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## CORRIGENDA

In Vol XV, No. 1, on page 43 for "Forward" read "Foreward"; on page 73, line 38, for "(related to the Asians)" read "(related to the Ainu)."

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# The Structure of the Turkish-Cypriot Race

By KIAMRAN HALIL<sup>1</sup>

## INTRODUCTION

This paper discusses the ethnic origin and composition of the Turkish-Cypriot race in the island of Cyprus. It traces, in broad outline,<sup>2</sup> its "birth" in 1571 and ends with conclusions, set out in summary form, as respects its subsequent hybridisation.

Until 1571, when the Turks conquered Cyprus from the Venetians, there were no Turkish inhabitants on the island. The bulk of the indigenous population comprised Greeks. There were also Franks, Venetians, Maronites, and Armenians. Many had soon emigrated. These were mostly the surviving Venetians and Franks. But there were also what were known in the Near East as Latins of Syrian, Ionian, Genoese, French, and Maltese descent.

Soon after the conquest, twenty thousand demobilised Turkish soldiers were given parcels of land, called *fiefs*, and settled on these State lands granted to them by Sultan Selim II. These people formed the original core and nucleus of the present Turkish element in the Cypriot population. Historical sources are unanimous on this important point.<sup>3</sup> The fighting forces, many of whom possessed pre-Seljuk and pre-Ottoman origins, were principally drawn from Anatolia and were full of renegades. They consisted, in part at least, of *Yenicheris* (Janissaries) who were men of non-Moslem birth but brought up as Moslems. The twenty thousand colonists contained many Turks of this sort.<sup>4</sup>

These settlers were supplemented from time to time by Turkish

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<sup>2</sup> "Generalisation of a demographic history such as that of Cyprus must be formulated in broad outline" *per* I. W. Tauber in "Cyprus: the demography of a strategic island," *Population Index*, Vol. 21, 1955, p. 8.

<sup>3</sup> See, in particular, C. D. Cobham, *Excerpta Cypria*, Cambridge University Press, 1908, p. 344; Sir George Hill, *A History of Cyprus*, Vol. IV, (1571-1948), Cambridge University Press, 1952, pp. 20 and 27; Franz Georg Maier, *Cyprus* (English translation) Elek Books, 1968, p. 117; Sir Harry Luke, *Cyprus under the Turks*, Hurst and Company, 1969, p. 22; William Forwood, *Cyprus Invitation*, Garnstone Press, 1971, p. 32; Professors Clarke and Fisher (editors), *Population of the Middle East and North Africa*, University of London Press, 1972, pp. 171-172.

<sup>4</sup> Sir George Hill, *op. cit.*, p. 27; William Forwood, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

immigration from Anatolia and Rumelia (European Turkey).<sup>5</sup> This was done in two ways. First, the island, which had become a peripheral province of the Ottoman Empire, was used as a place of banishment from the Turkish mainland for undesirables, such as criminals and brigands of the Yürük (Anatolian nomads). Amongst those who were deported there were also high-ranking officers and celebrities who had incurred the Sultan's disfavour. Secondly, the Sultan ordered the *Kadis* (local justices) of Konia, Larenda, Kayseri, Nigde, Karamania, and Zulkadir to achieve the transfer of inhabitants by shifting one out of ten households. In the main, they were peasants of rough character.<sup>6</sup>

It must be emphasised that this series of migrations was, at any rate at first, entirely made up of males. Afterwards, however, the administrator of the Land Register was commanded "to bring over from Karamania two thousand Turks with their families."<sup>7</sup> Whereas immigration stopped after the first decade, deportation continued. As late as 1864 (which is fourteen years before the end of the Ottoman régime), we have it that "2700 Circassians were deported to the island but only 550 were declared sound on landing, the others having perished during the voyage. Of these only 200 survived."<sup>8</sup>

## THE GREEK INDIGENOUS POPULATION AND INTERMIXTURE

For a proper appreciation of the subject-matter covered by this paper, a brief historical summary about the position of the Greeks at the material time is essential. The indigenous population which, as stated earlier, consisted mainly of Greeks who had not managed to leave (or indeed preferred, having no option to do otherwise, to remain behind) were, after the Turkish occupation, called *rayahs*.<sup>9</sup> The ruling class had upgraded them to the status of second-class citizens from the conditions of slavery<sup>10</sup> under the Venetians. Historians, therefore, agree that it is not surprising that the Greeks looked upon the Turks as their saviours despite the fact that the

<sup>5</sup> Sir Harry Luke, *Cyprus*, Harrop and Company, 1965 (revised edition), p. 79.

<sup>6</sup> Sir George Hill, *op. cit.*, pp. 18-19.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* Italics supplied. "... there is no mention of an in-movement of wives for men. However, successive reports indicate increasing number of Turks, including women and children" *per* I. W. Tauber, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

<sup>8</sup> Sir George Hill, *op. cit.*, p. 261.

<sup>9</sup> From the Arabic word "*ri-aya*" or "*ra'iyah*," meaning left behind, or literally, "flock"; "*riayet*," however, in Turkish is synonymous with (to) "adhere," "comply," or "observe."

<sup>10</sup> They were divided mainly into two classes: the *parici* and the *perpirarii*. The first-mentioned served Venetian noblemen while the latter were just ordinary serfs. Both categories could be bought and sold.

Turks had, in turn, introduced a yoke of oppression through the imposition of excessive taxation and certain rigid restrictions, such as the taboo to own or purchase land.<sup>11</sup> As against these prohibitive measures the Greeks were granted complete religious liberties which were forbidden during the eighty-two years of Venetian administration that perpetuated the abject conditions under which their predecessors, the Lusignans, had governed the country.<sup>12</sup>

Throughout the Turkish period there were attempts at compelling the *rayahs* to embrace Islam.<sup>13</sup> Where such attempts were successful, in the majority of cases the converts looked forward to reverting to their old faith. But the villagers of Lefkara, which lies twenty-five miles to the south-west of the Turkish landing-point of Scala town, did not resist these overtures. Lefkara was the first village to submit to the conquerors. Its Greek inhabitants offered them every assistance. They acted as guides and provided information on geographical locations and strategic points, in return for which they were treated well and allowed some privileges. Many had even embraced Islam of their own volition in expectation of further rights. The population of the village was afterwards increased by Turkish settlers. Most likely interracial marriage, especially with those who had changed their religion, took place.

This important landmark probably accounts for the fact that the Turks of this mixed village have always found it considerably easier to express themselves in Greek than in Turkish. This linguistic characteristic is not possessed by the offspring of the present generation because of the impact of modern education. But the quality of the Turkish of the children's parents of today is still tainted with a peculiar accent which is similar to the Turkish spoken by the inhabitants of the mixed village of Ayios Theodoros some ten miles to the east of Lefkara.

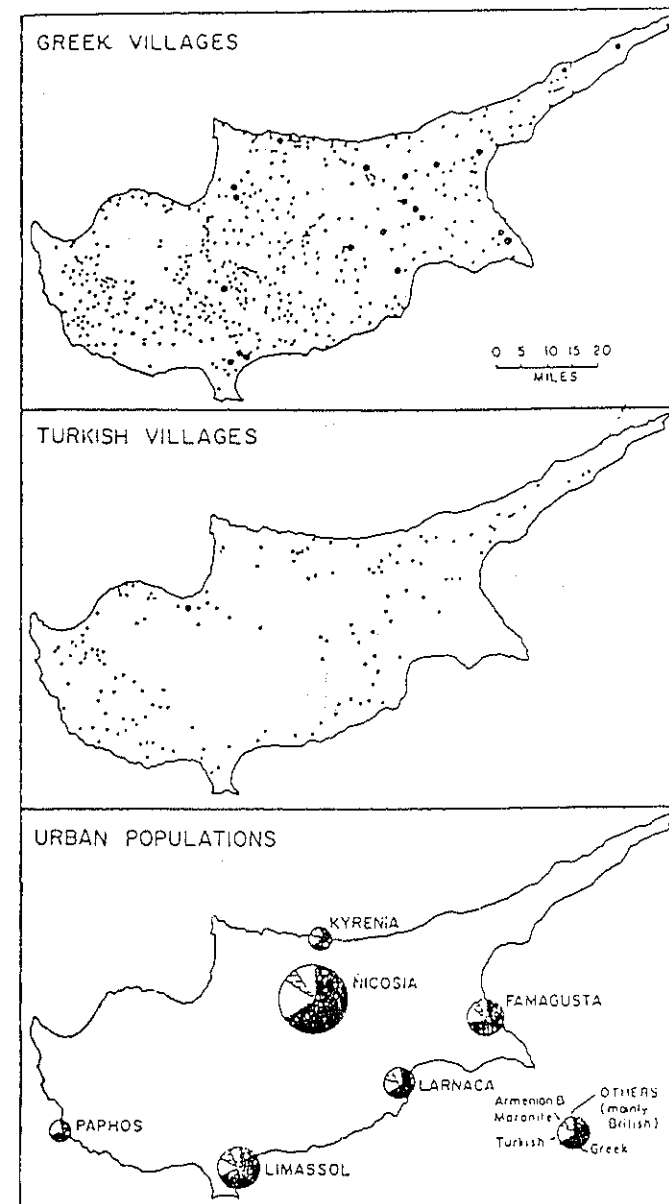
The same is true of the all-Turkish village of Louroudjina, twelve miles to the south of Nicosia, the capital. This particular "disability" is also noticeable in many villages of the Karpass peninsula to the north-east of Famagusta town as well as in the Tylliria region to the north-west of Nicosia, and in several villages in the more remote Paphos district in the extreme west. The type of Turkish spoken in all urban and rural areas is markedly different in accent from that of the Turkish mainland, though such a distinction cannot be drawn as regards its written form.

Racial intermixture may not, of itself, be a satisfactory criterion to explain the degenerate form of Turkish one hears in

<sup>11</sup> This disability ceased on the abolition of feudal system of land tenure at the beginning of the seventeenth century.

<sup>12</sup> Sir Harry Luke, *Cyprus under the Turks*, p. 14.

<sup>13</sup> C. D. Cobham, *op. cit.*, p. 182.



Communities of Cyprus, 1960. The Greek and Turkish communities do not have discrete geographical distributions.

the areas referred to above. Possibly the true answer lies in the fact that the Turks were in the minority<sup>11</sup> from the start and that their numbers dwindled over the years while the Greek majority relatively gained in strength. It is impossible, however, to rely on the same premise in the case of some all-Turkish villages where the more elderly folk find it easier to converse in Greek. Louroudjina (to which reference has already been made) is a striking example of this curious phenomenon. Some town-dwellers describe these people by the local term "*mezzokertoos*" which, unlike the expression "*mestizo*," is a word not given in any language dictionary. One could perhaps "decipher" it if *mezzo* is multiplied by *quarto* or *quadrans* and discover that it probably means "octoroons"!

The subject of voluntary or compulsory conversion to Islam of the *rayahs* followed by intermarriage may account in certain areas for structural peculiarities like similarity of physique, physical features and characteristics and physiognomy of both peoples. Included in this racial hybridisation is the outward physical trait of the sameness of mannerisms. In so far as the Turks are concerned, this last attribute may also be said to be largely due to acquired characteristics rather than exclusively to hereditary traits.

#### THE IMPACT OF SLAVERY

In addition to the above summary on *rayahs* and intermixture, it is equally vital in the writer's opinion to indulge in a further digression for the purpose of referring (inevitably in broad outline) to the existence of black or negro slaves on the island. The material on this point is scattered, here and there, in the recorded observations of diarist travellers. Barring fleeting references, no book or article in any journal on Cyprus has yet treated this matter either seriously or even superficially.

Although the books are completely silent on this subject for the first century of the occupation, there is abundant, albeit intermittent, informative material covering the remaining two centuries of the régime that slaves were in fact imported and employed locally. If regard is to be had to the institution of serfdom on the Ottoman mainland itself, it could be safely assumed that some slaves were transported along with immigrants during the early years of the occupation. On the other hand, the presumption can always be made that slaves were bought from visiting ships running a slave-market—a trade that was rampant in the Near

<sup>11</sup> Maps depicting Turkish and Greek villages as at 1960. Reproduced with permission from Professor J. Clarke, *Population Geography and the Developing Countries*, Pergamon Press Ltd., 1971. Mixed villages are interspersed in undotted areas.

East in those days. And that is by no means conjecture masquerading as fact, especially when one finds that in 1668 there were one thousand black slaves (male and female).<sup>12</sup> It could be inferred from this fact that this "accumulation" must have been due to an influx spread over a period of time.

The following eye-witness accounts are interesting: according to Richard Pococke, LL.D., F.R.S., who visited the Limassol littoral (now the second largest town) in 1738, slaves<sup>13</sup> were frequently brought from Egypt and sold to the Turks. The next piece of information on record reveals that in 1770 "Russian ships anchored off the coast and both Turks and Greeks purchased black slaves."<sup>14</sup> Apparently by then the Greeks were allowed to have slaves; for, Pococke had noted<sup>15</sup> that on his visit, as previously mentioned, he formed the impression that the Greeks were debarred from owning any slaves. In 1787, Dr J. Sibthorp<sup>16</sup> called at the coastal town of Poli in the north-west and observed that a black slave was in the service of the headman of the town. In 1806, Don Domingo Badia y Leyblich<sup>17</sup> noticed a black eunuch<sup>18</sup> who was employed by an eminent Greek<sup>19</sup> at Limassol. Delaroiere<sup>20</sup> who was in the Larnaca in 1832 reported to have seen at *Tékke*, the Turkish shrine by the salt lake outside the town, a male and two female slaves in the employ of the Sheikh.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Sir George Hill, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

<sup>13</sup> C. D. Cobham, *op. cit.*, p. 269; it is interesting to note that Carleton S. Coon wrote (p. 122) in his book *The Living Races of Man*, Jonathan Cape, 1966, "By 'proper Negroes' we mean those peoples of Africa who are neither Pygmies nor Bushmen, Berbers, Arabs, or any of the clinal populations with a readily visible Caucasoid racial element. We mean the West Africans, some of the East Africans, and most of the Bantu. It was from these populations that most of the Negroes transported to the New World and to Arabia were drawn . . ."

<sup>14</sup> Sir George Hill, *op. cit.*, p. 93.

<sup>15</sup> See note 16 above.

<sup>16</sup> Editor of *Flora Graeca* and founder of a professorship of Rural Economy at Oxford. " . . . The Agha of Poli was absent when we came back, and a black slave supposing us to be hungry brought down a bundle of beanstalks and threw them down before us, saying *there* was something to eat . . ." quoted from C. D. Cobham, *op. cit.*, p. 269.

<sup>17</sup> The famous Spanish diarist who travelled and wrote under the name of Ali Bey el Abbassi. Author of *Travels of Ali Bey (Viajes de Ali Bey el Abbassi per Africa y Assia, durant los anys 1803-1807)*, 3 tom. Barcelona, 1889).

<sup>18</sup> C. D. Cobham, *op. cit.*, p. 391.

<sup>19</sup> Mr Francoudis, Honorary Vice-Consul of Russia and England.

<sup>20</sup> Described as the author of *Voyage en Orient* by C. D. Cobham. This work is not listed in the British Museum Catalogue of Printed Books, however.

<sup>21</sup> C. D. Cobham, *op. cit.*, p. 395.

The number of slaves in 1845 was estimated at 2000,<sup>25</sup> families of higher rank having one or two, and those employed by Christian families retained the Moslem religion.<sup>26</sup> These slaves could obtain their freedom only under a certificate of emancipation granted by the local court. The following year Abdul Mejid ordered the closure of the public slave-market but trade went on clandestinely although there were no sales for many years prior to the British occupation in 1878.<sup>27</sup> But there is strong evidence of many negro slaves at the village of Episcopi (on the sinuous coast between Limassol and Paphos) in 1860—only eighteen years before the British set foot in Cyprus—to the effect that the Christians at Limassol some ten miles to the east were in daily fear of an attack from Episcopi “which was inhabited by the worst description of Turks and negroes.”<sup>28</sup>

In putting the finishing touches to the picture regarding black and negro slaves, the following extract from Sir Harry Luke's book<sup>29</sup> is interesting:

... Asiatic are the Turks of the walled town of Famagusta . . . African are the descendants of Nubian<sup>30</sup> slaves of Turkish governors and distinguished exiles . . . [And] African are date-palms dotted over empty spaces.

I could find no direct evidence of black or negro slaves being known to commit matrimony either with their female co-serfs or with members of the island's population at large. It must be accepted, however, that such a right existed, at any rate, on emancipation since that particular privilege was legally recognised on the Turkish mainland.<sup>31</sup> It will be seen in a moment that marriages were, so to speak, either endogamous or exogamous and

<sup>25</sup> Sir George Hill, *op. cit.*, p. 254. Sir George disputes Ross's figure of 5000 Negroes, but agrees with him that the island's population in 1845 was 115,000 of whom 25,000 were Turks.

<sup>26</sup> In 1830 Mahmud II had ordered the liberation of all male and female slaves who had not embraced Islam.

<sup>27</sup> Sir George Hill, *op. cit.*, p. 254. But this statement is contradicted by a French consular despatch from Larnaca by Consul Lang as late as 1872 which reads “For some time past . . . an increase has been observed in the trafficking in slaves . . . by the importation of negroes from the Barbary coast . . .”

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 229.

<sup>29</sup> Sir Harry Luke, *Cyprus*, p. 126.

<sup>30</sup> After the Turkish conquest of Nubia by Suleyman the Magnificent in 1520, it was guarded by Moravian mercenaries whose descendants formed part of the blue-eyed and red-haired slave trade. This is not the type of Nubian slave which is referred to in the extract.

<sup>31</sup> For an elaborate treatment of the subject of the institution of slavery in Ottoman Turkey in the nineteenth century, see E. M. Tugay, *Three Centuries*, Oxford University Press, 1963, pp. 303-312.

that in the latter event the identifiable Negro-Turkish<sup>32</sup> texture is distinctly discernible.

In view of the existence today of a limited number of “black” Turks (and very few “black” Greeks) sparsely scattered in some parts of Cyprus, and having particular regard to such Turkish villages as Episcopi and Mennoya (the latter is twenty miles to the west of Larnaca) in which a sizeable proportion of the people of both these two villages is to this day black with distinct negro features (e.g., black-skinned, woolly-haired, flat-nosed and thick-lipped), one can safely conclude that the right to marry, *inter se* or otherwise, must have been possessed by their ancestors after emancipation, otherwise their kind would have been extinct long ago. It must also be remembered that under the polygamous system of marriage obtaining at the time a master could marry his slave and take her into his harem. Alternatively, he could constitute her a concubine wife.

Some forty years ago (though not today) pitch-black persons escorting a white wife was not an uncommon sight. This accounts for the “milk chocolate,” as opposed to “plain chocolate,” colour of some present-day Turkish-Cypriots. Such “sub-species” emerging out of such mongrelisations are much less in evidence in the Greek camp despite the existence of a few black Greek males and virtually no black female Greeks. This type of Greek is mostly concentrated within the vicinity of Limassol which, as has been pointed out, is quite proximate to Episcopi!

The proportion of black Turkish females to black Turkish males has for the past fifty years or so been in the ratio of approximately 1:5. Since the overall number of black Turks is not considerable (probably only 700<sup>33</sup> out of a Turkish-Cypriot

<sup>32</sup> The following extract from Dr Pierre Paul Broca's *On the Phenomenon of Hybridity in the Genus Homo*, publication of the Anthropological Society of London, 1864, p. 35, footnote 2 is, in the writer's opinion, relevant in the present context by way of comparative study: “The first Europeans established at Jamaica were Spaniards and Portuguese; but the island was, in 1665 conquered by the English, when all the old colonists retired carrying away the greater portion of their wealth. Cromwell hastened to re-people the island by transporting to it a number of political convicts. In 1669, four years after the conquest, there were already 4500 Europeans and 1400 Negroes on the island. [Eleven years later] the white population amounted to 7500, and the slaves to 8000. It will, then, be observed, that the population of Jamaica descends exclusively from English colonists and negro slaves . . .”

<sup>33</sup> These are largely of the Negroid type. From the time the writer remembers himself his ears have been accustomed to the adage (handed down through the generations) that “the brain of the negro is contained in one single pip of the fig.” For an interesting discussion on the negro brain, see Gerard Wintringer, “The Intelligence of the African Negro,” *THE MANKIND QUARTERLY*, Vol. V, No. 1, July-September 1964, pp. 35-44.

population of 110,000-strong) it may be assumed with some degree of justification that most of their forefathers' relations or comrades-in-servitude expired without issue—a strong factor which explains the decline and continuing extinction of negritude. With the advent of British rule in 1878, the importation of slaves had definitely come to an end. Apart from isolated instances of conjugal unions between black and white Turks and the inbreeding of the existing negroes (which explains the presence of 700 or so of their kind) the infusion of negro blood into the Turkish-Cypriot population had long since ceased.

In general the colour of the skin of the majority of the Turkish-Cypriots (notably in urban areas) is brunette white; many are even "milk white"; and the hair form is—for the most part—straight or wavy. Fair-haired and blue-eyed types in some parts of Paphos district are not uncommon.<sup>34</sup> But swarthy skinned or slightly dark or light brown Turkish-Cypriots are prevalent. It could be said that these types are the descendants of mulatto matings. Whatever the shade of their colour, in most of them the negroid characteristics are present.<sup>35</sup>

It is important to point out that many Turkish-Cypriot peasants, and for that matter, several townfolk, have such twin-surnames as "Kara Hussein," "Kara Hassan," "Kara Mehmed" and "Kara Osman." The prefix "Kara" which means black in Turkish very rarely precedes any other names than the ones mentioned. The same prefix also appears before (but is "subsumed") some composite Greek surnames, like "Karayiannis," "Karageorghis," and "Karapittas," to mention but a few examples. Considerably more Greek names are preceded by

<sup>34</sup> Local opinion maintains that the large number of persons with fair hair and blue eyes in the Turkish community of Paphos district are descendants of "Frankish" settlers, i.e., of West European, so-called, "Frankish" origin, who were converted to Mohammedanism after the Turkish conquest: see Dr Alexander Melamid, "The Geographical Distribution of Communities in Cyprus," *Geographical Review*, Vol. 46, No. 355, 1956, p. 367, footnote 2. It may well be that the same reasoning holds true about Lufkara Turks who on the whole possess similar attributes.

<sup>35</sup> Studies of the skin colour genes which distinguish the Negro race indicate that the children which result from a mixture of the two races are intermediate in skin colour (Mulatto). As is well-known to the science of heredity when two mulattoes marry, however, their children can show many degrees of skin colour from typical negroid to the so-called white of the Caucasian race: see A. W. Winchester, *Heredity and your Life*, Dover Publications Inc., New York, 1960, pp. 103-104; A. Scheinfeld, *Heredity in Humans*, Chatto and Windus, London, 1972, pp. 57-58. It is a great pity that elements of the Turkish-Cypriot people have never been examined by physical anthropologists.

"Mavro,"<sup>36</sup> (Greek for "black") as in "Mavropoulos," "Mavrogordatos," "Mavroyiannis," and especially "Mavronicolas," to name a few examples. Moreover, there are several Turks and Greeks who simply have "Kara" and "Mavro" respectively as a surname.

Usually the holders of these names bear peculiarities of negro descent (e.g., body build, facial features, hair form, everted lips, and so on). Such traits are less easily visible in the case of individuals who are in fact white-skinned—not so remarkable when one stops to think of so many Britons whose surname is "Black"!\*

<sup>36</sup> Cf. the word "Moor" which comes from the Greek word "navros." In ancient history it was used to describe the natives of Mauritania. It later came to be applied generally to the people of north-west Africa of mixed Berber and Arab origin: see A. Sillery, *Africa: A Social Geography* (2nd edition) Gerald Duckworth and Co., 1972, p. 169.

\* The surname "Black" in English refers to the hair colour. It indicated Atlantic or Mediterranean blood, but not negro.—EDITOR.

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## CONCLUSIONS

(a) The Turkish-Cypriot people are the emergent results of the twenty thousand remnants of the Turkish army. They were mostly renegades and formed part of the numerous regiments during the campaign against the Venetians in 1571. They settled on State lands granted to them;

(b) In the early years of the occupation these settlers were supplemented by some immigration from Turkey. The deportation of undesirables from the Turkish mainland continued throughout the Ottoman era. There is evidence that some interracial association had taken place with elements of the local population, especially after many had embraced Islam, either forcibly or voluntarily;

(c) Until the end of the Turkish rule in 1878, the evidence in respect to black and negro slave trafficking indicates that the racial hybridisation mentioned in (b), above, was further polluted by racial miscegenation by virtue of Caucasoid-Negroid crosses, so much so that the resultant cross-bred stock with its marked negroid strain, inherent in most Turkish-Cypriots, bears little hereditary relatedness<sup>37</sup> to their original strains, namely, their soldier-ancestors' genetic structure.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Populations are recognised according to some particular component which is of interest: see G. A. Harrison and A. J. Boyce (Editors), *The Structure of Human Populations*, Oxford University Press, 1972, p. 3. In the case of many upper middle aged Turkish-Cypriot women it is no exaggeration to remark that the size of their buttocks surpass those of Hottentot females.

<sup>38</sup> "Turks lived as governing group for three centuries but there is no evidence of much interchange of permanent settlers between Cyprus and Turkey" *per* I. W. Tauber in "Cyprus: the demography of a strategic island," *op. cit.*, p. 7. With respect, this statement is absolutely accurate. In the writer's view, this very significant factor indicates that there never was much scope for genetic segregation. Consequently, the absence (at all relevant times) of the slightest prospect of reversion to the original strains is thus explained. In an age of ethnocentrism, few Turkish-Cypriots will admit as much!