

HISTORY



North Cyprus





Throughout its history the island of Cyprus has been known by many names. According to one source, up to 128 names have been used amongst which are:

Ancient Egyptian and Hittite: Alasia, Asi

Hebrew: Khittim

Assyrian: Yadnana, Ya

Phoenician: Hettim

The name by which she is known today, though is generally agreed to derive from the Latin word for copper; - 'cyprum'. Nevertheless, another school argues that Cyprus acquired its name from the henna plant (*Lawsonia alba*), known as 'kypros'. After Sicily and Sardinia, Cyprus is the third largest island in the Mediterranean. Archaeological excavations on the island have identified the first traces of human activity to the Paleolithic Age (Stone Age) around 10,000 – 8500 B.C.E. Cyprus stands at a strategic point in relation to the trade routes of the Eastern Mediterranean and, as such, has always been coveted by the ruling power of the region. As a result, throughout its history, the island has been subjected to invasion and conquest.

Between 1450-1320 B.C.E. Cyprus was ruled by Egypt. As the primary aim of Egyptian rule at the time was to control Cyprus politically, they did not have a particularly profound effect on the island culturally.



Rivalry between the Egyptians and the Hittites led to Egypt losing possession of the island briefly (B.C.E. 1320-1200) but Egyptian sovereignty was soon restored and lasted a further two hundred years until it then passed into the hands of the Achaeans and the Dorians, two early Greek tribes. The cities of Salamis, Soli, Paphos, Marion and Curium arose during this period.

It was not until the arrival of the Phoenicians, an enterprising maritime culture from the coastal areas of Syria and Lebanon, that the island received a cultural impulse. The Phoenicians arrived in Cyprus from Tyre in the 9th century B.C.E., and founded the city states of Idalion, Amathus, Tamassus, Kitium and Laphitos.



Between 709 and 612 B.C.E. the Assyrians, originating from Mesopotamia, ruled Cyprus, followed by the Egyptians (585-525 B.C.E.) and then the Persians (525-322 B.C.E.). Alexander the Great brought the rule of the Persians to an end as he established his own authority over the island. After Alexander's death Cyprus passed once again under Egyptian control. This time under Ptolemaic rule which lasted for 300 years until ended by the Roman Empire (58B.C.E.-325 A.D.).

Roman rule in Cyprus saw the spread of Christianity and Cyprus was the first province to be ruled by a Christian governor. After the division of the Roman Empire into East and West, Cyprus fell under the sway of the Eastern Roman Empire – Byzantium (395-1191 A.D.). The Greek Orthodox Church was established in Cyprus during this period and Greek language was adopted. During this early period of Byzantine rule Arabs organised several expeditions to conquer the island under the command of the Muslim Governor of Syria, Muawwiye. During one of these expeditions the wet-nurse of the Prophet Muhammed, Ümmü Haram, was martyred close to Larnaca and in the place where she fell the Ottoman administration of Cyprus, built a mosque complex in stages around her tomb. This shrine, the Hala Sultan Tekke and Tomb, is described as the third holiest place for Muslims in the world and is an important place of pilgrimage.





In the 12th century A.D., the period of the III Crusade, the island became a target of the crusaders. Richard the Lionheart, King of England, gained control of the island in 1191 but within a year he had sold it to the Knights Templar. Soon after that it was sold on to the Lusignans who established the Kingdom of Cyprus (1192-1489). They established the Catholic Church in Cyprus and declared Latin the official language, later replacing it with French. During this period art and culture on the island flourished and several of the greatest works of the Middle Ages were constructed on the island including the St. Sophia Cathedral, (the Selimiye Mosque), St. Nicholas Cathedral (the Lala Mustafa Pasha Mosque), Bellapais Monastery, the mountain fortresses of St. Hilarion, Buffavento and Kantara and the castles at Girne and Limmasol.

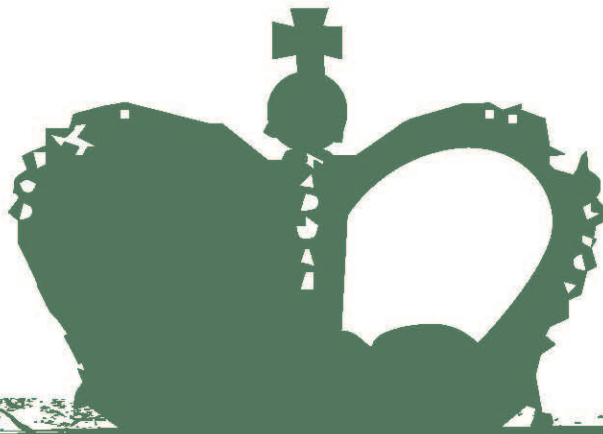


The kingdom eventually came to be dominated more and more in the 14th century by Genoese merchants. The Mamluks of Egypt then made the kingdom a tributary state in 1426; the remaining monarchs gradually lost almost all independence, until 1489 when the last Lusignan Queen, Catherine Cornaro, was forced to sell the island to Venice. When, in 1517, the Ottomans overthrew the Mamluks in Egypt, Cyprus became, in the legal sense, attached to the Ottoman Empire. It was not until 1571, however, during the reign of Sultan Selim II that the Ottomans consolidated their hold over the island and the Mediterranean as a whole. The Ottomans remained in control of Cyprus until 1878 by which time they had introduced settlers from Anatolia. The Ottomans bestowed a vast number of buildings to the island: mosques, medresses (religious schools), khans, tekkes (dervish lodges) and fountains. The finest extant examples of these are probably the Great Khan, the Mevlevi Tekke (whirling Derviş Lodge), the Arabahmet Mosque and the Kumarcılar Hanı (the Gamblers' Khan).



In 1878 the Ottomans were defeated in the Russo-Turkish War and, under the terms of the Treaty of San Stefano, the Russians were allowed access to the warm waters of the Mediterranean. Fearful of the Russian threat to Britain's imperial domination of the Far East trade routes the British and the Sultan secretly countersigned the Convention of Constantinople by virtue of which the possession and administration of Cyprus was vested in Great Britain whilst the Ottomans retained nominal title. This began the period of the British Administration. In 1914, when the Ottoman Empire sided with Germany in the First World War, Britain annexed Cyprus and this was formalised in the Treaty of Lausanne when the new Turkish Republic accepted British rule over the island.

As a result of lengthy consultations in Zurich and London in 1959, the decisions leading to the founding of the Republic of Cyprus were taken. On 16th August 1960, based on the principle of the equality of the Greek and Turkish communities, the Republic was declared. The same day the Treaty of Guarantee and the Treaty of Alliance were signed. Under the terms of these treaties, Turkey, Greece and Great Britain were to guarantee the territorial integrity of the new republic. The treaties gave Britain the right to retain two sovereign base areas on the island, Akrotiri and Dekhelia and for Turkey and Greece to maintain military contingents on the island consisting of 650 troops from Turkey and 950 from Greece.



The Republic of Cyprus partnership ended with the inter-communal clashes of Christmas 1963. Since that time, the Turkish Cypriots have governed themselves under various administrations which are as follows: - The General Committee (1963-1967), Turkish Cypriot Provisional Administration (1967-1974), and the Turkish Cypriot Autonomous Administration (1974-1975).

On 15 July 1974, the Greek military junta in Athens carried out a coup d'état in Cyprus, to unite the island with Greece. Five days later, on 20 July 1974, the Turkish army intervened on the island with the aim of restoring the constitutional order of the Republic of Cyprus by utilizing its rights as one of the guarantors of the 1960 Treaty of Guarantee. As a result of the Turkish Peace Operation, Turkish Cypriots moved to the north of the island and Greek Cypriots to the south.

On 13th February 1975, the Turkish Cypriots declared the Turkish Federated State of Cyprus and on 15th November 1983, the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus.



On 23rd April 2003 the hitherto closed border between the north and the south of the island was opened and passage between the two areas began. Talks between the two sides with the aim of finding a solution to the dispute have taken place with regular intervals beginning with discussions between Rauf Raif Denktash and Glafkos Clerides in Beirut in 1968 and have continued to the present day under the auspices of the United Nations, the latest being between the current Presidents of the two administrations, Dr. Dervish Eroğlu of the TRNC and Dimitris Christofias of the South Cyprus Greek Administration. The most significant of these discussions were those of 2004 that resulted in simultaneous referenda by the two communities to decide on the outcome of the United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan's 'Annan Plan'. The result of the referenda was 65% of Turkish Cypriots voting for the plan and 76% of Greek Cypriots voting against it. As a result, the plan was never implemented.





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