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### Spyros Sakellarios The Cypriot Social Formation (1191–2004): From the Establishment to the Partition, Athens: Topos, 2017

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συνθήκης των πολιτικών κοινωνικής ένταξης. Σε αυτό το πλαίσιο, τα αποτελέσματα της έρευνας αναμένεται να συμβάλλουν, ώστε να οικοδομηθούν ταυτόχρονα τόσο οι πολιτικές που συνδέονται με την κοινωνική προστασία και τα κοινωνικά δικαιώματα όσο και οι αντίστοιχες πολιτικές που διασφαλίζουν την κοινωνική συνοχή στις τοπικές κοινωνίες, καθώς και το αίσθημα ασφάλειας των κατοίκων που ζουν σε αυτές. Συνεπώς, μπορούν να παρακαμφθούν οι δυσκαμψίες και οι αγκυλώσεις που έχουν έως τώρα δυσχεράνει τις προοπτικές ομαλής διευθέτησης ενός σοβαρού ζητήματος που έχει λάβει διεθνείς διαστάσεις.

Συμπερασματικά, η μελέτη αποτελεί μια καίρια συμβολή σε μια εξόχως κρίσιμη συγκυρία συνεισφέροντας καθοριστικά στην ουσιαστική και εις βάθος κατανόηση του προσφυγικού-μεταναστευτικού προβλήματος, καθώς και στην πλήρη και ενδελεχή αποτύπωση της κοινωνικής, οικονομικής και θεσμικής διάστασης του φαινομένου. Κατ' αυτό τον τρόπο, συνιστά μια πρωτότυπη και ιδιαίτερα σημαντική συνεισφορά στη βιβλιογραφία της μετανάστευσης συμβάλλοντας θεμελιωδώς στον επιστημονικό διάλογο. Επιπρόσθετα, αποτελεί ένα εξαιρετικά χρήσιμο εγχειρίδιο για ερευνητές, φοιτητές των κοινωνικών επιστημών, καθώς και για όσους συμμετέχουν στις εγχώριες πολιτικές διαδικασίες σε τοπικό, περιφερειακό, κεντρικό επίπεδο και σε ένα ευρύ φάσμα θεμάτων που άπτονται του προσφυγικού-μεταναστευτικού ζητήματος.

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## Spyros Sakellariopoulos

*The Cypriot Social Formation (1191–2004): From the Establishment to the Partition,*

Athens: Topos, 2017

**T**he so-called Cyprus Question is one of the oldest unsolved issues in international politics, dating back centuries. More often than not, it is described as a confrontation between two nationalisms –the Greek and the Turkish– as it develops locally on the island. Nationalism therefore remains the concluding theme of politics in and around Cyprus –not only for local political parties and movements, but those of the so-called “Motherland” states, Greece and Turkey. It is important to note, however, that these circumstances are not “home grown”: for decades, both Greece and Turkey had sought to perpetuate this dependent situation while the two largest communities on the island often behave as if they have “internalized” a kind of colonialism. The recent negotiations attempting to resolve the issue is living proof of that dependent relation. In that respect, Spyros Sakellariopoulos’ study, *The Cypriot Social Formation (1191–2004): From the Establishment to the Partition*, is not only a welcome addition to the booming literature on Cyprus, but is also timely.

While recent work has offered new, and indeed critical, perspectives on the subject, a not insignificant share of scholars continue to address the issue through the prism of colonialism. Depending on which “hyphenation” the author bears –Greek- or Turkish-Cypriot alike– their approach to the issue is likely to hue all-too-closely to the dominant national narrative created

decades ago in their respective “Motherland”. Paradoxically enough, the local Cypriots –and the concerns and dynamics that have plagued daily life and inter-communal reconciliation on the island itself– continue to be either overlooked entirely or scrutinized only selectively. In Greece and Cyprus, therefore, the Cyprus Question remains fixed on the historical issue of “invasion, partition, and occupation” –namely, by the Turks of the northern part following their 1974 military operation. This perspective, of course, overlooks the inter-communal conflict and violence that well pre-date the invasion but lay the ground for it to occur.

*The Cypriot Social Formation* is a massive and demanding book, but includes detailed content that helps the reader to focus on a specific issue or time period of interest. More importantly –and bearing in mind the limits of the literature detailed above– Sakellaropoulos’ book provides a well-balanced and in-depth account of the issue that considers politics, society, economics and the broader international context. The work therefore is well-placed to challenge the widely shared contention that the Cyprus issue started in 1974.

The book is divided in three parts. The first, which would ideally be an extended introduction or even a separate, short book, begins in 1191AD, when the island was conquered by Richard I of England. It ends in 1878, when the island’s domination passed from the Ottomans to the British. The author’s aim is to portray, as the book title indicates, the social formation in Cyprus over the *longue duree*, and the factors contributing to it across the centuries. The second section –the longest part of the book– covers the British colonial administration from 1878 up to the Turkish invasion in 1974. The third and final part covers the thirty year-period until the Annan Plan in 2004.

The author’s Marxist approach is evident throughout the book. For example, Sakellaropoulos uses the ‘Asiatic Mode of Production’ to explain the social formation in the island since Ottoman times, an approach which would be benefitted even more if the author had followed the discussion in Turkey covering the period between İdris Küçükömer, Çağlar Keyder, Huri İslamoğlu, and others. Issues like colonialism, imperialism and capitalism would not be absent from such a study. In a matter of fact, these themes provide at the same time the methodological and interpretive context through which the author approaches the issue and explains how the social, economic and political relations and interrelationships in Cyprus were formed. Sakellaropoulos also takes into consideration the geopolitical restructuring, both during the age of empires but also later during the Cold War.

Bolstered by a broad array of sources, *Cypriot Social Formation* is a well-documented and comprehensive study of the complex issue of Cyprus. The rich documentation –both primary and secondary sources in English, French, and Greek, but also unpublished PhD dissertations– help Sakellaropoulos cover the gap that arises from the lack of Turkish sources, something he achieves with great dexterity. As a result, the author offers a sober, but critical, coverage of important issues in the history of the island, including: the policies and attitudes of Greece, Turkey and the USA in 1974 (and in other periods), the London–Zurich Agreements and the Constitutive Assembly in 1947, to name just few. The lack of Turkish sources becomes perhaps more evident when the discussion comes to the Turkish Cypriot Left, where the evidence is relatively limited. Bearing in mind Spivak’s central question – “Can the subaltern speak?” – we could gainfully pose a similar question regarding the Cypriot Left in general, and the Turkish Cypriot Left in particular. For his part, Sakellaropoulos treats the Left as an active agent –and no mere bystander– in the complex issue of Cyprus. At the same time, through the use of extensive bibliography, the author offers

the reader not only a balanced argument, but also food for thought with his multidimensional approach. This becomes evident in the last part of each chapter, dedicated to a section called 'Discussion', in which the author offers a critical review of the chapter's themes. In this way, the reader can, on the one hand, grasp the important details and events in Cyprus and, on the other, locate it in its proper global political context.

In conclusion, *The Cypriot Social Formation* features a sophisticated interplay of concepts, and deftly offers –sometimes implicitly, at times explicitly– an account of decades of historiographical debates between different interpretations of the Cyprus Question. Whether one agrees with the author or not, *The Cypriot Social Formation* is a must read for all those with an interest in the subject. There is no doubt in my mind that the book will become standard reading on the issue for many years to come.

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