The Recent History of Cyprus

Halil İnalcık

Instead of summarizing the historical facts of general character which are known to the audience, I would rather like to concentrate on a very important problem in the history of Cyprus, that is, the demographic structure of the island's population. Greek Cypriots claim that Turks constitute a minority on the island and that they have to be subject to the state of Cyprus—this is the main pretention today. So, I believe it is time to discuss this population structure problem on the island, and its history.

My dear colleague, Prof Talat Halman, very appropriately said "*vatan*" for Cyprus. It is true: the island has been a vatan for three hundred years for the Turks. They came here three hundred years ago from Anatolia. They settled, tilled this soil, they worked hard as agriculturers, tradesmen, and craftsmen. They are not a minority as the Greek Cypriots claim, they are citizens of the community on the island. We do not accept the claim that they have been a minority. They have been the masters of this land: they tilled this land, they appropriated this land.

After this introduction, I would like to discuss, in your presence, some historical facts as far as the demographic structure of the island goes. The fact that Cyprus is an island caused entirely characteristic changes in the population movements and the population structure of the island.[1] It is a well-known fact that, in the course of its history, especially in times of drought and grasshopper invasions, famine broke out and caused great migrations from the island to Anatolia and Syria. It resulted in sudden, considerable changes in the population and the ethnic structure. It was also the worsening of the economic and social conditions on the island and the permanent dwindling of economic resources leading to emigration that caused a real depopulation. Historians should concentrate their attention on this fluctuation in the population structure of the island.

Under Latin, French and Venetian rule, the feudal forced labour,

"*corvées*," especially the obligation to work on the lands of the lord two or three days a week, was such a heavy burden on the peasants that these peasants gradually fled to neighbouring countries, especially to Rhodes. It is claimed that the island's population constantly decreased under the Ottoman rule, and that this decrease was due to the burdens of the Ottoman rule and to the deterioration of economic conditions. But it is possible, by a closer examination of the situation, to reach a different conclusion.

The Latins came to the island as feudal lords, to exploit the native population, Greeks. It is a historical fact that they imposed, as I tried to emphasize, two or three days of forced labour for the lord. This was an exploitative regime. The Ottoman regime came quite differently, not to exploit the agriculturers, the peasantry of the island, but to free them from this forced labour, and to recognize them, with the immigrant Turks, as peasants under the guarantee of the Ottoman state.

To return to the population situation under the Ottomans: there are some estimates on the population of the island under the Ottomans. The Venetian estimates go up to 250,000 at the beginning of the 17th century. We have a census of the population under the Ottomans, for the *cizye* tax imposed upon the non-Muslim population, and this census gives 30,000 households subject to *cizye*. If you multiply this by four as a coefficient, you find a population of 120,000 non-Muslims on the island at about the year 1600.

The Ottoman *tahrir*, or population census records, show that thirty or forty years following the conquest, an increase took place in the population of the island. A comparative examination of the Ottoman census records late into this period confirm this estimate. The precious document dated 1572, just one year after the conquest, the survey of the population and taxation of the island, is preserved today in Ankara at the *Tapu Kadastro* Archives. Our study is mainly based on this Ottoman census.

It is a well-known fact that Ottomans, after the conquest, resorted to the method of *sürgün*—deportation—and settling Turks from Anatolia to the island. The most important difference between the Ottoman conquest and the Frankish invasion is that the Francs settled on the island as a small, military ruling class, a feudal class,

whereas the Turks, in addition to the garrison troops—about 3,000—brought, from the villages and cities of Anatolia, a great mass of people as productive elements of the population on this island.

The Ottoman rule, applying an old procedure, transferred peasants and town dwellers from Anatolian cities and the countryside, and settled them on the island. The main purpose of this operation, as revealed by the documents referring to it, was to have the deserted soil of the island cultivated properly, to ensure a livelihood for the surplus population of central Anatolia, and to make a newly-conquered territory safe by settling a reliable Turkish population on it.[2]

Here is the purpose which was declared in the 1572 edict regarding the matter addressed to the governors of central Anatolia. It says, "Because the invasion and military action caused some ruin on the island, the lands of which are arable and fertile, it is necessary to ensure their cultivation and the reconstruction of the boroughs and villages on the island."

As we know, the Greeks of the Mesoria plain took refuge on the mountains when the Venetians and the Ottomans confronted each other. They did not involve themselves in the confrontation. So, this plain was left uncultivated, empty. The Ottoman administration, interested in reviving this fertile plain back to cultivation, brought a Turkish population from Anatolia.

It was ordered that all persons from Anatolia suffering from shortage of land and who had not been entered into the imperial survey books, those who fled from their villages and settled on land belonging to other *sipahis*, those agricultural workers—*irgats*—whose land disputes could not be solved in court, and those found roaming about without work in the towns and villages, should have their names recorded on registers, and they should be sent to Cyprus as settlers.

At the same time, in the boroughs, of those who devoted themselves to all sorts of crafts and trades, one household out of ten was subject to be transferred to the island. Care had to be taken that these be able-bodied and healthy persons, and carry all their tools with them. They came with their tools. Likewise, it was ordered that the farmers be equipped with their own cattle and ploughs, without anything missing. These *sürgüns* —deportees—were to be settled in

such places as the Cyprus Beylerbeyi may see fit.3 At the rate of one household out of ten, the number of households to be sent from the Teke Sancağı alone was calculated to be 5720.[4]

This *ferman* makes the following statements which intend to encourage the population to go and settle in Cyprus: "Those who go shall be exempt," it says, "from taxes for two years. All sorts of steps shall be taken so that the population may be safe from enemy attacks." So a strong defense army was settled in the first years after the conquest—about 3,000.

The archives contain lists of the persons sent to the island from places as distant from one another as the Beyşehir, Seydişehir, Akşehir, Ürgüp, Niğde, Akdağ, and Bozok boroughs.[5] Barkan estimates that one third of these persons went to Cyprus of their own free will—gönüllü.

As an attack was expected at any moment from the allied Christian fleet, some well-to-do persons did not wish to leave their homes in Anatolia. On the other hand, a great number of severe orders show the eagerness of the Ottoman government to settle the island with Anatolian Turks.

I am mentioning these historical facts to contradict the Greek claims that the Turks on the island are Greek converts; this is not true. For example, ninety-four households from the Antalya borough had been ear-marked for deportation to Cyprus. Our records show that a number of them vanished, and only seventy-four were sent. Thereupon, the Sultan brought out a new edict ordering the remaining twenty families to be hunted down at any cost, and sent to Cyprus.[6]

The government also insisted that no poor or old people would be sent to Cyprus. So, the government was determined to restore economic prosperity on the island. The government, with its decision to repopulate Cyprus, subsequently ordered more population to be sent from the sancaks of Adana, Sis, and Tarsus later on.[7] We also know that, in 1577, six years after the conquest, an order was given to send 500 rich Jews to Cyprus from the city of Safed in Palestine.[8] This was expected to revive the business and commercial life in the island. However, this plan to deport the Jews of Safed was subsequently dropped.

In 1575, the Venetian Sagredo informs us that the Turks uninterruptedly conveyed settlers from Anatolia to Cyprus, but that many, not being accustomed to the climate, fell ill and died.[9] However, another contemporary source, Martinengo, states that in this way 20,000 persons, partly nomads, partly soldiers, or peasants, were settled in Cyprus in 1575.[10] In 1599, Cotovicus, another Venetian observer, declares that the Turkish Muslim population comprised 6,000 men—if you multiply this by three or four, you arrive to the same figure of 20,000 settlers from Anatolia.

We learn from the Cyprus *Kadı* Registers (*Şeriye Sicilleri*) that very few of the local Greek population embraced Islam, but that, on the other hand, some Turks from Anatolia married local women. The government did not encourage the Christians, the Greeks, who were subject to the *cizye* capitation, to turn Muslim knowing that converts would not escape the *cizye*. So, the Ottoman government did not encourage conversion to Islam.[11]

Our sources reveal that the Turkish Muslim population under the Ottoman rule, generally, was less than one third of the Christian population. In general, Turks constituted, taking all the periods from the 16th to the 20th century into consideration, one third of the population. Even numerically, they could not be considered a minority.

In the second half of the 18th century, a number of special circumstances, particularly the population pressure, the great drought and famine of 1757-58, and the wish of the population to get rid of the taxes which were getting heavier and heavier,[12] caused especially the Christian population to emigrate in great numbers. So, in the 18th century, Turks became the majority on the island. Our sources, estimating at 100,000 the population of the island in the first years of the 19th century, should not be far from the truth. The Ottoman census of 183113 gives the following figures for the male population only: Muslims: 8623 children, 6380 adults—total: about 15,000 males. Non-Muslims: 29,000. So again, we arrive at the same figure: one third of the population was still Turkish in 1831.

About the same time, Turner adds the following information: "Cyprus, though nominally under the authority of a Bey appointed by the Kaptan Paşa, is in fact governed by the Greek Archbishop and his subordinate clergy. The peasants of Cyprus, both Mahometans

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. Greek priests strip the poor, ignorant, superstitious Greek peasant of his last para." So, under the control of the Church, the Greek peasants themselves suffered.

In the years 1821 to 1826, during the Greek insurrection, the emigration of the Greek population from the island swelled. However, starting in 1830, the Ottoman State took radical measures to induce these emigrants to return: the poll-tax (*cizye*) was reduced, tax arrears were expunged, and, the last but not the least, a civil organization was created, entrusting the collection of the taxes to the reaya, the Greeks themselves, and securing autonomy for them.

Lacroix, in 1841, summarizes the results of the census operated by Talat Efendi as follows: "Les calculs plus exacts, établis sur un commencement de statistiques ds à Talat Efendi, Gouverneur en 1841, permettent d'évaluer la population actuelle du pays à 108,000 ou 110,000 habitants, ainsi divisés: 75 à 76,000 Grecs, 32 à 33,000 Turcs."[14] Again, one third of the population on the island was calculated to be Turks by this French source.

The claim that the *Tanzimat* gave no results is unfounded. In the period between 1850 and 1878, there was an increase of at least 50% in the population of the island.[15]

Now, I would like to make the following observation in conclusion: in the past, there were times when the Turks constituted the majority of the population on the island. Turks have never been a minority on this island. Unlike the Latins, Turks came here to cultivate the land, to make it a vatan, as my dear colleague said, a home for the Turks, and it will remain this way.

Notes

1. G. Hill, A History of Cyprus; concerning the drought and great emigration in 1757-1758, see Kyprianos; concerning the great drought in the first half of the 4th century, see Hill, I, 246. Excerpta Cypria, p.201.
2. On the subject of sürgün (deportation and settlement), see O.L. Barkan, "*Bir İskân ve Kolonizasyon Metodu olarak Sürgünler*" ("*Sürgün* as a Method of Settlement and Colonization"), Istanbul University, İktisat Fakültesi Mecmuası, XI, 1-4, p. 524-69; H. İnalcık, "Ottoman Methods of Conquest," in Studia Islamica, II (1954).
3. The complete text of this *ferman* of 13 Cemaziyevvel 980/2 September 1572 is found in O. L. Barkan, *ibid.*, pp.550-53.
4. A photocopy of the document: *Barkan, ibid.*, p.564. The figure is given in writing.
5. In another document we have: "no taxes or dues being collected for three years" (A. Refik, "Kıbrıs ve Tunus Seferlerine ait Resmi Vesikalar" ["Official Documents relating to the Cyprus and Tunis campaigns"], Edebiyat Fakültesi Mecmuası, V, 1-2 (1926), p.61, Document 32.
6. Mevkufat Defteri (Başvekâlet Archives), No.2551, Barkan, pp.556-57.
7. Mühimme No.23, Document 172, 25 Receb 981.
8. B. Lewis, Notes and Documents from the Turkish Archives, Jerusalem, 1952, pp.31-32.
9. "*Beaucoup d'habitants [à 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 arrivé dans l'le à cause de la grande chaleur*" (in Mas Latrie, III, p.560).
10. Excerpta Cypria, pp.161-2.

11. "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 would be much diminished" (Hunkel - 1670, in Excerpta Cypria, 233).

12. About this question, we have the following statement by Clarke (1801): "In cases of their inability to supply the important, the inhabitants fly from the island."

13. E. Z. Karal, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda İlk Nüfus Sayımı, 1831*, Ankara, 1934, pp. 161-63.

14. V. Michkov, *La Population de la Turquie et de la Bulgarie en XVII et en XIX e D*, IV, Sofia, 1935, p.380.

15. See Michkov, in index, Cyprus; Hill, IV, 33.

Historical Causes of the Cyprus Problem

Salahi Sonyel

Let me begin by defining the Cyprus problem before embarking upon an analysis of its historical causes. I believe that the Cyprus problem can be defined as a conflict between the Turkish and Greek Cypriots, with deep roots in history, directly involving their respective motherlands, Turkey and Greece, and emanating from the Greek and Greek Cypriot aspirations and actions aiming at the annexation of the island to Greece, after the elimination of the Turkish Cypriot people, who are determined to oppose such actions.[1]

There are other, similar definitions. For example, British historian and journalist Nancy Crawshaw refers to the Cyprus problem as "a complicated issue," closely related to the Greek Cypriot "struggle for the union of Cyprus with Greece (Enosis)."[2] American historiographer Pierre Oberling considers it to be "a problem caused by—and only by—Greek Cypriot nationalism," manifesting itself in the "firm desire by them to achieve *Enosis*."[3] Greek Cypriot writer Zenon Stavrinides defines the problem as "a complex and ever-changing conflict" between the Turkish and Greek Cypriots.[4] Turkish Cypriot jurist Necati Münir Ertekün states that it is an issue revolving around what he calls "one central fact: the existence of two distinct peoples on the island with different languages, cultures, national origins and religions, as well as their national aspirations, with each people being equal to one another in determining the destiny of the island,"[5] which, I presume, is not to the liking of the Greeks.

Some Greek writers admit that the Cyprus problem is intimately connected with Greek expansionism, inspired by the Megali Idea (Great Idea) which has its origin in the conquest of Constantinople (now İstanbul), the capital of the Byzantine Empire, by the Ottoman Turks in May 1453.

The Greeks have created a myth about Constantine Paleologos, the last emperor of the Byzantines who was defeated by Sultan Mehmet the Conqueror, which still lingers on. According to this

Eastern Mediterranean University Press,
Gazimağusa, Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus

EMU Press and Eastern Mediterranean University Press
are a trade mark of Eastern Mediterranean University

© Eastern Mediterranean University Press 1997

No unauthorized photocopying

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted, in any form or means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior written premission of Eastern Mediterranean University Press.

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by the way of trade or otherwise, be lent, resold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form binding or cover than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

Proceedings of the

First International Congress on Cypriot Studies

Gazimağusa

20-23 November, 1996

Edited by
Emel Doğramacı
William Haney
Güray König

Centre for Cypriot Studies
Eastern Mediterranean University

Eastern Mediterranean University Press 1997