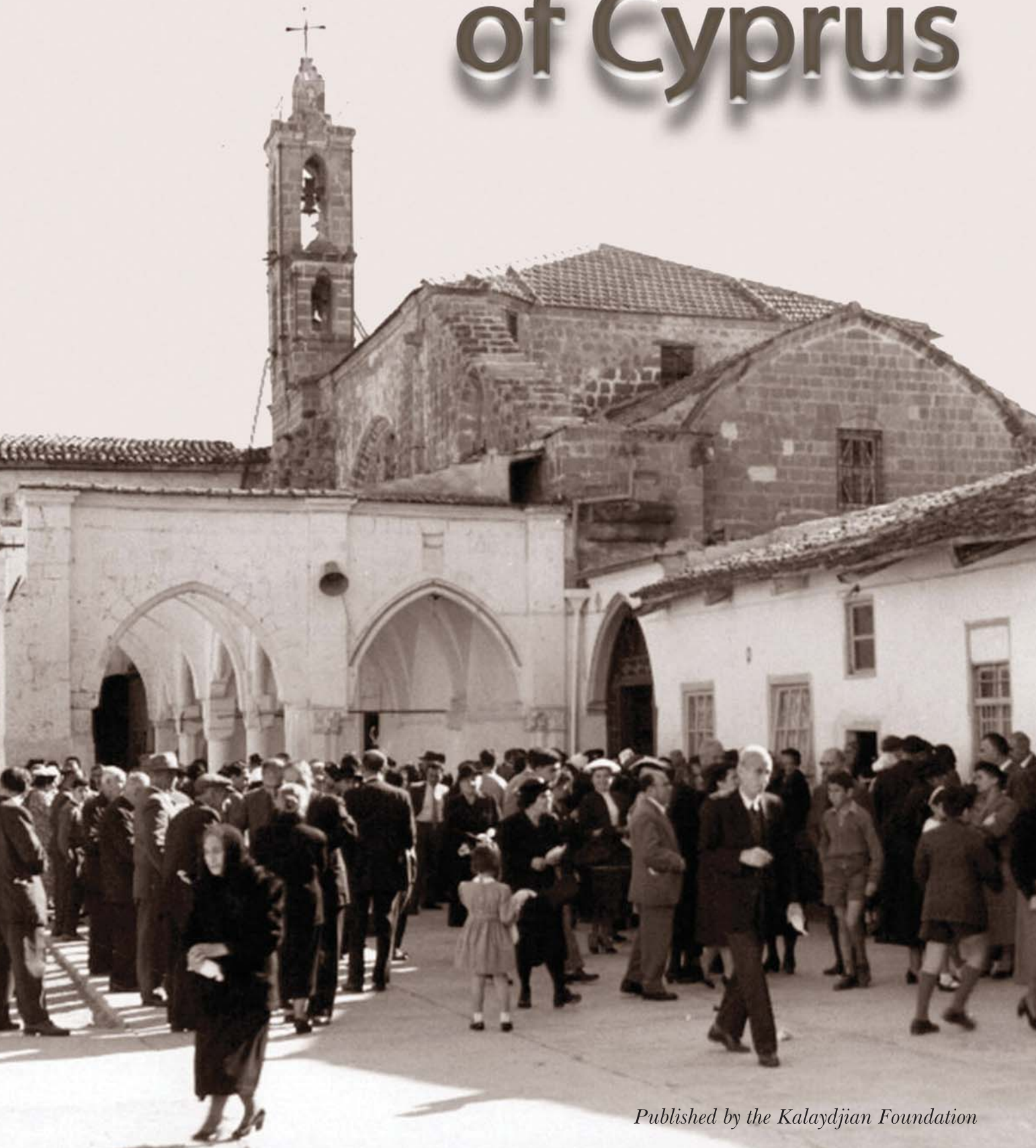


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by Alexander-Michael Hadjilyra

The Armenians of Cyprus



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THIS MONUMENT MARKS THE SPOT WHERE ARMENIAN REFUGEES FLEW TO FREEDOM DURING THE DESTRUCTION OF THE FIRST LAND IN CYPRUS. IT EXPRESSES THE GRATITUDE OF THE CYPRIOTE NATION TOWARDS THE PEOPLE OF ARMENIA FOR THEIR ASSISTANCE AND COURAGE IN THEIR RESISTANCE AND IN DEFENSE OF THE FREEDOM AND SOVEREIGNTY OF THE ISLAND.

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The Armenians of Cyprus

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Cyprus, located in the eastern corner of the Mediterranean Sea with an area of 9.251 km², looks from above like a golden-green leaf tossed into the sea. Due to its strategic geographical position, at the crossroads of three continents, its history has been marked indelibly. The first traces of civilisation are found at Aetokremmos, Khirokitia and Kalavassos (Tenta); a plethora of settlements dates back to the Neolithic and the Chalcolithic periods. Between 1400-1050 BC Mycenaean and Achaean Greeks settled here. By the 4th century BC the indigenous Eteocypriots gradually adopted the religion, culture and arts of the Greek colonists, as well as their language and alphabet.

Cyprus was consecutively occupied by the Phoenicians (950-850 BC), the Assyrians (709-669 BC), the Egyptians (565-546 BC) and the Persians (546-332 BC). In 332 BC, it was occupied by Alexander the Great. Upon his death it was passed to the Ptolemies. It became a Roman province in 58 BC. During the Roman period, Jewish refugees also settled in Cyprus, but the island's residents gradually adopted Christianity over the following few centuries. Subsequently, Cyprus became a Byzantine theme (province). This period saw the first Armenians and Maronites (Eastern Christians

of Syrian origin) settle here, as well as Jewish merchants. Between 632-965 AD, several Arab raids took place but the raiders did not establish permanent settlements. The first origins of the Latin community (Roman Catholics of European or Levantine descent) can be traced back to the Late Byzantine period.

In 1191 Cyprus was seized by the crusader King of England, Richard the Lionheart; he sold it to the Knights Templar, and they in turn re-sold it to Richard, until in 1192 it was purchased by the titular King of Jerusalem, Guy de Lusignan. During the Frankish Era (1192-1489), considerable numbers of Christians of the Levant as well as Jews were encouraged to settle here, especially Armenians, Latins and Maronites. After a series of machinations, the last Queen of Cyprus, Catherine Cornaro, was forced in 1489 to cede Cyprus to the Most Serene Republic of Venice, in the hands of which it remained until July 1570; the Ottomans eventually occupied the entire island in August 1571.

During the Ottoman Era (1571-1878) many Orthodox Christians were coerced into Islamisation or became Linobambaki (crypto-Christians).



A panoramic view of Magaravank monastery as it was before 1974



Armenians visiting Magaravank monastery in the 1950s

The Latins and the Maronites who were not expelled from Cyprus were forced either to become Orthodox or to embrace Islam; many opted to become Linobambaki. At the same time, many Ottoman families arrived. The only consolation for the Catholic community were the consulates in the coastal town of Larnaca, as their presence attracted European bankers, doctors, merchants, and some Roman Catholic monks.

On the 8th of July 1878, as a result of the Congress of Berlin and with an agreement to pay an annual lease of £92,800, the British became governors of the island. Their improved administration clearly ameliorated the condition of the religious groups, allowing them to prosper during the British Era (1878- 1960). The small Armenian community received a particular boost, since thousands of Armenians found refuge in Cyprus while fleeing the horrific massacres and the Genocide waged by the Young Turks in the Ottoman Empire. Likewise, the Latin community was enlarged with Britons, Europeans and some Maronites, while an Anglican community was also formed. Between 1946 and 1949, 52,384 Jewish refugees were temporarily transferred here.

After a 4-year guerrilla war led by EOKA (1955-1959), Cyprus was proclaimed an independent state on the 16th of August 1960. According to the new Constitution, three religious groups were recognised (Maronites, Armenians and Latins). The Latins were called so because the use of the term 'Catholics' found the Maronites opposing, as they are Catholics too¹. Inter-communal violence broke out in December 1963, resulting in the seizure of land pockets by Turkish Cypriots and the formation of a UN contingent to prevent further bloodshed. Using the Junta-orchestrated coup d'état against President Makarios as a pretext, Turkey savagely and unlawfully invaded Cyprus in two phases in the summer of 1974, occupying 34,85% of its soil and displacing 200,000 people from their homes. To-date, over 115,000 settlers from Anatolia have illegally settled in occupied Cyprus, dramatically altering its demography. The financial boom and the overall strength of the economy of free Cyprus over the last 30 years have attracted a large number of foreigners from all corners of the planet, especially from south-east Asia, Eastern Europe, Latin America and the Caucasus.

¹ The term was suggested by the last British Governor, Sir Hugh Foot.

The legal status of the Armenian religious group

The Constitution of the Republic of Cyprus (Article 2 § 1&2) states that there are two communities in Cyprus, the «Greek» and the «Turkish». Paragraph 3 states that:

«Citizens of the Republic who do not come within the provisions of the first or the second paragraph of this article shall, within three months of the date of the coming into operation of this Constitution, opt to belong to either the Greek or the Turkish Community as individuals, but, if they belong to a religious group, shall so opt as a religious group and upon such option they shall be deemed to be members of such community, provided that any citizen of the Republic who belongs to such a religious group may choose not to abide by the option of such group, and by a written and signed declaration submitted within one month of the date of such option to the appropriate officer of the Republic and to the Presidents of the Greek and the Turkish Communal Chambers opt to belong to the Community other than that to which such group shall be deemed to belong».

«Provided further that, if an option of such religious group is not accepted, on the ground that its members are below the requisite number, any member of such group may, within one month of the date of the refusal

of acceptance of such option, opt in the aforesaid manner as an individual to which Community he would like to belong».

«For the purposes of this paragraph a “religious group” means a group of persons ordinarily resident in Cyprus, professing the same religion and either belonging to the same rite or being subject to the same jurisdiction thereof, the number of whom on the date of the coming into operation of this Constitution exceeds one thousand, out of which at least five hundred become on such date citizens of the Republic».

According to the referendum held in November 1960, all three religious groups opted to belong to the Greek Cypriot community (as was expected), which affected somewhat their relations with the Turkish Cypriots, who viewed them as an extension of Greek Cypriot political ambitions. This is why they were treated similarly or even worse during the inter-communal troubles (1963-1964) and the Turkish invasion (1974). Although having to choose to belong to one of the two communities may seem unfair, this ensured that members of these groups enjoyed the same benefits as other community members, e.g. being eligible for public service and official positions of the Republic (Cyprus Act 1960, Appendix E). Articles 110 § 3 and 111 recognise



The Melkonian in the 1940s

the administrative autonomy of the religious groups' Churches, in line with the Hatt-i Hümayun edict (1856). In the absence of an official religion, there is a system of co-ordination with preferential status for the island's five major religions (Greek Orthodox, Islam, Armenian Apostolic, Maronite Catholic and Roman Catholic). The representation of the religious groups in the institutions of the Republic is defined by Article 109:

«Each religious group, which under the provisions of paragraph 3 of Article 2 has opted to belong to one of the Communities, shall have the right to be represented, by elected member or members of such group, in the Communal Chamber of the Community to which such group has opted to belong, as shall be provided by a relevant communal law».

Thus, an Armenian and a Latin participated in the Nicosia members of the Greek Communal Chamber, while in the Kyrenia members a Maronite was

House of Representatives and its administrative powers to the newly-established Ministry of Education and to the Council of Ministers (Law 12/1965). In order to approximate the tenure of the other MPs, the term of the religious groups' Representatives was annually extended (Laws 45/1965, 49/1966, 50/1967, 87/1968, 58/1969, and then again 30/1975 and 26/1976).

The Law on Religious Groups (Representation) (Laws 58/1970, 38/1976 and 41/1981) states that each religious group is represented in the House of Representatives by an elected Representative; the participation of the Representatives, who act as a liaison between the communities and the state, has a consultative character and its duration is five years. The Representatives enjoy the same privileges as the other MPs (non-liability, immunity, remuneration, tax exemptions etc), they participate in the parliamentary educational committee, and they attend the plenary meetings of the House.



Գրիգոր Մելգոնեան
1843 - 1920



Կարասյեղեան Մելգոնեան
1849 - 1934

Brothers Krikor and Garabed Melkonian and their monument at the Melkonian Educational Institute

included (Colonial Law 6/1960 & Greek Communal Chamber Law 8/1960). The Communal Chambers acted as a sort of lower Parliament, with jurisdiction over religious, educational and cultural affairs. After the secession of the Turkish Cypriots from the government and the de facto abolition of the Turkish Communal Chamber, it was decided on the 25th of March 1965 to transfer the legislative powers of the Greek Communal Chamber to the

Although they can express their views on matters relating to their group, the Representatives do not have the right to vote. According to Law 70/1986, their elections are held simultaneously and in parallel with the parliamentary elections. Therefore, on the day that parliamentary elections are held, members of the religious groups vote two times, once for their Representative and once for the election of the 56 Greek Cypriot MPs.



A remembrance ceremony in the 1940s for the victims of the Armenian Genocide

The origins of the Armenians

The Armenian plateau, extending to an area of 400.000 km², is roughly defined by the Black Sea, the Caucasus mountains, the Taurus mountains, and Mesopotamia; according to biblical tradition, Noah's ark landed on its highest point, Mount Ararat (5.137 m). The first traces of civilisation in the area date back to the Neolithic period and, based on linguistic and anthropological data, Armenia is considered to be the historic cradle of Indo-European peoples.

At around 1500 BC, a confederation of kingdoms was formed. It is believed that during the 8th century BC the tribes of the western part of the kingdom of Urartu, centred around Lake Van,

shaped the Armenian nation and the Armenian language. In 585 BC the Orontid dynasty took control, in an age when Armenia (Hayastan) was at times an independent state and at times a Persian satrapy. In 190 BC it was divided into Greater and Lesser Armenia, under Artaxias and his father, Zariadres, respectively; it expanded and flourished, reaching its apex between 95-66 BC, when it was unified under Tigran the Great, becoming one of the most powerful states to the east of Rome, with Tigranakert (the city of Tigran) as its capital city.

In 1 AD it came under the Roman Empire, until in 54 AD the Arsacid dynasty was installed. Between 40 and 60 AD Apostles Thaddeus and Bartholomew preached Christianity, and gradually Armenians adopted western politics, philosophy and religion. The year 301 is a landmark: Armenia became the first country in the world to officially adopt Christianity as a state religion, when Saint Gregory the Illuminator converted King Tiridates III and became the first Catholicos of Armenians. Ever since, Armenians have always depended on their Church to preserve their national identity, especially during periods when they were under a foreign yoke. The Christian faith was established on Armenian soil by the shedding of blood, and the very history of Armenians is a blood-stained account of martyrdom and heroic endeavour, characterised by an unwavering and unbroken faith, coloured with incurable optimism.

In 387 western Armenia became a province of Byzantium, while eastern Armenia became a Persian kingdom. In his determination to translate the Bible into Armenian, and after having travelled around the Caucasus, Mesrob Mashdots, a monk, theologian and linguist, invented in 405 a unique alphabet for the recording of the Armenian language. Until then, Armenian was written in Greek, Persian or Syriac scripts (none of which were well-suited for representing the complex sound system of ancient Armenian); this had presented him with difficulty in preaching the Gospel and instructing his flock. The alphabet, written from left to right, was originally made up of 36 letters (two more were added between the



The visit to Cyprus in 2006 of President Robert Kocharyan of Armenia

11th and 13th centuries) and signalled the dawn of a 'Golden Age' of the Armenian nation, as all administrative and ecclesiastical documents were subsequently written in it and the Gospel was preached in Armenian; it also served as a powerful factor in developing the national Armenian spirit. Saint Mesrob is also believed to be the inventor of the Georgian alphabet.

In 428 Armenia was subjugated by Persia. In 450 the Persian King Yazdegerd II imposed Zoroastrianism as the official religion: Armenians rebelled, with the famous battle of Avarayr in 451 finally securing their right to religious freedom in 484, with the Nvarsak Treaty. In 591 the Byzantine Emperor Maurice vanquished the Persians and incorporated a large part of eastern Armenia into his empire; the incorporation was completed in 629 by Emperor Heraclius. Although in 645 a large part of Armenia was conquered by the Arabs, a part of it remained in the Byzantine Empire. For centuries, Armenia was the guardian of Byzantium's extreme boundaries and an inexhaustible source of soldiers (archers, frontiersmen, horsemen, pathfinders, etc). Several Armenians became generals and emperors of Byzantium (one in five

Byzantine emperors is said to have been of Armenian origin). By 886 Armenia was recognised as an independent feudal kingdom, which was however re-captured by the Byzantines in 1045.

After the Battle of Manzikert (1071), the Seljuk Turks occupied Greater Armenia and much of Anatolia. By 1080 the numerous Armenian refugees who fled to the southwest established the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia, ruled by the Rubenian dynasty, which had strong ties with Lusignan Cyprus; it remained a flourishing and powerful kingdom until the Egyptian Mamlukes conquered it in 1375. In 1387 Turkic tribes made their way into the region, and by 1481 it fell entirely under the Ottoman Empire. As a result, many Armenians settled in Cyprus and elsewhere, with only a lesser number of them remaining in Cilicia. Despite Ottoman oppression, Cilician Armenians managed to grow in number, largely preserving their religion, language and culture, and were recognised as a distinct millet (religious group), led by the Armenian Patriarch of Constantinople. All this changed in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, when the Ottomans and the Young Turks decided to systematically exterminate the Armenians.



The monument of friendship between the Armenians and Greeks of Cyprus

The course of Armenians in Cyprus

Although individual Armenians seem to have been associated with Cyprus since the 5th century BC, and Armenian coins have been found in Cyprus dating from the time of Tigran the Great, the real history of the Armenian community on the island began in the 6th century AD and was directly related to population relocations between the provinces of the Byzantine Empire. The first large-scale arrival of Armenians in Cyprus took place in

578, during the reign of Emperor Justin II: while campaigning against the Persian King Chosroes I, General Maurice the Cappadocian captured 10.090 Armenians as prisoners in Arzanene (Aghdznik), of whom 3.350 were transferred to Cyprus. It is very likely that these Armenians served Byzantium as mercenary soldiers and frontiersmen; judging by their strategic positions, it appears that the colonies they founded were military. These settlements are mentioned by historian Etienne de Lusignan (1537- 1590): Armenokhori, Arminou, Kornokipos, Patriki, Platani, Spathariko, and perhaps Mousere.

More Armenians arrived during the reign of Armenian-descended Emperor Heraclius (610-641), who attempted to bridge the dogmatic disparity between the Armenian and Byzantine Churches by promoting monothelism². Others came during the time of Catholicos Hovhannes Odznetsi (717-728), for commercial reasons. In the mid-Byzantine period Armenian generals and governors served in Cyprus, like Alexius (868), Basil (968), Vahram (965), and Levon (910-911), who undertook the construction of the Saint Lazarus basilica in Larnaca; there are indications suggesting it had been an Armenian church in the 10th century and that during the Latin Era it was used by Armenian Catholics. After Cyprus was freed from Arab raids by Nikitas Chalkoutzis in 965, Armenian mercenaries were brought here to protect the political sovereignty of the island.

The many Armenians inhabiting Cyprus required religious pastoral care, which is why in 973 Catholicos Khachig I established the Armenian Bishopric in Nicosia. After that, many Armenian-Cypriot Bishops participated in important ecclesiastical synods, such as Bishop Tateos, who participated in the Council of Hromkla (1179), and Bishop Nicholaos, who participated in the Synod of Sis (1307); a few [like Khoren I (1963- 1983)] rose to the patriarchal throne. It is worth mentioning that, after multiple discords, Pope Leo I issued in 1519 a bull stating that the Armenian Bishop of Cyprus would be senior to the Maronite,

² When the Council of Chalcedon was convened in 451, Armenians were unable to attend, as they were fighting the Persians in the battle of Avarayr in order to preserve their Christian faith. The Synod condemned the heresy of Monophysitism (advocating that the human nature of Christ was absorbed by His Divine nature). Monothelism was the golden mean between Chalcedonians and anti-Chalcedonians, supporting that Christ did have two natures, but only one will, the Divine. Embraced - amongst others - by some Maronites, it was condemned by the VI Ecumenical Council at Constantinople (680-681).



Orphaned Armenian boy-scouts in Nicosia in 1927

Jacobite and Coptic Bishops. Between 1136- 1138 Emperor John II Comnenus moved the entire population of the Armenian city of Tell Hamdun to Cyprus. When Isaac Comnenus was self-declared 'Emperor of Cyprus' in 1185 and married the daughter of the Armenian prince Thoros , he brought with him Armenian nobles and warriors, many of whom fought together with the locals against Richard the Lionheart in Limassol in May 1191, and revolted against the Templars in April 1192. When on the 12th of May 1191 Richard married Berengaria of Navarre at Saint George's chapel in Limassol, the great Armenian King Levon II was their best man.

In his attempt to establish a western-type feudal kingdom, the new Lord of Cyprus, Guy de Lusignan, sent emissaries to Cilicia, Antioch and Acre in May 1192, inviting noblemen, knights and warriors from the Levant, resulting in a massive immigration of Armenians and other peoples, to whom fiefs, manors and privileges were granted. Cilicia's proximity to Cyprus made the island particularly attractive to Armenians, and over the years the two kingdoms were inextricably linked through a series of royal and nobility marriages that created close (but not always harmonious) relations between them; in fact, it is said that if

Cyprus had not remained in the hands of the Lusignans, it could have become part of Lesser Armenia. The fall of Jerusalem and Acre, in 1267 and 1291 respectively, made Cyprus the easternmost bulwark of Christianity; various Christian groups - amongst them many Armenians - settled mainly in Nicosia and Famagusta, where an Armenian Bishopric was established in the 12th century.

The Armenian community of Famagusta, concentrated around the Syrian quarter, numbered about 1.500 souls in 1360 and had three churches: Sourp Sarkis (Saint Sergius), Sourp Varvare (Santa Barbara) and Sourp Mariam Ganchvor (Virgin Mary the Caller). It was here that Saint Nerses Lampronatsi (1153- 1198) studied, suggesting the presence of an important theological institute. There is also mention of Armenian churches in Spathariko (Sourp Sarkis and Sourp Varvare, 1287), Kornokipos [Sourp Hreshdagabedk (Archangels), 1306], a Sourp Parsegh (Saint Basil) church, and two Sourp Khach (Holy Cross) churches, believed to be Arablar djami in Nicosia and the unidentified church between the Carmelite and the Saint Anne churches in Famagusta. There were also a few Catholic Armenians, the most famous of whom were Marie and Fimie, daughters of Armenian King Hayton I, and nuns at the Benedictine convent



Archbishop Makarios laying the foundation stone for the new cathedral in Nicosia in 1976

of Notre Dame de Tyre in Nicosia, as well as Lord Hayton of Corycus, monk at the Premonstratensian Bellapais Abbey.

When the Saracens attacked Lesser Armenia in April 1322, about 30.000 Armenian refugees found shelter in Cyprus, aided by ships of the King of Cyprus Henry II; some of them formed a garrison in Kyrenia. A new wave of Armenians arrived in 1335 and 1346 to escape the Mamluk attacks, while by order of the King of Cyprus Peter II many Armenian mercenaries were drafted in 1373 to face the Genoese raiders. Armenians fought against the Saracens at Stylli village (1425) and against the Mamlukes at Limassol and the Khirokitia Battle (1426), including priest Gosdantin, brother of the Armenian Bishop Levon. Due to the continuous decline of Lesser Armenia, its King Levon V moved to Cyprus in 1375. After he died, his title and privileges were transferred to his cousin, James I de Lusignan, in the cathedral of Ayia Sophia in 1396; subsequently, the crest of the Frankish Kings of Cyprus bore the Jerusalem Cross, and the lions of the Lusignans, Cyprus and Armenia. In 1403, 30.000 Armenians fled to Cyprus, while in 1421 the entire population of the Sehoun region was transferred here. In 1441 the authorities of Famagusta encouraged Armenians and Syrians from Cilicia and Syria to settle there.

Chroniclers Leontios Makhairas (1369-1458), George Boustronios (1430-1501) and Florio Bustron

(1500-1570) inform us that the Armenian quarter of Nicosia was located near the San Domenico gate³ (also known as The Gate of the Armenians), it was called Armenia or Armenoyitonia (Armenian neighbourhood), and it neighboured with the 2nd Lusignan palace (Royiatiko). The Armenian churches of Frankish Nicosia were those of Sourp Kevork (Saint George) and Sourp Boghos-Bedros (Saint Paul and Peter). Armenian was one of the eleven official languages of the Kingdom of Cyprus, and one of the five official languages during the Venetian Era. Armenians were amongst the seven more important religious groups of Cyprus, in possession of stores and shops in the ports of Famagusta, Limassol and Paphos, thus controlling a large segment of commerce. Several Armenians became mercenaries and noblemen of the palace, and a vineyard estate in Ayios Dhometios also belonged to Armenians until 1473. Despite their prosperity, however, the Armenian Orthodox - as well as the Greek Orthodox, the Maronites, the Nestorians and the Jacobites - were subjected to pressure to be latinised, especially during the time of the Latin Archbishop of Nicosia, Elias de Nabinaux, who convened a synod on the matter in January 1340. (A hundred years earlier, when latinisation pressure had become unbearable for the Greek Orthodox hierarchs, they had fled to Armenian Cilicia.)

In the 15th century the Armenian community of Cyprus was at its height, as commercial transactions with the neighbouring countries were particularly favoured, and many Armenians were active in trade; in fact, the dialectal Cypriot word *χανούτιν* [khanoutin = shop, workshop] and *χανουτάρης* [khanoutaris = shop-keeper, grocer] - deriving from the Armenian word for shop [khanout] - entered the Cypriot dialect during the Latin Era. On the 16th of December 1467 the Armenian community's prestige was boosted further when, after a prolonged drought and the unsuccessful prayers of the Franks and the Greeks, Archbishop Sarkis offered a litany around the walls of Nicosia; when he re-entered the city and touched a bowl of water with the Holy Cross, rains immediately fell and all the Christians of Cyprus rejoiced. Yet this prosperity was brought to a halt by the harsh

³ The present walls of Nicosia were built between 1567-1570; based on descriptions of the Frankish walls, San Domenico's Gate is believed to have been located between the municipal park and the new Supreme Court building.

and corrupt Venetian administration and the iniquitous taxes they imposed. Their tyrannical rule, combined with adverse circumstances (droughts, earthquakes, epidemics, famines, floods etc), caused a noticeable decline in the population.

During the occupation of the island by the Ottomans (1570- 1571), about 40.000 Ottoman Armenian craftsmen were recruited (carpenters, engineers, gun-makers, locksmiths, masons, mechanics, miners, sappers, smiths and tailors), and many of the ones who survived settled in Cyprus. The new order of affairs affected the Armenian community as well: Armenians in Famagusta were either slaughtered or expelled, whilst Armenians in Nicosia significantly increased in number and flourished. As a reward for their services - whose exact nature one can only guess - the Armenians of Nicosia were granted the keeping of Paphos Gate (they made use of this privilege for only a short time, due to the large expenditures required), and a firman (decree) by Sultan Selim II (May 1571) gave them the convent of Notre Dame de Tyre (also known as Tortosa): it is the Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary on Victoria Street, the heart of the Armenian community until 1963. About 20- 30 thousand Armenians lived in Cyprus during the first years of the Ottoman Era, but this number soon fell drastically due to the onerous taxation and the harshness of the Ottoman administration. Another blow was the abolition of the Famagusta Bishopric, as the entire walled city was forbidden for non-Muslims until the early years of the British Era.

Contrary to the Latins and the Maronites, the Armenians - being Orthodox - were not suppressed as regards their religion by the Ottomans. In fact, they were recognised as a nation via the millet institution, and the Armenian Prelature of Cyprus was regarded as "Azkayin Ishkhanoutiun" (Ethnarchy). They practised lucrative professions (coppersmiths, dragomans, goldsmiths, lenders, solicitors etc) and in the beginning of the 17th century Iranian Armenians settled here as silk traders. Travellers mention that in the Bedestan (the covered market place of Nicosia) there were many Armenian merchants, and that in the early



19th century Nicosia's leading citizen was an Armenian merchant by the name of Sarkis. A 1642 decree by the Sultan exempted the Armenians from paying a tax for the Monastery of Sourp Magar, renewed in 1660 and 1701; restorations were made in 1735 and 1814. The Magaravank had been an important station for Armenians and other pilgrims on their way to the Holy Land, as well as a place of rest for the Catholicoi of Cilicia and travellers, such as novelist Hovsep Shishmanian (known under his literary name "Dzerents"): inspired by the outline of the distant Taurus mountain range, he wrote in 1875 the historical novel "Toros Levoni".

Archbishop Makarios inaugurating the Nicosia Nareg in 1972

The discriminatory and burdensome taxation regime compelled many Armenians to become Linobambaki (Crypto-Christians): they appeared as Muslims, outwardly practising circumcision and other Ottoman customs, covertly though they held church services and carried two names, a Christian and a Muslim one. There are testimonies of Armenian Linobambaki in the villages Armenokhori, Artemis, Ayios Iakovos, Ayios Khariton, Kornokipos, Melounda, Platani⁴, Spathariko etc. Additionally, the Armenian church in Nicosia was an object of desire between Greek Orthodox and Alevi Muslims, who on numerous occasions attempted to acquire the church, even

⁴ It is interesting that the Madonna icon of the destroyed church of Platani, dated circa 1680 and since the 18th century in the Church of Stavros at Lefkoniko, was called the "Armenian Virgin Mary" and was Armenian in style.



Cyprus' sole Armenian Evangelical church, now in the occupied territories and used illegally as a handicraft centre

after a 1613 decree annulled such efforts. Nevertheless, Archimandrite Kyprianos (1735-1815) informs us that prior to 1788, the Armenians of the capital made an annual gift to the Greek Archbishop as a sign of subjection, a custom that lasted till the early 20th century. In the late 18th and early 19th centuries, a small number of Armenians became Catholics, after a series of intermarriages with some affluent Latin families on the island.

In July 1821 things escalated when a number of Cypriots supported the Greek Revolution. Greeks, Franks, Armenians and Maronites were prohibited from possessing or carrying any kind of fire-arms or offensive weapons, and amongst the clergymen executed was an Armenian priest from Nicosia, der Bedros. In the aftermath of 470 executions, the Ottomans destroyed the mansions of Greek and Armenian Orthodox in Nicosia, leaving only one floor, thus demoting their favoured position in society. Gradually, however, improvements were observed in light of the Hatt-i Çerif of Gülhane: in the Divan (Council of State), set up in 1839, the Armenian Bishop participated alongside the Greek Archbishop and the Maronite Bishop; after 1850 some Armenians were employed in the civil service, including some who came from Constantinople. Finally, the Armenian church in Nicosia was among the first churches in Cyprus to have a belfry, built with the donation of a Constantinople Armenian (by the name of Nevrouzian) in 1860. The small Armenian community began growing more

prosperous, especially after the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, which benefited Armenians and other merchants in Cyprus. The Archduke of Austria Louis Salvator (who visited Nicosia in 1873) noticed the 'alla franca' outfit of Armenians.

The arrival of the British in July 1878 and their progressive administration strengthened the Armenian community even more. Known for their linguistic skills, several Armenians were contracted to Cyprus to work as interpreters in the consulates and for the British administration, which was faced with the problem of reading Ottoman texts and legislation. Apisoghom Utudjian from Constantinople was the official translator of Ottoman state papers (1878-1919), and Enoch Jelajian was on Lieutenant Horatio Herbert Kitchener's map-surveying team (1880-1883). Just as the Greek Archbishop received the Governor and official guests (such as Sir Winston Churchill in 1907), so did the Armenian Bishop. The number of Armenians in Cyprus significantly increased following the massive deportations and horrific massacres committed by the Ottomans and the Young Turks [the Hamidian massacres (1894-1896), the Adana massacre (1909)⁵, the main 1915-1920 Genocide, and the 1921-1923 massacres and deportations], a Genocide that annihilated around 1.500.000 Ottoman Armenians and which Turkey to-date stubbornly refuses to acknowledge. Armenians who survived the slaughter and deportations arrived in Cyprus through all its



The Nareg Armenian School in Nicosia

⁵ After these massacres and due to the proximity with the north of Cyprus, dismembered corpses of unfortunate Armenians were being washed up along Kyrenia's coastline for days.



The inscriptions above the entrance of Larnaca's Sourp Stepanos Church

harbours, especially those of Larnaca and to a lesser extent of Kyrenia and Famagusta, although some arrived through the ports of distant Paphos and Limassol as well. Those who arrived in Larnaca were quarantined for 40 days in Dhekelia before they were allowed to enter the island.

Industrious, cultivated and progressive, Armenians did not need long to find their feet in Cyprus, which opened its arms to over 9.000 refugees from Constantinople, Smyrna and Cilicia (mainly Adana, Zilifke, Sis, Marash, Tarsus, Gesaria, Hadjen and Aintab). Some came here by chance, some because of the proximity to their homeland, while others felt safe under British administration. Most of them stayed here on a temporary basis and eventually made arrangements to settle elsewhere. About 1.300 decided to stay, establishing themselves as men and women of letters, able entrepreneurs and merchants, accountants, bakers, carpenters, customs officers, dentists, doctors, factory owners (manufacturing buttons, clothes, leather, paper, pottery, soap and wool), furniture makers, gold, silver, copper and tin smiths, jewellers, lawyers,

milliners, musicians, nurses, painters, photographers, potters, printers, professors, restaurateurs, secretaries, shirt and dress makers, shoemakers, silk, cotton and wool merchants, tailors, tanners, tinkers and veterinarians. Armenians were the first locksmiths, mechanics, seat, comb and stamp makers, upholsterers, watchmakers and zincographers in Cyprus, the first to introduce the cinema, and it was Armenians who first introduced Armenian bastourma, gyros, koubes, lahmadjoun and lokmadhes into the Cypriot cuisine - all very popular today. Law-abiding by nature, Armenians always had a high profile with the British administration through their work, and many of them became civil servants and policemen or were employed in the Cyprus Government Railway and in Cable and Wireless.

About 15 Armenians, who had just arrived in Cyprus, participated in the 1897 Greco-Turkish War. During World War I (1914-1918) several Armenian-Cypriots served as muleteers and translators. In 1917, the Eastern Legion (later called the Armenian Legion) was formed and trained near the village of Boghazi, consisting of over 4.000 Diasporan Armenian volunteers who fought against the Ottoman Empire in Palestine and Cilicia. The Armenian community prospered throughout the British Era by establishing associations, schools and musical ensembles and strengthening its religious sentiments. Throughout the 1920s-1950s some worked at the asbestos mines at Amiandos, and



The Virgin Mary of Ganchvor in Famagusta



The Sourp Asdvadzadzin Cathedral in Acropolis

others worked at the copper mines of Mavrovouni and Skouriotissa. Many had been trade unionists and were in fact amongst the first to strike during the 1935, 1936, 1941, 1944 and 1948 strikes. The social and linguistic segregation between the deghatsi (locals) and the kaghtaganner (refugees) gradually dwindled, and by the 1940s- 1950s it had ceased to exist. Armenians found refuge in Cyprus again as refugees from Palestine (1947) and Egypt (1956). However, during the liberation struggle (1955- 1959) some Armenians left Cyprus because of the political instability of the period.

Although in previous years Armenians - like the Maronites and Latins - had voiced their opposition to the independence of Cyprus (e.g. in December 1925, June 1928 and September 1929 - all under Archbishop Bedros Saradjian), a part of the community supported the armed struggle for self-

determination, and some even voted in favour of Enosis with Greece in the January 1950 referendum. At least 2 Armenian- Cypriots helped EOKA in making bombs, while 3-4 joined the mountain divisions of EOKA. We should also mention that around 90 Armenians participated in the Cyprus Regiment, fighting in the battlefields on Britain's side between 1940-1945⁶. By the 1960 Independence, Armenians had forged strong links with the rest of the Cypriots: evidence of their industriousness is the fact that although in 1963 they numbered around 3.500, their contribution to direct taxation was a little over one- third of the contribution of the Turkish Cypriots (numbering around 107.500 at the time). In the November 1960 referendum⁷, 1.077 Armenian voters opted to belong to the Greek Cypriot community (737 from Nicosia, 203 from Larnaca, 69 from Limassol, 64 from Famagusta and 4 from Kyrenia), and only 5 to the Turkish Cypriot community (4 from Nicosia and 1 from Larnaca), which consequently defined their political choices in the game of inter-communal controversy.

The blows that the Armenian community subsequently received were particularly harsh: when violence broke out on the 21st of December 1963, their quarter was one of the first areas of the walled city to be partially captured by extremist Turks, yet some chose to remain there, until the 19th of January 1964, when the Turks captured and looted their houses; 10 days later they raided the church. Although most did not return to their homes, some did in February 1964, but only for a short time: on the 3rd of March 1964 those who remained in the Armenian Quarter (Karaman Zade) and the ones who still lived in the newly-built areas of Neapolis and Constantia received threatening letters from Turkish Cypriot extremists giving them three hours to abandon their homes; overall, 231 Armenian- Cypriot and 169 Greek- Cypriot families of Nicosia became refugees during the 1963- 1964 troubles, and lost their businesses.

⁶ One of them, Vahan Kalemkerian (CY 227) from Famagusta, was killed in action on 26/07/1945 and was buried in Salerno.

⁷ The numerical discrepancy between the 1.082 Armenians who voted and the 3.628 Armenians who were residing in Cyprus at the time has to do with the fact that, according to the Constitution, "a married woman shall belong to the Community to which her husband belongs" (Article 2 § 7a), and "a male or female child under the age of twenty- one who is not married shall belong to the Community to which his or her father belongs, or, if the father is unknown and he or she has not been adopted, to the Community to which his or her mother belongs" (Article 2 § 7b). Also, some remained British citizens.

Despite the blow of 1963- 1964, as well as the exodus between 1925- 1940 and 1953- 1965 to Soviet Armenia, Great Britain and elsewhere, the Armenian community continued to prosper, supported by the Republic of Cyprus. Archbishop Makarios III placed the churches of Ayios Dhometios and Ayia Paraskevi at the disposal of the Armenians of Nicosia and Famagusta respectively. For christenings, weddings, funerals, Easter and Christmas, either the Anglican church of Saint Paul (where an altar cross and the stained glass windows were donated by the community) or Nareg's auditorium were used in Nicosia, while in Famagusta the Greek Orthodox church of Ayios Ioannis was used.

The Armenian community also suffered during the 1974 Turkish invasion: 4- 5 families living in Kyrenia, 40- 45 families living in Varosha (Famagusta) and around 30 families living to the west of the walled city in Ayios Andreas, Nicosia, became refugees, while the Melkonian boys' dormitory was bombed by the Turkish Air Force and the Magaravank monastery became inaccessible. Also, Rosa Bakalian from Neokhorio, Kythrea, is one of the 1.493 people missing since 1974.

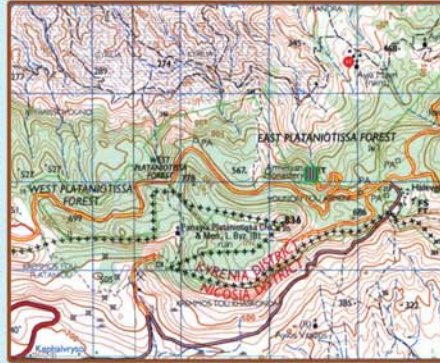
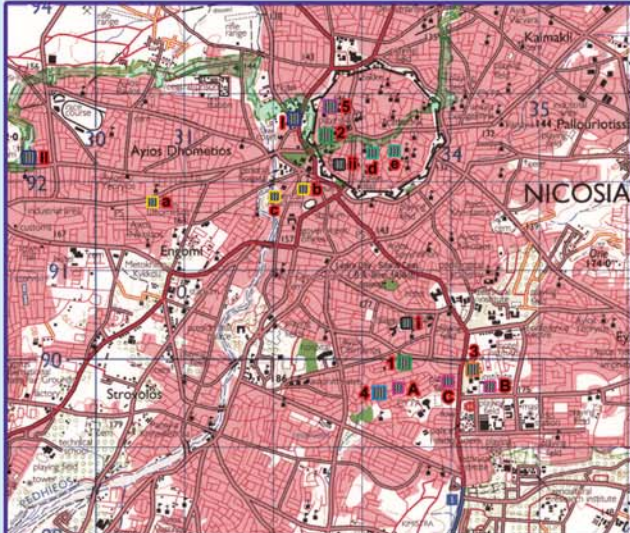
Following continuous efforts by Representative Dr. Antranik L. Ashdjian, the Nareg Elementary School was erected on Cyclops Street in Acropolis, Nicosia, with the help of the Cyprus government, and was inaugurated in 1972 by the Archbishop of Cyprus Makarios III and the Catholicos of Cilicia Khoren I, an Armenian- Cypriot himself. On the 25th of September 1976 the foundations of the new metropolitan Cathedral of the Virgin Mary were laid, which was inaugurated in 1981. In 1984 the Armenian Prelature of Cyprus - previously based in a rented property near the Ayios Dhometios chapel - moved to a new building that was erected on the same grounds, thus resembling the once close- knit Armenian complex on Victoria Street. The land on Armenia Street was originally given to the community in trust. In 1986, after the relentless efforts of Representative Aram Kalaydjian, the Cyprus government granted ownership to the Armenian Prelature by way of a freehold title deed in the Land Registry.

In the last few years the increasing number of

mixed marriages between Armenian- Cypriots and Greek- Cypriots has changed the dynamics of the community. Apart from Cilician Armenians, others have found refuge in Cyprus: Palestinian Armenians due to the Palestinian war (1947- 1949), Egyptian Armenians due to the Suez Crisis (1956- 1957), Lebanese Armenians due to the civil war in Lebanon (1975- 1990), Syrian Armenians due to the insurgencies in Syria (1976- 1982), Iranian Armenians due to the Islamic revolution (1978- 1979), and Georgian, Russian and Hayastantsi Armenians after the fall of the Soviet Union (1991). There is also a small number of Greek Armenians. Although some of the aforementioned have permanently settled in Cyprus, they are not yet fully integrated, even though the majority of those coming from Armenia are descendants of Armenian- Cypriots who emigrated to Armenia during the 1940s- 1960s. Today it is estimated that there are over 3.500 Armenians in Cyprus, of whom about 65% live in urban Nicosia (mainly Strovolos, Aglandjia, Nicosia and Ayios Dhometios), 20% in Larnaca, 10% in Limassol, 5% in Paphos, and a few families in some villages. The presence of Armenians and other religious groups indeed contributes to the cultural pluralism of Cyprus, with an indispensable contribution to the ongoing development of the country.



The Sourp Kevork Church in Limassol



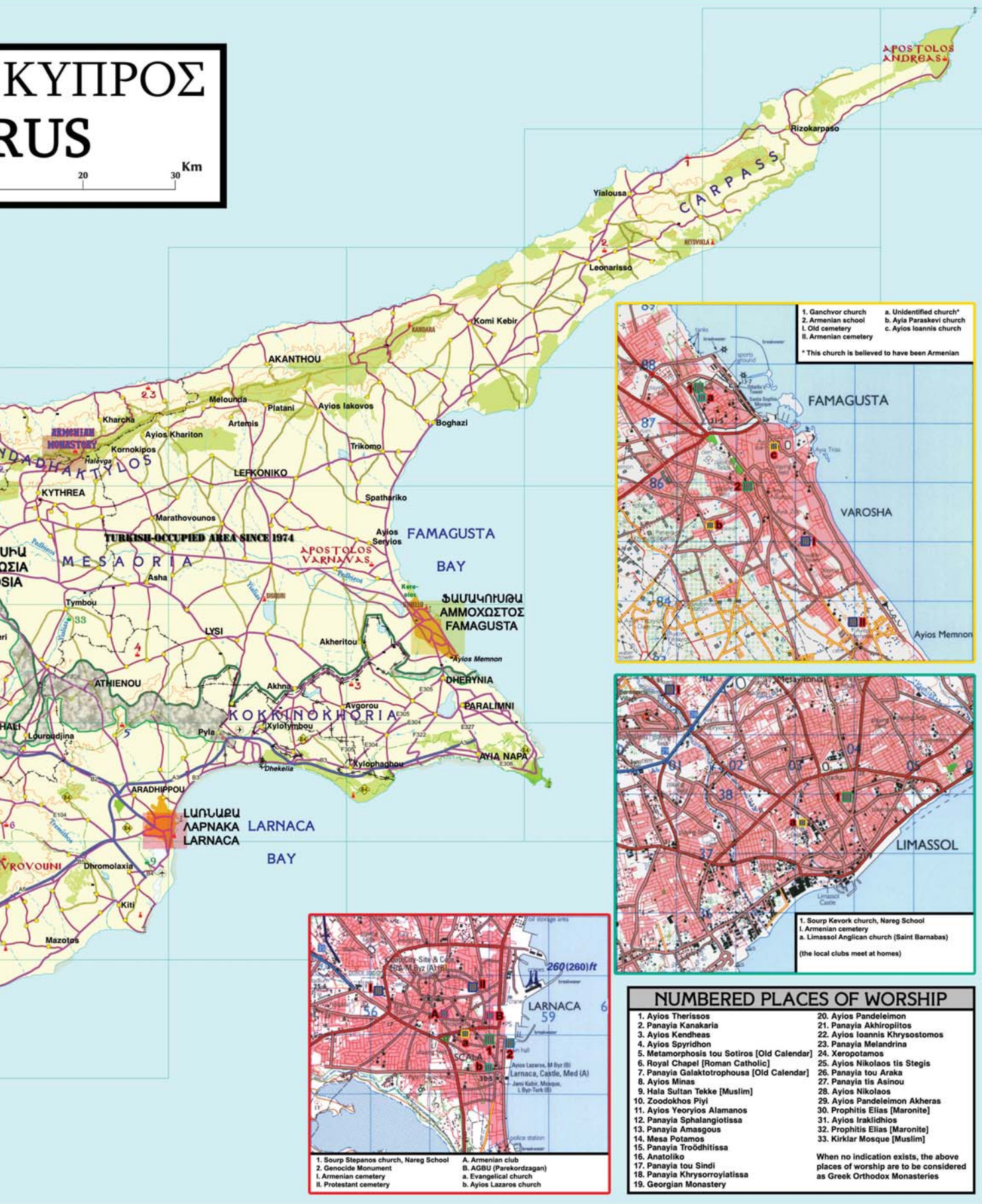
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|---|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sourp Asdvadzadzin church, Nareg School, Prelature, Genocide Monument 2. Turkish-occupied Armenian complex (church, prelature, school, monument) 3. Mekhonian Educational Institute 4. Kaledjian Rest Home, Sourp Amenapergitch chapel 5. Turkish-occupied Armenian Evangelical church i. Ledra Palace old Armenian cemetery, Sourp Boghos chapel ii. Ayios Dhometios Armenian cemetery, Sourp Hatoutian chapel A. Armenian Young Men's Association (AYMA) B. AGBU (Parekordzagan) | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> C. Nor Seroutn Cultural Association a. Ayios Dhometios church b. Saint Paul's cathedral c. Greek Evangelical church d. Arablar djami (Stavros tou Misairikou) e. Old Evangelical church i. Office of the Armenian Representative ii. Armenian Research centre |
|---|--|



ΚΥΠΡΟΣ CYPRUS

20 30 Km



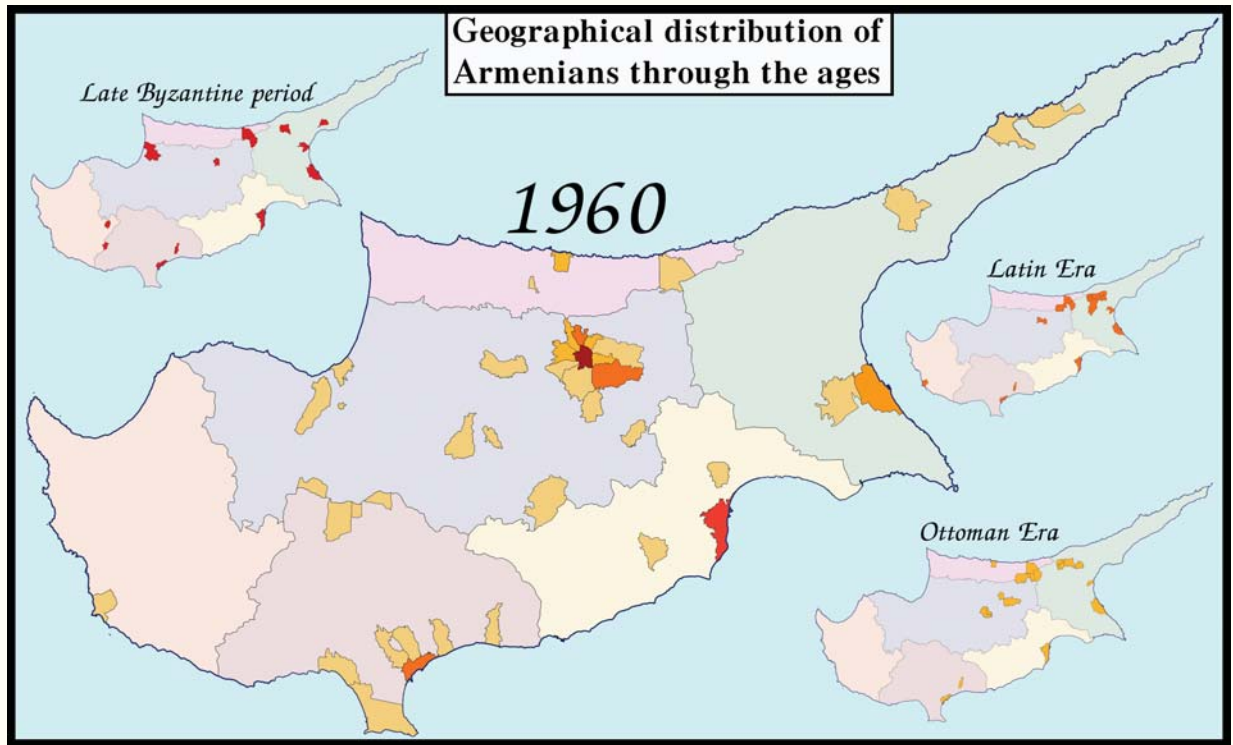
1. Ganchvor church
2. Armenian school
I. Old cemetery
II. Armenian cemetery
a. Unidentified church*
b. Ayia Paraskevi church
c. Ayios Ioannis church
II. Armenian cemetery
* This church is believed to have been Armenian

1. Sourp Kevork church, Nareg School
I. Armenian cemetery
a. Limassol Anglican church (Saint Barnabas)
(the local clubs meet at homes)

NUMBERED PLACES OF WORSHIP

- | | |
|---|--------------------------------|
| 1. Ayios Therisios | 20. Ayios Pandeilemon |
| 2. Panayia Kanakaria | 21. Panayia Akhiroplitos |
| 3. Ayios Kendheas | 22. Ayios Ioannis Khrysostomos |
| 4. Ayios Spyridhon | 23. Panayia Melandrina |
| 5. Metamorphosis tou Sotiros [Old Calendar] | 24. Xeropotamos |
| 6. Royal Chapel [Roman Catholic] | 25. Ayios Nikolaos tis Stegis |
| 7. Panayia Galaktotrophousa [Old Calendar] | 26. Panayia tou Araka |
| 8. Ayios Minas | 27. Panayia tis Asinou |
| 9. Hala Sultan Tekke [Muslim] | 28. Ayios Nikolaos |
| 10. Zoodokhos Piyi | 29. Ayios Pandeilemon Akheras |
| 11. Ayios Yeoryios Alamanos | 30. Prophitis Elias [Maronite] |
| 12. Panayia Sphalangiottissa | 31. Ayios Iraklidhios |
| 13. Panayia Amasgous | 32. Prophitis Elias [Maronite] |
| 14. Mesa Potamos | 33. Kirkitar Mosque [Muslim] |
| 15. Panayia Trochitissa | |
| 16. Anatoliko | |
| 17. Panayia tou Sindi | |
| 18. Panayia Khrysoroyiattissa | |
| 19. Georgian Monastery | |

When no indication exists, the above places of worship are to be considered as Greek Orthodox Monasteries



The demography of the Armenian-Cypriots

The 1831 large-scale census of the Ottoman Empire counted 114 non-Muslim males in the Armenian quarter of Nicosia (with 38 houses and 6 shops), and 13 in the Armenian Monastery; the total male population of Cyprus was 45.365⁸. The first overall record of the population was carried out in 1841 by the muhassil (governor and chief provincial tax collector) of Cyprus, Talat Effendi; according to him, 108.600 persons resided in Cyprus, of whom 150-160 were Armenians and lived in the town of Nicosia (with 12.000 residents). It is, however, known that some Armenians lived in Famagusta, Larnaca, and to the north and south of Nicosia (especially in Dheftera and Kythrea) and, naturally, at Magaravank. In 1844 and in 1847, British consul Niven Kerr and Greek vice-consul Demetrios Margarites, respectively, estimated the Armenians to be 200 in number (around 40 families), as did John MacDonald Kinneir when he visited Cyprus in 1814. In 1874 Belgian traveller Edmond

Paridant-Van Der Cammen estimated Nicosia's population to be 13.530 people, of whom 190 were Armenians. Between 1877-1885 priest Hovhannes Shahinian counted 152 Armenians in Nicosia, while in 1879 French historian and traveller, count Louis de Mas Latrie, estimated Armenians to number 150-200. In the first modern population census of Nicosia, performed on 31/01/1879, Armenians numbered 166 (out of a total of 11.197 inhabitants).

The first modern population census of Cyprus as a whole was carried out on the 4th of April 1881. The total population numbered 186.173 persons, of whom 174 were Armenians (0,0935%). Superintendent Frederick W. Barry mentions the following in the census report, p. 14:

65. [...] Of the last, and heterogeneous group of 992 persons [with mother tongue other than Turkish, Greek, Arabic or English] the mother tongue of [...] 199 [was returned] as Armenian.

⁸ Based on the 1881 sex ratio patterns, the actual number of Nicosia's Armenians in 1831 must have been around 190. Similarly, the total population of Nicosia and Cyprus must have been around 10.770 and 88.480, respectively.

Out of the 174 Armenians and 5 Copts of Cyprus in 1881, the mother tongue for 4 was Greek, for 7 it was Arabic and for 168 it was another language (Armenian). The second census of population was performed on the 6th of April 1891: the population of Cyprus had reached 209.286 persons, of whom 280 were Armenians (0,1338%), 269 Gregorian and 11 Catholics; 62 had Turkish for mother tongue, 4 had Greek, 9 had Arabic and 205 had Armenian, while Armenian was also the mother tongue of 11 others (2 Mahomedans, 7 Greek Orthodox and 2 others). In the census report, Superintendent Frank G. Glossop mentions:

104. The members of the Armenian Churches speaking Turkish are chiefly the offspring of families settled in Cyprus for generations [...]

The third population census of Cyprus took place on the 31st of March 1901, counting 237.022 persons in total, of whom 517 were Armenians (0,2181%), 491 Gregorian and 26 Catholics: Turkish was the mother tongue for 45, Greek for 2, Arabic for 1, and Armenian for 469; Armenian was the mother tongue of 36 others as well (31 Protestants and 5 others).

In the census of the 2nd of April 1911, Armenians numbered 558 persons out of a total of 274.108 (0,2036%): 549 Gregorian and 9 Catholics. The mother tongue for 52 of them was Turkish, for 9 was Greek, for 2 Arabic, for 493 Armenian and for 2 another language; Armenian was also the mother tongue of 58 others (5 Greek Orthodox, 18 Roman Catholics, 33 Protestants and 2 others).

The fifth population census was carried out on the 24th of April 1921, and Gregorian Armenians numbered 1.197 persons, out of a total of 310.715 (0,3852%): 61 had Turkish for mother tongue, 8 had Greek, 1.127 had Armenian and 1 had another language; additionally, Armenian was the mother tongue for 35 Greek Orthodox, 74 Roman Catholics, 228 Protestants and 39 others. The 27/28 April 1931 census recorded 3.377 Gregorian Armenians out of a total of 347.959 persons (0,9705%): 208 of them had Turkish for

mother tongue, 35 had Greek, 3 Arabic, 3.077 Armenian, 7 English and 47 other languages; Armenian was also the mother tongue of 240 others (20 Christian Orthodox, 89 Latins, 130 Protestants and 1 other). On 6 June 1935 Archbishop Bedros Saradjian prepared a report of the total Armenian population of the island: 2.139 lived in Nicosia, 678 in Larnaca, 205 in Limassol, 105 in Famagusta, 58 in Amiandos, 25 in Lefka, 20 in Kalokhorio (Kapouti), 18 in Lefkara, 17 in Magaravank, 5 in Kyrenia, 4 in Paphos; additionally, there were 102 “pnig” Gibratsi (native Cypriots), 399 in Melkonian and 44 in other villages. Overall, 3.819 persons.

The seventh population census was carried out on the 10th of November 1946: 3.686 Gregorian Armenians resided in Cyprus out of a total population of 450.114 (0,8189%): 86 of them habitually spoke Greek, 192 Turkish, 3.402 Armenian, 2 English, 1 Arabic, and 3 spoke another language; Armenian was spoken also by 276 others (28 Greek Orthodox, 11 Moslems, 70 Latins, 3 Anglicans, 145 Protestants, 4 Jewish and 15 others). Superintendent David A. Percival mentions that 1.345 Gregorian Armenians were born in Cyprus and 2.341 outside Cyprus; overall, 3.962 persons were either Gregorian Armenians or Armenian-speaking.

In October 1956 a population registration took place, with the purpose of issuing identity cards: out of a total of 528.618 people, 4.549 Armenian-Cypriots were recorded (0,8605%). The last detailed census of population took place on the 11th of December 1960: out of a total of 577.615 persons, there were 3.628 Armenians (0,6281%), of whom 3.378 were Gregorian. The censuses carried out on 01/04/1973 and 30/09/1976 did not record the religious groups separately, while in the 01/10/1982, 01/10/1992 and 01/10/2001 censuses mention was made that not all members of the religious groups have been recorded. The tables that follow show the geographical distribution of Armenians per census and according to district and nahieh (sub-district) and according to urban/rural areas:

The demography of the Armenian-Cypriots

	1881		1891		1901		1911		1921		1931		1946		1960	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
NICOSIA DISTRICT	66	47	99	84	198	154	158	141	277	257	1,126	1,099	1,211	1,276	1,217	1,325
Kythrea nahieh	65	44	95	81	186	144	156	141	276	257	1,083	1,067				
Orini nahieh	1	3	1	3	11	10	2		1		14	9				
Morphou nahieh			2		1						25	17				
Lefka nahieh			1								4	6				
LIMASSOL DISTRICT	5	—	8	3	10	3	13	9	166	209	106	98	111	114	148	139
Limassol nahieh	5		8	3	10	3	8	6	160	209	64	55				
Evdhimou nahieh							1	3								
Kilani nahieh							4		6		42	43				
FAMAGUSTA DISTRICT	4	—	7	4	15	9	8	5	38	10	47	44	61	57	80	77
Famagusta nahieh			4	4	8	6	7	5	38	10	40	42				
Mesaoria nahieh			2		2	2					3					
Karpass nahieh			1		5	1	1				4	2				
LARNACA DISTRICT	8	6	12	15	44	33	92	81	106	115	370	444	387	424	289	315
PAPHOS DISTRICT	1	—	5	3	2	—	2	1	1	—	10	6	13	8	2	1
Paphos nahieh	1		3	3	1		1	1			10	6				
Kelokedhara nahieh			2		1		1									
Khrysokhou nahieh																
KYRENIA DISTRICT	21	16	24	16	32	17	32	16	14	4	12	15	15	9	20	15
TOTAL	105	69	155	125	301	216	305	253	602	595	1,671	1,706	1,798	1,888	1,756	1,872

	1881	1891 ⁹	1901	1911	1921	1931	1946	1956	1960	1982 ¹⁰	1992 ¹⁰	2001 ¹⁰
NICOSIA DISTRICT	113	183	352	299	534	2,225	2,487	3,130	2,542	1,029	776	959
Urban area	107	176	330	293	473	1,749	2,252	3,062	2,529	1,025	773	945
Rural area	6	7	22	6	61	476	235	68	13	4	3	14
LIMASSOL DISTRICT	5	11	13	22	375	204	225	295	287	150	100	175
Urban area	5	11	12	14	22	109	207	278	268	148	99	169
Rural area			1	8	353	95	18	17	19	2	1	6
FAMAGUSTA DISTRICT	4	11	24	13	48	91	118	198	157	—	—	1
Urban area		8	11	10	21	78	115	193	152	Turkish-occupied		
Rural area	4	3	13	3	27	13	3	5	5			1
LARNACA DISTRICT	14	27	77	173	221	814	811	867	604	237	139	203
Urban area	14		61	173	208	799	809	864	602	230	136	195
Rural area		27	16		13	15	2	3	2	7	3	8
PAPHOS DISTRICT	1	8	2	3	1	16	21	26	3	—	1	3
Urban area	1	6	1	2	1	16	13	26	3			3
Rural area		2	1	1			8				1	
KYRENIA DISTRICT	37	40	49	48	18	27	24	33	35	Turkish-occupied		
Urban area	3		5	8	9	9	7	28	30	Turkish-occupied		
Rural area	34	40	44	40	9	18	17	5	5			
TOTAL	174	280	517	558	1,197	3,377	3,686	4,549	3,628	1,416	1,016	1,341
Urban areas	130	280	420	500	1,197	2,760	3,403	4,451	3,584	1,403	1,008	1,312
Rural areas	44		97	58		617	283	98	44	13	8	29

Prior to the 1974 invasion, Armenians owned 11,017 donums of land (1,474 hectares), only 0,2174% of privately-owned land: 8,380 donums were located in Kyrenia district, 1,532 in Larnaca district, 999 in Nicosia district, 88 in Limassol district and 18

in Famagusta district. A large part of this land was owned by the Church (e.g. the area surrounding Magaravank). Prior to the invasion, some Armenian-Cypriot developers were investing in large tourist projects around Nicosia and Kyrenia.

⁹ Unfortunately, the population census tables do not make a distinction between the towns and the rest of the districts; for this reason, we have considered the Armenian population of the nahiehs corresponding to the towns as urban, which explains why there is no urban/rural distinction in the Larnaca and Kyrenia districts.

¹⁰ As previously mentioned, the numbers are not accurate.

Places of education, worship and repose

Armenians have always placed particular emphasis on education, which - in conjunction with the Church - is the foundation of their national and cultural heritage. In Nicosia the first Armenian school was built in 1870 by Vartabed Vartan Mamigonian and was called Vartanants boys' school in 1886, after its restoration by Hovhannes Shahinian. In 1902 the Shushanian girls' school opened its doors, built by Vartabed Bedros Saradjian; it later became a kindergarten. Between 1897 and 1904 Vahan Kurkjian (also known as Pagouran) operated an orphanage near the church, while a Miss Sarkissian operated a nursery school between 1913 and 1918. In 1921 the first co-educational school was built by the family of Artin Bey Melikian, while in 1938 Dikran Ouzounian donated money for the construction of another co-educational school. The two schools were merged in 1950, and operated until December 1963; as the premises were taken over by Turkish Cypriot extremists, the school functioned for a few months at the Mitsis girls' school on Archbishop Makarios III Avenue, and between 1964 and 1972 in pre-fabricated buildings in the Melkonian grounds.

After substantial efforts by Representative Dr. Antranik L. Ashdjian, the new Armenian Elementary School in Nicosia was erected on Cyclops Street in Acropolis, Nicosia, on land given in trust by Archbishop Makarios III. The purpose-built school was inaugurated by Archbishop Makarios III on the 12th of November 1972, in the presence of the Catholicos of Cilicia Khoren I, and as a gesture of solidarity, Cyclops Street was renamed Armenia Street. Due to Representative Aram Kalaydjian's determined efforts and initiative, the Cyprus government granted freehold ownership of the land on Armenia Street to the Armenian Prelature in 1986. Since September 2008 a multi-purpose hall is being built within the grounds of Nicosia's Nareg, funded entirely by the government and expected to be completed in September 2009.

The Mousheghian school in Larnaca, named after its benefactor, Adana Bishop Moushegh Seropian, operated from 1909. It was replaced by a larger one in 1923, built by the Adana Educational Association, and in 1926 another floor was added with the contribution of Garabed Melkonian. After the efforts of Representative Aram Kalaydjian, the new building of Larnaca's Nareg was built and completed in 1995 with state funds. It was inaugurated by President Glafcos Clerides on the 18th of May 1996, during the term of Bedros

Kalaydjian, who had succeeded his brother Aram as Representative after the latter's untimely death on the 10th of September 1995.

The first Armenian school in Limassol was established in 1928 and was replaced by another one in 1951. After the efforts of Representative Bedros Kalaydjian and School Committee President Dr. Vahakn Atamyan, a new Nareg was built. It was inaugurated by President Demetris Christofias on the 5th of November 2008, in the presence of former and current Representatives, Dr. Vahakn Atamyan and Vartkes Mahdessian.

All of these schools are adjacent to the local church and are entirely funded by the state. They are supervised by a single Headmaster and a School Committee (Hokapartsoutium) - appointed by the Council of Ministers after the recommendation of the Representative and the Minister of Education and Culture. They comprise 7 grades (including kindergarten) and currently have 165 students in total. Since 1972 they are called Nareg, in memory of Krikor Naregatsi (951- 1003), a great Armenian monk, poet, philosopher and theologian.

In the past, other Armenian schools also operated: in Famagusta an elementary school operated in a rented house from 1927, in which church services were also held during the winter; from 1928 till the 1950s there was a nursery school at Pano Amiandos (built by the community and the mining company), which also served as a church; during World Wars I and II, Armenian schools operated in Lefka and Lefkara, respectively; other briefly-operating schools in the past were at Agros, Pedhoulas, Prodhromos, Skouriotissa and Magaravank. With regard to secondary education,



The Armenian Philharmonic of Vahan Bedelian (circled)



The Nareg in Limassol

most Armenians today attend the English School, the American Academy, the Grammar School and other private schools. Since 2005 about 15 Armenians attend Nareg Gymnasium, housed on the premises of Nicosia's Nareg; as with the elementary classes, students are taught in three languages (Armenian, Greek and English), based on the national curriculum of Cyprus, reinforced with Armenian language, history and geography lessons, and extracurricular activities cultivating Armenian culture. In the past, Armenian girls also attended Saint Joseph's school, while boys also attended the Terra Santa; some Armenians in Paphos, Kyrenia, Amiandos and elsewhere attended Greek schools, like a few do today.

Until 2005, a considerable number of Armenians attended the Melkonian Educational Institute in Aglandjia (Nicosia), one of the very few Western Armenian boarding schools in the world, built between 1924-1926 with the generous and benevolent donation of Egyptian-Armenian tobacco trading brothers Krikor and Garabed Melkonian. Bishop Moushegh Seropian encouraged the brothers to undertake such a project, in order to give shelter to about 500 Armenian orphans of the Genocide who had fled to Syria, Lebanon and Mesopotamia. The location, at the time 3 km outside Nicosia, is said to have been chosen in 1923 by Garabed Melkonian himself, because no minarets could be seen from there¹¹. Inaugurated on the 13th of February 1926 by Patriarch Zaven Der Yeghiayan, it started with only 80 students and 4 elementary

classes. In time it became a world-renowned secondary Armenian school, with an exceptionally rich library (nearly 30.000 volumes), well-equipped scientific laboratories, an orchestra, a choir, a theatre group and a scouts group. Until the 1970s the school had its own hospital, a windmill and an impressive 35-metre water tower.

On the 21st of October 1989, during the term of Aram Kalaydjian as Representative and Chairman of the Melkonian Board, the new complex of the Melkonian was inaugurated by the Acting President Dr. Vassos Lyssarides, in the presence of AGBU President Louise Simone-Manougian and Araradian Vicar General Karekin Nersissian, later Catholicos. Its foundation stone had been laid on the 24th of May 1987 by President Spyros Kyprianou. About 12.000 Armenians in total have studied there, originating from a host of countries, including Cyprus, Armenia, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Egypt, Russia, Iran, Bulgaria, Greece, Turkey, Romania, the USA, the UK, Canada, Iraq, Ethiopia, Argentina, Australia and Brazil, as well as some Greek Cypriots in the late 1990s.

On the 16th of March 2004 the administrative council of the AGBU (Armenian General Benevolent Union), contesting the deed signed on the 28th of December 1925, unilaterally decided to close down this historical institution, and its 200 students were chiefly accommodated at the American Academy. The House of Representatives responded with a unanimous resolution on the 26th of March 2004, and various steps have been taken by the government, organised groups and Representatives Bedros Kalaydjian, Dr. Vahagn Atamyan, and Vartkes Mahdessian. The last decree, issued by the Minister of Interior Neoclis Sylikiotis on the 2nd of March 2007, preserves 60% of its total area (124.100 m²), including the two historic buildings, the Melkonian brothers' monument and the historical grove planted by the orphans in memory of their parents, grandparents and siblings, characterising them as being of a "special architectural, historical and social character and natural beauty". The struggle to re-open the Melkonian is ongoing, and it is hoped that it will soon open again to welcome Armenian schoolchildren from Cyprus and the Diaspora. Since September 2007 it has been temporarily housing the Aglandjia Gymnasium.

¹¹ Indeed the sight of minarets would have been disturbing for the poor orphans who had just escaped the Turks. Just a few years earlier, the sight of Larnaca's minarets was enough for some Armenian refugees, fleeing from the massacres and the deportations, to seek refuge elsewhere.

Apostolic («Gregorian») Armenians have the following churches and chapels:

- **Acropolis:** With the aid of the Government of Cyprus, the World Council of Churches, the Church of Westphalia and the faithful, the elegant metropolitan Cathedral of the Virgin Mary (Sourp Asdvadzadzin) was erected on Armenia Street, built in traditional Armenian architectural style. It was consecrated on 22/11/1981 by Catholicos Khoren I and Catholicos Coadjutor Karekin II, and was renovated in 2005. In 1995 the Holy Saviour Chapel (Sourp Amenaprkich) was erected by brothers Aram and Bedros Kalaydjian on the premises of the Kalaydjian Rest Home. It was consecrated on 16/02/1997 by Catholicos Aram I.

- **Ayios Dhometios:** The Holy Resurrection (Sourp Haroutiun) Chapel was built in 1938, on the grounds of the Armenian cemetery, in memory of the cemetery's benefactor Haroutiun Bohdjalian; it was consecrated in 1949. As it is located in the buffer zone, liturgies are not held there.

- **Larnaca:** The church of Saint Stephen (Sourp Stepanos) is located in the town centre. Built in 1909 as a chapel, it was made a church in 1913 in memory of the martyrs of the Adana massacres. It was dedicated to the patron saint of Adana, the community leaders of which funded its construction. It is a replica of the city's church. It was consecrated in 1918 and was renovated in 1998.

- **Limassol:** Near the Greek Orthodox church of Ayia Zoni in the town centre, the church of Saint George (Sourp Kevork) was built in 1939 with the donations of the people. The land was bought by Mrs. Satenig Soutanian in memory of her father, Kevork. It was consecrated in 1948. Its bell was made electronic in 1989 and the church was renovated in 2006. Masses are held there every second Sunday, in turns with the Larnaca church.

- **Nicosia:** Near Paphos Gate there is the church of the Virgin Mary, a 1308 gothic church. Originally a Benedictine/Carthusian nunnery led by princess Fimie, daughter of the Armenian King Hayton II, it passed into the hands of the Armenians sometime before 1504. On the same grounds were located the Armenian Prelature, the Melikian-Ouzounian elementary school, the Armenian Genocide monument and the Melikian mansion. This church was occupied in December 1963 and has remained desecrated and non-operational ever since, as the



The Nareg in Larnaca

Turkish Army does not allow Armenians to hold a Badarak there. In December 2008 the UNDP announced that the church would be restored between April 2009 - April 2011. There is also the chapel of Saint Paul (Sourp Boghos), built in 1892 at the Armenian cemetery near Ledra Palace Hotel, in memory of the cemetery's benefactor, Constantinopolitan Boghos Odadjian; it was restored in April 2009.

- **Famagusta:** Opposite the Carmelite church is the Virgin Mary of Ganchvor (the Caller), a fortress-like building built in 1346 in typical Armenian fashion but with Cypriot masonry, part of an important monastic and cultural centre. Unused since 1571, it was preserved by the Department of Antiquities in 1907 and on 07/03/1936 it was given to the Armenians for a period of 99 years, for a rent of 5 shillings/year; it was consecrated on 14/01/1945. It was partially burnt by Turkish Cypriots in 1957 and has been inaccessible since 1964, when the walled city became a Turkish Cypriot ghetto. In August 1974 it was occupied by the Turks and is now located in a military area. It is in a relatively fair condition.

- **Khloraka:** After the kind permission of the Bishop of Paphos, Yeoryios, as of December 2008 the Armenian community of Paphos uses the chapel of Ayios Yeoryios (Saint George). Services are held there once a month by the Nicosia priest.

The pride of Armenian-Cypriots is the Monastery of Saint Macarius (Sourp Magar), also known as the Armenian Monastery or Magaravank, built at an altitude of 550 metres within Plataniotissa forest near Halevga. Dedicated to Saint Macarius the Hermit of Alexandria and celebrating on the first Sunday of May, it was founded circa the year 1000



The Sourp Haroutiun Chapel and cemetery in Ayios Dhometios

by Copts, and sometime before 1425 it passed into the hands of the Armenians. A large number of beautiful and invaluable manuscripts (dated 1202-1740) and vestments were housed there. Fortunately some of them have been saved, as they were transferred to the Catholicosate of Cilicia in 1947. During the Latin Era the monks followed a rigid schedule and diet, and no females were allowed, human or animal. In the Ottoman Era it became known as the Blue Monastery (because of the colour of its doors and windows) and was a popular pilgrimage site for Armenians and non-Armenians alike. The present church was built in 1814. The last restorations took place in 1929 and 1947-1949, during which running water and electricity were brought to the Monastery. During weekends and holidays many Armenians would visit it. It was also used as an educational summer resort and a place of rest and recuperation for Catholicos and other clerics, with its vast lands stretching down to the sea (over 8.500 donums of land, with nearly 30.000 olive and carob trees). It was occupied during the 2nd phase of the Turkish invasion, and was extensively destroyed by a fire in 1997. In 1998-1999 the Turkish pseudo-state attempted to turn it into a hotel. However, following intense efforts by Representative Bedros Kalaydjian and the Cyprus government, the European Union exerted pressure on the Turkish side and the plan was abandoned. After an initiative by Representative Vartkes Mahdessian, 250 Armenians were allowed their first visit as a community to the desecrated, pillaged and ruined monastery on the 6th of May 2007; a similar visit is scheduled for the 10th of May 2009.

Nicosia's Armenian Evangelicals originally shared their services with the Reformed Presbyterians and the Greek Evangelicals, opposite the old Electricity Authority building. On the 23rd of July 1946 they opened their own church to the north-east of Arab Ahmed Pasha mosque. It was occupied in 1963, and is today an illegal handicrafts centre. From the 1890s and until the 1960s, Armenian and Greek Evangelicals also gathered in the town of Larnaca, where they founded the local Evangelical church, opposite the American Academy. Since 2005 Armenian Evangelicals gather at the Nicosia Evangelical Church, since 2002 at the Larnaca Evangelical Church, and since 2008 at the Limassol Anglican Church. The few Armenian Catholics attend either the Armenian or the Latin churches of Cyprus. Armenian Jehovah's Witnesses gather at the «Kingdom Halls» of their areas. Anglican Armenians attend the Anglican churches of Nicosia, Larnaca and Limassol, while Brethren and Baptist Armenians prefer home gatherings.

Armenian-Cypriots have their own cemeteries in Nicosia, Limassol, Larnaca and Famagusta. In Nicosia the historical cemetery was built in 1877 to the south of Ledra Palace Hotel; in June 2008 the Armenian Prelature announced plans to restore the cemetery and its chapel, a process that was completed in May 2009. On 22/03/2009 the first ceremony was held there in 46 years. In 1931 a new cemetery was built to the west of Ayios Dhometios, which fell within the buffer zone after the 1974 Turkish invasion. The cemetery was restored in 2005 and visits are now allowed every Sunday. Finally, in 1998 the new Nicosia Armenian cemetery was built to the north of the Lakatamia-Ayii Trimitias road. The Larnaca cemetery was built in 1923, at a small distance to the south-east of the Greek Orthodox cemetery; Larnaca's Armenian and Greek Evangelicals have a special Protestant cemetery behind the Anglican one. The Limassol cemetery was built in 1960 off the Troodos road, in the Kato Polemidhia region. In the Turkish-occupied town of Famagusta, Armenians were initially buried in a small cemetery near Stavros Church. In 1967 a small Armenian cemetery was built near Ayios Memnon Church; their condition is unknown, as they are currently within the fenced-off area and are thus inaccessible.

The religious identity of Armenians

The vast majority of Armenians in Cyprus are Orthodox («Gregorian»); about 40- 50 are Evangelicals, around 30- 40 are Brethren or Baptists, about 20- 30 are Jehovah's Witnesses, around 10- 20 are Catholics and approximately 5- 10 are Anglicans.

The Armenian Apostolic Orthodox Church is an Oriental Church founded by Apostle Thaddeus. It does not recognise the Council of Chalcedon (451) and subsequent Councils as ecumenical, and the Creed it uses slightly differs from other Churches: it is based on the Nicene Creed, also containing the doctrine of the II Ecumenical Council and preserving the I Ecumenical Council's anathema. It is not a Monophysitic Church, as it condemns the heretic views of Eutychius, rather it embraces the beliefs of Saint Cyril of Alexandria (miaphysitism), that Jesus had one nature, in which the human and the Divine were inextricably and inseparably interconnected. Eastern Orthodox Churches and the Roman Catholic Church advocate that Jesus had two natures, the human and the Divine, which co-existed simultaneously in His person (dyophysitism). The Divine Liturgy (Badarak) - an elegant compilation of the liturgies of Saints Gregory the Theologian, Basil of Caesarea and John the Chrysostom, also containing some purely Armenian melodious hymns - is conducted in classical Armenian (krapar).

Globally it is the only Church that does not mix wine with water in the Holy Chalice: the faithful receive the Holy Communion under both kinds, in the form of unleavened bread immersed in consecrated wine. Armenian churches have a characteristic architectural structure, with a central octagonal conic dome. Although Armenians venerate icons, they kiss only the cross and the Gospel. An Armenian particularity is the cross-stone (khachkar) - a carved stone with a cross in the centre, decorated with floral patterns. Its origins date back to the Arab period (645- 885), when no facial representations were allowed. The altar is elevated and faces the east, separated by the main church not by an iconostasis but by a curtain. Clerics wear special slippers, so as not to bring dirt from outside. The vestments and the mitre of the priests resemble the corresponding Byzantine, whilst the mitre of the Bishops resembles the Roman Catholic one, because in 1184 Pope Lucius III sent the Latin vestments as a gift to Catholicos Gregory IV. A

¹² However, this has not always been the case: the Armenian Prelature of Cyprus used to be under the Patriarchate of Constantinople (1759-1775, 1800-1812, 1861-1864, 1908-1926), the Patriarchate of Jerusalem (1775-1800, 1812-1837, 1888-1908), even the Catholicosate of Echmiatsin (1864-1888).

characteristic of celibate Armenian clergy is the conic cowl (veghar) and, of Bishops in particular, the ring on the right hand, which during the Arab period they used in order to sign documents. Deacons and acolytes are laymen, and priests are not necessarily celibate and can partly shave. The symbol of the cross is made with three joint fingers starting from up, going down and then from the side of the heart (left) to right.

The Armenian Church celebrates Christmas together with the Epiphany, on 6 January (as the first Christians did), and Easter on the same day as Roman Catholics, namely the first Sunday after the full moon that occurs on or after the vernal equinox. Armenians have their own section in the ancient city of Jerusalem and the Temples of the Nativity and Resurrection. Although the Armenian Church remains one and indivisible, due to historical circumstances since 1441 it is governed by two equal Catholicos (Patriarchs), who retain the exclusive privileges of blessing the Holy Myrrh every 7 years, ordaining and consecrating Bishops, and anointing the King. The Supreme Catholicos of All Armenians resides in Echmiatsin in Armenia, and the Catholicos of the Great House of Cilicia resides in Antelias in Lebanon (from 1293-1921 it had been in Sis); under the Echmiatsin Catholicos are the Armenian Patriarch of Jerusalem and the Armenian Patriarch of Constantinople. The Armenian Prelature of Cyprus is the oldest diocese that falls within the jurisdiction of the Antelias Catholicosate¹², administered by an elected Metropolitan or appointed Vicar General, the Diocesan Council (Temagan), and the Administrative Council (Varchagan). Its charter, consisting of 104 clauses, was originally drawn up in 1945 and was ratified on the 13th of March 1950 by Catholicos Karekin I; some modifications were approved on the 7th of November 1960 by Catholicos Zareh I.

Catholicos
Aram I's
visit to
Cyprus
(July 2008)



The Armenian alphabet, sculpted by Sebouh Abcarian into a wall at the Melkonian



The Armenian language

The mother tongue for the vast majority of Armenian-Cypriots is Armenian, while most of them also speak English and Greek; the older generation also speak Ottoman Turkish. There are over 3.500 speakers of Armenian in Cyprus.

Armenian is an independent branch of the Indo-European family of languages and has its own alphabet. Spoken by approximately 9 million people in Armenia, Nagorno-Karabakh and across the Diaspora, in its classical form it was phonologically affected by Georgian and other Caucasian languages, and it received numerous loanwords from Greek, Syriac, Latin and Persian, and at a later stage from Turkish and Russian. It would be interesting to mention that, between the 18th-20th centuries, the Armenian script was used to transcribe Ottoman Turkish, as it was easier to read and is phonologically better-suited for it than the Perso-Arabic script; in fact, the first novel to be published in Turkish, *Akabi Hikayesi* (1851), was written by Vartan Pasha in the Armenian script.

Since the 19th century, vernacular Armenian (Ashkharhapar) is divided into Western (Arevmtahayeren) and Eastern Armenian (Arevelahayeren), developed in the Ottoman and the Russian Empires respectively. The former - based on the Constantinople dialect - is spoken mainly by Diasporan Armenians in Europe, the Middle East and the Americas, while the latter - based on the Ararat dialect - is mainly spoken in Armenia, former Soviet Republics, as well as in Iran. Although largely mutually intelligible, there

are noticeable differences in phonology, vocabulary, grammar even orthography.

Armenian-Cypriots speak the Western dialect, which has 8 vowels, 24 consonants and 9 diphthongs. Nouns have six cases (nominative, accusative, genitive, dative, ablative and instrumental), two numbers (singular and plural), and no grammatical gender. Adjectives do not decline, have no gender, and they precede the nouns they qualify. Verbs have four tenses (present, imperfect, preterite and future), two voices (active, passive), three conjugations (-el, -il and -al), five moods (indicative, optative, conditional, jussive and imperative), and they are usually placed at the end of a sentence. Armenian is not only inflectional, but also an agglutinative language (mainly with suffixes) with a fairly free word order. It is also rich in consonantal combinations.

Armenian is the main teaching medium at Nareg Elementary Schools and Nareg Gymnasium. The second CyBC (Cyprus Broadcasting Corporation) radio has been broadcasting Armenian programmes since 1953, nowadays daily from 17:00- 18:00, the only Armenian broadcast around the region. On the 1st of December 2002 the Republic of Cyprus and the Council of Europe declared Armenian to be a minority or regional language of Cyprus, which was clarified as of the 27th of September 2006 to be a minority language: it is estimated that Western Armenian is spoken by about 3.000 people in Cyprus, while Eastern Armenian is spoken by over 500 persons (mostly from Armenia, Georgia and Iran).

Publications, associations and activities

What follows is a concise outline of the numerous and varied activities of the highly active Armenian community in Cyprus. As regards publications, currently there are the «Artsakank» (Echo, since 1995) and «Azad Tsayn» (Free Voice, since 2003) newspapers, the «Lradou» (Newsletter, parliamentary, since 2006) and «Keghart» (ecclesiastical, since 1997) newsletters, as well as «Gibrahayer» (Cyprus Armenians) - the largest circulation Armenian e-magazine, established since 1999. In the past, other newspapers were published also, such as «Arax» (the first-published, in 1924), «Ayk» (Dawn), «Azad Gibrahay» (Free Armenian-Cypriot), «Deghegadou» (Informant), «Gibrahay Deghegadou» (Armenian-Cypriot Informant), «Hayatsk» (Glimpse), «Henaran» (Support), «Lousarpi» (Sunlight), «Nor Arax» (New Arax), «Ovavis» (Oasis), «Pharos» (Lighthouse) and «Tsolk» (Glow). The Armenian community was the first of the three religious groups in Cyprus to have an official web page in January 2006 (www.cyprusarmenians.com), and it also has an experimental Internet radio station. Summer and winter camps are organised, as well as numerous charity, theatrical, musical, dancing and cultural events.

As regards associations, there are the Kalaydjian Foundation, the Pharos Arts Foundation, the Arev Benevolent Foundation, the Armenian Cultural Association of Cyprus, the Armenian National Committee of Cyprus, the Armenian Relief Society of Cyprus (instrumental in helping orphans from Armenia after the 1988 earthquake and from Nagorno-Karabakh), the Armenian Youth Federation, the Azadamard Youth Centre, the Cyprus-Armenia Friendship Society, the Hamazkayin (Nation-wide) Cultural and Educational Association (Oshagan Chapter), the Larnaca Armenian Club (since 1931), the Limassolian Young Armenians Union (LHEM, since 1996), and the Middle East/Near East Armenian Research Centre. In the past, other clubs operated: Entertsasirats Mioutiun (Bibliophile Association) and Hay Agoump (Armenian Club) in Nicosia, the Armenian Club in Limassol, Entertsadoun (Place for Reading) and Hayakhos Mioutiun (Armenian-speaking Association) in Larnaca, and Peregamatats (Friends of Armenia) in Nicosia, Limassol, Famagusta and Larnaca, with its own football team, «Nor Gaydzak» (New Lightning).

There is also the **Kalaydjian Rest Home for the Elderly**, operating since March 1988 in Acropolis,



Nicosia. The Kalaydjian Rest Home is run by the **Kalaydjian Foundation**, a non-profit philanthropic organisation set up in 1984 which focuses primarily on the Armenian community of Cyprus.

The Kalaydjian Rest Home for the Elderly

The Kalaydjian Rest Home was built by brothers Bedros and Aram Kalaydjian in memory of their parents Roupen and Marie Kalaydjian. It was officially opened on Sunday the 6th of March 1988 by the then Interior Minister of Cyprus Mr. Christodoulos Veniamin with the religious blessings of Catholicos Karekin II of the Holy See of Cilicia and Bishop Yeghishe Mandjikian of the Armenian Prelature of Cyprus.

The Rest Home originally comprised 12 rooms that surrounded a central courtyard. There was also a large dining area and a sitting room with a library. In 1995, the Kalaydjian brothers built the “Sourp Amenaprkich” chapel on the premises of the Rest Home to address the spiritual needs of the residents. The chapel was consecrated in a ceremony on Sunday the 16th of February 1997 by the Catholicos of the Holy See of Cilicia Aram I.

In 2005, the Kalaydjian Rest Home underwent a major renovation and expansion with the addition of a second floor, thus increasing its capacity from 12 to 22 rooms. The official inauguration of the new wing took place on the 28th of June 2006 and was led by the late President of the Republic of Cyprus Mr. Tassos Papadopoulos, with the religious blessings of the Archbishop of the Armenian Prelature in Cyprus Varoujan Hergelian and the Bishop of Kykkos Nikiphoros. Also present were the Ministers of Health and Labour, party leaders and representatives, the Mayor of Strovolos, the Director General of the Ministry of the Interior, and the Law Commissioner. They were joined by many members of the Armenian Community, including past and current representatives. The government of Cyprus contributed €170,000

*Representative
Aram Kalaydjian
addressing
the Cyprus
Parliament
in 1986*



to the project, against a total cost of around €700,000.

The new floor was named after sisters Arousiak and Alice Rafaelian, who bequeathed their house on Armenia Street in Nicosia to the Foundation.

The Kalaydjian Foundation is run by a seven member Management Committee. Roupen Kalaydjian and Tigran Kalaydjian are the rotating chairmen serving four year terms each.

In addition to running the Kalaydjian Rest Home, the Foundation also provides substantial support for education. It currently offers a university scholarship programme that allows talented Armenian-Cypriot students to study for a Master's degree free of charge at the American University of Armenia. It also provides an annual grant to all Cypriot students who are graduates of Nareg elementary schools and are enrolled in private secondary schools on the island, while also offering an annual prize to outstanding students of the Faculty of Social Sciences and Education of the University of Cyprus.

The Kalaydjian Foundation is registered in the Republic of Cyprus as a philanthropic organisation (Registration No. 41) and as such all donations to it are tax-deductible. The Rafaelian sisters and Mr. Arto Matossian are Grand Benefactors of the Kalaydjian Foundation.

The **Pharos Arts Foundation**, established in 1993, is a non-profit cultural and educational foundation dedicated to the promotion of the arts and humanities. Its mission is to promote artistic excellence, by bringing audiences in Cyprus into contact with some of the most exciting and talented musicians and artists on the Cypriot and international scene. Its founder and president is Garo Keheyan. The Foundation is registered in the

Republic of Cyprus as a charitable trust (Deed No. 91) and therefore all contributions to it are tax-deductible.

The Armenian-Cypriot community is also active in sports: since 1945 there is the AYMA football team (between 1946-1962 in the first division championship), since 1999 there is the AGBU Ararat futsal team (originally established in 1984 as a football team; it has 6 championship titles, 4 cups and has twice won the double), while in 2005 the well-known Homenmen club formed a futsal team in Cyprus. It is also important to mention that all three major Armenian Diasporan political parties are active in Cyprus: the ARF Dashnaksoutiun (affiliated with AYMA), the ADL Ramgavar (affiliated with AGBU), and the SDHP Hnchakian (affiliated with Nor Serount). There is also the "Stepan Shahoumian" progressive movement, affiliated with local left-wing AKEL party.

The oldest Armenian association still active is the Larnaca AGBU (Armenian General Benevolent Union, Parekordzagan), founded in 1911, also active in Nicosia (since 1913) and Limassol (since 1936); until 1963 it had the Gaydzak (Lightning) football team, which in 1931 was declared Cyprus champion. An equally well-known association is AYMA (Armenian Young Men's Association), established in 1934. Finally, in 2006 the Nor Serount (New Generation) Cultural Association was established in Cyprus. In the past, Armenian-Cypriots had their own scout groups (nos. 7 for Melkonian, 77 for AYMA, 4 for Nareg Nicosia and 11 for Nareg Larnaca), a choir and a philharmonic (founded in 1926 by the great musician and teacher Vahan Bedelian), while AYMA also had a table tennis team, as well as a hockey team, which was declared champion for the years 1951-1954.



*Representative Bedros Kalaydjian with Armenian Foreign
Minister Vardan Oskanyan during the latter's visit to
Cyprus in 1999*

Monuments

The oldest monument is a column at Magaravank, constructed by the students of the Kurkjian Orphanage and architect Garo Balian and unveiled on the 8th of September 1901, in memory of Abbot Mkhitar, who was a guest there in 1695. The first Genocide monument was unveiled on the 24th of April 1932 in the yard of the Armenian church on Victoria Street by Archbishop Bedros Saradjian; it was also dedicated to the French- Armenian Legion fighters of the Battle of Arara, Palestine, and was the second oldest Genocide monument in the world. On the 8th of September 1933 a column was unveiled at Magaravank, on the occasion of the visit there of Catholicos Sahag II, who had decorated the Monastery in 1931.

On the 24th of April 1954 Bishop Ghevont Chebeyan unveiled a monument on the grounds of the Melkonian Educational Institute in memory of the two benefactors and founders of the school, brothers Krikor and Garabed Melkonian; the monument was designed by sculptor Leon Mouradoff and built by architect Mardiros Altounian. Between 1990 and 1991 a number of sandstone statues depicting important pillars of Armenian history and letters were sculpted by Levon Tokmadjian. Krikor Naregatsi was placed in front of Nicosia's Nareg; Boghos Noubar Pasha was placed outside Nicosia's AGBU club; General Andranik Ozanian, Gomidas Vartabed, Hagop Meghabard, Hovhannes Aivazovski, Mesrob Mashdots, Movses Khorenatsi, Vahan Tekeyan and Alex Manougian (marble) were placed around the Melkonian.

On the 24th of April 1992 the new Genocide monument, designed by John Guevherian, was unveiled in the yard of the new Armenian church in Nicosia "in memory of 1.500.000 Armenians massacred by the Turks". In 1996 some martyrs' remains from the Der Zor desert in Syria were interred within the monument, while more bone remains are kept in the two marble columns, built in 2000 in front of the monument; all these are encircled by five sandstone khachkar-like columns, also built in 2000. Some of the bone remains were interred in an obelisk in front of AYMA's premises, unveiled on the 24th of April 2001 by Archbishop Varoujan Hergelian.

On the 21st of October 2001, on the occasion of 1700 years of Christianity in Armenia, Catholicos Aram I unveiled a white marble khachkar - erected by the Armenian Prelature of Cyprus and chiselled by Boghos Taslakian - as a "symbol of friendship between Armenians and Greeks of Cyprus". In 2005



The Armenian Genocide monument in Nicosia

the bronze bust of Bishop Zareh Aznavorian, the beloved Armenian Bishop of Cyprus between 1977-1983, created by sculptor Mkrtych Mazmanian, was unveiled in front of Nicosia's church by Archbishop Varoujan Hergelian.

On the 28th of May 2008, the President of the Republic of Cyprus, Demetris Christofias, led the grand opening ceremony of the Armenian Genocide Memorial. The Armenian Genocide Memorial, located on Larnaca's seafront, marks the spot where thousands of Armenian refugees fleeing the atrocities of the Genocide of 1915- 1923 first landed in Cyprus (at Larnaca Port). Its position is adjacent to the entrance to Larnaca's present-day marina.

The memorial represents the gratitude of the Armenian nation towards the people of Cyprus for their generosity and assistance to those Armenian refugees, and stands in memory of the countless victims of the Armenian Genocide.

Its creation was a joint project between the governments of Cyprus and Armenia and was inspired and initiated by the Representative of the Armenian community in Cyprus, Bedros Kalaydjian. The memorial was funded principally by the government of Cyprus. It was designed by the architect and town planner Angelos Demetriou, with the help of architect Michael Thrassou, and features a bronze monument surrounded by rows

President Christofias unveiling the Armenian Genocide Memorial in Larnaca



of pomegranate and cypress trees. The four granite plaques at the base of the sculpture (describing the monument in Greek, English, Armenian and Turkish) were made by the government of Armenia. The monument itself was sculpted by the Greek artist Georgios Kalakallas.

The square in front of the memorial was funded by the Kalaydjian Foundation and links the Armenian Genocide Monument with Larnaca's main promenade.

In November 2006, during the state visit to Cyprus of the President of Armenia, the memorial's foundation stone was laid by President Robert Kocharyan.

On the 28th of September 2008 a brown stone khachkar was unveiled in Limassol by Archbishop Varoujan Hergelian, after the donation of the Hayastantsi Arakelyan family.

Finally, it must be mentioned that Cyprus was the first country to raise the issue of recognising the Armenian Genocide, when on the 25th of January 1965 Foreign Minister Spyros Kyprianou brought the issue to the United Nations General Assembly.

Prior to his powerful speech, a delegation comprising ARF Dashnaksoutiun Bureau members Dr. Papken Papazian and Berj Missirlian, as well as Armenian National Committee of Cyprus members Anania Mahdessian and Vartkes Sinanian, handed him a memorandum urging Cyprus' support in raising the issue at the United Nations.

Cyprus was also the first European country (and the second world-wide, after Uruguay) to officially recognise the Genocide. On the 24th of April 1975, after the determined efforts of Representative Dr. Antranik L. Ashdjian, Resolution 36 was voted unanimously by the House of Representatives. Representative Aram Kalaydjian was instrumental in passing unanimously through the House of Representatives two more resolutions regarding the Genocide: Resolution 74 on 29/04/1982 and Resolution 103 on 19/04/1990, the latter declaring 24 April as a National Remembrance Day of the Genocide in Cyprus. Today the Armenian Genocide is recognised by 21 countries and 43 of the 50 US States; a major obstacle for its global recognition is the incessant and obsessive denial by Turkey, whose strategic geopolitical position deters major states like the USA and the UK from adopting a stance detrimental to it.

Important figures

If one were to categorise the religious groups of Cyprus, it would be fair to say that the Latins are the bourgeoisie, the Armenians belong to the merchant/craftsman class, and that the Maronites are people of the land. Despite the fact that the majority of Armenian Cypriots were historically middle class, numerous Armenians excelled through their contributions to their community and to Cyprus in general, as businessmen, consuls, diplomats, doctors, dentists, journalists, lawyers, municipal councillors, musicians, painters, photographers, poets, professors, religious personalities, researchers, scouts, sports personalities etc. Listing them all would be arduous and space-consuming. It would, however, be prudent to provide brief biographies of the current and past Representatives as well as the current President of the House of Representatives:



Berj Tilbian: Born in Larnaca on 11/02/1922, he was educated at the Melkonian Educational Institute and then joined his father in the world's oldest Kodak products distribution agency. Chairman

of the Melkonian's Board of Directors, a leading land developer and a member of the Lions Club, on 07/08/1960 he became the first and the youngest Armenian Representative, holding that position until 1970. His untimely death came on 19/11/1979.



Dr. Antranik L. Ashdjian: Born in Tarsus, Cilicia on 27/12/1918, he settled with his family in Larnaca in 1921. A well-known dentist, in 1955 he was one of the founding members of the Nicosia Lions

Club and the Lusignan Lodge. In 1960 he became vice-Chairman of the Unified Armenian Front. He also served as a municipal councillor and vice-Mayor of Nicosia (1963-1970). He was elected

Armenian Representative on 19/07/1970 and 24/10/1976. He passed away on 01/02/1997.



Aram Kalaydjian: Born in Larnaca on 03/10/1936, he was a prominent businessman. Having served as a member of the Larnaca Armenian School Committee (1960-1970), Chairman of the Larnaca and Cyprus AGBU chapters (1968-1976 and 1976-1995, respectively) and the Melkonian Board (1976-1995), he was elected Armenian Representative on 14/03/1982, 13/07/1986 and 19/05/1991. He was also the Honorary-Consul General of the People's Republic of Bangladesh in Cyprus. He passed away on 10/09/1995. After his death, a street was named after him by the Larnaca Municipality.



Bedros Kalaydjian: Born in Larnaca on 18/08/1934, he was a prominent businessman. He served as Chairman of Larnaca's AGBU chapter, Larnaca's and Limassol's American Academy Alumni Foundation (1986-1994) and Larnaca's Rotary Club (1992-1993). He was a founding member of the Cyprus-Armenia Friendship Association. Following his brother's death, he was elected Representative of the Armenians on 22/10/1995, on 26/05/1996 and again on 27/05/2001. He passed away on 01/09/2005.



Dr. Vahakn Atamyan: Born in Nicosia on 20/11/1957, he is a medical doctor. He has served as chairman of Nicosia's AGBU chapter (2000-2001), the Cyprus Medical Association of pre-Registration doctors (1986-1987), as president of Nareg Schools' School Committee (2000-2006), Ararat Futsal Club (2000-present), and as a member of the Melkonian Board (1992-2004). He was elected interim Representative of Armenians on 09/10/2005, after the death of Bedros Kalaydjian.



Vartkes Mahdessian: Born in Nicosia on 13/11/1950, he is a prominent businessman and managing director of two international companies, with extensive experience in marketing and management.

Having served as Chairman of AYMA (early 1990s), a member of the English School's Board (1998-2004) and of the Armenian Diocesan Council of Cyprus (1996-2007), he was elected Representative of the Armenian community on 21/05/2006, a post he holds until today.



Marios Karoyan: Born in Nicosia on 31/05/1961, he has been President of the Democratic Party since 2006. On 06/03/2008, he was elected President of the House of Representatives, thereby

holding the highest elected post currently held by an Armenian outside of Armenia.

Another Armenian Cypriot, Benon Sevan, served as Assistant Secretary-General of the UN (1992-2005).

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