

# English travelers in early modern Cyprus: Piety, commerce and anti-Ottoman sentiment

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## ABSTRACT

English travelers in Lusignan and Venetian Cyprus saw the island as the last obligatory stop on their maritime pilgrimage route to the Holy Land. After the Ottoman conquest of Cyprus (1571) the island was visited almost exclusively by English merchants on the lookout for the construction of factories on Eastern Mediterranean shores. They were attracted by Cyprus's famed fertility and by the abundance of much-valued products to trade with. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries English traders were nevertheless issued with warnings by English travel accounts. These dealt with the danger of over-trusting the paradise-like prospects of the island and remaining there for good, with the subsequent risk of "turning Turk." In order to discourage English travelers and residents from becoming renegades in Cyprus, travel accounts included abundant morbid information on the brutal repression applied by the Great Turk upon Cypriot cities in the Wars of Cyprus and upon other anti-Ottoman Christian insurrections.

KEYWORDS: Travel accounts; Cyprus; Holy Land; English pilgrims; English merchants; Ottoman occupation of Cyprus.

**Viajeros ingleses en el Chipre proto-moderno: devoción, comercio y actitudes anti-otomanas**

RESUMEN: Los viajeros ingleses a Chipre de los periodos Lusignan y veneciano consideraron la isla como la última parada obligatoria de la ruta marítima hacia Tierra Santa. Tras la conquista otomana de Chipre (1571) la isla era casi exclusivamente visitada por los mercaderes ingleses que pretendían fundar factorías en las costas del Mediterráneo oriental. Les atraía la célebre fertilidad de Chipre así como la abundancia de productos muy apreciados para el comercio. En los siglos

**Viajantes ingleses no Chipre da era protomoderna: Devoção, comércio e atitudes anti-otomanas\***

RESUMO: Os viajantes ingleses no Chipre do período Lusignan e veneziano viram a ilha como a última paragem obrigatória na sua rota de peregrinação marítima até à Terra Santa. Após a conquista otomana do Chipre (1571), a ilha era visitada quase exclusivamente por mercadores ingleses que pretendiam fundar feitorias nas costas do Mediterrâneo Oriental. Iam atraídos pela reconhecida fertilidade do Chipre e pela abundância de produtos comercialmente muito valiosos. Nos sécu-

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\* Translation into Portuguese by Miguel Ramalhete.

XVI y XVII los comerciantes ingleses recibieron avisos de cautela en los relatos de viajeros ingleses que insistían en el peligro de confiar demasiado en la imagen de la isla como paraíso y de quedarse a residir en ella con el consiguiente riesgo de “convertirse en turco.” Con el fin de desanimar a los viajeros y residentes ingleses de convertirse en renegados en Chipre, los relatos de viajes incluían abundante información morbosa sobre la brutal represión aplicada por el Gran Turco en las ciudades chipriotas en las Guerras de Chipre y en las insurrecciones anti-otomanas de la población cristiana.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Relatos de viajeros; Chipre; Tierra Santa; Peregrinos ingleses; Mercaderes ingleses; Ocupación otomana de Chipre.

los XVI e XVII, os comerciantes ingleses recebiam advertências em relatos ingleses de viagens, que insistiam no perigo de se confiar demasiado na representação da ilha como sendo paradisíaca e de se ficar a residir nela, com o risco subsequente de se “virar turco.” Para desencorajar os viajantes e residentes ingleses de se tornarem renegados no Chipre, os relatos de viagens incluían informação mórbida abundante sobre a repressão brutal aplicada pelo Grande Turco às cidades cipriotas nas Guerras do Chipre e noutras insurreições cristãs anti-otomanas.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Relatos de viagem; Chipre; Terra Santa; Peregrinos ingleses; Mercadores ingleses; Ocupação otomana do Chipre

Pilgrims were among the first travelers who showed their disposition to write and read travel accounts about their spiritual and adventurous journeys to the Holy Land, the core of Christendom, a literary tradition that dates back to the Middle Ages. Relatively abundant scholarly attention has covered the English experience of traveling to the Holy Land as a pilgrimage destination in medieval times. Yet, there has been even more research done on English travel accounts written and/or published throughout the early modern period. Most recent research has included critical analyses of the literary production of the time and how it evolved as the years passed (Snoek 1995; Kamps and Singh 2001; Suranyi 2002; Aune 2005; Stanivukovic 2007; Kuehn and Smethurst 2009; Bent 2010; Groves 2012; Harvey 2012; Carey and Jowitt 2012).

Most of the aforementioned scholars seem to coincide in the belief that by the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries European and English travel writing had not yet established its genre boundaries, and they find that first-hand autobiographical travel narratives blended easily with earlier travel writings, hearsay, legends and folklore, personal letters, (more often than not erroneous) geographical data and brief notes on natural history, ethnography, etc., and a generous portion of the writer's imagination. The early modern readership of this emerging genre widened and included playwrights in need of foreign

settings and contexts for their plays, historians, geographers, potential travelers among whom pilgrims, diplomats and merchants especially, abound.

To further exacerbate these imprecise boundaries of the genre, as far as travel in the Mediterranean was concerned, its two main cultural and religious axes – the Christian and the Muslim cultures – did not mingle comfortably either, especially after the Venetian-Turkish crisis (1566–1573) or the year 1570–1571, when Cyprus was invaded by the Ottomans and the leaders of Christendom opposed their initial attempt at their expansion in Europe at the battle of Lepanto. Whereas the European/Christian nations shared their anxiety and fear for the rising power of the Ottoman Empire, Muslims on the whole did not care to show any special interest in the Christian civilization.

Not many Englishmen and women frequented the routes of the Holy Land as a pilgrimage destination in comparison with other nations. This is perhaps due to the distance between England and the most eastern lands of the Mediterranean and because of the numerous holy sites existing in the British Isles and nearby lands.<sup>1</sup> Other nationalities – French, Italian and central European pilgrims – proved keener to go to the very confines of the Mediterranean than the English or have at least left more abundant written records of their voyages which were either in the form of pilgrimages or embarked on for trading purposes (Cobham 1986). Sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English travel narrations to the Holy Land concentrated on descriptions of the holy sites of Jerusalem and on the many spiritual implications of a pilgrimage to the “centre of the universe.” English-Ottoman political and commercial relations were relatively fluid during the reign of the excommunicated Elizabeth I, as she actually searched for a military alliance with the Ottoman Empire against their common enemies, Spain and Catholicism (Matar 2000; McLean and Matar 2011; Brotton 2016). Nevertheless, despite Henry VIII’s

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<sup>1</sup> Chaucer mentions pilgrimages beyond Britain: to Rome, Cologne, Santiago, Bologna and Jerusalem in his presentation of the Wife of Bath (“General Prologue,” 465–466). Langland refers to the shrine of Our Lady in Walsingham, Norfolk in *Piers Plowman* (“Prologue,” 53–54, 56), but ignores Canterbury. Other popular medieval pilgrimage destinations in the British Isles not mentioned by Chaucer nor Langland were Evesham (Worcestershire, for the Virgin Mary) and Lough Derg, Co. Donegal (Ireland), where St Patrick was believed to have entered Purgatory (Walsham 2010, 178).

abolition of pilgrimages in his Second Injunction in 1538, English travel to the holy places continued, albeit with a different level of intensity, frame of mind and theological scope (Groves 2012, 681). Indeed, the Reformation did not manage to eradicate the sacred character of the journey to Palestine. Protestant thought cast a new light on “pilgrimages”: the former medieval perception of the Holy Land sites as sanctified places gradually disappeared and moved toward a more secular view of holy destinations (Groves 2012, 682). Early Modern English travelers poured into their Holy Land narratives a certain feeling of hostility to the uncritical (Catholic) acceptance that a physical site or a visible object (i.e., relics such as crosses, paternoster beads, rosaries, girdles, etc.) could have inherent saintly characteristics (Snoek 1995, 11–12). But Protestant theology did not altogether disregard the idea of pilgrimage as a relevant act of piety for a Protestant. The new idea of “disenchantment of the world” brought about by the Reformation implied the need to discredit the old “Catholic” pilgrimage destinations and search for new Protestant sites of pilgrimage. This new piety grew in the belief that some places were holier than others. Nevertheless, as stated before, although Protestant pilgrimages to former popular holy sites diminished throughout the Early Modern period, they did not stop completely. They continued to be realized for Christian spiritual nourishment, to fulfil curiosity about seeing the outside world, and with time, also for trading interests. Indeed, the Holy Land retained much of its traditional star role as a pious destination among English travelers, even after 1538. The production of travel accounts following an author’s experience of a journey to the Holy Land was the response to the Protestant need to store this feast of piety in their memory and to share it with their community. Their accounts either allowed readers to participate in the traveler’s spiritual discovery or in his criticism of old Papist practices and perceptions and contributed considerably to the creation of a national identity, the reaffirmation of their Protestantism (Suranyi 2002) and the growth of a proto-imperial mentality (Kuehn and Smethurst 2009).

The clergyman, commercial advisor and political propagandist Richard Hakluyt’s *Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques and Discoveries of the English Nation*<sup>2</sup> overtly promoted English colonial

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<sup>2</sup> All quotations to Hakluyt are from Edmund Goldsmid’s edition (Hakluyt 1885–1890).

and commercial expansion in the known world (including the Eastern Mediterranean lands) in an ideological context of mercantile, political and religious rivalry (and often open military confrontation) with Spain-Portugal, and to a lesser extent France and the Netherlands. In his *Principal Navigations*, Hakluyt collected and gave visibility to England's navigational feats in a discourse of almost undisguised exaltation of her rising commercial entrepreneurship, her growing worldwide leadership in the expansion of Protestantism and her political construction as a rising military and economic power (Carey and Jowitt, 2012). Indeed, Hakluyt played a major role in the change of mentality of the strictly English pilgrim-traveler of medieval tradition compared to the new English merchant-traveler.

Cyprus was an obligatory last stop in the Mediterranean maritime route before reaching the final endpoint of the Holy Land pilgrimage. It is my intention here to put Cyprus on the scholarly map of research done on the literary English travel routes in the Early Modern period. This article aims to explain how the island became a pilgrim destination of secondary importance in the minds of English travelers and how it gradually lost its religious role—though not completely—and acquired the status of a commercial hub for English traders in search of new markets. Parallel to this secularization of the previously dominant religious perception of any English journey to Cyprus in the accounts studied, one perceives a rise in anti-Ottoman sentiment, especially after 1571. The end of the sixteenth century and the beginning of the seventeenth century witnessed the almost complete conversion of the English pilgrim figure into the English merchant figure as far as travelers in Ottoman Cyprus were concerned. However, at the same time, the intrepid English traders on the lookout for the founding and the exploitation of commercial factories in the Levant, being also avid readers of travel accounts in the Mediterranean, were provided with constant written warnings about the lack of safety for Christians in Cyprus. In these travel accounts the Turkish invaders of Cyprus were often characterized as practitioners of brutal repressions which they employed with gusto in their recently conquered island, as I will presently endeavor to demonstrate.

During the three centuries of Lusignan rule (1192–1489), the French royal house born in the crusades, the number of French, German and Italian travelers in Cyprus who left written accounts of their travels, mostly men of the cloth on route to Jerusalem and other

nearby holy sites, exceeded any other Christian travelers (Cobham 1986, 13–20) The English on the whole refrained from traveling in the Mediterranean.<sup>3</sup> For England’s ships, any venture in the area in the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth centuries was a perilous journey, especially in waters almost monopolized at the time by the Castilian, Aragonese, Venetian and Ottoman navies, Christian and Muslim privateers and Barbary corsairs, as well as Dunkirkers (or Dunkirk Privateers) patrolling the English Channel at the service of the Spanish Monarchy. Around the eastern half of the Mediterranean there were Muslim (Turkish) and Christian (French, Maltese, Catalan and Florentine) pirates in abundance who attacked each other’s vessels in a wider context of holy war between the Cross and the Crescent. Turkish pirates also attacked the ports of Crete and of Lusignan and Venetian Cyprus as these were the sole Latin territories remaining in the eastern Mediterranean (Coureas and Orphanides 2007, 123–126; Bekkaoui 2018, 189–190).

A fifteenth-century English traveler who left a brief written record of a visit to Cyprus in the last decades of the Lusignan rule is William Wey (1407?–1476). In his travel account, written in Latin, he provided useful tips for the use of potential pilgrims in the area. In *The Itineraries of William Wey, Fellow of Eton College. To Jerusalem, A.D. 1458 and A.D. 1462; and to Saint James of Compostella, A.D. 1456*,<sup>4</sup> Wey, an experienced pilgrim, claimed to have stopped at Paphos in July 1458. He did not seem to have gone any further inland, despite including descriptions of other Cypriot towns. His descriptions are made up of factual and objective information, devoid of any personal impressions, as if his account had been meant to serve as a pilgrim’s guidebook to the major sites in the Holy Land: he explained the local currency and its equivalence in Venetian currency (Wey 1857, 9); he informed about Paphos as the place of St Paul’s imprisonment (95); he described St

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<sup>3</sup> In the mid-thirteenth century, a rare example of an English pilgrim, a Benedictine monk from St Albans Abbey and a historian, Matthew Paris (ca. 1200–1259), passed by Lusignan Cyprus. He wrote the illustrated manuscript *Chronica Majora* in Latin after his journey to Eastern lands between 1250 and 1259. Only meagre and ambiguous references to Cyprus can be found in *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville* (ca. 1356), a (probably imaginary) journey made circa 1322 by the fourteenth-century traveler Sir John Mandeville/Maundeville, of dubious origin himself (despite claiming that he was born in St. Albans, England). For the popularity of Mandeville’s work in the early modern period, see Bennet 1954 and Seymour 1993.

<sup>4</sup> References to Wey’s text here follow the Roxburghe Club edition (Wey 1857).

Katerina's burial place in Famagosta [Famagusta],<sup>5</sup> where, he added, according to tradition, she had been born and had also learnt to read (95).<sup>6</sup> He also told of the relationship of its principal city, Nicosia, with an English Knight known as Lord Mountford, who had died and was buried two centuries before and was revered as a saint in Wey's time (95).<sup>7</sup>

Also in the city of Nicocea [Nicosia], which is one of the chief cities of Cyprus, there lies the whole body of the lord Mountford, once an English Knight, in the abbey of the Order of S. Benedict, and there he is revered as a saint, and two hundred years and a little more have passed since he was buried there. (Wey 1857, 95)

Wey was in fact alluding to St John of Montfort (or Marshal Frey Jean of Montfort), an ex-Knight Templar, Count of Ruchan (Jeffery 1918; Tyerman 1985; Valente 1995), who spent a time of meditation in Paphos and from whose tomb drops of sweet manna flowed continuously (Jeffery 1918, 40). Wey also wrote Nicosia was the burial place of other Cypriot saints such as Abbot Hilarion and St Mamas (1857, 95). Of St Mamas's tomb he affirmed it exuded oil (95). Wey's interest in Cyprus was restricted almost exclusively to its relevance as a producer of saints and their respective holy burial places and its strategic suitability as a final stop for those religiously-minded travelers on their way to Jerusalem.

Naturally, most visitors in Cyprus during the Venetian rule (1489–1570) and in the decades prior to this were of Italian origin (Cobham 1986, 3–53). John Locke (or Lok), of unknown dates of birth and death, seemed to be the sole English traveler who left a narration of his

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<sup>5</sup> St Catherine (of Alexandria) (ca.290–ca.312) was a Roman virgin and martyr born in Egypt who was very fervently venerated by French crusaders in the Holy Land and by the Greek Orthodox Church from the tenth century onward. Wey's interest in her tomb may be attributed to the popular and widespread veneration in England due to the influence of twelfth-century Anglo-Norman Clémence de Barking's *Life of St. Catherine*.

<sup>6</sup> Despite what medieval English travelers believed, St Catherine had apparently neither been born nor buried in Cyprus. According to tradition, her tomb was found at the foot of Mount Sinai (Wogan-Browne and Burgess, 1996; Foster, 2005).

<sup>7</sup> Other medieval travelers (such as Felix Faber and Fra Stephano Lusignano) spoke of this knight as a German nobleman. Jeffery (1918, 40–41) narrated his life (he died either in 1177 or 1200 or 1248) and his relationship with the Abbey Church of Beaulieu, Nicosia, where he was interred. He was venerated by the Cypriots up to 1571, when his chapel was destroyed by the Turks. The Greek Orthodox Church in Cyprus celebrates the saint's name day on 25<sup>th</sup> of May.

journey through Venetian Cyprus. His account about the island, visited as part of his pilgrimage to Jerusalem in 1553, was published as “The Voyage of M. Iohn Locke to Jerusalem” in Hakluyt’s *Principal Navigations* (Locke 1889, V: 76–104). Locke arrived at the coastal town of Limisso [Limassol] in August 1553. Of this town he mentioned its fortress, then in decay, and its ruined walls, destroyed some ten or twelve years earlier by the Turkish navy (1538). His 1553 journey to Jerusalem coincided with the establishment of English diplomatic and commercial relations with the Ottoman Empire thanks to the merchant and sea-captain Anthony Jenkinson (1529–ca. 1610), who, through Solyman the Great, whom he had met at Aleppo, obtained a safe-conduct or privilege allowing him to carry out his trade in Ottoman ports in very favorable conditions.

On his return to Cyprus from Jerusalem in September of the same year, Locke made a stop at Famagusta, of which he wrote it was “a very faire strong holde, and the strongest and greatest of the Iland” (Locke 1887, V: 163). He insisted specifically on the solid protection granted by its Venetian military forces and watchmen night and day, which was a logical consequence of their being a permanent target for their Ottoman neighbors, and the latter’s plans for conquest and piracy. Locke added that, according to some, it was the birthplace of St Katherin (169). He also mentioned the unhealthy conditions of the area due, first, to its nearness to marshy grounds and, second, to the yearly sickness suffered by its population always around October, a localized epidemic which used to produce numerous cases of blindness (169–170). In Famagusta he also visited several holy monasteries (praising the continence and chastity of their friars), one of which kept one of the seven jars which had contained the water Jesus Christ had converted into wine at the Canaan wedding (169). He also mentioned his experience contemplating a piece of the true Holy Cross and another small cross that preserved three drops of Jesus Christ’s blood at Monte de la Croce [Stavrouni] (171). He visited Salina (i.e., Larnaca), from where the Venetians greedily took all the salt they needed, he added (167–168), and then Nicosia, described as the residence of the gentility of the island (170). He observed that even though the city was walled, “it [was] not strong neither of walles nor situation” (170). He was surprised to see it had so many gardens. As it is unpaved, he added, it looked more like a “rurall habitation” (171). Interestingly, in the description of the ruined fortress and walls of



Limisso, Locke recalled that the Ottomans had been keeping an eye on the Venetian colony for some time. In fact, the local population had been struggling to fight back during several Turkish raids. He also provided ample information about the Venetians' exploitation of carob, wine, vinegar, cotton wool, pickled songbirds, all laden at Limisso (172), and above all, the Venetians' strictness in running their salt monopoly.<sup>8</sup>

The fact that Locke was from England, a country of recently acquired Protestant faith, explains the constant signs of distrust and reservation he showed in relation to the dubious authenticity of the famed Cypriot relics. The use of expressions and phrases such as "they say"; "which is sayd to be"; "whether it be one of them or no, I know not"; "you must (if you will) beleeeue it is so, for see it you cannot"; or "this was told me by my fellow pilgrims, for I saw it not," reveals the English traveler's incredulity regarding the authenticity of the sacred objects he had the opportunity of seeing or hearing about in Cyprus. When describing the island's religious sites, as Locke kept in mind the profile of the pilgrim-figure as his main type of reader, his remarks reveal a certain interest in demythologizing and deconstructing sacred worshipping sites and relics, which is characteristic of a zealous reformist Anglican stand. Locke had left England for the Holy Land around the same time that the Catholic Queen Mary I acceded to the throne, but his narrative account saw the light in Elizabethan England. Locke suggests his support for Reformation and Protestantism in his constant dropping of critical comments about what he must have perceived as superstitious adoration of doubtful relics. The purely religious perception of Cyprus as a biblical place like in olden times was now becoming more and more irrelevant in English travel accounts. As positive religious perceptions of the Holy Land faded, the English writers' animosity and fear of Muslims increased, coinciding with the Turk's attempts to conquer European territories.

The Ottoman conquest of Cyprus in 1570–1571 coincided with the gradual stagnation of the eastern Mediterranean economy due to the

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<sup>8</sup> "This the Venetians have, and doe maintaine to the use of S. Marke, and the Venetian ships that come to this lland are bound to cast out their ballast, and to lade with salt for Venice. And there may be none in all the lland buy salt but of these men, who maintaine these pits for S. Marke. This place is watched by night" (1889, V: 167).

discovery of the Atlantic trade routes in the mid-fifteenth century. In the sixteenth century the previously frequented waters of the Ottoman region had become fairly neglected. Many of Cyprus's profitable crops, mainly sugar, were negatively affected by American trade in the seventeenth century. This was partly offset by cotton plantations which tied in well with a tradition of producing fine textiles (linen, woolens, silks and gold embroidery). However, Cyprus still managed to retain a reasonable amount of English commerce with salt, wine, olive oil, carob and grain, all sold at reasonable prices by the Ottoman traders (Jennings 1992). English travelers, whilst most unwelcome in Spain's monopoly of Atlantic routes to America, had in their favor above any other Christian traders in the Mediterranean the fact that queen Elizabeth I had not taken part in the multi-national Catholic crusade against the advancement of the Turkish armies in Europe that had culminated in Lepanto (1571) and were therefore tolerated in the region and waters. In 1580 Sultan Murad III granted English merchants the right to trade in Ottoman lands which led to the formation of the so-called Levant Company. Soon after, in 1581, a "Turkey Company" was established in London. Indeed, during the 1577-1704 period, only two captivity narratives of Englishmen in the Ottoman Levant were published, a meagre figure in comparison to the twenty-three English captivity accounts in North Africa (Vitkus 2001, 36; Vitkus and Matar 2001, 3). However, the message conveyed by the new wave of playwrights, travelers and chroniclers and mercantile advisors was clear: English merchants should be wary of the unreliable and cruel Great Turk if considering doing business in Ottoman Cyprus. Indeed, all Christian travelers found in their dominions ran the risk of being made slaves, galley rowers, being murdered or, what was worse for the English political and ecclesiastical authorities, being forced or being invited to "turn Turk" after being lured by prospects of social and economic advantages.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>The lure of falling into the apostasy of "turning Turk" was recurrently denounced in English church services, tavern yarns, pamphlets such as Frauncis Billerbege's *Straunge Newes from Constantinople* (1585), Thomas Sanders's "A True Description and Breefe Discourse" (1587, included in Hakluyt's *Principal Navigations*, I: 192-199) or Edward Webbe's *The Rare and most Wonderfull Things which Edward Webbe an Englishman borne, hath seene and passed in his troublesome travailes* (1590), and plays such as Kyd's *The Tragedye of Solyman and Perseda* (attributed, ca. 1593), Daborne's *A Christian Turn'd Turke* (1612), Massinger's *Renegado* (1630), Heywood's *The Fair Maid of the West, Parts I and II* (1631), etc. (Burton 2002, 40-48).

Despite these “literary” admonitions and the generalized Christian caution and mistrust towards the Great Turk and the Ottoman/Saracen piracy, the late sixteenth century and the seventeenth century saw the rise and consolidation of the figure of the English trading traveler in eastern Mediterranean lands in the shape of a new generation of English travel narratives. Those travel writers who visited Cyprus and left written accounts of it were John Sanderson (1584–1602), Laurence Aldersey (in 1581 and in 1586), Fynes Moryson (1591–1596), Thomas Dallam (1599), William Lithgow (sometime between 1609 and 1621), George Sandys (from 1610), Thomas Coryat (sometime between 1611 and 1614) and Sir Paul Rycout (1678).

Two new tendencies began to be perceived in the English travelers’ portrayal of Cyprus. On the one hand, some Anglophone accounts about Ottoman Cyprus (such as those by Moryson and Dallam) included information on the presence of European merchants, consuls and commercial agents residing in its main cities, namely Nicosia (the only town on the island that was considered to be large enough) and Larnaca (conveniently situated on the southern coast). Eventually Larnaca ended up becoming the trade hub of the island as well as its main port, as the official and commercial representatives who had previously settled in Nicosia, situated in the uncomfortable geographical center of the island, gradually moved towards this growing coastal town. Larnaca was also allowed to hold the consulate of the Levant Company. Limassol, traditionally a small fishing village on the southern coast, also gained importance as it became the port for wine and wheat and a popular supplier for the ships in the area due to its low prices.

On the other hand, unlike Moryson and Dallam, other English-speaking travelers of the sixteenth-seventeenth centuries were interested in presenting Cyprus as a victim of the ambitious Ottoman plans for the dominion of Christian Europe. As far as anti-Ottoman travel accounts during the early seventeenth century were concerned, five English travelers, Sanderson, Aldersey, Sandys, Coryat and Rycout, and one Scot, Lithgow, took the responsibility of reminding their English readership of the unreliability of the Turks in Cyprus, should anyone venture to enter their dominions.

Among those English travelers who praised Cyprus’s fertility and wealth, an ideal place for commerce, were Moryson and Dallam. Their

readership included commercially-minded travelers and potential merchants. Thomas Dallam (ca. 1575–ca. 1630) was a prominent English organ-builder who authored the “Account of an Organ Carried to the Grand Seignor and Other Curious Matter,” a personal diary only published as late as 1893 (Bent 2010, 1–98). Dallam left London in May 1599 accompanied by a group of English merchants, settled for some time in Constantinople, played the organ as often as he was asked to, and on the whole played a relevant role in the Ottoman court, to the English and other foreign ambassadors’ dismay, who believed him to be a mere artisan unworthy of his privileged position with the sultan. Dallam reports managing to catch the first ever Christian glimpse of the sultan’s harem in his seraglio. The fact that Elizabeth I sent Dallam with a gift of a sixteen-foot-high mechanical organ for the sultan of the Porte Mehmet III at Istanbul<sup>10</sup> in 1599–1600 indicates the amicable relations between the English and the Turkish courts. In the encouragement of her friendship with the Ottoman sultan the English queen was seeking a powerful ally against her traditional enemies, the wealthy Papist Spaniards. Dallam’s errand in the Porte was therefore of utmost importance for the establishment of fruitful Anglo-Ottoman political relations, which were not merely of a commercial nature.

Dallam’s reference to Cyprus, though only brief and incidental, was not lacking in interest. In mid-June 1599 his ship stopped at Famagusta because its captain had allowed a Greek sailor to disembark with permission to visit his brother. Dallam took the opportunity to describe Cyprus as he saw it, “the moste pleasante of any that hitherto [he] did ever see, [...] a verrie fruitful contrie” (2010, 29). Dallam was perfectly conscious of the value of Cyprus as a place for potential commerce with England due to its famed wealth of various precious products. No mention of the island as a place of religious interest was made at this stage by the observant musician, let alone in relation to its brutal past during the Ottoman conquest of the island in 1571.

Fynes Moryson (1566–1617?) traveled in Europe and in the Levant between 1591 and 1596. In his *An Itinerary containing his ten yeers travell through the twelve dominions of Germany, Bohmerland, Sweitzerland,*

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<sup>10</sup> Dallam constantly calls the capital city of the Ottoman Empire Constantinople (2010, 50; 57; 61; 81; 89).

*Netherland, Denmarke, Poland, Italy, Turkey, France, England, Scotland & Ireland* (1617), he described Nicosia and Famagusta as the chief cities of Ottoman Cyprus, though he says nothing of the cruelty that had been allegedly exercised on their local populations in 1570–1571. Moryson also mentioned the convenience of Famagusta as a good haven and its stronger fort and stated that it was consequently preferred over Nicosia by the Pashas, in spite of the latter being a fairer city (1908, 185). He added that Cyprus was taken from the Venetians by the Turks “by force of armes” (186), providing no further details about this. His Eden-like description of the island concentrates mainly on the wealth and excellent quality of its products and its trading potential: the terms “fruitfull/ness,” “precious,” “inriched,” “sweet,” “pleasure/pleasant,” “rich,” “fertile,” “blessings,” “abounding”) are the dominant descriptors employed. It is clear for him that Cyprus deserved a fluent commercial link with England, especially for diamonds, oil, sheep, fruit (pomegranates and oranges), cotton, sugar cane and wine.

However, most of the other English travelers of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries opted for a negative image of the Ottomans. The Turks had conquered Cyprus in 1571 through the sieges of two of its main cities, Nicosia and Famagusta, according to the remarkable “true relations” of Venetian eye-witness narrations of these events by Count Nestore Martinengo and Bishop Fra Angelo Calepio. Other equally prejudiced Italian chroniclers such as Paolo Paruta and Uberto Foglietta also narrated similar accounts. Naturally, in their propagandistic tracts and narratives the Italian (mainly Venetian) authors insisted on describing with morbid gusto the brutality of the behaviour of Selim II and Lala Mustapha Pasha’s armies in the repression of the Venetian and Cypriot survivors after their surrender (Ruiz Mas 2011 and 2013). Even Samuel Purchas wrote in the 1617 edition of *Purchas his Pilgrimage* that for any information on the Wars of Cyprus he recommended the reading of the “Relation of Nestor Martiningo” (Nesvet 2006, 280), precisely the one where the Ottoman cruelty is described at its worst.

The English historians and chroniclers of the period soon followed suit in depicting the barbarity shown by the Ottoman conquerors in their occupation and repression of Cyprus as described earlier by Italian chroniclers, historians and eyewitnesses. The list of anti-Turkish historical accounts and chronicles/pamphlets published in

English at the time included Richard Knolles's *The General Historie of the Turkes* (1603), a rich account of the Ottoman history and culture to date, displaying both fear and admiration for the Ottomans due to their military prowess, with special reference to the conquest of the island; Ralph Carr's translation of large excerpts of Uberto Foglietta's *De Caussis Magnitudinis Imperii Turcici ac Narratio Belli Cyprii inter Venetos et Turcas Superioribus Annis Gesti* (1594) to write his *The Mahumetane or Turkish Historie* (1600), and Henry Carey Earl of Monmouth's translation of Paolo Paruta's *Historia Vinetiana* (1605) as *The Historie of Venice* (1658), among others (Ruiz Mas 2013). These historical narratives were clearly addressed to the English merchants and sailors with an interest in Mediterranean trade.

Laurence Aldersey (1546–1598) was a sea captain and a merchant of London and the author of "The first voyage or iourney, made by Master Laurence Aldersey, Marchant of London, to the Cities of Ierusalem, and Tripolis, &c. in the yeere 1581. Penned and Set Downe by himselfe," published in Hakluyt's *Principal Navigations* (Aldersey 1889, IX: 177–187). His first journey to the Levant in 1581 began by land via Holland and Germany. In his travel account Aldersey mixed his religious and his economic interests, although the latter were clearly the dominant ones. In fact, he called his voyage a "journey," not a "pilgrimage," despite traveling to biblical lands. In Venice he boarded a vessel for Cyprus and the Holy Land. His brief description of the Cypriots of the village of Missagh in August 1581 is extremely superficial and full of clichés, but he evidences having taken into consideration the scarce (and mostly irrelevant) information that Mandeville had earlier provided on Cyprus in his *Travels*.<sup>11</sup> Aldersey's second journey to the east (now made by sea all the way through) became "The voyage of M. Laurence Aldersey to the cities of Alexandria and Cayro in Aegypt, Anno 1586," also published in Hakluyt's *Principal Navigations* (1887, VI: 39–46). Aldersey stopped at various Greek islands and at Cyprus (Missagh). At the Cypriot harbor he acknowledged the pitiful sight of hundreds of galleys in Turkish

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<sup>11</sup> "The people there be very rude, and like beasts, and no better. They eat their meat sitting vpon the ground, with their legges a crosse like tailors, their beds for their most part be hard stones, but yet some of them haue faire mattreces to lie vpon" (Aldersey 1889, IX: 181).

vessels and lamented their wretched state. This was bad publicity for the Ottomans.

In *The Travels of John Sanderson in the Levant 1584–1602*,<sup>12</sup> Sanderson (1560–1627?), who was not particularly religious, was nevertheless wary of any “perylous” journey made to Cyprus for commercial reasons and overtly and undisguisedly recommended English merchants not to travel there, despite the acknowledged quality of the island’s cotton: “And for the Cyprus woolle, you may buy it of som of the Colchester factors, thoughe you geve the more for it, for avoydinge forder trouble in that place” (Sanderson 1931, 130), he wrote. After leaving the Holy Land’s shores, Sanderson was forced to spend several weeks at Larnaka [Larnaca] in February 1597 waiting for his ship to be loaded with salt for Venice. In his account Cyprus is portrayed as a place of potential danger (130).

George Sandys (1577–1644), the son of the Archbishop of York and the author of *Relation of a Journey begun An. Dom. 1610* (1615),<sup>13</sup> spent some time in the early years of the seventeenth century in the area of the Ottoman Empire and was able to offer one of the most informative accounts on the Muslim world of the century. In his travel account he included a detailed summary of the tragic events of Famagusta and Nicosia as well as information on the miserable fate of the (Cypriot) Grecians who staged an ill-fated insurrection against the Infidels in 1607. Sandys does not make it at all clear that he landed in Cyprus, but he did compile with diligence what was known at the time about the former Venetian colony and he wrote somewhat nostalgically about the glorious past of its main city, “the regall City of Nicosia, circular in forme, and five miles in circumference: not yielding in beauty (before defaced by the Turke) unto the principall cities of Italy” (1621, 220). Although he focused on the brutal Ottoman conquest and occupation suffered by Cyprus’s population, he could not (and in fact did not) deny its natural wealth and the much valued products the island boasted. Like other English writers (though slightly less enthusiastically than others), he insisted on the island’s richness in oil, long-lasting wine, oranges, pomegranates, sugar cane, Oriental

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<sup>12</sup> I have used Sir William Foster edition (Sanderson 1931).

<sup>13</sup> Sandys’s work was reedited several times throughout the seventeenth century (Cobham 1986, 55), proof of the popularity and wide dissemination of its contents in early modern England. I quote from the second edition (Sandys 1621).

cotton, wool, precious stones, “of inferior value,” and “some small store of gold and silver” (1621, 208). However, the undeniable fertility of the soil did not stop Sandys from reminding his English readers about the island’s excessively hot climate and unhealthy summers, its abundance of serpents and locusts and its serious want of water as well as its tradition of sinfulness. Sandys was especially keen on describing “the beastly lusts of the people [of Cyprus], who, to purchase portions for their daughters, accustomed to prostitute them on the shore unto strangers” (1621, 205).

In *Coryat’s Crudities* (1611),<sup>14</sup> the Englishman Thomas Coryat (ca. 1577–1617) criticized the fact that the “noble island” (Cyprus) had been rather unfortunate while in the hands of the “ignoble Venetian conquerors” before they were expelled by the Turks in 1571, not before their putting into practice their reputed cruelty on the besieged and wretched Cypriot cities, especially Famagusta, defended by “that valiant Venetian Gentleman Antonius Bragedinus [...] being then flea’d alive” (Coryat 1905, 455).<sup>15</sup>

William Lithgow’s popular *A Most Delectable and True Discourse, of an admired and painefull peregrination from Scotland, to the most famous kingdoms in Europe, Asia and Affricke*, better known as *The Rare Adventures and Painful Peregrinations*, was published in numerous editions (1614, 1616, 1623, 1625, 1632, etc.) throughout the early seventeenth century.<sup>16</sup> Lithgow (ca. 1585–ca. 1645), an orthodox Scottish Protestant, was not a conventional pilgrim, despite the title of his book, where the journeys are referred to as peregrinations — perhaps to mock Catholics (Groves 2012, 700); still, he did visit Jerusalem and Santiago de Compostela. He seemed to have wished to guarantee himself a place in Heaven as a Protestant martyr as wherever he went, he got involved in religious trouble. In Cyprus he claimed to have been attacked by a gang of Turks and helped by a few passing Greek peasants who acted as Good Samaritans, otherwise he would have perished (Lithgow 1974, 111–112). His anti-Turkish/Muslim sentiment gradually increased during his (alleged)

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<sup>14</sup> [London]: W[illiam] S[tansby], [1611]. References to Coryat’s text are to the modern edition (Coryat 1905).

<sup>15</sup> On the 1571 siege and fall of Famagusta and Marc Antonio Bragadino’s defense of the city and subsequent death at the hands of the Ottoman conquerors, see Ruiz Mas 2011.

<sup>16</sup> Citations to Lithgow are from Phelps’s edition (Lithgow 1974), based on the 1632 text.



stay on the island, which contrasts with the kindness and the hospitality he always found among the local Greek (i.e., Christian) inhabitants (109).

Having arrived in Cyprus some time between 1609 and 1621, Lithgow visited Nicosia (he wrote nothing about it) and Famagusta, whose fortress, together with that of Rhodes, was one of the two “strongest holds in all the empire of the Great Turk” (Lithgow 1974, 109). Despite experiencing continuous thirst for the island’s want of water, which he said was Cyprus’s greatest imperfection (111), as well as intense heat, he openly regretted the loss of the island to the Turks, “the usurpers of God’s Word and the world’s greatest enemy,” who had treacherously taken advantage of the peace existing with Venice to conquer it (110). Lithgow loudly expressed his wish that a Christian prince should attempt its recovery for Christendom, and did not doubt that this idea would be supported by its local population, so “unspeakable is the calamitie of that poor afflicted Christian people under the terrour of these infidels” (112). The reference to the recent unsuccessful Greek insurrections against their Ottoman rulers seems clear. This hypothetical valiant Christian prince would be guaranteed, he added, “an infinite treasure of worldly commodities” (111), a reference to Cyprus’s well-known fame of wealth and fertility. Just as Sandys had done before, Lithgow described Cyprus’s abundance of strong-flavored wine, its richness of fruit, “infinite canes of sugar,” cotton, oil, honey, precious stones. But more emphasis is given now to its mining potential: gold, iron, excellent copper and asbestos (i.e., “the admirable stone amiante, whereof they make linen cloth that will not burn being cast into the fire”) (111).

Lithgow did not only fail to disguise the discontent felt by the downtrodden Christians on the island; he also insisted on describing the cruel fate of all the Greeks who participated in the insurrection in Paphos against the Ottoman rule in 1607. The rebellion was “cut off by the bloody hands of the Turks,” whom Lithgow described as “bloody oppressors” (1974, 112). His personal experience with the local Turks who robbed him and beat him does not say much good about his opinion of them, especially if he insisted by contrast on the hospitality and affectionate nature of the local Greeks, i.e., the Christians of Cyprus. He did not forget to remind his English readers of the greatest imperfections of the island: its “scarcity of water, and

too much plenty of scorching heat and fabulous grounds" (109). Cyprus was not presented by Lithgow as an appealing place to live.

Sir Paul Rycaut/Ricaut (1629–1700), a secretary of the English embassy in the Porte and consul of the Levant Company at Smyrna, left an account of his stay in Cyprus in *The Present State of the Greeks and Armenian Churches Anno Christi 1678* (1679), a travel book written at the personal command of King Charles II of England. Rycaut paid almost no attention to the famed fertility of the island: the oppression and violence of the Turks on the Cypriot population is the main subject matter of his book, especially as regards their treatment of the Christian churches and institutions: they had all been reduced to a minimum by the Ottoman administration (Rycaut 1679, 90). According to Rycaut, the local population also suffered the cruelty of the Turks: "after a rebellion they made against the Turk, anno 1580 and 1593, the greatest part of the inhabitants was either killed or exterminated" (91). He described his meeting with a monk of 119 years of age who recalled the taking of Cyprus in 1570–1571 by the Turks when he was about twelve years old. The monk vividly remembered that "the channels of his town ran with blood" (213), and "the cruel soldiers bloodily massacring all persons which met them in their fury" (213) and how "his mother defended him from violence" (213) by giving up her own life for him. It was then that the child decided to dedicate his life to serving God in a monastery (214). Rycaut's Ottoman Cyprus was once again far from appealing to any potential merchant, visitor or resident. Though it was true that Pafos [Paphos] remained a port of good fame and renown, "from whence is yearly shipped off a considerable quantity of cotton, silks and other merchandise" (94), he also added that "by the oppression and hard usage of the Turks and the covetousness of the officers, [the town] is reduced to poverty and want of people" (94).

There was more evidence of English Protestant merchants-pilgrims still traveling to the Holy Sites in the second half of the seventeenth century, but the accounts of their voyages no longer included any information about Cyprus, as they now favored the presumably safer land routes to Palestine. In *Two Travels of Fourteen English Men to Jerusalem in the Year 1669* (1672), its editor, Nathaniel Crouch (ca. 1632–ca. 1725), made a compilation of various journeys to the Holy Land, none of which included Cyprus.

After reviewing the main early modern English travel accounts which included a stop or a visit in Cyprus I have attempted to analyze the different types of travelers who patronized pre-Ottoman and Ottoman Cyprus and the reason(s) why they did so. Initially English travelers in Cyprus showed spiritual/Protestant concerns and later were more concerned with the building of a commercial link with the island. As I have endeavored to prove, initially English travelers in the Lusignan and Venetian periods used the island as a last step in their pilgrimage routes to Jerusalem. After its conquest in 1571, Cyprus became an Ottoman province and was visited mostly by English travelers for commercial purposes, notwithstanding their relative distrust of the Turk. The reputation of wealth and fertility of the island made Cyprus the epitome of a land of plenty with an abundance of much-valued products, ranging from jewels, gems, salt, sugar, wine, cotton, minerals, fruit, etc. Cyprus was therefore praised in the English accounts of the time such as those of Moryson and Dallam for its trading potential for English merchants on the lookout for the construction of factories on Eastern Mediterranean shores. However, commercial interest in Ottoman Cyprus did not stop a number of English travel writers, who, presumably supported by the Monarchy and the Protestant ecclesiastical authorities, warned the English merchants and sailors who frequented the plentiful Cypriot markets of the risks of over-trusting the Eden-like prospects of the island in their anti-Turkish chronicles, accounts and narratives. English residents, merchants and adventurers in Cyprus were believed to be in permanent danger of falling into the temptation of remaining there for good, with the subsequent risk of “turning Turk,” a policy that would often have improved the social and economic prospects of many an Englishman of the time within the Ottoman Empire. In order to discourage any potential English traders and indeed any travelers from falling into the trap of converting to Islam in bountiful Cyprus and therefore losing their souls for eternity, English historians, chroniclers and travel writers such as Carr, Purchas, Knolles, Monmouth, Sanderson, Sandys, Lithgow, Coryat and Rycout included in their accounts abundant information on the brutal repression exercised upon Cypriot cities such as Famagusta and Nicosia by the Great Turk during the Wars of Cyprus, as well as on the violence exercised on the Christians who dared rebel against the Ottoman rule on the island.

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