

FAMAGUSTA



CYPRUS

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HISTORY OF CYPRUS

The island of Cyprus, some fifty miles off the coast of Cilicia, had a history similar to that of Cilicia but even more varied. It was important from early in the Bronze Age as one of the main sources of bronze; it gave its name to the metal copper. It entered the books about 1500 B.C. when Egyptian scribes noted its conquest by Thutmose III. The legendary founders of its cities had the usual reason; Mycenaean settlement was much more extensive here than in Asia Minor. There were also colonies of Phoenician traders, whose Astarte was akin to Aphrodite, the principal deity of Cyprus. Throughout its recorded history the island was a meeting place of East and West. After submitting to the Assyrians, it was ruled successively by Persians, the Ptolemies of Egypt, Romans, Byzantines, Arabs, Crusaders, Venetians, and Ottoman Turks. Its later history differed from that of Cilicia or of Asia Minor in general, in coming under more marked Western influence. The kingdom established by the Crusaders—the House of Lusignan—was the richest and strongest of the Crusader Kingdoms, lasting three hundred years. It was then taken over by the Venetians, whose misrule anticipated that of the Turks but first provided the legend of Othello. In 1878 the Turks handed it over to Great Britain in return for guarantees of protection against the Russians. The British had a sentimental claim to it. En route to the Holy Land Richard the Lionhearted had taken possession of the island, staying long enough to marry Berengaria and have her crowned Queen of England, then turning it over for a price to Guy de Lusignan.

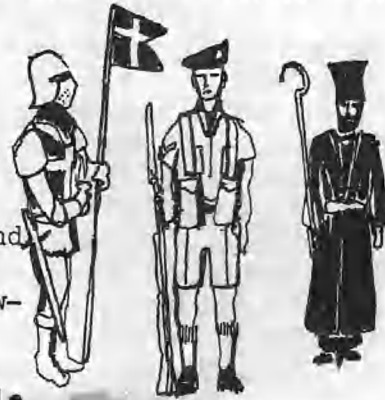
In spite of this pageantry, however, the history of Cyprus is relatively undistinguished; and therein is the excuse for this parenthetical note on an island that technically was not part of Asia Minor. The Cypriots—now agitating for union with Greece—have rarely been independent, never in the last two thousand years of their history. More to the point, they were throughout antiquity culturally backward and insular, failing to keep pace with the rest of the Greek world. They clung to a clumsy syllabary apparently derived from the Minoans, and made no contributions to literature. Their air was unoriginal; their coinage inferior. They had no famous schools. They had a few famous sons, such as Zeno the Stoic and Barnabas the companion of Paul, but these went off to their work elsewhere. Chiefly the Cypriots won a reputation for sensuality and love of luxury. It seems fitting that Mark Antony presented the island to Cleopatra.



Its backwardness cannot be attributed to geographical handicaps. Cyprus was richer in natural resources than Ionia or mainland Greece, and it lay in the main stream of commerce; the no more favorably situated island of Rhodes to the north took a leading role in the Hellenistic era. The most significant factor, I should say, was its political backwardness. While the rest of the Greek world was developing the polis, Cyprus clung to kingship. Its local princes included some able, patriotic rulers, notably Evagoras of Salamis who finally won independence from the Persians; but his feats emphasize that as late as the fourth century the cities of Cyprus were still ruled by princes. A people who had never known the full, free life of the polis were unlikely to distinguish themselves under the rule of the Ptolemies and the Romans.

Thereafter the Cypriots maintained their identity with the help of a miracle. In the fifth century A.D. their Archbishop was blessed by a vision that led to the discovery of the body of St. Barnabas; on his breast was a copy of St. Matthews' Gospel that St. Mark had placed there when burying him. In return for the gift of this gospel, the Emperor Zeno of Byzantium granted the Archbishop of Cyprus extraordinary privileges that he enjoys to this day, such as wearing an imperial purple cope and carrying an imperial scepter instead of a pastoral staff. The grateful Cypriots clung to their Holy Orthodox faith through three centuries of Arab raids and invasions, and then through the four centuries of Roman Catholic rule that began with the coming of the Crusaders.

The vigorous House of Lusignan most fully realized the potentialities of Cyprus, aided by Christian refugees from the Holy Land, and by a disposition to ignore papal protests against commerce with the infidels. This period (1192-1489) was the most brilliant in its history. The island became celebrated for its wealth and luxury; Famagusta in particular was known as "the richest of all cities." The most impressive monuments in Cyprus are its medieval castles, abbeys, and churches, including the Gothic cathedrals of Nicosia and Famagusta. It also contributed to medieval letters, directly and indirectly; St. Thomas Aquinas and Boccaccio dedicated works to its kings. This brilliance, however, was wholly Latin, a foreign importation. The natives—of whom we hear almost nothing—contributed only hard work and taxes. Under the rule of Venetians and Turks, who came only to exploit, Cyprus relapsed into insignificance. The Venetians left chiefly their fortifications, such as the city walls that still enclose the heart of Nicosia, the capital. In their three centuries of occupation the Turks built nothing of consequence. To Great Britain they bequeathed a headache by restoring the authority of the Orthodox Church, which in recent years has led the belated struggle for union with Greece, and by leaving a Turkish minority that is bitterly opposed to Greek rule.



CYPRUS



The mixed peoples and cultures of the pre-Christian Cyprus have made it a happy hunting ground for archaeologists, who have excavated numerous sites. But the remains from the Greco-Roman period are not very memorable. The great city of Salamis is a sandy waste. At Paphos only the foundations remain of the temple of the Cyprian Aphrodite, who was born on the coast nearby. At the site of a later city of Paphos, the "Tombs of the Kings," a catacomb-necropolis, are a ghostly reminder that Cyprus was ruled by kings to the end. Excavations at Curium, superbly situated on a cliff above the Mediterranean, have uncovered surprisingly little fine marble; its celebrated temple of Apollo nearby is built of an ordinary yellowish stone. More memorable are the mosaic pavements of a late Roman villa, luxurious with hot and cold baths.

Inscriptions in the pavement express the hope that Christ would protect the establishment as Phoebus Apollo once had, but both fell down on the job--Moslem Arabs destroyed it. The hope seems more pathetic because except for the mosaics the villa was a rather shoddy construction, built atop the messy remains of earlier buildings. Some solid, well-built walls from an earlier period emphasize the decay in the later Roman world. On Cyprus men were no longer building with pride or keeps.

The excellent museum of Nicosia may also stir some melancholy thoughts. Among its most striking exhibits is a reproduction of graves, from the Stone Age to the early Greek period, with bones, pots, and other objects placed exactly as they were found. On the later tombs inscriptions in both Greek and Phoenician express the sentiment so common among the ancients curses on whoever might violate the tomb. The curses rarely worked. Poor men might sleep in peace in their common graves, and take with them their few possessions; those who could afford a resting place worthy of their higher station were always likely to be robbed, or denied the privacy that apparently meant so much to them. Just what did it mean? and why? The poor, on the other hand, were given to an unenviable kind of piety. A collection of rude terra cottas from a sixth-century includes a popular

bearded, horned god later identified with Zeus-Amon. He is an unlovely figure without the slightest air of majesty, or even anything fearsome. He is simply crude and ugly—as sorry an exhibit of the religious spirit of man as one can imagine. And he was worshiped all over the island that gave birth to the beautiful Aphrodite, and was the first destination of St. Paul when he set out on his missionary journeys. (From The Loom of History by Muller).

HISTORY OF FAMAGUSTA

Famagusta was founded in the 3rd century BC and is located $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles south of the ruins of Salamis, the city destroyed by the Arabs in 647 AD. The Christian inhabitants settled at the present site of Famagusta and were reinforced by the refugees of Acre in 1291. Annexed by the Genoese in 1376, Famagusta was reunited to the throne of Cyprus in 1464, and surrendered to the Turks in 1571, after a year's siege. The various landmarks, remodelled by the Venetians after 1489, and other attractions, attest to the medieval splendour of the city.

Some of the famous landmarks include the walls and the two gates of the city. Both gates were erected at the end of the 15th century; the Sea Gate, on the eastern side of the walled city, bears the Venetian emblem, the Lion of St. Mark. The Land Gate, on the southwest corner near the bastion, was greatly damaged in the Turkish siege of 1571, but still remains one of the most imposing entrances to the city, and is reached by a causeway across a moat. The massive walls of the city are nearly 17 feet thick and about three miles in circumference, built of huge blocks of solid stone said to have been taken from the ruins of Salamis.

Just inside the Land Gate is the Ravelin, the part of the fortification which sustained the brunt of fighting between the Venetians and the Turks. From the Ravelin, a winding street, with shops and cafes, leads to a public square where the beautiful 14th century Gothic Cathedral of St. Nicholas (now used as a mosque and renamed by the Turks, St. Sophia) and the remains of the old Venetian Palace, the Palazzo de Proveditore with its magnificent facade consisting of three arches supported by four Roman columns taken from Salamis. On the other side of the square are two Venetian columns of grey granite, backed by a small white domed building, formerly used as a Turkish school. It was to these pillars, used in the past as the public pillory, that the unfortunate Venetian General Bragadine is said to have been tied when tortured to death under the cruel and merciless conquest by the Turks.

About three miles north of Famagusta are the remains of the ancient city of Salamis. It was the principal city of the island from the earliest times, until its destruction by the Arabs in 647. It was the place where St. Paul landed, and St. Matthew's Gospel was found here in the tomb of St. Barnabas who was St. Paul's companion and fellow preacher; this is one of the major attractions to this day.

Off Salamis, the great sea battle between the Phoenician fleet belonging to Persia, and the Cypriots took place during the revolt against the Persian rule early in the 4th century BC.

The city of Famagusta is the only port of any importance on the island of Cyprus. The populous are poor and not well clothed. They are divided into three separate elements: the British group, the Greek group and the Turkish group.

The religious faction is predominately Greek Orthodox, with about a fifth being Mohammedan, and a small fraction being of the Jewish faith. The island being poor, communism is prevalent, especially among civil officials not of the British group, but all officials have been friendly and cordial and have been found to be most generous in their suggestion and efforts to make a visit a pleasant one.

TRANSPORTATION:

Nicosia is the name of the airfield, and is approximately four miles west of the city Nicosia.

There is a combination passenger freighter operating on a ten day schedule calling at Beirut, Alexandria, and Famagusta. Additional service operates from Larnaca or Limosia to Italy, Greece, and Turkey. There are four trains from Famagusta to Nicosia daily.

(Auto, Bus, Street Car, Ferry, Train, Boat) Taxis are plentiful and cheap. There are no street car lines, and the bus schedules are erratic. Reasonable prices are generally accepted by Taxi firms, but quite frequently fancy prices are charged to the obvious vistor. Especially does this apply to Kyrenia.

MEDICAL FACILITIES:

The District Hospital at Famagusta has a capacity of 40 beds and private rooms, but is poorly equipped. A dispensary is operated in connection with the hospital. Medical supplies are adequate to meet normal requirements. Drinking water from existing supply is considered safe to drink, but should be tested. Venereal disease is prevalent, with between 90% to 95% of the prostitutes being infected. Prevalent disease are typhoid and undulant fever, and reports of Brucellosis have been received. There is a high incidence of syphilis and tuberculosis. There are 350 doctors on the island, graduates of medical schools in Athens, Paris, Rome, and U.S. A modern well-managed sanitorium is located in the mountain regions, as well as a small 12-bed hospital in an inland town.

CHURCHES:

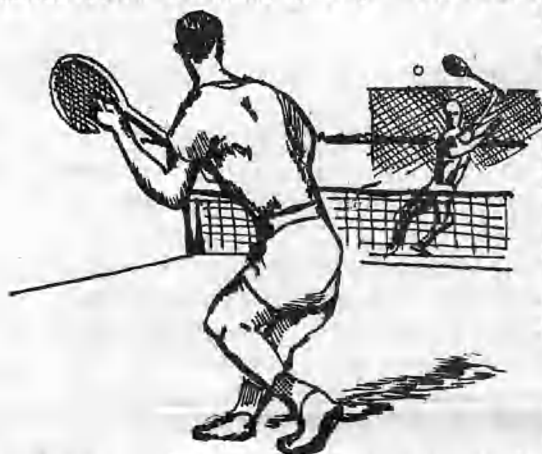
Catholic and Greek Orthodox, as well as Moslem mosques. Church of England, Church of St. Helena, 1 Stadium St. Varosha & the Soldiers Home, Christian Ass., 10 Arsinic St. are both in Famagusta; the Church of St. Paul, Church of England, Chaplains House, P.O. Box 264 is in Nicosia.

CURRENCY:

In accordance with Cyprus law, U. S. Currency should not be landed. Units of Cyprus currency are nine PIASTRE to the SHILLING, twenty SHILLINGS to the POUND. One Cyprus pound equals \$2.80.

ATHLETIC FACILITIES:

Recreational facilities afforded at Cyprus are extensive, and adequate for large parties of men. Camp Caracolos, Headquarters of the South Wales Borders, has made available its athletic facilities and Post Exchange for use on ship's parties, picnics, etc. British motor transport to and from the dock is available. Good beaches dot the coast between Larnaca and Famagusta. The British armed forces maintain at Troodes, 70 miles from Famagusta, a completely equipped mountain rest camp, situated at 5000 feet near the summit of Mountain Olympus. The camp can handle up to 150 men; meals and overnight lodging are included, and offers excellent winter sports including skiing, and sledding, and supplies complete equipment free in each case. The season lasts usually from December through



April, with snow accumulations of up to ten feet being normal. British motor transport is available. Hard surface tennis courts are available at the English Club in Famagusta for officers. Reading, writing, and relaxation facilities are offered to enlisted men at the British Institute and Soldier's Home.

TOURS AND POINTS OF INTEREST:

Tours offered by the Mantovani Company, the local agents of American Express, are unsatisfactory in price, scope, and quality. Tour arrangements may be made with local taxi companies for local tours to Salamis, St. Barnabas, Alacie, and Kantara Castle for \$2.80 per person, or all-day tours to Bellapais Abbey, Kyrenia, St. Hilarion Castle, and Nicosia for approximately \$4.00 per person. There are several points of interest in the walled city of Famagusta among which are Othello Tower and St. Nicholas Cathedral (now a mosque). Guides may be obtained near the inside of the Land Gate. A guide book, "Romantic Cyprus," is an excellent source of information about the entire island.

BEACHES:

King George, a short way by boat, provides excellent swimming. Swimming may be done from the ship; the British practice this custom.

CLUBS AND HOTELS

For Officers: (by invitation) English Club (Private Club) and British Army Officers' Mess.

Night Clubs: Panorama, Empire, and Chikito, all providing music, dancing and hostesses.

For Enlisted: Soldiers' Home, the British Institute and the Sergeants and Warrant Officers' Club.

Hotels: Famagusta Palace, Savoy Florida, King George, and the Palace, and Hotel Constantia.

RESTAURANTS, FOOD and BEVERAGES

Authorized restaurants are placarded with "in-bounds" signs indicating inspection and approval by British Military authorities. Local beverages are cheap but very potent. Imported beer and whiskeys are expensive. Ice cream is unsafe unless bought from a licensed dealer. Scotch is plentiful and inexpensive.

GENERAL INFORMATION

The CYPRUS MAIL, published in Nicosia, is the island's English-language newspaper. Excellent buys in English and Scottish woollens may be obtained at the Garden Shop in Famagusta or at various textile merchants in Nicosia.

NOTE: There was no map of Famagusta available at the time of publication. Efforts will be made to obtain and publish one after our arrival.

