

## **A Land for Strangers**

Non-Native Individuals and Communities in Cyprus

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# **Preface**

## **Stranger for a Day, Cypriot for a Lifetime. By Way of a Foreword**

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One of the things I share with the fellow editors of this Series is a genuine love for Cyprus. Nothing to be surprised about, as its stunning landscapes, its wonderful people, its diversities and contradictions – past and present – are indelibly inscribed in the memory of all fortunate to have stayed there for a while. It was Luca Bombardieri who introduced Tommaso Braccini and myself to the beauties of the island, at a time when we decided, some years ago, to start the experiment of a summer school based at the Phivos Stavrides Foundation in Larnaca. That successful experience, coupled with Luca's archeological excavations at Erimi and Lorenzo Calvelli's long expertise in studying the island's Roman past, was the natural prelude of the launch of the *Studi Ciprioti* editorial project.<sup>1</sup>

Nowadays Cyprus is the kind of place where one immediately feels at ease, and once back in her/his country, counts the days to returning. This surely depends on the Cypriots' hospitality and openness to multiculturalism, which, in turn, results from an uninterrupted history of migrations, foreign dominations, experiments of coexistence among groups of different ethnic, linguistic, and religious backgrounds. On the other hand, it is obvious that the experience of the present-day traveler, scholar or worker from abroad coming to the island is entirely different from that of those outlanders who arrived there in the past centuries as invaders, refugees, merchants, explorers, diplomats originating from the most diverse regions of a non-globalised world. This was the case – to mention just a couple of



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examples taken from the present book – of the anonymous traders who landed on Cyprus's shores during the Late Bronze Age, as well as of the Soviet archaeologist who visited the recently independent state on behalf of the Russian Academy of Sciences in the early 1960s.

The theme chosen for this volume, i.e. the exploration of interactions between insiders and outsiders, is connected with multiculturalism, multiethnicity, coexistence, *convivencia* on the one hand, and with insularity, connectivity, and their influence on the development of island culture(s) on the other. All these issues have been discussed numerous times in recent years, referring to both ancient and modern civilizations of the Mediterranean. Yet, the idea underlying the present collection of essays was to address such topics from a perspective not merely theoretical, but first and foremost practical, through a series of case studies revolving around the fresh examination of very different types of sources – pottery, inscriptions, archival documents, narratives, historical accounts, life stories, exhibition materials – along an intentionally broad chronological span. The Editors of the volume managed to achieve this goal by putting together a miscellany of original papers whose guiding threads are the dialectics between foreigners and locals, and the constant reshaping of the interactions between former inhabitants and newcomers. The authors of the articles have succeeded, I believe, in presenting many novel insights of the multifaceted nature of Cypriot history, and in providing new evidence on that complex and uninterrupted process of arrivals and departures, emigrations and returns, which started four millennia ago and has not yet ceased to evolve.

It is often said that studying the past may help us understanding the present, if not even finding suggestions on how to improve it. As we deliver this book to the publisher in conjunction with the 50th anniversary of the dramatic Turkish invasion and division of the island in July 1974, we cannot but hope that it may provide some food for thought to address the hitherto unresolved issue of Cypriot identity: a question that will hopefully find shared responses and reasonable solutions with the help of the new generations.

## Appendix

### From Livorno to Larnaca in the Late Eighteenth Century: Two Letters by Tuscan Émigrés to Giovanni Mariti

As an appendix to this foreword, I would like to offer a small contribution to the topic of the non-native presence in the island, by presenting a couple of unpublished letters written from Cyprus in the same year, 1767, to Giovanni Mariti, one of the very first enthusiasts of Cypriot antiquities and author of the successful travel-book *Viaggi per l'isola di Cipro e per la Soria e Palestina fatti dall'anno 1760 al 1768* (9 vols, Lucca/Florence, 1769-76).<sup>2</sup> Mariti, born in Florence but raised and educated in Livorno, resided in Larnaca from 1760 until the end of summer 1767. There he firstly operated under the orders of the British Consul Timothy Turner, and was later employed as Chancellor of the British consulate, representative of the Empire, and of the Grand Duchy of Tuscany. After his return to Italy, he kept contacts with several persons still living in the Levant.

Among these, there were other Livornese who had settled in Larnaca during the late eighteenth century. One was the merchant Antonio Mondaini, whose relationship with Mariti has been studied in depth (see Bombardieri 2021). Another two are the lesser-known authors of the letters published below.

The first one is Francesco Ricci, qualified as “Livornese, negoziante<sup>3</sup> in Cipro” by a handwritten note on the folio preceding it in the Archivio Mariti folder. Ricci apparently does not like his job and life in Larnaca, and longs for return; however, his message looks more like a playful prank rather than a serious complaint. Indeed, he writes about erotic reveries and sex jokes, and talks in mocking tones and almost coded language.

The second correspondent, Giovanni Rossiotti, is also to some extent homesick and asks for news from Livorno. On the other hand, he informs his friend of the news and gossip about common acquaintances in Larnaca. Interestingly, the same people's names appear together in the wedding register of the Latin parish church in Larnaca: the picture emerging from both documents, the register and Rossiotti's message, is, therefore, that of a very little but unite community of foreigners residing in town. Also noteworthy are the supply requests that Rossiotti makes to Mariti, that give us a glimpse of the most sought-after import goods (books, tobacco, etc.). Also notable is the postscript concerning a man trying to pass off as genuine some clearly fake ancient coins or medals, as it attests the incipient traffic of antiquities on the island.

In the following transcription I did not conform the spelling to current usage; when needed, I added accents and apostrophes if missing, and slightly modified punctuation in order to make the reading more fluent.

I.<sup>4</sup>

Baruth,<sup>5</sup> Sig.r Giovanni Mariti

Larnica li 6 Luglio 1767

La graditissima vostra del 27 spirante è la sola che abbia ricevuta, e devesi in conseguenza essersi smarrita l'altra che mi dite avermi scritta, senza di che accertatevi che non avrei mancato rispondervi. Vi avrei altresì date prima d'adesso le mie nuove, ma oltre non sapere precisamente dove indirizzarvi le mie lettere, non l'ho fatto per non cagionarvi distrazioni, e spero che saprete compatire questa mia discretezza ancor che forse troppo rigorosa.

Ancora io, se mi trovasse con una sbarbata al mio comando, sarei più grasso, e mi troverei colle carni sode, come le avevo quando respiravo l'aria nativa; ma, caro amico, voi che siete<sup>6</sup> nell'istesso caso di me, ditemi, come è possibile ingrassare a fare la vita che facciamo? Tutto il giorno aviamo il culo sopra una seggiola, quale colla durezza ci tormenta (per non dire macera) l'ano; che trattiene il libero canto, tanto necessario a' Itali;<sup>7</sup> stiamo colle gambe piegate, colla vita curva, e colle braccia appoggiate ad una tavola per sostenere il capo, ed il collo; una positura e attitudine simile impedisce la libera circolazione al sangue, una comoda digestione, e produce quasi un totale assopimento di spiriti; tutto il moto consiste nell'alzare un braccio per intingere la penna nel calamaro, e porre sopra quella gamba che un quarto d'ora è stata sotto dell'altra.

Converrete dunque meco che un tale esercizio non puole avere fatto ingrassare l'amico Mondaini, e deve averne l'obbligazione totale a Monsieur Coito. Questo si suol chiamare esercizio salubre perché omogeneo, e naturale e che per compirlo non si mette il culo sopra una seggiola, colla vita curva, gambe piegate, ma liberandosi da qualunque legatura e impaccio, col semplicissimo mobile alla camicia standosi sopra un morbido letto molte cose si fanno quali tutte giovano alla salute; come livornese dovete saperle, onde le taccio, anche per liberarmi dal prurito che sento cominciare a venire di metterne qualcheduna in pratica.

To Mr Giovanni Mariti, Beirut

Larnaca, July 6, 1767

Your very welcome letter dated 27<sup>th</sup> of the last month is the only one I have ever received: therefore, the other letter you claim to have written to me must have gone lost – otherwise, you can be sure that I would not have failed to reply. I would have given news from my side sooner, but besides not knowing precisely where to address my letters, I did it on purpose, in order not to cause distractions to you. I hope you can excuse this admittedly too strict discretion of mine. Well, if I had here a pretty young woman<sup>8</sup> at my disposal, I would look perky and I would put on firm muscles, like those I had when I breathed the air of my native country. Since you are in the same conditions as me, my friend, would you tell me how we could be in shining shape while living the life we are leading? All day long we stay with our bottom on a chair, that torments us with its hardness (not to say macerates our asses), and prevents us from free singing,<sup>9</sup> something really necessary for Italians. We stay with our legs bent, our back curved, our arms lent on a desk to support our heads and necks. Such a posture prevents the free circulation of blood, impedes smooth digestion, and induces heavy drowsiness. The only movement I do consists in raising my arm to dip the pen in the inkwell and to put one leg over the other at intervals of fifteen minutes.

You will then agree with me that it is not thanks to such an exercise that our friend Mondaini looks nice and perky, and that he owes this entirely to Mr Coitus: this can truly be called a healthy exercise, for it is harmonious and natural and does not need that one puts his bottom on a chair to perform it, curving one's neck and bending one's legs; conversely, it demands he who wants to practice it to be freed from any bindings and entanglements, to get rid of the shirt covering one's member,<sup>10</sup> and to lie on a soft bed, where one can perform many actions, all of them benefitting one's health. As a Livornese you must know these things, and thus I don't mention them, also to free myself from the itch to put them into practice.

Beato voi che siete vicino a mettere i piedi sopra quei terreni che lasciano una piena libertà all'uomo d'alleggerirsi i fianchi coll'aiuto d'una compiacente ragazza, se se li trova pieni per l'applicazione al tavolino.

Per me come sapete devo consumare ancora cinque anni tra l'astinenza e lo stento. Procuro di consumare il tempo con rassegnanza, ma per quanto mi sforzi vi assicuro che ho de momenti più critici di come potrei spiegarvi e possiate immaginarvi.

Il parlare di questa materia me ne concilia il ritorno, onde prendo la risoluzione di troncarne il discorso.

Seguitate a divertirvi per me, ma fatelo con li dovuti riguardi alla vostra salute; li miei rispetti alla sig.ra Tommasina, l'amico Mondaini,<sup>11</sup> e sono con tutto il cuore.

Vostro affezionatissimo amico<sup>12</sup>

Francesco Ricci<sup>13</sup>

II.<sup>14</sup>

G.G. Rossiotti<sup>15</sup>

*Cipro 3 novembre 1767*

*Mio caro amico Mariti,*

*li favorevoli venti che sin ora hanno regnato mi fanno sperare che molto prima di ora sarete felicemente costì giunto in quel ottimo grado di salute che ora per sempre di vero cuore vi desidero insieme a ogni vera prosperità, e contentezza che potete bramare, qual notizia sarammi sommamente grata per mia quiete.*

Lucky you, who are about to set your feet on that land that gives a man complete freedom to relax his hips with the help of a compliant girl, in case he has them tired due to desk fatigue.

Speaking about myself, as you know, I still have to consume (here) five years in abstinence and hardships. I try to pass the time with forbearance; however, no matter how hard I try, I assure you that I have more difficult moments than I could explain to you, and that you could imagine. Talking about this topic brings these pains back to my mind, and therefore I decide to interrupt this conversation.

Keep enjoying on my behalf, but do it with due regard to your health. My heartfelt regards to Mrs. Tommasina and to our common friend Mondaini.

Your most affectionate friend,  
Francesco Ricci

II.

G.G. Rossiotti

Cyprus, November 3, 1767

My dear friend Mariti,

the favorable winds that have been blowing so far make me hope that by now you have arrived there quite some time ago now, happily and in perfect health. Indeed, what I wholeheartedly wish for you are health, genuine prosperity and happiness, as much as you want: and if I received a word about that, it would be greatly appreciated and would give me relief.

*Il capitano Morfi si trova tuttavia in Alessandretta caricando per costì, e con quel occasione vi scriverò a lungo, ma frattanto non manco darvi la buona notizia che tanto il signor Stefano quanto la signora Elisabetta godono perfetta salute;<sup>16</sup> eglino sono tornati dal loro spasso di campagna ma ò saputo che ànno goduto poco perché in luogo di cam(m)inare con comodo ànno dovuto correre giorno e notte per non disgustare il capo Guidone, di cui sapete 'l nome; la signora Vas(s)alla<sup>17</sup> però ha fatto meglio di tutti perché li à piantati, e se ne è andata in Niccosia dove è restata 5 giorni e solo ieri è ritornata.*

*Ditemi di grazia come avete trovata la cara patria ma particolarmente Livorno, che credo vi sia parso un mondo nuovo, mediante le gran metamorfosi accadute dopo la vostra e mia partenza; datemi tutte quelle novità, di grazia, che crederete possino piacermi per mia consolazione, sulla sicurezza che ve ne conserverò infinita obbligazione.*

*Vi raccomando l'effettuazione delle commissioni datevi de' libri come per nota e tabacco in carote di San Domingo, e sigillo il quale sarà meglio farlo intagliare in argento per attaccarlo a(l)l'orologio, ma guardate bene di non fare scolpire altro che l'arme, per mandarmi il tutto quando vi capiterà occasione notandomene il costo et ordinandomi in che maniera dovrò rimborsarvi, che sarete pontualmente servito.*

*Spero avrete occasione di vedere il mio cugino Sig.or Giuseppe Modoi,<sup>18</sup> e la Sig.<sup>ra</sup> Agnese sua consorte, onde vi prego non scordarvi di presentargli gli miei distinti complimenti, come pure alla Sig.<sup>ra</sup> Agatina, e suo fratello, loro figli, et insomma a tutti li miei parenti et amici che vi chiederanno mie notizie. Per il qual favore vi conserverò infinita obbligazione.*

*Monsieur Gross e Monsieur Blanc si trovano tuttavia in Cipro, e non so quando penseranno di andarsene. Il piccolo Giarich<sup>19</sup> à ottenuta la vittoria perché mademoiselle Doublet è cotta spolpata di lui. Io se devo dirvi sinceramente la verità desidero che la prenda tanto presto che sia possibile per vedere finita questa canzona, ma esso mi giura che neppure vi pensa onde staremo a vedere quello che accaderà.*



Captain Morfi is still in Alexandretta<sup>20</sup> and is getting ready to embark on ship and head here in Cyprus. On the occasion of his departure, I will write you a longer message; in the meanwhile, I want to inform you that both Mr Stefano and Ms Elisabetta enjoy excellent health; they returned from their hike in the countryside, but I have been informed that they did not enjoy it much because, instead of walking comfortably, they had to rush day and night not to displease master Guidone, whose name you know. Lady Vassalla did better than all of them, as she jilted them and went to Nicosia; she stayed there five days, and she came back just yesterday.

Tell me, please, in which conditions you found our dear homeland, and in particular Livorno. I assume it must have looked like a different world to you, due to the big changes occurred after your and my departure. Give me, please, all latest news that you think I could like and that could comfort me, and be sure that I will be immensely grateful to you.

I recommend that you run the errand that I requested: the books whose titles I wrote, carrots of Santo Domingo tobacco, the seal that you'd better have carved in silver so it can be fixed to the watch – and beware not to carve anything else than my coat of arms on it –. And please, do send me all of it at your earliest convenience, do let me have the detailed amount, and do let me know how you prefer to get reimbursed: you will be promptly paid.

I hope you will have the occasion of seeing my cousin, Mr Giuseppe Modoi, and his wife, Mrs Agnese: in that case, please pass on to them my best regards, as well to Mrs Agatina, and his brother, their sons, and in short to all my relatives and friends who might be asking about me. I would be extremely grateful for this favor.

Mr Gros and Mr Blanc are still in Cyprus, and I do not know when they think to depart. Little Giarich got his victory, as Ms Doublet has a crash on him. If I have to tell you the truth, I wish that he marries her as soon as possible, so that we can stop listening to the same old story. Indeed, he swears that he does not think about it at all, so we'll see what happens.

*Avete mille saluti della signora Elisabetta, mille del signor Stefano,<sup>21</sup> che fanno due mille, quali vi prego di raddoppiare e riceverli da mia parte, mentre il tempo non permettendomi di scrivervi più a lungo resto sinceramente confermandomi.*

P.S. Ho ricevuto notizia che il Fontani vostro affezionatissimo amico vero e servo è stato imbarcato in Alessandria dal Console per costì, onde se lo vedete diteli che le sue medaglie nessuno le vuol prendere tutte insieme per mezza piastra, e voi che le avete tutte esaminate potete disingannarlo della falsa credenza in cui egli è che sieno di qualche valore, non potendo mai credere che esso le hà comprate, bensì trovate, ovvero stateli regalate da qualcheduno che non sapeva che farne.<sup>22</sup>

*Oggi ho ricevuto lettere da Aleppo con le quali l'Amiro a voi noto mi dà buonissime speranze per il noto stabilimento di Acrida, onde con altra mia sentirete qualcosa di sicuro.<sup>23</sup>*

Mrs Elisabetta sends you a thousand greetings, the same does Mr Stefano, and that makes two thousand; these are doubled if coupled with mine. Time no longer allows me to write more. Sincerely yours.

*Post scriptum:* I got news that Mr Fontani, your devoted friend, has taken a ship in Alexandria for Cyprus by order of the Consul. So, if you see him, tell him that nobody wants to buy his medals, not even for half a piaster for all them; you, who have examined them, can free him from the false conviction that they have any value – I cannot believe that he purchased them; rather, he must have found them, or someone who did not know what to do with them has probably given them to him.

Today I received letters from the Emir you know, who gives me very good hope that I will succeed in my transfer request to Acri, which you are well aware of: I will give you more certain information on that in another letter.

- 1 This paper is dedicated to my Larnaca friends Mia Gaia Trentin and Iosif Hadjikyriakos. I owe thanks to Franco Arato and Nello Bertoletti for their advice on the interpretation of some passages of the texts. All remaining mistakes are my own.
- 2 For a biographical overview see Pasta 2008; for Mariti's activity as student of Cypriot antiquities and for his travelogues see Pasta 2021 and Bombardieri 2024.
- 3 Besides 'trader', which is its most common meaning, the noun could also signify 'diplomat'.
- 4 Università di Bologna, Archivio storico, Fondo Mariti, b. 3 (examined on-site).
- 5 Mariti made a trip to Jerusalem and the Holy Land in the Spring of 1767, and Beirut was the last leg of the journey before returning to Cyprus: see Pasta 2021, 14.
- 6 Corrected above line from *vi trovate*.
- 7 *Ilati* in the MS.
- 8 According to Tuscan usage: see Fanfani 1863, s.v. "sbarbata" ('ragazza bella') and Battaglia 1961-2002, s.v. "sbarbata" ('donna giovane e bella').
- 9 Here 'singing' is probably to be intended as a metaphor for 'coitus' (see Boggione, Casalegno 2004, s.v. "canto" and "cantare"): the expression is in line with the metaphorical use of *uccello* to mean 'cock'.
- 10 The adjective *mobile* can be used in the sense of something capable of moving, as a human or animal 'member' (Battaglia 1961-2002 s.v. "mobile", 24): in this context, as a substantive, it probably indicates the penis. The word *camicia* may be understood either literally, to mean the piece of clothing ('shirt'), or perhaps metaphorically, to mean the foreskin.
- 11 For Mondaini see Bombardieri 2021 and 2024. He and Thomasine Barthélemy got married in the church of Santa Maria delle Grazie in Larnaca on January 31, 1762 (see the relevant parish church register entry in Trentin 2019, 50-1, no. 58).
- 12 *Amico* is corrected from *Fratell(o)* ('brother').
- 13 On the back of the folio the indication of the addressee ("Al Sig.<sup>ra</sup> Giovanni Mariti, Baruth") and of the sender ("Cap(ita)no Ricci, 1767").
- 14 Università di Bologna, Archivio storico, Fondo Mariti, b. 3 (examined on-site). The letter is written mostly in Greek alphabet: I print these parts in Italics. Here is a diplomatic transcription of the first lines: κίπρω „3,, νουέμβρε 1767. μίω κάρω αρίκω μαρίτι, λί φαυορέουλι νέντι χ' σίν ὄρα ἄννο ρεγνάτο μι φάννο σπεράρε χ' μόλτο πρίμα δι ὄρα σαρέτε φελίζεμεντε κοστί γιούντω ιν κουελ ὄττιμω γράδω δι σαλούτε χ' ὄρα περ σεμπρε δι νέρω κῶρε νί δεσίδερω ινσιέμε α ὄγνι νέρα προσπεριτά, ε κωνεντέζα χ' ποτέτε βράμαρε, κβαλ νοτίζια σαράμμι σομμαμέντε γράτα περ μία κιδίετ. Apart from the inconsistent use of spirits and accents, note that χ', the common abbreviation in Greek manuscripts and early printed books for the conjunction καὶ ('and'), here is to be read /ke/ according to the modern pronunciation, and corresponds to Tuscan 'che'; and that the ligature β, corresponding to ου, is used after κ to reproduce /kw/, i.e. Tuscan 'qu'; forms like ὦ and ἄνω correspond to the old fashioned ὀ (for *ho*) and *anno* (for *hanno*). Texts in Romance languages written in the Greek alphabet are widely attested in various areas of the medieval and early modern Mediterranean, mostly in regions of coexistence of different cultural traditions, as Southern Italy and Sicily (see e.g. Maggiore 2018; further reading can be found in his bibliography); there are also examples of Turkish texts in Greek characters, known as *Karamanlidika*, dating from the eighteenth to the beginning of the twentieth centuries and produced in Istanbul and other Ottoman cities (see Kappler 2015).
- 15 The name of the sender ("Cap(ita)no G Rossiotti") is found on the back of the second of the two folia containing the letter, above the name of the addressee (written in Arabic). The handwriting is identical to that of the signature "Girol. Gius. Rossiotti" found in the list of the witnesses of the wedding of Antonio Mondaini and Thomasine Barthélemy (cf. above, fn. 11): see the reproduction of the relevant page of the parish's wedding register in Bombardieri 2021, 35, figure 12 (Rossiotti's is the fourth signature in the list). Rossiotti is the author of further nine letters, dating from 1767 to 1771, comprised in folder no. 3 of the Mariti Archive in Bologna.
- 16 These are Stefano Saraf and his wife Elisabetta: they got married in Larnaca in 1758 (see Trentin 2019, 44, no. 51) and both signed as witnesses, together with Rossiotti and Mariti, the act of marriage between Antonio Mondaini and Thomasine (see above, fnn. 11 and 15).

**17** As a family name, Vassallo is attested several times in the Larnaca parish wedding registers. All mentions, however, are later: a Caterina Vassallo, Venitian, is found in an entry dated 1769 (Trentin 2019, 62, no. 73); an Elena Vassallo gets married in 1781 (Trentin 2019, 93, no. 112). Furthermore, an Emanuele Vassallo was Venitian consul in Cyprus from 1779 onwards (Özkul 2013, 263; see also Trentin 2019, 53 and fn. 2; the person mentioned here cannot be identified with his wife, as he got married only in 1787: Trentin 2019, 107, no. 128).

**18** Notable mentioned in Aubert 1766, 6 as “Deputato per l’Economia” in Livorno.

**19** A Giuseppe Giachich (also spelled Jiasich) is mentioned as wedding witness in two Larnaca marriage acts dated 1769 (Trentin 2019, 62, no. 73) and 1771 (Trentin 2019, 66, no. 78).

**20** Modern İskenderun in Turkey, on the Mediterranean coast, not far from the Syrian border.

**21** See above, fn. 16.

**22** On Mariti as a collector of coins see Bombardieri 2024, 50 and 62.

**23** Mariti had been employed in Acri for a year and a half in the early Sixties: see Pasta 2021, 12-13; Bombardieri 2024, 11. The letter next to this one in folder 3 of the Fondo Mariti was indeed sent by Rossiotti from Acri (it is dated September 27, 1768).

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