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CITIES AND IDEOLOGIES IN 19th CENTURY CYPRUS: 
A TRADITIONAL CAPITAL 
AND A MODERN PORT CITY

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The 19th century could be described as the *bourgeoisie century* since it is generally acknowledged that the European bourgeoisie, which reached its apex during the third quarter of the century (Hobsbawm 2000:346), was both financially strong and having a political say, and was successful in leading societies and their political states to radical changes. The rivalry of the bourgeoisie against other social groups, and mainly those attached to power or in many cases in power, led to ideological conflicts resulting in power changing hands or in some cases led the traditional aristocratic power being controlled by elements of the bourgeoisie.

With regard to Cyprus, the radical expansion of commerce in several areas of the Ottoman Empire in the mid 19th century\(^2\) created economic conditions that led to the emergence of a class of businessmen with increased accumulation of capital and strong mobility. The increased commercial activity in Cyprus, just like in other areas of the vast Ottoman Empire, was part of a certain view of the world: the Orient as an exporting area of raw materials and agricultural products and an importing area of industrialised goods. The European states' minorities in the Ottoman Empire, i.e. the consuls and businessmen, played an important intermediary role in this international economic and commercial network (Issawi 1982:261). What was also indicative of the increased commercial activity in Cyprus' ports

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2 The period between 1840 and 1870 is considered to be unique from the point of view of the connection of the Ottoman economy with the global capitalist economy. For the first time, and only during that specific period, the amount of the empire's exports exceeded its imports. The main business partners of the Ottoman Empire during the period were Great Britain, France, Austria, Russia, and the U.S.A. (Kasaba 1988:87).
during the period was the total number of merchant vessels arriving in
Larnaca port for the five-year period between 1854 and 1858. While 320
arrivals were recorded in 1854, in 1858 this number reached 715, marking a
65% increase, indicating the mobility at this specific port and the steep rise
of commercial activity in the city. A significant surplus in the island’s
balance of trade was marked in 1877 as the total value of exports, which
exceeded the total value of imports by 43% (Aristeidou 1999:129-130).

This business class, which was connected to the wealth-producing
resources of the island and mainly the production of agricultural goods,
eroded the traditional self-supporting economy and created new credit
networks that gave fresh impetus to a type of financial economy, and
facilitated the export of agricultural products to the West and the import of
industrial products (Saint-Cassia 1993:97). In this framework, the big
landowners, including Church institutions, turned to the big estates (çiftlik)
production destined for export trade. For example, the wealthiest monastery
on the island, the Kykkos Monastery, owned many çiftlikts on the island
during the 19th century (Michael 2005a:118-119), while it was also a joint-
owner of a merchant vessel for the trading needs of its goods (Papadopoullos
2008:192). Slowly, the traditional institutions of power — the Ottoman
administration and the Church of Cyprus — lost their privilege to accumulate
power and the biggest share of business activity, while educated people and
professionals emerged from the new class of businessmen who were
concentrated in port-cities. It should be noted here that in the case of Cyprus,
the Church of Cyprus, as of the mid 18th century, had gradually become a
powerful political institution and its high clergy perhaps the most powerful
class on the island (Michael 2005b).

The new class of powerful businessmen that appeared in the Ottoman
state was mainly composed of non-Muslim subjects of the empire, as the
growth of trade during the 19th century mainly favoured these groups. It thus
set aside to a significant extent the traditional economy and power elites.
Their leading status in their community did not require legitimization from
traditionally powerful institutions, nor their relation with these, such as the
high clergy for example (Karpat 1982:158). On the contrary, these young,
wealthy businessmen proved to be leading personalities in their community
thanks to their financial prosperity, their more and more frequent contacts
abroad as well as their high — for that particular time — level of education.
The connection of many businessmen and other non-Muslims with European
consulates and residents in Ottoman territory, an increasing phenomenon in
the empire since the 18th century (Göçek 1996:92), placed them in a
favourable position both in business activities and in contact with modern European ideas. These locals, in their effort to attain more favourable conditions of trade, entered the services of consulates in the Ottoman Empire as translators in order to maximize their profits, and created a favourable business environment. By this way they secured their direct involvement in the trade networks between their areas and Europe (Karal 1998:163). This class would become more and more homogenous towards the end of the 19th century and through united demands and claims express itself more dynamically.

Business activity from and to the western states brought about significant economic growth along the Cyprus coastline and in port cities such as Larnaca and Limassol; this soon led to social changes that became more distinct towards the end of the 19th century. An economic class that was financially independent from traditional authorities and that showed particular interest in public life developed mainly in Larnaca, where there were the consuls, their protégés, and the commercial agents who worked with the new businessmen, members of the Orthodox community. The fact that all these economic and social changes took place in Larnaca and not the island’s capital is a peculiarity in the history of Cyprus (Katsiaounis 1996:18). As of the moment that Larnaca was the par excellence city with an “urban face” in the second half of the 19th century, subversive ideas would not crystallize, at a first glance at least, in the capital but in the port city. Thus, conflict in relation to the political power of the Orthodox community appeared in Larnaca and not elsewhere.

**Larnaca: a Cypriot city with “traces of Europeanism”**

The fact that Larnaca was home to the main commercial port of Cyprus and to foreign consulates, led the city to adopt a more “urban” image, contrary to the “traditional Ottoman” image of Nicosia. The concentration of European consulates in Larnaca resulted in the emergence of a more European atmosphere in this city — in comparison to the rest of Cyprus — while the gradual emergence of a significant class of businessmen even more diversified the city’s image. The establishment of consulates in the city

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1 This will have an impact on another framework of conflict based on the national conscience that the members of each community develop. While, that is, import and export trade gave a push to the ottoman economy, at the same time the financial factor led to a clear diversification of the communities based on an economic and not only a religious aspect. This led to the development of a national conscience in each of the communities (Turgay 1982:289).
seems to have been mainly due to the port and its proximity to neighbouring Syria, since many European vice-consulates on the island came under the jurisdiction of the consulates of Aleppo (Katsiaounis 1997:226), while at the same time business activity was a priority for the consuls. In the mid 19th century the consulates of Britain, Austria, Belgium, France, Denmark, Greece, Spain, Holland, Ragusa, Russia, and other states were found in Larnaca (Kyriazis 1936:163).

The first commercial tribunal (ticaret meclisi) was established in Larnaca in 1854, thus contributing to the better administration of justice in relation to commercial activities and allowing the entrance of Orthodox and Europeans in an Ottoman institution. Larnaca seems to have been chosen to host the commercial tribunal because the businessmen and all those qualified to staff it were already residing there. It is characteristic that on April 2, 1856 the French consul reported that

_When Cemal Pasha wished to establish the commercial tribunal in the island’s capital, he realised that it was impossible to find qualified people there and was forced to establish it in Larnaca (Kyriazis 1929:244)._ 

Another consular report about the Commercial tribunal states the significance of its establishment in Larnaca, a fact that underlined the city’s difference in character in relation to the rest of the Cypriot cities and mainly the capital, Nicosia. It stated that

_Indeed, since the establishment of the commercial tribunal in Cyprus, its bench has been in Larnaca, while its composition signified the safeguarding of good administration of justice. Because, irrespectively of its Ottoman members, the European forces consuls had their own representatives in the commercial tribunal who came directly under the ministry of commerce and did not suffer the inevitable influence of the governor (Kyriazis 1933:184)._ 

The demographic character of the city was another important element that outlined the two main directions its society would follow during the second half of the 19th century. Firstly, the gradual political awareness of the population and the emergence of Larnaca as a place where the ideology of nationalism was predominant; secondly, the strenuous efforts of the community’s wealthy citizens to infiltrate the field of political power of the
Orthodox community. In the 1831 census conducted by the Ottoman administration that recorded all taxpayers, the population of Tuzla amounted to 5,551 residents, 3,776 of which (68%) were Greek Orthodox. At Iskele-i Tuzla the Ottoman census recorded 341 Muslim and 573 non-Muslims, i.e. 37.3% and 62.6% respectively. According to the same census, Larnaca was the second city in population in Cyprus after the capital Nicosia (BOA Genel Müdürlüğü 2000:93). In the 1841 census, the entire district of Larnaca presented a population of 9,500 Greek Orthodox (73.07%), 3,000 Muslims (23.07%) and 500 Catholics (3.8%). In the detailed 1881 British administration census, the data of which seem to be more valid, the population of Larnaca presented the same picture. Of a total of 7,883 residents in Larnaca, 1,965 were recorded as Muslims (24.9%), 5,058 as Greek Orthodox (64.1%), and 810 as others (10.2%), the latter including the Catholics who lived in the city (Papadopoulos 1965:80).

The fact that Larnaca had the largest percentage of Greek Orthodox residents in the 19th century is one of the main factors that facilitated the dissemination of the nationalistic ideology of the period. At the same time, the lack of a powerful Muslim population gave the city a more Greek character making it look less “Muslim” than the capital, Nicosia. The majority of the Greek Orthodox population and the gradual urbanisation of Larnaca would play an important role in the later course of the community in relation to the demand of Enosis (Union of the island with Greece) (Anagnostopoulos 2004:140).

In the same context, the action taken by an important group of Ionians who had come to live in the city at the beginning of the 19th century ideologically influenced those who had originated from Greece and the Greek Orthodox residents of the city. In time, the Ionians exhibited a strong presence in Larnaca mainly in the financial and intellectual fields. Let it be noted that these Ionians came from a region that had its own history in relation to a unionist movement that ended in the inclusion of the Ionian Islands in the Greek state in 1864. This would have immediate repercussions on the formulation of a unionist movement in Cyprus during British Rule. A letter by the Greek consul on the island to the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs requesting the number of subjects of the Ionian State living on the island is also indicative of the composition of this community during the

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1 T. Papadopoulos draws these data from Louis Lacroix (Louis Lacroix, *Iles de la Grèce*, Paris 1853) and notes that they may not be very accurate. However, the main point of interest here is the composition of the population that remains indicative (Papadopoulos 1965:62).
second half of the 19th century. Vice consul Philippos Vardas reported in 1864 that:

*The Ionians who have been reinstated in Cyprus amount to 205 souls, a third of whom reside in Larnaca. They are among the most respectable fellow-country-men, law-abiding businessmen who belong to the first class of the society* (Georgis 2001:386).

The Greek consulate in Larnaca immediately became the most important vector of the nationalistic ideology of the Greek national state among the Greek population on the island. The consulate was established in 1845 and came under the jurisdiction of the Samsun consulate and the Embassy of Istanbul; the first vice consul, D. Margaritis, arrived in Larnaca in July 1846 (Mpelia 2001:245). The issue with the presence of people with Greek citizenship already existed in Larnaca. Prior to the establishment of the Greek consulate, several Cypriots who had taken part in the 1821 Greek War of Independence had tried to secure Greek citizenship. It is worth noting that the British consul in Larnaca, Vodiciano, reported to the embassy in Istanbul in December 1831 that

*The measure regarding the acquirement of citizenship has been adopted by farmers and people of all professions at such a degree that if it is continued the island will very soon become a Greek colony and the Sultan shall have nothing but the empty title of the ruler* (Luke 1989: 169).

All of these points clarify why the various travellers described Larnaca differently from other cities even before the 19th century. The Archbishop of Sinai who visited the city in 1766 mentions in a document published in Venice in 1819 that:

*Scala too is increasing and growing daily, not only as concerns its buildings but in the civility and moral development of its inhabitants: their manners are becoming sociable, affable, and pleasant. Already three ensigns, one Imperial, one Royal, and one Sanatorial, float in the air over the houses of Consuls of native birth* (Cobham 1908:314).

In 1809 the traveller Coransez, pointed out that many Europeans reside in Larnaca and "**thus there are many opportunities for social life and for**
someone to reacquire European habits” (Maratheftis 1984:138). In 1816, Otto von Richter, another traveller, noted in his texts that:

For the European who returns from Asia, the particular charm that Larnaca has or offers are the traces of Europeanism that he sees in its image and first of all the hat that has set aside the turban (Enepekidis 2000:53).

Later, in 1845, the French consul in his description of Nicosia noted that this is “a Turkish city, with medieval ideas in the inland of the island without any Europeans” contrary to Larnaca, the people of which he characterizes as educated stating that “if the seat of the government was transferred to Larnaca, the implementation of new decrees would have been easier” (Kyriazis 1929:242).

What is certain about Larnaca during the second half of the 19th century is that the city was substantially the most prosperous urban centre in Cyprus; and immediately after the transfer of the island to Britain in 1878, noteworthy activities developed in the intellectual, cultural, and publishing fields. The first printing house in Cyprus was established in Larnaca in 1878, while a significant number of newspapers were published there, playing a decisive role in the dissemination of ideologies. The newspapers in circulation in Larnaca were Kypros, Neon Kition, Stasinos/Phontis Kyprou, Enosis, and To Ethnos. At the same time, the first cultural and intellectual clubs made their appearance (Papaleontiou 1999:195-220) and became meeting places for the local intelligentsia and forums of public information on questions concerning Cyprus during the first decades of the British Rule. Clubs like the Graikikon, Kittiys, Sophocles,1 Kitiakos Sylogen, Emportki Lesii and Laikon Anagnostirion contributed to the dissemination of a spirit of modernisation and of political say aiming at mobilising the local society mainly about ideological but also minor issues.

5 The names of these cultural clubs that come from the Greek antiquity should be included in the wider typical framework of the Greek case of nationalism where the Greek antiquity is strongly promoted aiming at consolidating a historical continuance of the Greek nation from antiquity until modern times.
Nicosia: a traditional Ottoman city

During the Ottoman period, Nicosia was the administrative centre of traditional Ottoman power, that is to say the Ottoman governor of the island and his bureaucracy, the Archbishop of Cyprus and the entourage of each Archbishop, and at least up until 1804 the dragoman (tercüman) a powerful Ottoman institution. Similarly, Nicosia was the place of activity of all those who belonged to the sphere of the financially powerful in the Ottoman system. These were the owners of large agricultural estates, and persons in the circle of the Archbishopric, i.e. those whose power was based on their immediate relation to the two centres of power and mainly the Church of Cyprus. It is characteristic that Sultan Abdul Mecid in a firman dated Saban 7, 1256 (October 7, 1840) referring to the appointment of Mehmet Talat as the new governor of Cyprus vividly describes the reaction of various circles of power in Nicosia against the effort to implement the reforms of 1830:

The election process of the parliament does not seem to be good and on behalf of the Turks and the reayyas some incompetent people entered the abovementioned parliament and some of the elders on the island. Hadjikyrgenis and Apegitos, eating and drinking as always wanted the properties and rights of the poor (Theoharides 1984-1987:452)... Since the kadi of Nicosia and the Archbishop of Cyprus were accused of causing unmentionable deeds a high order was issued for their removal...(Theoharides 1984 - 1987:454).

It is perhaps in this framework that the French consul in Larnaca noted in a letter dated January 24, 1855 that “the Turks of Nicosia are still very fanatical and every modern measure would be rejected” (Kyriazis 1929b:264). The resistance towards any kind of reform introduced to the island seems to have come from the powerful Muslims who were used to the existing system of administration and every measure of change appeared to them as a loss of their vested rights.

With regard to the demography of Nicosia, according to the 1831 Ottoman census its population amounted to 5,775 people. 60.8%, i.e. 3,511 people, were recorded as Muslims and 39.2%, i.e. 2,264 people as non-Muslims (BOA Genel Müdürlüğü 2000:93). The numbers indicate that the situation was the complete opposite of Larnaca’s, where the Greek Orthodox population was a majority. In the 1841 census, and in spite of the fact that Lacroix rounded off his numbers, Nicosia appears to have had a population
of 12,000 people, 8,000 (66.6%) of which were Muslims, 3,700 (30.8%) Orthodox and 300 (2.5%) Maronites (Papadopoulos 1965:62). In the British census of 1881, the Greek Orthodox population of Nicosia appears to have increased, without however reaching the percentage of Larnaca. Nicosia was recorded having a population of 11,536 people, 46.7% of which (5,393 persons) were Muslims, 49.1% (5,669 people) were Greek Orthodox and the rest 4.1%, or 474 persons were recorded as others (Papadopoulos 1965:80).

In the mid 19th century, Nicosia could be described as a capital without the urban character of the heart of a country: a city where the Ottoman character was stronger than in Larnaca. At the same time it hosted the Archbishopric, which meant that it was also the administrative centre of the most important institution of the Ottoman period, the Church of Cyprus. Close to the Archbishopric were people who were later called the Bloc of conciliators who, according to sources from that time, presented a more conciliatory and moderate attitude, always turning towards imperial Istanbul and the Ottoman framework of power. A large part of the country’s population, let it be noted, still remained in 1881 a rural population of 83.1% (Constantinou 2001:190), and was under the influence of the powerful conciliators who had connections that created a network of dependence affecting the daily lives of many.

**Larnaca: the way towards the ideological conflict within the Church**

What was particular about the still weak bourgeoisie of Larnaca was that it did not conflict with the local traditional power — which was the Church and specifically in the city’s case, the Metropolis of Citium — a completely traditional body of power that in the rest of the Greek Orthodox areas was the centre of reaction against any movement that supported the Greek national state. Instead it went along with it — or rather a way around it — and this Church institution became the leading figure of the movement. Until the end of the century, the Metropolis of Citium was the rallying point of nationalists and described as that part of the Church of Cyprus that constituted the National Authority of Cypriots (Roudometof, Michael 2009). The fact that an ideological conflict between Larnaca’s newly emerged bourgeoisie and the traditional Church took place within the Church is a Cypriot particularity. In addition, due to the fact that this was a conflict within the Church, the issue would be indeed superficially presented as a Church problem and analysed as such in many works.

A factor that made it easier for the bourgeois to claim power through
the mechanism of the Church was the financial management of the Metropolis. The Sublime Porte with the 1830 reforms first introduced seculars to the financial management process. With the establishment of the Central and District Committees of Dimogerontes and the Committee of the Public, the involvement of seculars in the financial activity of the Church was institutionalised. This overturned the previous absolute authority of the high clergy with regard to Church incomes and their management (Michael 2005b:255). The content of the letter of the French consul to the embassy in Istanbul is descriptive of the climate among the leading secular figures of Larnaca’s community:

_The clause that provided for the management of the clergy by a committee was enthusiastically accepted. The Bishop of Larnaca was subjected to this control in order to pay the debts of the throne, which in part he contracted to make his people rich. He was compelled to accept it with discontent since his creditors were exerting pressure (Kyriazis 1929:247)._

Throughout the 19th century the higher clergy of Cyprus needed to contract big loans in order to pay its debts to the Ottoman administration and be in a position to run the Church mechanisms, which meant paying salaries and other financial obligations. The amounts due to the Ottoman administration prior to the reforms could not only be extraordinary and unjustified but also significant and unbearable for the Church. Several Ottoman governors of the island took advantage of their office to become rich quickly and imposed on the prelacy of the Church various taxes. It is characteristic that the French ambassador mentions in his letter dated 12 January 1822 that

_The governor seizes all amounts collected either to fill his private fund or to add to the gift of 900 purses with which he hopes to buy off the favour of Kapudan Pasha (Kyriazis 1937:108)._ 

The large lands and other property of the Church and its institutions,

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* According to these reforms, a type of parliament is established on the island where elected representatives of the communities would participate. In relation to the financial management of the Orthodox community, control committees are established on both a central and district level (For more see Michael 2005b:251-257).
while making it perhaps the most important real estate owner, made it difficult to raise capital for the payment of extraordinary taxes and debts. Moreover, the need to borrow money became imperative when, due to the mismanagement of the Arch bishopric’s and the Metropolis’ funds, these institutions were forced to contract loans for the immediate payment of their debts. Another reason for which Church institutions contracted loans from wealthy seculars was their investing activities.

The squandering of Church money by people who were close to the institution, occasionally high priests — and often their relatives — was considered as a given fact by both the flock and the Church. This is also mentioned by the Ecumenical Patriarch Konstantios I in his letter to Archbishop Panaretos in January 1831. The letter states that the Archbishop is inactive and that

*he and the selfish men surrounding him are managing on their own the affairs of the throne squandering the Archbishopric’s money* (Stavrides 2001:396).

A vicious circle of contracting and paying off loans of the Church institutions — and mainly the Metropolises — was thus created and often took the form of a scandalous management of the funds that caused a stir among the flock of the Church and in particular the representatives of an economic elite that constantly sought a political role in the representation of the community. Specifically in Larnaca, the Bishop of Citium in a circular dated 7 June 1875 referring to older debts of his Metropolis notes that “*relatively big debts burden the fund of the Metropolis since before I was born*” (Archive of the Metropolis of Citium, Codex A:70). Besides, it is characteristic that in a document of the Ottoman administration of the island to the Archbishop of Cyprus dated 8 February 1859, the latter is urged to ensure the payment of a debt owed by the sister of the Bishop to the British consul Antonio Palma (Hidioglu 1971-1972:309).

Since the Church of Cyprus, through its high priests, was the exclusive leading institution of the community — within the framework that the Ottoman state of reforms established it as such (Michael 2005b:266) — it was expected that the wealthy bourgeoisie would claim power within the community, either by clashing with the high priests and expressing a completely secular ideology or by demanding that seculars are allowed to jointly share power with the high priests. In the end, the latter target was attained through two factors. Firstly, the still weak position of the Cypriot
bourgeoisie — just emerging in Larnaca — and secondly due to the powerful position of the high priests, a position strengthened not only by the Ottoman framework of administration that attributed them the legality of an Ottoman leadership, but also by the fact that the high priests of the Church of Cyprus — contrary to other Orthodox Churches — were elected with the direct participation of seculars and recognized as leaders of the community by such an election.

Another reason was the financial dominance of the Church of Cyprus. Church institutions were the main real estate owners on the island, while their involvement in the exports of agricultural products connected them to the most profitable industry of the times, trade. Seculars infiltrated the management of power through the management of the debts and public funds of the Metropolises since this was the only field where Church institutions seemed to be in need of the wealthy seculars. When contracting loans from them they gave the seculars the right to claim power through the timely payment of the loans they had granted.

In addition, the new Ottoman framework of community administration included seculars — and mainly from the wealthy bourgeois — in a framework of joint management of the community finances, a large part of which was essentially the finances of the Metropolises. These indeed were the reasons why in the second half of the 19th century the main characteristic of the relationships between seculars and high priests was the finances of the Church institutions and their joint management.

The “Citium Question” and its weak ideological context

The claim to power by seculars is recorded in Larnaca and by the Metropolis of Citium when the “Citium Question” broke out at the beginning of the 1860s. In spite of its financial character, this problem was in essence a political problem of power sharing in the community. The dispute, even though on the surface it seemed to concern only the debts of Church institutions — in particular those of the Metropolis — and their payment, was really about the loss of the Church’s absolute control over the political and financial management of the community’s public affairs and the infiltration of seculars in the sphere of power.

Immediately after the Tanzimat reforms and the institutionalised representation of seculars in the collective bodies for the management of the community’s finances and political issues (Central Committee of the Demogerontes and the Committees of the Public), a dispute broke out
between the Bishop of Citium and the seculars who had granted loans to the Metropolis. The dispute lasted for a long time — up until the end of the Ottoman period and the arrival of the British administration — during which the strong urge of the seculars to actively participate in the management of the Church’s finances, the forced agreement of the Bishop, and the opposition of the Archbishop and his entourage towards such a prospect, were all evident. In a more general view of the “Citium Question”, one could define it as the beginning of the formulation of the ideologically opposing groups that would clash at the end of the 19th century and especially at the beginning of the 20th century when the Archbishopal Question broke out (Roudometof, Michael 2009:44). Moreover, exactly because the “Citium Question” was the beginning of this formulation, its ideological context would not be evident and most of its expressions would be restricted to the financial level and the management of the Metropolis of Citium’s funds.

The beginning of the “Citium Question” and the demands on behalf of seculars to have a say took place when Bishop Meletios III Modinos was the Bishop of Citium (1846-1864). He found himself a few years after his accession in the vortex of conflicts and claims provoked by the Metropolis’ debts and the mismanagement of its fund. As it is also recorded by the consul of France in Larnaca in 1864

*today the dispute has been so aggravated that such fervent passions were born in both camps that shocked the country deeply* (Kyriazis 1929c:253).

In 1855, after responding to a request by renowned citizens of Larnaca, a committee was established to manage the Metropolis’ fund and to find ways to pay off the debts (Michaelides 1992:212). The main reason for the establishment of this committee was the extravagant debts of the Metropolis of Citium to its secular creditors who were claiming their money in various ways. At the same time, the admission by the Bishop that the Church fund could not pay off the debts and the evident mismanagement of the finances and the low level of the incomes left no room to question the demand of Larnaca’s citizens. Three years later however, this committee was dissolved, the Metropolis’ debts had not paid off but had increased, while Meletios III again undertook the management of the Metropolis’ fund. As expected, the committee was composed of people who belonged to Larnaca’s weak bourgeoisie. Among them were Ionian businessmen, since according to a letter by the French consul
The management by these Commissioners who were in part Ionians and whose clear objective was to pay off as fast as possible the old debts of the Metropolis, showed that instead of the deficit being made up it was growing more than necessary. This observation resulted in the reinstatement of Meletios to his legal office (Kyriazis 1929c:256).

Another indication of the extent of the debts towards various seculars from Larnaca — Cypriots and mainly foreign businessmen — is the detailed records in its Codices. What these entries confirm is the extent of the debts and even more importantly the large number of creditors who were wealthy seculars in its court. A few years earlier, the debt records of the Metropolis for the year 1797 alone, when Bishop Chrysanthos ascended the throne (1797–1810), show loans to the fund of the Metropolis; they amounted between a few to seven and a half thousand piastres accorded by several wealthy Larnaca citizens, among them consuls Konstantinos Peristianis and Antonio Vodiciano as well as the lord dragoman of the time, Hadjigeorgakis Kornesios. The total debt of the Metropolis for the that year was 30,761 piastres (Archive of the Metropolis of Citium, Codex E:12). Another reference to extraordinary loans of the Metropolis of Citium from seculars concerned the amounts that Bishop Meletios (1810-1821) borrowed in order to cover the expenses of his enthronement. Almost all loans, amounting to 12,328 piastres were borrowed from seculars from Larnaca and Nicosia (Christorfidou 1929:43). Several decades later, in 1860, the Metropolis of Citium appears to owe to a large amount 199,477 piastres, to seculars once again — among them the businessman Mattei7 (Archive of the Metropolis of Citium, Codex Θ:378). The amount of the loans that the Metropolis had contracted from each creditor during that period was between three thousand and 57,500 piastres. What is inferred from the entries in the Metropolis’ Codices is that the Bishop constantly borrowed from the wealthy citizens and the full payment of the loans was never attained.

By 1863 the situation with the Metropolis of Citium’s finances had caused such a problem that the group of seculars exerting pressure to be involved in the management of its fund took decisive action. What is even

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7 The issue of the big debt to the businessman Mattei is mentioned in the letters of the Ecumenical Patriarchate to the Bishop of Citium in 1854 and 1855. In these letters the Ecumenical Patriarch Anthimos urges the Citium Bishop Meletios to pay off the debt to Mattei. One of the letters mentions the total debt to Mattei, 174,000 piastres, and the Patriarchate suggests that the loan be paid off in instalments (Stavridos 2001:470-471)
more important however is that there was a split between the Larnaca and Limassol residents as to the management of the fund and the ideas of the people who sought to be involved in Church affairs. The crisis in the relations between the Citium Bishop and his flock, but also between the Larnaca and Limassol residents, culminated in May 1863, supposedly instigated by the dragoman of Holland Vasilios Leontaridis. The reason for the latter’s reaction seemed to be the intention of the Metropolis of Citium not to proceed to the renewal of the lease of Ayios Minas Monastery.

The dispute was so aggressive that the residents of the two cities were divided to “Meletios supporters” (Meletikoi) and “Anti-Meletios or supporters of the throne” (Anti-meletikoi) resulting in the latter not commemorating the Bishop’s name in services and commemorating Archbishop Makarios instead. The supporters of Meletios — mainly residents of Limassol — demanded that he maintain the financial management of the Metropolis and prevented any change to the existing framework. On the contrary, the anti-Meletios party — the Larnaca residents — demanded the re-establishment of the secular committee that would take over the management of the Metropolis’ fund (Michaelides 1992:212). The fact that this dispute started as a personal problem between the tenant of the Monastery and the Metropolis but soon expanded and split the society of Larnaca and Limassol, indicates an ideological context expressed mainly by the will of wealthy seculars from Larnaca to control as much as possible the financial activities of the Metropolis of Citium in an effort to penetrate the sphere of political power of the high clergy and to be recognised as part of the community’s political power.

Two letters written by residents from Limassol and Larnaca and sent to the Ottoman governor of the island and the Archbishop of Cyprus are indicative of the situation. In the first letter dated 2 August, a group of Limassol residents accuse the wealthy financial factors of Larnaca as well as a group of consuls and their inner circles that

*for a long time now they have been intervening in our public and Church affairs, organising meetings at their homes and misleading simple people with their dangerous teachings, misleading them to precarious and reckless plans that may result to devastating consequences* (Archive of the Late Archbishops of Cyprus, Book IB:40).

It is clear that apart from the issue of the fund’s financial management,
the letter also identifies — without however going into details — the ideological issue of dangerous teachings and the misleading of simple people. These references of the Limassol residents about dangerous teachings indicated the ideological activity behind the scenes of the time, which seemed to be about the control of the Church activities and which was more intense in Larnaca. On the contrary, the attitude of the wealthy seculars of Limassol indicated the still weak formation of a group of seculars with united opinions that would attempt to conflict with Church authority. Two weeks later, another letter written this time by residents of Larnaca and addressed to Archbishop Makarios, states the reaction of the financial factors of the city towards the mismanagement of the Metropolis’ fund and requests that the Archbishopric intervene by sending an official to examine the situation (Archive of the Late Archbishops of Cyprus, Book 1B:6).

The dispute between the two sides of Larnaca and Limassol ended when the Holy Synod forced Bishop Meletios III to resign on May 7, 1864 after inquiries that were carried out by the high clergy on behalf of the Archbishop of Cyprus. Those who were against Meletios, the Larnaca side, won and this resulted in the strengthening of the class seeking to infiltrate the ranks of the Church’s power by managing the Metropolises’ funds. This was evident only a few years later, after the ascent of Bartholomew (1864-1866) to the throne of the Metropolis of Citium. A year after his enthronement, Bartholomew faced a number of wealthy men from Larnaca — among them Peristianis, Vodiciano, Valsamakis, as well a Vasilios Leontarides. The cause of the dispute — also indicative of the firm pursuit of seculars to be part of the political leadership of the community — was the expiration of the lease of the Monastery of Ayios Georghos Kontos and the quest for a new tenant by Bishop Bartholomew.

However, the group of seculars that was formed against the Bishop exerted pressure for the fund’s management to be assigned to the Committee of St Lazarus church. After a period during which the relations between the Bishop and this group of seculars were heated, Bartholomew gave way and assigned the management of the monastery’s fund to the Committee of the church in question. The crisis did not pass however, and the pressure against the Bishop continued, resulting in the resignation of the latter in May 1866. Archimandrites Sophronios became the temporary administrator of the Metropolis of Citium for the next two years and remained in office until May 1868 when Kyprianos Economides was elected as the Bishop of Citium.

The bad state of the fund of the Metropolis of Citium forced the new Bishop Kyprianos to allow seculars their say in the management of the
Metropolis’ funds and mainly in the ways with which they could pay off the debts. While a plan was drafted, this was not applied in the end because of the constant drought and the bad economic state of the entire population. At a meeting between clergy and seculars that took place in Limassol on December 4, 1869 to examine the issue it was decided to pay off the debts from the collection of taxes from the flock. More specifically, it was decided that for the period 1870-1873 the kanonika to be collected would be doubled, Larnaca and Limassol would contribute twenty thousand piastres annually, the Bishop’s personal income would be reduced, they would ask the Archbishops’ aid, and finally a committee would be elected to discuss the issues with the residents of Larnaca (Archive of the Metropolitan of Citium, Codex Στ: 3-5).

The issues, therefore, of the Metropolis’s debts and the management of its fund remain important matters for the Larnaca community and it seems that they were about to be aggravated once again. As Bishop Kyprianos himself admits in a circular addressed to the people of Larnaca

*It is necessary to eradicate every reason of mistrust. As I understand, the greatest reason of mistrust in this district is the financial situation of the Metropolis* (Archive of the Holey Metropolis of Citium Codex Ε:70).

In two circulars addressed respectively to the residents of Limassol and Larnaca, the Citium Bishop Kyprianos explains the bad financial state of the Metropolis’s fund and calls the Orthodox residents to meet at the Metropolis in order to elect a management committee. This meant in essence that the Bishop was compelled by necessity to grant to seculars a substantial say in the management of a church fund and this would have a particular impact on the mapping out of the future strategy of the wealthy seculars.

However, during Kyprianos’ prelacy, the dispute between Nicosia and Larnaca, i.e. between the Archbishopric and the Metropolis of Citium, also emerged. While the reason appears to be the delay of the Metropolis of Citium to pay its dues to a school board in Nicosia, the causes should be sought in the reaction of Nicosia’s wealthy persons towards the policy of moderation that Kyprianos followed in respect to the Larnaca seculars. It is characteristic that the letter against the Bishop was signed by seculars from Nicosia who were against any innovations (Archive of the Holy Metropolis of Citium, Codex Στ:41). The conflict between the school board of Nicosia and Bishop Kyprianos became a conflict between the Archbishopric and the
Bishop to a point that Archbishop Sophronios wrote to Kyprianos using particularly harsh language and asking him to come to Nicosia and settle the matter. In his reply, Bishop Kyprianos complained to the Archbishop about the style of the latter's letter (Archive of the Holy Metropolis of Citium, Codex Στ:41)

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What is discernible, albeit not yet very clearly, is the dispute between the Archbishopric and the Metropolis of Citium, while it is obvious that the reason for this dispute was not an ecclesiastical problem but a clearly financial obligation; this was used by the seculars around Archbishop Sophronios to exert pressure on the Citium Bishop, Kyprianos. The latter directly accused these seculars that they had influenced the Archbishop while at the same time, due to the huge debts of his Metropolis he was forced to constantly "popularize" the financial management of his throne and assign competencies to seculars. The situation remained the same without any particular aggravation between Nicosia, Larnaca, the Archbishopric and the Metropolis of Citium.

The "Citium Question" was the first strong conflict within the Church but it was aggravated the incitement and support of seculars from both cities. The conflict, in the present and the immediate future, did not seem to have a substantial social and political context but it was restricted to the wealthy seculars who represented the oligarchy. It did however have a political context, expressed in the desire of each group to control or lead the political body that was created (Anagnostopoulou 1999:203). The group of seculars — a majority of wealthy businessmen — pursued in this way a more decisive participation in the bodies and institutions of power, thus securing, apart from their own financial prosperity, their inclusion in the sphere of political power.

It is clear however that the weak ideological basis of the "Citium Question" and the general situation did not allow the aggravation of the dispute or any stronger claims on behalf of the seculars. It would continue however, to smoulder during the next period, while the British administration after 1878 created a new status quo that would reinforce its ideological framework and lead to its dynamic expression.

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- Archive of the Holy Metropolis of Citium, *Codex E: Bishop’s Texts and Decisions (1776-1933)*.
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