Cyprus

Culture Name: Cypriot

Orientation

***Identification.***Cyprus is an island in the eastern Mediterranean that was divided into a Greek southern side and a Turkish northern side after a coup instigated by the [dictatorship](http://www.everyculture.com/knowledge/Dictatorship.html%22%20%5Co%20%22View%20%27dictatorship%27%20definition%20from%20Wikipedia)ruling Greece in 1974 and a subsequent Turkish military offensive. Interethnic violence had earlier caused the partial separation of the two communities. With a Greek majority of around 77 percent of the population at the time of independence in 1960, many people regard Cyprus as part of the wider Greek culture. Although the island became part of the Byzantine Empire in the fourth century, it was part of the Ottoman Empire from 1571 to 1878 and had an 18.3 percent Turkish minority in 1960. Greek Cypriots are Christian Orthodox, while [Turkish Cypriots](http://www.everyculture.com/knowledge/Turkish_Cypriots.html)are Sunni Muslim.

***Demography.***In 1960, the island emerged as an independent state after almost a century of British colonial rule. At that time, the demographics were as follows: Greek Cypriots, 77 percent (441,656); Turkish Cypriots, 18.3 percent (104,942); Armenians–Gregorians, 0.6 percent (3,378); and Roman Catholics and Maronites, 0.5 percent (2,752); with a total population of 573,566. Since the 1974 division, the population statistics have been disputed. Many Turkish Cypriots left because of declining economic conditions on their side of the island, while many Turkish settlers moved in because they viewed northern Cyprus as being better off than Turkey. Greek Cypriot official sources provided the following breakdown for the island as a whole in 1977: 735,900 total, of whom 623,200 are Greek (84.7 percent), 90,600 are Turkish (12.3 percent), and 22,100 (3 percent) are foreigners. Those sources claim that there are now 85,000 Turkish settlers on the Turkish Cypriot side and that around 45,000 Turkish Cypriots have emigrated.

***Linguistic Affiliation.***Greek Cypriots are taught at schools and employ in writing and orally, on formal and public occasions, standard modern Greek (SMG), while Turkish Cypriots employ standard modern Turkish (SMT). For informal oral exchanges, each community employs what could be called the Cypriot dialect. Cyprus has a high degree of literacy, and much of the population can communicate in English, especially the younger generation.

Until the 1970s, Turkish Cypriots could communicate adequately in Greek and a significant number of elderly Greek Cypriots could understand some Turkish. However, political conflict gradually led to increasing linguistic barriers. As animosity increased, the act of speaking the enemy's language was considered unpatriotic. Now, after twenty-six years of complete separation, very few Greek Cypriots can understand Turkish and no young Turkish Cypriots speak or understand Greek. For informal oral exchanges, each community employs a different idiom, known within each side as "the Cyprus dialect." Those dialects are sometimes regarded as intimate, local, and authentic idioms vis–a–vis the two standard varieties, while in other contexts they may be seen as low, vulgar, or peasant idioms.

***Symbolism.***When Cyprus emerged as a state in 1960, it acquired a flag but not a national anthem. The flag shows a map of the island in orange– yellow against a white background, symbolizing the color of copper, for which the island was renowned in ancient times. Under this lies a wreath of olive leaves. The symbolism of the flag thus draws on nature rather than culture or religion. The official symbol of the 1960 state, the Republic of Cyprus, is a dove flying with an olive branch in its beak in a shield inscribed with the date 1960, all within a wreath of olive leaves, symbolizing the desire for peace. Until 1963, when interethnic conflict broke out, a neutral piece of music was played on official state occasions; after 1963, the two communities fully adopted the national anthems of Greece and Turkey.

The flag of the Republic of Cyprus was rarely used before 1974. Greek Cypriots, who after 1960 were striving for union with Greece (*enosis*), used the Greek flag, while Turkish Cypriots hoping for the division of the island (*taksim*) used the flag of Turkey. The flag of the republic was used more commonly after the 1974 separation of the island, but only by Greek Cypriots. It was employed as a state symbol of the Republic of Cyprus, which in practice meant the Greek side. Turkish Cypriots declared their own state in 1983 under the name of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), which has been recognized only by Turkey. In striving to prevent international political recognition of the Turkish Cypriot polity, Greek Cypriots started to employ the official flag of the republic. In practice, however, Greek Cypriots often fly both the Greek flag and that of the republic, while Turkish Cypriots fly both their own flag and that of Turkey.

The largest left-wing parties on both sides, which are antinationalist and progressive, often jointly support the "Cypriot identity thesis," in which people are considered first and foremost Cypriots. The largest right–wing Greek and Turkish parties, which are nationalist and conservative, emphasize ethnic and cultural affiliations with the two other states.

History and Ethnic Relations

***Emergence of the Nation.***The processes of nation building, which transformed Christian and Muslim peasants in Cyprus from colonial subjects to Greeks and Turks, followed those of nation building in Greece and Turkey. Only in the twentieth century was there a widespread emergence of Greek and Turkish national consciousness in Cyprus. During the colonial period, both communities employed teachers from the two states, or their own teachers were educated in Greece or Turkey. Both actively encouraged those states to support them, as Greek Cypriots were striving for enosis and Turkish Cypriots initially wanted the island to remain under British rule or be returned to Turkey. As both groups identified with their mainland "brothers," their respective cultures were transformed in ways that drew them apart from each other. This process began with the identification of each group with the history of the "motherland" rather than the history of Cyprus per se.

During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the peasants of Cyprus shared a number of cultural traits, but as ethnic boundaries became stronger, those [syncretic](http://www.everyculture.com/knowledge/Syncretism.html%22%20%5Co%20%22View%20%27syncretic%27%20definition%20from%20Wikipedia)cultural traits gradually disappeared. Muslims might visit Christian churches to pray and offer votive offerings to Christian saints. There were people who came to be known as Cotton–Linens (*Linopambakoi*), who practiced both religions at the same time. Even more widespread commonalities existed with regard to folk religion and medicine. People would visit a local healer or spiritual leader of either creed to solve all daily problems, be cured of illnesses, and avoid becoming bewitched. Those common elements gradually were abolished as Orthodox Christianity and [Sunni Islam](http://www.everyculture.com/knowledge/Sunni_Islam.html)became established. Similar processes took place with regards to language as the mostly oral mixed varieties were replaced by the written official national languages of Greece and Turkey.

Greek Cypriot folklorists attempted to legitimize the struggle for enosis by emphasizing links to contemporary or ancient Greeks, while Turkish Cypriot folklore studies emphasized the commonalties of Turkish Cypriots with the people of Turkey. These attempts at proving a group's purity and authenticity often were accompanied by attempts to prove the impurity and mixed culture (and blood) of the other community in order to deny those people an identity and even existence as political actors who could voice demands.

***National Identity.***In 1960, the new state was composed of people who considered themselves Greeks and Turks rather than Cypriots; these people did not support the state. Interethnic conflict erupted in 1963 and continued until 1967, when Turkish Cypriots found themselves on the losing side. When an extreme right–wing military junta emerged in Greece in 1967, its policies in Cyprus led to resentment and made Greek Cypriots wary of joining Greece. As interethnic strife begun to abate, Greek Cypriots tried to reverse the separatist situation. Turkish Cypriots had moved into enclaves under their own administration, and Greek Cypriots tried to reintegrate them in social and political life. In the late 1960s, the two sides negotiated their differences in a relatively peaceful environment. Turkish Cypriots emerged from their enclaves and began, at least in economic terms, to reintegrate with Greek Cypriots. During this period, some Greek Cypriots started to regard themselves as Cypriots, in control of an independent state whose sovereignty they tried to safeguard both from Greek interference and from the threat posed by Turkish enclaves. A group of right–wing Greek Cypriots, with the encouragement of the junta and against the wishes of the vast majority of Greek Cypriots, launched a coup in 1974. The aim was to depose [Archbishop Makarios](http://www.everyculture.com/knowledge/Makarios_III.html), the president of the republic, and join Greece. Turkey reacted with a military offensive that caused enormous suffering among Greek Cypriots, 170,000 of whom were displaced from the 37 percent of the island that came under the control of Turkey. Population exchanges led to the creation of two ethnically homogeneous sides, although negotiations for a solution still take place.

***Ethnic Relations.*** Greek Cypriots who want a unified state claim that people peacefully coexisted in mixed communities in the past. Turkish Cypriots argue that the two groups always lived in partial separation and conflict.

After 1974, reunification emerged as the major Greek Cypriot political objective. This change in political aspirations led to major revisions. First, the "peaceful coexistence thesis" was established as a historical argument that proposed that if the past was characterized by coexistence, so would a united future. A policy of rapprochement toward Turkish Cypriots necessitated measures of goodwill toward Turkish Cypriots. Turkish Cypriots no longer were regarded as enemies but as compatriots, and all animosity was directed toward Turkey. Gradually, the term "brother," once used only for Greeks (living in Greece) has begun to refer to Turkish Cypriots. Greek Cypriots officially started to talk of "one people" who should live in one

*The harbor at Kyrenia. In seaside towns tourism and fishing are important parts of the economy.*

state, while Turkish Cypriots officially spoke of "two peoples" or "two nations" which should live separately.

However, Greek Cypriot society became more culturally integrated with Greece through education and the reception of Greek television channels. The Turkish Cypriot authorities actively encouraged even stronger measures of integration with Turkey, both economically and culturally.

On the Turkish Cypriot side, Turkey generally is considered as having liberated Turkish Cypriots, but after 1974 various groups came to identify themselves ethnically and culturally as Cypriots rather than Turks.. As a result of the enormous influx of Turkish people into the island, they feel threatened by cultural assimilation by Turkey. Turkish workers also provide an unwelcome source of cheap labor that competes with Turkish Cypriot workers and their trade unions. For this reason, they began to stress that jobs and resources should belong to the "Cypriots" rather than the outsiders (Turks). As a result of these developments, a new school of folklore studies emerged after 1974 on the Turkish Cypriot side that stresses cultural commonalties with Greek Cypriots. Turks are sometimes called*karasakal*("black– bearded") by Turkish Cypriots, a term with connotations of backwardness and religious fanaticism.

Political Life

***Government.***The Republic of Cyprus is a democracy with a presidential system of government. On some issues, notably defense and international politics it may act in cooperation or in consultation with Greece. The Turkish Cypriot regime is a parliamentary democracy with a marked political, military, and economic dependence on Turkey.

***Leadership and Political Officials.***In general both sides have a similar political party structure in terms of left and right. The right-wing parties on each side (Democratic Rally on the Greek Cypriot side, National Unity Party and Democratic Party on the Turkish Cypriot side) tend to be nationalistic, with strong links to ex-freedomfighters' associations, encompassing a spectrum of supporters from the far right to more liberal elements, and persistently advocating links with the two "motherlands." The two left-wing parties (AKEL on the Greek Cypriot side and CTP on the Turkish Cypriot side) are composed mainly of communist supporters and have a strong antinationalist stance that advocates more links between the people of the two sides instead of with Greece and Turkey.

*A Turkish boundary line limits Greeks from entering the area.*

Social Stratification

***Classes and Castes.***On the Greek Cypriot side, one of the strongest social movements has been that represented by the communist party, AKEL. It has consistently commanded about a third of the total votes cast in elections during the post-independence period. Related and linked to this is the strong and effective presence of trade unions, which have successfully defended and promoted workers' rights. Highly organized and well represented, the working class movement has managed to claim significant benefits for its members and has kept up with the rise in living standards. This has, to a significant extent, reduced the possibility of wide-ranging class distinctions, giving rise to a large middle class with few instances of poverty and almost no evidence of destitution, such as homelessness. The full-employment status in Greek Cyprus has contributed to this state of affairs.

On the Turkish Cypriot side, the political left has also been a significant political force, commanding 25 to 30 percent of the vote. However, high unemployment and grave economic problems, along with an influx of destitute migrant workers from Turkey who are prepared to work for very low wages, have prevented Turkish workers from organizing and effectively protecting workers' rights. The prevalence of patronage and clientilism has meant that those close to right-wing parties, which have the most political power, are also favored economically, giving rise to more rigid wealth distinctions.

**END OF READING HOMEWORK for 12/4/17**

Gender Roles and Statuses

***Division of Labor by Gender.***On both sides, there is a strong, though contested and decreasing, element of patriarchy. Economic, social, and political power are concentrated in the hands of men, and only men can become religious functionaries, whether Christian or Muslim. Women are almost absent from political offices, although they are entering the workplace in increasing numbers. However, in general they are employed in jobs of lesser status and lower remuneration than men. The entry of women into the job force, while offering a financial base for more independence and security, often means that women undertake both the role of working outside the house while still retaining their responsibilities in the home, resulting in a double burden. A solution is often found, especially on the richer Greek Cypriot side, by importing female workers (notably from Sri Lanka, Thailand, and the Philippines) to take over the domestic responsibilities.

Urbanism, Architecture, and the Use of Space

The most striking examples of monumental architecture during the British colonial period were schools built by Greek Cypriots emphasizing a Greek classical facade. After 1960 school buildings utilized a "modern" and functional style. The most imposing examples of contemporary monumental architecture are the glass and marble-covered bank buildings on the more affluent Greek Cypriot side. In terms of officially built monuments, which abound on both sides, the largest ones are those



*Meals commonly feature bread, yogurt, and a variety of vegetables, salads, and dips.*

depicting living and deceased political leaders. On the Greek Cypriot side, an enormous statue of past-president Archbishop Makarios stands opposite another monument symbolizing the EOKA fight against anticolonialism (1955-1960), with freedom as a woman opening the prison door to emerging fighters and civilians. On the Turkish Cypriot side, the largest such monument lying outside Famagusta is dedicated to [Ataturk](http://www.everyculture.com/knowledge/Mustafa_Kemal_Atat_rk.html)(the founder of the state of Turkey), whose head appears on the top. Another, multisided, monument is outside Nicosia with the inscription "We Will Not Forget;" it features Denktash, the current Turkish Cypriot leader, and Kuchuk, a once prominent politician. Perhaps the most striking feature in the landscape of the whole island is the "stamping" of the mountain range in the Turkish Cypriot side with two enormous flags, those of Turkey and the TRNC, visible from miles away with an inscription by Ataturk: "How Happy to Say I am a Turk." This could be seen as an attempt by the internationally unrecognized Turkish Cypriot state to engrave its presence on the land and remind all—Greek Cypriots, Turkish Cypriots, and foreign visitors alike—that it exists and is in control of the north side of the island.

From the middle of the twentieth century, the dominant trend was for people to move towards the urban centers and abandon the villages, a trend exacerbated by ethnic conflict. These demographic shifts took place as people searched for employment in government jobs, in the expanding industry, and later in the tourism sector. The social and political upheavals caused significant numbers of Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots to become, at one time or other, dislocated. This meant that town planning could never be seriously enforced, giving a rather cluttered character to urban space. The 'traditional' one room-type village house gradually disappeared as the emergence of a more individualized society necessitated separate rooms, at least for each adult. Related to this were changes in settlement patterns. While in the past relatives often formed neighborhoods, as land plots were divided and subdivided among children, the emergence of the nuclear family gradually changed this pattern. Overall, despite rapid industrialization and other changes of a [capitalist](http://www.everyculture.com/knowledge/Capitalism.html%22%20%5Co%20%22View%20%27capitalist%27%20definition%20from%20Wikipedia)nature, once couples are married, they build on the assumption of marital, occupational and geographical stability. This entails the construction of often large and expensive houses, which may place the couple in debt for ten to twenty years.

Food and Economy

***Food in Daily Life.***Fresh salad and plain yogurt accompany most meals, which usually consist of vegetables cooked in various ways and includes what is known by both communities as*yahni*(with olive oil, tomatoes and onions). When people eat out they often order*meze,*a large collection of small dishes starting with various dips and salads and ending with grilled meat or fish.

***Basic Economy.***Both sides in Cyprus are fairly self-sufficient in terms of food production and both export a variety of fruit and vegetables. The agrarian sector of the economy is gradually diminishing as the service sector assumes prominence.

***Major Industries.***On the Greek Cypriot side, beyond a significant sector of light industry, the tourism and services sectors have been growing very rapidly. Cyprus has become a fairly typical Mediterranean tourist resort, attracting millions of tourists annually, mainly from northern Europe. Its position at the crossroads of Europe, Asia, and Africa has led to a significant expansion of the service sector (which has lately been reaching markets such as the ex-Soviet Union and Eastern Europe). Various incentives have made it very popular as a site for offshore trading, shipping, and other offshore activities. The even more turbulent political climate in some of the nearby Middle Eastern countries (such as Lebanon) has led to various companies choosing Cyprus as a base for their activities in the area.

On the Turkish Cypriot side, agrarian production is much more significant, as it has been less able to develop tourism and industry. This is partly a result of a lack of funds for necessary investments and infrastructure improvements, but it is also an outcome of an international trade embargo that the Republic of Cyprus has been successful in levying against the Turkish Cypriot regime. This means, for example, that international air companies do not fly directly to northern Cyprus and that tourists wishing to travel there must work their way through Istanbul, raising expenses and travel time. For these reasons, there has been a steady migration of Turkish Cypriots abroad, to places such as Turkey and the United Kingdom, in search of employment. The unemployment problem in the north contrasts with the full-employment status of the south, one it has been enjoying continuously for more than 20 years, which leads to a net import of workers from abroad.

Marriage, Family, and Kinship

***Marriage.***Whereas half a decade ago a significant proportion of marriages were arranged (often by the father), this has largely disappeared, although parents may still exert strong control and influence over marital choices. Most people consider getting married to be the normal course of action, so the vast majority do in fact marry; those who don't are often viewed as being either eccentric or unlucky, or both. Whereas previously the provision of a dowry, mostly for women, was considered mandatory, parents still feel they should provide as much economic support as possible for their children when they marry. Ideally, the parents hope to provide the newlywed couple with a fully furnished house and other basic needs, such as one or two cars.

***Domestic Unit.***The typical family arrangement on both sides is the nuclear family, often with fairly strong ties towards a more extended family, especially the parents. Most couples hope to have two children, preferably one of each sex. The more traditional division between the public domain (work, etc.), which is overseen by the male, and the private domain (the home), which is overseen by the female, is still strong, despite women's entry into the labor market. Since people usually move into city apartments or build their own home, relatives do not live in as close proximity as in the past, when they lived in clusters of houses in the same town or village.

Socialization

***Infant Care.***Children are considered to be important, whether they are toddlers or as teenagers. As babies they are usually the woman's responsibility, and the social environment on both sides is very accepting of children in public spaces, such as restaurants. Parents put significant energy into providing a rich and stimulating environment for their children.

***Child Rearing and Education.***Parents take their children's education very seriously, carefully considering which school the children should attend and becoming actively involved in the whole



*A man and woman repair fishing nets in a boat in Paphos, Cyprus.*

schooling process. Providing a good education is considered as one of the most important parental responsibilities and is very highly valued in general. A child is viewed as being economically dependent on parents, with parents responsible for shouldering a child's expenses at least until the child graduates from university, if not up until marriage itself.

***Higher Education.***Most parents strive to provide a university education for their children, and the percentage of people with university degrees is very high by any standard. To achieve this goal, parents start to save early in order to cover the large expenses (since until a few years ago there were no universities in Cyprus), or they ask for a bank loan or sell property, as they feel it is their responsibility to pay their children's expenses until they graduate from university.

Etiquette

Cyprus as a whole could be characterized as a rather informal place. People easily and casually enter into physical contact and in general, personal space is not rigidly marked. There are more formal and polite forms of address that are employed in particular circumstances (such as toward elders, or in a professional situation, for example), but the absence of entrenched historical hierarchies and strong class distinctions allows daily exchanges to proceed in a mostly casual fashion. Because both societies are small, individuals usually know many of the people with whom they come into contact, thus decreasing the need for formalities. Visitors from larger Western countries often remark that Cyprus seems to be a place where "everyone knows each other," or even "where everyone is related to each other."

Religion

***Religious Beliefs.***The vast majority of Greek Cypriots are Greek Orthodox, while most Turkish Cypriots are Sunni Muslim.

Secular Celebrations

Secular celebrations are mostly national commemorations of historical events, including those of Cyprus itself and those from Greece (for the Greek Cypriots) or Turkey (for the Turkish Cypriots).

The main secular celebrations of Greek Cypriots include the following: 25 March: Greek National Day (commemorating the 1821 start of the struggle for independence from the Ottomans in Greece); 1 April: Anniversary of EOKA (commemorating the 1955 start of the Greek Cypriot anti-colonial struggle by the [National Organization of Cypriot Fighters](http://www.everyculture.com/knowledge/EOKA.html)[EOKA]); 1 October: Independence Day (commemorating the 1960 creation of the Republic of Cyprus); 28 October:*OHI*(NO) Day (commemorating the 1940 refusal of Greece to surrender to Germany leading to the involvement of Greece in the World War II).

The main secular celebrations of Turkish Cypriots are: 19 May: Youth and Sports Day; 20 July: Peace and Freedom Day (commemorating the Turkish military intervention in Cyprus starting on 20 July 1974); 1 August: Communal Resistance Day (commemorating the 1958 founding of the Turkish Resistance Organization [TMT], also commemorating the Ottoman conquest of Cyprus and Day of Armed Forces); 30 August: Victory Day (anniversary of the victory of Turkish army in 1922 against the Greeks leading to the emergence of an independent Turkish state); 29 October: Turkish National Day (commemorating the creation of the state of Turkey in 1923); 15 November: Independence Day (unilateral declaration of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus as an independent state in 1983).

State of Physical and Social Sciences

The 1980s were a period of rapid growth in the local provision of college and university education on both sides. Many state and private universities or colleges were created during that time period in order to cater to the already present and rapidly rising demand for university-level education. The new universities have also been successful in attracting students from other countries, notably the ex-Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, Turkey, Africa, Asia, and the Middle East. These institutions have provided a significant increase in the amount of research conducted in the social and physical sciences, which was previously almost nonexistent. Due to the colonial presence and subsequent political problems, research in Cyprus used to be mainly focused on disciplines such as history, folklore, and politics, which both sides could use to support and legitimize their political goals.

Read more: <http://www.everyculture.com/Cr-Ga/Cyprus.html#ixzz504hLzLCU>