

# Efforts to revitalise Maronite Arabic

Chryso Hadjidemetriou  
University of Fribourg, Switzerland

chryso dot hadjidemetriou at unifr dot ch



# Location of Cyprus





# Ethnologue Entry: Kormakiti Maronite Arabic

[http://www.ethnologue.com/14/show\\_language.asp?code=ACY](http://www.ethnologue.com/14/show_language.asp?code=ACY)

<b>Population</b>	1,300 (1995). Ethnic population: 6,000 in the Cypriot Maronite ethnic group, 140 Maronites in Kormatiki, 80 to 100 in Limassol, the rest in the Maronite community in Nicosia.
<b>Region</b>	Kormakiti, one of 4 Maronite villages in the mountains of northern Cyprus, and in refugee communities in Nicosia and Limassol.
<b>Alternate names</b>	Cypriot Maronite Arabic, Maronite, Sanna
<b>Classification</b>	Afro-Asiatic, Semitic Central, South, Arabic
<b>Language use</b>	All speakers older than 30 years. 140 mainly older adults in Kormatiki. No diglossia with Standard Arabic. Those in Kormatiki use Greek or possibly Turkish; those in southern Cyprus use Greek.
<b>Comments</b>	A hybrid language with roots in the Arabic of both the Anatolia and the Levant. Many borrowings from Syriac and Greek. People are called 'Maronites'. Christian.



# Kormakiti Maronite Arabic

Kormakiti Maronite Arabic (henceforth abbreviated as KMA) is spoken by a minority group, the Kormakiti Maronites, in Cyprus where the official languages are Greek and Turkish (with the local varieties of Greek and Turkish being the everyday languages). The Kormakiti Maronites belong to the Cypriot Maronite community which is a Catholic community. The name 'Maronite' does not designate the ethnic or national origin of the community (Dau 1984: 9).

Currently, there are approximately 4,650 Cypriot Maronites living in the government-controlled area of Cyprus of which one thousand nine hundred fifty are Kormakiti Maronites (European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages 2006: 7). The first Maronites possibly arrived in Cyprus in the seventh century (Varnava 2002), with a further three waves of Maronite migration occurring by the thirteenth centuries AD (Hourani 1998: 1). So, KMA and Cypriot Greek (henceforth, abbreviated as CG) have had the potential for contact ever since.

(Source: Hadjidemetriou: forthcoming).



# Kormakiti Maronite Arabic

Before the 1974 Turkish invasion, the Maronites were located in four villages in the northern part of Cyprus, Kormakitis, Asomatos, Karpasia and Ayia Marina. In only one of these four villages, Kormakitis, were the Maronites bilingual in CG and KMA. Inhabitants of the other three Maronite villages were monolingual CG speakers, although there is no record of when the speakers shifted from Arabic to CG. After the Turkish invasion, the majority of Maronites from all four villages were scattered around the unoccupied part of the island, abandoning their villages in the occupied north. Kormakiti Maronites share CG with other Maronites and with Greek Cypriots. However, the identity of each group does not follow the same lines of delimitation as the languages. Kormakiti Maronites like to distinguish themselves from the Greek Cypriots as far as religion is concerned; however, they have not shown any desire for alienation from CG or the Greek Cypriots. The linguistic integration of the Kormakiti Maronites into the Greek Cypriot population clearly demonstrates that CG is their first language.

(Source: Hadjidemetriou: forthcoming).



**DISTANCE CHART**

	LEFKOSIA	LEFKOSIA			
LEFKOSIA	0				
PAPHOS	120	0			
LARNACA	110	10	0		
TROUSOS	90	20	20	0	
AGIA NECHA	110	10	10	10	0
POLIS	140	30	30	20	0
LARNACA AIRPORT	110	10	10	10	10
PAPHOS AIRPORT	120	0	10	10	10

Distances between the towns in km (approx.)

Scale 1:400000



**REFERENCE**

	Motorway with junction numbers		State city
	Main road		Port city
	Secondary road		OTC organization
	Local surface road, all weather		OTC extension
	Road		OTC extension
	Fishing harbor		State city
	Sea harbor		Market
	Knowledge Base Area boundary		Industrial city
	Electroboundary		State town
	Isolated		Place of interest
	OTC of special responsibility (Member of the Council of Ministers)		OTC center
	OTC of special responsibility (Member of the Council of Ministers)		Travel information
	OTC of special responsibility (Member of the Council of Ministers)		OTC

OTC - Cyprus Tourism Organisation





**DISTANCE CHART**

LARNACA		
LEFKOSIA	46	
PAPHOS	70	
LARNACA	21	
TRICHOPIA	36	
AGIA NAPA	41	
POLIS	54	
LARNACA AIRPORT	13	
PAPHOS AIRPORT	47	
DISTANCES BETWEEN THE TOWNS IN KM (APPROX.)		
LARNACA	LEFKOSIA	46
PAPHOS	70	PAPHOS
LARNACA	21	LARNACA
TRICHOPIA	36	TRICHOPIA
AGIA NAPA	41	AGIA NAPA
POLIS	54	POLIS
LARNACA AIRPORT	13	LARNACA AIRPORT
PAPHOS AIRPORT	47	PAPHOS AIRPORT

Scale 1:800000

**REFERENCE**

- |  |                        |  |              |
|--|------------------------|--|--------------|
|  | International Boundary |  | Capital City |
|  | Major Road             |  | Port City    |
|  | Secondary Road         |  | City         |
|  | Local Road             |  | Town         |
|  | Railway                |  | Village      |
|  | Ferry Port             |  | Hamlet       |
|  | State Boundary         |  | Settlement   |
|  | National Boundary      |  | Place        |
|  | Airport                |  | Hill         |
|  | Dam                    |  | Mountain     |
|  | Lighthouse             |  | Island       |
|  | Windmill               |  | Lake         |
|  | Tower                  |  | Bay          |
|  | Monument               |  | Peninsula    |
|  | Shrine                 |  | Strait       |
|  | Well                   |  | Isthmus      |
|  | Well                   |  | Island       |



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(Source: Hadjidemetriou: forthcoming).























Kormakiti Maronite Arabic has been classified as an endangered language in need of protection within the frame of the Application of the European Charter for regional or minority languages. Kormakiti Maronite Arabic exhibits a disruption in its generational continuity (Hadjidemetriou: forthcoming). It has been heavily influenced by its contact with Cypriot Greek (henceforth abbreviated as CG) (Borg 1985, Newton 1964). Kormakiti Maronite Arabic has been categorised as an Arabic-Greek mixed language (Thomason and Kaufman 1988, Thomason 2001, Thomason 2003), rather than a variety of Arabic with extensive structural borrowing from CG. The opposing view claims that KMA has been erroneously classified a mixed language (Bakker 2003, Hadjidemetriou: forthcoming).



# European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages: Application of the Charter in Cyprus

- The Cypriot authorities need to recognise Maronite Arabic as a language “one that is in urgent and immediate need of protection” (European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages: Application of the Charter in Cyprus 2006).
- “The codification of Cypriot Maronite Arabic is crucial for its maintenance since it facilitates its teaching at school, enhances its visibility in public life, for example in the press, and raises its cultural status. The committee of Experts encourages the Cypriot authorities to find means, in co-operation with the speakers, to codify CMA” (*ibid*).
- More specifically, the Government of Cyprus needs to base its policies, legislation and practice on the following objectives and principles outlined by the application of the Charter in Cyprus:



- the recognition of Maronite Arabic as an expression of cultural wealth
- the respect of the geographical area of Maronite Arabic in order to ensure that existing or new administrative divisions do not constitute an obstacle to the promotion of Maronite Arabic;
- the need for resolute action to promote Maronite Arabic in order to safeguard it;
- the facilitation and/or encouragement of the use of Maronite Arabic, in speech and writing, in public and private life;
- the maintenance and development of links, in the fields covered by this Charter, between groups using Maronite Arabic and other groups in the State employing a language used in identical or similar form, as well as the establishment of cultural relations with other groups in the State using different languages;
- the provision of appropriate forms and means for the teaching and study of Maronite Arabic at all appropriate stages;
- the provision of facilities enabling non-speakers of Maronite Arabic living in the area where it is used to learn it if they so desire;
- the promotion of study and research on Maronite Arabic at universities or equivalent institutions;
- the promotion of appropriate types of transnational exchanges, in the fields covered by this Charter, for Maronite Arabic used in identical or similar form in two or more States.

(European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages: Application of the Charter in Cyprus: 2006: 4).



# First Symposium on Maronite Arabic

- Within the frame of the above recommendations, on November 9-10, 2007 the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Cyprus co-organised a symposium inviting members of the Kormakiti Maronite community and linguists who have worked on KMA to give their account on what they believe the future of KMA will or should be.
- After the symposium, a team of linguists and members of the Maronite community have come together in order to form a plan for the revitalisation of KMA. This team reached a consensus that in order to help the KMA community maintain its language and also strengthen its use and restore generational continuity, several measures need to be taken. Towards this end, four working groups have been proposed, each one focussing on a different issue. These four groups are:



# Working Groups

1. Awareness Group
2. Language Documentation Group
3. Re-Introducing the Language Group
4. Funding Group



# Community Response

- Based on my fieldwork for the purposes of my doctoral thesis, it became clear that some Kormakiti Maronites have already given up on the survival of their language, whereas some others welcome the revitalisation of the language. The ones who have given up do not oppose the revitalisation efforts, but they seem indifferent (Hadjidemetriou: forthcoming).
- The following quotations from interviews with KMA speakers offer different opinions about the past and present utility of KMA, the survival of KMA, and proposals on what can be done to guarantee its survival. The interviews were conducted in Cypriot Greek.



Quote A:

pándos emás efániken ítan pollá xrísimi yia llóumas.  
torá yia tin néan yenjián yia tin néan yenjián enná xásun  
tσίni éndzenna xásumen emís.

*We found it [i.e. KMA], it was very useful for us. Now for  
the younger generation, for the younger generation they are  
going to lose, we are not going to lose anything.*

(Source: Hadjidemetriou: forthcoming)



## Quote B:

nomízo to pco simandikón pu prépi na yíni yia na  
điasothí i ylóssa íne na epistrépsun i maronítes píso sta  
xoriá tus.

*I believe the most important thing that must happen in order  
for our language to survive is for the Maronites to return to  
their villages.*

(Source: Hadjidemetriou: forthcoming)



## Quote C:

ómos thélo na toníso óti ótan emiliótan i ylóssa mas i pappúðes mu tje i yonís mu emilúsan tin ylóssan sénan epípeðon morfotikón tis epoxies ecínis ikanopiúsen tes anágkes tus [...] i ylóssa pu tha anazoy pu tha anazooyonísumen pu tha ðiatirísumen pu tha metaðósumen prépi na andapokrínete stis anágkes tis yenjás pu tha tin máθun [...] ce tha íθela tus akaðimaikús na mas pun apó pu tha kalípsumen ta cená pu ðanizómasten apó tin ellinikín?

*But I would like to stress that when our language was spoken by my grandparents and my parents, they spoke the language in an educational level of those times which satisfied their needs [...] The language that we are going to revitalise, that we are going to maintain and transmit must satisfy the needs of the generations which are going to learn it [...]. And I would like the Academics to tell us how we are going to cover all the voids we have and we borrow from Greek?*

*(Source: Hadjidemetriou: forthcoming).*



# Community Response

As already pointed out, the revitalisation of KMA is welcomed by some Kormakiti Maronites. These Kormakiti Maronites have formed a group, Kermia Ztite, which aims at the survival of the community language:

Kermia Ztite: Programme for the survival of the language of Kormakitis 2006:

1. strengthening the Maronites' pride in their language and their culture
2. informing the wider Cypriot community and the world about issues concerning the Maronite community of Cyprus
3. dealing with racism in the Cypriot community
4. redevelopment of Kormakitis so that it can 'host' the revitalisation efforts.



To accomplish the above, they suggest the following methods:

1. lessons for learning the language of Kormakitis
2. lectures for explaining the value of maintaining a language and the relationship of language to ethnic identity
3. workshops on the use of the language
4. cultural events in Kormakitis for the promotion of learning the language, history, and traditions of the Maronites
5. excursions organised to take young people to the village and show them the most important places
6. creating material for teaching the language to elementary school children
7. creation of a TV documentary on the language of Kormakitis
8. publication of a newspaper in the language of Kormakitis with the title 'Sanna'.

(Source: Kermia Ztite: Programme for the survival of the language of Kormakitis 2006).



# Final Remarks

Kormakiti Maronite Arabic is an endangered language primarily because of its generational discontinuity and requires immediate attention to secure its survival. The efforts of the community to save their language need to be reinforced in any possible way, even if these efforts are not as unanimous and widespread as they should be. In theory, the proposed plan and working groups for the revitalisation of KMA sound promising. Such a hopeful project requires the full-time involvement of researchers and community members; I believe, this is one of the major obstacles of the feasibility of the project. However, since there is interest within the community, then the viability of the project might not be as dim.



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Thank you