

The varying geographical names in the island of Cyprus, situated on the main maritime passage way from Europe to the Holy Land for the past 30 centuries

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Abstract

The island of Cyprus could well claim to be the most visited and best cartographically documented island in the world due to its location on the main maritime passage way from Europe to the Holy Land and the end of the Silk Road to Europe. The island's strategic importance through its situation at the crossroads of Europe, Asia and Africa explains Cyprus's turbulent history and the importance of its ports and cities.

Since the Phoenicians (10th to 8th Century B.C.), Assyrians, Egyptians, Persians, Ptolemies, Romans, Byzantine, Arabs, English (Richard I the Lion Heart), Frankish (French), Genoese (partly), Venetian (Italian), Ottoman (Turkish) and English [1] ruled the island. During these periods, the names of the cities, towns, villages, ports, mountains, hills, rivers, streams, creeks, ponds, lakes, capes and similar geographic places kept changing [2].

1 Introduction

Sometimes when reading a manuscript written down by a traveler dating back to the medieval ages, it becomes very hard to understand what happened where because of the rapid change of the names due the different backgrounds and languages of governing bodies and their forcibly changing names of places on the island. In addition to this, the language-wise background of the traveling authors, which number to around one hundred and sixty seven different



personalities and fifteen different languages [3, 4], also effected the different pronunciation and recording of the geographic places on their notes.

Going through the existing manuscripts from 23 B.C., maps of the island of Cyprus published since 16th Century [5] and books written in medieval times, there were nearly 1000 different versions of the names of cities, towns and villages of Cyprus found, due to the different origins of travelers, both country-wise and language-wise.

2 Maps

One of the first geographic manuscripts mentioning the name of Cyprus is Strabo's "*Geographica*" [6] dating back to 23 B.C. and Claudius Ptolemy's "*Geographice Hyphegesis*" [Γεογραφικὴ ὑψηγησις] written in Greek dated 160 B.C. [7]. They both define the names of the cities and capes of Cyprus.

According to Herodotus, Aristogoras of Militus convinced the Spartan King Cleomenes to assist the Ionians in fighting against the Persians in ca 500 B.C. by pointing out to him the route to Susa on a map engraved on a copper plate [8]. This map is supposed to be the first map of the island of Cyprus and the towns of Paphos, Soloae (Soli), Lapheto (Lapta), Cerinia (Kyrenia), Citari (Cythrea), Salamina (Salamis), Cito (Kitium), Amathus (Amathus), Curio (Curion), Palephato (Palaepaphos), Tamiso (Kokkinotrimithia) and Thremitus (Nicosia) are marked and the distances between them indicated.

In Europe till the second half of the 13th century no outstanding progress was achieved in cartography. Especially in Western Europe, as of the other scientific studies, cartography was also in the hands of clergy and they were drawn behind the walls of monasteries and bishoprics. These mapmakers, who were originally monks, abbots or monastic people, collected the necessary information mainly from travelers or pilgrims and secondly from the mariners whenever they had the chance to meet them on land.

The first map showing Cyprus alone is the map of the Venetian mariner Bartolemmeo, dated 1480 AD. After the rumors of Ottoman preparations for an attack to Cyprus were widely spread, maps showing the island of Cyprus with details very close to its real shape started to circulate.

3 Publications and manuscripts of the travellers

Cyprus, as mentioned previously, was under the effect and pressure of the civilizations around the Mediterranean since early ages due to its very important location, being in the middle of the trade road between East and West, being on the roads to the Holy Land and due to reasons originating from its unique geography. When the "*List of the names*" mentioned in the author's book titled "*Names of the locations of Cyprus lost in the depths of 2500 years of History*" [2] is studied, it can be seen very clearly and amazingly that the name of the island of Cyprus has had lots of different variations since the early ages.

These different and varied names are "Acamantis", "Acamas", "Acantida", "Achamantide", "Achametide", "Aerosa", "Amathus", "Amatusa", "Amathusia",



“Aphrodite Cypris”, “Aspelia”, “Aspella”, “Astimono”, “Carastis”, “Carastoni”, “Cerasi”, “Cerastin”, “Cerastis”, “Ceraunia”, “Cethim”, “Cethin”, “Cethina”, “Chetim”, “Chetima”, “Chitim”, “Cipir”, “Cypre”, “Colinia”, “Collinia”, “Colonia”, “Copper”, “Cripton”, “Cytherea”, “Crytono”, “Cypiria”, “Cypris”, “Cypros”, “Crypta”, “Crypton”, “Cryptus”, “Kerastia”, “Macaria”, “Machara”, “Macharia”, “Marchara”, “Maxalia”, “Minois”, “Paphia”, “Qibris Adasy”, “Salamina”, “Salaminia”, “Spelia” and “Spekeia”.

The number of sovereigns ruled and accordingly the different languages spoken in the island of Cyprus throughout history is 13 [9]. This two digit number which is even greater than a dozen, of the different sovereigns who have ruled this island is one of the main causes of the change of the names of the towns, locations, rivers, points, capes, bays, mountains, hills, planes etc. in the island.

The second main reason is the travelers who visited this island on their way to the Holy Land for a pilgrimage since the flourishing of Christianity. As it is known very clearly, the pilgrims of Europe willing to visit “Terra Sancta”, the Holy Land, had no other choice but to travel by sea. The vessels departing from the port of Venice, propelled by the wind only, had to stop in the islands of Crete, Rhodes and Cyprus for a supply of victuals, water, salt for consumption and wood for cooking. The stays in these ports were a minimum of 4 days stretching up to 7 days or over.

The literate pilgrims who took this break as a chance to travel around and note down their souvenirs and perceptions, collected, edited and printed this information as a paper or in a book form on their arrival back to their home country. The number of such travelers is as much as one hundred and sixty seven [10] and they are from thirteen different countries. This variation caused the aforementioned publications to be printed in thirteen different languages and accordingly each different language had its own unique pronunciation, spelling and writing of the islands geographic names.

The names of the geographic places they noted down were under the effect of their native languages in pronunciation, spelling and writing. When these notes, books or papers were examined thoroughly, it is clearly seen that the geographic names they mentioned were altered under the pressure of their native tongues with out any intention.

4 Effect of travelers on the geographic names

The cartographer Abraham Ortelius and the other followers printed maps of the island of Cyprus [11] since 1570 in at least 4-5 languages like Latin, Italian, French, Dutch, Flemish and German using totally different names for the same place based on the language they are using. Ortelius marked for the first time in cartography a total of 564 locations in his map of Cyprus [11] while the total of the actual locations were 813 on the island.

A. and J. Stylianou made a comparison study of the Matheo Pagano 1538 map [12], the Giovanni Francesco Camocio, 1566 map [13] and the Abraham Ortelius 1570 map, to compare the exactness of locations on these maps of



Cyprus with Kitchener's 1885 Cyprus map [14] and published the results in their famous book titled "*The History of the cartography of Cyprus*". This study also revealed the different names of the same locations used on these maps.

The traveling notes written down by 82 travelers compiled by C. D. Cobham under the title "*Excerpta Cypria*" and 85 travelers compiled by T. A. H. Mogabgab under the title "*Excerpts on Cyprus*" contain a total of 941 varied names of locations in the island of Cyprus including A. and J. Stylianou's findings. As mentioned in the previous paragraph, 53 of these different names mean or indicate the island of "*Cyprus*".

5 Conclusion

The varying names of the same locations, based on the information given by the travelers or mentioned in their publications, were used very widely by the cartographers in their maps and these numerous variations lead to serious complications of our understanding clearly of "*what happened where*".

The people who are interested in the "*History of Cyprus*" when reading the manuscripts, books, traveling notes, itineraries, narratives, chronicles, peregrinations, maps and etc. end up with a fogginess or mess up due to the unconfomable location names mentioned. The subject when studied becomes more and more complicated and most of the time one ends up with wrong results due to a lack of a scientific reference as in this research.

This paper and the author's book titled "*Names of the locations of Cyprus lost in the depths of 2500 years of History*" will ease these problems and open up new horizons to the researchers of the "*History of Cyprus*" by giving birth to 941 previously unknown location names used in the island of Cyprus since the antique age.

Acknowledgments

This study refers also to the results of the research and the resulting book published afterwards titled "*Names of the locations of Cyprus lost in the depths of 2500 years of History*", 122 pages plus a bilingual map in Turkish and Greek (Roman Script), Nicosia, North Cyprus, 2004.

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