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Who are the people of Cyprus? The national identity building process in Cyprus from the late 19th to the early 20th century

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Abstract

This article offers a nuanced examination of the complex identity dynamics among the Christian and Muslim communities in Cyprus during the late 19th and early 20th century, particularly in the aftermath of British administration replacing Ottoman rule in 1878. The article draws attention to the profound impact of this historical transition on the identity formation processes of both communities. Despite the shared wartime experience of the First World War, the Christian and Muslim communities in Cyprus failed to construct a cohesive identity rooted in their common geographical space. Drawing on Zygmunt Bauman's concept of ambivalence, the article explores the complex process by which Cypriot communities sought to align their identity with larger nations, namely Greece and Turkey, rather than grounding it in their local context. The article contends that the genesis of their ambivalence can be traced back to 1878 when British administration replaced Ottoman rule on the island.

1. Introduction

In 1912, the first inter-communal conflict happened in Cyprus (Marovich-Old 2017). However, after a few years the First World War broke out and Christian Cypriots and Muslim Cypriots joined the British army together against the Central Powers, including the Ottoman Empire (Varnava 2017; Çetiner 2017). The already dire economic situation was getting worse during wartime and some Cypriots had no choice but to join the war to support their families. Who were the people of Cyprus when they conflicted between each other and who were they when they joined the British army together? Further, belonging somewhere includes complex meanings. Can people belong to multiple places or not is a difficult question to answer. The cause of the difficulty does not belong to more than one place but the uncertainty of belongingness (Bauman 1995).

This article aims to examine why the communities in Cyprus, Christians, and Muslims, did not build an identity based on where they live but other countries, Greece and Turkey. Cyprus, their living place, was kept in the background during the national identity building process of the communities in the island. The article claims that Cypriots and their situation started to become ambivalent in 1878 when the administration of the island was transferred from the Ottomans to the British. Further, the concept "ambivalence" from Zygmunt Bauman (1995) is used in the article.[1] Ambivalence, as defined by sociologist Zygmunt Bauman, refers to the simultaneous existence of

opposing feelings or attitudes towards a particular subject. In the context of national identity, ambivalence describes the conflicting desires and loyalties that individuals or groups may experience, leading to a state of in-betweenness and uncertainty. In Cyprus, ambivalence is a crucial concept for understanding the divided national identities of the Christian and Muslim Cypriot communities. After the island ceded to the British in 1878, the Muslim community had lost its majority feature, and they became an entire minority. The Muslim community tried to be in good relations with the new government but also not to break their ties with the Ottoman Empire. Nevertheless, Cyprus was not included even in the Turkish National Pact (Tunçay 1976; Kaymaz 1983).[2] This situation contributed to the binary position of the Muslim community. On the one aspect, they wanted the island to be returned to its former rulers of the island, but on the other side, they had to be on good terms with the new administration to strengthen their position. In other words, the sense of being abandoned contributed to their pragmatist attitude. They were in an ambiguous situation. Where they belonged and how they described themselves are questions they had no answers to. When the British came to the island, the Muslim community was neither Greek, Turkish nor British (Kızılyürek 2005). They were in an ambivalent situation because they had lost the administration that identified with them. In other respects, the Christian Cypriots, second-class subjects during the Ottoman Empire, could not eliminate feelings of underestimation within the new administration (Morgan 2010). This brought out the desire to belong to something bigger, and being part of the Eastern Roman Empire became attractive to them. Greek nationalism, with its promise of a glorious and respected past, offered an appealing escape from their ambivalent situation. It provided them with a sense of belonging to a significant and powerful national identity, which contrasted sharply with their inferior status under British colonial rule. However, the Greek Cypriots were also abandoned by their "motherland" too. During the Great War, the British offered to cede Cyprus to the Kingdom of Greece, but the offer was rejected (Varnava 2015). Greek Cypriots had become alienated from their place of residence in an effort to belong to something bigger, even if they were abandoned by the place to which they tried to belong. The more they tried to belong somewhere else, the more ambivalent they became.

Ultimately, Cypriots did not build their identities based on their own country and the ambivalent situation was influential in the process of identity construction. The situation of communities in Cyprus was different from Jewish people who are examined by Bauman because Jewish people did not have an imaginary homeland; they were excluded and became "other" within their living places. However, both Christian and Muslim communities on the island did not consider Cyprus as their homeland; they imagined that they belonged somewhere bigger than they lived, Greece and the Ottoman Empire/Turkey. On the other hand, Jewish people were trying to be assimilated because they could not be classified, but the more they assimilated, the more they became "other." Like Jewish people, both communities in Cyprus tried to construct the Greek and Turkish nations to avoid being excluded from the classifications. They could eliminate the ambivalent situation if they belong to the Greek or Turkish nation. However, neither Greece nor Turkey made any claims on the island until at least the 1950s. No matter how much they describe themselves as Turkish and Greek, they could not escape being excluded. As they identified themselves as Greek and Turkish, their ambivalent situation had intensified.

1.1. Theoretical Framework

Michel Foucault described identity as a constituted thing. The identities are not given but always constituted by the power; the notion of "man" has not always existed but is a recent invention (Foucault 1994). In that regard, we are not the ones who determine "who we are." It has already constituted, and we were born into it. People themselves created the identities. The process is like a cycle: people have constituted the identities, but then they assume and adopt them as if these identities have always existed and are something given.[3] National identities are among the identities that affect our lives the most today. Prejudices about who we can be begin to take shape according to our national and also religious identities. Many academic debates and approaches exist on

nationalism, such as when nationalism emerged, whether it was something produced by people or something that has always existed (Armstrong 1982; Anderson 1983; Gellner 1983; Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983; Smith 1986; Kedourie 1994). In other words, these theories discuss whether nationalism is a product of modernization and the importance of ethnic pasts in this construction. For example, according to Benedict Anderson (1983), nation and nationalism are modern phenomena. He described them as imaginary things and nations are not real but constructed by human beings. On the other side, Anthony Smith (1986) contends that all nations and nationalisms are fundamentally ethnic, asserting that there is a profound continuity between ancient cultures, ethnic communities and modern nation states, and that they are inseparable.[4]

In addition to Greek and Turkish nationalism in Cyprus, there is an ideology of Cypriotism that has emerged since the 1970s. This ideology appeared as a response to the divisive nationalisms that dominated the 20th century (Hamit 2009; Pastellopoulos 2022). Although it had not been fully formed ideologically, we can see traces of Cypriotism in earlier dates. For instance, according to a poem which was written in 1882, the British administration was blamed for attacking Cypriots with extreme and heavy taxes, and the poem called for both Muslim and Christian Cypriots for unification against the British administration (Bryant 2004, 38-39):

> …
> People of Cyprus, Christian
> Together with Muslim,
> You have a common interest,
> Work together.
> Enough of English
> Politics and flattery.
> For our common good
> We must unite[5]

The poem does not stress the national identities but religious ones. The people of Cyprus still identified themselves as Christian or Muslim, not Greek or Turkish. In addition, the poem accepts their differences, but it calls the people of Cyprus to be united against their common enemies, the cruel administrators. It can be deduced from the poem that the people were separated according to their religious identity. However, it is crucial that some Cypriots tried to get rid of these identifications and wanted to unite the people of the island. Further, the poem does not mention the mother lands: Greece and the Ottoman Empire. It addresses the Cypriots belonging to the island to unite against the oppressors. The poem defined Cypriots through Cyprus, where they lived in, and the poet did not seek another place to belong. Moreover, although the ideology of Cypriotism could not become the dominant ideology on the island, the signs of Cypriotism can also be found in the leftist movements that emerged in the 1920s. The Communist Party of Cyprus (CPC), founded by Greek Cypriots in 1926, was against Enosis[6] and supported independence (Alecou 2015; Katsourides 2014). While CPC was trying to integrate with the society, it did not exclude the Muslim Cypriot community either. The party desired to unify all Cypriot workers against the British colonial administration, but the nationalist Greek Cypriots did not allow the party's desire and insisted on Enosis (Katsourides 2014). Nevertheless, the identity based on living place, which some Cypriots tried to establish, was not successful and we had to wait until the 1970s for the ideological formation of Cypriotism.

Pastellopoulos (2022) discusses Cypriotism as an inclusive political ideology aiming to bridge the ethnic divide on the island. This civic nationalism contrasts with the ethnic nationalism traditionally seen among Greek and Turkish Cypriots, promoting a unified Cypriot identity. Mavratsas (1997) provides a comprehensive analysis of the ideological struggle between Greek Cypriot nationalism and Cypriotism. This struggle reflects the broader socio-political dynamics on the island, where efforts to promote a unified national identity face significant challenges from entrenched ethnic nationalism. He argues that ethnic identities in Cyprus are constructed by social

and political processes. This constructivist approach suggests that identities are not fixed and are reshaped according to changing conditions. Mavratsas (1999) argues that the clash between Greek Cypriot nationalism and Cypriotism creates a structural ambivalence in Greek Cypriot perceptions of self and others. This ambivalence was particularly evident when Greek Cypriots had the opportunity to differentiate themselves from mainland Greeks. Loizides et al. (2022) examines how ethnic groups adapt to changing conditions and the effects of these adaptation processes on nationalism. This paradigm emphasizes how groups respond to historical and political changes and how these processes shape their sense of identity. Also, Loizides (2007) highlights the internal divisions within Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities, suggesting that both groups have adapted their identities based on prevailing political opportunities and domestic alliances. He argues that the main focus of identity in Cyprus is not a binary choice between "motherland nationalism" and "Cypriotism" but rather a more complex identification with their respective ethnic communities. On the contrary, Volkan (1979) emphasizes the importance of historical traumas and collective memories in the identity formation from a psychological perspective. According to him, deep-rooted historical connections with Greece and Turkey create a sense of belonging that is difficult to change, reflecting the enduring nature of ethnic identities in Cyprus. He argues that ethnic identities are fixed and unchangeable and there is no way to form an inclusive Cypriot identity.

This article takes nationalism as an imaginary and constructed thing which has been formed and constantly reformed by the people. However, the national identity construction is not a process that always occurs in the same way and under the same conditions. Different societies in different contexts and times experience particular processes. Nationalism and its formation process can indeed differ depending on the context and change over time (Mylonas and Tudor 2021, 2023). These differences will become more evident as different societies are examined. Moreover, the attitudes of small islands towards nationalism and conflict can differ from the dynamics of larger countries. Examining small islands like Cyprus in terms of identity formation process is significant to explore different dimensions of national identities. In particular, Cyprus' irredentist movements and ambivalent situation are important factors that distinguish it from the identity formation processes of other societies. Studying nationalism in small island groups, such as Cyprus, reveals how historical transitions, colonial legacies, and geographic isolation contribute to unique identity trajectories. These insights can illuminate broader theories of nationalism, offering new perspectives on how identity is constructed in different environments. Moreover, the exploration of irredentist ideas and ambivalence within the island provides a deeper understanding of the complex interplay between local and external influences on national identity. Therefore, examining the nationalist trajectories of small island groups is crucial for a comprehensive understanding of nationalism in diverse global contexts.

Further, the article explores a different perspective from Volkan, Loizides, and Mavratsas by examining the earlier periods from a historical perspective. During this time, national identities were not yet fully formed in Cyprus. For this reason, the communities in Cyprus are mentioned throughout the article as Christian and Muslim, not as Greek or Turkish. The article examines how these identities ultimately emerged and why irredentist ideas became so dominant in Cyprus, unlike other islands in a similar geographical context where irredentist ideas were not as widespread. The concept of "ambivalence" is not used to describe them as being between two national identities, but to explain that they are drawn to irredentist ideas because they were in an ambivalent situation. It is important to show the diversity of nationalism theories and to reveal different dimensions. National identities are not built in a certain order – there are different reasons in different places, which lead to different formations (Mylonas and Tudor 2021, 2023).

2. Cypriots under the British Rule

Cyprus has hosted more than one community for several centuries. Although Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots are not the only communities, they are the dominant ethnoreligious groups on

the island. The island was occupied by the Ottoman Empire in 1571, and since then, Muslims have been added to the island's Christian population (Hill 2010). After the Ottoman-Russia war in 1878, the administration of Cyprus was temporarily left to the British rule in order to support the Ottoman Empire against Russia.[7] The British promised to assist the Ottoman Empire in the Congress of Berlin; in return, the administration of the island was assigned to the British, but the Sublime Porte continued its sovereignty over the island. After The Cyprus Convention was signed on 4 June 1878, the additional act was made on 1 July 1878 (Hariciye Nezareti 1916). It was decided that the excess amount of income after deducting the expenses would be given to the Istanbul government every year. The British administration could be regarded as an administration appointed by the Ottoman State. The theoretical ruler of the island, the Ottoman State, demanded the excess amount of income. This was a kind of price for giving the island to the British. Cyprus was practically still the property of the Ottoman State, but the right of use and administrate was given to the United Kingdom. In order for Cyprus to be returned to the Ottoman administration, the lands captured by Russia in Armenia had to be taken back. Thus, the administration of the island was given to the United Kingdom for an indefinite time and price. In that regard, Cyprus could be considered as leased.

This situation was confusing both for the new administration and the communities on the island. Once an ordinary Ottoman Island, it had the difficulty of falling into an ambivalent situation. What would the islanders do now? Would it be an important problem for them or not? The leasing of the island plays a significant role in understanding the Cypriots. Since the United Kingdom did not totally own the island, the islanders did not greet the new administration with rebellion. In other words, the new British governor was, in a sense, a governor appointed by the Sultan. The new administration was a foreigner to the Muslim community, but it was also an official of their Sultan. Since it was a government that came at the behest of the Ottoman Sultan, it made things easier for the Muslims, at least until the Great War, when the British unilaterally terminated the contract and claimed the island (Hill 2010). As the situation changed after 1914, the Muslim community found itself in an uncertain and weak position. Moreover, their situation can be evaluated in terms of ontological security. This concept is crucial for understanding how individuals and groups construct their identities in the face of uncertainty and change. It refers to the need for a stable sense of self and the confidence that one's social and material environment is consistent and predictable (Giddens 1991; Mitzen 2006). In the context of national identity formation, ontological security can help to explain why communities seek stable and coherent identities. The transfer of Cyprus from Ottoman to British rule in 1878 disrupted the established social and political order, leading to a sense of ontological insecurity among both Christian and Muslim Cypriots. In the archival documents, we realize that from the end of the 19th century, the Ottoman officers, especially Mufti[8], were worried about the apostates in Cyprus. Different petitions from different years were sent to Istanbul to complain about the situation in the island.[9] For instance, a document from 1911 lists the villages where all or some Muslims converted to Christianity (Ottoman Archives, 1911).[10] The document emphasizes that the Muslim population in those villages did not know their mother tongue, Turkish, and spoke Greek. For this reason, they were affected by Greek priests and converted. A traveler Muslim preacher should be assigned to decrease this impact and protect people from Christianity. The reason for converting to Christianity was considered as ignorance of the Muslim Cypriots. Some of them did not even know Turkish, and they were not aware of Islam. However, the British colonial administration had conducted detailed censuses every ten years since 1881 (Cyprus Blue Books).[11] These censuses show that the Muslim population has not decreased over these years. Thus, according to the censuses the complete and partial conversion of some Muslim villagers cannot be evaluated as accurate. This situation can be seen as the Mufti's effort to show himself to the Ottomans. He desired to show that he was there and still a part of the Ottomans. The Mufti probably felt abandoned and tried to be visible to the Ottoman State, where he felt he belonged. Especially after the annexation of the island, he lost his belonging and fell into an ambivalent situation. It became unclear where he belonged. The Ottoman administrators in the island did not want to lose their old power and became worried. If their connection with Ottoman

State had been broken, the Muslim Cypriots would have become only a minority community under the British administration. This must have made old Muslim rulers feel weak and powerless, and the petitions indicate these feelings. Moreover, the uncertainty of their future might have contributed to their feeling of powerlessness and unwillingness to break their bonds with the Ottoman Empire. The ambivalent situation that the Cypriots had fallen into and the anxiety about the ontological security were influential in the reasons for writing these petitions. It reveals how the need for stability and continuity drives people to adopt certain identities, especially in contexts of political and social uncertainty. This insight can be applied to other cases of nationalism in similar contexts, offering a more nuanced perspective on how identities are constructed and maintained in the face of change.

On the other hand, the Christian community was initially hopeful about the governmental change. However, they did not desire any changes in their privileges. The Ottoman *millet* system provided them with almost an independent power.[12] Especially the clergy members had privileges they enjoyed and wished to maintain. The new administrators had the same religion as the Christian community, but this put them in an even more ambivalent position. Should they accept a Christian government or not? What would they do when their personal interests were harmed? Or should they remain loyal to the Ottoman Empire, the rule they lived in for three hundred years? What did it mean for them to be handed over to another government once again? Should they rebel or not?

The Ottoman Empire was a foreigner to the Christian community of the island. After spending centuries under their rule, Ottomans became a familiar entity for them, yet the British administration was an unknown for both Christian and Muslim communities. The British administration was not the actual sovereign of the island, at least until the Great War. This situation created ambivalency for the Muslim community. To revolt against the new administration meant to revolt against the Ottoman Empire. However, the new administration seemed to be better for the Christian community because they had the same religion, though their sects were different. They did not have precisely the same faith, Greek Cypriots were Orthodox, but British administrators were Anglican.[13] In addition, the growing nationalist movement had an impact on the Christian communities' view of the British administration. Nationalism started to spread among the elites of Cypriots at first. The idea had developed hand in hand with modernization. The expansion of the middle classes in the cities with the help of the development of new professions, such as lawyers, journalists, merchants, etc., caused the spreading of new ideas (Katsourides 2017). Nationalism was one of these new ideas, as well as an impressive one. Elite Cypriots had used the press to spread their modernist and nationalist ideas to the ordinary islanders.[14] The developing public sphere, such as coffee houses, was the main bases for them. Their ideas could reach to illiterate islanders in the public sphere. The development of journalism and meeting places were also crucial for creating public opinion.[15] In these places, mostly in coffeehouses, the ideas of the elite were passed on to the lower classes, with the literate people reading newspapers to the illiterate. The idea of nationalism and being a part of something big started to develop and spread. Moreover, at the end of the 19th century, the economy of Cyprus was still rural, and its society was traditional. Most of the islanders lived in poor rural residences, and they supported their lives with farming or husbandry. That is to say, "at the end of the 19th century, Cyprus was a patriarchal and hierarchical society based on class, age and gender hierarchies with religious leadership having a significant proportion of power" (Kyrtitsi 2018, 96-97). In this hierarchical environment, the upper class had undertaken to convey the "right ideology" to the lower class. However, to base the influence of nationalism on the lower class only on the upper class would be to deprive them of their agency. Cypriots must have their own reasons for being influenced by this ideology in these changing times and circumstances.

On the other hand, the Muslim community on the island constructed Turkish nationalism much later than Christians. The Christian and the Muslim Cypriots were not affected by the same issues. The Muslim community was influenced mainly by Young Turks who escaped or were exiled to the island. The Christian community had a connection with the newly born independent Greece. Especially the elites and merchants were in touch with Greece and Greek nationalism. Nevertheless,

during the first period of the Young Turk era, Muslim Cypriots defended Ottoman nationalism, not Turkish nationalism. The Muslim Cypriots, who belonged to the same religion as the Ottoman administration, followed the Ottoman policy. While the Christian Cypriots started to build Greek nationalism, they still believed in the *millet* system and the Ottoman nation (Xypolia 2018).

Since the Church was the head of the Christian Cypriot community, the attitude of the church was also important in terms of the identity construction process. According to traditional historiography, Archbishop Sophronios, who was the Archbishop of Cyprus from 1865 until his death in 1900, welcomed the first British High Commissioner Sir Garnet Wolseley and expressed his feeling about Enosis, being united with Greece. Recent studies show that this historiography began after the death of Sophronios, and he did not desire unification with Greece. Instead, Sophronios requested equality and continuation of the rights of the Orthodox Church under the new rule (Katsiaounis 1996; Varnava 2013). After his death, the competition for the archbishop's throne started between the nationalist and conservative Christian Cypriots and Hellenized Cypriots won the election. The Bishop of Kyrenia was the candidate of the conservatives, and the Bishop of Kitium was favored by the nationalists, defenders of Enosis. The Bishop of Kitium and his followers, known as *Kitiaki*, insisted that Christian Orthodox Cypriots were Greeks. The *Kitiaki* was determined to win the election no matter what, and they decided in a meeting that the opposing leading elites should be assaulted and killed. They accused the Bishop of Kyrenia and his followers, known as the *Kyreniaki*, of being traitors and British lackeys (Varnava 2013). The elections were important because the Church had a significant place in the ordinary Christian Cypriots' daily lives. For instance, the locust problem was very serious for Cypriots who were mostly supporting their lives through agriculture. In addition to weddings, baptisms and funerals, the Church also played a role against the locust. The Church not only had a special prayer for the silkworms but also formed a prayer against the locust raids (Ioannides 2019). Although these prayers may seem like simple things to people in the 21st century, they were very important for the Cypriot villagers whose whole life depended on agriculture. The ideology of the Archbishop and the Church, which had played an important role in the life of ordinary Cypriots, was therefore significant. The supporters of the Bishop of Kitium mostly belonged to the middle classes, who were Greek nationals and Hellenized Cypriots. Ultimately, the Bishop of Kitium was chosen, but the conservatives did not accept the result. They claimed that corruption had taken place in the election. The *Kitiaki* did not hesitate to use violence and fraud to win the election (Varnava 2013). However, the old traditional establishment still had the power to be able to prevent the enthronement of the elected Archbishop. For this reason, the throne of the archbishop remained vacant for a decade (Katsiaounis 1996). This indicates that the conflict between conservatives and nationalists continued for a decade. Although the nationalist party somehow won the election, it was not easy for them to take over the throne of the archbishop. Moreover, apart from the conflict among upper classes, nationalist conflicts also broke out between the communities. 1912 was the year of the Italo-Turkish War, and the Ottoman Empire was not in a good position against Italy. For this reason, some Christian Cypriots made a celebration which provoked Muslim Cypriots (Marovich-Old 2017). Both communities were affected by the events happening abroad and reflected this in their inter-communal relationship. In addition to the Italo-Turkish War, the Ottoman Empire entered the war in the Balkans in the same year. The daily lives of Cypriots were influenced by the news coming from abroad. Since the administrative status was not definite yet, the Ottoman Empire was still the owner of the island for the Muslim Cypriot community, but it was not the same for the Christian Cypriots. As mentioned, they were second-class subjects during the Ottoman administration, and their status was not improved by the new administration. They needed to find a way to be free and to become first-class citizens. For this reason, some Christian Cypriots celebrated the Ottoman defeats. They did not want to go back to the old administration. Therefore, on 24 May 1912, when Christian Cypriot schoolchildren from Nicosia Gymnasium passed through the Muslim Cypriot village singing and blowing bugles, the children and teachers were attacked by Muslim Cypriots. The tension between the communities increased when rumors emerged that some of the schoolchildren had been murdered. The next day there was a festival in Limassol, and a group of Christian Cypriots threw

stones at some Muslim Cypriots in a horse carriage on the outskirts of Limassol. This escalated the events and caused a Muslim Cypriot riot. The church bells were rung to gather the Christian Cypriots, but the ringing of Church bells contributed to the violence. In the end, five Cypriots died, and more than a hundred were wounded (Marovich-Old 2017). These events had started when some Muslim Cypriots were provoked by schoolchildren, and then spread through the festival. The children were educated by nationalist teachers, and their syllabus was in accordance with the education in Greece. School education in both communities was taught by nationalist teachers who mostly studied in Greece or the Ottoman Empire. Christian Cypriots educated in Athens, Trieste and Alexandria learnt the idea of nations and returned to the island to teach Hellenism and Enosis (Varnava 2015). Education was seen as a way of creating decent Greeks and Turks; students were taught how to be good Greeks or good Turks in schools (Bryant 2004). Education is significant for constructing national identities because national ideas can be imposed and promoted through education (Anderson 1983; Hobsbawm 1992). However, education was not widespread on the island. For example, in 1911, about 25% of the Cypriots, including both women and men, knew how to read and write (Census 1911).[16] In 1912, 411 non-Muslim and 196 Muslim schools, fourteen Christian Cypriot newspapers, and only one Muslim Cypriot newspaper existed on the island (Cyprus Blue Books 1911-1912). Nevertheless, the education and print media were effective enough to initiate an inter-communal conflict. The newspapers were read in the coffeehouses or book clubs to the rest of the people, and the nationalist ideas could spread among the islanders. In addition, the nationalist ideas were spread through the schools, firstly in the cities and then in the countryside, but due to the lack of financial resources, the number of schools in villages and women's access to the schools was limited. For this reason, the spread of national ideas to the villages remained behind the cities (Katsourides 2017). On the other side, the year 1912 coincides with the first year when the nationalist Archbishop came to power, and his effect on education and the Christian community can be seen in the 1912 events.

Furthermore, nationalist ideas attracted not only Cypriot men but also women because, with nationalism, Christian women could be a member of the Greek nation and have a significant role in the national purpose. Women could be both human beings and parts of a great nation thanks to the nationalist idea (Kyrtitsi 2018). From the end of the 19th century, nationalism started to spread to all components of the island but, since the Muslim Cypriots were mostly part of the administrative or the rural class, the middle-class formation of the Muslim community was delayed. The delay in the formation of the middle class and the ambivalency kept the Muslim community from developing national ideas against British colonial rule. It was in their best interest, for the Muslims in the ruling class, to cooperate with the new administration, and the ambivalency of the island's situation at the beginning contributed to their attitude.

3. Being an Islander: in Cyprus and in other islands

The new government consisted of islanders like Cypriots. Insularity had an important place in the identity construction of the British, and they defined themselves as islanders, separating themselves from the European continent. For example, when the idea of the construction of the Channel Tunnel that linked them to the continent appeared in the 19th century, the proposal sparked intense backlash and a debate about what insularity meant for Britain (Rüger 2013).[17] Living on an island differed from living in terrestrial places. There were many things that water brings; culture was enriched with seaside trade, and interaction with distinct places was increased. However, the meaning of insularity includes both connectivity and isolation (Constantakopoulou 2007). In other words, insularity can contribute to the islanders' own identity construction against the outside. For the British, being an islander was a significant part of their identity.[18] Nevertheless, Cypriots had not constructed their identity in accordance with being an islander. The British imagined themselves in accordance with the environment they lived in, but for Cypriots, the environment they lived in stayed in the background. For example, Archbishop Sophronios described himself as an Orthodox

Table 1. Comparative Analysis of Insular Identity Construction

Aspect	Cyprus	Malta	Corsica	Crete	Ireland
Historical Context	Ottoman to British rule	British rule	French rule	Ottoman to autonomous and then Greek rule	British rule
Identity construction	Greek, Turkish	Maltese	Corsican	Greek, Muslim	Irish, British
Religion	Orthodox Christian, Muslim	Catholic Christian	Catholic Christian	Orthodox Christian, Muslim	Catholic Christian, Protestant Christian
Language	Greek, Turkish	Maltese, Italian, English	Corsican, Italian, French	Greek, Turkish	Irish, English
Influence of External Powers	Greece, Ottoman Empire/ Turkey	Italy, Britain	Italy, France	Greece, Ottoman Empire	Great Britain

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Cypriot (Varnava 2013). He aligned his identity with his living place, but after Sophronios, this identification was not continued. As mentioned, after his death, the competition for the archbishop's throne started between the nationalist and conservative Christian Greek Cypriots and Hellenized Cypriots won the election (Katsiaounis 1996). Unlike the British, Cypriots did not belong to the Colonial Empire, but they had been colonized by different empires for many centuries. For this reason, it is not surprising that Cypriots had looked for other places to be a part of something bigger and gain their dignity.

Although the new rulers were islanders, they did not consider Cypriots as people who shared the same features with them. Cyprus consisted of non-European and backward people who had been ruled by the backward empire for centuries. Even the Christian Greek Cypriots were not European enough, and they needed to be civilized by the British administration. The British administrators did not believe that Christian Greek Cypriots could reach to their Ancient Greek past without the support of the enlightened British government (Morgan 2010). The first High Commissioner, Sir Garnet Wolseley, documented his experience in Cyprus, and the contemptuous point of view towards Cyprus and Cypriots appeared in his journal (Wolseley 1991).[19] Wolseley had considered Cyprus not as an island like Great Britain but as an underdeveloped region in the East. He complained that Cyprus was a filthy place and had been mismanaged by Muslims for many years: "Wherever one goes here is the same: the face of the Island is stamped with relics of a past prosperity that has been destroyed by the Muslims" (Wolseley 1991).[20] In the eyes of the new British ruler, Cyprus was a dirty and underdeveloped area that needed to be civilized with the help of the British. Therefore, the fact that Cypriots were islanders stayed in the background for the new islander administrators.[21]

Like Cyprus, Malta is one of the islands of the Mediterranean, and it became a British colony at the beginning of the 19th century. Malta and Cyprus were similar in some respects.[22] The two islands were unsurprisingly affected by nationalist ideologies, and both islands resisted British colonialism with national desires. Although Maltase nationalism embraced the Italian language and culture, it did not include irredentist purpose in contrast to Cyprus. People in Malta formed their own language, which was composed of Arabic, Sicilian, Italian and English. Moreover, although the Maltase language was originally non-literary vernacular, in 1920, some leading Maltase writers and poets established the "Union of Maltase Writers" to create a standard orthography. As a result of the union, they published their own alphabet in 1924 and in 1934, Maltase became an official language along with Italian and English (Marovich-Old 2017). Maltase nationalists did not want to unite with

Italy, and having a language of their own was a significant factor in the identity construction process. Certainly, one could not have claimed that every Maltese person had formed an identity based on their living place, but predominantly, it was observed that their identity was more likely shaped by their own place of living rather than by another country. The fact that they had their own language was influential for their sense of belonging to the place they lived. Language is a crucial element of identities, and the origin of language is important in determining where people feel they belonged.[23] As seen in the table, societies with their own local language are more likely to build their own national identity. Conversely, instead of building the local language, those who insist on the language of the "motherland" are more likely to construct their identity through the "motherland." In Cyprus, the communities did not have their own languages, and both Christian and Muslim communities had developed the idea of nationalism with the desire for unification with the "motherlands" (Greece and Turkey). Both Christian and Muslim communities had non-literary vernacular languages similar to Greek and Turkish, but they did not form their dialect as distinct languages. The Maltase language was a vernacular language like the language of Cypriots, but the people in Malta constructed this vernacular language as a systematic written form and created their own language. Since Cypriots mostly had been living in mixed cities and villages, especially the Muslim Cypriots knew to speak the Cypriot version of Greek (Lytras and Psaltis 2011). Even today, both communities have many common words that they use in their daily speech.[24] All the features of our identities that we have today were constructed in the past. The people of Cyprus could have constructed their own language and formed their identity based on the island but unlike Maltese people, Cypriots did not choose to form an identity based on where they lived.

The British investment in Malta was driven by its strategic importance, particularly as a naval base. This investment contributed to the economic and social modernization of Malta. On the other side, British strategic interests in Cyprus were more limited, primarily focused on preventing other powers from gaining control of the island. Economic development in Cyprus under British rule was minimal, with little investment compared to Malta (Marovich-Old 2017; Holland 2014). Therefore, although the two islands were Mediterranean islands under British colonial rule at the same time, their experiences were different from each other. For example, both in Malta and Cyprus, the upheavals occurred against the colonial administration respectively in 1930 and 1931. Nevertheless, the British colonial administration did not respond to the upheavals in the same way. The colonial administration suppressed the uprising in Cyprus in more authoritarian ways. The Legislative Council was closed in Cyprus, but the administration granted legal reforms in Malta (Marovich-Old 2018). In addition, unlike Malta, the colonial government did not hesitate to apply all kinds of violence to suppress the riot in Cyprus. One of the reasons for the difference was the strategic location of Malta. It was a British naval base against the Fascist government in Italy, and for this reason, the colonial administration did not want to prolong the unrest on the island. Maltese nationalists did not desire to unite with Italy, and their attitude served the purpose of the colonial government, no need to prolong the issue. Conversely, the strategic location of Cyprus was not as crucial as Malta, and the nationalists in Cyprus already had an irredentist idea. The British colonial administration defined Malta not as an ordinary colony but as their "fortress" in the Mediterranean (Marovich-Old 2017). Malta is a tiny little island below Italy, but for the British, its location was more critical than Cyprus. Also, the occupation of Egypt in 1882 reduced the strategic importance of Cyprus (Varnava 2015), but the closeness of Malta to both Europe and North Africa enhanced its value and made Malta a fortress for the British Colonial Empire. Both islands experienced significant nationalist movements seeking greater autonomy or union with a culturally affiliated state. Malta's nationalist movements led to gradual political concessions and eventual independence, while nationalist movements in Cyprus were characterized by a persistent struggle for depending on "motherlands" (Holland 2014).

The other island which suffered from similar problems in the Mediterranean is Corsica. The island has a complicated relationship with Italy and France. Today it is one of the regions of France, but some of the islanders are not satisfied with this dependence. The conflict within Corsica still

continues today.[25] Corsica's identity formation is a complex interplay of geographical isolation, historical resistance to external control, socio-economic challenges, and cultural revival movements. The ongoing struggle for political and cultural recognition reflects the deep-rooted desire of Corsicans to maintain their unique identity within the broader framework of the French state (Adrey 2009). Corsica was ruled by Genoa for almost four hundred years, and the island had experienced a brief period of independence until the French rule in 1768 (Varley 2012).[26] Corsica is very isolated due to its geographical feature. The island is encompassed by two mountain systems that create an uncompromising environment. The mountain systems contributed to not only the pastoral economy and patriarchal society but also introspective clan organization and mistrust of outsiders (Thompson 1978). Corsica is geographically isolated both as an island and by its mountainous terrain, creating numerous "mountain islands" within the island itself. This physical isolation contributed to the preservation of local identities and resistance to external influences, fostering a strong sense of "us" versus "them." Moreover, Corsican regionalism and nationalism have roots in cultural revival movements of the 19th century. Intellectuals like Santu Casanova used cultural platforms to promote Corsican identity and resist French cultural dominance. These movements emphasized the preservation of the Corsican language and cultural heritage as a form of resistance against French hegemony (Adrey 2009). The geographical features have affected the identity construction process of the islanders. Since Corsicans were more isolated than the people in Cyprus, they could easily build their identity based on where they lived. The island is very close to both France and Italy, but Corsicans mostly did not identify themselves based on another "motherland." Being geographically isolated is probably not the only reason, but what I want to show here is that there can be different identity constructions on a similar island in the Mediterranean. Therefore, Malta is not the only example of the independent identity construction based on the living space. In other words, there are other islands in the world where the islanders desire to be independent and construct their own identity base on the place they live.

Crete was an island in the Mediterranean composed of Christian and Muslim communities such as Cyprus. Similar to Cyprus, Catholic and Orthodox Christians had lived in Crete for almost five hundred years before the Ottomans. In the 17th century, the Ottoman rule added people from different religion to the island's society. Muslim Ottomans and converted Cretans created one of the largest Muslim communities in the Greek world (Greene 2000). Christian Cretans and Muslim Cretans had continued to live together even after the Greco-Ottoman war when the island became autonomous. Unlike Cyprus, Crete was not leased, but the Ottoman province of Crete became an Autonomous Crete after the Greco-Ottoman War of 1897. The Ottoman State again became a theoretical owner of another island in the Mediterranean. Crete was not a colony of the British, but more than one foreign ruler had power on the island. The Ottoman Sultan shared his sovereignty with the Great Powers (Britain, Italy, France, Russia), who were the protectors of the island, including the second son of the King of Greece, Prince George, who became a High Commissioner. In addition, the local actors were granted a local parliament which was composed of a majority of Christian Cretan and a minority of Muslim Cretan deputies. During the period of Cretan autonomy, Muslims were integrated into local governance structures, but their numbers continued to dwindle due to emigration and the eventual political changes that led to Crete's union with Greece (Kostopoulou 2009). The Muslim community in Crete originated mainly from local conversions rather than large-scale immigration. Cretan Muslims largely retained their Greek cultural identity, with Greek remaining the dominant language among the Muslim population. This bilingualism and cultural duality were notable characteristics of the community (Şenışık 2007). In the end, in 1912, Crete integrated into the Kingdom of Greece, and the island has never been independent since then. The declining Muslim population came to an almost non-existent level as a result of the population exchange in 1923.[27]

Both Crete and Cyprus were Ottoman islands in the Mediterranean composed of Christian and Muslim communities. Their stories were not the same, but both islands were affected by the idea of Enosis. Christian Cypriots and Christian Cretans had their own reasons for being influenced by the

idea. Crete is geographically closer to Greece than Cyprus. Cretans did not hesitate to rebel against the oppression both before and during the Ottoman administration. The first rebellion of the 19th century in Crete broke out together with the Greek Rebellion of 1821. The Greek War of Independence continued until 1829, and the Ottoman State received support from the governor of Egypt, Mehmet Ali Pasha, against the Greek rebels. After the war, Crete was given to Mehmet Ali Pasha as compensation for his help to the Ottoman forces (Şenışık 2007). The ongoing malad-ministration and oppression in Crete caused unrest among the people. Since the rule of Mehmet Ali Pasha imposed new taxes and increased existing taxes, Cretans were not satisfied with the new administration. The rebellions can be seen as a search for a way out of the oppressions, and Christian Cretans might have considered unification with the Kingdom of Greece as a solution to the dire situation. However, the economic condition of the Kingdom of Greece was not good; they went bankrupt in 1893. The uneasiness within the island of Crete was seen as a way to distract the public from the economic crises. For this reason, Greece, despite its bad economic situation, started to give military support to Crete against the Ottomans in 1897 (Katsikas and Krinaki 2020). The Kingdom of Greece was not the solution to the problems in Crete, which were mainly economic, but Christian Cretans were not aware of this at that time. However, the islanders did not unquestion-ingly support unification with the kingdom. In line with the changing conditions, people's attitudes also were changing. For example, when the High Commissioner Prince George decided to annex Crete to the Kingdom of Greece in 1905, Eleftherios Venizelos and his followers initiated an uprising against the regime and the project of Prince George (Kostopoulou 2009). This means that one cannot say that Cretans always wanted to unite with Greece, but also cannot say they did not.[28]

These events in Crete affected Cyprus too. In June 1896, the British authorities were alerted about the secret recruitment from Cyprus to Crete. The recruitment process had already begun, and many young Cypriots embarked on Crete (Katsiaounis 1996).[29] The recruitment process was run by Nicolaos Katalanos, who arrived from Greece in 1893 to teach Physics at the newly founded Pancyprian Gymnasium in Nicosia. Katalanos came to Cyprus in 1893 to teach Physics in the newly founded school in Nicosia, Pancyprian Gymnasium. Thus, he became one of the influential nationalist figures on the island for the next 28 years. Apart from being a newspaper and club manager, he also gave various lessons to the working class (Katsiaounis 1996; Bryant 2004). He also played a significant role in the nationalist archbishop's victory (Katsourides 2017). Intellectuals from Greece, such as Katalanos, are among the reasons why Christian Cypriots were influenced by Greek nationalism but considering Katalanos as a primary reason for the effect of Greek nation-alism on Christian Cypriots underestimates the local agencies. They had reasons to be influenced by Greek nationalism. We cannot attribute the reasons they chose to be part of the Great Idea solely to the efforts of Katalanos and other nationalists. The fact that they were treated as second-class subjects and were underestimated for centuries had drawn them to Hellenism. They could be part of something bigger and finally become first-class subjects with Greek nationalism. They were alienated and could not be part of where they lived because they had been constantly under-estimated. This made them ambivalent and unable to belong to where they lived in. They considered Enosis as a way to get rid of the underestimation they faced, and to gain dignity. In this challenging situation, Christian Cypriots did not think that they could be independent on their own or along with the Muslim Cypriots.

If we broaden our examples, another island, which has been divided into two and still face some problems, is Ireland. Ireland is not located in the Mediterranean, but it was once a British colony like Cyprus; in fact, Northern Ireland is still part of the UK.[30] People on the island were divided according to their sects of belief, not according to their ethnicities. The Catholics desired to be independent of the British, but the Protestants requested to live as a part of the UK. The nationalism in Ireland was combined with Catholicism, and it became a conflict between the two sects. Indeed, the conflict between them can be evaluated in terms of class conflict. The Protestants mostly belonged to the upper class and had more properties, but the Catholics mostly belonged to the lower class. The British settlers started to migrate to the island during the 12th century, but they did not

interfere with the internal affairs until the 17th century. The British encouraged Protestant immigration to the island in opposition to the Irish, who rebelled against the British involvement in their internal affairs. Their purpose was to assimilate the Catholic Irish people in order to spread the Protestant sect. In this process the Protestants gained a privileged wealth in the fertile and vast lands they occupied. Catholics, on the other hand, began to impoverish over time. With the arrival of settlers from British Island, the Irish Catholics fell into an economically difficult situation. They tried to regain their lands, which were taken from them by force and given to the Protestants. For this reason, conflicts started between Catholics and Protestants during the 17th century (Öncü 2019). However, my aim here is not to stress the fact that the national conflict started in the 17th century, yet it can be said that the class distinction between them began to emerge starting from the 17th century. In addition, things became worse with the potato famine in the 19th century. The economic condition of the Irish consequently widened the gap between the Catholics and Protestants (Bartoletti 2001). Therefore, it can be said that the class distinction between Protestant and Catholic Irish caused them to form different identities in the process of identity construction. While the poor Catholics considered separation from England as salvation, the Protestants considered it as the loss of their possessions (Nutt and Gray 1994). This does not mean that there was a sharp division between Protestant and Catholic Irish and no attempt at reconciliation. For instance, in 1870, Isaac Butt, who was the founder of the Home Rule movement, preached an Irish Christian crusade, Catholic and Protestant, against British radicalism and secularism (McCaffrey 1973). Some intellectuals tried to form unification between Catholic and Protestant Irish, but somehow, Protestant Irish has continued to desire to be part of the UK, and Northern Ireland is still under British possession. To consider that Catholic and Protestant Irish were influenced only by the religious elite in forming their identities would be to underestimate their agency. Over time, influenced by many variables, mainly due to the class conflicts, some Irish formed their identity through the place they lived, while others formed it through another country.

As can clearly be seen in the table, these islands have very basic similarities. They have all been colonies of different countries and have external countries to which they are historically and culturally connected. Although they have experienced similar things, in fact, there have been different processes in all of them. Malta, Cyprus and Ireland were once British colonies, but why did Cypriots develop the irredentist national movement, but some Maltese, Irish and Corsican did not? Cyprus did not have a state of its own for a long time. Before the British and Ottoman administrations, it was governed by Venetians and, before that, Lusignans. Christian community had been ruled by other states for several centuries and the Muslim community, belonged to the Ottoman Empire, not to the island (Katsourides 2017).[31] They had created a perspective that fit their historical background or constructed the background in accordance with their perspectives. Since they did not have their own state for a long time, they did not have an independent state perception. They have built their identity based on different states, Greece, and Turkey. They did not create an island consciousness. They identified themselves not as islanders but as part of something bigger. Moreover, Cyprus was not an island as geographically isolated as Corsica. The communication system, such as the telegram line, was not perfect in Cyprus, but Cypriots could move abroad, and the migration from the different parts of the Ottoman State to Cyprus had not ended even in the 19th century.[32] Although limited, Cypriots had relations with the outside of the island. These relations influenced the communities in the identity construction process and might have prevented them from constructing their identities on the basis of their geography and environment. Thus, in these circumstances, they constructed an irredentist national idea.

On the other side, Malta was also governed by foreign rulers, including Romans, Hospitallers, French and British. Although nationalists in Malta believed that Italian culture and language were crucial parts of Maltese identity, most of the population spoke Maltese, not Italian (Marovich-Old 2018). Not only Maltese people but also Irish and Corsican had their own language, and in the construction of national identity, language is the crucial element (Anderson 1983). It is not a coincidence that the people who desired to be independent have constructed their own languages.

Cypriots also had spoken in a different accent, but they did not establish their own language. The nationalism of Cypriots might have been different if they had established the distinctive accent they used as their own language. However, the islanders had chosen to perceive their language as dependent on Greek or Turkish. The fact that Cypriots had spoken two different languages also had an impact on this formation. Nonetheless, Muslim Cypriots, especially those living in mixed villages, could speak the Christian Cypriot's accent of Greek, and even today, the two languages have common words and usages. Thus, it is all about the perception of the people. The people of Cyprus had built irredentist nationalism and did not perceive their accent as different from their "motherlands' languages." They had fictionalized all aspects to defend their irredentist national idea. It means they had created an environment with their own perceptions different from the environment they lived in and had associated their sea-bound island with other countries. They could have fictionalized their languages as different kinds of Greek and Turkish. The issue is not how similar the languages are to each other, but how the people define their language. This definition is an essential element of the identity construction process. For example, if you want to learn Greek in Cyprus today, you can choose whether you want to learn Cypriot Greek or mainland Greek.[33] If such distinctions had begun to be made in the 19th century, perhaps we would now examine a different identity construction. Unlike the Cypriot educated class, the Maltese elites mainly were educated in the University of Malta, which was founded in 1592 (Marovich-Old 2017). This small elite group mostly spoke in Italian, and they might have been influenced by Italy, but since they did not study in Italy as Cypriots were educated in Greece and Turkey, the "motherland" had less impact on their identity construction process. Since there was no university in Cyprus, the Cypriot literate class had visited their "motherlands" for many years and studied there. These visits had a significant impact on their identity building process and had an undeniable influence on defining themselves through the "motherlands." Spending a period of their lives in Turkey and Greece caused them to establish deeper ties with these countries. However, it would be wrong to consider that education abroad was the only reason for their irredentist identity construction. It was just one of the impacts on their identity building process.

4. The Importance of Fiction

Like the language, Cypriots did not construct their own national heroes. Eric Hobsbawm introduced social banditry as a form of lower-class social resistance. The bandits were usually people who robbed and plundered in the rural areas, but they often became heroes of the popular resistance in the eyes of ordinary people. They were not regarded as simple criminals by ordinary people but lords, and the state accepted them as criminals (Hobsbawm 1981).[34] The famous band in Cyprus, known as the *Hassanpoulia*, appeared in Paphos during the late 19th century, at the beginning of the British administration. Two communities had been living together in Paphos. Although these bandits were mostly known as Muslim Cypriots, the gang's victims and accomplices included both communities (Cassia 1993).[35] The *Hassanpoulia*, which appeared in 1887[36], was destroyed in 1896 when its leaders were killed or executed by the British administration (Bozkurt 2001). However, "the *Hassanpoulia* were never incorporated in a Cypriot national rhetoric, and subsequent Cypriot *agonistes* modelled themselves on the equally dubious Greek *klephts*[37] rather than their own homegrown variety" (Cassia 1993, 794). Both Muslim and Christian Cypriots did not fictionalize the *Hassanpoulia* as a national hero at the beginning of the 20th century. Although their stories were made epic by both Greek and Turkish Cypriots, they did not become national heroes. The *Hassanpoulia* was described as brave in both Greek and Turkish Cypriots epics, but some of the Turkish Cypriots' epics described the gang as a reaction against the British, while the Greek Cypriot versions did not (Bozkurt 2001).[38]

   Hassanpoulia did not become a national hero for the Turkish Cypriots too. One of the reasons is that the literary class of both communities did not fictionalize the gang as national heroes. Muslim Turkish Cypriots had felt abandoned since the administration was changed and tried to restore their

bonds with the Ottoman Empire and later with Turkey. This caused their ambivalent situation, and their solution to this situation was to identify themselves with the Ottoman State. On the other side, Christian Cypriots might not have used the gang because the gang mainly consisted of Muslim Turkish Cypriots. However, while national epics were being constructed, not everything could be fictionalized as they were then. That is to say they could have created common Cypriot or Greek Cypriot national heroes instead of Greek *klephts*. The fact that they were second-class subjects both in the Ottoman period and in the British period alienated them from the place where they lived, pushing them to look for something bigger. The hero who came out of their own land might not be sufficient hero for them.

Further, the historical narrative of Christian Cypriots started to be changed by the end of the 19th century. The mythical hero of the Christian Cypriots had been altered. During the 19th century Tefkros who was a founder of the Cypriot city of Salamis, appeared as the mythical ancestor of the Cypriots. This is in line with the new theoretical structure of "Greekness" and the desire to be a part of the glorious history of Hellenism (Kapeti 2017). They desired to belong to something bigger and being a part of Hellen meant to be a part of a respected past and present. Before the 19th century, Hettim, who was a grandson of Noah, was the origin of the Christian Cypriots. For example, in 1788, Archimandrites Kyprianos published *Chronological History of Cyprus*, and he narrated the origin of the Cypriots in accordance with the biblical world and based on Hettim (Kapeti 2017). A century later, the historiography of Christian Cypriots refocused on the Greek national narrative, and Hettim was replaced by Tefkros. This shift was not unique to Cyprus but part of the broader transformation of identities in the eastern Mediterranean. In the book of Kyprianos, Cyprus was described as a powerful spatial island as a country, and the roots of Cypriots were traced to the grandson of Noah, but after a century, the island was redefined as part of the Great Idea (Panayiotou 2012). The narrative of Cypriot historiography was shifted from one identity model to another, and both of them are strong models, but in contrast to other places in the Mediterranean, the national narrative was not constructed based on where they live. In the 19th century, when nationalism became widespread, to be descendants of Noah was no longer sufficient for them. An identity construction through Cyprus was also not considered sufficient for Christian Cypriots. They felt the need to get beyond the biblical narratives, as they were despised even by the British government, which had the same faith.

5. Conclusion

The exploration of national identity formation on the island of Cyprus under British rule reveals the intricate and dynamic nature of identity construction, influenced by historical transitions, colonial legacies, and the socio-political context. By seeking to align with Greece and Turkey, both communities attempted to overcome their ambivalent situations and achieve ontological security. This pursuit of a stable identity highlights the deeper psychological and social needs that underpin the nationalistic movements in Cyprus. The national identity construction process varies across societies, and the unique circumstances of Cyprus provide a significant case study for understanding these variations.

The Muslim community in Cyprus had lost their privileges when the administration had changed, and they lost their state that identified themselves when the new Turkish Republic was established. The Muslim community of Cyprus was not included even in the Turkish National Pact (Tunçay 1976; Kaymaz 1983). They were excluded from the new Turkish Republic. In addition, the new republic renounced all her rights over Cyprus in the Treaty of Lausanne and recognized the annexation of Cyprus proclaimed by the British Government on 5 November 1914 (Hill 2010). The Muslim community was given the right to choose Turkish nationality within two years from the coming into force of the Treaty (Xypolia 2021). However, they should leave their home and start to live in a place they do not know. It was not an easy choice, and the majority of the community did not choose to be Turkish citizens. This option created an in-betweenness for the Muslim

community. How should they describe themselves? If they defined themselves as Turkish, should they leave the country where they were born and raised? If they stay, would they ignore their Muslim Turkish identity? Where did they belong? All these factors from the time the island's government had changed amplified the ambivalent situation of Muslim Cypriots. When they started to build Turkish national identity, the geography they lived in became ambiguous. This contributed to their irredentist idea. They did not build Cypriot identity but Turkish identity. They were like abandoned children and did not know how they should describe themselves. They were first-class subjects during the Ottoman administration because of the Ottoman *millet system*. Since the island was given temporarily and theoretically still belonged to the Ottoman Empire, they supported the Ottoman rights on the island. They claimed rights on the island by identifying themselves with the Ottoman State. The belonging they created in order not to give up their rights on the island alienated them from their own country over time. Building Turkish identity meant belonging to Turkey, not Cyprus. Moreover, some Muslim Cypriots had joined the Great War in the British army against the Ottoman State, but also some of them tried to help the Ottoman soldiers who were brought to Cyprus as captives (Varnava 2017, 2020a). These examples shed light on the ambivalent circumstances of the Muslim Cypriots. They belong to neither British nor Ottoman or both British and Ottoman.

On the other hand, the Christian community on the island had lost some of their privileges when the administration was changed. The religious class had partly independence within the Ottoman *millet system* and did not desire to change this. Their religion was the same as the British, but the new administration that came to the island was foreign to them. It was an unknown administration that came to their country from another place. Especially the literate class and merchants of the Christian Cypriots were influenced by the independence of Greece and Greek nationalism (Katsourides 2017). Like the Muslim community, Christian Cypriots shared the same languages as Greece. Moreover, Cypriots were not familiar with governing themselves because they were mostly governed by different administrations. Since Cyprus was part of the Greek Great Idea, reviving the Eastern Roman Empire, constructing a national identity based on Greece was probably attractive to the intellectual class of the Christian community. They did not belong only to the small island on the Mediterranean but the whole Eastern Roman Empire. Although the Christian community of Cyprus was the majority subject of the island, they were the minority within the Ottoman Empire and in the eyes of the Ottoman administration of the island. When the administration was changed, the Christian Greek community became the underestimated subject of the colonial administration. The fact that they belonged to the same religion did not prevent the British administration from seeing the Christian Greek Cypriots as backwards. Since Christian Cypriots faced underestimation under British rule despite sharing the same religion with their colonial rulers, they alienated from their place of residence and this situation intensified their ontological insecurity, driving them to seek belonging and stability through Greek nationalism. The promise of being part of a respected and powerful Greek nation provided a sense of security and continuity that contrasted with their uncertain status under British administration. In this circumstance, being a part of the Eastern Roman Empire was probably very attractive to the Christian community. They belonged to something bigger and became influential. Being underestimated in their own country alienated them from their own island. The Christian Greek community differed from the ancient Greek image that the British administration had, and the new administration could not classify them. This attitude put the Christian Greek community in an ambivalent situation. Who were they, and where did they belong? Greek nationalism helped them to answer these questions. They could get rid of the in-betweenness and ambivalent situation with the ideology of Greek nationalism.

This study emphasizes the importance of examining small island groups like Cyprus to explore different dimensions of national identities. The unique historical and geopolitical context of Cyprus, including its irredentist movements and the ambivalent positions of its communities,

provides valuable insights into the broader theories of nationalism. Examining the identity formation in Cyprus alongside other islands like Malta, Corsica, Crete and Ireland reveals crucial insights. Unlike Cyprus, where irredentist movements were predominant, development of a local language in Malta, Corsica and Ireland had a pivotal role in constructing a distinct national identity. This shows the importance of language in identity construction, which Cyprus lacked.

In contemporary Cyprus, the legacy of these historical identity struggles continues to influence socio-political dynamics. The island remains divided between the Republic of Cyprus in the south and the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus in the north, a situation that reflects the enduring impact of the identity conflicts explored in this article. The Green Line, a buffer zone maintained by the United Nations, physically and symbolically separates the two communities. Efforts to reunify the island have been ongoing but fraught with difficulties, illustrating the deep-seated nature of the divisions rooted in historical identity constructions. Although not the only reason, the low participation rate of Turkish Cypriots in the European Parliament elections held on 9 June 2024 reflects the ongoing difficulties in achieving a united Cypriot identity. Of the 103 thousand 821 Turkish Cypriots who had the right to vote, only 5 thousand 676 voted.[39] This modern political behavior reflects the historical ambivalence and division that characterizes Cypriot identity formation. The current socio-political situation in Cyprus reveals the long-term consequences of the ambivalent situation in which Cypriots found themselves under the British rule and the identities constructed as a result. The persisting divisions reflect the complexities of reconciling the different national narratives that have shaped the island's history.

Overall, the article demonstrates how the ambivalence in Cyprus, driven by historical transitions and external influences, led to unique identity trajectories compared to other insular societies. Understanding these dynamics offers valuable perspectives on the complexities of national identity construction in diverse global contexts. The exploration of these identity trajectories provides a crucial understanding of how past conflicts and alignments continue to shape present realities. By shedding light on the diverse experiences of nationalism in Cyprus, this article contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of national identity formation in various global contexts. The case of Cyprus demonstrates that national identities are not built in a certain order but are influenced by multiple factors, leading to different formations in different places. This nuanced perspective challenges the traditional narratives of nationalism and underscores the importance of considering the specific historical and social contexts in which national identities are constructed and maintained.

Disclosure. None.

Notes

1 Bauman determines Jewish people in Germany as a stranger and defines ambivalence through them. Jewish people in Germany, were not friends or enemies but strangers. They were in-between friends and enemies, chaos and order. One cannot classify them, as ambivalent people they did not belong anywhere. They could not be controlled and had no place in the modern controlled world order.

2 According to Tunçay National Pact is not something with definite boundaries, but it is a legend. However, this does not change the fact that the new republic did not claim any rights over Cyprus and the people left over from the Ottoman Empire in Cyprus.

3 Not only identities but the many concepts we use today as they have always existed are recent inventions. For example, the meaning of "culture" before the 19th century was not the same. The

meaning we attach to most concepts today differs from their previous understandings. In other words, people have reproduced most of the concepts they thought always existed over time and invented new meanings. See Williams (1983).

4 For details about the theories of Nationalism see: Özkırımlı (2010).

5 It was published on *Keravnos*, 15 April 1882.

6 Enosis / Ἕνωσις means union in Greek, and it is the effort of various Greek communities living outside of Greece to integrate the regions they live in into the Greek state.

7 Before the Congress of Berlin on 13 June 1878, on 4 June, the Cyprus Convention was signed between the United Kingdom and the Ottoman Empire. See Sir Edward Hertslet (1891, 2722-2725) via www.archive.org accessed September 27, 2022; Sir Harry Luke (1989, 259-267); D.E. Lee (1934).

8 A Muslim religious leader.

9 Presidency Ottoman Archives in Istanbul. Document codes: BOA, KB.MAA.FE. 6,46; KB.MAA. FE. 7,50; Y.MTV. 180,177. Dates: 1878, 1902, 1905, 1907, 1910.

10 Presidency Ottoman Archives in Istanbul. Document code: BOA, KB.MAA.FE 6,46. Date: 07.03.1911.

11 Also, see Republic of Cyprus Statistical Service, www.cystat.gov.cy

12 For details about the millet system, see Karpat (1973). Also, Aymes (2014) discusses the millet debate and examines the link between the formation of nations and the millet system, questioning the bond between millet and nation, and religious and national communities. He shows that the previous system did not prepare the environment for the development of nations. Further, for a different perspective about the millet system, see Özil (2013). Özil brought a new approach to the field by questioning the narrow perspective that examined Ottoman Greeks in the context of continuities and similarities.

13 Anglicanism is a form of Christianity that incorporates features of both Protestantism and Roman Catholicism. It is one of the main branches of the Protestant Reformation, a reform movement against the Catholic Church during the 16th century. For details about the history of the Anglican Church, see Heal (2003); Carleton (2001).

14 Print capitalism and the mass media are the essential elements of national identity construction. The concept of simultaneity that created them and plays a leading role in the construction of the perception of nation. There are particular objects and concepts that bring this concept of simultaneity to people, and newspapers are essential in the construction of nationalism because they instill similar ideas and feelings in people from different places. For the details, see Anderson (1983).

15 Newspapers and public spheres are inseparable developments. Newspapers could meet their audience in the public sphere (Bryant 2004). For the constitution of the public and the public opinion in the Ottoman State, see Kırlı (2009). In its simplest form, the public sphere refers to a space in our social life where something akin to public opinion can be formed. People of all classes can gather and exchange information in the public sphere. Jürgen Habermas established the concept of the public sphere. Habermas used the 18th century coffeehouses dialogues in France to establish this concept. The public sphere was where political issues were discussed rationally. For the details, see Habermas (1991); Calhoun (1996). However, it is unclear whether people of different classes could really interact so freely in the public sphere. The public sphere can also be considered as Habermas's fantasy. See the criticism of Habermas and the historians to learn why they used the public sphere so eagerly (Mah 2000). Also, unlike Habermas, Foucault considered these spheres as places under the surveillance of the power, and with modernization, the power began to take control of people's daily lives (Foucault 1991, 1995).

16 Republic of Cyprus Statistical Service, census of 1911, www.cystat.gov.cy

17 Rüger explains what insularity meant for the British, especially in the 19th century, and he stresses that insularity meant freedom and protection from foreign rulers for the British. I think one of the reasons of the British who wanted to be apart from the European continent is the fact

that they considered themselves as superior, and their insular identity contributed to this idea. For a long time, they kept themselves apart from the European continent and organized celebrations of navy and sea in accordance with the idea of the "island race." For more information about the insularity and British identity, see Wilson (2003).

18 When the island status was associated with a negative meaning in the poem "island nation" by Rudyard Kipling, published in 1902, many people found it insulting and abusive (Rüger 2013).

19 The journal started after Wolseley's appointment to Cyprus on 19th July 1878 and ended on December 31st, 1878. He remained for five more months in Cyprus but did not continue his journal. The journal is essential in the aspect of the British High Commissioner's perspective on the island. He evaluated Cyprus and Cypriots from an orientalist point of view. For example, he defined the owners of the house where he stayed when he came to the island as "It is simply impossible to bring these owners of houses to reasons. They are so avaricious that they cannot even make up their minds as to the extent they will be satisfied to rob us." Ibid, 34-37. For a different perspective, see the memoir of Esme Scott-Stevenson, who was the wife of British Commissioner of Kyrenia, Captain Andrew Scott-Stevenson, in 1879 (Scott-Stevenson 1880).

20 Also, he complained about the lack of drainage system in the cities; "..the walls would necessarily be filthy, impregnated as it would be with the filth exuding from the cesspits belonging to every house, which are never cleaned out.." Ibid, 27.

21 Besides, Sir Garnet Wolseley was one of those who opposed the Channel Tunnel, which was planned to connect England to the European continent (D'Erlanger and Fell 1917).

22 However, they were different in many ways (Holland 2014). Malta was seen on many levels as a "fortress" of the British colonial empire, while Cyprus remained a restricted and superficial colony. Also, Malta showed its strategic importance in the battle of Navarino in 1827 and its vital and logistical point during the Crimean War in the 1850s.

23 Shared language is crucial for nations. People need to feel that they have their own shared destiny, and the language is essential in the creation of shared destiny and history, for the details and to see the importance given to the language in the theories of nationalism see Özkırımlı (2010).

24 For example, *bahce* is used as a garden and *gancelli* is used as a garden gate by both communities. In addition, Seftali / Sheftalia, one of the traditional dishes of Cyprus, is known by the same name in both communities and is cooked in a similar way. The only difference is that the Greek Cypriots use pork while the Turkish Cypriots use lamb.

25 See for the recent events: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/10/clashes-in-corsica-after-prison-attack-on-nationalist-figure-yvan-colonna https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/16/france-may-offer-corsica-autonomy-struggles-quell-protests accessed June 17, 2022.

26 For example of conflict on the island during the French rule, see Wilson (1981).

27 For details about Crete and the Greco-Ottoman War, see Şenışık (2007); Tatsios (1984); Yılmaz (2003); Ekinci (2006); Katsikas and Krinaki (2020); Katsikas (2021). For a different perspective, see Kostopoulou (2009). Kostopoulou examines the island, not from a linear perspective, but she studies both Christian and Muslim communities as constantly changing and evolving agents. The Muslim community was not identified as an oppressed minority group, but the community would reach different consequences. On the other hand, Pınar Şenışık provides valuable information, but I disagree with her perspective because she underestimates the historical agents and attributes the main importance to external factors. For example, "The Greek state's irredentist policies and ideological and cultural infiltrations played a vital role in introducing modern Greek identity in Ottoman Crete. In other words, the Cretan Christians were gradually indoctrinated by the idea of belonging to an 'imagined community'" (Şenışık 2007, 3).

28 This situation can be observed in Herzfeld's work on Crete. The Glendiots built their identities based on the place they lived in and then added the Cretan and Greek identities to this identity,

but the identity that defined them primarily was formed through their relationship with the place where they lived. They were firstly Glendiot, then Cretan, then Greek (Herzfeld 1988).

29 However, according to Andrekos Varnava, in contrast to the traditional historiography, not so many Greek Cypriots joined voluntarily to the Greek army especially compared to the numbers joining the British army between 1916-1922 (Varnava 2020b).

30 Ireland has long been called an "internal colony." For example, see Hechter (1975). However, historians have compared Ireland to other colonies, especially India. For details, see Foley and O'Connor (2006); Wright (2007).

31 Katsourides considers that the traditional Greek Cypriot politics of compliance with foreign rulers contributed to Greek nationalism because the Greek nationalist movement in Cyprus grew out of a growing impatience with the existing mode of politics. However, the ideology that emerged from this discontent was to come under another foreign rule's domination.

32 For details about the telegram line in the island, see Çakılcı (2015). Also, Aymes (2014) discusses the mobility movement in Cyprus in the early 19th century and its connection with Anatolia, Syria, and Egypt.

33 For example, free language class of *Hade* which is an association that was established by Greek and Turkish Cypriot youths to promote peace and reunification. See https://www.instagram.com/hade.cyp?igsh=NHJxaDQ2c2duMHRj

34 Hobsbawm described social bandits who gained fame and popularity in the eyes of the peasants. The bandits win public praise by exposing authority and defending the interests of the popular masses against the elite oppression. However, his perspective can be considered too general and romantic. On the other hand, Blok thinks "Rather than promoting the articulation of peasant interests within a national context, bandits tend to obstruct or to deviate concerted peasant action" (Blok 1972, 496). Other examples for criticism of social banditry see O'Malley (1979); White (1981). And for Hobsbawm's answer to Blok see Hobsbawm (1972).

35 Cassia examines the reasons for the decline of banditry during the British colonial period in Cyprus and the effect of colonial rule on this decline. Contrary to Hobsbawm's view that bandits necessarily belong to the peasantry, he argues that bandits often belong to the groups who created the bandits as national characters in literary texts or controlled their production, and the bandits became part of remembered history, mainly because they were included in written history. I agree with Cassia's idea; like nationalism, national heroes also need to be fictionalized.

36 1887 was the year of mass mobilization in Cyprus. Both Christian and Muslim Cypriots were not satisfied with the heavy taxes. They firstly appealed to the local authorities and then organized protest meetings. The committee which organized the protests included five Christians and two Muslims (Anagnostopoulou 2013). The economic problems which were already bad in Cyprus during the Ottoman period had never been solved during the colonial era.

37 Bandits in Greece.

38 Example for the Turkish Cypriot epic: I died, but I did not surrender to the British [---] It is not possible for us to leave this arena Even if the British destroy us.

39 Newspaper article dated June 16, 2024: https://www.kibrispostasi.com/

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