

## State Honours in Ottoman Nicosia: The Bishops as Agents of Modernity

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On the cold morning of 5 December 1846 in Nicosia, a day which according to the relevant entry in Codex A' in the Archive of the Archbishopric of Cyprus<sup>1</sup> would be established as a day of celebration in Cyprus, the Archbishop of Cyprus, Ioannikios (1840-1849), arrived at the mansion of the Ottoman Governor of Cyprus, Hasan Pasha (1846-1861), for a reason entirely different to his previous visits.<sup>2</sup> On this occasion, he visited the governor's mansion to receive officially the medal bestowed on him by the Ottoman state. Ioannikios' state decoration took place at a time when the system of decoration in the Ottoman Empire, especially since the end of the eighteenth century, was undergoing serious transformation. Immediately following the forced disbandment of the janissary corps in 1826, the restructuring of the Ottoman military forces according to Western models and the modernization policies of Sultan Mahmud II (1808-1839), which essentially initiated the reforms in the Ottoman state,<sup>3</sup> a more systematic and Westernized policy for state decoration began. According to the new realities, Archbishop Ioannikios must have

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<sup>1</sup> For the contents of Codex A', see: Charilaos Papaioannou, "Codex A' tis Arhiepiskopis Kyprou. Pinax ton en ayto Periehomenon Eggrafon", *Fos*, 8 (1911), pp. 225-244 [Codex A' of the Archbishopric of Cyprus: List of the Included Documents].

<sup>2</sup> For a list of the Ottoman governors, archbishops and bishops of Cyprus during the period of Ottoman rule (1571-1878), see: Theoharis Stavrides, "Lists of Governors, Prelates and Dragomans of Cyprus (1571-1878)", Michalis N. Michael, Matthias Kappler, Eftihios Gavriel (eds.), *Ottoman Cyprus: A Collection of Studies on History and Culture*, Harrassowitz, Wiesbaden 2009, pp. 89-106.

<sup>3</sup> Kemal Karpat, "The Transformation of the Ottoman State, 1789-1908", *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 3 (1972), pp. 253-255.

received a medal known as a nishan (*nişân*); a better organization and a more systemic process for state decoration would only take place a few years later during the reign of Sultan Abdülmecid I (1839-1861) with the institutionalization and detailed recording of the terms of the *Mecidiye* medal.<sup>4</sup> However, what should be noted is that Archbishop Ioannikios was bestowed a medal at a time when the Ottoman state in general, but also the role of the Orthodox high clergy, was in the process of being redefined, while the entire empire was transitioning to modernity. According to the entry in Codex A' of the Church archives related to the ceremony and the celebrations that took place on the day that Ioannikios was decorated by the state, '...His Beatitude and Eminence our Bishop, Mr Mr [*sic*] Ioannikios, arrived at the palace, where he appropriately accepted on his right chest on behalf of the Royal Representative, our Respected Governor, the distinguished Royal Medal...'<sup>5</sup>

After the ceremony at the Ottoman governor's mansion came to an end, Hasan Pasha offered to Ioannikios a large escort of guards to accompany him from the mansion in a procession to the Archbishopric of Cyprus. According to the description given in Codex A', this procession with the escort presented by the Ottoman governor was magnificent, whilst a crowd gathered in the area and cheered in favour of the Ottoman sultan. Archbishop Ioannikios walked all the way to the Cathedral of St John next to the Archbishop's Palace, where he made wishes for the long reign of Sultan Abdülmecid I. As is mentioned in the relevant entry,

After [Ioannikios] entered the holy and sacred church of his bishopric and chanted praises to God in favour of strengthening our powerful and serene King, who

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<sup>4</sup> For the state decoration and medals in the Ottoman state, see: Edhem Eldem, *Pride and Privilege: A History of Ottoman Orders, Medals and Decorations*, Ottoman Bank Archives and Research Centre, Istanbul 2004. For the *Nişân-ı İftihâr*, see pp. 110-125.

<sup>5</sup> '...ο Μακαριώτατος και Σεβασμιώτατος ημών Δεσπότης, Κύριος Κύριος Ιωαννίκιος, αφίχθη εις το Ηγεμονεϊόν όπου δεχθείς προσηκόντως επί του δεξιού σεπτού αυτού στήθους, το αριπρεπές Βασιλικόν Παράσημον παρά του Βασιλικού Αντιπροσώπου, Πολυσεβάστου Διοικητού μας...' The ceremony that took place that day is described in the relevant entry as a day of celebration. See: Archive of the Archbishopric of Cyprus [hereafter AAC], Codex A', p. 275.

honoured our respectful Ethnarch, that is the Orthodox people of Cyprus, with a decoration, an appropriate speech by the teacher Mr Ioannis Pavlidis took place. The speech began with the evangelical note ‘Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and unto God the things that are God’s’ and ended with ‘Long live our King’.<sup>6</sup>

Following the ecclesiastical ceremony and the speech about the significance of the great honour bestowed on Ioannikios, the crowd gathered outside the church, cheering and waiting for the archbishop to exit with his medal. As documented in Codex A’, upon his exit to the crowds, the archbishop, considering himself the representative of the Orthodox people and part of the administration in Ottoman Cyprus, pronounced 5 December to be hailed in Cyprus annually as a day of celebration. As mentioned in the relevant entry in the Archive, ‘...Our Respected Ethnarch officially instructed the clergy that from now on the fifth of December should be celebrated on the island as an eternal and immortal remembrance of the royal favour and generosity bestowed on the Orthodox people of Cyprus.’<sup>7</sup>

The ceremony described above appears to be the first official bestowal of a medal to an archbishop of Cyprus in Ottoman Nicosia. Until the end of the period of Ottoman rule on the island, in 1878, two successors of Ioannikios<sup>8</sup> to the archbishop’s throne of Cyprus would receive medals from the Ottoman sultan. They were Archbishop Makarios I (1854-1865) and Sofronios III (1865-1900), who were given medals by Abdülmecid’s successor, Abdülaziz (1861-

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<sup>6</sup> ‘Εισελθόν δε εις τον Πάνσεπτον και θειον της έδρας του Ναόν και ψαλείσας κατανυκτικής προς Θεόν δοξολογίας υπέρ της στερεώσεως του Κραταιοτάτου και Γαληνοτάτου ημών Άνακτος, του ευδοκήσαντος να τιμήση ιδίως μεν τον Πολυσεβάστον Εθνάρχην μας, κοινώς δε τον Ορθόδοξον της Κύπρου λαόν εκφωνηθέντως δε και κατάλληλον λογίδριον εις ταύτην την περίστασιν παρά του Ελλογίμου Διδασκάλου Κυρίου Ιωάννου Παυλίδου αρχίσαντος μεν από την Ευαγγελικήν ρήσιν την εξής ‘Απόδοτε τα Καίσαρος, Καίσαρι, και τα του Θεού των Θεώ’ παύσαντος δε εις το ‘Ζήτω ο βασιλεύς ημών’.’ AAC, Codex A’, p. 275.

<sup>7</sup> ‘... ο Πολυσεβάστος Εθνάρχης μας, διέταξεν επισήμως τον Κλήρον, από τούδε και εις το ακόλουθον η πέμπτη του Δεκεμβρίου να καθιερωθή επέτειος εορτή καθ’ όλην την Νήσον, προς μνήμην αιώνιον και αθάνατον και ταύτης της προς τον ορθόδοξον της Κύπρου λαόν, παρεχομένης Β. ευνοίας και μεγαλοδωρίας.’ AAC, Codex A’, p. 275.

<sup>8</sup> Ioannikios was succeeded on the archbishop’s throne in 1849 by Kyrillos, whose service was very short, as he died in 1854. See: Philippos Georgiou, *Eidiseis Istorikai peri tis Ekklesias tis Kyprou*, n.p., Nicosia 1975 (first edition: Athens, 1875), p. 126 [Historical News Related to the Church of Cyprus].

1876).<sup>9</sup> According to the archival sources at our disposal, Makarios I was bestowed with the medal of *Mecidiye* of the third degree in 1863.<sup>10</sup> Archbishop Sofronios, the last archbishop of the Ottoman era and the first of the colonial era on the island (1878-1960), was bestowed the medal of *Mecidiye* of the third degree in March 1867,<sup>11</sup> while in July 1868 his medal was upgraded to that of *Mecidiye* of the second degree.<sup>12</sup> The medals were accompanied by a relevant diploma, which was prepared in the offices of the central administration tasked with this duty, while for Sofronios' medal upgrade, and according to the regulations, the previous medal had to be returned to Istanbul. Despite these protocols, it seems that Archbishop Sofronios did not return to the Sublime Porte the third-degree *Mecidiye* that he had received the previous year. As Hidiroglou mentioned, both of Sofronios' medals were, at some point, in the possession of a Cypriot doctor in Nicosia.<sup>13</sup>

Taking into consideration the ceremony in 1846 for the medal bestowal of Ioannikios, and in spite of the fact that there is no documentation in Codex A' for similar ceremonies with the mandatory Ottoman and Orthodox magnificence, such celebrations must have been organized for Makarios and Sofronios as well. It is possible that, since Ioannikios was the first archbishop who received a medal on behalf of the Sublime Porte, the state decoration of his successors, Makarios and Sofronios, received less attention or celebrations, and for these reasons there are no relevant entries in Codex A'.

Letters found in the Ottoman State Archives of Istanbul document the gratitude of the Cypriot high clergy and notables to Sultan Abdülaziz for the medal awarded to Archbishop Makarios. The first letter (fig. 1) was written by

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<sup>9</sup> For short summaries of Ottoman documents related to state decorations received by the archbishops of Cyprus, see: Pavlos Hidiroglou, "Episima Othomanika Eggrafa Anaferomena eis tin Istoría tis Kyprou", *Epetiris Kentrou Epistimonikon Erevnon*, 4 (1971-1972), pp. 83, 105-107 [Ottoman Documents Related to the History of Cyprus]; *id.*, "Katalogos ton en Arheio tou Kentrou Epistimonikon Erevnon enapokeimenon Othomanikon Eggrafon", *Epetiris Kentrou Epistimonikon Erevnon*, 5 (1971-1972), p. 287 [List of the Ottoman Documents of the Cyprus Research Centre]; *id.*, "Soultanika veratia", *Epetiris Kentrou Epistimonikon Erevnon*, 7 (1973-1975), pp. 189-190, 241-242 [Sultanic *Berats*].

<sup>10</sup> For the *Mecidiye* medal, see: Eldem, *Pride and Privilege*, pp. 176-201.

<sup>11</sup> The relevant *berat* for Sofronios was issued on 28 March 1867 [23 Şevval 1283]. See: Hidiroglou, "Katalogos", p. 287.

<sup>12</sup> The relevant *berat* for Sofronios was issued on 15 July 1868 [24 Rabi, 1285]. See: Hidiroglou, "Katalogos", p. 287. For the differences between the different degrees of the *Mecidiye*, see: Eldem, *Pride and Privilege*, pp. 176-179.

<sup>13</sup> Pavlos Hidiroglou, "Soultanika Veratia yper tou Arhiespikopou Kyprou Sofroniou III", *Kypriakai Spoudai*, 35 (1971), pp. 155 and 156 [Sultanic *Berats* for the Archbishop of Cyprus Sofronios III].

the archbishop of Cyprus himself, while the second (fig. 2) appears to have been sent by the Orthodox bishops on the island, as well as the notables. Both letters express the appreciation of the archbishop and the notables for the recognition of the archbishop's devotion and services to the Ottoman state. In his letter to the sultan, Archbishop Makarios noted that after receiving the medal, 'A feeling of deep gratitude runs into my heart, and, since I cannot offer anything else, I beg Your Highness to allow me to offer in front of your feet my loyalty and devotion to the Throne and Your Highness'.<sup>14</sup>

In the second letter, two other bishops of the Church of Cyprus (Meletios of Kitium and Chrysanthos of Kyrenia), the abbot of the Monastery of Kykkos and other clergy and island notables articulated their gratitude to Sultan Abdülaziz on behalf of all of the Orthodox people of Cyprus and noted that they believed that Makarios' medal bestowal was an indication of '...his virtuous and loyal conduct'.<sup>15</sup> The letters bear the Ottoman seals of the archbishop and the bishops of Cyprus, coloured red in the case of the archbishop,<sup>16</sup> as well as the seals of all the notables who signed the letter of gratitude.

Concerning the medal bestowal of Archbishop Sofronios, the information from the available Ottoman documents reports that in March 1867 a decree was issued that documented the decision to award Sofronios with the *Mecidiye* medal of the third degree. In the reasoning behind this decision, the archbishop's loyalty to the Ottoman state was noted, as well as the reciprocation of the sultan's favour for his services.<sup>17</sup> With a second document, in July 1868, Sofronios' medal was upgraded to that of a *Mecidiye* of the second degree. The explanation for this upgrade notes once again the archbishop's

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<sup>14</sup> 'Το δε αίσθημα βαθυτάτης ευγνωμοσύνης, το οποίον συνέχει την καρδίαν μου, εν άλλοις μη δυνάμενος να προσφέρω, ως φόρον πίστεως και αφοσιώσεως προς τε τον Θρόνον και την υμετέραν Υψηλότητα, παρακαλώ θερμώς Αυτήν να δεχθή και να καταθέση εις τας πόδας Αυτού.' Letter dated 12 December 1863, signed by Archbishop Makarios and bearing his Ottoman red ink seal, sent to the grand vizier and addressed to the sultan. See: Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arsivi [hereafter: BOA]) HR.TO, 444/68/4.

<sup>15</sup> '...ενάρετον και πιστήν διαγωγήν. Letter dated 12 December 1863, sent to the grand vizier and addressed to the sultan. See: BOA, HR.TO, 444/68/3.

<sup>16</sup> For the usage of red ink in signatures and seals by the archbishops of Cyprus during the Ottoman period, see: Michalis N. Michael, "Ottomanizing Symbols, Projecting Ottoman Political Power: The Archbishops of Cyprus and the Regalia Privileges", *Chronos*, 41 (2020) forthcoming. See also: Joseph P. Huffman, "The Donation of Zeno: St. Barnabas and the Modern History of the Cypriot Archbishop's Regalia Privileges", *Church History*, 84/4 (2015), pp. 713-745.

<sup>17</sup> Document dated 28 March 1867. See: Hidioglou, "Katalogos", p. 287.

loyalty to the Ottoman state.<sup>18</sup> According to the document for the upgrade of the medal received by Sofronios, the decision to honour him was taken following recommendations at the Sublime Porte from the Kapudan Pasha in favour of the archbishop.<sup>19</sup> It is characteristic that Sofronios' upgrade was done only one year after his first decoration with the third-degree *Mecidiye*. According to the statutes of the *Mecidiye* Order, elevation from one class to another was dependent on time spent in the previous class, but, as Eldem noted, a door was left open for a more rapid promotion on the basis of vague notions of 'extraordinary service' and 'praiseworthy advantages to the state and nation'.<sup>20</sup> In such a framework, the intervention of Sofronios for the removal of Cyprus from the vilayet of the islands of the archipelago must have been seen as an 'extraordinary service' to the state.

As on previous occasions, similar letters of appreciation were sent to the sultan by Archbishop Sofronios, and the grand vizier acknowledged receiving them. It is characteristic that in his letter to the sultan thanking him for the *Mecidiye* medal of the third degree (fig. 3), Archbishop Sofronios remarked that, without the support of the *Mutasarrıf* Tayyip Pasha and the Christians of Cyprus, he would not be worthy of the medal.<sup>21</sup> This remark demonstrates the occasional support between the Ottoman administration on the island and the high clergy of the Church of Cyprus when it came to matters of the Sublime Porte. At the same time, in a separate document the payment to the public fund of 1500 qurush as expenses for the preparation and shipment of the medal is confirmed.<sup>22</sup> Archbishop Sofronios must have carried his medals with him during his visit to Istanbul during the summer of 1870. As Philippos Georgiou, the secretary of the Archbishopric who accompanied Sofronios to his meetings, noted in his journal, on 25 July Sofronios visited a photography studio in the area of Beyoğlu, where he was photographed with his archbishop's mantle, as well as his Ottoman medals.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Document dated 15 July 1868. See: Hidiroglou, "Katalogos", p. 288.

<sup>19</sup> Hidiroglou, "Soultanika Veratia", p. 156. For the relations of the archbishops of Cyprus and the Kapudan Pasha, see: Sia Anagnostopoulou, "Les rapports de l'Église orthodoxe avec le Kapudan Pacha (fin du XVIIIe début XIXe siècle)", Sia Anagnostopoulou, *The Passage from the Ottoman Empire to the Nation-States: A Long and Difficult Process: The Greek Case*, Isis Press, Istanbul 2004, pp. 103-130.

<sup>20</sup> Eldem, *Pride and Privilege*, p. 176.

<sup>21</sup> '...nişân-ı âli-i mezkûr Kıbrıs mütasarrıfı sa'âdetlü Tayyib Paşa bendeleri vâsıtasıyla ta'alik ger-beyân-ı mefhâret-i ubeydânem olup '. BOA, A.MKT.MHM, 384/13/3.

<sup>22</sup> Document dated 3 December 1868. See: Hidiroglou, "Episima Othomanika Eggrafa", pp. 106-107. See also: Hidiroglou, "Soultanika Veratia", p. 154.

<sup>23</sup> Philippos Georgiou, "Imerologion", *Kypriaka Hronika*, 5 (1927), p. 58 [Diary].

On a first reading, the medal bestowals described above seem to have formed part of a usual practice of the Sublime Porte, especially during the second half of the nineteenth century. A number of Ottoman administration officials, local governors and other institutional – and more – agents received medals from the sultans in an effort for the Ottoman state to highlight its authority in its territories and to reinforce the feeling of belonging to the Ottoman Empire. In the framework of Ottoman modernity, which was the aim of the Tanzimat reforms, the medal bestowal was seen as a way for the state to promote a new structure of operation and to establish a novel feeling of belonging to a more modern and Western type of state, a nation-state. What makes the Cyprus medals special, though, and in need of analysis is the fact that in a state that was trying to become a Western-type modern entity, and in an empire that wished to achieve the creation of an Ottoman nation, it was the clerics, the prelates of the Orthodox Church, who were chosen to be awarded with medals. The Church, as a religious institution, had previously opposed modernity, while its first reaction to the administrative changes under the Tanzimat had been negative.<sup>24</sup> The Church, but especially the high priests of the Church of Cyprus, reacted negatively to the spirit of the reforms, at least during the initial efforts to implement them in Cyprus, considering that the new and modern spirit in the empire would undermine their personal position of power.

In spite of their reaction, and having in mind the modern framework that the Sublime Porte wanted to impose throughout the empire, the fact that the archbishops of Cyprus were chosen for state decorations – and would continue to be chosen on a regular basis until the end of the Ottoman period on the island – raises the question as to whether the clerics were considered by the Ottoman state as agents of modernization in Ottoman Cyprus. Also, keeping in mind that the Tanzimat reforms did not seem to have been as successful on the island compared to the empire's other regions, the fact that the state decoration for archbishops continued demonstrates that the question above is crucial, both in terms of the character of the Ottoman modernization, as well as the uniqueness of Cyprus and its Church. Important questions arise in relation to the medal bestowal on the archbishops of Cyprus by the Ottoman sultan during the mid-nineteenth century onwards, and especially ones relating to the framework under which these medals were awarded, as well the specific policies of the Ottoman state that they expressed. In this context and in an Ottoman universe which appears to have been undergoing the effort to transform

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<sup>24</sup> Michalis N. Michael, "Trying to Impose the Reforms in the Periphery: Actions and Reactions to the Tanzimat – The Case of the Muhassıl Mehmet Talat", *Journal of the Centre for Ottoman Studies*, 34 (2013), pp. 163-184. See also: Mehmet Demiryürek, *Osmanlı Reform Sürecinde Kıbrıs*, Akademik Kitaplar, İstanbul 2010.

politically into a national monarchy,<sup>25</sup> the Ottoman sultans chose to award state medals to the archbishops of Cyprus. If we are to assume that the medals were awarded by the Ottoman sultan after the initiative of Abdülmecid and they essentially represent the turn of the Ottoman state towards modernity, in the case of Cyprus, the main question of this study is how and why the agents – or why they were perceived as such – of this Ottoman modernity were the representatives of an Orthodox religious, conservative institution, whose first reaction was to oppose changes.

### *The State Decoration as an Element of Ottoman Modernity*

In spite of the fact that the bestowal of medals is not a creation of the nineteenth century, neither in the Ottoman Empire, nor in Europe, during the modern period the very strict organization of state medal bestowals appears to have played a significant role, which transcended its cultural nature.<sup>26</sup> Through the giving of medals to people from all domains – military, political, administrative and cultural – modern states made the effort to create cohesion in terms of society and to position loyalty to the state as the main value. Through the procedures of medal bestowal of state officials or other people or groups, modern states sought to reinforce the links of faith between the officials and the empire. The recognition achieved through receiving a medal for the work and role of the various officials, who were often also leading figures of various groups (for example, of a religious community), targeted the reinforcement of that faith in the state of the members of such groups.

The latter is especially important for the Ottoman Empire and its heterogeneous population in a period when the Tanzimat reforms, which responded to an ‘emerging global modernity’,<sup>27</sup> aimed at creating continuity within Ottoman society and the development of faith in the common Ottoman state. In a period when nation-states were the new status quo in Europe, the Ottoman Empire as a multiethnic and multireligious state appears to have been the era’s biggest anachronism,<sup>28</sup> one which, aside from its political dimension, could also be traced in the financial delay faced by the empire. Looking at the

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<sup>25</sup> Selim Deringil, “The Invention of Tradition as Public Image in the Late Ottoman Empire, 1808 to 1908”, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 35/1 (1993), p. 5.

<sup>26</sup> Samuel Clark, *Distributing Status: The Evolution of State Honours in Western Europe*, McGill-Queen’s University Press, Montreal 2016, p. 230.

<sup>27</sup> Carter Vaughn Findley, “The Tanzimat”, Resat Kasaba (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Turkey: Volume 4: Turkey in the Modern World*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2008, p. 14.

<sup>28</sup> Ahmad Feroz, “The Late Ottoman Empire”, Marian Kent (ed.), *The Great Powers and the End of the Ottoman Empire*, George Allen and Unwin, London 1984, p. 5.



subject from this perspective proves that the reform of the Ottoman state was but a complex effort to extinguish this delay and to incorporate the empire – now a modern state – into the circle of powerful Western nations. The Ottoman state attempted to deal with the influence of the financially and politically developed West through changes in its own structure, which seemed outdated compared to the messages of the French Revolution on a political level, as well as to the lessons of the Industrial Revolution on a financial level.

It is important to note that these medal bestowals took place during the period when the Ottoman Empire began the Tanzimat reforms and was in the process of transitioning from a traditional type of state to a modern type of centralized state of enlightened absolutism.<sup>29</sup> At the same time and in combination with all the reform policies applied by the Sublime Porte in the framework of this transformation, the medal bestowal perhaps operated as a manner in which the central administration tried to include the periphery in a unified plan to transition to the new type of state, a transition to ‘the era of modernization’.<sup>30</sup> With the policy of the reforms, the Ottoman state underwent the effort to create a united national space within which all of its populations would feel at home and, under the control of the central administration, a continuity between all the populations and the Ottoman nation. In essence, the reforms of the nineteenth century in the Ottoman Empire aimed to transform the state and, at the same time, to develop a collective and common Ottoman identity for all the subjects of the empire.<sup>31</sup> A pillar of this policy was to declare equality among all of the empire’s subjects, regardless of their religion, and to create a centralized authority which would be in a position to control the entire territory and the populations that inhabited it; the hope was that these changes would foster a spirit of unity and that all the religious groups in the empire would become a population with a common national identity: the Ottoman. To maintain the empire within the changing international environment, the Ottoman administration tried to transfer to the populations within its domain a common identity and a sense of patriotism, an Ottoman identity. In theory, the religions of the subjects of the Ottoman state would not have a significant role, and the people would be able to embrace the Ottoman national identity, which

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<sup>29</sup> İlber Ortaylı, *İmparatorluğun en Uzun Yüzyılı*, (Greek edition: Papazisis, Athens 2004), p. 216.

<sup>30</sup> Ussama Makdisi, “Rethinking Ottoman Imperialism: Modernity, Violence and the Cultural Logic of Ottoman Reform”, Jens Hanssen, Thomas Philipp, Stefan Weber (eds), *The Empire in the City: Arab Provincial Capitals in the Late Ottoman Empire*, Ergon, Beirut 2002, p. 30.

<sup>31</sup> Şerif Mardin, “Some Consideration on the Building of an Ottoman Public Identity in the Nineteenth Century”, Dennis Washburn, Kevin A. Reinhart (eds), *Converting Cultures: Religion, Ideology and Transformations of Modernity*, Brill, Leiden 2007, p. 169.

in turn would allow the Ottoman Empire to survive on a parallel course to the European nations.

The official ideology that was promoted is Ottomanism (*Osmanlılık*), which describes the effort to homogenize, on a political level, the populations of the empire. The official documents of the administration refer to ‘the subjects of the empire’, ‘subjects of the sultan’ and ‘subjects of the state’;<sup>32</sup> this can be seen as an effort to convey throughout all the ethnic and religious communities that lived in the empire the message of belonging to a modern state and of being one nation, one people. With the equality introduced with the *Hatt-ı Şerif* edict (1839), the state highlighted its disposition to provide equal rights to all its subjects, putting aside their religion, and promised equal treatment for all by the law in a unified Ottoman population which identified with the Ottoman state. As the creation of traditions was aimed at conveying values through the repetition of rituals, which, according to Hobsbawm, created a historical continuity,<sup>33</sup> the normalization and the invention of new practices aimed at demonstrating the historical continuity of the ‘Ottoman nation’ for all the inhabitants of the Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman bureaucracy throughout this period tried to demonstrate a common patriotic sense by utilizing various practices – among them the bestowal of medals to officials of different religions.<sup>34</sup> With the reforms that the decrees of the central administration anticipated, the effort was to promote the idea of an Ottoman identity, or Ottomanism, amongst the subjects of the empire who held different faiths. The non-Muslims of the empire were recognized as Ottomans through their introduction in their own millet, and their equality within the Ottoman state was established through the recognition of privileges of their religious space, their millet.<sup>35</sup> It seems therefore that the modern state tried through medal bestowal to be in contact with the officials in the bureaucratic space and in the peripheral administration, as well as in society in general, creating or renewing a framework of links of faith to the state.

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<sup>32</sup> Roderic H. Davison, “Turkish Attitudes Concerning Christian-Muslim Equality in the Nineteenth Century”, Roderic H. Davison, *Essays in Ottoman and Turkish History, 1774-1923: The Impact of the West*, University of Texas Press, Austin 1990, p. 118

<sup>33</sup> Eric Hobsbawm, “Introduction: Inventing Traditions”, Eric Hobsbawm, Terence Ranger (eds), *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1983, p. 1.

<sup>34</sup> Findley, “The Tanzimat”, p. 29.

<sup>35</sup> Sia Anagnostopoulou, *Mikra Asia, 19th c. – 1919. Oi Elinorthodoxes Koinotites. Apo to Millet ton Romion sto Elliniko Ethnos*, Ellinika Grammata, Athens 1998, p. 271 [Asia Minor, Nineteenth Century – 1919: The Greek Orthodox Communities: From the Rum Millet to the Greek Nation].

The tradition of symbols of power or the reward of officials in the Ottoman state existed before the nineteenth century. Pre-dating the Ottoman reforms of the nineteenth century, medal bestowal concerned mainly the military class and its reward by the sultan for distinction in the field of battle.<sup>36</sup> However, the adoption of laws and regulations, the detailed recording of medals and their classes, as well as the people or groups to whom they were addressed, was a modern reform effort which became more regulated in the Ottoman state under the rule of Abdülmecid I. Let us not forget that during the Tanzimat period the significance of bureaucracy appears to have intensified, as well as that of the imperial administration,<sup>37</sup> and perhaps in this framework the codification of the rules of medal bestowal and the continued development of this institution moved in parallel with the shaping of a new administrative bureaucracy, which was trying to catch up to the modern framework of the era. At the same time and in the context of shaping the Ottoman national monarchy, the Ottoman state tried through various practices – mainly of a secular character – to reinforce the feeling of belonging to a unified national group. Such practices, as Deringil also pointed out, extended to the development of symbols for the Ottoman nation and establishing official music.<sup>38</sup>

Sultan Abdülmecid I was the first Ottoman sultan who introduced specific procedures and created a legal framework for the Ottoman state medals and medal bestowal.<sup>39</sup> As Eldem noted in his work, the new medal of the Sublime Porte, the *Mecidiye*, is differentiated from the previous ones, since it carries with it all the characteristics of the modern framework of its creation and awarding procedure.<sup>40</sup> In this structure and in an effort by the Ottoman state to reform its system on the whole, the ranks and various levels of the *Mecidiye* medal appear to have been established in 1852 by Abdülmecid, the first Ottoman sultan who could speak a European language, French.<sup>41</sup> Two decades later, a complete and detailed description of all the ranks and levels of the medal was published.

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<sup>36</sup> For the Nishan and medals in the Ottoman Empire, see: J. M. Landau, “Nishān”, *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, E. J. Brill, Leiden, vol. 8, pp. 57-60.

<sup>37</sup> Findley, “The Tanzimat”, p. 13.

<sup>38</sup> Deringil, “The Invention of Tradition”, pp. 8-9.

<sup>39</sup> Landau, “Nishān”, p. 58.

<sup>40</sup> Eldem, *Pride and Privilege*, p. 176.

<sup>41</sup> J. Deny, “Abd al-Madjid”, *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, E. J. Brill, Leiden 1986, vol. 1, p. 75.

### *The Bishops of Cyprus as Agents of Ottoman Modernity*

Regarding the question of how the high priests of the Church of Cyprus were introduced to the Ottoman attempt to create a modern framework for the operation of the Ottoman state, the answer lies in the first attempts of the Ottoman administration to make this type of change on the island. These efforts took place some years before the official Tanzimat reforms begin with the *Hatt-ı Şerif* edict in 1839, since the entire Tanzimat policy represents a continuation and intensification of reforms that had started earlier.<sup>42</sup> With the reforms that took place on the island in the 1830s, it seems that the new era which was inaugurated focussed on the institutionalization of habits of the past, and this was done as an attempt to avoid abuses that had been present. According to the orders given by the Sublime Porte in 1830, a type of 'parliamentary system'<sup>43</sup> with a supervising role for the high priests of the Church of Cyprus and the participation of laymen in central and district boards was to be implemented on the island. For the enactment of these reforms, a general assembly was held in the Archbishop's Palace in Nicosia under the presidency of the Archbishop of Cyprus, Panaretos (1827-1840). According to the minutes of this assembly registered in Codex A', the assembly decided to establish a central council of elders (*dimogerontia*) and a committee of the public (*epitropi tou koinou*). It was also decided that the archbishop of Cyprus had to convene a general assembly of the high priests and eminent laymen<sup>44</sup> of the community once a year at the Archbishopric. This general assembly would be responsible for the supervision of state tax-related matters and the functioning of the central and district boards.

In the newly founded bodies, next to the laymen who were institutionally included in the administration of their community, the role of the Church became institutionalized, and its prelates were recognized officially as part of the modernized Ottoman administration system. The most important consequence of this institutionalization was that the Church of Cyprus itself began to be presented as an agent of the modern structures of the Ottoman state being attempted through the reforms. The membership of laymen in the administration of this community and the control of its finances were to be expressed through this body, in which, however, the high priests of the Church of Cyprus held positions of power through their participation in it. In essence, the first attempt of the Sublime Porte to modernize the administration on the

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<sup>42</sup> Findley, "The Tanzimat", p. 13.

<sup>43</sup> AAC, Codex A', p. 199. For the minutes of this assembly, see: AAC, Codex A', pp. 199-201. Also, Filios Zannetos, *Istoria tis Nisou Kyprou* [History of the Island of Cyprus], Philokalias, Larnaca 1910, vol. 1, pp. 1163-1169.

<sup>44</sup> AAC, Codex A', p. 199.

island and to transition to a secular type of state operation, as strange as it may seem, was assigned as a duty to the high clergy of the Church of Cyprus.

Shortly before the decree of 1839, through which the sultan announced the Tanzimat reforms, there was a second attempt in Cyprus to change the administrative institutions of the community – an element which demonstrates that the institutional changes of 1830 had fallen through shortly after their implementation.<sup>45</sup> A new body of delegates representing Cyprus –including the Bishop of Kitium, Damaskinos (1837-1846), the Bishop of Kyrenia, Charalambos (1824-1844), and two laymen<sup>46</sup> – travelled to Istanbul, and in 1838, shortly before the official announcement of the reforms with the *Hatt-ı Şerif* edict, a general assembly of the community was called at the Archbishopric, in which the new structure for the community administration was announced.<sup>47</sup> According to the new orders, the bishops of the island were recognized as the lifetime prelates of the Orthodox people with the obligation to care for and protect them. It should be noted that aside from the recognition of the importance of the prelates of the Church of Cyprus for the island, they were also established as the agents who would lead the effort to transition the island to modernity and secularity. In the minutes of the assembly, it is noted that:

According to their royal privileges, our father, His Beatitude the Archbishop of Cyprus and the metropolitans shall be the protectors of the reayas of the island for life. They are responsible for the protection of the poor people, as they should be, and they shall have a paternal care for them.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> George Hill, *A History of Cyprus*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1952, vol. 4, p. 155.

<sup>46</sup> Loizos Philippou, *I Ekklesia tis Kyprou epi Tourkokratias*, Kyprologiki Vivliothiki, Nicosia 1975 [The Church of Cyprus during the Period of Turkocracy], p. 173. The French consul noted that, according to rumours, the goal of the delegation was to reinforce the Ottoman governor of Cyprus after implications that various enemies were moving secretly to achieve his replacement and removal from the island. See: Neoklis Kyriazis, “I Satrapai tis Kyprou”, *Kypriaka Hronika*, 7 (1930), pp. 7-8 [The Satraps of Cyprus].

<sup>47</sup> For the minutes of this assembly, see: AAC, Codex A', pp. 243-247. Also, Zannetos, *Istoria*, pp. 1171-1178.

<sup>48</sup> ‘Ο μακαριώτατος πατήρ ημών αρχιεπίσκοπος Κύπρου και οι σεβασμιώτατοι μητροπολίται κατά τα βασιλικά προνόμιά των θέλουν είσθαι οι διά βίου προστάται των ραγιάδων της νήσου. Εις αυτούς λοιπόν αφιερούται προ πάντως η προστασία των πτωχών ως οφείλοντας να έχουσι πατρικής υπέρ αυτών πρόνοιαν.’ See: AAC, Codex A', p. 243.

It was again decided that a general assembly would be held at the beginning of each year under the presidency of the archbishop, whilst, once again, central and district councils of elders and a committee of the public were established. According to the minutes of the 1838 assembly, the members of the district councils of elders had to be elected directly by the people of the principal towns of every district, but the approval of the local bishop was also required.<sup>49</sup> It is evident that, according to the developments described above, the prelates had established – even before the official announcement of the Tanzimat reforms – their power over the community with the assurance that they would remain the leaders of the Orthodox people. Additionally, it seems that they would remain in this role forever, a fact which transferred a permanent and stable authority to the members of the community. On the one hand, the existence of representative bodies – councils of elders, committee of the public – introduced the laity into the financial management of community issues; yet, on the other hand, that also placed them in the position of partnering with the ecclesiastical authority, who had the power to formulate the political scene. In other words, the leading laymen of the community were to function through the existing structures of the relationship between the prelates and the Ottoman administration, while the actual representation of the community to the Ottoman state was in the hands of the high clergy. It is characteristic that the high clergy, who represented the only organized institution with the capacity to conduct and control any election procedures, was responsible for the method of indicating new members for the body of the councils of elders. Indicative of the influence of the Orthodox high clergy is the fact that, in many areas of the empire, while the central administrative directive expected local council members to be elected, in reality the members of the councils were placed by the Muslim pashas and the Orthodox high clergy.<sup>50</sup>

In the Archives of the Archbishopric of Cyprus there is a plethora of letters from various areas of the island that refer to the procedure of electing representatives. In these letters it is stressed that the Orthodox people of a particular village moved forward with the election of their

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<sup>49</sup> AAC, Codex A', p. 246.

<sup>50</sup> Halil İnalçık, "Application of the Tanzimat and its Social Effects", *The Ottoman Empire: Conquest, Organization, Economy: Collected Studies*, Variorum Reprints, London 1978, p. 15.

representatives upon the ‘order’ of the archbishop of Cyprus.<sup>51</sup> On one occasion, a member of a town council of elders informed the archbishop that elections had to be announced so as to elect a new representative, as he himself could not remain in the position due to some issues he was facing with his cases. He noted that he hoped that the archbishop was pleased with his service in the council. In his letter he remarked:

Your Beatitude, Holiness and Most Reverend Despot. As the political year is towards its end, I take the courage to request your Holiness to order elections in our town for a new council of elders for the new year; because of some long-term cases I have had come to a hold, I can no longer perform my duties. I hope that during my service I have been able to fulfil my obligations to the best of my abilities.<sup>52</sup>

With the edict of 1839 and another in 1856, new administrative reforms were introduced on the island in an effort to follow a parallel course with the framework of the reforms, while at the same time to control the periphery more effectively. As such, Cyprus was transferred from the administration of the Kapudan Pasha to the administration of the Islands of the Archipelagos as a separate *sancak* included in the pashalik of Rhodes. The new governor of the island was a *mütesarrıf*; he was paid with a salary from public funds and presided over the great council (*meclis-i idare*),<sup>53</sup> which sat in Nicosia and held council once a week. In this council, apart from the governor, the following also participated: the mufti, the molla, the *mühasebeci*, the director of the land registry (*eraz-i memuru*), the director of religious endowments (*evkaf-i nazır*), the archbishop and six elected representatives from the communities of the capital, three of whom were Christian laymen and three Muslim laymen.<sup>54</sup> Where the districts were concerned, district councils were established in which the participants were: the local *kaymakambeyi*, who also presided, the local sharia law judge (*kadi*), the people responsible for the local offices of the land registry

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<sup>51</sup> AAC, Book A', Part B', Documents 1767-1853, p. 7.

<sup>52</sup> ‘Μακαριώτατε θειότατε και Σεβασμιότατε Δέσποτα. Επειδή και το πολιτικόν έτος είναι ήδη προς την λήξιν του, ο υποσημειώμενος λαμβάννει το θάρρος να παρακαλέση την Υμετέραν Σεβαστήν Μακαριότητα όπως συνείθως διατάξη εις την πόλιν ταύτην περί εκλογής δημογέροντος διά το ελευσόμενον έτος, μη δυνάμενου πλέουν αυτού διά την νέκρωσιν των μακρών υποθέσεων του να υπηρετήση. Ελπίζω δε κατά το διάστημα της υπηρεσίας του, να εκπλήρωσε κατά το δυνατόν του τα επιβληθέντα του καθήκοντα.’ Letter to Archbishop Ioannikios, dated 5 February 1845, AAC, Book A', Part B', p. 45.

<sup>53</sup> Hill, *A History of Cyprus*, p. 178.

<sup>54</sup> Zannetos, *Istoria*, pp. 1185-1186.

and Islamic assets, the metropolitan of the area, the Christian elder (*kocabaşı*) or treasurer of the district office of the community and four members – two Christians and two Muslim – who were elected by the communities of their areas.

As was mentioned above, Ioannikios was the first archbishop of Cyprus and he was awarded medals by the Ottoman state for his service. It is important to note that his primacy coincided with the official announcement of the Tanzimat reforms. Taking into consideration that Ioannikios had a personal relationship with two powerful officials of the Tanzimat reforms, Mustafa Reşid Pasha and Fethi Ahmed Pasha,<sup>55</sup> as well as the fact that he was essentially placed on the archbishop's throne of Cyprus after his own interventions, it is to be understood that he epitomized a person who was suitable for the implementation of the reforms on the island. As such, Ioannikios returned from Istanbul, where he had travelled accompanied by representatives of the laymen who were against Archbishop Panaretos,<sup>56</sup> with a decree to remove him from the archbishop's throne to be replaced with himself. After the Ottoman governor of the island was informed, Ioannikios was appointed as the new archbishop of Cyprus, and the governor ordered the arrest of Panaretos and his placement under restriction, which was done.<sup>57</sup> Soon after, Panaretos resigned, and Ioannikios took over the archbishop's throne. In his note of resignation, Panaretos mentioned that he was resigning after an imperial decree and after 13 years of ruling ecclesiastically and politically.<sup>58</sup> Where Makarios and Sofronios are concerned, as archbishops they too were members of the administrative council which was formed in Nicosia as a result of the Tanzimat reforms.

Of particular interest is the role of the high priests in these new state structures of power formulated after the establishment of the reforms and their importance for the course of the Church in relation to the Orthodox

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<sup>55</sup> Ioannikios had managed to escape the island in 1821 and to evade the mass executions of July ordered by the then Ottoman governor, Küçük Mehmet. He fled to Paris, where he lived for eight years with an allowance offered to him by the French government. In Paris he met influential men of the Ottoman administration, who invited him to Istanbul and who also recommended to the grand vizier to appoint him to Cyprus, which was achieved. According to information offered by Loizos Phillipou, with the actions of two powerful men, Ioannikios was offered a monthly income from the public treasury of Cyprus, while in May 1840 Fethi Ahmed Pasha, who had been appointed as minister of commerce in Istanbul, invited him to his wedding to the sister of the sultan. See: Phillipou, *I Ekklisia tis Kyprou*, p. 151

<sup>56</sup> John Hackett, *Istoria tis Orthodoxou Ekklisias tis Kyprou*, Athens 1923, vol. 1, p. 327 [History of the Orthodox Church of Cyprus].

<sup>57</sup> Georgiou, *Eidiseis Istorikai*, p. 126.

<sup>58</sup> Note dated 13 October 1840. See: AAC, Codex A', p. 259.



community. In a way, the ecclesiastical structure was embodied in the administrative mechanisms of the state, something which made the political power of the high priests indubitable, but it also added – officially – the prestige of a state function. This embodiment, however, would imply that the authority of the high priests over their flock would be subject to the administrative regulations of the state. Within this framework, the Church was presented as a part of the Ottoman state, representing the interests of the Orthodox Ottomans. With these administrative reforms, it is obvious that the goal of the central administration was to exercise a more effective control on the periphery of the empire – as was Cyprus – and to introduce new state structures which were inspired by the Western understanding of the state. The fact that the governor of the island was now an employee of the central administration on the payroll, that is, not collecting his revenue through tax farming, is essentially evident of the Ottoman state's effort to stop the abuses that had been common during the past two centuries in relation to the collection of public revenue. The gradual and not institutionalized introduction of the Church of Cyprus – as an institution and not on the level of clergy – to the Ottoman state logic, an attempt which started materializing thanks to the privileges which had been given personally to the high priests since the beginning of the Ottoman rule of the island, was concluded with the recognition of the Church as an official administrative mechanism of the Orthodox millet. It is characteristic that, many years after the Tanzimat decrees, the Church of Cyprus operated – on an institutional level – as the representative of the Orthodox of the island to the Sublime Porte.

During the time between the beginning of the Tanzimat reforms and the end of Ottoman rule in Cyprus, the Church of Cyprus became a type of state – in terms of organization – for its flock. Through the official recognition of the prelates as the legal authority of the Orthodox millet on the island, the participation of the high clergy in all the statutory administrative councils (the archbishop participated in the central council, while the bishops participated in the district councils) and the incorporation of the ecclesiastical framework in the Ottoman administrative system, the role of the high clergy became even more of a state function, and the ecclesiastical authority became the political authority for the Orthodox as well. Therefore, if we assume that before the Tanzimat reforms the members of the high clergy were received as part of an administrative mechanism whose central point of reference was the officials who were the agents of the authority, then after the reforms the Church of Cyprus became the agent of state authority. If during the period before the reforms the high clergy belonged to the circle of Ottoman officials thanks to their appointment documents (*berats*), the clergy now represented a 'state' administrative mechanism, the Church. Based on these developments, it is possible to assume that after the Tanzimat reforms the authority of the Church of Cyprus did not only become official, but it also became more part of the

state, providing the ecclesiastical institution with a state-wide operation and profile.

### ***Conclusions***

Taking into consideration the modern framework in which the Sublime Porte operated during the nineteenth century – or at least tried to operate under – it seems that Ottoman state honours offered to the archbishops of the island were included in the efforts to transmit the feeling of belonging to the Ottoman nation, irrespective of religion. This, in fact, was what Ottomanism was all about; the creation of a common Ottoman nation in which national identity would prevail over all other identities – for example, the religious – which would be considered secondary. It is understood that in this framework the Sublime Porte, and especially the Tanzimat-period sultans, chose to bestow medals on people or officials of the state who did not only agree with the reform policies, but could also be considered agents and protectors of these changes through their inclusion in the new and modern structures that were being built. They were people who were called to project the Ottomanness of their power – through their medals – and transmit on a social level the new values of the Ottoman state, in an effort to impose the new type of modern state authority.

The main question examined through this study concerns the high clergy of the Church of Cyprus and their relationship to Ottoman modernity. As is evident from the description of the main elements of every attempt the Sublime Porte made to impose modern administrative structures on the island, each such effort included the prelates of the Church of Cyprus. Either through their lifelong status as leaders of the Orthodox on the island or by putting them in charge of the calls for the general assemblies at the Archbishopric, for the newly established election procedures or as *ex officio* members of the central and district councils of the period of the reforms, the archbishop of Cyprus and the three bishops of the Orthodox Church, of Paphos, Kitium and Kyrenia, were called not only to project but also to implement the modern structures of the Ottoman state on the island. In spite of their reaction to any measures or changes that would seemingly undermine their former authoritarian role, the high clergy seem to have embraced their involvement in modern structures that would reinforce and nationalize further their operation as part of the Ottoman administration on the island. If in the period before the reform, the operation of the high clergy as part of the state was evident only on a personal level through the provision of the *berat*, in the era that began with the Tanzimat reforms the operation of not only the high clergy, but of the ecclesiastical institution as well, was evidently part of the state structure, characterized by its orientation to modernity.

In this framework, in the period of Ioannikios, an archbishop who had friendly relationships with the powerful men of the reforms, Mustafa Reşid Pasha and Fethi Ahmed Pasha, after having met them in Paris, the Sublime Porte chose to bestow medals on a regular basis to the archbishops of the Church of Cyprus until the end of the Ottoman period on the island. An exception to this medal bestowal was Archbishop Kyrillos, whose service on the archbishop's throne was very short. Through the medal bestowal of the archbishops of Cyprus, two very important elements were achieved. First, the introduction of the high clergy to the modern framework that the Sublime Porte wanted to impose was achieved on a symbolic level through the bestowal of state medals and the upgrade of some of those medals, as in the case of Archbishop Sofronios. The loyalty of the archbishops of Cyprus to the Ottoman state, even in its modern framework, was expressed through the letters of gratitude that they sent to the sultan as tokens of their appreciation for their medals. Second, the symbolic bestowal of an honour and the organization of ceremonies with the attendance of the public achieved the recognition of the authoritative and administrative role of the high clergy. What should be deemed as even more important is that the medal bestowal achieved the transmission to the Orthodox of the Church of Cyprus of the new values of the Ottoman state, mainly the effort to create and maintain one unified identity for all of the populations.

To sum up, the state honours offered to the archbishops of Cyprus within the new modern framework that was under construction indicates the uniqueness of the Ottoman reforms, as well as the exceptionality of Cyprus as a historical space. Where Ottoman modernity is concerned, the medal bestowals highlight, yet again, the strain of operating a secular state and the choice of the Sublime Porte to proceed in the new framework while maintaining elements of the past, such as the administrative authority of the archbishops of Cyprus. Where Cyprus and its history are concerned, the bestowal of medals to the archbishops of Cyprus and their introduction to modern frameworks being constructed showcase the complex role of the Church of Cyprus on the island: it was in part a religious institution with a conservative orientation and in part an institution which applied the modern framework. These factors, as well as the reciprocal relationship of all of these elements, led to the appearance on the island, especially after the Ottoman period, of a modernity that included the religious conservatism of a church whose operation also incorporated modern elements.



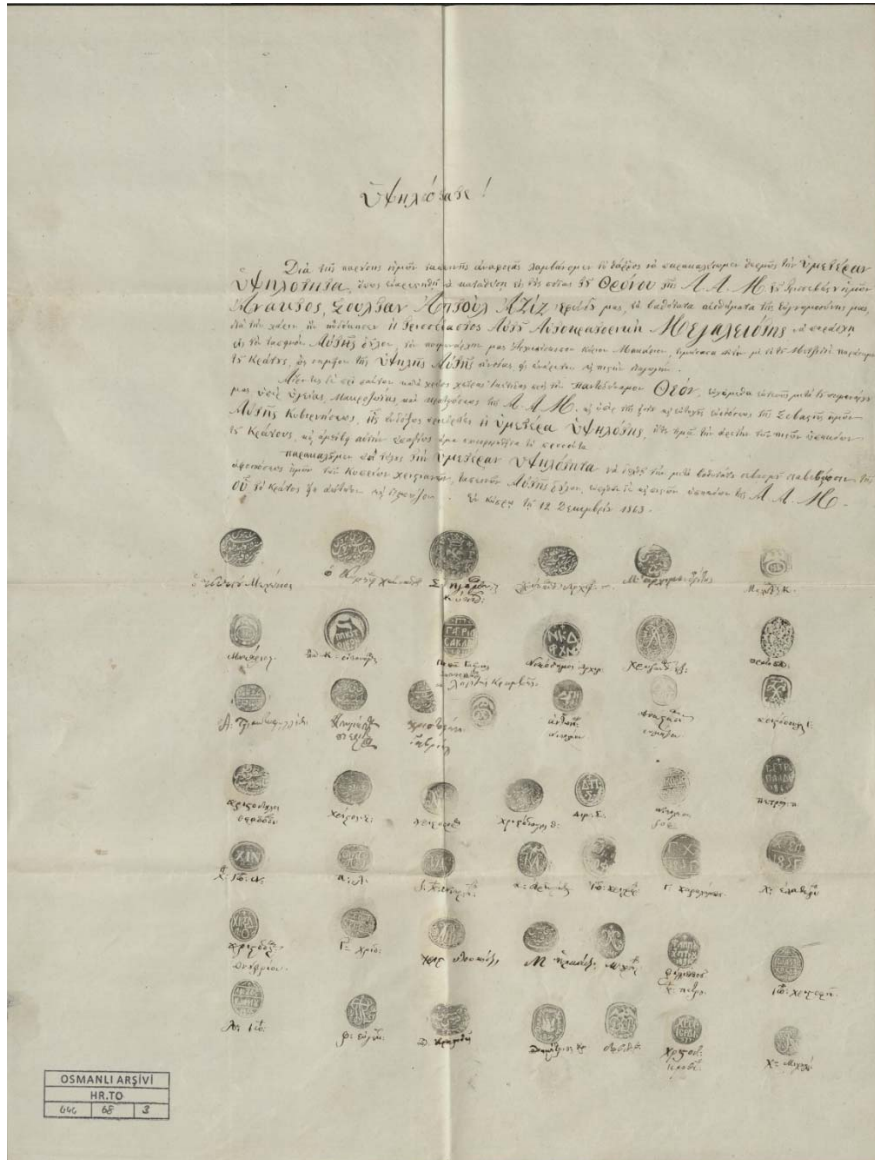


Figure 2. Letter of gratitude from bishops and laymen to Sultan Abdülaziz, dated 12 December 1863.  
BOA, HR.TO, 444/68/3.

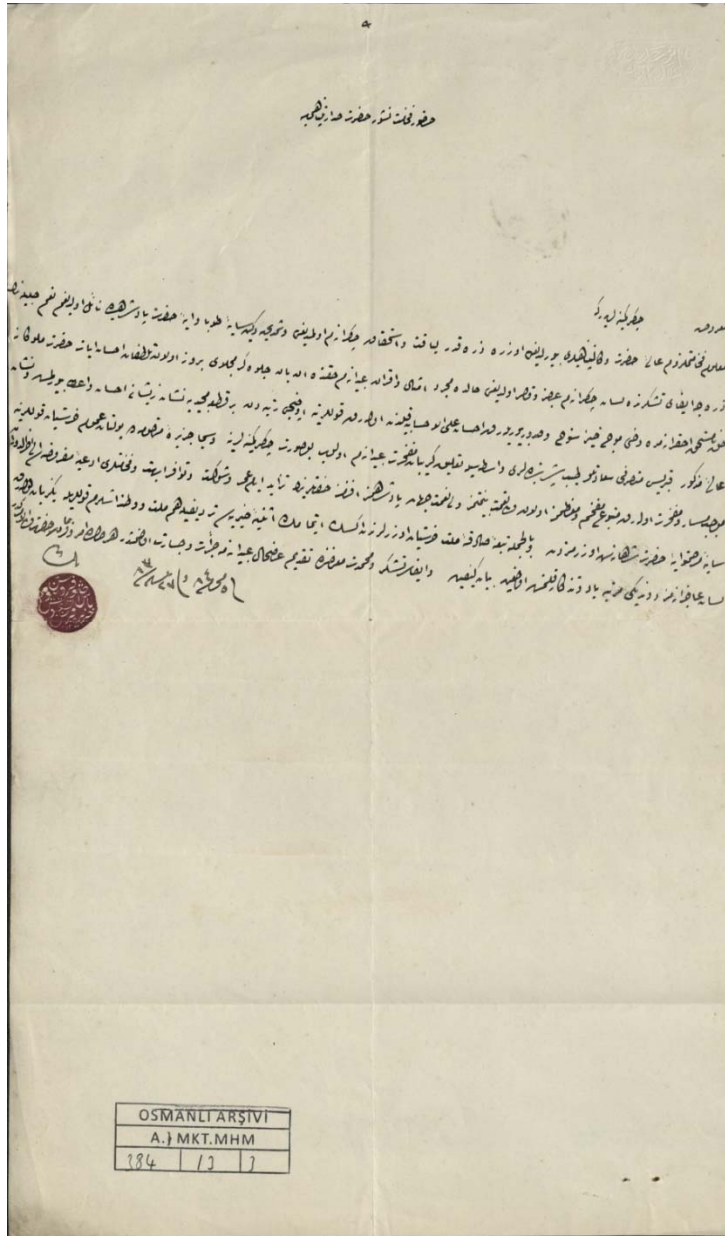


Figure 3. Letter of gratitude from Archbishop Sofronios III to Sultan Abdülaziz, dated 5 Muharrem 1284 [9 May 1867]. BOA, MKT.MHM.384/13/3.

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