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THE TRANSFORMATION OF GREEK ORTHODOX ECCLESIASTICAL INSTITUTIONS IN CYPRUS, 1878-1931

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In this discussion, I outline the transformation of Greek Orthodox identity in Cyprus during the first 50 years of British rule over the island. The year 1931 marks the first Greek Cypriot anti-colonial revolt (Oktomvriana), and the post-1931 period constitutes the period in which the Greek Cypriot goal of union (enostis) with Greece is forcefully put forth in the political agenda. In the article’s opening section, I outline the main institutional and political changes of the post-1878 period. In this era, ecclesiastical institutions underwent a major internal transformation as the religious hierarchy reasserted its authority in the face of new and threatening legislation enacted by the British. In pursuing this goal the church hierarchs became increasingly involved in the politics of Greek Cypriot nationalism. This involvement was expressed in a twofold manner: on the one hand, the hierarchs succeeded in legitimizing themselves as elected representatives of the Greek Cypriot community in the colonial administrative and legislative structures; while on the other hand, the church’s extensive involvement in education allowed it to identify its own authority with the defense and propagation of pro-Greek national sentiment.

In the next section, I address the tumultuous process through which this internal transformation of the religious institutions was accomplished. Thus, I examine the nature of the infamous Archdiocesan Question of the first decade of the 20th century and, next, I outline the consequences of the hierarchs’ increasingly nationalist stance vis-à-vis the British. In the context of this internal transformation, the office of the Archbishop of the Church of Cyprus was increasingly endowed not only with religious authority but also with secular authority: the office holder became de facto the national leader.

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of the entire Greek Cypriot community.

Finally, I briefly offer a contextual account that situates Cyprus in the framework of the broader Ottoman regime, as well as the challenges entailed by the post-1878 British regime. In so doing, I aim to show the convergences and divergences of Cyprus vis-à-vis the experience of other regions of the Empire (such as Serbia, Greece or Bulgaria) that became autonomous or independent of the Sublime Porte, and where the relationship between religious institutions and the state assumed a markedly different status as opposed to Cyprus. Cyprus’ particularity lies mainly in the absence of an autonomous and organized secular middle class that could displace the Orthodox hierarchy from its leadership position within the Greek Orthodox community.

The Transformation of the Religious Institutions

Under Ottoman rule the power and authority of the religious hierarchy of the Orthodox Church of Cyprus was significantly extended thanks to the various decrees (berats) issued by the Sultan (for the nature of these decrees, see Fekete 1986). In the mid-17th century, following an initiative of the Sublime Porte, the hierarchs were formally included in the state administration (see Michael 2005:133-137; Alasya 1973). That is, from 1660 onwards, the Orthodox Church of Cyprus entered into the system of leasing state tax revenues (ıltizam), and this development offered the prelates additional possibilities for gaining authority. In the Ottoman state, lifelong renting of tax revenues provided the framework for increasing the autonomy of local authorities from the Sublime Porte (İnalçık 1980:334).

A century later, in 1754, once more as a result of an initiative of the Sublime Porte, the church’s prelates were upgraded and became life-long holders of the kodjabash (communal elder or representative) position for the Orthodox population on the island. By means of this post, the hierarchs were officially authorized to represent the Orthodox population of the island to the central authority of the Empire.

By the 19th century the confluence of the authority of tax leasing with the political authority of the kodjabash post contributed to the Orthodox Church becoming the main economic and commercial factor on the island. While Archbishop Kyprianos and several members of the Greek Orthodox elite were executed in 1821 after having been falsely accused as sympathizers of the 1821 Greek revolution, the state of affairs soon returned to the status quo ante (Roudometof and Michael, forthcoming). The application of the
post-1856 Tanzimat reforms did not challenge the church hierarchs’ basis of authority. While they lost their personal authority in the government structures of the Ottoman Empire, their participation in the authority structures was secure thanks to their role as representatives of the Greek Orthodox confessional community (i.e., the Rum millet). In the new administrative bodies created in the Tanzimat period, the institutional role of the Orthodox Church of Cyprus, expressed through its prelates, remained substantial. Based on the economic significance of the ecclesiastical institutions, it seems that the part of the laity that was introduced into the Ottoman administrative bodies was not in a position to threaten or otherwise challenge ecclesiastical authority (Michael 2005:262). Moreover, the administrative initiatives that were undertaken between 1830 and 1850 appear to have faded over time, and subsequently the Ottoman Tanzimat reforms were implemented in Cyprus only partially and belatedly (Aymes 2009:110).

In fact, after 1850, the ecclesiastical institutions’ economic activities became a significant factor in the Ottoman Cyprus economy (for details, see Roudometof and Michael 2009). The island’s ecclesiastical institutions were the first ones to employ permanent personnel for their agricultural and stockbreeding activities while they accumulated capital to invest in acquiring additional agricultural lands, operating markets in the island’s cities and expanding their commercial activities beyond the island’s shores. Thanks to their land management and their production and trading of agricultural products, the ecclesiastical institutions dominated local and export commerce. At the same time all these activities allowed the central funds of the various churches, bishoprics and monasteries — all of them referred to as the Koinon (common) fund in the literature — to function as financial centres lending money to land cultivators at a considerable interest rate. The Ottoman land tenure system, the tax mechanism, the agricultural production and distribution of products, the church taxation, the spiritual side and the flock were all interwoven and coexisted in a single economic system.

During the first years after the British occupation (1878), the externally induced modernization project of the British administration extensively modified the Orthodox Church’s role. The colonial government

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2 Koinon fund was the central fund of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, which was also characterised as the bank of the community since it provided loans and the largest part of the Patriarchates’ incomes were deposited there. (See Moshovakis 1882:60). The funds of the monasteries were also called Koinon. These functioned according to the same standards but on a smaller scale, since they were used only for the population living close to the monastery.
sought to strip the church's hierarchy from its past political and financial privileges (for details, see Roudometof and Michael 2009). Post-1878 British colonialism entailed a redrawing of the boundaries between religious and secular spheres and the hierarchy's Ottoman semi-formal, administrative role was no longer officially sanctioned. Specifically, the administration did not recognize the hierarchs' traditional role of *kodjabash* (communal elders or representatives). It further refused to accept the financial obligations of the peasantry *vis-à-vis* the Orthodox Church as part of legitimate state taxation. Finally, the colonial authorities did not recognize the religious institutions' property claims over fields and forests without proper documentation.

Subsequently, the colonial government's actions led to a crisis of legitimacy for the prelates of the Orthodox Church of Cyprus. The church's reaction to its loss of legitimacy was twofold. On the one hand, the church hierarchy challenged colonial legislation in the courts in order to legally safeguard its property holdings. This course of action was rather unsuccessful since the 1885 legislation governing possession of fields and land contributed to extensive property loss by the church over those fields for which no definite proof of possession could be presented.

On the other hand, the church's prelates attempted to rally their flock by portraying themselves as fighters for the political rights of the Greek Orthodox community. In this turn of events, the high clergy's actions were increasingly framed in terms of their national (as opposed to their purely religious) authority as communal representatives. With the 1883 establishment of the Legislative Council, the British brought to the island the fundamental structures of an urban society, such as equality before the law and respect toward the subject's obligations and rights. Although the high commissioner cast the deciding vote, the Legislative Council was a forum of expression for the Greek Orthodox and Muslim Turkish communities' political will. In the Council, the British duplicated the Ottoman *millet* model of ethno-confessional governance by distributing the Council's seats between Greek and Turkish Cypriots. Such a division allowed for the *prima facie* transformation of the prelates into political leaders, thereby tacitly facilitating the reassertion of their traditional political leadership.

In the first elections for members of the Legislative Council in June 1883, the Bishop of Citium Kyprianos was successfully elected in both areas (Larnaca and Limassol) where had he competed, making his electoral triumph undisputed. Once the prelates were elected as representatives of the people through modern democratic means, the British were effectively forced to accept them as such. From this point on and for the entire colonial period
the prelates — thanks to their democratic election by the people — operated as political representatives of the Greek Orthodox inhabitants. Kyprianos' original electoral success in the 1883 elections was followed by the success of the Bishop of Kerynia Cyril Papadopoulos in 1889. Cyril remained in office until 1911. Gerasimos, the Hegumen of the Kykkos Monastery, was also a council member between 1883 and 1891. With the exception of the Legislative Councils of 1911, 1916 and 1921, there was at least one religious leader elected in all Councils until the British abolished the institution in 1931.  

Once they became members of the Legislative Council, the three bishops of Citium (Kyprianos, Cyril and Nicodemos) and the hegumen of the Kykkos Monastery Gerasimos, all conducted a bitter anti-British propaganda against the colonial government (Persianis 1978:22). In fact, the British government initially accepted their attacks with great tolerance until the 1931 revolt. The prelates' participation in the elections meant that they were forced to develop political mentalities and to conclude alliances with the laity in order to maximize their electoral support. As a result of entering into elections and of using their elected office to conduct nationalist politics, the hierarchs were drawn into the orbit of rising Greek nationalism: faith in the church and its leaders was transformed into faith in the nation and an act of opposition to British colonialism (Anagnostopoulou 1998; 1999:198,204). In this fashion, the Orthodox Church of Cyprus became the Greek Cypriots' only national authority, a unique source of national and political inspiration. This was expressed by the term ethnarcy. The faithful Orthodox was also a patriot and therefore national leadership had to be spiritual leadership (i.e., the prelates). Because the people's national sentiment took place within the pre-existing religious-political categories of difference, the result was not the construction of unified national public sphere but rather the fragmentation of the public domain along ethno-confessional lines (Bryant 2004). Difference vis-à-vis Cyprus' Muslims was preserved, but was now based on secular nationalism and not on religious doctrine.

This shift in mentality is clearly shown in the high clergy's behavior toward their Muslim counterparts. Although during the two first decades of British rule Christian and Muslim members of the Legislative Council collaborated on financial and local issues, from the dawn of the 20th century, this collaboration ceased, mainly as a reaction of the Muslim members to the

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3 All information on the Council's elections is drawn from the Cyprus Blue Books (1887–1931).
Greek Cypriots’ increasing unionist activities (Georghallides 1979:75). As the prelates assumed the political role of spokespersons for Greek Cypriot nationalism, they adopted an antagonistic position vis-à-vis the Muslim political representatives. After 1909, when the Orthodox Church of Cyprus (and the Archiepiscopal Throne in particular) fully assumed its role as national authority for the Greek Cypriots and openly supported union with Greece, collaboration with the Turkish Cypriots became difficult.

The Archiepiscopal Question and Beyond

This turn of events is intimately connected to the Archiepiscopal Question (1900-1910). Before discussing the specifics of this dispute, however, it is wise to look at the Citium Question, which was an early precursor to the Archiepiscopal Question.

In the course of the 19th century, the expansion of modern economic activities contributed to the transformation of the city of Larnaca (i.e., the ancient city of Citium) into the island’s main commercial port over the same period. In large part thanks to the concentration of all foreign consulates and European merchants (Katsiaounis 1997:242), the city attracted local merchants and professionals. At the same time, a number of intellectuals settled there after their studies abroad, mainly in Greece. In an effort to gain some level of political power, this newfound bourgeoisie attempted to control the bishoprics’ central funds. It was this effort that gave rise to the Citium Question (1855-1870), which concerned the activities of that bishopric’s central fund. On the surface this dispute was over the compromises the local bishop was forced to make against the community’s wealthy laity.

A closer look at the dispute reveals that the laymen attempted to control the fund’s management and thus usurp some of the prelates’ financial power (Michael 2005:286-294; Michaelides 1992:206-240; Roudometof and Michael, 2009). The Archbishopric became involved in the dispute when the Larnaca and Limassol congregations were divided between the supporters and opponents of the Bishop Meletios III (1846-1864). Letters were sent to the Archbishop accusing him of poor financial management and calling for outside intervention. After a representative investigated the issue, the Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church of Cyprus forced Bishop Meletios III to resign. His successor, Bishop Vartholomaios (1864-1866) also resigned after strong reactions by Larnaca’s laity, while his successor, Bishop Kyprianos (1866-1886) eventually allowed laymen to control the bishopric’s finances. The above also signified the initial stirrings of an ideological conflict
between those modernists who expressed a new understanding of community management and operated as carriers of Greek nationalism and those traditionalists who remained faithful to the Ottoman understanding of the millet system (Konortas 1999:169-179) and of the church’s role in it, and hence rejected nationalism.

In the 19th century, two ideological tendencies gradually formed within the hierarchy and the broader society on the island: a traditionalist one, carrying on the ideology of the Patriarchate of Constantinople and attempting to preserve the church’s traditional authority, and a nationalist one, which was a carrier of the irredentist national ideology of the Greek state. The Archiepiscopal Question was a continuation of the Citium Question, but of greater importance in terms of duration, depth of divisions, animosity and extensive involvement of outside agencies (e.g., the British authorities, the Kingdom of Greece and several Patriarchates).

The conflict was between the urban and intensely nationalized society of Larnaca, and the conservative and traditional society of Nicosia. Allegiance towards the Greek nation and the Greek state was the basic criterion for the Larnaca society with the Bishop of Citium Cyril (Kyrillos) Papadopoulos in the leading role, while religious faith and allegiance towards the Ecumenical Patriarchate was the criterion of patriotism for the society of Nicosia with the Bishop of Kerynia Cyril (Kyrillos) Vasileiou in the leading role. The fight was bitter and polarized the entire Greek Cypriot public sphere.

On the ecclesiastical level, the main issue was the election of an archbishop between the two above-mentioned bishops who were the candidates after the death of Archbishop Sofronios (1865-1900) in 1900. In the same way that the followers of the Bishop of Citium made the nation a political slogan, the followers of the Bishop of Kerynia made Christianity their own political slogan (Katsiaounis 1996:229). After a decade of intense conflict, the Archiepiscopal Question concluded in 1909 with the final election of the Bishop of Citium Cyril Papadopoulos to the throne. His election signaled the victory of the nationalists and the beginning of a new period for the island’s society (Michael 2005; for descriptions of the affair, see Christodoulou 1999 and Fragoudis 1911).

*The exception that confirms this generalization is the case of Dragoman (interpreter) Hadji Georgakis Kornesios who was the only layperson successful to use this particular post to gain power and authority. For a brief overview, see Roudometof and Michael (Forthcoming). For his biography, see Rizopoulos-Egoumenidou (1995).*
An important consequence of this bitter rivalry was that the colonial administration was called upon to offer official recognition to the high clergy. This was one of the original demands of the bishops who, after 1878, had asked the colonial authorities to continue the Ottoman practice of officially recognizing the election of new bishops and to endow them with administrative competencies, essentially continuing the Ottoman practice of granting berats to the bishops. In 1890, when new bishops were elected in the bishoprics of Kerynia, Citium and Paphos, the archbishop presented a petition asking that the Queen should confirm their elections. But for a long while, the British colonial government was reluctant to offer such recognition for it deemed that it constituted undue interference in ecclesiastical affairs. In 1909, Cyril Papadopoulos (Kyrillos II) was successful in receiving the High Commissioner’s formal approval for his election. But from this point on, the colonial authorities began intervening more in ecclesiastical affairs. In the next elections, the colonial government asked for the right to approve the archbishop prior to his enthronement (Persianis 1978:22).

It would be a mistake to fail to include here another major factor that contributed to the church hierarchs’ successful transformation into ethnarchs or national leaders for the Greek Orthodox Cypriot constituency. This factor concerned the critical role of the Orthodox Church in the development of the local educational system and the manner in which this system further fostered bi-communal separation. The growing significance of education has to be placed in the context of the nascent urbanization of the island. While Cyprus became an urban society only after World War II, the island experienced its first wave of urbanization over the 1878-1931 period. The population of the main cities (Nicosia, Larnaca, Limassol, Famagusta, Paphos and Kerynia) increased from 31,461 in 1881 to 65,585 in 1931 (Persianis 2007:47). While in 1881 there were only 4,907 students in elementary schools (of whom 765 were girls), by 1919-1920 this figure was 34,523 (of whom 12,547 were girls). That is, the structures of urban society took root in Cyprus over this period — which also accounts for the rise in popularity of nationalist discourse among the population.

With regard to education, one of the ways the church kept and even increased its influence upon the island’s Orthodox population was the expanded educational system. For nearly half a century after 1878, control of the schools remained in the hands of district committees presided over by the bishops (Persianis 1978:27). The teachers in the schools were expected to support the pro-union cause and to speak publicly in favor of the union in their speeches in the villages in which they were appointed. Further
developments within the educational system in the period of the British rule in Cyprus (1878-1959) can be divided into two periods: from 1878 to 1929 and from 1929 to 1959. The principal feature of the first period was the management of education by community institutions; in contrast, in the second period the British policy for educational centralization prevailed. As a result, education was strictly controlled by the colonial administration without however abolishing the role of the communal authorities.

In accordance with the 1895 Act, two supreme educational councils were formed. Both resided in Nicosia (on the Act, see Myrianthopoulos 1946:53-55; Weir 1952:25-26). The Greek Educational Council was composed of the Chief secretary to the administration who was acting as the Council’s chairman with the participation of the Archbishop of Cyprus and nine elected members. The Greek community elected six of the members: one from each of the district educational committees and three by and from the body of the Greek representatives in the Legislative Council. Their term of office was two years. As to the Greek Cypriots, the responsibility of the Church of Cyprus and the participation of the archbishop in the central council, and the bishops in the district committees placed education under the direct authority of the religious authorities.

The most significant outcome of the bi-communal separation of education that was adopted during the British rule was the complete reproduction of the ideologies of the institutions that controlled public education. For the Turkish Cypriots, on one hand, Turkish nationalism reached the educational system mainly after the establishment of the Turkish state and the enforcement of the Kemalist national education. For the Greek Cypriots, on the other, nationalism became the most essential part of their education long before the Turkish Cypriots. Through the church, which in the post-1878 period became the main representative of the political will of the Greek Cypriots, and through the educational system, which was controlled by the church and was constructed as an ethno-religious affair, Greek nationalism achieved the status of the dominant collective ideology for the Greek Cypriot population on the island. The dominant features of the Cypriot educational system during the British period formed as a result of the political conflict between the Orthodox Church of Cyprus and the British colonial administration. Education was used as a means to attain the political objectives of each of the two fighting sides (Marathetis 1992:29).
Cyprus in Context: Historicity, Convergences and Divergence

Eventually, the victory of the nationalist faction led the hierarchy to an increasingly vocal demand for union with Greece, which in turn spearheaded open political conflict with the British government. This came to a head in 1931 when a spontaneous peasant revolt that began in the island’s mining areas turned into a full-fledged anti-colonial revolt (Oktomvriana), culminating with the torching of the governor’s house on October 21. Responding to the revolt, the colonial government exiled the metropolitans of Citium and Kerynia, who had sparked the events with their actions. On this occasion, the British also abolished the island’s Legislative Council and engaged a policy of political suppression that entailed the prohibition of pro-Greek propaganda, suspension of civil liberties and censorship. Thus, Cyprus entered into a period of political suppression and authoritarianism referred to as Palmerokratia (“Palmerocracy”, after the British governor’s name). The British project pursued in this era entailed the reshaping of the island through of a policy of Cypriotism — whereby the island’s local identity was put forth as an alternative model for political, social and cultural cohesion (Rappas 2008). The actions of the British administration from the 1930s onwards were also indicative of an effort to usurp the church’s power over education and a willingness to enforce effective control over the educational system. Until the end of the colonial period, friction between the British administration and the Church of Cyprus, but also with other organized bodies on educational matters, remained constant, while the administration’s efforts to control the local educational system only came to a halt with the end of colonialism.

The British post-1931 policy was quite unsuccessful because the Greek Cypriot nationalists were able once more to use the vacanting of the archiepiscopal throne in order to challenge colonial authorities. That is, with the passing of Archbishop Cyril III in 1933, the issue of elections for a new archbishop was put onto the agenda. Nevertheless, the continuing absence of the other two bishops who had been exiled by the British, as well as the colonial government’s actions, all prevented the election of a successor. Only one bishop was left on the island: Leontios, the Metropolitan of Paphos, who had held the archiepiscopal throne for 14 years as locum tenens (1933-1947). After World War II, during which the Orthodox Church of Cyprus appeared to be loyal in the struggle against Fascism, the Holy Synod was reinstated and a new archbishop was elected. With the end of the Civil War in Greece (1949), during which the church suspended pro-union activities so as not to
embarrass the embattled Greek government to its British allies, the demand for union with Greece started to be expressed ever more forcefully.

In 1950, Makarios III was elected to the archiepiscopal throne, and his reign (1950-1977) unquestionably represents the high point of the Greek Cypriot institution of ethnarchy. Makarios III assumed the role of national leader, or ethnarch, of the Greek Cypriot community, becoming the soul of the Greek Cypriot pro-union movement. Makarios III also served as the Republic of Cyprus’ first President (1960-1977). It was only after his passing that formal division of secular and religious leadership was accomplished, with the Orthodox Church of Cyprus and the Republic of Cyprus electing different individuals for their respective leadership posts (for further discussion, see Roudometof, forthcoming).

As I have strived to show in this discussion, in Cyprus, as with many other Eastern Orthodox countries, religion and national identity have been intertwined in the island’s history. However, unlike other regions of the Ottoman Empire, the monopolization of the communal elder (kodjabash) post by the religious hierarchy substantially marginalized the ascent of the laity into political power: when the Orthodox population of Cyprus referred to the kodjabash, they meant the religious hierarchy — that is, the archbishop and the three bishops of Kyrenia, Paphos and Larnaca (Čevikel 2001:100). This identification of the kodjabash institution with the prelates alone — that is, without the presence of laity who held this position — appears only in Cyprus. Elsewhere in the Empire, while the Orthodox hierarchs were often the holders of this position, in due course, various laypersons (most often rich merchants, traders or officials) were able to displace the religious leadership from this post and to occupy it (Petrou 1992). This lack of power contenders from within the laity’s rank of Cyprus means that there were neither social developments nor any subversive possibility to challenge the power of the hierarchy.

As a result even in the course of the 19th century, the hierarchs of the Orthodox Church of Cyprus retained mixed political (e.g., administrative) and religious functions. This was radically altered only in the aftermath of the British rule. Cyprus is not unique in the fact that religious leadership had to contend with new political structures different from that of the Ottoman Empire. The ‘nationalization’ of Orthodox Christianity is perhaps the main characteristic of the post-Ottoman Eastern European Orthodox countries’ path to modernity (Roudometof 2001). In this respect, the ‘nationalization’ of the Orthodox Church of Cyprus is not exceptional but rather typical of the broader regional patterns. That is, just as in Greece, Bulgaria, Romania and
Bulgaria, Cyprus' own historical trajectory for entering into the modern world entailed the gradual but steady identification of a religious confession with a potential nation. In this process, a person's membership in a confessional community became eventually transformed into membership in a political community (see Roudometof 1999).

However, unlike the rest of the other Eastern European Orthodox countries, Cyprus was a British colony, a feature that impacted greatly on its own historical trajectory. In Cyprus, the assertion of secular authority and the displacement of religious authority from secular power was complicated by the church's adversarial relationship with the British colonial government (while in Greece, Serbia or Bulgaria, the religious hierarchy had to face secular national governments that did not antagonize the church).

In Cyprus, the hierarchs' role as popular representatives brought them increasingly close to the rising Greek Cypriot nationalism. In so doing, the hierarchs became increasingly drawn into the order of Greek Cypriot nationalism, thereby aligning the church with secular nationalist politics. Such a turn of events might seem paradoxical at first glance for nationalism is conventionally conceived as antithetical to Christianity's religious universalism. But as Gorski (2000) argues, nations often emerge out of previously constructed religious categories. This was certainly the case of the Orthodox peoples of Ottoman southeastern Europe, where the religious categories of the Ottoman millet system were gradually transformed into classifications of membership to a nation (Roudometof, 1999). Over the 19th century, when Greece, Serbia and later on Bulgaria were territorially disaggregated from the Ottoman Empire and became either independent (e.g., Kingdom of Greece) or autonomous states (e.g., pre-1878 Serbia, pre-1908 Bulgaria), they developed their own secular political leadership, which in turn led to a modern synthesis between church and nation (Roudometof 2008). In these modern syntheses, religious symbolism was re-deployed as national symbolism, thus facilitating the re-deployment of Orthodoxy as part of the peoples' national identity (Roudometof 2005).

In the course of the 19th century, Greek nationalism was gradually imported to the island's society. The particularity of Cyprus lies in the weakness of civil leadership within the Greek Orthodox ethno-confessional community (*Rum millet*). In turn, this weakness caused the redeployment of Orthodoxy in the service of nation building to take place within the institutional structures of the church itself. In southeastern European Orthodox countries, the transformation of Greek Orthodox Christianity in the era of nations and nation formation took the form of creating separate
national churches (Greek, Serb, Bulgarian, Romanian), whereby each church was affiliated with a respective nation, and membership in that church signaled a person's tacit declaration of national affiliation. In contrast, in Cyprus, there was no institutional disaggregation of the Orthodox Church of Cyprus. Rather, the transformation of the Orthodox Church of Cyprus was first and foremost an internal transformation: the hierarchs reasserted their past authority credentials — once deemed forever lost as the result of British colonialism — using the very 'new' or modern colonial structures, such as the Legislative Council, or their status as guardians of the Greek Cypriot communal educational system. This internal transformation registered a radical departure from the former modus vivendi under Ottoman control and the development of an adversarial relationship with the British colonial authorities.

Concluding Remarks

In this article, I have attempted to provide a brief sketch of the manner in which Cyprus' ecclesiastical institutions became intertwined with the forces of the rising Greek Cypriot nationalism during the colonial period from 1878 to 1931. My presentation focused on the important repercussions of the imposition of British colonialism on the former Ottoman province and the changes instigated as a result of the superimposition of modern colonial institutions. For Cyprus, unlike the rest of the Ottoman provinces of southeastern Europe, the coming of modernity is coterminous with its transition into the colonial sphere. In turn, this means that, unlike the rest of the Orthodox Christian religious institutions operating in the post-Ottoman Orthodox countries of the region, in Cyprus the relationship between church and state was also a relationship between colonized subjects and colonizers. The past incorporation of the church into Ottoman authority structures was replaced by the modern doctrine of church-state separation. Reacting to this state of affairs, the religious hierarchs entered forcefully and with considerable success into the arena of contemporary democratic politics, ironically using the very institutions set up by the colonial authorities. In so doing, they charted a new course in the history of the relations between the church, the state and the people.

This new course was accompanied by their endorsement and promotion of Greek Cypriot nationalism. This new and hitherto non-existent relationship meant that church structures were sufficiently adaptive to their newfound situation and that the church hierarchs were able to reassert their
past privileged positions as popular representatives. Their role as guardians of the Greek Cypriot educational system further strengthened their positions.

The bitter conflicts and disputes of the era — starting with the Citium Question and culminating in the Archiepiscopal Question — show the contested nature of this transformation, as different constituencies, ranging from rich laypersons to the ideological camps of the modernists and traditionalists, attempted to gain control over ecclesiastical institutions as a means of gaining authority over the single most important institution of the Greek Cypriot community.

Unlike the rest of Eastern Orthodox societies, then, the ‘nationalization’ of Cyprus — at least with regard to its Greek Cypriot part — was not accomplished through the creation of separate secular authorities (as was the case in Greece, Serbia, Romania and Bulgaria). It was accomplished through the internal transformation of the nature, character, orientation and scope of the Greek Orthodox ecclesiastical institutions on the island (the bishoprics, the archiepiscopal seat, etc.). This feature is a major divergence in Cyprus’ historical trajectory and a consequence of the post-1878 imposition of British colonialism.

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