

A NOTE ON THE POPULATION OF CYPRUS

HALİL İNALCIK

Halil İnalçık is professor of Ottoman History at Bilkent University, Ankara.

The fact that Cyprus is an island caused drastic changes in its population over time. In the course of its history, especially in times of drought and locust invasions, famine broke out and caused large-scale migrations from the island to Anatolia and Syria, which resulted in sudden, considerable changes in the population and ethnic structure of the island.¹ But most of the emigrants subsequently returned home. Also, the adverse economic and social conditions led to continual emigration and long-term depopulation of the island.

Under French and Venetian rule, the forced labour, especially the obligation to work on the lands of the feudal lord two or three days a week, was such a heavy burden that the serfs called *paroikoi* had to flee to neighbouring countries. The documents published by Mas Latrie, the noted authority on Cyprian history, concerning the retrieval of the fugitive serfs in the years 1468-1469 are particularly illuminating.² On the other hand, it is claimed that the island's population continually decreased under Ottoman rule, due to heavy taxation and deteriorating economic conditions. Let us examine the following tables:

A comparison of the tables suggest that there is a population increase by 1606 and a continual decline after 1643 down to 1841. In Cyprus capitation was collected per household. Even if we suppose that total population of 250,000 given by Accidas is exaggerated, the figures concerning the Christian population subject to capitation confirm that an increase had taken place by 1606. It's a well known fact that from 1572 on the Ottomans resorted to the method of *sürgün*, deportation and settling Turks from Anatolia on the island. The most important difference between the Ottoman conquest and the Frankish invasion was that the Franks settled on the island as a small military ruling class of 500 in all, whereas the Turks, in addition to the garrison troops (about 3000), brought from the villages and cities of Anatolia a great mass of people as productive elements and settled them. Guy de Lusignan (1192-1194), invited European Crusaders from Syria to come to the island, giving them fiefs there. These numbered about 300 nobles. They constituted the ruling class, the nobility. Then, in addition to these, another military force of about 200 existed under the name of 'Turcople' or 'Turcopoulos'.³ Under these two groups, who numbered no more than 500 men altogether, all the native population, rich and poor, were given the status of dependent subjects.⁴ The Franks, i.e. the Europeans, have never been numerous in Cyprus. At the end of Venetian rule, the troops of Italian origin assembled in Nicosia totalled 1500 and the nobility about 1000.⁵

For the Turkish population in Cyprus, let us first see the Turkish troops permanently stationed on the island.

In September 1571, when the Serdar, Lala Mustafa Pasha, left the island with the bulk of his army, there remained some troops for the defence. Calepio, a Venetian spy, who happened to be present on the island estimated these forces at 300 horsemen and 2000 foot soldiers.

With 40 sergents and others added, the number of defence forces came to 2779. The annual salary paid out to them was about six million akçe or about 100,000 gold pieces. In any case the number of Ottoman soldiers and officials in Cyprus was not altogether above 3000 in 1572.⁷ Later on, when the danger of a Christian counter-attack diminished, defence forces stationed on the island appear to have been reduced.

The Venetian B. Sagredo states that there were no more than 800 or 1000 horsemen on the island in 1575.

Actually, in a summary register, *icmal defteri*⁸, dating back to the reign of Murat III (1574-1595), we find that the revenue from Cyprus was distributed in *timar* to the *gönüllü* (volunteers), *mustahf_z* (Janissaries), *azeb*s (the marines), *topçus* (the artillerymen) and the *cebecis* (armourers) stationed

within the fortresses. There was no sipahi timar-holders except the garrison soldiers. This military organisation in Cyprus seems to have changed little down to the nineteenth century.⁹

As to the Turkish civil population in Cyprus, the Ottoman government, using the old method of sürgün, deportation and settlement, transferred groups of peasants and town dwellers from Anatolia and settled them on the island. The main purposes of this operation, as revealed by the sürgün documents, was to have the soil of the island, the population of which had deserted, properly tilled to ensure a livelihood to the surplus population of Anatolia and to make a newly conquered territory safe by settling a reliable Turkish population.¹⁰ The following is the declaration to the governors of Central Anatolia in the edict of 1572:

“As a result of the invasion and military action, a great extent of land has fallen in ruins, which are arable and fertile land. It is necessary to ensure its cultivation and the reconstruction of the boroughs and villages on the island. Therefore, my order is that in Anatolia all persons suffering from shortage of land, and those who have not been entered into the imperial survey books, those who abandoned their villages and settled on land belonging to the sipahis other than his own, or those who work as agricultural workers (_rgad), those whose land disputes could not be solved in the courts and those who are found roaming about without any work in cities and villages, should have their names recorded in registers, and should be sent to Cyprus as settlers. At the same time, of those who in the boroughs and towns devoted themselves to crafts and trades, one household out of ten subject to extraordinary taxation (avariz) should be selected and sent. Care shall be taken that these be able-bodied and healthy persons, and that they carry all their tools with them; likewise that the farmers be equipped with their own cattle and ploughs, without any thing missing (for cultivation). These sürgüns should be settled in such places as the Cyprus governor may think fit.”¹¹

At any rate, as one household out of ten, the number of households to be sent from the Teke sancak (sub-district of a province) alone was estimated to be 5720.¹² To encourage the population to go, the sultan made the following promises: those who go shall be free from taxes for two years¹³; forts shall be built where necessary on the island so that the population may be safe from enemy attack. The ferman (edict) ends with the threat that those who disobey the order shall be severely punished.

Lists of the persons sent to the island were from places as distant from one another as the Bey_ehir, Seydi_ehir, Ak_ehir, Niçde, Ürgüp, Akdağ and Bozok sancaks.¹⁴ As an attack was expected any moment from the allied Christian fleet, some well-to-do people did not wish to leave their homes. Barkan finds that one-third of people migrating to Cyprus were going of their own free will. A great number of orders for deportation shows the eagerness of the Ottoman government to settle the island with Anatolian Turks. For example, of the 94 households of the Antalya borough having been earmarked for deportation to Cyprus, some vanished, and only 74 were sent. Thereupon, the sultan despatched a fresh ferman dated 1574, ordering the remaining 20 families to be hunted down at any cost, and sent to Cyprus.¹⁵ The government also insisted that not the

poor and the old, but the well-to-do and the strong should be selected.¹⁶

Determined to repopulate Cyprus, the government subsequently ordered that more families to be sent from the sancaks of Adana, Sis and Tarsus.¹⁷ We also know that as late as 1577, an order was issued to the effect that 500 rich Jews were to be sent from the city of Safed, Palestine¹⁸ so that to revive business and commercial life on the island. However, this plan was subsequently dropped. In 1575, B. Sagredo informs us that the government uninterruptedly conveyed settlers from Anatolia to Cyprus, but that many, not being accustomed to the climate, fell ill and died.¹⁹ However, another contemporary source, Martinengo, stated that in this way 20,000 people, partly nomads partly soldiers, were settled in Cyprus.²⁰

In 1599, Cotovicus, a contemporary Venetian author, declares that the Turkish Muslim population comprised 6000 males; whereas Dandini, another Venetian author, in 1596, tells us that, there were 12,000-13,000 Turks who came from Anatolia to settle in Cyprus. We learn from the Cyprus cadi registers that then very few of the local Rum population embraced Islam, but that, on the other

hand, Turks from Anatolia married local women. The government did not encourage the Christians, who were subject to djizye, capitation, to adopt Islam, because such conversions resulted in the loss of the revenue from djizye.²¹ At any rate, our sources, Christian and Muslim, reveal that in the end the Turkish Muslim population under Ottoman rule was not less than one-third of the Christian population of the Island. However, there were times when the Turkish Muslim Population constituted the majority. For example, Kyprianos,²² giving the results of the Ottoman census, tells us that there were 47,000 Turks and 37,000 Christians in Cyprus in 1777. About 1790, M. de Vezin, the British consul to Aleppo and Cyprus, estimated the island's population at 60,000 Turks and 20,000 Greeks.²³ At any rate, emigrations resulted from various causes—famine, unemployment, heavy taxation, etc.—led to the drastic fluctuations in the island's population.

In the second half of the eighteenth century, a number of circumstances, for instance the great drought and famine of 1757-58, caused mass emigration. Heavy taxation struck especially the Christian population.²⁴ Our sources²⁵, which estimate the island's whole population at 100,000 in the first years of the nineteenth century, should not be far from the truth. The Ottoman census of 1831²⁶ gives the following figures:

Children Adults Total

Muslims 8,623 6,360 14,983

Non-Muslims 16,420 12,680 29,100

Foreigners 31

Muslim Gypsies 43

Merchants 49

Grand Total 44,206

About the same time, Turner, an English traveler tells us: "Cyprus, though nominally under the authority of a Bey appointed by the Kapudan Pasha, is in fact governed by the Greek Archbishop and his subordinate clergy ... The peasants of Cyprus, both Mohammedans and Greeks, are so insufferably plundered that their labour is barely capable of supporting their existence, and they yearly desert in great numbers to the coasts of Caramania and Syria. They [Greek priests] strip the poor ignorant, superstitious peasant of his last para".

In the years 1821-26, during the Greek insurrection, the emigration of the Greek population from the island accelerated. However, starting in 1830, the Ottoman state took measures to induce these emigrants to return: the poll-tax was reduced, tax arrears were expunged and, not least, a civil organisation was created, entrusting the collection of taxes to the Greek reaya (ie. tax paying, Christian subjects) themselves, securing a kind of autonomy for the island. In 1841 the French traveler Lacroix²⁷ tells us, summarising the results of the census made by the governor Tal'at Effendi, "Des calculs plus exacts, établis sur un commencement de statistique, gouverneur en 1841, permettent d'évaluer la population actuelle du pays à 108 ou 110,000 habitants, ainsi divisés: 75 à 76,000 Grecs, 32 à 33,000 Turcs, 1,200 à 1,300 Maronites, 500 Catholiques Romains, la plupart Européens, 150 à 160 Arméniens. Nicosie seule a une population de 12,000 habitants, dont 8,000 Turcs, 3,700 Grecs, 150 Arméniens et une centaine d'Anoroties".

That the Ottoman Tanzimat reforms gave no results proves to be unfounded. In the period 1850-1878 there was at least an increase of 50 per cent in the island's population.²⁸

In conclusion, in the past there were times Turks constituted the majority or half of the population of Cyprus. Unlike the Latins, Turks settled on the Island to make it a vatan, homeland.

1 See Hill, G., *A History of Cyprus*, I, 246: for the drought and great emigration of 1757-1758, see Kyprianos in Cobham, C.D., *Excerpta Cypria*, Cambridge 1908, p. 201.

2 See Mas Latrie (1855), *Histoire de l'île de Chypre*, vol. III, Paris, p.192.

3 Among the Turcoples, who were a mixture of several elements, the Turks must certainly have been numerous in the beginning. The term Turcopoulos was applied in the Byzantine Empire from the ninth to the eleventh century, to the Turks serving as mercenaries (See Moravcsik, G., (1942), *Byzantinoturcica*, I, Budapest, 2 (5-6). In the anonymous chronicle added to Guillaume de Tyrus' text, it is noted that the Turcoples came to Cyprus from "Jerusalem and Triple [Tripoli] and from Antiochia and Ermanie [Armenia]." In that period, the term of Turqueman was also used in Cyprus as the equivalent of soldier. (Mas Latrie, II. p. 665.)

4 See Makhairas, L. *Recital Concerning the Sweet Land of Cyprus*, ed. Dawkins, R.M., Oxford, 1932, pp 19-29; Mas Latrie (1865), *Histoire de l'île de Chypre*, vol I, Paris, pp. 44-49.

5 See Hill, *ibid.*, p. 953.

6 See Sahilliođlu, H. (1967), 'Osmanl_ _daresinde K_br_s'_n _lk Bütçesi', *Belgeler*, IV, p. 16-17.

7 In addition to these 2,779 men, the list of persons drawing their salaries from the Cyprus Treasury included sailors, not over 50 men, architects and carpenters, saltpetre manufacturers, workers of water works, treasury secretaries and, a müderris-cadi, Ekmel efendi and his students, not more than 100 men altogether (Sahilliođlu, p. 25).

8 Tapu ve Kadastro Genel Müdürlüđü, *Kuyud-i Kadime*, Ankara, undated. On the tughra may be read the name: Murad bn. Selim.

9 Situation in 1826 (Prime Minister's Archive, no. 598):

Gönüllüs Azebs Topçus Cebecis

Nicosia 299 225 88 27

Famagusta 350 250 140 20

Paphos 80 100 20 10

Limassol 50 50 10 -

Kyrenia 80 78 20 -

No mustahf_z Janissary in this period.

10 In sürgün see Barkan, Ö.L. *Bir iskan ve kolonizasyon metodu olarak sürgünler* (The sürgün as a method of settlement and colonization), _stanbul University, _ktisat Fakültesi Mecmuas_, XI, 1-4, p. 524-69; _nalç_k, H. (1954), "Ottoman Methods of Conquest", *Studia Islamica*, II.

11 For the complete text of this ferman of the 13th of Cemaziyelvel 980/2 Sept. 1572 see Barkan, *ibid.*, pp. 550-53.

12 See Barkan, *ibid.*, p. 564.

13 In another document: "no taxes or dues being collected for three years" (Refik, A., 'K_br_s ve Tunus seferlerine ait Resmi Vesikalar', ('Official documents relating to the Cyprus and Tunis campaigns'), *Edebiyat Fakültesi Mecmuas_*, V, 1-2 (1926), p. 61, document 32.

14 *Mevkufat Defteri* (Ba_vekâlet Archives, No. 2551): Barkan, *ibid.*, p. 556-57.

15 Prime Minister's archives, _stanbul, Mühimme defteri No: 23, p. 317, Zilkade 981 / February-March 1574.

16 Mühimme No. 23, p. 26. To the Bey of Bozok. Order dated 25 Cemaziyelvel 981.

17 Mühimme No. 23, document 172, 25 Receb 981.

18 Lewis, B. (1952), *Notes and Documents from the Turkish Archives*, Jerusalem, pp. 31-32.

19 "Beaucoup d'habitants (en Chypre) ont abandonné leurs demeures et se sont enfuis; d'autres s'éloignent journellement. Afin de remédier à cette dépopulation, les Turcs font venir incessamment de leur propre pays de nouvelles familles ... d'habitants pour les fixer en Chypre, mais une grande partie des émigrants meurt à peine arrivée dans l'île à cause de la grande chaleur" (*Mas Latrie*, III, p. 560). *Excerpta Cypria*, pp.161-2.

20 In *Excerpta Cypria*, pp.161-2.

21 "... very many of them ... wish to turn Turk, but many are rejected, because (say their lords) in receiving them into the Muslim faith, their tribute djizye would be so much diminished". (Hunkel-1670-, in *Excerpta Cypria*, p. 233.)