

## **A Land for Strangers**

Non-Native Individuals and Communities in Cyprus

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# **Introduction**

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Modern research has shown a growing interest in studying interactions between diverse social and cultural groups. The present volume aims to contribute to this newest research approach by reflecting from a multicultural and interdisciplinary perspective on the impact of newcomers on local communities in Cyprus. Diversity of methodologies helps to tackle such a complex topic over a broad time frame, spanning from Prehistory to Contemporary Age.

Lying at the heart of the eastern Mediterranean basin, from the earliest times Cyprus has been visited by seafarers, fishermen, various travellers, colonists, conquerors and ultimately merchants and traders. Furthermore, its natural resources and strategic position attracted new settlers, refugees and, at times, foreign invaders. The Cypriot cultural heritage is, thus, the product of a complex history characterised by an increasing reshaping of interactions between locals and non-natives, which resulted in the constant renewal of the demographic, economic, political, and social landscape of the island.

Arranged according to a chronological order, the collected essays pertain to different fields like archaeology, epigraphy, history, and anthropology. They explore a wide variety of themes implementing diverse methodologies. A brief overview follows.



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The contribution “To Import and to Imitate. The Role of Aegean Pottery in the Community of Late Bronze Age Hala Sultan Tekke, Cyprus” by Lorenzo Mazzotta (University of Pisa) and Laerke Recht (Moesgaard Museum, Denmark) has an archaeological topic. The focus of analysis centres on Hala Sultan Tekke, a Mediterranean trade hub located in South Eastern Cyprus dating to the Late Bronze Age. In particular, the scholars propose a typological and functional analysis of the Late Helladic IIIA-B Aegean pottery imported at the site. Imported ceramic Aegean materials are found above all in the settlement and in the funerary area. They played an important role in expressing the identity and conveying the social status of the community living in the city.

The contribution “Inscribing Texts in Hellenistic Cyprus. Epigraphic Habit as a Tool for the Study of Social Interactions under Ptolemaic Rule” by Anaïs Michel (former member of the French School at Athens) addresses the Cypriot mixed society during Classical Antiquity. By studying a selection of inscriptions dating from the 4th to 1st centuries BC, the Author demonstrates how epigraphic habits intertwine with the socio-historical context, offering insights of the ongoing social interactions between Cypriot and external communities at that time.

The contribution “Venetian Reaya. Greek Orthodox Zantiots in Cyprus in the Eighteenth Century” by Theoharis Stavrides (University of Cyprus) is on a historical topic. The scholar analyses the figure of the ‘Zantiots’ (literally denoting the natives of the island of Zante), Greek Orthodox Venetians from the Ionian Islands. They arrived in Larnaca around the middle of the eighteenth century. The scholar attempts to delineate the social identity of the group, analysing numerous Italian, Greek and Ottoman sources for this purpose. The Zantiots, often described as troublesome subjects, had an ambiguous status, exemplified by the case of Evangelista Peristiani, sometimes described as Raja, other times as a subject of the Sultan. Lastly, the contribution describes the role assumed by the Zantiots as social and cultural intermediaries.

The contribution “French Consuls in Cyprus, 1840-70. Their Roles and Impact, with Archive Evidence” by Lucie Bonato (University of Paris Nanterre) reconstructs the vast and complex activity of the French consuls in Cyprus during the mid-1800’s, when the Ottoman Empire went through an intensive reorganisation of its administration. The historical analysis is developed by the Author through a systematic and rigorous investigation of the rich archive evidence of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, including a vast collection of letters. This article offers a detailed picture of the French Consuls’ politics with regards to internal situations in areas of trade, agriculture, taxes, customs duty, quarantine and water supply, but also foreign affairs and international diplomacy. In this

context, French consuls are crucial for the formation of the earliest Louvre Museum Cypriot archaeological collections.

“A Stranger’s Visit from the ‘Iron Curtain’: Cyprus as an Unrealised Project of Soviet Archaeology in the 1960s” by Pavel A. Evdokimov (Moscow State University) offers a detailed narration of the visit of the USSR Professor Sergey Kisselyoff to the island of Cyprus in 1962, based on unpublished archives materials and Kisselyoff’s original trip diary. The visit represents the first contact between the USSR and the young Republic of Cyprus. Kisselyoff’s activity on the island is contextualised in the broader historical framework of Cypriot foreign affairs and the relative liberalisation of the Russian political regime during the so-called Khrushchev Thaw. The Author gives a comprehensive description of the various Cypriot and Russian characters encountered by the Professor during his trip, engaged in a delicate embassy where foreign archaeological interests became a crucial element in the USSR ‘soft power’.

“Some Reflections of a Foreign Orthodox Priest” in Cyprus is a sort of field-work journal, in which Václav Ježek recorded anecdotes and stories from his years as a priest in Cyprus. However, this contribution extends beyond mere memoirs of first-hand experiences. The Author shares his personal thoughts and provides his perspective on Cypriot society, especially in rural areas. Due to his priestly appointment, Václav Ježek transitioned from an outsider to an insider. Accordingly, he not only proves to be a privileged observer but also a knowledgeable interpreter of contemporary culture in rural Cyprus.

The contribution “Unbuffered zone. Here let me stand by Marianna Christofides and the loop of extractive archaeology” by Luca Bombardieri (University of Siena) is dedicated to the video installation by Marianna Christofides, exhibited in Berlin in 2014, in Palermo in 2017 and in Turin in 2021 on the occasion of the exhibition *Cyprus. Crossroad of Civilizations held at the Royal Museums*. The Cypriot artist unmasks the colonialist and extractivist model acted by the nineteenth century, twentieth century and contemporary Western archaeology against the Cypriot antiquities and the Cypriot communities. Through processes of competition and accumulation typical of capitalism, colonialist archaeology triggers the continuous formation of collections of antiquities which are characterised as real commercial catalogues. The slow loop of *Here let me stand* gives us back the images of those antiquities extracted from the island: cold, dead and rootless.

Given the complexity of the topic, the present volume did and could not aim for exhaustivity. Yet, it hopefully demonstrates the value of a multidisciplinary and diachronic approach, paving the way for future research.

