqué-Grammont, 'L'étude des cimetières ottomans: méthodes et perspectives', in Idem and Tibet (eds), *Cimetières et traditions funéraires*, 1: 136; cf. Eldem and Vatin, *L'építaphe ottomane*, 80, 83-84, 142.

21 Gravestone No. 173.



III. 2: Gravestone of Gazaroğlu Ali Bey (1878)
(photo by Efi Moraitaki).

nal epitaphs.²² The Rethymno gravestones follow trends current all over the Ottoman Empire, and come in various shapes: they are acute or rounded on the top, octagonal, cylindrical, rectangular, or ovoid in shape, with flat or curved backs. As a rule, there does not seem to be any direct correlation between particular gravestone shapes, or decoration styles, and the existence of inscriptions or not, but this is a preliminary observation which may be revised in the future. As in other localities, it is not known whether gravestones were imported half-ready with only their texts (or maybe just the personal information about the deceased and the date) missing, or whether they were fabricated locally; but shapes and decorations are in most cases more or less identical with those from other Ottoman regions, and can be classified following the typologies put forward by Jean-Louis Bacqué-Grammont and Hans-Peter Laqueur in their various publications on this subject,²³ which suggests that importation of pre-fabricated gravestones is not unlikely. By a comparative study of the gravestones of Rethymno with the published gravestones of Istanbul and other places, but also with the gravestones of other urban centres in Crete,²⁴ we could detect not only influences and relationships in terms of forms and styles, but also networks with respect to the trade in gravestones.

22 Cf. Eldem and Vatin, *L'építaphe ottomane, passim*, esp. 75-108, 161-217.

23 See, for instance, Bacqué-Grammont *et alii*, *Stelae Turcicae II*; H.-P. Laqueur, *Osmanische Friedhöfe und Grabsteine in Istanbul* (Tübingen 1993).

24 Cf. J.-L. Bacqué-Grammont and N. Vatin, 'Stelae Turcicae IV. Le cimetière de la bourgade thrace de Karacaköy', *Anatolia Moderna/Yeni Anadolu*, 2 (1991), 10, 12.

Moving now to the epitaphs of Rethymno's Islamic gravestones, the basic information contained in them is, as everywhere, the invocation to God, the name of the deceased, a request that the *fatiha* be recited for his/her soul, and the date of death. For the rest, funerary inscriptions in most cases are based on or fully reproduce a number of specific formulas,²⁵ and become, as noted above, more elaborate, poetical and original in the nineteenth century. As with the shapes of the gravestones, many of the formulas used in the epitaphs of Rethymno are the same as those which are found on gravestones from Istanbul and other regions of the Ottoman Empire.²⁶ However, we should not neglect the fact that much as the formulas preclude the expression of spontaneous or truly personal feelings and concerns, they still presuppose a procedure of selection on the basis of suitability in terms of particular circumstances and personal (or family, or prevailing social) taste. Furthermore, epitaphs sometimes contain small or more significant variations of or additions to the popular formulas, or combinations of formulas. This issue is not only beyond the scope of this paper but also defies easy conclusions; nevertheless, I strongly believe that the question of originality versus reproduction of stereotypes is a very important aspect of studying Ottoman gravestones.

Obviously, the aim of carving an epitaph on a gravestone was neither to provide an exhaustive biography of the deceased nor to give a critical account of his/her deeds; apart from asking for the *fatiha*, the inscriptions were aimed at commemorating and praising the dead.²⁷ Still, their most obvious usefulness for modern historians is as sources of prosopographical information about the deceased and their relatives. Sometimes, it is also possible to study the continuity and, with luck, the social status of a given family through time, when several of its gravestones are available; a few such cases do exist in Rethymno.²⁸ If we distance ourselves from particular names, and focus on the way in which names are cited on gravestones, it is striking – though hardly surprising – that this was done in a gender-specific manner: women were almost always identified as daughters and spouses of men,²⁹ while men were identified through their male lineage. It is in fact noteworthy that if the deceased was male, it was not infrequent, at least for notable families, to cite next to his name not (or, more rarely, not only) his father's but the fam-

25 In the light of corpora of gravestones from Anatolia and the Balkans, Eldem and Vatin, *L'építaphe ottomane*, 95-108, esp. 97, have counted 72 basic formulas and many variations.

26 See *ibid.*, 321-337. On the basis of the formulas which appear in the epitaphs, Eldem and Vatin (*ibid.*, 132) include Crete in the core area of the Ottoman funerary culture.

27 Cf. W. Diem, *The Living and the Dead in Islam: Studies in Arabic Epitaphs*. Vol. 1: *Epitaphs as Texts* (Wiesbaden 2004), 10, as cited by Eldem and Vatin, *L'építaphe ottomane*, 12 n. 13.

28 See, for instance, the gravestones of the Gazzazzade/Gazzazoğlu (gravestones Nos 151 [1275/1858], 172 [1285/1869], 292 [1309/1892]), and of the Cinci Araboğlu families (gravestones Nos 230 [1244/1828-1829], 225 [1275/1858], 223 and 227 [1276/1860], 215 [1293/1876]). There is also the gravestone of a certain Gazaroğlu (gravestone No. 173 [1295/1878]); his family name could be a misreading for Gazzazoğlu, but at Koronaiou Street, Rethymno, there is a small inscription, dated 1210/1795, which commemorates a dedication by Gazaroğlu Osman Ağa.

29 Cf. Eldem and Vatin, *L'építaphe ottomane*, 149-155.

ily name.³⁰ Here we observe a reflection of the phenomenon of ‘aristocratisation’ of the Ottoman elites,³¹ which included the notion of family consciousness and pride. Women are notably absent from this ‘cult’ of family identity,³² at least in Rethymno, with only a few remarkable exceptions, such as the gravestone of 1262/1845-1846 belonging to Baonopula Ayşe Hanım, daughter of Hüseyin Ağa;³³ more often women were indirectly related to their paternal family through a formula of the type ‘X, daughter of Y-zade Z’.³⁴ Viewed from another angle, the fact that some, admittedly few, Muslim family names appear on the gravestones with Greek endings (-aki, -opula), suggests incorporation into or acceptance of a Greek linguistic culture, and may possibly reflect the conversion in the past of certain local families to Islam, even though the latter is a far-fetched assumption without other supporting evidence.³⁵ All available examples of names with Greek endings belong to the nineteenth century; it is maybe not irrelevant to mention here that there are more than one example of Rethymno houses which were renovated in the same century, and bear the year of renovation over their entrance doors in both the Islamic and Christian calendars.

When dealing with gravestones as historical sources we should keep in mind, as many researchers have pointed out, that the principal purpose of setting up a gravestone was to address passers-by, who were asked to recite the *fatiha* for the deceased; it was, therefore, essential that a gravestone should be visible to onlookers and this was a decisive factor for its orientation, which did not necessarily coincide with the orientation of

30 See, for instance, gravestone No. 98 (*Marizade Mustafa Ağa bin Hüseyin Ağa*) (no date).

31 M.Zilfi, *The Politics of Piety: The Ottoman Ulema in the Postclassical Age (1600-1800)* (Minneapolis 1988); Ch. K. Neumann, ‘Political and Diplomatic Developments’, in S. N. Faroqhi (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Turkey. Volume 3: The Later Ottoman Empire, 1603-1839* (Cambridge 2006), 53-54. This phenomenon is not limited to gravestones: provincial *ayan* dynasties of higher or lower standing proudly display their family names in documents and inscriptions of all kinds all over the Ottoman Empire in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

32 I generally tend to interpret the ‘-zade’ and ‘-oğlu’ types appearing on gravestones as family names rather than meaning ‘son of so-and-so’, even though admittedly the distinction is often impossible; cf. N. Vatin, ‘La notation du nom propre sur les stèles funéraires ottomanes’, in A.-M. Christin (ed.), *L’écriture du nom propre* (Paris 1998), 140-141.

33 Gravestone No. 153.

34 See, for instance, gravestone No. 284 (*Karacazade Mustafa Ağa’nın kerimesi merhume ve mağfure cennetmekân Şerife Raziye*) (1260/1844). This formulation sometimes was applied to men as well: gravestone No. 81 (*merhum Ahmed Ağa bin Süleyman Ağa Karakızoğlu*) (1226/1811).

35 See, for instance, gravestones Nos 95 (Cinaki, no date), 230 (Saranaki [?], 1244/1828-1829), and 331 (Monlazaki, 1288/1871). Muslim family names, which appear in the proper ‘-zade/-oğlu’ form in epitaphs, are cited with Greek ‘-aki’ endings by local Greek scholarship, but also in formal documents and almanacs of professionals of the early twentieth century (for example, Tzintzarapaki for Cinci Araboğlu, or Aliyizitidakis for Ali Yazıcızade) (M. Tsirimonaki, *Autoi pou ephygan, autoi pou erthan: apo ten autonomia os ten antallage* [Those Who Left, Those Who Came: From the Autonomy of Crete to the Exchange of Populations] [Rethymno 2002], 14, 30; ‘Digital Crete’ [<http://digitalcrete.ims.forth.gr>], ‘Neoterai Chronoi’ [Modern Times] Section).

the grave.³⁶ This is an important parameter in the study of gravestones, as it means that they should not be treated only as sources of names and prosopographical information about particular individuals, but also as conveyors of ‘messages’ from mostly middle and upper-class families, first and foremost to contemporaneous society, and, then, to future generations.³⁷

Moreover, gravestones reveal as much about the attitude and stereotypes of a given community towards death, as they do about issues unrelated to death, such as sources of social pride and eminence, as well as ideals and symbols of status, elegance, and finesse.³⁸ As I mentioned above, the use of formulas and elaborate expressions and metaphors suggests that what was recorded on a gravestone most of the times was not the strictly personal beliefs of the person who had ordered the gravestone, but what was thought of as appropriate in terms of expressing grief for the loss of a beloved person, faith in God’s judgment about and pride in the deceased.

The examination of the Rethymno gravestones may, for instance, corroborate the fact that it was widely accepted on the social level that the notion of ‘martyrdom’ (*şehadet*) applied to many more cases than having been “slain in the way of God”, that is, combating the enemies of the Islamic faith.³⁹ The afore-mentioned Köprülüzade suffered sudden death “şehiden” on the way to Bursa; the particular circumstances are not revealed, only that he suffered “hardship” (*meşakkat*), which seems to be a minimum precondition for being acknowledged as a martyr.⁴⁰ Kabakulak el-Hac İbrahim Paşa (d. 1155/1743), a former Grand Vizier, was beheaded while banished in Rethymno, but this did not prevent those who ordered his gravestone to declare that he had “sacrificed his soul in order to obtain martyrdom” (*şehadet neyline kıldı feda-yı ruh-ü revan*).⁴¹ As to another martyr, Memişzade el-Hac Osman Ağa (d. 1228/1813), only his piety and faith in God are stated, without any further explanation as to how he gained his special status (*nasıb old[um] şehadet menzili bana ki zikr-i tevhid eyledim*).⁴² Two further examples concern women: Ümmügülüm Hatun died in suffering, and thus it was hoped that she would be resurrected and judged by God as a martyr (*ne dertlerle helak old[um] şehidlerle*

36 Bacqué-Grammont *et alii*, *Stelae Turcicae II*, 13-14, 43-44; Bacqué-Grammont, ‘L’étude des cimetières ottomans’, 136; Eldem and Vatin, *L’építaphe ottomane*, 10-11; Eldem, *Death in Istanbul*, 24.

37 As Bacqué-Grammont and Vatin note, “... en un endroit donné, les notables locaux, quel que fût leur niveau à l’échelle nationale, affichaient dans le cimetière leur prééminence”; Bacqué-Grammont and Vatin, ‘*Stelae Turcicae IV*’, 8. Cf. E. Eldem, ‘Urban Voices from Beyond: Identity, Status and Social Strategies in Ottoman Muslim Funerary Epitaphs of Istanbul (1700-1850)’, in V. H. Aksan and D. Goffman (eds), *The Early Modern Ottomans: Remapping the Empire* (Cambridge 2007), 233-255.

38 For a very interesting example of the use of gravestones as a means to enhance the social status of a relative of the deceased, see Eldem, *Death in Istanbul*, 142-143.

39 For *şehadet* and the expansion of its meaning over time, see *EP*², s.v. ‘*Şahīd*’ (E. Kohlberg). Cf. Eldem and Vatin, *L’építaphe ottomane*, 16 n. 29, 173, 202-203, 254-255.

40 Gravestone No. 150.

41 Gravestone No. 169.

42 Gravestone No. 190.



haşr eyle).⁴³ Fatma, on the other hand, was a ten-year-old girl, an avid student of the Qur'an, who, having died of an illness that doctors failed to cure, was also considered to be a martyr (Ill. 3).⁴⁴ Thus, it is only Süfyan Ağa (d. 1246/1831)⁴⁵ and Koşkinaki Hasan (d. 1314/1896)⁴⁶ who were martyred fighting against the enemies of Islam (*merhum el-mağfur şehid [Süfyan]/şüheda bezmine katıldı ruhu [Hasan]*).

The inscriptions of the gravestones of the two last-named persons – coming from the turbulent nineteenth century – are, I think, interesting in yet another respect. They are 65 years apart, the first having been erected in 1831 and the second in 1896. According to the 1831 gravestone, Süfyan Ağa “sacrificed his life in the battle against the enemies of the true faith and for the benefit of the eternal, sublime state”, while, in 1896, Koşkinaki Hasan was called “a patriot”, someone “who loved his country” (*muhibb-i vatan*). Furthermore, in a damaged gravestone, which is in all probability the top part of the stone which bears Hasan’s name, this man is referred to as a “fighter of the faith” (*mücahid*), who (in what, I think, can be interpreted as a combination of old religious and new patriotic/national ideals) sacrificed his life in the *gaza* and the service of his country (*vatana hizmet etmek*).⁴⁷ The substitution of *vatan* for *devlet-i aliye-i ebed* could be coincidental, as I base my interpretation on only two gravestones, but it seems to me that it very likely reflects an ideological development rather than a mere difference of nomenclature.⁴⁸ Another ‘modern’ notion is recorded in another late-period gravestone, da-

III. 3: Gravestone of the ten-year-old Fatma (1852) (photo by Efi Moraitaki).

43 Gravestone No. 230 (1244/1828-1829). On women who died prematurely while pregnant or in childbirth and *şehadet*, see Bacqué-Grammont *et alii*, *Stelae Turcicae II*, 19 n. 59, 20, 22.

44 Gravestone No. 149 (1268/1852); cf. Eldem and Vatin, *L'építaphe ottomane*, 335 (No. 62).

45 Gravestone No. 229. Süfyan’s monument is the only funerary monument which survives in Rethymno, and in every way the most impressive among the Rethymno gravestones; the deceased was an adopted son of the then governor of Kandiye (gravestones Nos 229, 234, 235, 255, 311).

46 Gravestone No. 125.

47 Gravestone No. 129.

48 Cf. Eldem and Vatin, *L'építaphe ottomane*, 203-208.

ted 1306/1888: *yüzbaşı* Hüseyin Ağa is praised for having suffered for years many afflictions for the *millet*, which should, I think, in this period and context be translated as ‘nation’ rather than as ‘religion’ or ‘the community of Muslims’.⁴⁹ I find this inscription interesting for one more reason: I may be reading too much into it, but it seems to me that it somehow reflects a spirit of pessimism and melancholy at a time when the Ottomans, and the Muslims of Crete in particular, were under pressure. Despite the fact that Hüseyin was a military man, there is nothing heroic about his gravestone. He is not called a martyr or a *gazi*; on the contrary, he is described as someone who in life suffered a lot for the nation and in death found peace, may God have mercy on him and accord him a place in paradise (as it is put in the epitaph).

Archival and literary sources allow us to place the Rethymno gravestones in context, beyond the, seemingly or really, limited information that each one of them individually provides. For instance, it is known from archival and literary sources that Rethymno was in the eighteenth century a place of exile for high officials. This information explains why the gravestones of such persons have been found in this town. These include the gravestones of former Grand Viziers Kabakulak el-Hac İbrahim Paşa (d. 1155/1743) (Ill. 4),⁵⁰ and Tiryakî el-Hac Seyyid Mehmed Paşa (d. 1164/1751) (Ill. 5),⁵¹ and of the Bosnian el-Hac Mehmed Paşa, former governor of Bosnia, Yan-ya, and Kandiye (d. 1174/1761) (Ill. 6).⁵² A number of entries survive in the *kadı* registers of Kandiye about the last-named pasha; according to them, he was removed from office shortly after his appointment and before reaching the city, and ordered to settle in Rethymno with a retinue of no more than ten persons following accusations of misconduct.⁵³ Kabakulak İbrahim was executed after a ten-year stay in Rethymno,⁵⁴



III. 4: Gravestone of the former Grand Vizier Kabakulak el-Hac İbrahim Paşa (1743) (photo by Efi Moraitaki).

49 Gravestone No. 287; *EP*², s.v. ‘Millet’ (M. Ursinus).

50 Gravestone No. 169.

51 Gravestone No. 164.

52 Gravestone No. 232.

53 See, for instance, Stavrinidis, *Metaphraseis*, V: 135 (No. 2687), 138 (No. 2691), 144 (No. 2701), 146-147 (No. 2705), 154-155 (No. 2717); Mehmed Süreyya, *Sicill-i Osmanî/Osmanlı Ünlüleri*, Vol. 4, ed. N. Akbayar (Istanbul 1996), 1053.

54 *Ibid.*, 3: 782.



but the inscription on his gravestone is, as already noted, full of praise for him. Tiryakî Mehmed is reported to have suffered a natural death;⁵⁵ his gravestone is rather plain, and the inscription only bears the formula *el-muhtac ila rahmet-i rabbihi'l-gafur* [he who is in need of the grace of God All Merciful], even though it does refer to him as being a former Grand Vizier. Bosnian Mehmed's inscription is almost identical to that of Tiryakî Mehmed, that is, very simple, but the gravestone of the disgraced pasha, who had, like the other two, been stripped of the rank of vizier, is decorated with a *kallavi* turban. The three gravestones are similar to one another in terms of shape, and we may rather safely assume that all three must have been crowned with the same headgear.⁵⁶

However, the majority of Rethymno's 'male' gravestones belong to people who were neither pashas nor high officials, and may be described as members of prominent local families and the middle class: merchants, craftsmen, petty officials, dervishes, and military men. Furthermore, we should not overlook the fact that many of the surviving gravestones belong to women, apparently coming from the same social groups; in fact, as the gravestones by necessity reflect demographic trends, we may be right in remarking that women of these strata are better represented in gravestones than in archival or literary sources, which record specific political, social, and economic acts (from which women are largely excluded).⁵⁷ The gravestones provide information about men and women within the limitations of available space and social etiquette briefly described above, and can undoubtedly be best exploited in combination with other sources about local society. The history of Ottoman Rethymno is still largely unknown, but in recent

III. 5: Gravestone of the former Grand Vizier Tiryakî el-Hac Seyyid Mehmed Paşa (1751) (photo by Efi Moraitaki).

55 *Ibid.*, 4: 1075.

56 It would be useful to compare the inscriptions of these gravestones with those of pashas and Grand Viziers who did not die in disgrace, in order to see if those were any more elaborate. For the gravestone of a vizier who died in a provincial town at a later time (1811), see Kiel, 'Little-Known Ottoman Gravestones', 322-324; the text is longer than the last two cited here, even though neither it nor the gravestone are elaborate at all.

57 But see the comments of Eldem, 'Urban Voices', 250-251.

years there have been some important contributions regarding the town and its hinterland in the Ottoman period.⁵⁸ When more becomes available and/or published, it is certain that gravestones will find their place in the larger picture, and contribute towards drawing the profile of Rethymniot society. Until then and in concluding this short paper, I believe that – at this relatively early stage of the study of Ottoman Rethymno – we may observe that the Rethymno gravestones are valuable not only as sources for the members, mentalities, tastes, and fashions of the society which ordered and had them carved and inscribed, but also, and more particularly, as sources and relics of the fate of a community which passed from a position of strength and domination to the status of a minority and eventually to forced migration and (relative?) oblivion. In other words, they reflect in broad outlines the creation, development, and disappearance of the Muslim community of Rethymno.



III. 6: Gravestone of the Bosnian el-Hac Mehmed Paşa, former governor of Bosnia, Yanya, and Kandiye (1761) (photo by Efi Moraitaki).

58 See, for instance, the studies of Nükhet and Nuri Adıyeke collected in A. N. Adıyeke and N. Adıyeke, *Fethinden Kaybına Girit* (Istanbul 2006); Y. Z. Papiomytoglou (ed.), *Eggrapha hierodikeiou Rethymnes, 17^{os}-18^{os} ai.: hoi metaphraseis tou 'Vematos' Rethymnes* [Documents of the *Kadı* Court of Rethymno, Seventeenth-Eighteenth Centuries: Translations of the 'Vima' Newspaper of Rethymno] (Rethymno 1995); A. N. Adıyeke, 'XVII. Yüzyıl Girit (Resmo) Şeriyeye Sicillerine Göre İhtida Hareketleri ve Girit'te Etnik Dönüşüm', in *XIV. Türk Tarih Kongresi. Ankara: 9-13 Eylül 2002. Kongreye Sunulan Bildiriler*, Vol. 2, Part 1 (Ankara 2005), 557-569; E. Balta and M. Oğuz (eds), *To othomaniko ktematologio tou Rethymnou: Tapu-Tahrir 822* [The Ottoman Cadastral Register of Rethymno: *Tapu Tahrir Defteri* 822] (Rethymno 2007).

