

CYPRUS; HISTORY OF THE CONFLICT

Cyprus, an island in the Eastern Mediterranean, at the cross-roads of three

continents - Europe, Asia and Africa - has one of the oldest histories of the

world, dating back 9000 years.

Its strategic position, its wealth in forests and mineral deposits, as well as its

skilled craftsmen, made it the prized possession of the powers of the day.

Cultural influences came from all directions - all major regional civilisations left

their mark on the island, contributing to the development of a very rich and

diverse cultural heritage.

ANCIENT TIMES

The Stone Age

The first signs of human life on the island date back to c. 8500 BC during the

Palaeolithic period. Evidence of human activity was found in cave dwellings near

Liopetri, though it is not known whether they were just hunting parties passing

through or permanent settlers.

The first undisputed settlements are believed to have been established towards

the end of the 8th millennium BC. Vestiges of such early communities are found

all over the island, such as at Khirokitia, Kalavassos-Tenta, Apostolos Andreas-

Kastros, Phrenaros, Petra tou Limniti.

Neolithic Cypriots built circular houses

with small undressed stones for the

lower structures and sun-dried

mudbricks and clay for the middle and superstructure. The Khirokitia neolithic settlement in Larnaca district stands out as a striking example of prehistoric architecture.

Khirokitia

The Neolithic settlement of

The Bronze/ Copper Age

have even

Large copper deposits brought fame and wealth to the island and may

Cyprus had

given it its name. It has been documented that during the bronze age

intense commercial relations with the main commercial and cultural centres of that

time. During this period metallurgy and pottery flourished while close relations

developed, particularly with Crete, which are also expressed in the

Cypro-Minoan script which appeared in Cyprus around 1500 BC.

Of special significance for the future of Cyprus was its colonisation around 1200

BC by Mycenaean and Achaean Greeks, a migration process that lasted for

more than a century. They brought with them to the island the Hellenic language,

culture and religion. Legend has it that the first Hellenes who settled in Cyprus

were heroes of the Trojan war. The arrival of the Achaeans greatly influenced

town planning, architecture, and pottery. Since then Cyprus has remained

predominantly Greek in culture, language and population despite influences

resulting from successive occupations.

Iron Age

More and more people from the Greek world came to live in Cyprus. They built

kingdoms in city along the lines of the Greek ones. There were about eleven city

Kyrenia, all: Kourion, Paphos, Soloi, Marion, Lapithos, Salamis, Kitium,

Amathus, and Idalion.

mostly Although Cyprus was conquered by other peoples, these city kingdoms

conquered in ruled themselves, paying taxes to their conquerors. The island was

BC). succession by the Assyrians, the Egyptians and the Persians (800-332

The Classical Period

struggle For more than a century, Cyprus was caught in the middle of the power

dominant between Greece and Persia. In the 6th century BC Persia became the

autonomy, power and the kings of Cyprus, while being allowed to retain their

military forces at were obliged to pay tribute to the Persian King and place their

his disposal. Persia's domination, however, was not maintained easily and there

were several attempts to overthrow the Persian yoke, the most significant being

the Ionian revolt and an attempt by King Evagoras I of Salamis to unite all of

Cyprus' city-kingdoms under him. attempts failed.

The Hellenistic Period

Cyprus stayed in Persian hands until Alexander the Great defeated the Persian

Empire when the island became part of his huge Empire. Upon Alexander's death

Cyprus fell to one of his generals, Ptolemy I, the ruler of Egypt. From then on

Cyprus, under the Ptolemies, was an integral part of the Hellenistic World until its

integration with the Roman Empire in 30 BC.

During this time Cyprus experienced significant cultural activity and close contacts

with the city kingdoms of the Hellenic World. Cypriot athletes took part in the

Olympic and Panathenian Games and the names of Cypriot sculptors are referred

to at Delphi and Lemnos. The worship of Aphrodite was known throughout the

region and the Temple of Goddess of Love and Beauty at Palaepaphos gathered

pilgrims from all over the ancient world. The city-kingdoms of Salamis, Amathus,

Paphos and others which were established at the time of Greek colonisation

flourished during this period and produced magnificent pieces of architecture and

sculpture which survive till our days.

The Roman Period

As the Ptolemaic empire declined, Cyprus came under Roman domination and

was a colony in 58 BC. Romans also left their legacy on the island in the form of

Roman amphitheatres, public baths, mosaics and other architectural edifices. One

of the most significant events during this period was the visit to the island of the

Apostles Paul and Barnabas, the latter being considered the founder of the

Autocephalous Greek Orthodox Church of Cyprus. The Apostles travelled all

across the island to Paphos where they converted the Roman governor to

Christianity and so Cyprus became the first country to be ruled by a Christian.

THE MIDDLE AGES

The Byzantine Period

The Christian civilisation was consolidated in

the island during the Byzantine Period

(330-1191 AD) at which time the island was

an important spiritual focus. Wonderful

churches and magnificent monasteries

containing fine wall paintings and mosaics

survive to our times and are testimony to the

importance of Cyprus in the East Roman

Empire.

St Bartholomew, mosaic from the

Kanakaria Church. 6th century AD

With the emergence of Islam in the 6th and 7th centuries AD, Cyprus became an

object dispute between Christendom and Islam. The Arabs, who with their

repeated incursions, spread death and destruction in coastal settlements, were

finally pushed away in 965 AD by Emperor Nicephorus Phocas and restored

Cyprus as a province of the Byzantine Empire.

history of The western Crusaders influenced a great deal the development of the

Third Cyprus. It was Richard the Lionheart, King of England, who during the

1191. Richard Crusade captured the island defeating its ruler, Isaac Comnenos in

not able to tried to sell Cyprus to the Knights Templars, who nevertheless, were

to the English resist the revolt of the people of Cyprus. Thus the island went back

Guy de King, who sold it again this time to the Frankish King of Jerusalem,

Lusignan.

The Frankish Period

time life on the The rule of the Franks in Cyprus lasted until 1489 and during that

oppression of island was organised on the basis of the feudal model of the West,

period left the indigenous population being its main characteristic. The Lusignan

mountain numerous monuments on the island - mainly Gothic churches and

fortifications.

During the 14th century Cyprus is an important point of contact between East and

West. Within a network of contradictions, a complex cultural creation took shape

both in the letters and in the arts with the pronounced seal of a variety of

influences.

The end of the Latin period in Cyprus came with the Venetian rule from 1489 to

1571. The Venetians held the island for its strategic position in the area of the

Eastern Mediterranean on the way to the vital Silk Route to China. Venice,

wished in this way to underline its prominence among the western powers of the

time and attempted to keep the road to the East open despite the growing menace

of the Ottomans. The Venetians also left their mark on the island's

cultural

heritage with their fortifications around Nicosia and Famagusta. These, built with

the intention of fending off the Turks, proved inadequate and Cyprus fell to the

Turks in 1571, becoming part of the Ottoman Empire.

MODERN TIMES

The Turkish Period

Though Cyprus on the whole became less prosperous under Ottoman rule, there

were certain immediate benefits. Serfdom was abolished and the rights of the

Greek Orthodox Church, which had been suppressed since the Franks, were

restored. However, there was very harsh rule and harsh taxation which

impoverished the people, and there were continual revolts. In 1821 an attempt by

Cypriots to support the Greeks in their revolt against Ottoman rule was brutally

including crushed, with the Archbishop being publicly hanged and many others,

three bishops, put to death.

of Berlin, Cyprus remained under Ottoman rule until 1878 when, with the Treaty

with the Russians the Sultan in his effort to secure British support in his conflict

Turkey in leased Cyprus to Great Britain. Then in 1914, following the entry of

Cyprus World War I on the side of Germany, the British government annexed

surrendered and turned it into a Crown colony in 1925. In the meantime Turkey

Greece in 1923. all claim on Cyprus with the Lausanne Treaty it concluded with

The British Period

adoption by the British rule left its mark on the island's complex culture with the

legacy of people Cyprus of some of the customs of their colonial masters, the

some British colonial buildings, and, most importantly, the tradition of the British

administration especially in the civil service.

Cypriots fought alongside the allies against fascism and nazism during World War

II. The British, however, refused to keep their word and offer the island the right

of self determination at the end of the war. There followed the Enosis referendum

of 1950, when 96% of Greek Cypriots voted for Enosis, Union with Greece. In

April 1955 the EOKA Liberation Struggle, against the colonial rulers, resulted in

the granting of independence to the island on the basis of the Zurich and London

Agreements of February 1959.

Independence and invasion

The independent Republic of Cyprus came into being in August 1960. Its first

President was Archbishop Makarios. Over the first three years of independence

relations between the Greek and Turkish Cypriots deteriorated, mainly as a

result of flaws in the constitution which gave disproportional rights to the Turkish

Cypriot community including the right to block the passing of laws. In 1963

intercommunal violence broke out following which many Turkish Cypriots

withdrew to enclaves. Attempts to bring the two sides back together were made

through the United Nations who sent a contingent to the island.

On 15 July 1974 the Junta ruling Athens at the time organised a coup to

overthrow Archbishop Makarios. A week later Turkey invaded the island,

claiming this was to restore constitutional order. However, when the rightful

government was restored, Turkish troops stayed on, implementing a long-held

policy of partitioning the island. They went on to occupy more than a third of

Cyprus, forcing 200,000 people to lose their homes and become refugees. The

area under Turkish occupation unilaterally declared independence in 1983, an act

condemned by the UN and other international organisations. No country in the

world other than Turkey has recognised this illegal state.

The political issue, despite efforts to solve it, remains virtually frozen since 1974

and the occupation of part of Cyprus by the Turkish army still continues.