

# Histories of Cyprus

*The Disputed Years of Ottoman Rule, 1571–1878*

**Jan-Erik Smilden**



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Department of Archaeology, Conservation and History

UNIVERSITETET I OSLO

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## **Acknowledgements**

Living in Cyprus from 1992 to 1994, I was continuously reminded that the Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots on the divided island each had a very special relationship to their respective “Motherlands”, Greece and Turkey. On the Greek Independence Day, 25 March, the Greek Cypriots celebrated by hoisting the Greek flag, parading in the streets. Even on the Cypriot Independence Day, 1 October, there were more Greek flags than Cypriot. Cyprus seemed in many ways to be a part of Greece.

Some of the same tendencies were revealed in the Turkish occupied breakaway state of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. Turkish and Turkish Cypriot flags were flying side by side. This was Cyprus, but it resembled Turkey.

These conspicuous contrasts triggered my interest for the history of Cyprus. By reading history books from the Greek Cypriot as well as the Turkish Cypriot side, I discovered the differences in presentation, interpretation and perception. From a vague idea, my first readings developed into this thesis.

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*This map appeared in 1571, when Famagusta was under siege by the Ottomans.  
Drawing by Balthasar Jenich*

## Introduction

One hundred and eighty kilometres of barbed wire, barricades, walls and no-man's-land separate the internationally recognised Republic of Cyprus in the south and the breakaway state of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC).<sup>1</sup> Since the Turkish invasion in 1974, Turkish soldiers have occupied the northern part of Cyprus.<sup>2</sup>

Cyprus is a member of EU, but without a political solution to the conflict of the island, this membership does not include the TRNC. The breakaway state is ruled by Turkish Cypriots, but is very largely under the political control of Turkey. In Greek Cypriot rhetoric, the TRNC is referred to as “the pseudo state”. Hitherto, a number of peace initiatives and peace plans have yielded no decisive results.

The essence of the conflict is that the two ethnic and religious groups on the island, the Orthodox Christian Greek Cypriots and the Muslim Turkish Cypriots, cannot agree on a common political governance.<sup>3</sup> In a simplistic way, one can say that as a majority, the Greek Cypriots want hegemony while the Turkish Cypriots, even as a minority, want to be treated as equal partners. The Greek Cypriots have opted for a federation, while the Turkish Cypriots want a confederation.

The Turkish Cypriots and the Greek Cypriots have drifted increasingly apart since Cyprus achieved independence in 1960.<sup>4</sup> Politically, there has been a stalemate for many years, but instead of efforts for reunification, reconciliation and cooperation, the two parties have emphasised their own ethnicity, their own religion, their own identity, their national heritage, and their close relation to their “Motherlands”, Greece and Turkey.

History plays an important part of the so-called Cyprus problem. The Greek Cypriots and the Turkish Cypriots have their separate ethnocentric and partisan versions of the island's history, and their narratives and perceptions are often contradictory. As in many societies with ethnic conflicts, there is a focus on own glory, own sufferings and

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<sup>1</sup> The Turkish occupied north consists of 37 per cent of the total area of Cyprus. The TRNC is only recognised by Turkey.

<sup>2</sup> Turkey has between 35,000 and 40,000 soldiers deployed in the TRNC.

<sup>3</sup> There has not been a census for the entire island since 1973 when the Greek Cypriot population made up 78 per cent of the population, while the Turkish Cypriot portion was 18.4 per cent.

<sup>4</sup> I have generally chosen to use the terms “Greek Cypriots” and “Turkish Cypriots”, as explained in the section “Clarifications of concepts”.

own legitimate rights. The sufferings and the rights of the others are ignored. Cooperation between the conflicting parties is silenced or downplayed. Prejudice against each other prevails. Their two separate historiographies have contributed to the establishment of a dividing wall, not only the physical barrier in the capital Nicosia, but also a mental one.<sup>5</sup>

The Ottoman period in Cyprus, lasting from 1571 to 1878, plays an important role in present history writing on the island. This thesis focuses on how this period is presented in both Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot history books. This is an important aspect for the understanding of the present Cyprus problem.

There is all reason to claim that the different interpretations of the history of Cyprus are one of the main obstacles for a peace solution: people from the two sides are talking at cross-purposes; they are speaking two different *historical* languages, and neither of them seems to understand the past of the other.

The Turkish Cypriot historian, Altay Nevzat, has the following comment:

There is no "history" of Cyprus; there are "histories". That is to say there is no singular angle to understanding and writing the political history of the island, but rather there are varied approaches whose descriptions and contentions are clustered around divergent perspectives of times gone by. Most prominently, and consequentially, there exist two dominant, competing official histories, that of the Greeks and that of the Turks.<sup>6</sup>

In Greek Cypriot historiography, the period under Turkish rule is presented as "the three hundred dark years", when Greek Cypriots daily suffered under "the Turkish yoke".<sup>7</sup> In the less comprehensive Turkish Cypriot historiography, the Ottoman era is described in a far more positive way, when harmony mostly prevailed and the population usually lived in peace, irrespective of ethnic belonging or religious faith.

According to Greek Cypriot historiography, the Greek Cypriot Orthodox Church was the spearhead of Greek nationalism and of freedom aspirations under the three hundred years of Ottoman rule. The Church is presented as protector and benefactor of the Greek Cypriot population. Turkish Cypriot historians give a quite different view.

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<sup>5</sup> Uludağ, Sevgül 2006. *Oysters with the Missing Pearls*. Nicosia: IKME and BILAN, p. 191.

<sup>6</sup> Nevzat, Altay 2005. *Nationalism amongst the Turks of Cyprus, The first Wave*. Oulu: University of Oulu, p. 28. Nevzat has studied the origins of Turkish Cypriot nationalism in Cyprus, a field which, until now, has been understudied.

<sup>7</sup> "The Turkish Yoke" is a common description used in history books, essays and novels.

They tend to emphasise that there was cooperation between the Ottoman rulers and the Orthodox clergy during most of the 300 years. As will be shown in this thesis, the Orthodox Church plays an important role in the two “histories of Cyprus”.

### **Research questions**

The whole period of Ottoman rule is within the scope of this thesis. Besides examining general perceptions on this period as presented in Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot history books published in recent years, emphasis is placed on some important events, years and subjects. The Ottoman conquest (1570–1571) will be central, as will the period around 1821 when the Greeks on the mainland revolted for independence from the Ottomans. The 1820s were a watershed for the Greek Cypriots and play an important role in Greek Cypriot historiography.

Considerable attention is devoted to the Orthodox Church, which stands out as the most important and controversial institution during the Ottoman years. Re-established by the Ottoman conquerors, the Church obtained great power, and the leading clergy became a part of the Ottoman ruling system. At the same time, the Orthodox Archbishop was the political and religious leader of the Greek Cypriots.

There are important research questions which can be classified into two categories: presentation and construction. Firstly, what characterises the Greek Cypriot general views and what characterises the Turkish Cypriot views? Are there any patterns? In what way is the Orthodox Church presented in Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot history books? And how do the historians look upon the Turkish Ottoman rulers?

Secondly, how are the two history versions constructed? Which events and subjects do Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot historians emphasise? What is actually written, what is downplayed, and what is omitted? How is the picture of the Orthodox Church and the Turkish Ottoman rulers designed?

History writing in countries with ethnic and religious antagonism often tends to be biased and ethnocentric. Cyprus is no exception. Turkish Cypriot historians largely identify themselves with the Turkish Ottoman occupiers of Cyprus and Turkish settlers who came to the island from Anatolia in the 1570s. Greek Cypriot historians have their sympathy chiefly towards the occupied Greek Cypriot people.

The following examples from two Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot history books give an example of the diametrical differences in attitudes towards “the other”. In the Greek Cypriot schoolbook *Istoria tis Kyprou* (History of Cyprus), the author Andreas Polydorou begins the section called “The conquest of Nicosia by the Turks” with the following sentences:

It was obvious that one day the Turks would try to grab Cyprus. The way that the state of the Sultan expanded, small Cyprus appeared like a weak mouse in the claws of a wild Lion.<sup>8</sup>

On the Ottoman years in Cyprus, the Turkish Cypriot historian Ahmet C. Cazioğlu writes in the history book *The Turks in Cyprus*:

Having become a part of the Ottoman Empire in 1571, Cyprus remained so for more than three hundred years. This was the longest uninterrupted rule and most stable period Cyprus experienced in its long history.<sup>9</sup>

With such a different approach to history, there is little room for nuances. Taken into consideration that the Greek Cypriots and the Turkish Cypriots stick to their exclusive, partisan versions, there are also difficulties in finding a common ground for the history of this small island. In this thesis, it is not the intention to search for the ultimate truth (which is impossible anyway) but to deconstruct parts of the two versions.

## **Methodological approach and problems**

The topic chosen for this thesis is both extensive and complicated, having a time span of more than three hundred years. This is not an empirical thesis in a narrow meaning of the word. By selecting a few, relevant history books from the Greek Cypriot and the Turkish Cypriot sides, a study is made of the presentation and construction of the two different historical versions.<sup>10</sup> With the exception of one, these history books have recently been published in English.

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<sup>8</sup> Polydorou, Andreas 1991. *Istoria tis Kyprou*. Nicosia.

<sup>9</sup> Gazioğlu, Ahmet C. 1990. *The Turks in Cyprus, A Province of the Ottoman Empire (1571–1878)*. Lefkoşa (Nicosia): K. Rustem & Brother, p. xi. Also used as an ancillary textbook in high schools.

<sup>10</sup> I will refer to these books in the section “Primary sources”.

In some chapters, contemporary texts written by foreigners visiting Cyprus during the Ottoman era are examined and compared with the selected Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot history books. For the same purpose, use of recent and present research done both by Cypriots and non-Cypriots is also made, mainly in the historical and anthropological field.<sup>11</sup> By bringing in these sources, an attempt is made to clarify how the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot historians present and construct their narratives and perceptions. This methodological approach will make it possible to find confirmations, flaws or contradictions in the historical presentations, respectively.

Much more literature on Greek Cypriot history exists than on Turkish Cypriot history. Based on various sources, an attempt is made to show how, in a decisive way, the historical accounts on both sides are based on selective memories, contradictions and attitudes that emphasise “us” against “the others”. The intention is also to reveal how historical events are used to create generalisations and stereotypes, often in a retrospective way.

Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot history writings on the Ottoman period are imprinted by contrasts. By examining and discussing two different versions of history, there are many minefields. The Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot history books consulted are written in the turbulent years after the Turkish invasion in 1974, which might have influenced the authors’ interpretations.

There are also many ways of presenting historical narratives: the fact that two versions of an historical account are contradictory does not necessarily mean that one of them is true and the other false. We are not necessarily talking about falsifications; everything or most of what we read might be true. Very often, this is a question of selectivity; what the author chooses to include or exclude in his or her material. In nationalist historical writing, it is quite natural to emphasise and legitimise one’s own ethnic/national/religious group at the other’s expense. “Our” case is righteous, justified and understandable; “theirs” is evil-minded, unjust and incomprehensible.

Considerable source material from foreigners who visited Cyprus during the Ottoman rule exists. Sources in English, from travellers, pilgrims, diplomats, delegates,

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<sup>11</sup> Social anthropologists like Yiannis Papadakis and Rebecca Bryant have given important contributions to the understanding of Cypriot history.

officers and merchants provide considerable material for the study. This material gives important clues when examining Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot history writing. To avoid pitfalls, however, there is every reason to bear in mind that these reports and narratives were “not products of nature, but written by people”.<sup>12</sup> They were not always neutral, and the described events may have been misinterpreted, misunderstood, exaggerated or trivialised. Reports by diplomats were written and composed according to well-established rules, sometimes stamped by the colour of their native country, and written for a political purpose. Writers of travel accounts often copied their predecessors. Since many travellers did not know the Greek or Turkish languages, the number of people they could converse with, was limited. Some came with a condescending attitude. Many were biased towards the Muslims, but in many cases also towards the Orthodox Christians. Some stayed just for a short while and acquired only superficial impressions.

The Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot historiography is supplemented by foreign history writings, and papers written by Cypriot and non-Cypriot researchers. Clearly, some of these sources may be biased, deliberately or otherwise. There is also the general problem of the constructions and uses of the past in nation-states with competing claims to sovereignty and statehood. The researchers, Yiannis Papadakis, Nikos Peristianis and Gizela Welz explain this as follows:

In such cases, history becomes the major battleground for the legitimization of opposed political claims, often leading to what we call “fetishism of History”. History does not just speak, it commands; History may be injured or raped; History is alive and it is the duty of the living to obey its commands. In short, History emerges as a transcendental moral force that dictated the morally (that is politically) desirable future, thus being imbued with primary agency that is simultaneously denied to living social actors.<sup>13</sup>

One of the great problems with Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot historiography is the shortage of historical narratives written by Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots during

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<sup>12</sup> Faroqi, Suraiya 1999. *Approaching Ottoman History, An Introduction to the Sources*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p 22.

<sup>13</sup> Papadakis, Yiannis; Peristianis, Nikos; Welz, Gizela (eds.) 2006. *Divided Cyprus, Modernity, History and an Island in Conflict*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, p. 6.

the Ottoman period. In fact, only one such comprehensive history book exists, written by the Greek Cypriot Archimandrite Kyprianos.<sup>14</sup> His work has been, and still is, an important source both for successive Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot historians and foreigners writing on the history of Cyprus. This book, however, first and foremost presents the Greek Cypriot version, and it is only printed in Greek.

### Primary sources

As mentioned above, there has been much more historical writing and research on the Greek Cypriot side than there has been among the Turkish Cypriots.

One of the most acknowledged history books in English on the Greek Cypriot side is *The Making of Modern Cyprus* by the Cypriot-born historian Stavros Panteli.<sup>15</sup> Another much read and influential book is *History of Cyprus* written in English by the Greek Cypriot historian Costas P. Kyrris.<sup>16</sup> A third important book on the Greek Cypriot side is *Istoria tis Kyprou* written by the Greek Cypriot historian Katia Hadjidemetriou. This latter is translated into English: the English version, *A History of Cyprus*, has been used.<sup>17</sup> The title of Hadjidemetriou's book indicates that she recognises that there is more than one history of Cyprus. The book is used in secondary and tertiary school among Greek Cypriots.

The three above-mentioned historians have a common negative view on the Ottoman Turks who ruled Cyprus for more than 300 years. Their history writing is principally ethnocentric, essentialistic and on the whole, pro-Greek.

On the Turkish Cypriot side, considerable use has been made of *The Turks in Cyprus, A Province of the Ottoman Empire (1571–1878)* written in English by the Turkish Cypriot scholar and former teacher of history, Ahmet C. Gazioğlu.<sup>18</sup> The school

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<sup>14</sup> Archimandrite Kyprianos wrote his book *Istoria Khronoloyiki tis Nisou Kiprou* (History and Chronicles of the Island of Cyprus) in 1788. Archimandrite is an honorary title in the Greek Orthodox Church, given to monks ordained as priests.

<sup>15</sup> Panteli, Stavros 1990. *The Making of Modern Cyprus, From obscurity to statehood*. New Barnet, England: Interworld Publications.

<sup>16</sup> Kyrris, Costas P. 1996. *History of Cyprus*. Nicosia: Lampousa Publications.

<sup>17</sup> Hadjidemetriou, Katia 2002. *A History of Cyprus*. Nicosia: Hermes Media Press Ltd. Translated from Greek by Costas Hadjigeorgiou.

<sup>18</sup> Gazioğlu, Ahmet C. 1990. *The Turks in Cyprus, A Province of the Ottoman Empire (1571–1878)*. Lefkoşa (Nicosia): K. Rustem & Brother.

text, *Kıbrıs Tarihi*, written by the Turkish Cypriot historian Vehbi Zeki Serter, president of the Cyprus Turkish History Association, has also been useful.<sup>19</sup> These two historians have a pro-Ottoman and pro-Turkish approach to the Ottoman years. There is, however, a difference between the two. While Serter largely presents Cypriot history as a part of Turkish history, Gazioğlu emphasises that Cyprus has its own history.<sup>20</sup> In the introduction of *The Turks in Cyprus*, Gazioğlu states that the main objective of writing the book was “to find out as far as possible the facts concerning Turkish rule in Cyprus and to present them to those interested in the true history of this island”.<sup>21</sup>

A considerable amount of source material written by foreigners, who either lived in or visited Cyprus during the Ottoman years, exists. Greece and Cyprus Research Center in Altamont, New York, has collected and reissued some very important texts in their series, *Sources for the History of Cyprus*.<sup>22</sup> Some of these foreign source materials throw an interesting light on the perceptions of Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot historians.

## Previous research

As mentioned above, there are few contemporary sources that can throw some new light on the Cypriot history under Ottoman rule. Due to the so-called Cyprus problem there is, however, a certain interest both by Cypriot and foreign researchers to look into the history of the island in order to establish the origin of and causes to the present conflict. Such research is, of course, an important contribution to the peace efforts going on, both in Cyprus and internationally.

In English language, I have found no academic work with the aim of giving a comparative analysis of the Ottoman period in Cyprus, as presented in present Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot history writing. The Greek Cypriot anthropologist, Yiannis Papadakis, has just accomplished a survey, comparing how the history of Cyprus is

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<sup>19</sup> Serter, Vehbi Zeki (no year is given for the issuing). *Kıbrıs Tarihi*. Nicosia: Kema Offset. The extracts dealing with the Ottoman years are translated from Turkish by the Norwegian master student Gunvald Ims.

<sup>20</sup> Serter's schoolbook has more than ten reprints, and was until 2004 used in secondary schools in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus.

<sup>21</sup> Gazioğlu 1990, p. xvi.

<sup>22</sup> Wallace, Paul W. and Orphanides, Andreas G. (eds.) 1998. *Sources for the History of Cyprus*, Vols V & VI. Altamont, New York: Greece and Cyprus Research Center.

portrayed in Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot schoolbooks. His analysis, which not yet has been published, encompasses the history of Cyprus from ancient time until the present day.<sup>23</sup>

Even if two of the books examined have been used in history education among Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots respectively, this thesis deals first and foremost with history books written for the public in general. Similar to Yiannis Papadakis, the aim of the analysis is to show how Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot writers on history are presenting the history of Cyprus.

### **Clarification of concepts**

The inhabitants of Cyprus did not call themselves Greek Cypriots or Turkish Cypriots during most of the Ottoman era. They regarded themselves as “Christians” and “Muslims”. After the Greek War of Independence in mainland Greece in the 1820s, many Greek Cypriots spoke of themselves as “Greeks”. The same phenomenon occurred among the Turkish Cypriot population, but not before the emergence of the new Turkish Republic in the first part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when they started to refer themselves as “Turks”. The German historian, Jan Asmussen, states that a common “Cypriotness” or “Cypriotism” existed neither as a term nor as a concept of shared identity prior to the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1974.<sup>24</sup> However, in order to distinguish between the islanders and the mainland Greeks and Turks, the terms “Greek Cypriots” and “Turkish Cypriots” are generally employed, except where quotations are given.

In the historical sources, Ottoman representatives and delegates are both described as “Ottomans” and “Turks”. In general, the term “Ottomans” is used and refers to representatives of the Ottoman rulers, and “Turks” when referring to immigrants from Anatolia. However, since the Ottoman ruling system included Christians, the term “Ottoman Turkish rulers” is occasionally employed to avoid any misunderstanding. Concerning the term “Turk”, one has to have in mind that a “Turk” was considered as an inferior person by the Ottoman establishment; it was a description of a simple farmer

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<sup>23</sup> The International Peace Research Institute, Oslo (PRIO), finances this project.

<sup>24</sup> Asmussen, Jan. ‘Patterns of Cypriot Identity or Why Cypriotism doesn’t exist’, in German-Cypriot Forum (ed.), *Culture in Common – Living Cultures in the Cypriot Communities*. Berlin 2003, p. 9.

from Anatolia. To make the matter even more complicated, some Greek Cypriot historians also use “Cypriots” when referring to Greek Cypriots.

The Turkish Cypriot historian Ahmet C. Gazioglu consistently uses the terms “Turk” and “Turks” when referring to the rulers of Cyprus. From a Turkish Cypriot view, this has a positive nationalist effect, alluding to the “Motherland”, Turkey. The Greek Cypriots, however, have a diametrically opposed approach; for them the “Turks” are the adversary, in history and in present time. To signify the Turkish oppression, the Greek Cypriots often use the word *Turkokratia*.<sup>25</sup>

The use of the names Constantinople and Istanbul is controversial among Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots. It is also problematic when studying Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot historiography. Constantinople was the capital of the Byzantine Empire when the city fell to the Ottomans in 1453. In Greek Cypriot history books, newspapers and in everyday language, the city is still called Constantinople, not at least for emotional reasons.<sup>26</sup> In Turkish Cypriot history books, however, the city is called Istanbul, which was the common name among Turks during the Ottoman era. Since the city is still called Istanbul and has been Ottoman or Turkish for the last 554 years, this has been used in preference to Constantinople.

In order to avoid excessive use of Turkish words, English translations are used when convenient. In cases where there is no relevant English term, the Turkish phrase is used.

A Turkish historical dictionary was consulted in the explanations of Turkish titles and terms.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> *Turkokratia* is the term used for the Ottoman period in Greece as well as in Cyprus, both by Greeks and Greek Cypriots. This is a negatively loaded word.

<sup>26</sup> Constantinople was made the eastern capital of the Roman Empire by Emperor Constantine I in AD 330 under the name of *Nova Roma* (New Rome). In honour of its founder, the name was later changed to Constantinople.

<sup>27</sup> Bayerle, Gustav 1997. *Pashas Begs and Effendis, A Historical Dictionary of the Titles and Terms in the Ottoman Empire*. Istanbul: The Isis Press.

## 1 A Captive of Geography, a Captive of History

[Cyprus'] geographical position marks it out as a nodal point in that region, as it looks to the north towards the southern shores of Asia Minor, and to the east towards the countries of the Middle East, the portal to the routes into the interior of Anatolia, and beyond that, to Asia; to the south lie Egypt and the other countries on the north coast of Africa. To the west, the Mediterranean gives it free access to the rest of the countries on its shores and to those of Europe.

The island is thus free of constricting frontiers, protected, but also challenged, by the sea, its lines of communication open; it is therefore little wonder that it has always been a point of reference but also the object of acquisitive interest for would-be conquerors.<sup>28</sup>

The above description shows the importance of the geographical location of Cyprus in the Mediterranean. In addition, it is worth mentioning that Turkey lies only 75 kilometres from the north of Cyprus.

It is not an exaggeration to claim that the small island has been a captive of geography. The history of Cyprus is a history of occupations – by Assyrians, Egyptians, Persians, Macedonians, Romans, Byzantines, Anglo-Saxons, Lusignans, Venetians, Ottomans and Britons. The inhabitants of the island have also been victims to numerous destructive raids, mostly by Arabs from the 7<sup>th</sup> to the 10<sup>th</sup> century.

There are few discrepancies between Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot historians concerning this part of the history of Cyprus. The problem starts when discussing the inhabitants and their origin. The Greek Cypriots, who regard themselves as the real primordial population of Cyprus, feel a kind of moral and ethnic superiority towards the Turkish Cypriots, who have inhabited Cyprus for just a few hundred years.

### The Greek Cypriots

A typical part of a nationalist attitude is some mythical *golden age* and that the nation has existed since ancient times. In the Greek Cypriot historiography this is a prevailing theme. As the recognised theorist, Anthony D. Smith, explains in his studies of

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<sup>28</sup> Koumariou, Catherine (ed.) 2004. *Avvisi (1570–1572), The War of Cyprus*. Nicosia: Bank of Cyprus Cultural Foundation, p. 17.

nationalism, primordialism is a tool for ethnic survival.<sup>29</sup> For the Greek Cypriots this is not only a question of primordial existence in Cyprus. Just as important is the bond to the Greek nation and to the Greek “Motherland”. The claim that particular nations have existed for hundreds of years and even more, is what Anthony D. Smith characterises as continuous perennialism, mentioning such nations as the Greek and the Egyptian.<sup>30</sup>

The Greek Cypriot author of the book *A History of Cyprus*, Katia Hadjidemetriou, states that the first appearance of human beings in Cyprus is recorded as during the Pre-Neolithic Age, in the tenth millennium BC.<sup>31</sup> But it still lasted eight thousand years before the decisive immigrant group arrived:

In the era of the maritime and trading expansion of the Greeks in the second millennium B.C., Cyprus was settled by the Mycenaeans who gave it its Greek character. This national and cultural character, so different from that of the other peoples in the region, the inhabitants of the island managed to keep and maintain, despite the fact that they were constantly under the rule of foreign conquerors and enjoyed very short periods of freedom. The ancient Cypriot dialect, which contains words coming from Homer and other ancient Greek sources, has been maintained till the present time. Centuries old traditions are still alive in the folk culture, and you can see them in ritual ceremonies and the way of life of Cypriots today.<sup>32</sup>

As may be seen, the focus is on Greekness.<sup>33</sup> Archaeologists trace a human presence in Cyprus to at least 10,000 BC. The first tracks of the Greek population on the island (Achaean and Mycenaean) are recorded as in the late Bronze Age, mid-15<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> century BC and especially 12<sup>th</sup>–11<sup>th</sup> centuries BC.<sup>34</sup>

The predominant factors in the perception of Greek Cypriot identity are based on religion, culture, history, language and tradition of Hellenism.<sup>35</sup> For many Greek

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<sup>29</sup> Smith, Anthony D. 1999. *Myths and Memories of the Nation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Smith argues that a sense of common identity has existed since pre-modern times. For the primordialists, the key to the nature, power and incidence of nations and nationalism lies in the rootedness of the nation in kinship, ethnicity and the genetic bases of human existence.

<sup>30</sup> Smith, Anthony D. 1999, pp. 4–5.

<sup>31</sup> Hadjidemetriou 2002, p. 7.

<sup>32</sup> Hadjidemetriou 2002, p. 5.

<sup>33</sup> A common definition of a Greek is a native or inhabitant of Greece, or a person of Greek ancestry, speaking the Greek language.

<sup>34</sup> Kyrris 1996, p. 13.

<sup>35</sup> According to *Encyclopædia Britannica*, the Greek language has been predominant in Cyprus since the beginning of the 1st millennium BC.

Cypriots, including historians, Cyprus is Greece, i.e. a part of the Greek Republic on the mainland.<sup>36</sup> During the first two hundred years of Ottoman rule in Cyprus, there was little focus on Greece, which also was a part of the Ottoman Empire. The change came with the emergence of the Great Idea (*megali idea*), an irredentist concept of Greek nationalism, with the aim of establishing a Greek state that would encompass all ethnic Greeks and all Greek territory back to the time of the ancient geographer, Strabo.<sup>37</sup> The first map illustrating the Great Idea was prepared between 1791 and 1796 by a Greek called Rigas Ferreros. The aim of a Greater Greece played a major role during and after the Greek War of Independence on the mainland in the 1820s. On the island of Cyprus, this idea had influence among some Greek Cypriots.

Just like individuals, nations have “the need for a narrative of ‘identity’”, writes the respected scholar of nationalism, Benedict Anderson.<sup>38</sup> Nations, however, have no clearly identifiable births, and their deaths are never natural. Consequently, the nation’s biography cannot be written with a beginning and an end. “The only alternative is to fashion it ‘up time’ – towards Peking Man, Java Man, King Arthur, wherever the lamp of archaeology casts its fitful gleam,” Anderson states.<sup>39</sup> In Cyprus, this lamp has put the glorious ancient Greek gods and goddesses into light, as the definitive proof of the Greekness of Cyprus.<sup>40</sup> No doubt, Aphrodite is the Greek Goddess of love, but there is a snag. In Phoenician mythology Aphrodite is called Astarte, and there is an irrevocable fact that the Phoenicians also inhabited Cyprus in ancient times. So, who has the copyright?

Historically, the Greek Cypriots have their roots both in their ancient and present religion. In Greek Cypriot historiography there is continuity from Aphrodite until the present day. The establishment of the Orthodox Church by the Byzantines in the first centuries AD does not imply a break with the pagan past, but a continuation. The Byzantines are treated as Greeks, and the Byzantine period in Cyprus is treated as purely Greek, even if the Byzantine Empire only did emerge as a result of the split within the

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<sup>36</sup> The military and political fight to achieve union with Greece (*enosis*) led to interethnic fighting in the 1950s and 1960s.

<sup>37</sup> Strabo lived from 63/64 BC to ca. AD 24.

<sup>38</sup> Anderson, Benedict 1994. *Imagined Communities*. London-New York: Verso, p. 205.

<sup>39</sup> Anderson 1994, p. 205.

<sup>40</sup> The Greek connection to Cyprus is mostly established through archaeological findings.

Roman Empire in AD 395, and even if there was a substantial Roman influence in the years to come.

The emergence of Greek nationalism in the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century on the Greek mainland, spread quickly, but not extensively, to Cyprus. Before that time, the common Greek Cypriots first and foremost had their allegiance to the church, their families and villages. In the Greek Cypriot historiography, the Greek Cypriot religious community under the Ottomans (*millet*) is equated with *nation*, even if a Greek nation state did not exist before 1829 and a Cypriot nation did not emerge before 1960.<sup>41</sup>

The German historian, Jan Asmussen, states that the formation of national identity was first concluded among the Greek Cypriot community and occurred well before Britain took over the administration from the Ottomans in 1878.<sup>42</sup> There was, however, a big difference between the urban and the rural populations. In general, the peasants were less educated, and their identity was focused on family and village.

According to the Greek Cypriot revisionist historian, Marios Hadjianastasis, the key elements in the idea of the Greek nation are cohesion, continuity, ethnic purity and enduring awareness.<sup>43</sup> Greek Cypriot historians have a tendency to focus on the dramatic events during the Greek revolt in the 1820s and generalise in a retrospective way, using nationalism as a concept for the whole Ottoman period. This interpretation is refuted by the Greek historian Paschalis M. Kitromilides (among others) who states that it is methodologically wrong to interpret events “out of their historical and social context by

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<sup>41</sup> *Millet* was an Ottoman term for a legally protected religious community. The *millet* system gave religious minorities in the Ottoman Empire, as the Greek Orthodox, Armenians and Jews, extensive self-rule with specific privileges and obligations. Each *millet* was under the supervision of a leader, usually a religious patriarch who reported directly to the Ottoman Sultan. The *millets* had their own laws, collected and distributed their own taxes. As non-Muslims, the members of a *millet* had to pay an extra head tax (*cizye*). The most important obligation to the Sultan and the Empire was loyalty.

<sup>42</sup> Asmussen, Jan. 'Britishness, Cypriotness or Diverse Nationalism in Cyprus', in Kate Darian-Smith; Patricia Grimshaw; Kiera Lindsey; Stuart McIntyre (eds.), *Exploring the British World: Identity, Cultural Production, Institutions*. Melbourne: RMIT Publishing, 2004, p. 136.

<sup>43</sup> Hadjianastasis, Marios 2004. *Bishops, Ağas and Dragomans, A Social and Economic History of Ottoman Cyprus 1640–1704*. Birmingham: School of Historical Studies, University of Birmingham, p.17. Hadjianastasis has examined aspects of the social and economic history of 17<sup>th</sup> century Ottoman Cyprus. Until Hadjianastasis' research this subject remained largely understudied during this century. I know that the word “revisionist” by someone is negatively loaded. However, I choose to use the word to describe historians who are reinterpreting or challenging common accepted historical views.

projecting subsequent social situations into the past”.<sup>44</sup> The Danish anthropologist Kirsten Hastrup expresses the same view, writing that the history “is reinterpreted, and the people with their cultural characteristics are retrodicted to a time where these characteristics were not prevailing”.<sup>45</sup>

There is a tendency to regard the Greek Cypriots as Greek nationalists long before such nationalist attitudes existed, and the repression and exertion are mostly described as a result of Ottoman rule – even if there was terrible hardship under the former occupants, the Lusignans and Venetians, too. Marios Hadjianastasis gives the following explanation of this phenomenon:

The most “vicious and barbaric” of these foreign rulers is always the last one, the one against which the nation finally “re-emerged”, was “re-born” and returned to claim what has been its “rightful place” for centuries.<sup>46</sup>

## The Turkish Cypriots

The Turkish Cypriots trace their origin back to 1571, when the Ottomans conquered Cyprus. The soldiers and some family members arrived first. Then, on 21 September 1572, the Ottoman Sultan, Selim II, issued an imperial decree (*firman*), ordering the transportation of Anatolian Turks to Cyprus.<sup>47</sup> This more or less forced immigration is still a controversial question in Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot historiography.<sup>48</sup>

According to the Turkish Cypriot historian Vehbi Zeki Serter, the real history of Cyprus begins with the arrival of the Ottomans:

Also from a historical point of view, Cyprus is important for Turkey. Our ancestors captured (for political, strategically, economical and religious reasons) Cyprus in 1571, at a cost of 80,000 martyrs. The Turks, who formally governed Cyprus for more than 300 years, until 1878, behaved very well towards the local population. They brought freedom and justice. The Turks also gave priority to development work

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<sup>44</sup> Kitromilides, Paschalis M. ‘From Coexistence to Confrontation: The Dynamics of Ethnic Conflict in Cyprus’, in Michael A. Attalides (ed.), *Cyprus Reviewed*. Nicosia: The Jus Cyprici Association 1977, p. 40.

<sup>45</sup> Hastrup, Kirsten 2004. *Det fleksible fællesskab*. Aarhus: Univers, p. 93. My translation from Danish.

<sup>46</sup> Hadjianastasis 2004, pp. 9–10.

<sup>47</sup> Gazioglu 1990, p. 74.

<sup>48</sup> This will be explained in Chapter 3.

in Cyprus and therefore built a great amount of monuments, so many in fact that Cyprus therefore has kept its Turkish character.<sup>49</sup>

Serter, like other Turkish Cypriot scholars, is preoccupied with the Turkish Cypriot ancestors, the Turks. In Turkish Cypriot historiography the importance of, and closeness to, the “Motherland”, politically, culturally and geographically, is readily observed.

Neither Vehbi Zeki Serter nor Ahmet C. Gazioğlu discuss who the original inhabitants of Cyprus were, but some Turkish researchers have their own interpretations on this issue. Some Turks have claimed that geologically, Cyprus was “attached” to Anatolia and thus part of the Turkish homeland.<sup>50</sup> The Turkish archaeologist Arif Erzen writes that geological developments in the past “brought about a subsidence, which severed Cyprus from the Hatay region”.<sup>51</sup> Erzen also claims that the first inhabitants in Cyprus “are believed to have come from Anatolia”.<sup>52</sup> He cites, among others, a German archaeologist, Dümmler, who has stated that old graves in Cyprus are identical with those of the Trojan, “the old Anatolian culture”.<sup>53</sup> By comparing names in Cyprus and Anatolia, Erzen also claims that Cyprus must have been settled in 3000 BC, and that neither any Phoenicians nor any Mycenaens lived on the island when the Anatolians came to settle.<sup>54</sup> This author clearly wishes to establish a non-Greek origin in Cyprus. This origin is definitely not Turkish since Turkish tribes lived in Central Asia and not in Anatolia at that time. These allegations seem first and foremost to be an attempt to delegitimise Greek Cypriot claims of being the primordial ethnic group in Cyprus.

The Turkish Cypriot historian, Altay Nevzat, finds that the first stirrings of a Turkish nationalist sentiment only emerged towards the end of the nineteenth century, after the British takeover of Cyprus.<sup>55</sup> Marios Hadjianastasis argues that Turkish

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<sup>49</sup> Serter, p. 7.

<sup>50</sup> This argument was used by Turkish Foreign minister Fatin Zorlu during the London Conference on Cyprus in 1955.

<sup>51</sup> The south-western part of Anatolia.

<sup>52</sup> Erzen, Arif. ‘A glance over the history of Cyprus’, in *The First International Congress of Cypriot Studies*. Ankara 1971, p. 86.

<sup>53</sup> Dümmler’s first name is not indicated.

<sup>54</sup> Erzen, p. 87.

<sup>55</sup> Nevzat 2005, p. 46.

nationalism in Cyprus did not fully develop until the mid twentieth century and gives one main reason: The Turkish nation-state was not established before 1923.<sup>56</sup>

While the Greek Cypriot identity is closely tied to Greece and Greekness, the question of Turkish Cypriot identity is much more complicated. Historically there are, of course, strong links to the Ottoman Turks. But the modern Turkish Cypriot identity is tied up to Turkey and *kemalism*, the ideology of the founder of the Turkish state, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. In any case, the *raison d'être* of the Turkish Cypriots is directly connected to the Ottoman rule in Cyprus.

Marios Hadjianastatis emphasises that Turkish Cypriot historical writing tends to focus on the modern period, especially between 1950 and 1974.<sup>57</sup> But he also finds that the few Turkish Cypriot writers who deal with the Ottoman period take a defensive position when it comes to the Ottoman administration, largely because of the negative presentation by Greek Cypriot historians.<sup>58</sup>

One of these historians, Ahmet C. Gazioglu, is constantly praising the Ottoman administrators of the island and stresses what was achieved during Ottoman rule in Cyprus. As other Turkish Cypriot historians, he also has a tendency to focus on the good intentions of the Ottoman Sultan, stated in imperial decrees, for example. How these intentions were carried out, is downplayed. The Greek Cypriot historians have the opposite approach; they emphasise the negative performances of the edicts and imperial decrees, and downplay the positive contents.

## Summary

The Greek Cypriots' claim of ownership to the country goes back thousands of years, deposited through ethnicity, pagan religion, culture and language. The Turkish Cypriots do not have such a long historical claim, but they are legitimising their rights through the three hundred years of Ottoman rule. These attitudes are clearly reflected in the historiography of the two peoples, as will be seen in the following chapters. Cyprus has not only been a captive of geography, but also of history.

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<sup>56</sup> Hadjianastasis 2004, pp. 24–25.

<sup>57</sup> Hadjianastasis 2004, p. 25.

<sup>58</sup> Hadjianastasis 2004, p. 26.

## 2 The “Turks” are coming

In Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot historiography, the Ottoman conquest of Cyprus in 1571 is interpreted in totally different ways. For the Turkish Cypriots, the Ottomans came as peaceful saviours; for the Greek Cypriots, as violent occupiers. How are the reasons for the Ottoman invasion presented in the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot history literature studied? In what way is the conquest described and interpreted? To better understand the situation in Cyprus around 1570, a brief presentation of the preceding period when the Venetians ruled Cyprus is given.

### Cyprus under the Venetians

As a sea power, the Venetians had a huge interest in controlling the strategic important island of Cyprus. In 1468, they managed to marry the Venetian noble woman Catherine Cornaro to the Lusignan King of Cyprus, James II.<sup>59</sup> James died under suspicious circumstances in 1473, and Catherine became Queen of Cyprus.<sup>60</sup> The Venetians, keen on securing privileges and commercial rights, tried to make Cyprus a protectorate. Catherine, however, behaved too independently for the liking of the masters of Venice. In 1489, she was forced to abdicate, and Cyprus was handed over to the Venetians. This rule lasted until the conquest of the Ottomans in 1571.

For common Cypriots, the Venetian rule with a European-styled feudalism was generally full of hardships.<sup>61</sup> The taxes and the obligations to the rulers were harsh, even if some serfs were able to buy their freedom. The traveller, Martin von Baumgarten, who visited Cyprus in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, before the Ottoman conquest, wrote:

All the inhabitants of Cyprus are slaves to the Venetians, being obliged to pay to the state a third of all their increase or income, whether the product of their ground, or corn, wine, oil, or of their cattle, or any other thing. Besides every man of them is bound to work for the state two days of the week wherever they shall please to appoint him: and if any shall fail, by reason of some other business of their own, or for indisposition of body, then they are made to pay a fine for as many days

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<sup>59</sup> The Lusignans ruled Cyprus from 1192 to 1473.

<sup>60</sup> He was supposedly poisoned by Venetian agents.

<sup>61</sup> The feudal system was inherited from the Lusignans.

as they are absent from their work. And which is more, there is yearly some tax or other imposed on them, with which the poor common people are so flayed and pillaged, that they hardly have wherewithal to keep soul and body together.<sup>62</sup>

Von Baumgarten's account is recounted both in Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot history books.<sup>63</sup> There is a common belief that ordinary Cypriots suffered enormously under the Venetian rule. To go into details is beyond the scope of this thesis. However, the study does consider how the Venetian years are compared with the Ottoman era in Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot historiography.

### **Prelude to invasion**

As a possession of Venice, Cyprus was the last European and Christian bastion in the Eastern Mediterranean. The relationship between The Ottoman Empire and Venice was ambiguous. Sometimes the two parts were allies, sometimes adversaries. The fate of Cyprus was decided when the tenth Ottoman Sultan, Suleiman the Magnificent, died in 1566 and was succeeded by his son, Selim II, known in history as the conqueror of Cyprus. By Greek Cypriot historians – and some Western colleagues – he is called Selim the Drunkard.<sup>64</sup> According to some historical narratives, Selim invaded Cyprus because he was quite fond of wine. The Greek Cypriot historian Stavros Panteli records:

It seems that he found the attraction of Cyprus' wines and liqueurs irresistible. He was consumed therefore with a feverish desire for the possession of the island; a feat which he accomplished in 1571.<sup>65</sup>

The Turkish Cypriot historian, Ahmet C. Gazioğlu, dismisses such allegations as “unsubstantiated gossip”.<sup>66</sup> The conflict between The Ottoman Empire and Venice had been going on for a long time. Selim was angered by the Venetians in 1563 when they seized some Ottoman ships and at the same time accepted an increased activity by

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<sup>62</sup> Cobham, Claude D. 1908. *Excerpta Cypria*, p. 55, cited in Hadjidemetriou 2002, p. 251. Under the Venetians a master could sell a serf whenever he pleased, and the local population was treated as personal property of their masters.

<sup>63</sup> Baumgarten is cited by Katia Hadjidemetriou, Stavros Panteli, and Ahmet C. Gazioğlu.

<sup>64</sup> Hadjidemetriou 2002, p. 257.

<sup>65</sup> Panteli 1990, p. 48.

<sup>66</sup> Gazioğlu 1990, p. 20.

Maltese and Venetian pirates, using Cypriot harbours as supply bases and shelter. Even as a prince, Selim had been fully aware of how strategic important Cyprus was to the Ottoman Empire.

According to the Ottoman historian, Ibrahim Peçevi (1574–1649), the Sultan felt forced to act against Cyprus in 1570 because Venice had allowed brigands to attack ships, travellers, merchants and pilgrims going to Egypt.<sup>67</sup> The Turkish Cypriot historian, Vehbi Zeki Serter, writes that Cyprus “had become an infected boil” due to its geographical position in the middle of the Ottoman territory. According to Serter, a conquest of Cyprus was “inevitable”.<sup>68</sup>

The allegation in Panteli’s book of an Ottoman Sultan longing for drinking Cypriot wine seems questionable. What is certain is that the mighty Ottoman Grand Vezir, Mehmed Sokolli, did not want any invasion of Cyprus.<sup>69</sup> According to Katia Hadjidemetriou, this was because he was “a friend of the Venetians”.<sup>70</sup> Selim, the new Sultan, paid more attention, however, to a Jewish friend who was a sworn enemy of the Venetians.<sup>71</sup>

More interesting than the allegation of wine drinking, are several Greek Cypriot requests for support, brought to the Ottoman leadership in Istanbul. Already in 1566, Greek Cypriot renegades and exiles discussed with Sultan Selim the possibility of a Turkish conquest of the island. Three years later, a representation of Greek Cypriot serfs requested Mehmed Sokolli that Turkey should occupy Cyprus, but the Grand Vizir “had them put to death instead”.<sup>72</sup> Just before the invasion, two Greek Cypriots had arrived in Istanbul with letters expressing the desire of many of their compatriots to come under the rule of the Sultan.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Egypt was an Ottoman province.

<sup>68</sup> Serter, p. 51.

<sup>69</sup> The Grand Vizir was the Sultan’s deputy in all state affairs and the senior official of the Imperial Council in Istanbul.

<sup>70</sup> Hadjidemetriou 2002, p. 257.

<sup>71</sup> Hadjidemetriou does not mention the Jew’s name. According to Panteli, his name is Joseph Nasi – a Jew who held a fief on the island of Naxos and who also hoped for the investiture of Cyprus. Gazioğlu is apparently referring to the same person, but he uses the name Joseph Miquez, a Portuguese Jew who had become Selim II’s financial adviser after he succeeded to the throne. According to Gazioğlu, Miquez tried to convince Selim to conquer Cyprus and hand the island on to him, to be used as a settlement for Jews.

<sup>72</sup> Hadjidemetriou 2002, p. 258.

<sup>73</sup> Hackett, J. 1901. *A History of the Orthodox Church of Cyprus*. London, pp.182–183, and note 1, p. 183, cited in Stavro Skendi: ‘Crypto-Christianity in the Balkan Area under the Ottomans’, a paper prepared for

Both Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot historians recognise that envoys travelled from Cyprus to Istanbul to ask the Sultan for assistance to get rid of the Venetians. The interesting point is that some Greek Cypriots did not regard the Ottomans as a threat, but actually wanted them to invade the island. As may be recalled, many Greek Cypriots suffered under the Venetian misrule, not least the serfs who were harshly treated by the occupiers. According to one source, 50,000 serfs were ready to support an Ottoman expedition. There was also great discontent due to dearth and export of grain by the Venetian authorities, who were accused of corruption.<sup>74</sup>

The situation between the Porte and Venice remained tense.<sup>75</sup> In January 1570, the Sultan's envoy arrived in Venice, but instead of an official reception, he was put in prison.<sup>76</sup> In February–March 1570, an emissary from the Sultan by the name of Kubad arrived in Venice, threatening to seize the island of Cyprus if it was not voluntarily surrendered. The Venetians replied on 27 March by turning down the Sultan's ultimatum, with the message that they trusted the "justice of God".<sup>77</sup>

When looking into the dispatch from Sultan Selim, there is no doubt that it was a genuine ultimatum:

Selim, Ottoman Sultan, Emperor of the Turks, Lord of Lords, King of Kings, Shadow of God, Lord of the Earthly Paradise and of Jerusalem, to the Signory of Venice: We demand of you Cyprus, which you shall give us willingly or perforce; and do not irritate our horrible sword, for we shall wage most cruel war against you everywhere; nor let you trust in your treasure, for we shall cause it suddenly to run away from you like a torrent; beware to irritate us.<sup>78</sup>

According to Ahmet C. Gazioğlu, Kubad tried to negotiate with the Venetians. All requests were turned down. But was there really something to discuss at all? The Sultan's ultimatum was just as threatening, as it was clear: take it or leave it. The envoy Kubad had no authority to negotiate any compromise.

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the First International Congress of Balkan and Southeast European Studies, held in Sofia, 26 August–1 September 1966.

<sup>74</sup> Kyrris 1996, p. 251. Kyrris does not give any reference to the above-mentioned source.

<sup>75</sup> The Porte, also called the Sublime Porte, was the seat of the Ottoman Government in Istanbul.

<sup>76</sup> The Turks had in the meantime imprisoned some Venetian merchants. See Hadjidemetriou 2002, p. 258.

<sup>77</sup> Panteli 1990, p. 48.

<sup>78</sup> Hill, Sir George 1948. *History of Cyprus*, Vol. III. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 888, cited in Hadjidemetriou 2002, p. 258.

## The conquest begins

On 27 May 1570, an Ottoman invasion force set sail from Istanbul.<sup>79</sup> In the beginning of July, Ottoman troops started to disembark in Cyprus. The port town of Limassol was captured first, then, in the middle of September, the capital Nicosia was overrun after a siege that lasted for more than 40 days. It took nearly one more year to conquer the important port town of Famagusta.

The Venetian forces were very small compared to the Ottoman invasion fleet, and Greek Cypriot historians do not deny the fact that Venice had little support among the islanders. Katia Hadjidemetriou states:

The Cyprus people...on many occasions showed indifference or took a negative attitude towards the Venetians...The indigenous population was tired of oppression and exploitation by their European masters.<sup>80</sup>

The Greek Cypriot historian, Costas P. Kyrris, states that some Greek Cypriots helped the Venetians in the fighting, but this was often done with reluctance and inefficiency.<sup>81</sup> On some occasions, Greek Cypriots had no other choice than to side with the Ottoman conquerors who “won over many rich inhabitants... [and] by promises and gifts the hill folk, whose fastnesses would have been difficult to reduce by force of arms”.<sup>82</sup> According to Hadjidemetriou, “[t]he villagers were more eager to wage a guerrilla war against the Turks, but they refused to come to Nicosia to fight under the orders of the Venetians whom they hated”.<sup>83</sup>

There is no doubt that Greek Cypriot historians are critical of the Venetians and their rule over Cyprus, but they are more hostile to the Ottomans. Katia Hadjidemetriou writes that there was misery in Cyprus towards the end of the Venetian period, “but with

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<sup>79</sup> The number of vessels participating varies in the source material, from 124 to 400. Gazioglu puts the number of Ottoman soldiers to 100,000. See Gazioglu 1990, p. 29. The same figure is mentioned in Hadjidemetriou 2002, p. 260.

<sup>80</sup> Hadjidemetriou 2002, p. 259.

<sup>81</sup> Kyrris 1996, p. 251.

<sup>82</sup> Cobham 1908, pp. 90, 95, cited in Kyrris 1996, p. 252.

<sup>83</sup> Hadjidemetriou 2002, p. 261.

the Turkish conquest the island fell into abject poverty”.<sup>84</sup> Costas P. Kyrris simply states that Ottoman conquest of the Venetians “marked an end of European domination and the beginning of an era of Oriental despotism”.<sup>85</sup>

When looking at the Turkish Cypriot version, there is the same tendency to stress the Greek Cypriot people’s lack of support for their Venetian masters. But there is a difference in the description of the Ottoman soldiers’ conduct, as will be shown later in this chapter. When Gazioğlu writes about the capture of the port town of Limassol, he stresses that the Ottoman commander, Mustafa Lala Pasha, “issued orders that the inhabitants’ lives and properties would be protected.<sup>86</sup> The occupying troops obeyed the orders, and no harm was done to the inhabitants”. According to Gazioğlu, the Cypriot people welcomed the Ottomans, and the situation was so favourable that the commanders decided to leave only a few ships and a small garrison in Limassol after they had captured the town.<sup>87</sup>

Gazioğlu mentions a massacre committed against the inhabitants of the village of Lefkara.<sup>88</sup> The perpetrators were allegedly not the Ottomans but the Venetians, who most probably punished the villagers because they had given the Ottomans a “warm reception”.<sup>89</sup> The Ottomans, according to Gazioğlu, experienced more such kind receptions:

The native Greeks of Cyprus were so anxious to end the brutal Venetian rule on the island that they offered no resistance whatsoever during the Turkish invasion. In the countryside particularly they welcomed the Turks and were even prepared to guide them towards targets inland.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Hadjidemetriou 2002, p. 269.

<sup>85</sup> Kyrris 1996, p. 258.

<sup>86</sup> Pasha was a high rank in the Ottoman Empire, often granted to governors and generals. It was also an honorary title.

<sup>87</sup> Gazioğlu 1990, p. 31.

<sup>88</sup> Four hundred people, including children and women were killed, according to two eyewitnesses; the Catholic theologian and priest Fra Angelo Calepio from Cyprus, and the Venetian author Antonio Maria Graziani. See Gazioğlu 1990, p. 33.

<sup>89</sup> Gazioğlu 1990, p. 32.

<sup>90</sup> Gazioğlu 1990, pp. 33–34.

## **The battle of Nicosia**

The first real battle in Cyprus was fought for Nicosia, the Venetian capital. The Ottoman army arrived on 25 July 1570. Lala Mustafa Pasha sent a message to the Venetian authorities asking them to surrender. The Venetians did not respond.<sup>91</sup> The Ottoman siege, invasion and capture of the important town was cruel and bloodstained.

Katia Hadjidemetriou states that the total number of dead was 20,000, on the first day alone. The slaughter and looting continued for three days.

In their religious fanaticism they even killed the pigs they came across. The carcasses of the animals lay in the streets beside the human corpses. They then buried their dead, leaving the Christians unburied to rot away. But the stench forced them to gather them from the streets and burn them. They then went to the Cathedral of St. Sofia and thanked God for their victory. It is said that the wealth they seized from plundering Nicosia equalled that which they had seized in the fall of Constantinople. They also profited by selling young girls and boys they had captured as prisoners of war.<sup>92</sup>

Hadjidemetriou writes that Mustafa kept “as a present for the Sultan” the best young men and women among these prisoners and put them on three ships to Istanbul.<sup>93</sup> Gazioğlu does not mention such atrocities, but gives an extensive coverage of the battle of Nicosia. He tells about hard fighting between the Ottomans and the Venetians – fighting that naturally also harmed the civilian population extremely hard. He describes the different battles and sieges, but he mentions no slaughter or looting after the fall of the capital. Neither does he give any figures on casualties among the civilians.

## **The battle of Famagusta**

Nicosia fell in September 1570. Now, the Ottomans could concentrate their military efforts on Famagusta. Because of its port facilities and many fortifications, this was the most important town in the kingdom of Cyprus. The force that defended the town was

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<sup>91</sup> The Ottoman army had the habit of issuing demands of surrender before attacking towns. If these demands were accepted, the conquest normally ended peacefully. If the demands were rejected, the resisting soldiers and the townspeople often suffered hard reprisals. Ottoman soldiers were normally allowed to pillage and plunder for three days.

<sup>92</sup> Hadjidemetriou 2002, p. 261. Constantinople fell to the Ottomans in 1453.

<sup>93</sup> Hadjidemetriou 2002, p. 264.

relatively small compared with the number of Ottoman attackers: 4000 Italian infantrymen, 200 to 300 horsemen and about 3000 Cypriot fighters.<sup>94</sup> The Ottoman forces attacking Famagusta probably consisted of as many as 80,000 soldiers.<sup>95</sup> The Ottomans managed to maintain the same number of troops by replacing their fallen soldiers with fresh reinforcements brought from Asia Minor.<sup>96</sup>

Hadjidemetriou hails the Venetian Commander Astorre Baglione, and also gives the town's leader and Governor-general Marco Antonio Bragadino, credit for running the city effectively during the ten months' siege.

The leaders were constantly at the side of their men taking part in all the difficult and dangerous tasks. They would frequently come out of the walls and make sorties against the Turks inflicting great losses on them.<sup>97</sup>

Panteli also describes the two Venetians as heroic leaders. Gazioğlu, however, criticises Bragadino for not surrendering – even if Lala Mustafa Pasha twice had made him an offer.<sup>98</sup>

Both Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot historians are concerned with the fighting in Famagusta, but much less is written about the civilian population. Katia Hadjidemetriou gives the following account:

The distribution of food supplies was organised systematically but after a few months when supplies were running out, the leaders put all the people, who could not directly participate in the war, on ships and removed them from the city.<sup>99</sup>

Famagusta capitulated on 1 August 1571, after the ten months long blockade. What happened thereafter is one of the most referred incidents of the whole War of Cyprus.

Most historians agree that the peace terms were generous when the Venetians surrendered. All Venetians were allowed to embark on Ottoman ships together with any

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<sup>94</sup> Hadjidemetriou 2002, p. 265.

<sup>95</sup> Gazioğlu 1990, p. 54.

<sup>96</sup> Gazioğlu 1990, p. 54.

<sup>97</sup> Hadjidemetriou 2002, p. 265.

<sup>98</sup> Gazioğlu 1990, p. 56.

<sup>99</sup> Hadjidemetriou 2002, p. 265.

Greek Cypriots who wanted to accompany them in exile. Greek Cypriots who chose to stay would be guaranteed their personal liberty and property. They would be given two years to decide whether to remain or to leave the island. If they decided to depart, they would be granted safe conduct to the country they chose.<sup>100</sup>

The document was signed by Lala Mustafa Pasha and authenticated with the Sultan's seal. It was given to Bragadino and Baglione, even complimenting them on their courage during the defence of Famagusta.

With such an apparently lenient attitude from the Ottoman side, it is not surprising that Bragadino informed Lala Mustafa Pasha that he was ready to present him with the keys to Famagusta. According to Hadjidemetriou, the Ottoman pasha was ready to receive Bragadino with pleasure on the evening of 5 August. At the beginning of the encounter, the exchange was friendly, but then something happened. Hadjidemetriou writes that Lala Mustafa Pasha got terribly angry, took out his knife and shouted to Bragadino:

Tell me, you hound, why did you hold the fortress when you had not the wherewithal to do so? Why did you not surrender a month ago, and not make me lose 80,000 of the best men in my army?<sup>101</sup>

Stavros Panteli gives more or less the same version, mentioning a kind reception before Lala Mustafa Pasha's mood changed:

Suddenly however, his face clouded and his manner changed. In a mounting fury, he began hurling baseless allegations at the Christians accusing them of murdering Turkish prisoners, of concealing munitions and of not respecting the peace terms. Bragadino's lieutenants (Baglioni, Martinengo and Quirini) were executed in his presence but the treatment meted out on him topped all atrocities. After being subjected to the most excruciating public tortures, which he bore with great fortitude (Mustapha three times made him hold out his neck under the axe; he cut off his nose and ears; stretched him on the ground and trampled on him using all kinds of insults), he was flayed alive: his skin was stuffed with straw and suspended to the yard-arm of a vessel it was sent to Constantinople. His skin was then exposed in the prison in which the Christian prisoners and slaves were confined. It remained there for 25 years until redeemed by his brother Antony and his three sons, Mark, Hermolaus and Antony, for a great price and laid in its present resting place in the Church of Saints John and Paul at Venice.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Panteli 1990, p. 49.

<sup>101</sup> Hadjidemetriou 2002, p. 266.

<sup>102</sup> Panteli 1990, p. 49. Panteli calls the Venetian Commander Baglioni instead of Baglione.

A dramatic narrative, indeed. But why did the Ottoman Pasha change his attitude completely; why did he withdraw from his promises? And why did the meeting suddenly turn sour?

Panteli and Hadjidemetriou do not give any real explanation, but Gazioğlu gives an interesting indication. By examining Turkish sources, he has found out that one condition for surrender was added to those proposed by the Venetians and accepted by both sides. Fifty Muslims, who had been taken prisoner by the Venetians while on a pilgrimage to Mecca – before the siege of Famagusta began – were to be handed over to the Ottomans.<sup>103</sup>

Gazioğlu gives a detailed narrative of what happened during the meeting between Marco Antonio Bragadino and Lala Mustafa Pasha:

In the beginning, the Ottoman commander and Bragadino sat down conversing about the battle of Famagusta. According to Gazioğlu, Lala Mustafa Pasha asked Bragadino what guarantee he could give for the return of the Ottoman ships carrying the Venetian troops and families into exile. Here Gazioğlu refers to a contemporary Venetian source, Paolo Paruta.<sup>104</sup> According to Paruta, Bragadino replied that he was not bound to such guarantees according to the capitulation demands. This statement made by a defeated commander to a victorious one apparently made Lala Mustafa Pasha furious. When Mustafa demanded that a hostage should be held back as a guarantee for the safe return of the Ottoman vessels, Bragadino was furious and refused any such hostage deal. In the heated exchange of words “Bragadino also told Mustafa that he would not entrust even his dog to the Turks”.<sup>105</sup> The situation grew even worse when Mustafa started inquiring about the fifty Muslim pilgrims who had been taken prisoner. According to Gazioğlu, “Bragadino admitted that the captives had been tortured and killed after the peace terms were signed”.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Gazioğlu 1990, p. 63.

<sup>104</sup> According to *Catholic Encyclopedia* 1913, Paolo Paruta (1540–1598) was a Venetian historian and statesman. Among his chief works was *Storia della guerra di Cipro*.

<sup>105</sup> Gazioğlu 1990, p. 65.

<sup>106</sup> Gazioğlu 1990, p. 65.

This was apparently the end of it. Killing pilgrims on their way to Mecca is a horrific insult to a Muslim. Lala Mustafa Pasha immediately ordered eleven men accompanying Bragadino to be killed in retaliation, while Venetian soldiers who had embarked for transport into exile ended up as captive oarsmen on board Ottoman galleys.<sup>107</sup>

In both Gazioğlu's and Hadjidemetriou's accounts, one of the parties uses the word "dog" or "hound" to insult the other. These types of insults are common in the history of this region. Concerning alleged atrocities after the killing of Bragadino, there is nothing more to be found in Gazioğlu's account. He merely states: "... work started on clearing up Famagusta. The moats, trenches, and surrounding lands and streets were full of Turkish soldiers and the people of Famagusta who were mobilised to remove all traces of the war."<sup>108</sup> What this "clearing up" and "removal" implied is not specified.

Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot historians differ on what happened after the fall of Famagusta. Stavros Panteli gives the following brief account: "Now that the killing had begun, it was very hard to stop it. The island was sacked and plundered."<sup>109</sup> Panteli quotes the above-mentioned Venetian source, Paolo Paruta, who states that during the sieges of Nicosia and Famagusta, the Ottomans "destroyed whole villages and hamlets, churches and monasteries and committed other bestial and cruel acts – even against the dead!"<sup>110</sup> Hadjidemetriou writes that the execution of Bragadino and his men was followed by "the usual plunder, slaughter and atrocities. The few who managed to escape left for Venice. They settled as refugees in a community, where the Catholics squabbled with the Orthodox."<sup>111</sup>

The above extract suggests that most of the Greek Cypriot inhabitants of Famagusta were either killed or had to flee. There is a self-contradiction in Hadjidemetriou's account, since she writes (as will be remembered) that all non-participants of the war were evacuated *before* the capitulation of Famagusta.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Gazioğlu 1990, pp. 65–66.

<sup>108</sup> Gazioğlu 1990, p. 66.

<sup>109</sup> Panteli 1990, p. 49.

<sup>110</sup> Cobham 1908, pp. 107–119, cited in Panteli 1990, pp. 49–50.

<sup>111</sup> Hadjidemetriou 2002, p. 267.

<sup>112</sup> See footnote 99.

## Summary

The years 1570 and 1571 were crucial for the small island of Cyprus. Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot historians agree that the Venetians were powerless against the overwhelming Ottoman force, and they largely have the same interpretation of the Greek Cypriots' attitude towards their Venetian masters. In describing the conduct of the Ottoman forces, however, there is a considerable difference. While Katia Hadjidemetriou states that 20,000 people died during the first day of the battle of Nicosia, Ahmet C. Gazioğlu does not mention any figures at all. When characterising the Venetian Governor-general in Famagusta, Marco Antonio Bragadino, Hadjidemetriou and Panteli give him heroic dimensions while Gazioğlu portrays him as a man breaking his word. By emphasising that Bragadino's fate was sealed because of the Venetian execution of fifty Muslim pilgrims on their way to Mecca, Gazioğlu gives a plausible explanation of the dramatic events in Famagusta on 5 August 1571. For reasons unknown, the killing of the pilgrims is not emphasised by the Greek Cypriot historians considered here. The execution of Bragadino and his Venetian compatriots, however, fits very well into the Greek Cypriot picture of the so-called terrible Turk.

As seen in this chapter, Greek Cypriot historians have a tendency to focus on the negative sides of the Ottoman behaviour in Cyprus. On the other hand, Turkish Cypriot historians such as Ahmet C. Gazioğlu, usually have an apologetic approach, trying to legitimise the Ottomans' policies and conduct.

With the surrender of the Venetians, Cyprus came under total Ottoman control. The new rulers' first step was to introduce a settlement policy in Cyprus. As will be shown in the next chapter, Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot historians have different views concerning the arrival of immigrants coming from Anatolia.

### 3 The Settlers are coming

Like the Ottoman Conquest of Cyprus, the arrival of the settlers who came from Anatolia to the island in the years after the Ottoman occupation in 1571, is a controversial aspect in Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot historiography. Together with Christian converts and the descendants of Turkish soldiers and officers, they largely constitute today the Turkish Cypriot population of the divided island.

In Greek Cypriot historiography, the settler policy is described as colonisation and to a certain extent an Islamisation and a Turkification, deliberately undertaken to change the demographic balance of the island. From a Turkish Cypriot view, the settlers came to an island that was underpopulated and with too few people to cultivate the fertile soil.<sup>113</sup> The population had decreased before the Ottoman occupation due to disasters, disease, widespread piracy and Venetian misrule.<sup>114</sup> In addition, many Catholics were expelled from the island after the defeat of the Venetians. Many Orthodox Greek Cypriots were also killed as a consequence of the war, and many fled from the island. Accordingly, there is every reason to believe that Turkish Cypriot allegations of underpopulation are correct. But what was the real reason for the Ottoman settler policy in Cyprus? Was the aim just to repopulate the island after the decline in the population, or was it at the same time a deliberate effort to change the ethnic and religious balance in favour of Turks/Muslims at the expense of the Christian Greek Cypriots?

#### Orders from Istanbul

After the Ottoman occupation of Cyprus, the authorities in Istanbul initiated a repopulation policy, by moving settlers from Anatolia to the island.<sup>115</sup> On 21 September 1572 the Porte in Istanbul issued an imperial decree with the aim of transferring inhabitants from Anatolia to Cyprus. One of ten households in four different Ottoman

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<sup>113</sup> Population figures confirm that by 1570, the estimated number of inhabitants in Cyprus was 150,000. See Panteli 1990, p. 46.

<sup>114</sup> The low population of Cyprus had worried Venice so much that substantial energy had been devoted to encourage immigration. See Jennings, Ronald C. 1993. *Christians and Muslims in Ottoman Cyprus and the Mediterranean World, 1571–1640*. New York and London: New York University Press, p. 212.

<sup>115</sup> Forced population transfer (*sürgün*) was an important part of Ottoman social and economic policy.

provinces in Anatolia was to be resettled in Cyprus. This migration was not meant to be voluntary as the following extract from the edict shows:

You, the Cadis will see that those transported may not return and if such a thing happens, those who have come back shall be forced to go again.<sup>116</sup>

The intention was to resettle 12,000 families by 1581. A document dated 7 January 1581 states that 8000 families had arrived in Cyprus and were duly registered. That was four thousand less than intended, which indicates that the use of force may not have been practised fully.<sup>117</sup>

In addition to the settlers, between three- and four-thousand Ottoman soldiers and officers who had participated in the occupation of Cyprus, remained on the island instead of returning to the mainland. Some of them brought their families to Cyprus while others married local women.

To confirm his assertion on underpopulation as a main reason for the settler policy, the Turkish Cypriot historian, Ahmet C. Gazioğlu, mentions that in 1572 the new Ottoman rulers carried out a general registration in order to work out the size of the island's population, their occupation, properties and wealth.<sup>118</sup> According to this registration, 76 villages had been completely abandoned, with surrounding land being uncultivated. Gazioğlu also emphasises that the soil in Cyprus "was very suitable for agriculture, fruit growing, and the cultivation of sugar cane."<sup>119</sup> The Turkish Cypriot historian, Vehbi Zeki Serter, stresses that Cyprus was in economic ruin because of "the Venetian misrule" and the succeeding War of Cyprus 1570–1571. The population "had to be increased" according to Serter, who does not mention anything about the settlers' ethnicity or religion.<sup>120</sup> Ahmet C. Gazioğlu, however, states that the imperial decree from September 1571 ordered "transportation of Anatolian Turks to Cyprus".<sup>121</sup> The above quote should in fact prove the Greek Cypriot allegations of a deliberate Ottoman policy

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<sup>116</sup> Cited in Gazioğlu 1990, p. 298. *Cadi* means judge.

<sup>117</sup> By 1598, the policy of population transfers from Anatolia had ended. See Jennings 1993, p. 197.

<sup>118</sup> Gazioğlu 1990, p. 74.

<sup>119</sup> Gazioğlu 1990, p. 74.

<sup>120</sup> Serter, p. 59.

<sup>121</sup> Gazioğlu 1990, p.74.

of Turkification of Cyprus. There is, however, one problem. In the imperial decree there is nothing to confirm Gazioğlu's allegation of a deliberate settlement of *Turks* from Anatolia. Neither ethnic nor religious affiliations are mentioned.<sup>122</sup>

Is Gazioğlu referring wrongly to the decree by mistake, or do we see an ethnocentric interpretation of history, influenced by the fact that the Turkish Cypriots descend from these early settlers? The sources considered give no real answer.

In the Greek Cypriot history books examined, the interpretation of the Ottoman settler policy is quite different from the Turkish Cypriot version. Comparing English policy in Ireland about the same time, the Greek Cypriot historian, Stavros Panteli, uses the term "transplantation" which in his words means "importing Muslim Turks, speaking a foreign language and practising a different religion, to form an ascendancy and help keep the native Greeks – the majority – under control".<sup>123</sup> Panteli refers to the well-known historian, Bernard Lewis, who argues that Turkish peasants were transferred to Cyprus "so that the countryside should not be exclusively Greek and Christian, but partly Turkish and Muslim". Lewis also writes that there were orders to transfer Turcoman pastoral nomads from Anatolia "so that stock-raising and the supply of animals for food and transport should be safely in Muslim hands".<sup>124</sup>

The Greek Cypriot historian, Costas P. Kyrris, states that it had been a "long-growing depletion of population" in Cyprus before the Ottoman conquest.<sup>125</sup> He agrees with the Turkish Cypriot view that the settler policy "was not the Turkicisation (*sic*) of Cyprus, but the reactivation of its economy".<sup>126</sup> However, Kyrris uses the phrase "colonisation" to underline that the Ottomans intended to undermine the Greek Cypriot population already living on the island.<sup>127</sup>

To a certain extent, Katia Hadjidemetriou gives a more balanced account:

In his order to the governor, the sultan expressed the wish to see Cyprus prosper. So that the population might increase, he ordered that people be

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<sup>122</sup> See the English translation of the imperial decree in Gazioğlu 1990, p. 297.

<sup>123</sup> Panteli 1990, p. 52.

<sup>124</sup> Lewis, Bernard 1984. *The Jews of Islam*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, p. 123. Cited in Panteli 1990, p. 52.

<sup>125</sup> Kyrris 1996, p. 259.

<sup>126</sup> Kyrris 1996, p. 260.

<sup>127</sup> Kyrris 1996, p. 260.

transported from Asia Minor to the island and that they be exempted from taxation for two years. Among these settlers there were craftsmen from the towns and peasants, who for some reason were in a difficult position or had a bad reputation. A good number of these settlers were Christians who lived in Anatolia.<sup>128</sup>

According to this quote, the population transfer did not seem to be a deliberate attempt to Islamise Cyprus. But Hadjidemetriou clearly sees an element of Turkification when she writes: “The settlement of military men together with the transportation of settlers from Asia Minor constitutes the first serious intervention in the demographic structure of the island’s population.”<sup>129</sup>

Hadjidemetriou does not elaborate what she means by stating that some of the settlers were “in a difficult position” or “had a bad reputation”. The following extracts from the above-mentioned imperial decree of September 1572 will clarify:

The following persons will be sent to the said island: people living in barren, rocky, steep places; people who are in need of more land; those who are known for their bad character and unlawful activities; those who are not registered in the local register, those who are newcomers to a place; those who are staying in places by paying rents and those people who have had land disputes among themselves for ages; people who emigrated to towns from rural areas and are living there, and those who are idle and without definite employment and guilty of threatening behaviour.<sup>130</sup>

The decree reels off the following traders and craftsmen to be settled in Cyprus: “Shoemakers, boot-makers, tailors, skull-cap makers, weavers, sack weavers, wool carders, silk dyers and manufacturers, cooks, soup-makers, candlestick-makers, saddlers, farriers, grocers, tanners, carpenters, master builders, stone cutters, goldsmiths, coppersmiths, and other people of crafts and trades.”<sup>131</sup> This punctilious description indicates that the Porte, at least in theory, had a clear-sighted settlement policy. There is nothing in the text of this imperial decree indicating that the Ottomans were pursuing a policy of Turkification and Islamisation, as claimed by Greek Cypriot historians.

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<sup>128</sup> Hadjidemetriou 2002, p. 270.

<sup>129</sup> Hadjidemetriou 2002, p. 271.

<sup>130</sup> This imperial decree stated that those settled in Cyprus would be pardoned of their offences. Cited in Gazioğlu 1990, p. 297.

<sup>131</sup> Gazioğlu 1990, pp. 297–298.

## Muslim and Christian immigrants

Recent research confirms Hadjidemetriou's information that there were Christian settlers among the immigrants. The Turkish researcher, Recep Dündar at İnönü University in Ankara, has made a survey of the settlers' background.<sup>132</sup> By checking the contemporary lists, he found that there were indeed Christians, mostly Greeks, among the settlers from Anatolia. But the majority living in these areas were Turks, so evidently most of the Anatolians who arrived in Cyprus were Turks. From the above perspective, one may speak of a Turkification, but not necessarily one that could be referred to as deliberate. Dündar writes that there is "no indication whether the exiles should be Muslim or non-Muslim".<sup>133</sup>

Many of the new settlers in Cyprus moved into abandoned or depopulated villages.<sup>134</sup> According to Ahmet C. Gazioğlu, these villages kept their original names. Turkish names were only given to new villages and regions established by the immigrants.<sup>135</sup> This fact, indeed, weakens the allegations that the reason for the settler policy was a Turkification of Cyprus.

Halil Inalcık, a Turkish professor and expert in Ottoman history, points to the fact that "the Sultan was the state itself" in the Ottoman Empire.<sup>136</sup> There were two principal classes: the civilian subjects (*reayah*) and the military-administrative establishment – the latter paid by the Sultan and exempted from taxation.<sup>137</sup> The administrative organisation, which also consisted of Christians, was "totally devoted to the person of the Sultan".<sup>138</sup> In general, the Porte's main purpose of conquering land was to have military control and to establish an official register for a methodical recording of the potential taxpayers. Regarding the immigrants to Cyprus from Anatolia, there was no indication that ethnicity was an important element. Neither did religion play an important role. As in other parts of the Ottoman Empire, the Turkish rulers were not interested in converting the native

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<sup>132</sup> Dündar, Recep. 'The conquest and settlement of Cyprus', in Kemal Çiçek 2000 (ed.), *Great Ottoman-Turkish Civilisation*, Vol. I. Ankara: Yeni Türkiye, pp. 259–274.

<sup>133</sup> Dündar, p. 265.

<sup>134</sup> The Ottomans also settled Muslim peasants on the land of the dispossessed Venetian aristocracy.

<sup>135</sup> Gazioğlu 1990, p. 78.

<sup>136</sup> Inalcık, Halil. 'Ottoman Methods of Conquest', in *Studia Islamica*, No. 2, 1954, p. 113.

<sup>137</sup> The term *reayah* denoted Ottoman tax paying subjects in general. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century the term was limited to non-Muslim taxpayers.

<sup>138</sup> Inalcık, p. 120.

Christian population, but to secure the tax incomes from them. Based on such facts, it is difficult to claim that the Ottoman occupants were promoting an Islamisation policy.

### **Return of refugees**

It was not only people from Anatolia who settled in Cyprus after the Ottoman occupation. The Turkish scholar, Cengiz Orhonlu, has studied Ottoman documents which show that the authorities gave priority of resettlement to those Greek Cypriots who had taken refuge in Venice and elsewhere, and even instructed that these people should be granted every facility for their return to Cyprus.<sup>139</sup> This is emphasised in an imperial decree from 1572 where the Governor encouraged people who had fled the island to return, with the promise that all their rights would be restored. There are some reports about people returning, among them an account of 35 Christian families who came back from exile in Venice, reportedly provided with all the facilities they required.<sup>140</sup> The return of these Christian refugees is another indication that Turkification and Islamisation was not the primary reason for the Ottoman settlement policy in Cyprus. In the sources examined, there is unfortunately no total number of such returnees.

### **Summary**

The arrival of thousands of settlers in Cyprus from Anatolia is widely discussed by both Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot historians. For the Greek Cypriot historians, the Ottoman settlement policy meant that original Christian inhabitants had to share the island with a new ethnic and religious group. Hence, the arrival of the settlers is interpreted in a negative way, as one of many Turkish unjust measures against the Greek Cypriot people.

Turkish Cypriot historians have a quite different approach; the Turks among these settlers were actually their ethnic forefathers. It is therefore not surprising that Turkish Cypriot historians see the Ottoman settler policy in the 1570s in a positive light.

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<sup>139</sup> Orhonlu, Cengiz. 'The Ottoman Turks settle in Cyprus (1570–1580)', in *The First International Congress of Cypriot Studies*. Ankara 1971, pp. 99-100. According to Ottoman documents, the small colony of Cypriots in Venice applied to the nearest Ottoman authorities to return to the island after the conquest.

<sup>140</sup> Dündar, p. 261.

While Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot historians agree that Cyprus was underpopulated, they disagree on the Sultan's motives for the transfer of inhabitants from Anatolia after the conquest in 1571. According to Greek Cypriot historians, a main aspect of the Ottoman policy was to Turkify and Islamise the island. By examining relevant sources, not at least imperial decrees, it seems doubtful that the Ottoman resettlement policy was a deliberate effort of Turkification and Islamisation, but rather, an attempt to increase the population figures of the island in general.

For unknown reasons, the Greek Cypriot historians examined do not emphasise the fact that a certain number of the settlers were Greek Christians. These Christians, however, became a part of the Orthodox Church congregation in Cyprus. As will be shown in the next chapter, the Orthodox Church was to become a powerful institution in Ottoman Cyprus.

## 4 The Ottomans and the Orthodox Church

While Muslims from Anatolia embarked on the shores of Cyprus after the Ottoman conquest in 1571, the Orthodox Church in Cyprus rose like a phoenix from the ashes. After being subdued under the Venetian rule, the Orthodox Archbishop and his clergy were reinstated by the Sultan in Istanbul and obtained a powerful position in society. As seen in earlier chapters, Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot historians do agree on some important points, but disagree on others. The same is the case concerning the re-establishment and role of the Orthodox Church on the island.

### The ruling system

To better understand the position of the Orthodox Church under the Ottomans, it is necessary to give a brief explanation of the Ottoman ruling system in Cyprus.<sup>141</sup> The head of the governing council (*divan*) was the Governor, always a Turk and Muslim. He was usually accompanied by four administrative senior officials, referred to as *agas*, also Turks and Muslims.<sup>142</sup> In addition to the Governor and senior officials, the governing council consisted of the person holding the highest religious Muslim authority (*mufti*), of Muslim army officers of higher rank, the Orthodox Archbishop in Cyprus, and the interpreter (*dragoman*). The interpreter, who functioned as the link between state and people, was always Christian, and usually a Greek Cypriot. He was elected by the bishops and other notables of the Greek Cypriot community, and had a close relationship to the Orthodox clergy in Cyprus. Together with the Archbishop in Cyprus, the interpreter had the responsibility of tax collecting among the Greek Cypriots. He communicated directly with the Sultan in Istanbul.<sup>143</sup>

The Muslim chief justice (*kadi molla*) was generally a Turk, and exercised the highest legal authority. He administered the *sharia* law among the Muslims, and dealt with criminal cases involving Muslims as well as Christians. In cases of civil and family

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<sup>141</sup> The ruling system was more or less the same in all provinces of the Ottoman Empire.

<sup>142</sup> *Agha* means master and elder in Ottoman Turkish, a title given to senior officers or officials in Istanbul, or in the provinces of the Ottoman Empire.

<sup>143</sup> See Hadjidemetriou 2002, p. 273, and Panteli 1990, p. 53. The interpreter occupied a more powerful position than the title *dragoman* indicated.

law, involving the Greek Cypriot population, the Greek Orthodox Church had the authority.<sup>144</sup>

The Orthodox leading clergy and the Christian interpreter were included in the Ottoman ruling system, as mentioned above.<sup>145</sup> At the same time, the Orthodox Archbishop was the political and spiritual leader of the Greek Cypriots. How do Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot historians describe the Archbishop's dual role? How powerful was the Orthodox leading clergy compared with the Governor and his Turkish Ottoman administration in Cyprus? For a more comprehensive answer to these questions, use is also made of contemporary foreign sources.

### **The background of the Orthodox Church**

The Cypriot church is one of the oldest independent and self-governing constituent bodies of the Orthodox Eastern Church.<sup>146</sup> This is an important factor when understanding the strong position of the Church among the ordinary Greek Cypriots during the Ottoman period, their feeling of belonging to the Church, and their respect for the top clergy.

It was the Byzantine Emperor Zeno who, in AD 488, declared the Orthodox Church in Cyprus independent and self-governing, and he conferred upon the Archbishop of Cyprus three very important and symbolic privileges: to sign in red ink, to wear a purple cloak during the Church ceremonies, and to carry an imperial sceptre in place of the ordinary pastoral staff.<sup>147</sup> The right to sign in red ink was a mark of distinction enjoyed only by the Byzantine Emperors, so this showed, in fact, the strong power base of the Greek Cypriot Archbishop.<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> See Hadjidemetriou 2002, pp. 276–277.

<sup>145</sup> The Ottomans gave Christians and Jews special status. As followers of the “revealed religions” they were treated as “protected people” (*zimmi*). Through the *millet* system, however, they were obliged to pay the above-mentioned head tax (*cizye*) and were generally in a subordinate position to the Muslims.

<sup>146</sup> Panteli 1990, p. 27.

<sup>147</sup> See Theodoulou, Georghios 2005. *The origins and evolution of Church-State relations in Cyprus with special reference to the modern era*. Nicosia: Kailas Printers and Lithographers Ltd., p. 13. Theodoulou had worked as a teacher in Cyprus for 36 years when he began studying church history at the University of Glasgow. In his Ph.D thesis he gives a comprehensive and balanced view on the history of the Orthodox Church in Cyprus.

<sup>148</sup> The special power of the Archbishop was introduced after the Cypriot Archbishop Anthemios had a vision and found the Tomb of St. Barnabas, considered to be the first Archbishop of Cyprus.

When Cyprus was captured by King Richard, The Lionheart, in 1191, and thereafter was offered to Guy de Lusignan in 1192, the Orthodox Church was gradually subjugated to the Latin Church, ending in 1260 with the *Bulla Cypria*, a papal decree declaring the Latin Church to be the official church of the island.<sup>149</sup> Under the Venetians, who gained control over Cyprus in 1489, the Latinisation continued. The Orthodox Church was in ruins. Since the issue of *Bulla Cypria*, no Archbishop had been elected, and the four remaining bishops had mostly been confined to smaller towns or villages in Cyprus. Many Orthodox churches and monasteries with their associated land had been confiscated, and the Church had lost its property and income. Some of the churches, initially in the towns, were converted to Latin Houses of God. In the villages, the priests were living in dire poverty.

### **The Orthodox Church reinstated**

All this ended in 1571, when the Ottomans conquered Cyprus. The Venetians were the Ottoman's greatest enemy – so it was the Latin Church and not the Orthodox – which was punished and exterminated by the Ottoman conquerors. Most of the Latin church buildings were either converted to mosques or used as stables and shops, but the Ottomans also handed over several Latin churches to the Greek Orthodox community.<sup>150</sup> The Orthodox Church was allowed to keep most of its own churches from the Venetian time, but needed permission for repairing or building new ones.<sup>151</sup> The most important thing that occurred, however, was that the new Ottoman rulers restored the power of the Orthodox Church from the Byzantine era. The Archbishop in Cyprus regained his old privileges granted by Emperor Zeno in AD 488. According to the practice within the Ottoman *millet* system, the religious leader became indeed both the spiritual and political head of his subjects.<sup>152</sup> In tradition with the *millet* system, the Church got the right to tax

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<sup>149</sup> The Latin Pope Alexander IV issued the *Bulla Cypria* in July 1260, thereby forcing the Cypriot clergy to take oaths of obedience to the Latin Church. The number of bishops was reduced from 14, to four. By accepting papal authority, however, the Orthodox clergy retained autonomy over the liturgy.

<sup>150</sup> Jennings 1993, p. 156.

<sup>151</sup> Theodoulou 2005, p. 28.

<sup>152</sup> For an explanation of the *millet* system, see footnote 41. The Greek word for a national leader with religious as well as secular power is *Ethnarch*. It was this historical power base which later enabled the late Archbishop Makarios III to become president after Cyprus achieved independence in 1960.

its parishioners and pass judgements in civilian and religious matters. From being the Christian underdog in Cyprus during the Venetian rule, the Orthodox Church under Ottoman supremacy obtained the power and wealth it still possesses today.

### **A powerful institution**

As shown above, the Orthodox Church obtained a powerful position in Cyprus after the Ottoman conquest in 1571. Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot historians mostly hold the same version of how the Church was reinstated, but differ, as will be shown, in their interpretations of what significance this actually had.

Costas P. Kyrris characterises the “re-establishment” of the Orthodox Church as an independent organisation in 1571, as a “major event in the history of Cypriot Hellenism”.<sup>153</sup> In this respect, Kyrris also refers to a decree from the Sultan in Istanbul, issued in October 1571. This decree allowed the Greeks to redeem the monasteries annexed or seized by the Ottomans during the occupation of Cyprus. Kyrris states that the Orthodox Church in 1585 had succeeded in “recovering most monasteries” and thus was “faring relatively well”.<sup>154</sup> The process of recovery had, according to Kyrris, “been such as to provoke Turkish encroachments and persecutions”.<sup>155</sup> There is no mention of the kind of persecutions that occurred, but Kyrris proceeds by stating that the Greek Cypriots of Larnaca in 1589 – four years after the alleged persecutions – were allowed by the Ottoman rulers to buy back the church of St. Lazarus. This holy place, existing since the beginning of Christianity in Cyprus and allegedly built over St. Lazarus’ tomb, was of great importance to the Orthodox Church.

Similarly, Katia Hadjidemetriou stresses the fact that the Ottomans “granted a privileged position to the Church of Cyprus”. Being able to buy back monasteries, as well as everything else it was deprived of by the Ottoman conquest, the Church “came to own property which it could use in any way that it wished”, she writes.<sup>156</sup> Stavros Panteli also mentions the important role given to the Orthodox Church by the Ottoman rulers:

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<sup>153</sup> Kyrris 1996, p. 263.

<sup>154</sup> Kyrris 1996, p. 259.

<sup>155</sup> Kyrris 1996, p. 263.

<sup>156</sup> Hadjidemetriou 2002, p. 273.

[F]or a substantial section of the upper or ruling classes (especially those who acquiesced with the new administration) and of the higher clergy there were benefits... beyond their wildest expectations.<sup>157</sup>

Panteli also states that the Church “was a strong institution and played an important role in safeguarding the national identity of the island’s Christian inhabitants”.<sup>158</sup>

As noted, Greek Cypriot historians emphasise the fact that the Orthodox Church obtained an important and privileged position after the Ottoman conquest. Nevertheless, they give the Ottomans very little credit for this achievement. By reading the presentations by Kyrris, Panteli and Hadjidemetriou, one gets the impression that the Church – as the rest of the Greek Cypriot society – continuously suffered under the “hardships associated with an alien regime and its strange governmental institutions”.<sup>159</sup>

It will be remembered that the Orthodox top clergy had a dual role – as members of the Ottoman ruling system, and as political and spiritual leaders of the Greek Cypriot population. In the Greek Cypriot history books examined, the main focus is on the latter aspect. One important reason might be that such a dual position does not fit into an ethnocentric perception of history. For the Turkish Cypriot historians, however, this dual role of the church leaders is recognised, but not problematised. From a Turkish Cypriot point of view, such a dual position was a natural part of the Ottoman ruling system, not only in Cyprus but also in most of the other provinces of the Ottoman Empire.

### **An important ally**

There is no reason to believe that Sultan Selim II reinstated the Cypriot Church as an expression of pure generosity and solicitude towards the Greek Cypriot people. The Greek Orthodox Patriarchy in Istanbul also had many privileges and enjoyed a considerable measure of religious freedom, obtained after the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople (Istanbul) from the Byzantines in 1453. There were three reasons for this special position. Firstly, the Sultan needed an ally in the struggle against the West and the

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<sup>157</sup> Panteli 1990, p. 50.

<sup>158</sup> On the question of nationalism, see Chapter 7.

<sup>159</sup> Panteli 1990, p. 54.

Roman Catholic Church.<sup>160</sup> Secondly, he needed competent and educated people to work in his administration. Finally, the Sultan followed the principles of the holy Koran, concerning toleration of Christianity and Judaism.<sup>161</sup> This model from Istanbul was practised in other parts of the Ottoman Empire, as Cyprus and the Balkans.

As mentioned, people were governed by their own religious leaders through the *millet* system. By granting the Orthodox Church in Cyprus economic benefits, the Sultan also got the clergy into a certain dependency. The Archbishop and the bishops were often allied with the Turkish Ottoman leadership in Cyprus. This relationship was probably not based on the two parties' love for each other, but on common benefits, first and foremost in economical and political matters.

### **The taxmen**

The Archbishop and the bishops played an important role as tax collectors. According to Katia Hadjidemetriou, the Church “took part in the operation of the tax system from the first days of Turkish rule”.<sup>162</sup> Kyrris writes that 1589 is the first year bearing testimony to the role of the Church in the taxation system in Cyprus.<sup>163</sup> This role was strengthened in the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, when the Greek Cypriot bishops acquired an increased authority to collect taxes.<sup>164</sup> According to Stavros Panteli, one of the intentions was to put the blame of heavy taxes not only on the Turkish Governor but also on the Church.<sup>165</sup> Katia Hadjidemetriou describes the role of the Church as tax collector as follows: “The officers of the Church collected the taxes allocated to each region and delivered them to the Turks.” At the same time, she states that the Sultan with these privileges “strengthened the position of the Church”.<sup>166</sup> There seems to be an inconsistency in Hadjidemetriou's argumentation. If the collected money was “delivered” to the Turks it is difficult to understand how the position as tax collector could be a “privilege” benefiting

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<sup>160</sup> After the schism that separated the Western and Eastern churches in 1054, the Orthodox Church was usually much more lenient to Muslim rulers than to the Catholic Church and the Pope in Rome.

<sup>161</sup> Theodoulou 2005, pp. 32–34.

<sup>162</sup> Hadjidemetriou 2002, p. 273.

<sup>163</sup> Kyrris 1996, p. 263.

<sup>164</sup> According to Kyrris this happened in 1641, in 1660, or in 1669. See Kyrris 1996, p. 270, and Gazioğlu 1990, p. 98.

<sup>165</sup> Panteli 1990, p. 57.

<sup>166</sup> Hadjidemetriou 2002, p. 284.

the Church. Maybe the Orthodox leading clergy did not give away all the collected tax money after all? The Spanish traveller Don Domingo Badia-y-Leyblich, who wrote under the pseudonym Ali Bey, gives an indication of how the tax incomes were split between the higher clergy and the Turkish Ottoman rulers:

The Greeks pay to the church the tenth, first-fruits, fees of dispensations and a great many alms. The archbishop enjoys the revenues of almost all the monasteries of the island, which are very numerous. These ecclesiastical princes receive the taxes of the nation to pay the usual tribute to the Turkish government, and this gives room to a kind of monopoly among them.<sup>167</sup>

From the above quote, it may also be seen that the Orthodox clergy had several sources of income. In addition, it is also worth mentioning that the Christian clergy shared the tax-exempt status with the Muslim religious–judicial hierarchy (*ulema*).<sup>168</sup> Like the Muslim religious–judicial hierarchy, the Orthodox clergy owned or rented land, they engaged in trade and commerce, and they lent and borrowed money, according to the American historian Ronald C. Jennings.<sup>169</sup>

### **A privileged position**

Greek Cypriot historians do not conceal the fact that the Orthodox Church held a powerful economic position. However, they show little, if any, interest in examining the way in which this money was spent. Neither is there much discussion of how the Church administered its political and economical power. Looking into Turkish Cypriot history books, one finds critical remarks showing how the Church leaders took advantage of their privileged position. Ahmet C. Gazioğlu gives the following interpretation of the power of the Orthodox Church during the Ottoman rule:

The Church became a dominant institution and some archbishops even went so far as to declare it to be above the State. Consequently, priests became very influential and started to take part in politics. As monks and bishops were exempt from much of the law, the privileges granted

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<sup>167</sup> Ali Bey 1816. *Travels of Ali Bey in Morocco, Tripoli, Cyprus, Egypt, Arabia, Syria and Turkey, between the Years of 1803 and 1807*, pp. 269–271. London. Cited in Koumoulides, John 1974. *Cyprus and the War of Greek Independence 1821–1829*. London: Zeno Booksellers & Publishers, p. 31.

<sup>168</sup> *Ulema* means those who are educated in the Islamic scripts.

<sup>169</sup> Jennings 1993, p. 150.

by the Turks began to be abused. Towards the end of the Turkish rule archbishops of the Orthodox Church were as powerful as the Governors of the island, and had come to be regarded by their people as “living saints”.<sup>170</sup>

Gazioğlu clearly claims that the Church “abused” the privileges it had obtained by the Sultan in Istanbul. From an ethnocentric Turkish Cypriot point of view, this assertion is not surprising. Through the Ottoman conquest of Cyprus in 1571, the Church had obtained an important role in the society, as part of the Ottoman ruling system, and as leader of its Christian subjects. Reading Turkish Cypriot history books, one gets the impression that the Orthodox leading clergy exploited the situation instead of showing gratitude towards the Ottomans.

Like Turkish Cypriot historians, some contemporary foreign sources have a critical approach concerning the power of the church leaders. The British diplomat William Turner, attached to the British Embassy in Istanbul, visited Cyprus in 1815, just a few years ahead of the Greek uprising in 1821.

Cyprus, though nominally under the authority of a Bey appointed by the captain Pasha, is in fact governed by the Greek archbishop, and his subordinate clergy. The effects of this are seen every where throughout the island, for a Greek, as he seldom possesses power, becomes immediately intoxicated by it when given to him, and from a contemptible sycophant is changed instantaneously to a rapacious tyrant.<sup>171</sup>

It is interesting to observe that the above-mentioned term “rapacious tyrant” refers to the Orthodox clergy. In the Greek Cypriot history books, the term “tyrant” is usually reserved for members of the Turkish Ottoman ruling system.

## Summary

The Orthodox Church was granted a privileged position after 1571, something that is recognised both by Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot historians. However, the historians from the two ethnic and religious groups have quite different views on how

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<sup>170</sup> Gazioğlu 1990, p. xv.

<sup>171</sup> Wallace and Orphanides 1998, p. 186. *Bey* means commander or leader.

powerful the Orthodox Church became and which role the leading clergy played in the Cypriot society.

As has been shown, Greek Cypriot historians have a focus on the economical and political power of the Church and the leading clergy, but a critical discussion of the impact of this power is almost absent. They emphasise the top clergy's significance as religious and political leaders of the Greek Cypriots, while underplaying the role of the Church as an important part of the Ottoman ruling system. Based on the sources examined, this does not fit into the nationalist pro-Hellenic scheme with "the good guys and the bad guys". In Greek Cypriot historical perception, the Greek Cypriots are a people longing for freedom, fighting a brutal Turkish occupant.

Turkish Cypriot historians do not seem to have any problem in understanding and accepting the dual role of the Archbishop – as part of the Ottoman ruling system, and as leader of the Greek Cypriot Christian population. To them, this was simply how the Ottoman ruling system was organised, both in Cyprus and in most other provinces of the Empire. Concerning the steadily increasing power of the Orthodox top clergy, however, the Turkish Cypriot historians have a more critical approach. To take part in the ruling body was one thing, challenging the Governor's power something quite different, as will be shown in the following chapter.

## 5 Impacts of the Greek Uprising

Being a part of the Ottoman ruling system seems to have been unproblematic for the Orthodox Church leaders before the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This situation came to a dramatic change in March 1821 when the Greeks started their uprising against their Ottoman rulers on mainland Greece. The uprising quickly had a spillover effect in Cyprus the same year, resulting in the execution of the island's Archbishop, three bishops and many laymen on the grounds of conspiracy.

Greek Cypriot as well as Turkish Cypriot historians have recounted these dramatic events. They mostly agree on what actually happened in Cyprus in 1821, but they have different explanations concerning the question of guilt. They also differ in their accounts of what happened on the island in the years between 1821 and 1830 when the Greek state was established on the mainland.<sup>172</sup> In what way is the available information emphasised and interpreted in Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot history books?

### A Greek Cypriot trauma

The mass executions carried out in the summer of 1821 is one of the most traumatic and momentous events in Greek Cypriot history, and the core example of the atrocities committed by the Turkish Ottoman rulers in Cyprus. The executed Archbishop, Kyprianos, is regarded as one of the greatest Greek Cypriot martyrs.<sup>173</sup> From the Turkish Cypriot point of view the picture is totally different. While Greek Cypriot historians hold the Ottoman Governor in Cyprus responsible for what happened, their Turkish Cypriot colleagues put most of the blame on the Archbishop himself and the Orthodox Church.

As mentioned above, the uprising against the Ottoman rulers on mainland Greece in 1821 was of great importance in the course of events in Cyprus. Since this uprising also plays an important role in Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot historiography, a brief overview is required.

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<sup>172</sup> By the London Protocol of 3 February 1830, a Greek-Ottoman settlement was determined by the European powers at a conference in London. Greece was declared an independent monarchical state.

<sup>173</sup> On 9 July 1921, one hundred years after the executions, a monument was erected at the burial place of the Archbishop and his three bishops in Nicosia. This place is still important to many Greek Cypriots.

A declaration in the town of Patras on 25 March 1821 signalled the start of the Greek Revolt against the Ottomans, in the Peloponnese and in Central Greece.<sup>174</sup> The uprising found eager supporters among Greeks around the world, also among Greek Cypriots in Cyprus.

A Greek nationalist underground organisation called *Philike Hetaireia* (Friendly Society) was founded in Odessa in 1814. The aim was to overthrow the Ottoman rulers and establish an independent Greek state. Both Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot historians state that Archbishop Kyprianos of Cyprus became a member of *Philike Hetaireia*.<sup>175</sup> The Greek Cypriot historian, Costas P. Kyrris, writes that in 1818 Archbishop Kyprianos agreed with the organisation that owing to geographical considerations, the role of Cyprus in a Greek uprising should be limited to supplying funds and provisions.<sup>176</sup> Katia Hadjidemetriou states that Cyprus was “too far from Greece and very near Turkey and in the event of an uprising the Turks would immediately bring troops over and carry out massacres”.<sup>177</sup>

It was *Philike Hetaireia* that laid the organisational groundwork for the Greek Revolt. Secret meetings were held in Cyprus. After 25 March 1821, leaflets from *Philike Hetaireia* proclaiming the revolution were spread among supporters in Cyprus.

So far, Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot historians agree. The role of the Archbishop in the underground work of *Philike Hetaireia* is, however, interpreted differently by Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot historians. One example is the assessment of what role, if any, the Archbishop played in the spreading of underground leaflets among Greek Cypriots. According to the Turkish Cypriot historian, Ahmet C. Gazioğlu, a shepherd called Dimitriou confessed to the Ottoman authorities that Archbishop Kyprianos had circulated secret letters throughout Cyprus, “urging the Christian population to take up arms against the Turks; to rise in revolt and kill the Turkish population when the signal was given.”<sup>178</sup> Through the shepherd’s testimony,

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<sup>174</sup> Also known as The Greek War of Independence and The Greek Revolution.

<sup>175</sup> See Gazioğlu 1990, p. 243, and Hadjidemetriou 2002, p. 299.

<sup>176</sup> Kyrris 1996, p. 281.

<sup>177</sup> Hadjidemetriou 2002, p. 300.

<sup>178</sup> The signal was to be the discharge of gunshot in Nicosia. Gazioğlu 1990, p. 246.

Gazioğlu clearly indicates that the Archbishop was involved in the circulation of the letters.

The same herdsman is mentioned by the Greek Cypriot historian, Katia Hadjidemetriou, but her account differs from that of Gazioğlu. Like Gazioğlu, she writes that the shepherd was taken prisoner for carrying secret letters from the organisation *Philike Hetaireia*. In Hadjidemetriou's narrative, however, it is not a question of a real confession. The shepherd was forced to give false testimony against the Archbishop.<sup>179</sup> While Gazioğlu points to the guilt of the Archbishop, Hadjidemetriou does just the opposite. These two views are important to note, not at least with an eye to the coming execution of the Archbishop.

Hadjidemetriou, Panteli and Kyrris all indicate that Greek Cypriots were involved in several underground incidents in the spring of 1821, but their accounts are sketchy. Kyrris argues that there were "unrestrainable insurgents", such as an archimandrite called Theophilus Thesseus.<sup>180</sup> Kyrris does not explain what kind of activities this Greek Cypriot from the clergy was involved in, except that he was leader of a "movement".<sup>181</sup> Hadjidemetriou writes that Thesseus had brought to Cyprus some "leaflets proclaiming the revolution".<sup>182</sup>

As seen above, Greek Cypriot historians recognise that underground activities were going on in the spring of 1821, but by their accounts these activities do not seem to be of a military or violent art. On the Turkish Cypriot side, the wording is different. Ahmet C. Gazioğlu quotes a contemporary Rome newspaper, *Notizie del Giorno*, which told a story of a hidden barrel of explosive powder found in a church in Nicosia. Several Greek Cypriots were arrested, found guilty of hiding weapons, and executed.<sup>183</sup> In Gazioğlu's narrative, there is a clear indication that Greek Cypriots were planning violent actions. Once again, two different versions of the same occurrence are observed. In order to portray the Greek Cypriots as innocent victims, Greek Cypriot historians apparently try to downplay the severity of underground activities. On the Turkish Cypriot side, Ahmet

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<sup>179</sup> Hadjidemetriou 2002, p. 300.

<sup>180</sup> Kyrris 1996, p. 281. On the title of archimandrite, see footnote 14.

<sup>181</sup> Kyrris 1996, p. 281.

<sup>182</sup> Hadjidemetriou 2002, p. 300.

<sup>183</sup> Gazioğlu 1990, pp. 242–245.

C. Gazioğlu emphasises the subversive elements of such underground efforts, indicating that the Greek Cypriots involved indeed were to be blamed and prosecuted.

As described by both Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot historians, the Ottoman rulers in Cyprus reacted negatively to these underground activities. The Turkish Governor, Küçük Mehmed, suggested to the Sultan that 486 alleged Greek Cypriot religious and secular leaders should be executed, and asked for military reinforcements.<sup>184</sup> 4000 soldiers belonging to the army of the pasha of Egypt, Mehmet Ali, were dispatched from Syria during the spring of 1821.

In the beginning, Sultan Mahmud II did not comply with Governor Küçük Memhed's suggestion to execute Greek Cypriot leaders. However, he did issue an imperial decree forcing the Greek Cypriots to disarm. Katia Hadjidemetriou argues that the Sultan had no concrete evidence in order to charge the Greek Cypriots "with rebellion".<sup>185</sup> This statement is in accordance with her tendency to moderate the dimensions of the underground activities.

According to Gazioğlu, the discovery of secret weapons was one reason for the above-mentioned imperial decree on disarming Greek Cypriots. In addition, Gazioğlu points to another reason:

On 25 March 1821 the Greek uprising began on the Peloponesus, the Turkish civilian populations in Roumania and Morea being the main targets for Greek massacres. Greek insurgents did not even spare innocent Turkish Moslem women and children, and their brutality shocked the Turkish capital. Sultan Mahmud II retaliated by sending a special order to Cyprus that the Christian Greek *reayah* on the island should be disarmed.<sup>186</sup>

Gazioğlu brings a new element into the historical writing of this period – Greek massacres of the Turks. These atrocities did not happen in Cyprus, but it seems from the above quote that the Sultan decided to disarm his Christian subjects in Cyprus as a precaution so as to safeguard the situation. According to Gazioğlu, Archbishop Kyprianos did not oppose this act. The Archbishop "was aware of the fact that some

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<sup>184</sup> Hadjidemetriou 2002, p. 300. See also Koumoulides 1974, p. 53.

<sup>185</sup> Hadjidemetriou 2002, p. 300.

<sup>186</sup> Gazioğlu 1990, p. 245. The Peloponnese peninsula was sometimes called Morea. For an explanation on *reayah*, see footnote 137.

Greeks had hidden their fire arms and other prohibited weapons”.<sup>187</sup> According to Gazioğlu, Kyprianos therefore felt obliged to issue a circular to the priests dated 22 April 1821, in which he requested all Christian inhabitants to surrender their arms. In this circular, he refers to the Sultan as “our king”.

Our king simply wishes to protect himself from his enemies. It is very important that we try and keep our record clear if you want to enjoy his protection. So please open your shops again, continue with your business, and be calm without having the slightest suspicion. And please be very careful, and if any one of you still has arms which he has not yet handed in, please bring them to us and we shall then hand them over to the proper authorities...<sup>188</sup>

By referring to this circular, Gazioğlu seems to weaken his former argument on the alleged role of the Archbishop in Greek Cypriot underground activities related to the Greek uprising against the Ottomans. The circular indicates that the Archbishop apparently tried to *avoid* an open conflict with the Turkish Ottoman rulers in Cyprus.

As been observed, Sultan Mahmoud II first refused to accept any execution of Greek Cypriot leaders. But he changed his mind later. According to both Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot historians, this had to do with the arrival of a Greek sailor called Constantinos Kanaris, who came to Cyprus on 19 June 1821. According to Hadjidemetriou, Kanaris was a sea captain, and the Cypriots “supplied him with provisions” and gave him “a warm welcome”.<sup>189</sup> Hadjidemetriou does not indicate the purpose of Kanaris’ visit. Gazioğlu, on the other hand, writes that the Greek sailor was, in fact, an admiral, and that he arrived in Cyprus with a naval force consisting of seven ships.<sup>190</sup> According to Gazioğlu, “a number of young Greek Cypriots joined the Admiral’s naval force”.<sup>191</sup>

Here, yet another incident is described differently by Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot historians. In Hadjidemetriou’s account, there is no indication of a military or offensive element in the arrival of Konstantinos Kanaris. She gives the impression that he came as an ordinary sea captain, which can hardly be seen as any threat to anyone. When,

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<sup>187</sup> Gazioğlu 1990, p. 245.

<sup>188</sup> Cited in Gazioğlu 1990, p. 246.

<sup>189</sup> Hadjidemetriou 2002, p. 300.

<sup>190</sup> The Greeks who rebelled against the Ottomans established their own navy in the beginning of the 1820s.

<sup>191</sup> Gazioğlu 1990, pp. 246–247.

in Gazioğlu's narrative, Kanaris is described as an admiral with "a naval force", the arrival seems to be far from peaceful. In the tense situation Cyprus witnessed at that time, the Ottoman Turkish rulers in Cyprus would undoubtedly regard such a military presence as a provocation.

### **The executions**

Saturday 9 July 1821 is a gloomy day in Greek Cypriot history. Archbishop Kyprianos was hanged from a mulberry tree in the square outside the Governor's palace in Nicosia. The three bishops suffered the same fate.<sup>192</sup> Another 483 Greek Cypriots were to be executed on the order of the Sultan, who apparently had kept the original death list from Governor Küçük Mehmed.<sup>193</sup>

"The Turks brought their victims to the capital from the other towns as well and continued with the executions for a month," Katia Hadjidemetriou writes.<sup>194</sup> According to Costas P. Kyrris, the Ottoman rulers killed 500 people during this wave of executions. Stavros Panteli gives the following account:

The killings did not stop with prominent people: monks, priests, young and old, innocent peasants and other laymen did not escape the sword. Those able to flee the island disguised themselves and embarked for Genoa, Marseilles and elsewhere.<sup>195</sup>

In the Turkish Cypriot history books examined, there is no indication of how many Greek Cypriots were executed. Ahmet C. Gazioğlu merely refers to Governor Küçük Mehmed's list, including "the Archbishop, the three metropolitans, the abbots, and other leading Greek citizens".<sup>196</sup> Gazioğlu argues that power abuse from the Orthodox Church leaders was the reason for "[t]he tragedy of 1821" – an abuse "which the Turkish rulers could not allow to go unpunished".<sup>197</sup> Gazioğlu does not substantiate this assertion but stresses that

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<sup>192</sup> In a meeting, Governor Küçük Mehmed promised the Archbishop not to behead him. In a way, the Governor kept his word by hanging him instead. Koumoulides 1974, p. 57.

<sup>193</sup> It is not clear how many of the 486 on the Governor's death list who were actually killed. According to Georghios Theodoulou the number differs from 235 to 470. Theodoulou 2005, p. 45.

<sup>194</sup> Hadjidemetriou 2002, p. 303.

<sup>195</sup> Panteli 1990, p. 59.

<sup>196</sup> Gazioğlu 1990, p. 247.

<sup>197</sup> Gazioğlu 1990, p. 240.

this was the only incident during the 307 years of Turkish rule resulting in political executions. According to Gazioğlu, these events were “regrettable”, but they “have to be seen within the generally accepted terms of similar uprisings in the world of that time”.<sup>198</sup>

While Gazioğlu is seemingly apologetic to what happened in July 1821, his Turkish Cypriot colleague Vehbi Zeki Serter’s account of the dramatic events is quite the opposite. Serter plainly states that Archbishop Kyprianos was in the forefront of a revolt against the Ottoman state.<sup>199</sup> Through his book, *Kıbrıs Tarihi*, Turkish schoolchildren have been presented with the following short explanation of the bloody events in July 1821: “When the situation was uncovered, this Archbishop and his compatriots were captured and executed by the Cypriot Governor Küçük Mehmed.”<sup>200</sup> In this hard line version, it seems that the Ottoman Turkish authorities revealed a real plot, and that the executions for that reason were justified.

Contrary to the Turkish Cypriot historians, Greek Cypriot historians have a somewhat emotional approach to the executions. Seen through ethnocentric glasses, this is understandable. Hadjidemetriou writes, “[t]he Cypriots living far away from other Greeks” became victims of Governor Küçük Mehmed, “like lambs in a separate penfold”.<sup>201</sup> While Stavros Panteli calls the executions a “massacre”, Hadjidemetriou admits that uprisings were a risky sport at that time: “The Cypriot leaders knew very well that an uprising in Cyprus would have no other consequence than slaughter.”<sup>202</sup>

In Ahmet C. Gazioğlu’s narrative, what happened in Cyprus in 1821 is regarded as an isolated event. From Greek Cypriot historians’ point of view, however, the executions of the Archbishop and his followers fall into the general pattern of the violent and oppressive Ottoman Turkish occupier.

## **The aftermath**

The crushing of the prelates and parts of the nobility was a serious blow to the Greek Cypriots. But how lasting was the Ottoman revenge after 1821, and how weakened was

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<sup>198</sup> Gazioğlu 1990, p. 248.

<sup>199</sup> Serter, p. 70.

<sup>200</sup> Serter, p. 70.

<sup>201</sup> Hadjidemetriou 2002, p. 303.

<sup>202</sup> Panteli 1990, p. 59, and Hadjidemetriou 2002, p. 299.

the Orthodox Church? Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot historians give different answers also to these questions.

Katia Hadjidemetriou writes that after the mass executions, Governor Küçük Mehmed and the leading Turkish Ottoman officials “made huge fortunes by confiscating the property of their victims”.<sup>203</sup> Küçük Mehmed left the island in 1822, but according to Hadjidemetriou this did not stop the abuses against the Greek Cypriot population. To “defend” Cyprus, the Sultan in Istanbul decided once again to send forces under the control of the pasha of Egypt to the island.<sup>204</sup> They behaved very badly, plundering and pillaging Orthodox churches and monasteries, which caused “great destruction to the population”, writes Hadjidemetriou.<sup>205</sup> The troops stayed in Cyprus until 1829.

Stavros Panteli does not mention when such “atrocities” stopped, but quotes a British general by the name of Thomas Gordon who wrote that the whole of Cyprus “was converted into a theatre of rapine and bloodshed”. Unfortunately, Panteli does not indicate which years Gordon is referring to. He only states that the book was written in 1832.<sup>206</sup> The Greek Cypriot historian, Costas P. Kyrris, does not mention any Ottoman persecution of Greek Cypriots in the first years following the mass executions in 1821, nor do the Turkish Cypriot historians examined. One notable exception is the Greek historian, John Koumoulides, who gives an extensive coverage of the situation for the Greek Cypriots in Cyprus from 1822 to 1830.<sup>207</sup> According to Koumoulides, it has been estimated that at least 20,000 to 25,000 Cypriots escaped from Cyprus between 1821 and 1825 “because of their miserable living conditions”, and that the emigration “continued later on”.<sup>208</sup> Simultaneously with this mass escape, the Greeks on the mainland carried on with their War for Independence. According to Koumoulides, the majority of the escapees from Cyprus went to Greece in order to participate in the Greek uprising against the Ottomans.<sup>209</sup>

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<sup>203</sup> Hadjidemetriou 2002, p. 304.

<sup>204</sup> These were not the same forces dispatched in 1821. This time the soldiers came from Egypt.

<sup>205</sup> Hadjidemetriou 2002, p. 305.

<sup>206</sup> Panteli 1990, p. 59.

<sup>207</sup> Koumoulides 1974, pp. 66–88.

<sup>208</sup> Koumoulides 1974, p. 85. According to Koumoulides, the population in Cyprus was reduced to less than 60,000 in 1829.

<sup>209</sup> Koumoulides 1974, p. 85. At the battle of Athens (May 1827), no less than 130 Greek Cypriots were killed. See Koumoulides 1974, p. x.

Joining the Greeks in their rebellion was regarded as treason by the Ottoman rulers in Istanbul. Still, such acts do not seem to have provoked a new wave of executions in Cyprus. Instead, according to Katia Hadjidemetriou, the Ottomans changed their brutal attitude towards the Greek Cypriots due to the substantial numbers of people fleeing Cyprus to seek refuge in Greece and Europe.<sup>210</sup> Greek Cypriot skills and economic competence was important to the Ottomans, so it seems reasonable that they tried to apply countermeasures in order to avoid more people leaving the island. It is, however, rather surprising that the Ottomans did not strike harder against the volunteers going to the war in Greece.

In 1830, the Greeks on the mainland gained their independence from the Ottomans, and the Greek state was established. Hadjidemetriou writes that Greek Cypriots wanted to “link themselves to the Greek state”, but that this simply “could not happen”.<sup>211</sup> Instead, “many Cypriots” found another outlet:

They went to Greece for a period of time, acquired Greek nationality and returned to Cyprus as Greek citizens. In this way they escaped being treated by the Turks in an undignified manner as *rayahs*. Under this new status they enjoyed the protection of the French consuls. The Cypriots who had taken part in the Greek War of Independence were also granted Greek nationality.<sup>212</sup>

According to the above quote, it seems that Greek Cypriots continued to travel to Greece without any protest from the Ottoman rulers. It also seems, from what Hadjidemetriou writes, that it was quite simple for Greek Cypriots to gain Greek citizenship without any reprisals from the Ottoman Governor on the island. What seems even more surprising is that the Ottoman rulers obviously allowed Greek Cypriots who had fought for “the Greek enemy” to return to Cyprus as Greek citizens. Hadjidemetriou emphasises that the Greek citizenship made it possible to avoid the lower status as *reayah*. This, of course, implied a better social status, and not at least lower taxes.

While there is nothing in the Greek Cypriot history books indicating an Ottoman reaction to the flow of Greek Cypriots to Greece after 1830, the Turkish Cypriot

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<sup>210</sup> Hadjidemetriou 2002, p. 305.

<sup>211</sup> Hadjidemetriou 2002, p. 305.

<sup>212</sup> Hadjidemetriou 2002, p. 305.

historian, Ahmet C. Gazioğlu, writes that the situation after a while became unbearable for the Sultan in Istanbul.

It was estimated that during the Greek War of Independence some twenty to twenty-five thousand people left their native land of Cyprus, most of them returning during 1830–1 as Greek citizens, claiming the protection of Russia, France, and England, through their Consuls in Larnaca. They argued that they were no longer *rayahs* but free citizens of Greece, and therefore had to be regarded as foreign nationals who qualified for all the tax exemptions and other privileges enjoyed by foreigners.<sup>213</sup>

According to Gazioğlu, “the Turks were obliged to take effective measures to stop the abuse”. One of the most important steps the Ottomans took was to forbid mass emigration to Greece. However, Gazioğlu does not discuss whether this policy was successful or not.

### **The Orthodox Church restored**

The execution of the Archbishop and the bishops in 1821 was naturally a serious blow to the Orthodox Church in Cyprus, but a new leadership was immediately installed. Gradually, the Orthodox Church regained its former power. Churches and monasteries had been plundered and pillaged, mainly by the Egyptian soldiers of Mehmet Ali after 1822. An imperial decree from the Sultan in Istanbul, made sure that much silver and gold confiscated from the monasteries and churches was returned to the new Archbishop, Joakim.<sup>214</sup> By the end of 1829, the Sultan issued a decree by which the authorities protected the prelates of the Church. According to this decree, no one could be removed from their office unless they committed criminal offences contrary to their religion.<sup>215</sup> There is nothing in this decree indicating that the prelates could be dismissed or persecuted by opposing the Ottoman rulers.

For unknown reasons, Greek Cypriot historians are not emphasising the relatively fast recovering of the Orthodox Church in Cyprus after 1821. This recovery is important, however, being a good indicator of Ottoman pragmatism. By executing alleged riot

<sup>213</sup> Gazioğlu 1990, p. 220. Gazioğlu’s figures most probably cover the whole period from 1821 to 1829.

<sup>214</sup> Gazioğlu 1990, p. 248.

<sup>215</sup> From unpublished documents of the Archbishopric in Nicosia, cited in Theodoulou 2005, pp. 45–46.

leaders, the Ottoman Turkish rulers had shown that they could strike hard against subversive efforts. To weaken the Church permanently might have been an option, but such a reaction would have been harmful to the Ottomans, undermining the *millet* system that was the foundation of their rule.

## **Summary**

Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot historians do not differ considerably in their narratives of what happened during the dramatic events in 1821. Their approaches, perceptions and interpretations, however, are manifestly distinct. As seen in other chapters in this thesis, the Greek Cypriot historians are focused on the everlasting conflict between a so-called evil Turkish oppressor and a suppressed and subjugated Greek Cypriot people. Katia Hadjidemetriou, Costas P. Kyrris and Stavros Panteli all emphasise the brutal conduct of the Ottoman rulers against the Greek Cypriots who, in their view, were unjustly executed. Turkish Cypriot historians, however, interpret the events from the perspective of the Ottoman rulers whereby incitement to rebellion and power abuse from the leadership of the Ottoman Church had to be punished. For Ahmet C. Gazioğlu, it is important to play down the brutality of the executions of 1821, arguing that this was an isolated event in Ottoman Cyprus.

In Greek Cypriot history writing, the conflict in Ottoman Cyprus is based on religion and ethnicity. As will be discussed in the next chapter, the picture is more nuanced.

## 6 Ethnic and Religious Conflict or Class Struggle?

The events of 1821 have a broad coverage in Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot history books. There were also many other disturbances and riots during the 307 years of Ottoman rule in Cyprus, but these were on a lesser scale. Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot historians do agree that there was unrest and dissatisfaction. They also agree that tax burdens were the main reason for riots. As will be shown, there are substantial differences in their narratives and interpretations.

How serious were these riots? Who fought whom, and what kind of alliances existed? To answer these questions, it is important to examine the two historical interpretations that exist. While Greek Cypriot historians tend to generalise and are conflict-orientated, the Turkish Cypriot approach is quite the opposite. On the Greek Cypriot side, Katia Hadjidemetriou, Stavros Panteli and Costas P. Kyrris put much emphasis on describing unrest and riots. On the Turkish Cypriot side, Ahmet C. Gazioğlu treats the subject superficially, while Vehbi Zeki Serter briefly mentions some of the riots without much elaboration. In any case, this is an important aspect of understanding the different interpretations of Cypriot history.

### **Common destiny, common life**

To gain a better understanding of who were friends and who were foes under the Ottoman rule in Cyprus, it is important to look into the daily life of common people. Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot historians do not emphasise this subject in their narratives and interpretations. It is nevertheless necessary that a short overview is included here.

During the Ottoman years, there was a small upper class in Cyprus consisting of the Ottoman Governor, his administration and officers, the Orthodox Archbishop, the bishops and the interpreter (*dragoman*). As shown earlier, they were all part of the Ottoman ruling system, and thus woven into a certain common destiny.<sup>216</sup> No actual

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<sup>216</sup> See Chapter 4.

middle class existed, but a huge underclass – mostly farmers. This underclass, consisting of Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots, also shared a common destiny during most of this period. They lived under the same conditions, suffered the same exploitation and poverty, and required the same basic needs of survival.<sup>217</sup>

Many of the Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots lived side by side in mixed villages.<sup>218</sup> Concerning religion at the grass root level, there was apparently no strict barrier between Christianity and Islam in Cyprus. In the mixed villages it was common that Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots participated in each other's religious feasts. They also went to each other's holy places, and worshipped each other's saints. The British historian Charles Fraser Beckingham writes:

To many people of the eastern Mediterranean where Christianity and Islam were practised in the same or in adjacent villages, these religions did not present themselves as two mutually exclusive systems of belief, but rather as two ways of conciliating supernatural forces. The Orthodox Cypriot did not become a Muslim when he prayed at the shrine of the forty at Tymbou, nor did the Cypriot Muslim become a Christian when he sought the aid of the Holy Cross at Stavrovouni, or of St Andrew at his monastery on the extreme eastern promontory of the island. They were simply testing the efficacy of another means of getting a good harvest or curing an illness.<sup>219</sup>

The Muslim Turkish Cypriots did not always follow their own religious rules. The British diplomat, William Turner, who visited Cyprus in 1815, describes an episode where he met a Greek priest in Larnaca who told him that “the Turks here are much more mild, and less bigoted, than in other parts of Turkey, many of them in private even eating pork, and all of them being very sociable and friendly to the Christians”.<sup>220</sup>

The above quotes indicate that the Cypriot people were much less divided along religious lines than common interpretation among Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot historians might suggest. The Greek historian, Paschalis M. Kitromilides, states:

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<sup>217</sup> There is one exception. As in all the Ottoman territories, the non-Muslims in Cyprus had to pay the previously mentioned head tax (*cizye*).

<sup>218</sup> A population census conducted in 1832 recorded 198 Christian villages, 92 Muslim villages, and 172 mixed villages. In 1859 the number of mixed villages was 234. The role of nationalism will be examined in Chapter 7.

<sup>219</sup> Beckingham, C. F. ‘The Turks of Cyprus’, in *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, Vol. 87, No. 2, July–December 1957, p 173. The shrine of the forty is a Muslim sanctuary. Stavrovouni is a Christian Orthodox monastery.

<sup>220</sup> Wallace and Orphanides 1998, p. 165.

“coexistence in a traditional society was founded on a shared folk piety and common life style conditioned by the agricultural cycle of rural life”. As the most eloquent testimony, he points to the great number of mixed villages and interspersed of Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot settlements all over the island.<sup>221</sup>

In the Greek Cypriot history books examined in this thesis, there are many examples of cooperation between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots against the Ottoman rulers, especially during riots and protests. According to Stavros Panteli, there was much dissatisfaction among Christians, Muslims and other ethnic minorities, due to harsh taxes and maladministration.<sup>222</sup> “Insurrections and mass protests were therefore joint affairs,” writes Panteli who states, “peaceful co-existence and fruitful co-operation between the Greeks and Turks of Cyprus, during the long Ottoman administration, is a precise historical event, and beyond any shadow of doubt”.<sup>223</sup>

In line with Stavros Panteli, Katia Hadjidemetriou focuses on inter-ethnic unanimity during the Ottoman years:

We note that there was cooperation between the Greeks and the Turks of the island throughout the difficult state of affairs and the popular uprisings Cyprus experienced during this time.<sup>224</sup>

“[T]he difficult state of affairs” Hadjidemetriou refers to above was very largely caused by heavy tax burdens. It has been seen that the Greek Cypriot historians recognise that Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots were cooperating in order to ease these burdens, but against whom?

### **Protector or extortionist?**

As previously shown, the Ottoman era is described as a continuous conflict between the Orthodox Christians and their Turkish masters in Greek Cypriot historiography.

According to this view, the Turkish Ottoman rulers were the enemy, while the leadership

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<sup>221</sup> Kitromilides 1977, p. 37.

<sup>222</sup> They were Armenians, Maronites, Copts, and Catholics. It is difficult to estimate numbers of other Christians than the Orthodox. Ronald C. Jennings, who has studied the period from 1571 to 1640, suggests that non-Orthodox Christians and Jews probably made up ten per cent of the population in Nicosia. Greek Cypriot historians do not focus too much on these Christians. See Jennings 1993, p. 390.

<sup>223</sup> Panteli 1990, pp. 54, 66.

<sup>224</sup> Hadjidemetriou 2002, p. 293.

of the Orthodox Church is presented as benefactor and protector of the Greek Cypriot people.

Stavros Panteli emphasises the Greek Cypriot perception by stating that the Church, in fact, “was the upholder and protagonist of the continuous existence of a well-defined Greek Cypriot national community”.<sup>225</sup> Yet there is inconsistency in his narrative:

For 307 years the Cypriot masses fared badly under their new rulers. Yet for a substantial section of the upper or ruling classes (especially those who acquiesced with the new administration) and of the higher clergy there were benefits (especially after 1660...) beyond their wildest expectations.<sup>226</sup>

The above quote does not harmonise with Panteli’s own assertion that the Church was the protagonist of the Greek Cypriots. On the contrary, he underlines the cooperation between the Church and the Ottoman rulers, which gave the leading clergy certain benefits. There is every reason to believe that the granting of these benefits was at the expense of the common Cypriot people. Unfortunately, neither Panteli nor the other Greek Cypriot historians examined, are looking into this matter.

As will be remembered, the top clergy cooperated with the Turkish Ottoman rulers in collecting taxes.<sup>227</sup> One may assume that common Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots suffering from the tax burden were united, not only against the Ottoman leaders, but also against the Orthodox tax collectors. However, this latter aspect is almost absent in Greek Cypriot historiography. There is also little focus on the conflict of interest between the secular upper class and the common Greek Cypriot population. An exception is the following quote by Katia Hadjidemetriou, showing that the Turkish Ottoman rulers were not the only oppressors:

The poor villagers also suffered oppression at the hands of rich Greek landowners. They managed to evade the payment of taxes so that they might be paid by the poor instead.<sup>228</sup>

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<sup>225</sup> Panteli 1990, p. 53.

<sup>226</sup> Panteli 1990, p. 50. See also Chapter 4.

<sup>227</sup> See Chapter 4.

<sup>228</sup> Hadjidemetriou 2002, p. 322.

## Class distinctions

As seen above, there are clear indications of a class struggle in the Cypriot society during the Ottoman years. The Greek Cypriot historian, Marios Hadjianastasis, has elaborated this aspect in his Ph.D thesis:

Internal strife between Ottoman officials, higher clergymen, dragomans and high-ranking soldiers combined with the corruption and the out-of-reach location meant that the island was divided into two: the elite and the peasantry, both homogeneous socially but heterogeneous when it came to participation of religious communities.<sup>229</sup>

Hadjianastasis emphasises that the Ottoman institutions were dominated by the ruling classes, spanning “over and beyond religious communities”.<sup>230</sup> The Ottoman Governor and the Archbishop belonged to the same social group “which *strictly* defined itself as distinctively different and superior to the lower social groups in the society”.<sup>231</sup>

Hadjianastasis’ research covers the period between 1640 and 1704, although his findings seem relevant to the Ottoman era in general. The political scientist, Nadav Morag, who has studied the development of Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot national identities, writes the following:

[T]he peasantry, both Muslim and Christian, had very little in common with their respective religious and social elites and did not identify with or relate to the large landowners, Orthodox and Islamic religious hierarchies, or the ruling Ottoman oligarchy. In other words, the average Christian (Greek) peasant had much more in common with their Muslim (Turkish) counterpart than with members of their own national group belonging to higher socio-economic classes.<sup>232</sup>

Some contemporary sources confirm the assertion of class distinction, illustrating that the peasant class was suffering under Ottoman rule – Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots alike.

The British diplomat, William Turner, wrote in his report:

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<sup>229</sup> Hadjianastasis 2004, p. 15.

<sup>230</sup> Hadjianastasis 2004, p. 45.

<sup>231</sup> Hadjianastasis 2004, p. 45.

<sup>232</sup> Morag, Nadav. ‘Cyprus and the Clash of Greek and Turkish Nationalisms’, in *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, Vol. 10, 2004, pp. 588–599.

[T]he peasants of Cyprus, both Mahometans and Greeks (not a single Jew is allowed to live in the island) are so insufferably plundered that their labour is barely capable of supporting their existence...<sup>233</sup>

John Macdonald Kinnair, a captain for the East India Company who visited Cyprus in 1814, also reacted to the harsh treatment of both Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots:

The evil consequences of the Turkish system of government are no where more apparent than in Cyprus, where the governor, who is appointed yearly by the Capudan Pasha, the ex-officio proprietor of the island, has recourse to every method of extortion; so that the Turks would labour under the same grievances as the Christians, were not the latter, in addition to the demands of the government, compelled to contribute towards the support of a number of lazy and avaricious monks.<sup>234</sup>

Both Kinnair and Turner observed the social gap between the Orthodox leadership and the common people. According to Turner, the Archbishop and the bishops were enjoying their power to the full.<sup>235</sup> Kinnair describes a visit to the Episcopal palace in Larnaca in 1814, where he was received by the Archbishop “dressed in a magnificent purple robe, with a long flowing beard, and a silk cap on his head”.<sup>236</sup> The Archbishop was, according to Kinnair, “both in power and affluence” the “second personage” on the island.<sup>237</sup>

The Spanish traveller Ali Bey, too, found the Greek Cypriot bishops extremely mighty and extravagant:

In their houses and servants, the prelates display the luxury of princes. They never go out without a numerous retinue; and when they are to ascend a staircase, they are carried.<sup>238</sup>

## **Riots and rebellions**

As indicated earlier in this chapter, riots against the Ottomans play an important role in Greek Cypriot historiography – both before and after the turbulent 1820s. Katia

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<sup>233</sup> Mahometan means Muslim. Turner is wrong about the Jews, they were not denied to settle in Cyprus. Wallace and Orphanides 1998, pp. 186–187.

<sup>234</sup> Wallace and Orphanides 1998, pp. 147–148.

<sup>235</sup> Wallace and Orphanides 1998, p. 186

<sup>236</sup> Wallace and Orphanides 1998, p. 150.

<sup>237</sup> Wallace and Orphanides 1998, p. 150.

<sup>238</sup> Ali Bey 1816, pp. 269–271. Cited in Koumoulides 1974, p. 31.

Hadjidemetriou states that there were about 28 riots and rebellions between 1572 and 1668, always with a “sad outcome”.<sup>239</sup> Many of these rebellions were instigated by the remaining part of the old nobility from the former Venetian period, sometimes in cooperation with Orthodox Church leaders.<sup>240</sup> One of several efforts to overthrow the Ottoman rulers was made in 1607, when the Duke of Tuscany sent an expeditionary force to launch an attack on Famagusta. “[T]he Cypriots did nothing to help the duke’s forces,” Hadjidemetriou writes, indicating that there was no general support for a change of rule in Cyprus.

To cope with such a large number of riots, one is inclined to believe that the Ottomans were in need of an extensive military presence. Yet there were never more than 4000 Ottoman officers and soldiers deployed on the island, except during the 1820s when the Sultan dispatched reinforcements.<sup>241</sup> According to Hadjidemetriou, there was “no need for larger numbers to keep order among such a peaceful and obedient people as the Cypriots”.<sup>242</sup> This assertion does not seem to fit into a pattern of frequent riots and rebellions. Hadjidemetriou’s Greek Cypriot co-historian, Stavros Panteli, gives a possible explanation of the relatively low numbers of soldiers prior to 1680, by stating that these rebellions were minor. After 1680, however, there were mass protests of a more serious kind, according to Panteli. Some of these riots were instigated by Turkish troops who demanded better conditions, while others were tax revolts.<sup>243</sup>

In the decade after the Greek War of Independence, several uprisings are mentioned by Katia Hadjidemetriou and Stavros Panteli. In 1831, the Greek Cypriots revolted, “together with some Turks”. They “burnt down the serai and killed the Governor”.<sup>244</sup> A new riot took place in 1833, in which a Greek Cypriot by the name of Nicholas Thesseus, played an important role. Thesseus had become member of the secret Greek nationalist organisation *Philike Hetaireia* before the Greek uprising started in

<sup>239</sup> Hadjidemetriou 2002, p. 281. In the first years after the Ottoman conquest, the prevailing rebellions were political, instigated by the Venetians, Greek prelates and notables, mostly of Latin extraction.

<sup>240</sup> According to Hadjidemetriou, some of these nobles were Hellenised while others were Islamised.

<sup>241</sup> According to the sources examined, it was generally less than 4000 officers and soldiers in Cyprus during the Ottoman era. An army list of 1841–1842 indicated that the numbers had been reduced to 840. In the period 1856–1860 there were only 600 Ottoman officers and soldiers, according to the Greek Consul. See Gazioğlu 1990, p. 261.

<sup>242</sup> Hadjidemetriou 2002, p. 279.

<sup>243</sup> See Panteli 1990, pp. 54, 55.

<sup>244</sup> Hadjidemetriou 2002, p. 306. *Serai* means Palace.

1821, and had participated in the Greek War of Independence.<sup>245</sup> According to Panteli, the purpose of this riot was to achieve union (*enosis*) between Greece and Cyprus.<sup>246</sup> Hadjidemetriou, too, gives this riot a nationalist overtone, but she simultaneously states that it started as a protest against tax increases, and that many peasants “came down to Larnaca and joined the demonstrators who were about four hundred, Greeks and Turks”.<sup>247</sup> The accounts of Panteli and Hadjidemetriou are confusing. On the one hand, the riot is presented as a Greek Cypriot nationalist struggle, on the other, as a tax riot in which Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots are united.

In addition to the above-mentioned riot in 1833, there were two more uprisings the same year. The first broke out in the south-western town of Paphos and was headed by Giaur Imam, a rich Turk with a Greek mother. “He rose against the Turkish administration because of heavy taxation,” Hadjidemetriou writes.<sup>248</sup> Most of the rebels were Turkish Cypriots. The last uprising in 1833 broke out under the leadership of a monk called Ioannikios. According to Hadjidemetriou, Ioannikios “collaborated with Giaur Imam” in Paphos, and “promised freedom from the Turks”.<sup>249</sup> Where is the logic behind such a strange alliance? Being a Turk, there is no reason to believe that Giaur Imam had any interest in a Greek Cypriot fight for “freedom”. Once again, Katia Hadjidemetriou’s narrative is confusing.

In conformity with their Greek Cypriot colleagues, Turkish Cypriot historians tend to emphasise cooperation between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots during the Ottoman rule. Disagreements and riots, however, are not given much attention in Turkish Cypriot historiography. According to Vehbi Zeki Serter, there was generally no reason for popular uprisings because the Ottoman rulers behaved very well towards the local population.<sup>250</sup> Serter briefly mentions that there actually were some riots, instigated by “profit hunters” and the Orthodox Church.<sup>251</sup> The term “profit hunters” is not

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<sup>245</sup> See Chapter 5.

<sup>246</sup> Panteli 1990, p. 59. Panteli uses the term *enosis*. According to the Greek Cypriot historian Marios Hadjianastasis, this term was not used during the Ottoman period. (Explained in an e-mail to the author of this thesis on 31 October 2007.)

<sup>247</sup> Hadjidemetriou 2002, p. 307.

<sup>248</sup> Hadjidemetriou 2002, p. 309.

<sup>249</sup> Hadjidemetriou 2002, p. 310.

<sup>250</sup> Serter, p. 7. See also Chapter 1.

<sup>251</sup> Serter, p. 68.

substantiated, but Serter claims that the Orthodox Church “exploited the tolerance given by the Turks to incite the people against the state authorities”. Finally, he adds that “[t]he background for the riots becomes more clear because of some mistakes by the Turkish Administrators in Cyprus”.<sup>252</sup> According to Serter, one of these “mistakes” was that the Orthodox Church achieved too much power during the Ottoman years.<sup>253</sup> Serter argues that the population in Cyprus was not exploited by the Turkish Governor, but by the Greek Orthodox Archbishop.

Ahmet C. Gazioğlu is more or less in line with Serter when he writes, “[o]n the whole the Greek inhabitants were content with Turkish rule.” There were, however, “signs of unrest and dissatisfaction, usually resulting from economic conditions”.<sup>254</sup> Gazioğlu argues that tax burdens were the main cause for the disturbances, and he does not put any emphasis on possible ethnic or religious elements in these riots.<sup>255</sup> Like Serter, Gazioğlu downplays the disgruntlement towards the different Ottoman Governors. The comprehension of “Turkish tolerance” runs like a connecting thread throughout Gazioğlu’s presentation.<sup>256</sup> His aim is apparently not to focus on Turkish Ottoman grievances towards the Greek Cypriots but to show that there was no religious or ethnic conflict during the Ottoman era.

## Summary

As seen in previous chapters, Greek Cypriot historians usually describe the Ottoman era as an on-going conflict between the Orthodox Christians and their Turkish occupiers, while the picture turns out to be more nuanced. In this respect, this chapter is no exception.

While Katia Hadjidemetriou and Stavros Panteli recognise the powerful position of the Orthodox Church within the Ottoman administration, they seem to have a problem in accepting that this role was also to the disadvantage of the common Greek Cypriot people. As tax collectors, the Archbishop and the bishops were not only in a close

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<sup>252</sup> Serter, p. 68.

<sup>253</sup> Serter, p. 70.

<sup>254</sup> Gazioğlu 1990, p. 240.

<sup>255</sup> Gazioğlu 1990, p. 240. One exception in his presentation is the upheavals in 1821, caused by the Greek War of Independence.

<sup>256</sup> See Gazioğlu, pp. 250–269.

alliance with the Ottoman Governor, they also contributed to the exploitation of their Greek Cypriot subjects. As long as the Turkish Cypriot population also were victims of high taxes, it is not so strange that many of the riots were carried out both by Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots.

Greek Cypriot historians and Turkish Cypriot historians emphasise that Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots were cooperating in riots against the heavy tax burdens. They differ, however, when discussing who was responsible for this agony. While Turkish Cypriot historians put the blame on the tax collectors in general, the Greek Cypriot historians stress the role of the Turkish Ottoman rulers and downplay the responsibility of the leading Orthodox clergy.

As also shown in this chapter, there was a considerable social distance between the Orthodox leadership and the common Greek Cypriots. This aspect is also trivialised in Greek Cypriot historiography. Based on the sources examined, there is every reason to suggest that the conflict lines in Cyprus were not only ethnic and religious, but also had a class perspective, as seen through the many riots and rebellions on the island. In just a few riots, there was a nationalist element. The importance of nationalism will be discussed in the next chapter.

## 7 In the Shadow of the Greeks

When reading Greek Cypriot history books, one gets the impression that the Greek Cypriot people were fighting for emancipation from the very beginning of the Ottoman conquest of Cyprus. Hellenism was an important part of their ideology. The uniting factor was Greek nationalism, based on the actual and imagined common heritage between Greeks and Greek Cypriots, in Greek mythology, Orthodox belief, language and culture. For Greek Cypriots, Greece was the “Motherland”. According to the Greek Cypriot historians examined, the Orthodox Church played an important role in maintaining and transmitting this heritage and Greek values to its subjects, partly through the education system.

As shown in Chapter 6, very few of the riots in Cyprus under the Ottomans had nationalist overtones. It is therefore important to look more closely into how important Greek nationalism really was among the Greek Cypriots, and when the nationalist aspirations emerged. Besides, what kind of independence were the Greek Cypriots longing for? They had been occupied by Englishmen and Latins since late 12<sup>th</sup> century, and Cyprus had never been a single independent state.<sup>257</sup> In this regard, the Greek Cypriots were in the same situation as many people in Europe at that time.

Nationalism in Europe emerged in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, principally inspired by the French Revolution. In European history writing, nationalism has often been used as a retrospective tool. In this regard, Cyprus is no exception. Benedict Anderson writes in his book on origins of nations that in Europe, “the new nationalisms almost immediately began to imagine themselves as ‘awakening from sleep’”.<sup>258</sup> This trope is very much applicable to the Greeks and the Greek Cypriot historic tradition.<sup>259</sup> When the Greeks started their revolt against the Ottoman rulers at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Hellenism and the former greatness of the ancient Greeks were an important part of the

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<sup>257</sup> In ancient times Cyprus consisted of small city-states.

<sup>258</sup> Anderson 1994, p. 195.

<sup>259</sup> Stavros Panteli states that with the advent of the Turks, the island sunk into “a long sleep”. Panteli 1990, p. 62.

ideology. Through the underground philhellenic organisation, *Philike Hetaireia*, these notions were spread to Cyprus, but with no decisive outcome.<sup>260</sup>

Based on the fact that there never was a comprehensive countrywide rebellion against the Turkish Ottoman rulers in Cyprus, it seems doubtful that the Greek nationalist ideology established a strong foothold among the Greek Cypriot population. Most villagers had their loyalty first and foremost to their family and their religion.<sup>261</sup> Many lived in isolated villages, coping with the hardship of daily life. Besides, Cyprus was geographically far from Greece. Katia Hadjidemetriou seems almost regretful when she writes that the Greek Cypriots were living “such a long way from the centres of Hellenism”.<sup>262</sup>

While Greek Cypriot historians emphasise the ethnic relationship between the Greek Cypriots and the Greeks on the mainland, Turkish Cypriot historians underline their ethnic group’s relationship to the Turks in Anatolia and Istanbul, the capital of the Ottoman Empire. As seen in Chapter 3, the settlers who came from Anatolia constituted the majority of what was to become the Turkish Cypriot population.<sup>263</sup> These immigrants apparently settled down and became part of the local society, simply living as Turks in a province of the Ottoman Empire. Whether they were longing back to Anatolia or not, is a question neither Greek Cypriot nor Turkish Cypriot historians have looked into. In spite of bonds to the Turks in Anatolia, Ahmet C. Gazioğlu and Vehbi Zeki Serter do not indicate that there was any Turkish nationalist spirit among the Turkish Cypriots during the Ottoman era.

### **Ottoman reforms**

In the late 1830s, the Ottoman Empire was in decline, economically, politically and militarily. In an attempt to improve the situation and to stem the nationalist currents in many of the provinces, the Sultan and the Porte initiated a reform policy called *Tanzimat*

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<sup>260</sup> The Greek Cypriot historians examined are not discussing which influence the Greek nationalist concept of *megali idea* (Great Idea) had in Cyprus. The followers of this idea wanted to establish a Greek state, encompassing all ethnic Greeks and Greek territories back to ancient time.

<sup>261</sup> See Chapter 6.

<sup>262</sup> Hadjidemetriou 2002, p. 298.

<sup>263</sup> See Gazioğlu 1990, pp. 77–78.

(reorganisation). According to the sources examined, this attempted policy had little effect on the situation in Cyprus, partly due to strong opposition.

The Greek Cypriot historian, Costas P. Kyrris, writes that the administrative reforms were implemented to “appease the people”, but that they “proved mostly abortive because they failed to touch the vested interests of local magnates, particularly the Turkish ones”.<sup>264</sup> Stavros Panteli’s interpretation is that Cyprus only “benefited slightly from the reforms”.<sup>265</sup> Katia Hadjidemetriou writes that there were made serious attempts to improve the living conditions of the Cypriots, but the results were meagre.<sup>266</sup> While Kyrris emphasises that Turkish “magnates” opposed the new reforms, the Turkish Cypriot historian Ahmet C. Gazioğlu shows that opposition to the reforms was much broader:

One of the main reasons why the reforms sometimes met with only limited success was the obstructive attitude of some of the leading Greek and Turkish Cypriots towards the new system. The French Consul Fourcade reported in 1841 that the new Governor’s desire to improve the condition of the Cypriots was frustrated by leading men of the island who wanted to maintain old abuses. The prospect of reforms caused tension instead of satisfaction due to the fact that Greek and Turkish community leaders, aghas, and the Greek magnates wanted to preserve their vested interests, and were interested only in maintaining the old system.<sup>267</sup>

On this matter, the Greek Cypriot historian Katia Hadjidemetriou seems to be in line with her Turkish Cypriot colleague, writing that there was “strong reaction from the Turks of Cyprus and the Greek Cypriot leaders who saw their interests being affected”.<sup>268</sup> What she does not mention, however, is that the Greek Cypriot leaders referred to were principally the higher clergy of the Orthodox Church. As privileged collaborators with the Ottoman Muslim rulers they most probably felt challenged by some of the reforms, which included new methods of tax collection. The Church was apparently interested in keeping status quo and to stem nationalist sentiments among the Greek Cypriots, showing the Ottomans that they were capable of ruling their subjects. In 1852, in fear of fury from

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<sup>264</sup> Kyrris 1996, p. 22.

<sup>265</sup> Panteli 1990, p. 58.

<sup>266</sup> Hadjidemetriou 2002, pp. 311–313.

<sup>267</sup> Gazioğlu 1990, p. 114.

<sup>268</sup> Hadjidemetriou, 2002, p. 312

the Governor in Cyprus and the Sultan in Istanbul, Archbishop Kyrillos threatened to excommunicate anyone reading pro-Greek pamphlets which were distributed on the island.<sup>269</sup>

The political scientist Nadav Morag emphasises how the Orthodox Church leaders viewed Greek nationalist sentiments in the light of the new reforms:

Not surprisingly, most of the Church hierarchy viewed Greek nationalism as a threat because it carried with it the potential to undermine their standing with the Ottoman authorities as well as the creation of an alternate social framework and political leadership for Greek Cypriots.<sup>270</sup>

## Education

As mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, the Orthodox Church in Cyprus was transmitting Greek culture and values through education under the Ottomans. Before looking further into this aspect, a brief historical background is given.

Through the *millet* system, the Ottoman Sultan in Istanbul gave the different religious communities the responsibility for the education of their own flocks.<sup>271</sup> Cyprus was no exception. According to Katia Hadjidemetriou, Greek Cypriot schools were established by the Orthodox Church in the period between 1754 and 1821.<sup>272</sup> Archbishop Kyprianos founded the Hellenic School in Nicosia in 1812. “The national martyr Kyprianos played a significant role in Cypriot education,” Katia Hadjidemetriou writes. By referring to Kyprianos as a “national martyr”, Hadjidemetriou reminds her readers of the tragic events that brought the Archbishop’s life to an end in 1821.<sup>273</sup>

According to Hadjidemetriou, establishing schools was the main reason for the Church reaching its peak before the Greek uprising in 1821. After some years of interruption during the turbulent 1820s, the Orthodox prelates intensified their educational efforts by establishing schools, partly with funds from the bishoprics and the

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<sup>269</sup> Katsiaounis, Rolandos 1996. *Labour, Society and Politics in Cyprus during the second half of the nineteenth Century*. Nicosia: Cyprus Research Centre, pp. 20–21.

<sup>270</sup> Morag, p. 604.

<sup>271</sup> For an explanation of the *millet* system, see footnote 41.

<sup>272</sup> Hadjidemetriou 2002, p. 325.

<sup>273</sup> See Chapter 5.

monasteries. Several of the teachers were priests.<sup>274</sup> The schools and the teachers' salaries were financed by taxes imposed by the Church. This was after the Enlightenment and in a period when nationalism was on the rise in Europe. According to Hadjidemetriou, Greek Cypriot education "took on a national character", especially after the establishment of the Greek state in 1830. "The main aims of the curriculum centred around the Greek identity of the population. This process started in towns and gradually spread to the countryside."<sup>275</sup>

The students were educated in the Orthodox religion, Greek language and history. This obviously strengthened their Greek identity. But how could the Turkish Ottoman rulers, in the aftermath of the Greek War of Independence, accept such a Greek-inspired curriculum of the schools ran by the Orthodox Church in Cyprus? Were they not afraid of a rub-off effect? The sources examined give no answer to these questions. One possible explanation might be that the teachers were just teachers, and not propagandists and agitators. As shown earlier in this thesis, the Church leaders were closely linked to the Turkish Ottoman rulers. Subsequently, there is no reason to believe that the Turkish Ottoman rulers in Cyprus suspected the leading clergy of fomenting nationalism. Nor is there any reason to suppose that the leading Orthodox clergy wanted to challenge the Ottomans. On the contrary, Nadav Morag argues that through education the Orthodox Church in fact played a major role in weakening nationalist tendencies after the Greek independence:

The Orthodox Church was so intrinsically tied to the Ottoman system that it was viewed by most Greeks as an accessory to Ottoman officialdom. By virtue of its control over whatever education was offered most Greek Cypriots, the Church was also able to socialize generations of Greek Cypriot children to accept the leadership of the Church and acquiesce in the existence of a stratified society in which the Greeks played a role within the Ottoman Empire rather than against it.<sup>276</sup>

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<sup>274</sup> Hadjidemetriou 2002, p. 327.

<sup>275</sup> Hadjidemetriou 2002, p. 327.

<sup>276</sup> Morag, p. 604.

## **Summary**

Turkish Cypriot nationalism did not exist during the Ottoman years in Cyprus from 1571 to 1878. Since the Turkish Cypriots belonged to the same ethnic and religious group as the rulers of Cyprus, there was no need for a struggle for “independence”. Hence, this is not an important issue in Turkish Cypriot historiography.

The situation was quite different among the Greek Cypriots, who belonged to another ethnic and religious group than the Turkish Ottoman rulers. Greek Cypriot historians emphasise the importance of Greek nationalism. As shown in this chapter and earlier chapters, the Greek War of Independence on mainland Greece had an impact on Cyprus. The sources examined do not, however, show that nationalism played such an important role as indicated by Greek Cypriot historians. There is also reason to doubt the Greek Cypriot assertions about a major role played by the Orthodox Church in fomenting nationalism in Cyprus. In this respect, the Church seems to have been a brake block and not an accelerator.

In this chapter and earlier chapters, the Greek Cypriot historical perception of a Greek Cypriot people generally suffering because of Ottoman misrule and oppression has been witnessed. The next chapter examines how Greek Cypriot historians downplay the effect of natural catastrophes as causes for agony and despair in Cyprus.

## 8 Mother Nature or “the Terrible Turk”?

Greek Cypriot historians emphasise the sufferings of the Cypriot Orthodox population during the 307 years of Ottoman rule. According to Greek Cypriot perceptions, most of the human misery was attached to the Ottoman misrule. Were the Ottoman rulers the main culprits? In this chapter it will be shown that the situation was much more complicated.

Katia Hadjidemetriou gives the following assertion in the introduction part of the chapter dealing with the Ottoman rule in Cyprus. This example illustrates the negative, one-dimensional attitude in Greek Cypriot history writing.

In contrast to other empires, the Ottoman Empire proved to be inefficient and corrupt in the administration of conquered countries. This is the only reason why Chios and Cyprus, two islands which were rich and productive until the time of their conquest, were reduced to causing a deficit in the imperial treasury.<sup>277</sup>

Hadjidemetriou does not explain why she assigns the Ottoman Empire an exclusive role as “inefficient and corrupt”. Further, she gives only one single reason for a considerable drop in productivity during the Ottomans; the misrule of the Ottomans.

Cypriot history from the Ottoman years tells about depopulation, dramatic reduction in living standards and economic decline. But what were the actual reasons for all this misfortune? The British archaeologist Michael Given writes that general causes to depopulation “includes a series of devastating plagues, locust attacks, droughts, and earthquakes, as well as emigration partly due to these factors and partly because of increasing and sometimes arbitrary taxation”.<sup>278</sup>

In reality, Cyprus was haunted in periods by “Acts of God”.<sup>279</sup> Interestingly, this is recognised both by Greek Cypriot historians and by more “neutral” sources, as the following will show.

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<sup>277</sup> Hadjidemetriou 2002, p. 269. Chios is today a Greek island.

<sup>278</sup> Given, Michael. ‘Agriculture, settlement and landscape in Ottoman Cyprus.’ *Levant* 32. Glasgow ePrints Service 2000, p.5. Arbitrary taxation has been dealt with in former chapters.

<sup>279</sup> Natural disasters, famine and crop failure were common under Venetian rule in Cyprus as well, causing poverty and depopulation.

## Plagues

From the mid 13<sup>th</sup> century to the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, plagues struck at Cyprus with disastrous regularity.<sup>280</sup> A pestilence in 1624 was so severe that the number of villages and hamlets was reduced by one third.<sup>281</sup> A serious plague occurred in 1641, with so much misery that many people emigrated to Crete, Morea and Corfu.<sup>282</sup> Another of the most severe plagues was in 1692, when some two-thirds of the population shall have perished.<sup>283</sup> The French Consul in Aleppo from 1623 to 1625 stated, “Cyprus is completely abandoned on account of the plague, which has made the island deserted.”<sup>284</sup> According to Giovanni Mariti, an official of the Imperial and Tuscan consulates who lived on the island at that time, 22,000 people died in a plague in 1760.<sup>285</sup>

## Locusts

Locusts were a considerable problem, too. The swarms particularly ravaged the island between 1610 and 1628.<sup>286</sup> According to Katia Hadjidemetriou, one of the worst destructions took place in 1628. In 1633, there was a terrible drought. Hadjidemetriou writes that the Sultan in Istanbul ordered the Governor to ask the monks of a monastery called Kykko to help. The monks took “the revered icon of the Holy Virgin all over the island in order to put an end to the drought”.<sup>287</sup> The devastation by locusts went on to the final decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

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<sup>280</sup> Jennings 1993, p. 392.

<sup>281</sup> Panteli 1990, p. 54.

<sup>282</sup> Jennings 1993, p. 187. Morea was the former name of the Peloponnese peninsula.

<sup>283</sup> Luke, Sir Harry 1989. *Cyprus under the Turks, 1571–1578*. London: C. Hurst & Company, p. 36.

<sup>284</sup> Cited in Jennings 1993, p. 187. The Consul’s sphere also included Cyprus.

<sup>285</sup> Mariti, Abbe Giovanni 1971. Translated by Claude D. Cobham. *Travels in the Island of Cyprus*. (Printed in Italian in 1769.) London: Zeno Booksellers and Publishers, p. 141.

<sup>286</sup> Jennings 1993, p. 179.

<sup>287</sup> Hadjidemetriou 2002, p. 283. This is the famous icon of Virgin Mary with the child Jesus in her arms, said to be the work of St. Luke. It is interesting to observe that the Ottoman Sultan asked for assistance from the Christian monks to perform Christian rituals.

## **Famine, earthquakes and diseases**

A famine in 1757–1758, the consequence of the drought and the locusts, meant that an unsubstantiated number of the island's population fled to Syria and Asia Minor. In 1768, another famine hit Cyprus.<sup>288</sup> Two earthquakes in 1741 and 1756 also brought great material destruction.

In addition, malaria was a constant threat. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century this disease largely affected Cyprus, and the port town of Famagusta was virtually abandoned.<sup>289</sup> Occasionally, diseases damaged the wine and silkworm production, seriously affecting the economic situation.

These natural disasters, of course, took their toll on the Cypriot population. After a famine and plague in 1640, the Sultan in Istanbul despatched a superintendent to carry out a census on the island. He found that the entire population was down to 25,000, including old men and children.<sup>290</sup>

## **All were victims**

Both Hadjidemetriou and Panteli mention many of the catastrophes that occurred to the Cypriot people during the Ottoman years. Nonetheless, their main focus remains on the Ottoman oppression. Due to their ethnocentric presentation, one gets the overall impression that the “Turks” were the root of all evil, and that even these “Acts of God” mainly were the fault of the Ottomans. There is also a lack of analysis into the many natural disasters. How seriously did they affect society? Could they have been prevented, or led to lesser consequences under another ruler than the Ottoman Sultan? Most surely,

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<sup>288</sup> Panteli 1990, p. 57.

<sup>289</sup> Braudel, Fernand 1976. *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, cited in Jennings 1993, pp. 188–189.

<sup>290</sup> Hadjidemetriou 2002, p. 283. In 1572, it is estimated that the non-Muslim population in Cyprus was between 70,000 and 80,000. These figures are based on the first Ottoman census, carried out just after the conquest in 1572. Referring to Ottoman tax registers, Ronald C. Jennings estimates the non-Muslim population in 1607 to be between 93,000 and 110,000. In 1624, these figures had fallen to between 67,500 and 79,000. Concerning the population figures in 1640, Jennings reckons that these figures refer to the tax paying population and not just non-Muslims. He estimates that 17,000 of 25,000 taxpayers were Christians, and that 8000 were Muslims. See Jennings 1993, pp. 192, 198.

they would have happened anyway. The Cypriot people had probably been more prepared to cope with such situations had the economical conditions been better and the tax burden easier to cope with. Either way, even without Ottoman misdeeds, it seems that the Cypriots would have suffered tremendously.

And *who* suffered from these disasters? Even if Greek Cypriot historians do not state that the Greek Cypriots were the only victims, the narratives are written in an ethnocentric form, giving the impression that they were the real sufferers. But natural catastrophes do not tend to differentiate between ethnic or religious groups, rich or poor, oppressors or the oppressed. There is every reason to believe that all people living in Cyprus were victims, something that is far from clear in the Greek Cypriot narratives.

An address from the Orthodox population to their sovereign, Sultan Abdul Majid, in 1859 gives an indication of what problems they had to cope with. It was written in a refined language, but with serious wording. The address approached the Sultan directly by stating, "...our country, most merciful King, has painful wounds". The locusts were the "principal and greatest evil". The second biggest misfortune was "the wine disease and silkworm disease". The third most important grievance was the "arrears of taxes".<sup>291</sup>

As we see, the two greatest complaints from the petitioners had to do with natural causes. The third most important grievance, high taxes, was most probably directed towards both the Governor in Cyprus and the leading Orthodox clergy on the island.<sup>292</sup>

### **Battle against locusts**

How do the Turkish Cypriot historians cover all the natural catastrophes? Vehbi Zeki Serter does not mention them at all. Ahmet C. Gazioğlu gives little attention to such tragedies, but stresses the Ottoman efforts for eradication of locusts, highlighting the arrival on the island in 1862 of a Governor by the name of Ziyas. The new Governor seems to have given the struggle against the locusts high priority, and these efforts were followed up by Ziyas' successors, Mehmet Halet Bey and Mehmet Said Pasha. According

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<sup>291</sup> Cited in Luke 1989, pp. 206–207.

<sup>292</sup> See Chapter 4 on taxes.

to Gazioğlu, Mehmet Said Pasha managed to eliminate the locust problem totally, with the help of a rich landlord from Larnaca by the name of Richard Mattei.<sup>293</sup>

But what priority did the Ottoman Governors give to the struggle against locusts before the 1860s? Gazioğlu is vague on this point, and the reason is probably that the efforts were not too impressive. The picture of an energetic Governor taking care of his subjects fits well with Turkish Cypriot historical perceptions. Failings and inefficiencies do not. We must remember that the Ottoman years were mainly to the benefit of all the inhabitants of Cyprus in Turkish Cypriot historiography.

On the Greek Cypriot side, it is interesting to see that especially Mehmet Said Pasha is given a lot of credit for the extermination of the locusts. Katia Hadjidemetriou regards him to be “the best of all Governors who came to Cyprus”.<sup>294</sup> Hadjidemetriou has also great regard for Abdul Aziz, the Sultan who ruled in Istanbul at that time:

In 1870 there began in Cyprus a period of drought which lasted for four years. The crops that survived the drought were destroyed by the locusts. The Sultan showed understanding and did not press for the payment of taxes. He even gave the farmers the seed they needed in order to sow their fields the following year.<sup>295</sup>

In Greek Cypriot historiography, this is a rare example of acknowledging a Sultan’s care for his subjects, Christians as well as Muslims. This is also a tiny part of Cypriot history where Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot historians have a common view.

## Summary

As shown in earlier chapters, Greek Cypriot historiography during the 307 years under Ottoman rule is characterised as a dark and oppressive period. The Orthodox Christians were almost continually suffering under “the Turkish yoke”; the blame for most of the Greek Cypriot agony is put on the Ottoman occupiers.

This chapter is not an exception. As we have seen, “mother nature” was often more cruel than the Ottoman rulers. In periods, Cyprus was haunted by plague, famine, locust swarms and infectious diseases. When Greek Cypriot historians blame “the Turks”

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<sup>293</sup> Gazioğlu 1990, p. 134.

<sup>294</sup> Hadjidemetriou 2002, p. 318

<sup>295</sup> Hadjidemetriou 2002, p. 318

for periodical decreases in population, the reason may well be “Acts of God” instead. Natural disasters and infectious diseases harmed everyone, irrespective of religion or ethnic belonging.

As shown, Turkish Cypriot historians put very little emphasis on the above subject. Why? One reason seems obvious; failings and inefficiency do not fit into the Turkish Cypriot perception, where the Ottoman rule was to the benefit of all Cypriots, Greek Cypriots as well as Turkish Cypriots, Christians as well as Muslims. Contrary to the Greek Cypriot historians, the Turkish Cypriot historians do not need a scapegoat. There is no alien occupier to blame since Cyprus was governed from the Turkish Cypriots’ “Motherland”.

## Conclusion

Two peoples – divided along religious and ethnic lines, but united through historical events and common life – have two different versions of the history of Cyprus. No common Cypriot historiography exists.

As shown in this thesis, Greek Cypriot historians characterise the Ottoman era in Cyprus from 1571 to 1878 as 307 “dark years”. For Turkish Cypriot historians, however, this was a period of stable Ottoman rule when harmony mostly prevailed and the population usually lived in peace, irrespective of ethnic belonging or religious faith.

The research questions in this thesis have been classified into two categories: presentation and construction. Concerning presentation, the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot historians’ description and interpretation of events and issues during the Ottoman era have been examined. Regarding construction, it has been important to examine not only what the historians on both sides actually write, but also what they are downplaying and omitting.

In their presentation, Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot historians write from their own ethnic perspective, emphasising their own ethnic groups. This ethnocentric view is manifest in the Greek Cypriot presentation more so than in the Turkish Cypriot one. The reason is obvious: the Greek Cypriots were living in Cyprus as an ethnic and religious majority, but were ruled by an Ottoman regime regarded as an occupying power. For the Turkish Cypriot historians this is not a question of an occupation. To them, the Ottoman soldiers, who stayed in Cyprus after the conquest in 1571, and the Turkish settlers arriving from Anatolia to Cyprus in the following years, are considered to be the forefathers of the now living Turkish Cypriots.

The role of the Orthodox Church in Cyprus is important in Greek Cypriot as well as Turkish Cypriot history writing. As shown in this thesis, the leading clergy of the Orthodox Church on the island had a dual role during the Ottoman period – on the one hand as part of the Ottoman ruling system, and on the other, as political and religious leaders of their flock in accordance with the *millet* system. This dual role is presented completely different in the history books examined. The Greek Cypriot historians

emphasise that the Orthodox Church first and foremost was the spearhead in the struggle against the Ottoman rulers, and the protector and benefactor of the Greek Cypriot people. The Turkish Cypriot historians underline the significance of the leading Orthodox clergy as participants of the ruling system, except in 1821 when the Archbishop and his bishops together with other prominent Greek Cypriots were accused of, and executed for, treason.

The Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot historians examined in this study also present the Turkish Ottoman masters quite differently. To the Greek Cypriots, they are the adversaries who continuously oppressed the Greek Cypriot people; for Turkish Cypriot historians, they are simply the rulers of Cyprus, taking orders from the Sultan and the Porte in Istanbul, and mostly behaving well towards their subjects.

In constructing their different versions, the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot historians make use of several mechanisms of selection. Through their distinct choices and approaches they have created their respective picture of the institutions, rulers and people in Cyprus during the Ottoman years. For example, while Turkish Cypriot historians emphasise that the Ottoman conquest in 1571 in many ways led to a considerable improvement after Venetian misrule, Greek Cypriot historians argue that the Ottomans led Cyprus into a continuous decline. The conquest creates the basis for the division of Cypriot history in two different versions, one of the victors, the other of the victims. While Turkish Cypriot historians stress the tolerant side of the Ottoman ruling system, their Greek Cypriot co-historians draw a picture of intolerance. While positive elements of the administration in Cyprus are stressed in Turkish Cypriot history books, maladministration is a key word in the Greek Cypriot texts. Where Turkish Cypriots shape a picture of an egalitarian Cypriot community, Greek Cypriot historians put emphasis on discrimination. By emphasising the brutal and suppressive behaviour of the Ottoman rulers, Greek Cypriot historians are also portraying an enemy who fits well into the actual political situation in Cyprus, where Turkish soldiers occupy the northern part of the island.

The Ottoman conquest of Cyprus, the execution of the leading Orthodox clergy in 1821, and numerous riots and rebellions are predominant factors in Greek Cypriot history writing. The brutality of the Ottomans is emphasised, while the Greek Cypriots appear as subjugated and indiscriminately taxed.

When constructing the role of the Orthodox Church, the Greek Cypriot historians draw a picture of an institution with nationalistic aspirations, opposing the Turkish Ottoman rulers. The leading clergies' position within the Ottoman ruling system is moderated. The Turkish Cypriot historians shape a quite distinct picture of the Orthodox Church. As an institution, it was the fundament of the Orthodox Greek Cypriot *millet*. As part of the Ottoman ruling system, the leading clergy are mainly put into a political, and not an ethnocentric, context.

In constructing their picture of the Ottoman rulers in Cyprus, Greek Cypriot historians have an ethnocentric approach: a Turkish Muslim occupant versus a Greek Cypriot Christian population. The portrait of the occupant shows all traits of evil, and per definition the ruling system is oppressive.

Moving to the Turkish Cypriot historians examined, the historical foundation is based on an Ottoman ruling system, mainly characterised by peace and stability. Riots and rebellions play a less conspicuous role in Turkish Cypriot history writing than in the Greek Cypriot texts. According to the Turkish Cypriot perception, the executions in 1821 were an isolated event in Ottoman Cyprus.

Both Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot historians downplay important events and aspects when writing their different histories of Cyprus. Neither human suffering nor the number of fatalities during and after the conquest of Cyprus in 1571, is a matter of concern to the Turkish Cypriot historians. Nor do they focus on the scale of the executions in 1821. One reason seems obvious: such attention does not harmonise with the comprehension of a just and well-intentioned Ottoman ruler.

Greek Cypriot history books tend to downplay effects of the Ottoman rule that most probably did benefit Greek Cypriots. The reinstatement of the Orthodox Church by the Ottomans after the conquest of Cyprus is recognised by the Greek Cypriot historians. However, an analysis of the impact of this event in regard to the Greek Cypriots' well-being is lacking. If the Ottoman invasion in 1571 had not occurred, Cyprus would most probably have continued to be a Catholic-dominated island, with an increasingly weakened Orthodox Church. A discussion of this latter aspect is more or less absent in Greek Cypriot historiography.

Greek Cypriot historians recognize that tax collecting was an important task for the Orthodox leading clergy. When they are describing subsequent riots as a result of harsh tax burdens, however, they never put the blame on the Orthodox Church, but on the Ottoman rulers. The reason is most probably because this does not fit into the general picture of a united Greek Cypriot people, struggling against their Turkish Ottoman oppressors. As shown in the above, foreign contemporary sources throw a broader light on the relations between the Turkish Ottoman rulers and the leaders of the Orthodox Church.

In this thesis, contemporary and present sources have been useful tools when filling in voids in Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot historiography. Such sources also elucidate certain discrepancies in the two perceptions of the history of Cyprus. When Greek Cypriot historians present the 300 years under Ottoman rule as a continuous struggle between the Orthodox Greek Cypriots and the Turkish Muslim Ottoman rulers, other researchers, such as the Greek Cypriot historian Marios Hadjianastasis, emphasise the class distinction on the island during Ottoman rule. This thesis has thus shown that the conflicts in general – especially concerning taxes – did not follow ethnic and religious lines, but that this was partly a struggle between social classes: the Turkish Ottoman rulers and the Orthodox Church on the one side, and on the other, common people – Turkish Cypriots as well as Greek Cypriots. This cross-ethnic and cross-religious cooperation also weakens the nationalist aspect of Greek Cypriot history writing. Nationalism played a role in the dramatic period around 1821, but there was never a nationalist wave which spread throughout the entire Greek Cypriot community in Cyprus. The beneficial role obtained by the Orthodox Church, not least as tax collectors, also weakens the perception of the Church as a nationalist spearhead. As shown in Chapter 7, the Church was important in promoting Hellenism and the Greek heritage, but not to an extent that would have provoked the Turkish Ottoman rulers, thereby jeopardising the powerful position of the leading clergy.

Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot historians draw on many of the same primary sources, but their interpretations and perceptions are often distinct. Their accounts of the Ottoman conquest from 1570 to 1571 and the executions in 1821 are very largely concurrent, but there are divergences regarding reasons and consequences. Nevertheless,

it is important to underline that both the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot historians examined have done a proper research, based on available source material. There are few discrepancies concerning historical facts. Their presentation is mostly far from propagandist. Some of the accounts are written in a sober and straightforward way; others show clear signs of ethnocentric skewness. In any case; even if there are omissions, there are no signs of deliberate falsification of history, neither by the Greek Cypriot nor Turkish Cypriot historians.

For nearly an entire generation, Cyprus has been divided, geographically, politically, ethnically and religiously. In their historical presentations, the Greek Cypriot and the Turkish Cypriot historians pass on attitudes, perceptions and interpretations to a new generation of Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots, thereby maintaining the barrier between the two ethnic and religious groups.

In his book *The Making of Modern Cyprus*, the Greek Cypriot historian, Stavros Panteli, draws a line from the Ottoman conquest to the political situation today when he writes; “[t]he Turks proceeded to institute a policy which directly created the so-called ‘Cyprus Problem’.” Such assertions give little room for dialogue.

As written in the introduction to this thesis, the Turkish Cypriot historian, Ahmet C. Gazioğlu, states that his intention with the book *The Turks in Cyprus* is “as far as possible” to present the “true history” of the island. Unfortunately, Gazioğlu does not quite meet with the expectations. But he is apparently aware of what problems the two different history views on Cyprus represent, when writing:

My conviction is that unless we, The Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots, learn our common history with a correct perspective and stop listening to falsehoods intended to foster animosity between our two peoples, we shall never be able to understand and respect each other.<sup>296</sup>

To narrow the gap between the two “histories of Cyprus” is of utmost importance. A common historical understanding between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots will undoubtedly make an important contribution to a vitalising of the deadlocked peace process on the island. Historians on the Greek Cypriot as well as the Turkish Cypriot

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<sup>296</sup> Gazioğlu 1990, p. xvi.

side, have a big challenge and responsibility, not only as academics, but also as future contributors to peace.

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