

JOHN ROBERT BARNES is a scholar of Ottoman and Near Eastern history. He holds a BA in Arts from Stanford University, an MA in History from New York University, and a PhD in History from the University of California, Los Angeles. Dr. Barnes’ research spans the historical and legal development of religious foundations in Islam and the Ottoman Empire, the origins of Turkish Sufism, and Bektashi and Alevi rituals. His work also explores the history of Ottoman Rhodes, nineteenth-century Ottoman intellectuals on the island, the *tekke* and cemetery of Murad Reis, Ottoman epigraphy in the cemeteries of Murad Reis and Gani Ahmed, and the classificatory headings and catalogues of the Hafız Ahmed Ağa Library.

He has published extensively on Ottoman history, including his landmark book, *An Introduction to Religious Foundations in the Ottoman Empire* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1986); “Murad Reis Tekkesi (Rodos),” in Ahmet Yaşar Ocak, ed., *Osmanlı Toplumunda Tasavvuf ve Sufiler*, 2nd ed. (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 2014), pp. 375–408 [1st ed. 2005]; “Some Cases of Mistaken Identity in the Ottoman Epigraphy of Murad Reis on Rhodes,” in *σοφία άδολος*: Studies in Honor of Ioannis Papachristodoulou (Archaeological Institute of Aegean Studies, Rhodes, 2014), pp. 233–57; and ‘Σχόλια γύρω από την ιστορία του Καστελλορίζου με αφορμή την Οθωμανική Ιστορία της Νήσου Μείς του Χαμπιμπζαντέ Αχμέντ Κεμάλ’ [Comments on the History of Kastellorizo in Light of A *History of the Island of Meis* by Habibzade Ahmed Kemal], *Δωδεκανησιακά Χρονικά*, vol. 23 (Rhodes, 2010), pp. 62–84.

“My association with the Hafız Ahmed Agha Library began in 1997, when Elias Kollias, then director of the Ephorate of Antiquities, invited me to translate its original catalogue from Ottoman Turkish into English. At the time, Dr. Kollias imagined that the task would require no more than a month. Were he alive today, he would, I suspect, be surprised—if not appaled—to learn that the project has now extended over three decades.

The reasons for this protracted endeavor lie in the nature of the original catalogue itself. Abbreviations are frequently used for the names of authors and titles of works, but these are of little help in securely identifying either. Moreover, the catalogue provides no account of the twenty-five classificatory headings, most of them being Islamic sciences, into which the library’s holdings are divided, nor does it offer biographical information on the scholars whose works defined the sciences. It soon became clear that the project could not remain a mere inventory of books. Rather, it had to evolve into a broader undertaking: a historical survey of the Islamic sciences, a biographical study of their authors, and a contextual discussion of the Prophet Muhammad, the Kur’ān, and the formative period of Islam.

In this light, a thirty-year effort for what was once thought to be a one-month task is perhaps not as implausible as it may seem. The British historian Arnold Toynbee confronted a similar experience: what began as a modest set of notes eventually grew into his monumental ‘A Study of History’, a multi-volume work that took him three decades to complete and expanded into nothing less than a history of the world.

At the close of my own study of the library, I was fortunate enough to be introduced to Tarık Tüten, the representative (mütevelli vekili) of the administrator (mütevelli) of the library’s pious foundation. Tarık has been an unfailing source of patience and support, particularly as I have contended with a debilitating illness. His encouragement has extended well beyond friendship: he has been an ardent advocate of my research on the library and on the history of Ottoman Rhodes, and he has shown himself to be a first-rate scholar through his involvement in the field of Ottoman studies and in the publication of this volume.”

John Robert Barnes

The Ottoman Past in the History of Rhodes

Evidence of Rhodes’ Ottoman past is apparent to anyone looking at the skyline of the Old Town where the spires of minarets and domes of mosques can be seen. On a casual stroll through the medieval town, the visitor encounters mosques, fountains, an imposing and still-functioning bathhouse, a library, schools, and a clock tower - all monuments of a bygone Ottoman era. Information about a specific building or structure can usually be found in any one of a number of tourist guidebooks that are available today. More often than not, the descriptions found in them are brief but are sufficient to satisfy the cursory interest of tourists.

For anyone wishing to discover something more about the Ottoman period of Rhodes, the same guidebooks offer by way of introduction an overall history of the island from ancient times to the present. In these guides a good deal of attention is naturally devoted to the Classical and especially the Hellenistic period of Ancient Greece. This is followed by the Byzantine era and a lengthy section on the Knights of St. John. When it comes to the Ottoman period, the four centuries of history from 1522 to 1912, this kind of touristic literature has very little to say. Often, it is usually critical of the Ottoman era and dismisses it in little more than a paragraph.

Ottoman Rhodes is described as a dark period of four hundred years about which nothing worth mentioning is known - apart from the fact that the Greeks of the island, as elsewhere, were reduced to “slavery.” A well-noted example of this abject status is the fact that the Greek population was not allowed to live within the medieval walled town and was locked out after sundown.

Those who are dissatisfied with this kind of response generally found in touristic literature should consult the first and new editions of *Encyclopaedia of Islam*¹ for a more scholarly assessment of the period, as well as the articles on Rhodes in the Turkish *İslam Ansiklopedisi*² and the *Türk Ansiklopedisi*.³ It is recommended that İ.H. Uzunçarşılı’s study on the naval organization of the Ottoman Empire should be considered as well⁴.

However, in their articles on Rhodes, both the first and second editions of the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* have virtually nothing to say about the Ottoman period - nothing, that is, save the fact that, apart from the Classical and Hellenistic era, the island had only really been important during the period of the Knights of St. John. That importance was due to its strategic location in the southeastern

1 The article “Rhodes” in the 1993 reprint edition of the first *Encyclopaedia of Islam* has two entries with two authors, A.S. Atiya and Ettore Rossi. Neither of them has anything to say about the Ottoman period. For A.S. Soucek “Rodoss,” *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, CD-Rom Edition, VIII: 570, “After the conquest and for the rest of the Ottoman period (1522-1912), Rhodes lost much of its former prominence and strategic importance. . .” (In a later edition of the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* the architectural historian and Ottomanist Machiel Kiel’s entry on Rhodes is noteworthy, Ed.)

2 Besim Darkot, in the article “Rodoss” in the *İslam Ansiklopedisi* IX: 753-8, is of the same. opinion, and says so from the beginning: “Ottoman rule on the island of Rhodes lasted for 390 years (1522-1912). Within that time Rhodes was not the scene of any important events.”

3 The article “Rodoss” in the *Türk Ansiklopedisi* XXVII, 341-2 equally has little to say on the subject, but does state that it was a maritime sancak in the Province of the Kapudan Pasha and that a number of worthy admirals came from the sancak of Rhodes.

4 İ.H. Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Devletinin Merkez ve Bahriye Teşkilatı*, Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1948. This otherwise excellent study has very little to say about Ottoman Rhodes.

Aegean where it posed a threat to Muslim shipping and pilgrims along the maritime route to Alexandria. In addition, Rhodes under the Knights was a menace to the Turkish principalities along the Aegean littoral of Anatolia. But with the Ottoman conquest in 1522, the reader is told, Rhodes lost its historical *raison d'être*, and its only purpose was to serve as a port for the Ottoman fleet from time to time. The island was used primarily as a rendezvous point for an Ottoman armada assembled against the French occupation of Egypt in 1799, and as a stopping point in 1824 for re-victualing the Egyptian fleet of Ibrahim Pasha en route to the Morea to suppress the Greek uprising there. Apart from that, Rhodes was not historically significant under the Ottomans and had no role to play in the annals of the Ottoman Empire.

Published accounts of travels in the Levant by English travelers, as well as British Foreign Office reports of the nineteenth century, represent another source of information about Ottoman Rhodes. But again the reader is brought up short by the English myopic obsession with Classical Antiquity to the exclusion of everything else, and by a condescending attitude toward anything Muslim or Ottoman. For many of them, Rhodes throughout the nineteenth century wallowed in an endless torpor of oriental indolence where nothing ever happened. Foreign office reports for the period are fond of pointing out the lack of social and medical services on the island, where there was “... no hospital, no infirmary, no asylum; the lame, the blind, the mad, and the old are all left to their fate.”⁵

Throughout the course of the twentieth century, the cemetery of Murad Reis has been regarded as a locale for finding Ottoman history. From 1930 on, various people have taken an interest in the grave site and have published their findings. Here then was one place on Rhodes where history could be found. A perusal of publications from 1935, 1945, and 1986 in Italian and Turkish readily informs the reader who is historically significant in this Ottoman graveyard.⁶

Within and around the tekke and cemetery of Murad Reis there are a total of 242 engraved inscriptions over fountains, on wall plaques, and on grave stelae. But only some twenty have been found by these authors to be historically noteworthy. They comprise, by and large, the epitaphs of the *rical*, the leading men of the Ottoman Empire—grand viziers, admirals of the fleet, pashas of high rank, and khans of the Crimea. The reason for many of them being found in the graveyard of Murad Reis is because they were either exiled to Rhodes where they ultimately ended their days, or they were sent to the island and executed there. In either case, they represent an ill-fated element among the Ottoman aristocracy. Everyone else buried in the cemetery has been deemed of either lesser interest or of no importance altogether because they either were not of high rank, were women, children, or attendant staff, or they were persons about whom nothing was known beyond a name and a date.

Since these exiled or executed notables of the Empire have been the exclusive focus of attention in published studies, the natural consequence of this limited vision is to regard the burial ground of Murad Reis as little more than a “cimetière de criminels,” as a mid-nineteenth century French topographical map of Rhodes would have it. Invariably, whenever any Europeans visited the tekke and cemetery of Murad Reis, they would ask if anyone of importance was buried there. The resident shaiyks were only too happy to point to the graves of noteworthy individuals who had been condemned to Rhodes. The effect of this negative view is that it was not restricted to the grave site

alone, but came to be applied to the entire island as well. By extension, Rhodes was less an outpost than a backwater of the Empire, and viewed as little more than a Devil's Island for those who fell out of imperial favor.

Anyone making a careful study of the gravestones in the cemetery of Murad Reis would come to the conclusion that while a number of the twenty or so leading men of the Empire that have been singled out for study are of some historical interest, they have nothing to do with the history of Rhodes. Nor does anyone else in the graveyard, save for a few officials in the service of the Province of the Archipelago in the nineteenth century. So then, after a close examination of the literature on the history of Ottoman Rhodes and a study of the epigraphy at Murad Reis, it would appear that the assessment of the tourist guidebooks and scholarly reference works is altogether justified in negatively describing the Ottoman era. Or so it would seem.

Lawrence Durrell once described the cemetery of Murad Reis as a secret garden.⁷ What he meant was that he found the place a quiet retreat where he could shut out the noise of the outside world. His choice of words however can be taken literally, for Murad Reis has kept its secrets well throughout the centuries. The first thing to realize is that nothing should be taken at its face value, for there is little in the cemetery that is as it seems. The mosque of Murad Reis is an example. The congregational mosque is not only a symbol for the cemetery, it is a famous landmark on Rhodes and a much-photographed icon associated with the island. Virtually anyone seeing it would accept it for what it is. Virtually anyone would, that is, except for architects with a historical sense. On close inspection, it is obvious that the style of the minaret does not accord with the style of the mosque. Ottoman mosques do not have onion-shaped domes for minarets; they have conical spires, as can be seen in the minarets of mosques throughout the Old Town.

Entering the cemetery area, the visitor sees before him series of rows of sarcophagus-like cenotaphs in close formation. Prefabricated cement forms can be seen alongside traditional cenotaphs made of stone blocks faced with marble. All this seems perfectly natural; indeed, it would be difficult to imagine the cemetery any other way. But this arrangement is the product of Italian restoration of the site after 1925. Economy of space was never a consideration in Ottoman graveyards, but it served the purpose of Italian landscape architects. They were intent on clearing more than one-half of the cemetery area of graves and turning the place into a park-like area, a sight more aesthetically pleasing, no doubt, to the guests of the newly-created luxury hotel, the Albergo delle Rose, not to mention the players on the tennis court adjacent to the cemetery.

As for cement forms, it should be realized that cenotaphs were constructed with stone, not cement, a building material unknown in Rhodes until the arrival of the Italians. Prefabricated cement memorials were created to replace crumbling stone structures. If Italian restoration specialists had taken the time and the expense to recreate cenotaphs made from stone blocks, this would have entailed the additional expense of facing them with marble. It was simpler, faster, and more economical to replace them with mass-produced cement forms. These were also used extensively in the new Turkish cemetery of Gani Ahmed that the Italians created in 1925. The cemetery of Gani Ahmed is where the tombs and remains of the common population that had been buried outside the walls of the Old Town were transferred.

Another image that the visitor readily becomes accustomed to is the sight of marble grave stelae planted randomly at the head or foot of rectangular stone border graves. These border stones have

5 F.O. 198/13, General Reports from the Consuls, 1858-60, Report from the island of Rhodes.

6 Vitalis Strumza, *II Tecche di Murad Reis a Rodi*, Bologna: Stabilimento Tipografico L. Cappelli, 1934, extract from *Rivista delle Colonie Italiane* No. 1, 1930; Celalettin Rodoslu, *Rodos ve İstankoy Adalarında Gömülü Tarihi Simalar*, Ankara: Çankaya Matbaası, 1945; Zeki Çelikkol, *Rodos 'taki Türk Eserleri ve Tarihçe*, Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1986.

7 Lawrence Durrell, *The Greek Islands* (New York: Viking Press, 1978), 129: “I linger a little before leaving the town of Rhodes where I spent such happy post-war years, locked into the secret garden of Murad Reis.”

been implanted low in the ground in outline form to indicate the presence of a grave. They may or may not have sandstone markers indicating a headstone and a footstone, but they are without an inscribed grave stele. The Italians freely placed inscribed tombstones inside border graves as a solution to the problem of what to do with an excess number of marble grave stelae. Naturally, there is no relation between the person mentioned on the stele and the individual interred in the border grave.

When it comes to identifying high-ranking officials of historical importance, there has been a tendency in publications on Murad Reis to either take what is written on the stone memorial at face value, or impose a pre-conceived notion of who that person must be based upon what is known about a figure in history with that name. But what appears as self-evident in these inscriptions is rarely the case, and what is presented is a person with a mistaken identity. This wrongly assumed identity is accepted and repeated in subsequent publications as if it were obvious. The consequence of this is that the actual identity of the person in question is never discovered.

This last-mentioned example--a blind acceptance of what is inscribed--is, perhaps, the most pernicious example of deception, if only because it is so difficult to detect. The only way to know the true identity of an individual is to question what is written in his epitaph and, whenever possible, to correct the image that is presented through careful research.

The difficulty of determining who is of historical importance and correctly identifying is evident in Vitalis Strumza's study I1 *Tecche di Murad Reis a Rodi*. Of the twenty persons presented in Strumza's original study of the cemetery of Murad Reis, five are not of historical interest because nothing is known of them beyond what is said in their epitaphs,⁸ while an additional five have been incorrectly identified,⁹ which leaves ten out of twenty whose identity has been accurately determined and who may be regarded as historically significant. Out of the fifteen persons of presumed known historical interest, twelve were executed or died in exile. This fact weights his study so that the dominant impression the reader receives is that the cemetery of Murad Reis was a graveyard reserved for an ill-starred few of the Ottoman ruling class.

But appearances are deceiving. The remaining two hundred and twenty persons interred in the cemetery were neither executed nor did they end their days on Rhodes in exile. Further, the fifteen persons Strumza is concerned with do not represent their own kind. The majority of Grand Viziers, Khans of the Crimea, and Pashas sent to Rhodes were exiled there for only a short time. They were usually restored to office when the Porte found it appropriate, and thus returned to Ottoman government service. Whether anyone is engaged in a study of some fifteen or so notables of the Empire identified in Strumza's work or investigates the personal histories of a much broader number of Grand Viziers, Pashas, and Khans of the Crimea who were exiled for a time to Rhodes, it is doubtful if biographical information of this kind would offer any understanding about Rhodes' Ottoman past.

8 Strumza provides only an Italian translation, without historical commentary, of epitaphs for Mahmud Pasha of Bosnia; Salim Bey, Administrator for Religious Foundations on Rhodes; Said Bey, Minister of Finance for Egypt; Hacı, Necib Bey, General Director of Finance for the Province of the Archipelago and his wife Nefise Hanım; and Hatice Hanım.

9 Şahin Giray, Fetih Giray, and Saadet Giray Sultan have all been wrongly described by Strumza as "Khans of the Crimea," while the person described as Şah Safi Mirza has been identified as a Safavid Shah of Iran and the legitimate son of Shah Hüseyin, one of the last Safavid Shahs. Memi Pasha has mistakenly been identified as the well-known Rodos Bey of history.

Be that as it may, before abandoning altogether the cemetery as a locale for discovering the history of Ottoman Rhodes, it may be worthwhile to have a second look at a grave located in the *hazire*, the small walled graveyard area situated next to the mosque. One of the graves encountered in the *hazire* is that of Elhacı Ahmed Pasha, who died in the year 1715. The first thing to note about the sarcophagus-like stone cenotaph is that it is impressive in size. The large headstone has been broken off and rests against one side of the memorial, and does so in such a way that it gives the impression that it was randomly placed there and actually belongs someplace else. The inscription on the headstone is brief and uninformative, simply requesting the passerby to say the Fatiha, a prayer for the repose of the soul of Kaymakam Elhacı Ahmed Pasha.

As to the term *kaymakam*, it is an appellation that has a variety of meanings. The most common is that of an official who is substituting for someone else. Given the fact that this individual held the rank of pasha, it is fair to assume that the person in whose place he was officiating must have been a high-ranking dignitary. Fortunately, *Sicill-i Osmânî*, the Ottoman national biography, provides information on the identity of Kirli Elhac Ahmed Pasha. He was Haseki Ağa in the Bostancı Ocağı, chief of the lower grade officers in the corps of the Imperial Guards employed in the gardens in and around the Sultan's palace. In 1707 he became Bostancı Baş, Commander of the Imperial Guards. In this office he had supervision of the Bosphorus, the Golden Horne, the Sea of Marmara, and the Black Sea. In December 1711, with the rank of vizier, he became Kapudan-ı Derya, Grand Admiral of the Ottoman fleet. A year later, in January 1712, he became Istanbul kaymakamı. In April 1712 he was again appointed Kapuda-ı Derya and at the beginning of 1713 he became governor of Mosul. In 1714 he was made governor of Rhodes, where he subsequently died.¹⁰

The significance of this biographical entry in *Sicill-i Osmânî* is that Ahmed Pasha had been an important officer in the palace service of the Sultan. Upon graduating from palace service, he was twice appointed Grand Admiral. In the interim between these appointments he served as Istanbul kaymakamı, that is, he acted in the capacity of the Grand Vizier when that officer was away from the capital on campaign. After being appointed Grand Admiral for the second time, he was governor of Mosul, and then of Rhodes. In the latter office he lasted less than a year, for he died in 1715 for reasons that are unknown, but the entry in *Sicill-i Osmânî* may provide a clue; he died *maktulen*, that is, he was probably executed. Although he was twice made Grand Admiral and was governor of Rhodes, he preferred to be remembered on his epitaph as serving as kaymakam in the place of the Grand Vizier.

The case of Elhac Ahmed Pasha is neither unusual nor an aberration. Karabağ Süleyman Pasha, who had been trained in the Tersane, the Imperial Maritime Arsenal in Istanbul, was appointed Kapudan-ı Derya on three occasions, in 1755, 1757, and in 1760, and on the last occasion with the rank of vizier. He then became governor of Rhodes in 1763, but died there not long thereafter.¹¹ The Rodos Beyi, the governor of Rhodes, held a unique position of preeminence among the derya beyis, the governors who administered maritime sancaks or subdivisions within the Province of the Kapudan Pasha. Exactly how the Rodos Beyi achieved this is in need of further research, but it is possible to offer an outline with the information presently available.

After the conquest of Rhodes in December 1522, Sultan Suleyman appointed Kurdoğlu Muslihüddin Reis, one of his chief naval commanders during the siege, to be in charge of the newly-conquered island. According to A.S. Atiya in the first part of an article on Rhodes in the first edition

10 "Kirli Elhac Ahmed Pasha," *Sicill-i Osmânî*, 238.

11 "Süleyman Pasha, Karabağ," *Sicill-i Osmânî*, iii 83.

of the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, “Rhodes became the seat of a Turkish Pasha.”¹² İ.H. Uzunçarşılı states as well that Muslihüddin Reis was appointed by Sultan Süleyman as Rodos sancakbeyi.¹³ While this was the case, the situation of the island after the conquest prevented it from functioning as an independent administrative entity. As part of the peace terms, it is known that the population of Rhodes was exempt from taxation for a period of five years.¹⁴ It is not clear if a land and population registers were drawn up immediately after the conquest or later. At any rate, holders of medium and large-size fiefs (timar, zeamet) were not deriving their income from the island’s revenue during this five-year period, and neither was the *Sancakbeyi*. The azab forces manning the medieval walled town must have received their pay from the state treasury, and it may be assumed the sancakbeyi probably did as well.

Further, although Sultan Süleyman appointed Muslihüddin as *Sancakbeyi* of Rhodes at the end of December 1522,¹⁵ it must have been with the understanding from the Sultan that he was free to pursue his piratical activities. If Italian records for the period are correct, Muslihüddin was active as a corsair in the southwestern Aegean and Mediterranean from 1522 to 1535.¹⁶ In these early years, Muslihüddin used Rhodes in the same way he had Bizerta, as a port base from which to launch his piratical operations. As a consequence, during the same period Rhodes was administratively tied to Mytilene, which at the time was part of the province of Rumeli, and Dizdarzade Mehmed Çelebi, the *Sancakbeyi* of Midilli, took charge of the island.¹⁷ Rhodes remained under the administration of Mytilene from 1522 until 1538 and like Mytilene during this time, Rhodes would have been administratively tied to the *Beylerbeylik* of Rumelia.

It is not clear what administrative status Rhodes had at the time in its relation to Mytilene (that is, whether it ranked as a *kaza*), or what the exact position of the Rados *Beyi* was. Mytilene itself would have been under the Sancak of the Kapudan at Gallipoli. It is possible that the *Sancakbeyi* of Mytilene acted as overseer of Rhodes and appointed lieutenant governors (*Kaymakam-ı Mir-i liva*) to administer the island in Muslihüddin’s absence. This would explain the presence of two persons who are described as *Mir-i livas* (that is, *Sancakbeyis*) for Rhodes between 1522 and 1530. The name Mehmed Bey appears early as *Mir-i liva* from about 1522 to 1525, and that of Abdülcelil İsfendiyar Bey from about 1525 to 1530.¹⁸ More properly, they would have ranked as *Kaymakam-ı Mir-i liva*, lieutenant governors.

According to Italian sources, Muslihüddin Reis died in 1535.¹⁹ This conclusion probably derived from the fact that reports of his activity as a corsair in the Mediterranean ceased after that date. The reason for this perhaps was due to the changing status of Rhodes. After being subject to the sancak of Mytilene from 1522 to 1538, with the creation of the Province of the Archipelago, from 1538 to 1546 Rhodes had an independent position (*müstakil*) as a sancak outside the administration of the newly-

created maritime province. This may have been due to the fact that Rhodes became during this time a source of revenue (*has*) for the Kapudan Pasha, Barbaros Hayreddin Pasha. At this point, Muslihüddin may have had his naval activity restricted to the province of Rhodes, the southeastern Aegean, and by this time became subject to the Kapudan Pasha as squadron commander in support of the Ottoman fleet when the occasion demanded. This would necessarily have put an end to his traditional high-profile role as a privateer.

Rhodes’ exceptional administrative status of being outside the Province of the Archipelago ended with Hayreddin Pasha’s death in 1546, and it is only from this date on that the maritime sancakbeyi of Rhodes was included within the Province of the Kapudan Pasha with the rank of *Derya beyi*.²⁰ While the three periods of Rhodes’ administrative status and their dates are known, the same cannot be said of Muslihüddin Reis’s role as *Sancakbeyi* during each of them. That role as presented here is simply a surmise, but it offers an understanding of how Muslihüddin’s position evolved over the years from essentially one of a freebooting corsair to that of *derya beyi*, a maritime sancakbeyi resident on Rhodes within the Province of the Kapudan Pasha. As *Derya beyi*, Muslihüddin became a naval commander responsible for policing the southeastern Aegean with his squadron, and adding his ships and marines to the Ottoman fleet when the occasion demanded. Ultimately, however, questions surrounding the early years of the island’s administration can only be resolved through research in the Istanbul archives.

A word may be in order regarding how the creation of the Province of the Archipelago came about. The earliest records relating to the maritime province date to the year 1550, some four years after Rhodes entered the Province of the Kapudan Pasha. The province in that year comprised the *sancaks* of Gelibolu (Gallipoli), Midilli (Mytilene), Rodos (Rhodes), Egriboz (Euboea), İnebahtı (Naupaktos), and Karlı ili (Epiros), which indicates that Rhodes was part of Province of the Archipelago at an early date. With its creation as a *sancak* in 1522, the island may have formed the original nucleus of the future province along with Gallipoli and Mytilene.²¹ The addition of Rhodes created an early core of naval bases along the eastern Aegean to control piracy in the region, fully fourteen years before the Province of the Kapudan Pasha came into being.

While the Province of the Kapudan Pasha comprised only six sancaks in 1550, by the end of the sixteenth century the maritime beylerbeylik expanded to twenty-seven. As an overview, the Province of the Kapudan Pasha developed in the following manner. The sancak of Gelibolu (Gallipoli) comprising the Gallipoli peninsula was taken from the European Province of Rumeli and the port town of Gallipoli was made the seat of the Kapudan Pasha. To complete the control of the Hellespont, the sancak of Biga comprising the Biga Peninsula with its capital of Kale-i Sultaniye was taken from the Province of Anatolia.²² To the south of Biga, the sancak of Kocaeli in the region of Bithynia and Suğla in the area of İzmir (Smyrna) and its environs were obtained from the *Beylerbeylik* of Anatolia as well and added to the maritime province. For the western Aegean, the sancaks of Eğriboz (Euboea) and Mizistre (Mystra) were removed from the Province of Rumeli, along with the sancaks of İnebahtı (Naupaktos)

12 AS. Atiya and Ettore Rossi, “Rhodes,” *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 1993 repr. of first edition (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1993), 1147.

13 İ.H. Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Tarihi* II, eighth printing (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1998), 315.

14 Ibidem.

15 Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Tarihi* II, 315: 5 safer 929, which is Tuesday, 23 December 1522.

16 Salvatore Bono, *Corsari nel Mediterraneo*, Perugia, 1993, and the article “Kurtoğlu Muslihiddin Reis” in the Wikipedia encyclopedia.

17 Çelikkol, *Rodos’taki Türk Eserleri*, 14, citing Şerafettin Turan, *Rodos’un Zaptından Malta Muhasarasına* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayını, 1970), 71.

18 Ettore Rossi, “L’Iscrizione ottomana in Persiano sul bastione della Torre di S. Maris a Rodi,” *Annuario della R. Scuola Archeologica di Atene e delle Missioni Italiane in Oriente* viii-ix (1925-26), 342-3. Mehmed Bey and Abdülcelil İsfendiyar Bey are described as *Mir-i liva*, an early term for Sancak beyi.

19 “Kurtoğlu Muslihiddin Reis,” Wikipedia encyclopedia.

20 “Cezayir-i Bahr-ı Sefid Eyaleti,” *Türk Ansiklopedisi* x, 332: Barbaros Hayrettin Paşanın da “Derya beylerbeyliği” ne tayin olunduğundan ve kendisine Gelibolu sancağından başka, Rodos, Midilli ve Eğriboz sancaklarının da verildiğinden bahsetmekte...” and “Kaptan Paşa” *İslam Ansiklopedisi* vi, 207: Rodos’un müstakil durumu, Barbaros Hayreddin Paşa’nın vefatını müteakip (1546), bozularak, Rodos beylerine derya-beyi payesinin verilmesinden sonra, Cezayir eyaletine idhal edilmiş.”

21 Ayhan Afsin Ünal, “XVI. ve XVII. Yüzyıllarda Cezayir-i Bahr-ı Sefid (Akdeniz-Ege Adaları) ya da Kapdan Pasha Eyaleti,” *Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi*, No. 12 (2002), 253.

22 The peninsula of Biga corresponds in area to the Troad (Troas), the ancient region of Troy.

on the Gulf of Corinth and Karlı ili (Epiros) on the eastern shores of the Ionian Sea. In the southeastern Mediterranean, the sancaks of Dimyat (Damietta) and Alexandria were taken from the province of Egypt, while the sancak of Mehdiye was taken over from that of Tunis. The *beylerbeylik* of Algiers as a separate province completed the military-administrative frontier along the southern Mediterranean. Forming a ring of naval bases around the Aegean, Ionian, and Mediterranean seas, they protected their own territory and supplied ships for the Ottoman fleet as well as a compliment of marines.²³

This newly-created province was called the *Cezayir-i Bahr-i Sefid Eyaleti*, the Province of the Islands of the White Sea,²⁴ or simply the Province of the Archipelago, which became synonymous with the Province of the Kapudan Pasha. At its creation, it was under the command of Hayreddin Pasha, who was Admiral of the Ottoman fleet and *Beylerbeyi* of the Province of Algiers. Hayreddin Barbarossa thus governed two provinces, the Province of Algiers and that of the Kapudan Pasha from Gallipoli, the capital of the maritime province.

After Hayreddin Pasha’s death in 1546, for a time the Kapudan Pasha was reduced to *sancakbeyi* rank. When Piyale was made *Kapudan-ı derya* in 1554, he was accorded the title of Bey only and rank of *Sancakbeyi* of Gallipoli.²⁵ In 1558, in view of his victories in the western Mediterranean, the Imperial Divan awarded him the rank of *Beylerbeyi* (governor of a province) and the title of Pasha. After the conquest of Chios (*Sakız*) in 1566, shortly after the accession of Selim II, Piyale Pasha was assigned a yearly *has* income of 400,000 akçes and made second vizier (*vezir-i sani*) with a seat in the imperial divan (*kubbe veziri*).²⁶ During the conquest of Cyprus in 1570, Piyale Pasha was elevated to the rank of third vizier.²⁷ High vizierial rank and a seat in the imperial divan were not accorded to the Kapudan Pasha again until Damad İbrahim Pasha was made Grand Admiral in 1588.²⁸

With respect to Muslihüddin Reis, Rhodes’ first Ottoman governor, nothing is known of his naval activity during his long term of service, perhaps often nominal, as *sancakbeyi* after 1535. Surprisingly, there is no mention of him in the battle of Preveza in 1538. He was replaced in the position of Rodos Beyi by one of Turgut Reis’s lieutenants, Deli Cafer Reis, who administered the island from 1552 to 1557-8. In 1552 Muslihüddin Reis exchanged his position as derya beyi of Rhodes for that of Mytilene. He remained in that post until sometime after 1560. In 1559 Muslihüddin as derya beyi of Mytilene and his brother Kurdoğlu Ahmed Bey, the *Derya beyi* for Rhodes, were a part of Kapudan Piyale Pasha’s fleet in the naval battle off the island of Jerba (Tr. Cerbe). They also took part in the siege of Jerba the following year which succeeded in evicting the Spanish from the island.²⁹ After the Jerba campaign, Muslihüddin Reis returned to Mytilene as derya beyi and died a short time thereafter.³⁰

When Muslihüddin’s brother Kurdoğlu Ahmed Pasha became Rodos Beyi in 1557-8, the manner of appointing persons to this position may have changed. Muslihüddin and Deli Cafer Reis gained their naval experience at sea as corsairs. With the appointment of Ahmed Pasha, governors of Rhodes obtained their training in the Tersane-i amire, the Imperial Maritime Arsenal in Istanbul. Ahmed Pasha rose through the ranks to become Tersane kethüdası, Director of the Maritime Arsenal, second in rank in that organization only to the Kapudan Pasha. Corsairs, regardless of their position or rank within the Ottoman navy, retained their title of Reis, which signified they commanded their own vessel. Throughout much of the sixteenth century, sancak beyis, including derya beyis, held the title of bey. It is worthy of note that Muslihüddin’s brother had the distinction of being titled “pasha.”

Kurdoğlu Ahmed Pasha’s appointment as Rodos Beyi from the office of *Tersane Kethüdası* is indicative of the importance Rhodes was being given within the administration of the Province of the Kapudan Pasha. The moment of his election happened to coincide with increased naval activity of the Ottoman fleet. This began the Ottoman campaign against the Spanish to take the island of Jerba in 1559-60. In 1565, Ahmed Pasha took part in the siege of Malta, and in 1570 during the conquest of Cyprus as Rodos Beyi he blockaded Famagusta (Magosa) and guarded the island with forty ships while the main fleet under Piyale Pasha returned to Istanbul. Ahmed Pasha was not present at the battle of Lepanto on 7 October 1571, in all likelihood because he had been recently appointed governor-general (*beylerbeyi*) of Cyprus. The Rodos Beyi was present, however, in that historic battle: Hasan Bey led a fleet of six ships. A certain Kaya Bey replaced Hasan Bey as Rodos Beyi from 1571 to 1573.

Nothing is known of the activities of the Rodos Beyis from 1573 on--not even their names, until the year 1610 when Memi Bey became derya beyi for Rhodes. Of Albanian origin, Memi Bey was also educated in the Tersane-i amire. In 1591-2 he was made Trablusgarb Beyi, Commander of Tripolitania in Libya. Upon being dismissed several years later, he returned to the Imperial Arsenal in Istanbul and was appointed Rodos Beyi in 1018/1609-10. He joined with Grand Admiral Kayserili Halil Pasha in attempting to rid the eastern Mediterranean of Tuscan and Maltese pirates that were harrassing Ottoman shipping between Alexandria and Rhodes. Memi Bey made a name for himself in capturing two galleons belonging to the French Knights of Malta. One galleon was commanded by someone known to the Turks as the “Grave-digger Captain” for the number of Muslim ships he had sunk. Both galleons were taken to Rhodes as prizes and added to the fleet.³¹

In 1614 Memi Bey joined Halil Pasha on a punitive expedition against Malta as retaliation for the number of raids conducted by the Knights of St. John against Ottoman vessels in the eastern Mediterranean. Although the objective of the expedition was to quickly raid the island in order to destroy property and take prisoners, the attack was not successful as the Knights were forewarned of their coming and anticipated where the Ottoman troops intended to land. While

23 “Cezayir-i Bahr-ı Sefid Eyaleti,” opera citato, 332.

24 In normal English parlance, the Province of the Archipelago.

25 “Piyale Pasha, Damad İkinci Vezir,” *Türk Ansikl.* xxvii, 44; “Cezayir-i Bahr-ı Sefid Eyaleti,” opera cit., 332.

26 “Piyale Pasha,” *İslam Ansiklopedisi* ix, 568. “Kubbe Vezirleri,” *Osmanlı Tarih Deyimleri ve Terimleri Sözlüğü* II (İstanbul: Milli Eğitim Basımevi, 1983), 307.

27 Ibidem.

28 “Kaptan-ı Derya,” *Türk Ansiklopedisi* xxi, 240; *Sicill-i Osmânî* iv, 785. The term “Grand Admiral” was reserved for Kapudan Pashas with vizierial rank.

29 Katip Çelebi, *Tuhfetü’l-kibar ft Esfar’ul-bihar*, i, 111 on the Jerba campaign: “Moton (Modon) onüne vardıkta, Rodos Beyi Kurtoğlu Ahmet Bey ve Midilli Sancağı Beyi Mustafa Bey birkaç parça gemi ile geldiler.” Midilli sancak beyi Mustafa is identified in the *Türk Ansiklopedisi* article on the Jerba naval battle as “Mustafa Muslihiddin.” “Cerbe Deniz Muharebesi,” *Türk Ansiklopedisi* x, 213: “Türk donanması gayet iyi tertiplenmiş olup derya beyleri olarak Rodos beyi Kurdoğlu Ahmet, Karesi Beyi Gazanfer, Midilli beyi Mustafa Muslihiddin, Kocaeli beyi Ali Börtek, Seyit Ali Reis, Oluç Ali Reis, Cafer Reis bulunuyordu.”

30 There is some confusion as to what happened to Muslihüddin Reis after his appointment as derya beyi for

Mytilene in 1552. According to Seydi Ali Reis’s memoir *Miratü’l-memalik*, when it had been assumed in 1554 that Seydi Ali Reis was lost at sea after attempting to return the Indian Ocean fleet from Basra to the Ottoman naval port of Suez, Muslihüddin Reis was appointed Silvey (Mısır) Kapudam in his stead: “İskender Pasha, benim olduğum haberinin bütün Osmanlı ülkelerinde yayıldığını da bildirdi. Hatta Mısır Kaptanlığına Rodos sancağı beyi Kurdoğlu’nu tayin etmişler...” And so Seydi Ali Reis’in Hatıraları. But this is a mistaken recollection on his part, since it is known that the Süveyş Kaptanlığı at the time was given to Muslihüddin’s son, Kurdoğlu Hızır Reis. See İ.H. Uzuçarşılı, *Osmanlı tarihi* II, 400.

31 “Memi Pasha,” *Sicill-i Osmânî* iv, 514-15.

doing reconnaissance of Sapienza Island, a mile off Methone, Memi Bey and Sencuvan oğlu,³² the derya beyi for Alexandria, encountered a combined fleet of twenty galleys from Malta and Tuscany. Although Sencuvan's ship escaped, Memi Bey's did not; he died in battle, and his ship was taken as a prize.³³

Ebu Bekr Pasha, the founder of the mosque in the tekke of Murad Reis, is yet another noted example of someone educated in the Maritime Arsenal who was made Rodos Beyi. He is something more---an early example of someone who after serving as Rodos Beyi became Kapudan-ı derya. It is not known when he was assigned to Rhodes, but it may be assumed sometime in the early 1630s. By 1640-41 he became Ak Deniz Kumandanı, Commander of the Mediterranean and Aegean, and in muharrem 1054/March 1644 he was appointed Kapudan Pasha. He died the following year, but left a grown son who became the Beylerbeyi of Tunis.³⁴

More than a century after Ebu Bekr Pasha, the Rodos Beyi was still being appointed to the highest office in naval administration. After being appointed derya beyi for Rhodes, İbrahim Pasha was made Tersane Kethüdası in 1758. In 1768, with the rank of mir-i miran (equivalent to that of beylerbeyi), he was appointed Kapudan-ı derya and the following year was made vizier.

There is no date on the mosque at Murad Reis to indicate when it was first completed. However, according to records kept in the Administration Office for Religious Foundations, the cami was built by Ebu Bekr Pasha at the same time he built a fountain in 1046/1636-7 near the present-day Akteon restaurant along the Mandraki esplanade.³⁵ The fountain was removed at the beginning of the twentieth century, but the dedicatory stone slab that had been placed over it has been preserved in the courtyard of Diomede de Villaragut, a part of the garden area of the Archaeological Museum of Rhodes. The inscription states that Ebu Bekr Pasha built religious and charitable foundations throughout the passes, defiles, and along the byways of the Empire to aid pilgrims and wayfarers. Constructing a fountain in Rhodes doubtless was intended to benefit those who took the pilgrimage route by sea between Istanbul and Alexandria. The mosque he built at Murad Reis most probably was also founded to serve travelers, as the tekke of Murad Reis functioned more like a hospice for visitors and pilgrims than as a residential lodge for dervishes. The mosque at Murad Reis has particular significance since it was originally built and subsequently restored by two governors of Rhodes.

It is not clear when, but possibly dating from the time of Ebu Bekr Pasha's appointment to Rhodes in the 1630s, the Rodos Beyi exclusively among the derya sancak beyis could be advanced to the office of Kapudan Pasha.³⁶ Likewise, former Admirals were appointed as

governors of Rhodes.³⁷ The significance of the office of the Rodos Beyi is evident from the fact that he was second in rank after the Kapudan Pasha in the divan of the Grand Admiral.³⁸ When the Kapudan Pasha was in Istanbul, the Rodos Beyi was in charge of the Ottoman fleet, whose base was Rhodes.⁴² In addition, it was the duty of the Rodos Beyi to police the southeastern Aegean and act as an escort for ships voyaging between Rhodes and Alexandria. It should be noted that apart from the battle of Preveza in 1538, the Rodos Beyi was present in virtually every major naval battle between the Ottoman Empire and European powers, acting as a derya beyi commander supporting the Ottoman fleet.

The reason why the Rodos Beyi was the alter ego of the Kapudan Pasha when the Grand Admiral was in Istanbul and why only this derya beyi alone could become Grand Admiral is due to the strategic position of Rhodes in the Province of the Kapudan Pasha. For centuries Muslim shipping and the pilgrimage route by sea had been attacked by the Knights of Rhodes. Removing the Knights from the island, however, did not stop their predations in the southern Aegean and in the open stretch of sea between Alexandria and Rhodes. Protecting the sea route to Mecca remained a priority with the Ottoman government until Napoleon took control of Malta in 1798 and thereby put an end to the predations of the Knights. By virtue of its position, then, Rhodes was in the best location for defending the pilgrimage route by sea.

Before leaving the cemetery of Murad Reis, the visitor should stop before the door of the mosque to reflect what is written over it. The dedication is by Murabitzade Hasan Bey. His grave is not found in the cemetery of Murad Reis; it is, rather, located near his residential konak, a structure that can be seen today inside the Eleutheria Gate, situated behind and to the left of the Temple of Aphrodite off the Plaza of Argyro Kastro in the Old Town.³⁹ Formerly located on a hill to the left of the temple, his tomb was removed in the late 1930s to the Turkish cemetery of Gani Ahmed nea Zephyros by Cesare Mario de Vecchi, the Italian governor of the Dodecanese.⁴⁰

In spite of his grave not being located in the cemetery of Murad Reis, Hasan Bey has left a written memorial over the entrance to the mosque. It reads that the once beautiful edifice that had been the cami of Murad Reis had fallen into ruin, but was restored to its former state by Murabitzade Hasan Bey from the spoils of war in the year 1212/1797-98. It has been surmised by Zeki Çelikkol in the first edition of his study on the Ottoman monuments of Rhodes that the Hasan Bey in question must be none other than the famed Cezayirli Gazi Hasan Pasha.⁴¹ This guess, however, is wide of the mark. Murabitzade Hasan Bey was Rodos Beyi most probably from 1781 until his death in 1815.⁴² His period in office amounted to a sinecure, for apart from Muslihüddün Reis, the first Rodos Beyi, it was unusual for an official to remain as governor of

32 Probably a corruption of the French form of St. John. The derya beyi of Alexandria may have been the captured son of a Knight of St. John of Malta.

33 Katip Çelebi, *Tuhfetü'l-Kibar ft Esfari'l-Bihar* i (İstanbul 1980), 160-61. By this time, in 1614, Memi Bey may no longer have been the Rodos Beyi, but was the bey of Dimyat (Damietta). If Anderson is referring to the same event, he gives a different account of what happened: "Two of these scouts, Neapolitans under Diego Pimentel, their Lieutenant General, had the good fortune to surprise 2 Turkish galleys at Prodano island to the north of Navarin and to capture them both. Three other Turks came out from Navarin, but the Neapolitans held onto their prizes and got away...." R.C. Anderson, *Naval Wars in the Levant* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1952), 82.

34 "Ebu Bekr Pasha," *Sicill-i Osmânî* i, 174.

35 Strumza, *II Tecche di Murad Reis*, 3; Çelikkol, *Rodas'taki Türk Eserleri*, 28.

36 "Kaptan Paşa," *İslam Ansiklopedisi* VI, 209: "Kaptan Paşa İstanbul'da bulunurken, kendisine Akdeniz'de Rodos Beyi vekalet ederdi. Bu mevki filo kumandanları arasında Kaptan Paşadan sonra en yüksek bir makam olup, bu mevkiden Kapudan-ı deryalığa yükselen ümera dahi görülmüştür."

37 Ibid.

38 "Kaptan Paşa," *İslam Ansiklopedisi* vi, 209. See as well M. Efthymiou-Chazilacou, "Rhodes et sa region elargie au xviiiie siecle: Les activites portuaires," unpublished doctoral dissertation submitted to the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes, Sorbonne, University of Paris, November 1984, p. 4 fu 10 for the observation that the Rodos Beyi ranked directly after the Kapudan Paşa in that officer's divan.

39 Strumza, *II Tecche di Murad Reis*, 4.

40 Çelikkol, *Rodas'taki Türk Eserleri*, 29, fn 129.

41 Ibid.

42 The early date of Murabitzade Hasan Bey's activities as Rodos Beyi comes from French consular reports. The reader is referred to the study of M. Efthymiou-Chazilacou.

Rhodes for more than a few years. Given the timing, Hasan Bey may have been a *Derebeyi*, one of the governors of a province who, due to the weakness of the Ottoman central government at the time, was capable of maintaining a quasi-independent stance toward the Porte while allocating a considerable degree of wealth and power to himself. He is said to have controlled much of the mercantile trade of the island.⁴³

A year after Murabitzade Hasan Bey restored the mosque, he figured prominently in a moment in history when he was called upon by the Porte to command a fleet in September 1798 to aid Lord Nelson in maintaining a blockade against the French in Alexandria.⁴⁴ Another fleet under the command of Kadri Bey accompanied a Russian naval force to liberate the Ionian Islands from the French. Hasan Bey may have also been active in sending reinforcements from Rhodes to assist in the defense of Acre against Napoleon's forces.

The long history of naval warfare with the Knights was replaced in 1798 with Napoleon's occupation of Egypt and attempted conquest of Syria. A short interlude of peace was ended with the outbreak of the Greek War for Independence and the constant threat that liberation of the island posed for the Empire. It may be said that Rhodes only ceased to play an active role in the defense of the southeastern Aegean and eastern Mediterranean after 1833. In spite of a decline in naval warfare after the Greek uprising, the dockyards of Rhodes remained busy with ship construction, and were employing some five hundred workers by mid-century.⁴⁵ In the latter part of the nineteenth century the island was to take on a new role as the capital of the *Cezayir-i Bahr-i Sefid Vilayeti*, the Province of the Archipelago. But this, like the history of Ottoman Rhodes itself, awaits further research in the archives of Istanbul. In conclusion, considering the important role played by Rhodes in Ottoman naval organization and in the defense of the Empire, it may well be time for guidebooks and scholarly reference works alike to reconsider the island's Ottoman past as part of its history.

Map of Rhodes
Pîrî Reis (d. 1554), *Kitāb-ı Bahriye*,
17th century expanded version, fol. 4b,
Ink and pigment on European paper.
Walters manuscript W.658,
courtesy of The Walters Art Museum.

⁴³ On Murabitzade Hasan Bey, see M. Efthymiou-Chazilacou, *opera citato*.

⁴⁴ "Selim III," *İslam Ansiklopedisi* x, 450: "Bundan bir gün sonra, 24 rebiülevvel 1213 (5 eylül 1798) tarihinde, bir rus filosu Kara-denizden gelerek, Büyükdere önlerinde demirledi. Osmanlı donanması da iki kısmı ayrıldı; bir kısmının, amiral Nelson'a yardım maksadı ile, iskenderiye'ye ve diğer kısmının da rus filosu ile beraber, Yediada üzerine gönderilmesi uygun görüldü. İskenderiye'ye gidecek filonun kumandanlığına Rodoslu Murabıt-zade Hasan Kaptan ve diğer filonun kaptanlığına da Kadri Bey tayin olundular."

⁴⁵ Efthymiou-Chazilacou, *opera citato*, 127.

