

*Reshaping the concept of healthcare in 19th c. Ottoman Crete: The case of the
Christian hospital of Heraklion*

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We can argue that the hospital, as an institution, is probably one of the oldest creations of mankind. Intertemporal hospitals fulfill a twofold function: On one hand, they operate as healing centers applying the contemporary principles of medicine, philosophy and technology and on the other hand, they work following the dominant social values and hierarchies, ideologies and perceptions about health and sickness. Hospitals provide us with a complex and concise manner glimpses of the principle values of each civilization and its transformations at a specific time and place. In each different geographical and historical context, hospitals are the symbols of social solidarity and acceptance forms of public policy concerning healthcare. The concepts and limits of healthcare are dynamic rather than static and are constantly reshaping according to changes in the social, cultural, political and economic fabric of every society.

During the 19th century structural reforms and changes took place in the Ottoman Empire. These changes in the ottoman province of Crete (*Vilayet-i Girit*) were enhanced due to local factors like the various political and economic concessions of the Ottoman government to the local population or the gradual empowerment of the Christian population over the Muslim. The sectors of medicine, public health and healthcare in general were deeply affected by these changes. The focal point of this paper will be the first civil hospital that operated on the island, the Christian hospital of the city of Heraklion (*Kandiye* in Ottoman) during the 19th century. The basic source of this paper will be four regulations and laws that regulated the function of this particular hospital: the first known Internal Regulation of the hospital (1863), the Regulations for the Social Institutions of Heraklion (1876) and the First (1879) and Second (1888) Municipal Law of Crete. These four chief sources will be supplemented with other relevant archival documents.

Through analyzing the aforementioned sources, the paper will try to answer to questions like: How was the transition from a traditional, eleemosynary type to a modern, state-backing hospital made? When did the specific hospital lose its asylum approach to healthcare in favor of scientific, medical oriented practices? How and why was the religious character of the hospital replaced by a secular type? Did the ascending Christian bourgeoisie managed to undertake the control of the hospital's administration over the clergy and the local Christian notables-elders (*demogerontes*)? And if so, how did this affect the services of the hospital? Finally, did the medicalization of society and healthcare prevail in Crete during the Late Ottoman Era?