

*The Archbishops of Cyprus in the Modern Age:
The Changing Role of the Archbishop–Ethnarch,
Their Identities and Politics*

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This book results from the collaborative efforts of seven experts on Cypriot history and religion (Andrekos Varnava, Michalis N. Michael, Sia Anagnostopoulou, Kyprianos D. Louis, Irene Pophaides, Alexis Rappas, and Theoharis Stavrides) coming together to present an overview of the personalities and administrations of the Archbishops of Cyprus, from Chrysanthos who straddled the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (1767–1810), to Chrysostomos who died in 2006. The putting together, for the first time of a political and religious analysis of all the modern era Ethnarch–Archbishops allows the distinctively different philosophies of the Church’s administrations to emerge more clearly; and the authors wish to critique the different personalities, as they pursued various goals according to the widely different political and economic climates of their times. The editors begin their work, noting that too often studies of the Ethnarchs emanating from Cypriot standpoints have taken too monolithically favourable a view of their subject, too apologetically referential, and too nationalistic in tone. The foreword notes that: ‘This book is not an attack on the Church of Cyprus nor is it anti Church of Cyprus; in fact, on the contrary, it seeks to restore the historical record, and offer the Church a starting point from which to reassess its past and move forward’ (p. xi). The editors note how the figure of Makarios III dominates the continuing imagination about what the Cypriot Archbishopric represents, perhaps too much so, and they seek to move away from this towards a larger focus on continuities and discontinuities across the last three centuries. Placing their study against the backdrop of an ‘almost royalist’ sense in much Cypriot writing that the Ethnarch–Archbishop is the ‘God-given ruler’ and protector (indeed almost definer) of the nation’s core identity, they pose an alternative thesis that the historical record itself will show a more nuanced view, of different political and religious figures struggling to combine multiple roles in widely differing circumstances. Taking ten case studies from the eighteenth century to the near present, the book opens with a review, by both editors, of recent Cypriot historiography that treats the issue of the Ethnarchs, noting in the main how the authorial *tendenz* has been the support of the nationalist cause using the Ethnarch figure as a potent symbol. This book’s macro thesis is that pre-1900 the Ethnarchs truly defended the island as a whole. Since then the institution has often been subverted to the cause of a: ‘chauvinist brand

of Cypriot Hellenism'. They ask whether in the future, a time that more urgently than ever needs reconciliation between the divided factions of the island, the Ethnarch can truly play the role of Reconciler once again.

Theoharis Stavrides' opening study on Chrysanthos, the eighteenth-century Ethnarch, begins with the paradox that while his rule is generally characterised as a 'dark period' for a Church mercilessly oppressed by Ottoman forces, it actually was a Golden Age, of political power, financial stability and cultural excellence in Cyprus. Chrysanthos gained from the *Sublime Porte* the right to direct appeal, thus circumventing any local Ottoman Governor. In Church circles his indefatigable educational work, building of schools, and stressing the education of the clergy, allied with his insistence on the status of Cypriot Autocephaly (in his hands tantamount to conferring a Patriarchal status for the Church) all raised the Orthodox Church of the island in international renown. The case study of how the Archbishop secured the dismissal of the corrupt Governor Ηαϋ Baki demonstrates just how ruthless the Ottoman tax gathering system was. Although they won their case for extortion at trial in Constantinople, all the extorted monies (from three episcopal sees that had the right to levy taxes on the Christians of the island) were declared forfeit to the *Sublime Porte*, in addition to which the Church had to pay all the costs: 'Their political victory was a financial disaster', Stavrides notes (p. 29).

Michalis N. Michael's chapter on Kyprianos (1810–1821) depicts a very famous figure who overlapped with the Greek wars of independence. He is popularly seen today as Ethno-martyr. Michael notes how he sought to overthrow Ottoman rule, for an independence that retained the structures of political power the Ottomans themselves had established (using the Archbishopric as the political overlord of the Christians). He himself has been installed as Archbishop uncanonically by the *Sublime Porte*, while the old Archbishop was still alive (albeit very old and ineffectual). His administration was characterised by a careful attempt to preserve the peace and *status quo* on the island; despite subsequent attempts to enrol him posthumously in the cause of Greek freedom. The machinations of the brutal Ottoman Governor of this time, Küçük Mehmed, are shown to have been based in a sustained attempt to dismantle the wealthy middle class of Cypriot Christian, resulting in his own self-enrichment. Mehmed had the robes of office for the successors already prepared at the very executions of Kyprianos and his leading clergy.

The same author's study of Panaretos (1827–1840) also draws out the extent to which the main dangers to the Archbishop under Ottoman rule came from subordinate clergy with an eye to their own political advancement through the payment of bribes and manipulation of political contacts. Panaretos was forced into monastic seclusion in 1840 and Ioannikios, the Sultan's favoured candidate, and that of a large section of rich Cypriot laity, assumed office. We do not receive a review of the latter's career. Kyprianos D. Louis then reviews the career of Makarios I (1854–1865) setting him in the context of major changes to the governance system of the Ottoman empire that were then in process, the so-called Tanzimat reforms. Makarios invested extensively in education, and worked consistently to develop good relations between Christians

and Muslims. Andrekos Varnava's chapter on Sophronios III (1865–1900) defines him as the transitional figure par excellence, between the old style and new era Ethnarchs of Cyprus. His administration is regarded as one of the most significant of all the moderns because of its extensive duration, and his successful occupation of the transition from the death of the Ottoman empire to British administrative rule. The *Illustrated London News* of August 1878 carried a fine lithograph of him blessing the Union Jack flag in Nicosia (reproduced p. 143). A quiet, highly educated and reverent man, Sophronios defined the Ethnarch's role as that of working collaboratively with the established state power; thus he made no calls for independence from the British, or for *Enosis* with Greece. For such reasons, Varnava argues, he has been extensively passed over in silence in modern accounts.

His successor Kyrillos II (1909–1916) was a marked contrast; highly nationalistic and politically strident. Andrekos Varnava and Irene Pophaides, in a joint article designate him the: 'first Greek nationalist Archbishop of Cyprus' (p. 148), and a 'Greek brawler' (p. 175). His administration positioned the Church almost as a political opposition party to the British, it is suggested. Using the British political reforms intended to introduce greater representation to the island's Turkish and Christian subjects, Kyrillos pushed heavily for a Greek nationalist presence in the assemblies, and subverted the cultural programmes encouraged by the British, for similar ends. The study criticises him as a kind of symbol providing a nationalistic and *Enosistic* 'archetype' for almost all of his successors.

Irene Pophaides also offers a study on Kyrillos III (1916–1933) which portrays a political figure of much vacillation. His pro-British stand of his early years as a bishop turned to anti-British positions after the 1920's. If his *Enosis* agenda was not extensively developed intellectually, it was existent nonetheless, and Pophaides presents him as perhaps being more concerned with ensuring, whatever came of British rule, the Archbishopric would be at the enduring centre of Cypriot life. Alexis Rappas' study of Leondios (1933–1947) presents a figure: 'more of a prelate than a national leader' (p. 237) whose abdication from nationalist politics, or any strong *Enosis* programme, alienated the island's wealthy elite from his side. His overarching desire to keep the Church out of politics fell apart in the rising strength of right and leftist factions then dividing the Cyprus community – a reflection of the wider issues concerning the rise of Fascism and Communism in Europe at the time.

Sia Anagnostopoulou's chapter on Makarios III is, as one would expect, one of the more extensive essays, dealing with a highly complex and politically major figure in twentieth-century political affairs. The treatment of the events of the Coup which overthrew him shows Makarios employing the brilliant political skills that accompanied his entire career. The coup (given the fact that he had survived it) was denounced from exile as not a Cypriot business at all, but a movement led by 'outside factions' (p. 287). Makarios, even in exile managed to present himself as Ethnarch, the symbolic core of Cyprus' independence and democratic values. Makarios' triumphant return to Cyprus, after the fall of the Greek Colonel's Junta in 1974, is argued to have cemented an agenda

of Cypriot nationalism cut free from *Enosis* agendas. Nationalism in this renewed form was presented as the pure form of democracy, for which Cyprus had paid a sacrificial price (the Turkish invasion of the north). Henceforth, so the Makarian agenda read, the Archbishops would stand as the guarantee of this form of democracy, and Makarios' issuing of an 'Absolution' to those Cypriots who were caught up in the errors of the *Enosis* revolt, served to underline this concept as a factor in 'keeping the peace'.

The final study, again by Andrekos Varnava, on Chrysostomos I (1997–2006) ends the book with an account of a man who found Makarios III: 'a hard act to follow'. His rule was complicated after 2000 by a fall down his palace steps, and after 2005 a long coma induced by Alzheimer's disease. He was removed from office on the grounds of ill health in 2006. His active period saw an administration that strongly resisted any federal solution to the Cyprus problem, and insisted on the: 'liberation of every corner of our occupied country' (p. 305). Varnava concludes that the Archbishop did not really believe in any reconciliation talks, merely for the international community to impose a solution (one that he favoured) on the Turkish state, and effect the withdrawal of troops, subject to guarantees of rights and protections for resident peoples. Although he was actively engaged in local politics, in every way he could use his influence, overall that influence had strict limits. He was side-lined progressively by the international community leaders, and his long illness took him, and his office, largely out of the arena.

Overall this is a very fine, historically nuanced book, which balances in a very refreshing way the religious, cultural, political and historical aspects of the study of Cyprus' life, seen through the lens of its Church leaders from the eighteenth century to the near present. It is very well presented, replete with first class sources, and useful bibliographies. The editors and authors are all to be highly congratulated on an important and illuminating work.

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