



ÖZLEM ÇAYKENT & MESUDE ATAY

***RE-MEMBERING BORDERLESS AND
BORDERED CHILDHOOD IN CYPRUS :
A CASE STUDY ON THE LIMITS AND
PROSPECTS OF ORAL HISTORIES***

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- Peer Reviewed contents

Re-membering Borderless and Bordered Childhood in Cyprus : A Case Study on the Limits and Prospects of Oral Histories

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Abstract

Over the last century, ‘childhood’ has become a major field of study as childhood is an important stage in the formation of individual identity, and adult narratives of childhood reveal interesting data on both personal experiences and public memories. These memories are important to be captured especially in societies where perceptions of difference change and borders emerge. This article explores the complex narratives of history and cultural construction of childhood in Cyprus from such a perspective. Our aim is to assess the narratives of the borderless to a bordered Cypriot society dwelling mostly on Turkish Cypriot informants whose childhood was in the 1930s to the 1970s.

Keywords: *Childhood, Cyprus, Nationalism, Oral history.*

1. Introduction

Over the last century, childhood has become a complex and intricate concept and even a major field of study. It began as an alternative perspective, part of the attempt to study the 'non-central' groups ignored by traditional history and oral history. However, the genre now transcends the marginal niche and has become an important method for shedding light on the unknown grey and blacker areas of the past.

Not only is the concept of childhood ambivalent in terms of its extent, significance and nature, there is also a great 'ambiguity in relation to its content in widely different periods in history' and across geographical regions (Heywood, 2001, p. 32; Cunningham, 1991, 1995; Sommerville, 1982; James & Prout, 1990). One fact is certain: 'in most periods of the past there have emerged dominant modes of thinking about childhood. We can think of these as inventions of childhood, new ways of imagining the key features of childhood' (Cunningham, 1991). Consequently, it is important to understand childhood frameworks and stories in their social, geographic and cultural context and to take individual aspects and conditions into account.

This is a project to shed light some light on this rather unknown area based on oral history data. The study attempts to capture the non-written history of Cyprus, not in terms of 'undiscovered' chronology, but rather the experience of childhood during the last era of the British period, the 1930-70s. However, as we began to collect the childhood histories, question regarding the understanding of memory formation and social memory arose. Thus, we found ourselves demythifying the romantic/nostalgic gaze of childhood memories and wrestling with an understanding of the process of social memory. Thus, it is also deeply concerned with the development of the hegemonic discourses of the rising nation state(s) like Cyprus. That is, it will look at childhood memories to reveal the developing mind-sets of Turkish Cypriots growing up in the discursively and nationally divisive, but not yet spatially divided island of Cyprus.

Social learning, language, and social memory are important parts of this oral history project. Hamilton and Shopes (2008) point out, 'how oral history, as an established form for actively making memories, both reflect and shape collective or public memory'(p. viii). When recollecting a memory we are always caught between the past experience (or the shape in which we have last recollected that memory) and the context of remembering (Bhabha, 1967, p. 67, xxiii).¹ Oral history has often been described as 'uncovering unknown stories' or 'giving voice to the unheard, the secret' 'making it, in effect, a form of exposé or evidence where no other is available' (Hamilton and Shopes, 2008, p. viii). Furthermore, as it has the human mind as its main source, it has recently become intertwined with memory studies. The research aim is no longer to simply capture data by collecting people's memoirs, but to understand why they remember and how they make sense or meaning of these recollections.

Oral history has often been described as 'uncovering unknown stories' or 'giving voice to the unheard, the secret' 'making it, in effect, a form of exposé or evidence where no other is available' (Hamilton and Shopes, 2008, p. viii). Furthermore, as it has the human mind as its main source, it has recently become intertwined with memory studies. The aim of research is no longer to simply capture data by collecting people's memoirs, but to understand why they remember and how they make sense or meaning of these recollections. Michael Frisch states that oral history can emerge as 'a powerful tool for discovering, exploring, and evaluating the nature of the process of historical memory' – how people make sense of their past, how they connect individual experience and its social context, how the past becomes part of the present, and how people use it to interpret their lives and the world around them (Frisch, 1990, p. 188; Grele, 1991, Passerini, 1987).

A famous memory studies scholar Mieke Bal observes the connection between memory and history saying that 'Neither remnant, document, nor relic of the past, nor floating in a present cut off from

¹ Bhabha calls this process of remembering in nation formation/construction as 're-membering'.

the past, cultural memory, for better or worse, binds the past to the present and future.’ From this perspective, memories give an insight into the past, even as they are shaped by the present. There is a great deal of recent literature that ‘illustrate[s] how memory serves many purposes, between conscious recall and un-reflected re-emergence, between nostalgic longing for what is lost to polemical use of the past to reshape the present’ (Bal, 1999) In other words, individual and public memory, as complicated as they are, have an active role in linking the past to the present.

2. The Challenge of Writing a History of Cypriot Childhood Experiences

Social memory is certainly very important in shaping perceptions of history and vice versa; basically there is a reciprocal relationship between them. However, this reciprocity is a complex process with many actors in it. In places where the nation-state mentality is still a constituent, such as in the Eastern Mediterranean and especially in Cyprus, this reciprocity is still very dominant. It is this process of binding that we explore in this paper. Many of us who engage in oral history in Turkish Cypriot society, have observed that memory and history are inextricably entangled. Not only is it very interesting to ponder upon memory, how memory is formed and re-memorised each time it is re-called, but also how our memories are shaped by socially learned memories.

An analysis of Cypriot childhood experiences and political/national identities inevitably involves social learning, language, and social memory. Sadly, Cyprus is very rich in recent political turmoil and in these circumstances, childhood memories seem to undergo vivid alterations. They are filtered through public memory and political discourses that give them new contexts of understanding. These new understandings of personal experiences then contribute to the national discourses, creating a circular reasoning/construction. In other words, when recollecting a memory we are always caught be-

tween the past experience and the context of remembering, and by speaking or writing our memoirs, we are contributing to and acknowledging the public memory. In fact, this personal aspect of history makes oral history studies priceless. As a result, childhood experiences and narratives are an important aspect of the recent 'nation(s) building processes' of Cyprus. This study will examine the complex ways of in which childhood memories are shaped by personal experiences, education, political discourses, place of residence and socio-economic developments. Thus, to analyse the various levels of oral history narratives of childhood multi-formation of national identity, socio-political developments and personal experiences need to be taken into account at the same time.

Nations and nationalisms are not simply defined by physical borders. At the same time, boundaries and borders are not only more or less distant political margins; they surround us and have a great influence on our daily practice and on our mind-sets. They are not only lines between spatial entities; they can delineate processes of education, politics, economy and governance and distinct national symbolisms (Paasi, 2007, p. 160). The boundaries that define our identities and geographical regions are formed by spatial and historical processes, and these processes have a powerful effect on our minds as we grow up. Malcolm Anderson (1996) notes in his book *Frontiers* that:

Contemporary frontiers are not simply lines on maps, the unproblematic givens of political life, where one jurisdiction or political authority ends and another begins; they are central to understanding political life, power relations and cultural limitations. Examining the justifications of frontiers raises crucial, often dramatic, questions concerning citizenship, identity, political loyalty, exclusion, inclusion and of the ends of the state (p. 1).

History education is certainly a significant feature in the formation of modern state nationalisms, especially a nation-state (Papadakis, 1998). This is accomplished by constructing a new social memory and building social cohesion by creating a political culture and a sense of citizenship and belonging. History is also an instrument for commemorating the sufferings of the nation and justifying the politi-

cal aims of various groups, this is particularly common in divided societies. In such a narrative, the sufferings of the 'others' are ignored, any type of social and cultural similarities and interactions between groups is denied and the historical presence of the other is questioned, while the self is praised (Papadakis, 2008, p. 6-7). At the same time, an organic bond is constructed between the nation and the territory, which is usually gendered as female (Bryant, 2002). This perspective is closely related to the construction of the feeling of belonging as the only conceivable legitimate discourse. Rights, liberties and even justice become restricted to one community and any internal or external act can be justified on the grounds of self-defence. Anastasiou (2002) remarks that the two main ethnic communities in Cyprus have a cycle of a miscommunication based on the development of nationalism emerging during the colonial period. Competing nationalisms have since then informed the structure, culture, psychology, communication processes and anthropology of the society.

Although the island is now engaged in a bi-communal and bi-national discourse and spatially divided into separate states for two ethnic groups, namely the Turkish and Greek Cypriots, historically the island bears the imprint of many different societies and nations. At the centre of the Eastern Mediterranean trade routes, the island carries the cultural heritage, whether material or not, of all those who passed through: Egyptians, Hittites, Phoenicians, Assyrians, Persians, Romans, Byzantines, Arabs, Lusignans, Venetians, Ottomans and British. However, since the rise of nation states, the history of Cyprus has become the history of two nations: Turkish and Greek Cypriots. Another important factor in the creation of inter-communal tensions is that Cyprus was for a short period of time, a British Crown colony; this led to some modernisation in the economy, state and jurisdiction, but also prompted each of the major groups, Greek and Turkish Cypriots and the British government, to otherise the remaining two. (Polis, 1973)

3. A Summary of Historical Developments for Contextualization of the Oral Histories

In this study, there are a couple of very obvious examples that reveal the complex ways in which memory is shaped. Cyprus is very rich in recent political problems, and thus memories seem to have undergone vivid alterations. Here, learned memories emerged especially in relation to political liberation/victimisation narratives and traditional versus modern discussions. The memories that seemed to be recalled most easily were those that have found synchronic verifications with contemporary political and modern discourses of conflict, unrest and war on the island. Another typical example is the typical modernity discourse of the past as a time of poverty and deprivation compared to modern abundance and richness. However, interestingly, these memories are more vivid, personalised and encompassed by 'self-victimisation' narratives among the educated members of the society and those who have left their homes for a 'better life' and moved to Britain/Turkey or big cities.

To make sense of theoretical points in this study, it is necessary to understand the historical developments on the island. Given the ages of our informants, Cyprus had not yet been divided. Thus, some of our informants spent their childhoods within the territory known now as Southern Cyprus or Republic of Cyprus. *Mahalles*, or street divisions between communities were usually the norm in mixed cities and villages. Another important difference was certainly demographic numbers. As it is the case in all ethnically divided conflict areas, it is difficult to give exact population numbers. However, still one can certainly remark that between 1881 and 1953 there was a clear demographic upward curve; Taeuber (1955) points that the population was 186,000 in 1881 and had increased to 510,000 by the end of 1953 (p. 9). According to the 1960 census, the population of Cyprus was then about half a million. There were several communities such as Greek Cypriots, Turkish Cypriots, Armenians, Maronites and other foreigners on the island (Solsten, 1991, p. 54-8). In 1953, the biggest city in Cyprus was Nicosia, with a population of 40,500.

At that time, all the towns apart from the capital, Lefkosa (Nicosia), were called villages. The largest were Limasol, Mağusa (Famagusta), Larnaka, Baf (Paphos), and Girne (Kyrenia). Most of these big towns/villages are located by the coast or very close to the coast (Rüstem, 1961, p.7). In terms of occupations, the population was certainly agrarian. According to Rüstem (1961) in 1955 7,000 worked in mining, 20,000 worked in construction, 263,000 worked in sectors such as trade, transportation, and public administration and 263,000 were employed in other sectors.

As most of our informants were born between 1920 and 1960, the conditions on the island during this period are relevant to our study. After approximately 300 years of Ottoman rule, Cyprus was leased to the British Empire in 1878 when the Ottomans entered into alliance with the British Empire against the increasing threat of Russia. When the Ottoman Empire joined the Central Powers to form the Triple Alliance and signed the Turco-German Alliance, Britain unilaterally declared Cyprus a British Colony and this status was subsequently recognised by Turkey and Greece in the Lausanne Treaty in 1925. In terms of social and intellectual movements such as modernization and nationalism Cyprus was in the footsteps of Mediterranean mainland. For all these reasons, during the early part of the twentieth century, perceptions of differences between the two largest communities started to crystallise.

The division of the two communities on the basis of their ethnic origins by British colonial rule, and the colonial politics of “divide and rule” that established the alliance of the Turkish community with Britain against the Greeks, increased tensions and potential conflict situations between the two communities (Pollis, 1973; Kızılyürek, 2002, p. 215). An important difference between the British and Ottoman rule was the secularisation of the education system in both communities, which was facilitated by teachers sent from Greece and Turkey. The narrative of Hafiz Cemal is a remarkable example of this process. While mentioning the journalistic activities of both of the communities between 1902-07 Hafiz Cemal highlights the nationalistic fervour:

Against fourteen regular and perfectly functioning newspapers and presses of the Greeks we only had two Turkish newspapers. Back then, they were all published by Greek publishing houses as the Turks did not have the type settings and machines. I know that press is development of the spirit and minds, a guide to happiness. I know that most of our people are ignorant and in dark! Many Greeks write lies on papers and increasingly manipulate our community towards the realization of Greek aims. On the other hand, they keep doing “Ellinosis” (Greek nationalism) and on the other hand they feel close to the British; and as a result the feelings of great Ottomans lose their influence in the community day by day (Fevzioğlu, 2004, p. 14).

It is possible to argue that to understand Cypriot history and ‘The Cyprus Issue’, it is necessary to understand Cypriot nationalisms. The Cypriot society is composed of competing nationalisms which inform the structure, culture, psychology, communication processes and anthropology of the society. The recent history of the island is characterised by uprisings against British colonial rule followed by rising nationalist clashes between the two communities. The project of Greek Cypriot nationalism was based on a union of Cyprus and Greece (Enosis); Turkish Cypriot nationalism was based on ethnic separation and partition of the Island.

As World War II unfold, the demands for independence increased and the idea of Enosis (unification with the mainland Greece) became increasingly popular among the Greek Cypriots. This idea was also influential in igniting unrest both against the colonial government and within the community; it led to divisiveness, violence, uprisings, armed conflict. This situation created anxiety among the Turkish Cypriots and led to conflict with the Greeks who were imposing on them a minority status. The uprising in October 1931 was one of the peak points of the tension building during those years. The Great Depression, which had started in New York in October 1929, had expanded to the world when, at the local level, Greek Cypriots rebelled against the colonial government with demands of Enosis. In response, the colonial government increased its control on both communities (Asmussen, 2006). Such control was visible even in so-

cial gatherings like weddings which were monitored and their duration were limited.

Turkish nationalism developed greatly in the 1950s and 1960s against the backdrop of a flourishing Greek nationalism. In the 50s the Greek Cypriots had increased their political actions against the British rule. EOKA demanding self government and union with mainland Greece founded a guerrilla movement going into armed conflict against the British government. Finally, Cyprus acquired its independence from Britain on 16 August 1960. The treaties of Zurich and London, signed on 19 February 1959, established the guarantor status of Turkey, Greece and England. The Republic of Cyprus established in 1960 was a unitary bilingual state with two founding communities. Archbishop Makarios III became the first President and Fazıl Küçük acted as the Vice-President. Yet, this did not mean that the problems ceased in Cyprus. Conflict between the two communities reached a state of war.

In the years following the ethnic division of the island, the problems and the ethnic nationalist politics of the two communities increased and became chronic issues that remain unresolved today. As Makarios suggests, “the treaties created a state not a nation.” Kızılyürek (2002) suggests that this situation would not have been the choice of the Cypriot people; it was the decision of the states that gained the guarantor status with the declaration of the Republic (p. 103). He also adds that the leaders of two communities signed this treaty because they felt forced to do so (Kızılyürek, 2005). He further emphasises that the idea of independence never appealed to the Cypriots, as it was neither Enosis nor partition, and thus, no effort has been made to sustain the Republic. (Kızılyürek, 2002) In summary, the establishment of the Republic did not result neither in Turkish Cypriot nationalists abandoning their ideal of partition of the Island, nor in Greek Cypriot nationalists abandoning the ideal of Enosis (Calotychos, 1998, p. 7). Inter-communal armed conflict of EOKA and TMT led to the de facto division of Island under the UN supervision. Violence that started in 1955 steadily increased, especially 1963 and 1974, resulting in Turkish Cypriots living in ghettos in fear of

their life. Eventually these led to Turkey's intervention as a guarantor state in 1974 following the coup d'état against President Makarios and ensuing de facto separate states divided by a Green Line, composed of two ethnically homogenous populations. Following these segregations and divisions, the majority of the Greeks who had been living in the north – except the ones living in the Rizokarpaso – had to migrate to south, while the majority of the Turkish Cypriots living in the south had to migrate to the north. Although the statistical figures are debated, the following numbers illustrate the severity of the issue for a small island like Cyprus: between 120,000 and 200,000 Greek Cypriots and between 50,000 and 60,000 Turkish Cypriots were forced to migrate and lost their land or property forever (Calotychos, 1998, p. 8). The memories of forced migrations on both sides have set the tone for the public memory of the Island. Additionally, Jewish, Armenian and Maronite communities, which were relatively small but had centuries of history on the island, were forced to immigrate to the south and adopt minority or Greek identities. Although these two types of nationalism have evolved to some degree since the division of the island, they still exist (Demetriou, 2007; Bryant, 2005).

4. Analyses of Data

Significantly, when the participants were asked about the first socio-political event they remembered, the answers, in order of frequency, were Greek Cypriot attacks, waiting at the outskirts of the village to protect themselves, national holiday celebrations (mostly Turkish Republican national days), and the Queen's Birthday celebrations at school. This demonstrates how strongly, later political narratives and social memory have influenced personal memories and foregrounded these experiences. The answers are so similar it is as if they had been memorised.

Fairs during holidays, feasts, weddings (as mentioned earlier), and wrestling contests were also among the events most frequently re-

ferred to in childhood memories related to society and community in Cyprus.

For Ferit Dođramaciođlu, born in 1947, as for many of our informants, memories of past holidays are a significant part of his remembrances of his childhood. Below, he focuses on a specific wrestling story, which he tells with great delight, in relation to his escape from the South in 1974.

I would go to watch wrestling contests. I had an uncle-in-law, a short guy but whose biceps resembled to those of wrestlers. I had an uncle, a tall guy, who was actually a wrestler. One day these two were wrestling. My uncle made a move in the harvest field. Our uncle-in-law was suddenly flared up. He ripped his shirt off and threw it on the bundles. Then he made his own move. The wrestler uncle, who called himself Hüseyin the Brute and who was coming from Fasula (a place in Southern Cyprus), fled from the other end of the field when he saw the biceps of our uncle-in-law (laughing). All the people burst into laughter. They forcibly brought back Hüseyin the Brute and this time the uncle-in-law fled. He said to Hüseyin, you call yourself a wrestler and I liken myself to a donkey (laughing). How am I supposed to wrestle with this bear? Spectators again started to laugh out loud. Back then I was fourteen or fifteen years old, I remember very well that my uncle-in-law said to me, while fleeing, that he was going home because otherwise that rascal is going to kill him (Ferit Dođramaciođlu, born 1947, Susuz Village, personal communication, July 6, 2009).

Social conflict, war and political organisations were another set of most enduring memories of the past political events. In addition to these, those who were born in the 1920s and in the early 1930s had reminiscences of Atatürk, Kemalist revolutions, and national holidays.

A close contact was established through newspapers and through teachers, who either came from or received their education in Turkey (Altan, 1997; Fedai, 2005). Although Cyprus was outside the Turkish national borders defined by the Lausanne Treaty and the National Struggle, Turkish Cypriots, in some instances, outpaced their counterparts in Anatolia in adopting and implementing Kemalist Revolutions. Turkish Cypriots were following the revolutionary resolutions of the Turkish National Assembly closely. In the second half of the

1920s and during the 1930s, newspapers such as *Hakikat* [Truth] were instrumental in communicating these resolutions to Turkish Cypriots. Teachers played a crucial role in facilitating the adaptation of these revolutionary resolutions – for instance abandoning the fez and *çarşaf* (chador)² (Altan, 1997, p. 108). It is possible to go even further and to maintain that the Muslim ethnic group in Cyprus voluntarily adopted Kemalist revolutions in a shorter period of time and with less resistance than the Muslim population of Anatolia (Beckingham, 1957, p. 66). Emine Tüler relates the Kemalist transformations she experienced during her adolescence as follows:

Women in Cyprus were all wearing chador at the time, but they abandoned it and became civilized thanks to Atatürk. Before, women completely covered themselves, only their eyes were visible. Atatürk ordered his commanders to go to Cyprus and to lead women to abandon their chador. Commanders and leaders of the community campaigned against the chador. Commanders forcibly tore some women's chador and in some cases, families willingly ripped off chadors. I experienced this transformation. *Were you also wearing chador then?* I was also wearing chador. I was eighteen years old and I was covered. Then I got rid of my chador. Atatürk paved the way for this and we became civilized (Emine Tüler, born in Mallıdağ 1929, personal communication, August 26, 2009).

This enthusiastic adoption of Kemalist Revolutions is reminiscent of the (Turkish Republican) holidays that were enthusiastically celebrated in Cyprus. These holidays were especially important for children because the celebrations offered more visual feasts than other holidays. Mustafa Alpay Kocareis, born in Mağusa in 1945 gives a vivid snapshot of these celebrations.

On national holidays, we decorated the central square and leaders would give national speeches there. Then, when I was growing older, I started to recite poems as part of these celebrations because I was talented in this. National folklore dance teams coming from Turkey would perform on stages erected on the square. People in Mağusa would watch their performances...As a part of the Republic Day celebrations, on October 29, all peo-

² A loose black robe worn over the clothing to hide the contours of the body and cover the hair.

ple in Mağusa would walk in the city during the night with torches in hand. I have a very vivid memory. I guess I was at grade four in the primary school. Flying a Turkish flag and hanging Atatürk's portraits were forbidden. School administration would punish us because we were insisting on flying our flag and hanging Atatürk's portraits. They would beat all of us up.

Although these were considered national holidays, it is important to remember that this was still the British period and some of these celebrations were unofficial. Although the English administration allowed the existence of separate community schools, it controlled schools in official matters and paid close attention to any celebrations that would rally people in mobs, mutinies or other show of power. Again Mustafa Alpay Kocareis narrates an official ceremony at school:

From the British Era, I remember one specific day. I was in primary school. That day was the coronation of the British Queen. The British school administration had brought these small tubs full of crushed ice. They distributed to each pupil a glass with the Queen's image on it and a bottle of Coca Cola. It was the first time I saw bottled Coke. *Did they put Cokes in those tubs?* Yes, they cooled the bottles inside and then they distributed them. Back then, the district governor's office building was situated near where today are the ruins of courthouse. The British held large ceremonies there, but the children were not taken to these ceremonies. They made older students sing "God Save the Queen" anthem. Another memory from around the same time was about the Korean War. I think I was in grade five. I heard from the radio that Turkey had sent soldiers to Korea. At the same time, some friends of mine were saying that they were going to chorus. I was confused, how on earth would they go to Korea and come back here in an hour. It took me some time to distinguish Korea from chorus.

The Second World War -- or the German War, as it was known locally -- also left persistent memories. During the war, Cyprus was still a colony of the British Empire and thus, Cypriot men were conscripted to the British Army. Although at the beginning of the war the number of these soldiers was limited to five hundred, the number increased as the war was prolonged. Eventually, a separate Cyprus Regiment was established (Demiryürek, 2005). Although most of the

informants did not remember any specific phenomenon of the war era, some had vivid memories of the sounds of bombardment planes.

I was continuing to the dervish lodge and I was around fourteen years old. The German War broke out. During the war, German planes would bomb vicinity of the airport, and the Larnaca port. Thirty or forty planes would arrive with a thunderous noise and they would endlessly bomb. My older sister was very afraid by these bombings. We would lie down on the fields or around the house whenever we heard them coming. My sister got really scared and asked my father to run away. As a result, we escaped to our village. Many people, people living in cities like Larnaca and small towns, had dispersed to villages to be safe. One day, I remember, a plane crashed near the salt lake in Larnaca. We went there to see the plane. We walked across the salt lake and salt had bruised our feet (Hanife Esendağ, born in Alaniçi 1928, personal communication, July 01, 2009).

Obviously, the childhood of our informants coincide with hard times in Cyprus' political history. The 1950s witnessed intensifying conflicts between communists and right wing nationalist/extremist. The anti-colonialist and Enosis movements emerged around this time. Public acts of intimidation and political "executions" occurred in these years. The conflict positions were multifaceted. Right-wing Greek Cypriot militants adopted an anti-British position and denounced those collaborating with the British administration as traitors. Turkish Cypriots directed similar denunciations and accusations of betrayal at Greek Cypriots, as the Turkish Cypriots were defending the partition of Cyprus against the possibility of a union with Greece. The post-1950 conflicts were dominated by three main struggles: the anti-colonial struggle against the British rule; the inter-ethnic conflicts between Greek and Turkish Cypriots, and the intra-ethnic competition and conflicts among Greek and Turkish Cypriots. In interviews, many Turkish Cypriots make statements similar to Harry Anastasiou's: "The so-called Green Line, which ethnically divides the capital city of Nicosia, is not so much in itself an obstacle to communication as it is a symbol of a communication problem that goes far deeper than the physical barriers of sandbags and barbed wire"(Anastasiou, 2002, p. 501). Anastasiou relates a memory from

his childhood in the opening part of his book. His parents were running a movie theatre. Anastasiou remembers one traumatic evening at the theatre. He relates that their neighbour Zanetos and his family sat two rows ahead of him and suddenly, a group of men move in and Zanetos was shot dead.

What had occurred was a political assassination, one no different from the many taking place in Cyprus during the 1950s. I was just five years old when I witnessed this dreadful event. I was stunned – uncomprehending of what had just taken place in front of my eyes. My mother, fear-ridden over my safety, ran breathlessly to the scene, grabbed me by the hand, and forcibly dragged me out of the cinema through one of the exit doors that had been flung open.. People shouted that someone should rush him to the hospital, but no dared do so. It was common knowledge that anyone assisting the dying man would put his own life in jeopardy. The man just bled to death. (Anastasiou, 2002, p. 501).

A short while later, British forces arrived and arrested, among others, Harry's father and grandfather were taken into custody and questioned whether they were involved in the assassination or not. Anastasiou relates that: "This was my first encounter with the complex historical and political realities that evolved into the now proverbial Cyprus problem" (Anastasiou, 2008, p. 1-2). Without doubt, such an experience is a heavy burden for a child to carry and it is hard to understand. It is only after growing up that a person manages to situate this experience into its proper, generally political context by connecting it with other learned narratives.

Another memory that comes up frequently belongs to the transition period when communities went from co-habitation and playing together to threatening and killing each other. Here again the political context appropriated during the course of growing up seems to play an important role. Without remembering the details most of the narratives explain that they were on friendly terms before and suddenly they started to fear each other:

Around 1958, we were children. People in the village told us to leave our house and escape. I remember going to our neighbour's house and hiding in the attic. We would sit on the rooftops and men kept guard. *Why did you*

run away? Because they announced Greeks were about to attack our village. My mother gathered us and took us away. *Who would tell you to escape?* Elders of the village. *What else would you do?* In fact, before these events we were not afraid of Greeks. When we saw a Greek in the field we would say hello to each other...We were not afraid of them before. However, then we started to get scared. There was a church in our village. Greek Cypriots would come there on April 23rd and they would hold a fair there. Greek girls were also there and we befriended them. They used to sell desserts and we used to buy these. During the summers, many Greek Cypriots came to the church and socialised with us (Emine Harutoğlu Mallıdağı, born in Gönendere, 1944, personal communication, June 26, 2009).

Some older children had realized that what was going around was a struggle between Turkish and Greek Cypriots.

I was not quite fourteen years old. On a Friday, the bus to our village passed by our store. Our store was situated on the road to Monarga strait. In other words, it was on the road to the port. The driver came back at 2:30 pm after completing his tour and honked the horn. I went out to check it out. Uncle Yusuf told me: “Muzaffer, we will depart for the village earlier than usual today. Tell your master that you will quit work early and you will come back with us.” We did not have any idea about what was going on. They told me that war broke out. *When was it?* It was in December 1963, but I cannot remember the exact day. While on the road I learned that Greeks had killed a Turkish guy, Gara Bullük, the son of a coffeehouse owner. An air of panic and chaos dominated the passengers which included my elder relatives, too. I asked my uncle what was happening. He said that I would not go to work anymore. We were trying to reach our village safely. I do not remember which day of December, but I do remember the outbreak of the war (Muzaffer Artan, born in Topçuköy, 1949, personal communication, July 30, 2009).

It was during the 1950s, when national consciousness and national resistance movements emerged among Turkish Cypriots in an organized system. Although the earlier Greek Cypriot rebellions and the organisation of EOKA in 1955 were directed against British rule, in time they evolved into ENOSIS and evolved to anti-Turkish Cypriot policy. The response of the Turkish Cypriots came with secret organisations and gatherings to augment their sense of nationhood. These efforts laid the foundation for the Turkish Resistance Organi-

sation (Türk Mukavemet Teşkilatı, TMT) (Gazioğlu, 2000). A great number of young men enthusiastically joined these secret organisations and later events show that this went in conjunction with an armament movement on the Island. These organisations engaged in intimidating the counter population -- e.g., 9 September and the Black Mob (Gazioğlu, 2000, p. 3). However, the transition to a more organised resistance came with the establishment of the TMT on 27 November 1957, and gained a great popular support from the general public. Turkish media on the Island were openly propagating now nationalism and were widely read in coffeehouses. The national rights movement led by Dr. Küçük (Volkan) expressed itself through a number of articles in the *Halkın Sesi* and *Nacak* newspapers.

As animosity grew between Greek and Turkish Cypriots, Britain and the United Nations opened negotiations about the future of Cyprus. Meanwhile, on 27 October 1957 Rauf Raif Denktaş was elected as the Chairman of the Federation of Association of Turkish Cyprus. *Halkın Sesi* interpreted this election as the union of the Federation and the political party Cyprus is Turkish (Kıbrıs Türktür Partisi). According to the newspaper, this provided collaboration opportunities for several Turkish nationalist organisations to work towards their shared cause (Coşar, 1957). As a corollary to these events, in 1959 attempts were made to mobilise the peasant and youth branches of the Federation and the Turkish National Student Federation under the leadership of the TMT.

Among our male informants, membership in the above-mentioned organisations and events experienced within these organisations were the first thing that came to their mind when they were asked about socio-political events of the time. The following is the narrative of an informant born in 1947:

I was conscripted to the TMT when I was ten years old. When I went back home after the initiation I was regretful. I was threatened. I could not tell my mother or my father that I was a member of this organization. It was impossible to tell it to others. The next night I went to the commander's house again. There I told him that I was regretful. He reacted badly and said that there was no way out. He continued, "You chose this road and there is no turning back." I cried out loud. Then he gave me a mission. I took our

shepherd's horse to go to a village called Akdoğan. I was given a letter and a small map. I went to that village that I did not know before. There I told the code to the peasant waiting for me and he took me to his home. I gave him the letter. He offered me food. When it was time for me to leave I could not find the horse outside. I had to call it again and again. Then we found the horse. On my way back home, the horse and I fell into a swamp. The owner of the horse was one of the first members of the TMT. In the morning he went to complain to the commander because the horse sweated heavily during the night. The commander appeased him and sent him away. When I got back to my village I went to the coffeehouse. Back then I was going to the coffeehouse although I was ten years old. There I sat with my classmate who happens to be the shepherd from whom I stole the horse. He said that he knows what I was up to earlier that night. I was anxious about my secret activities and denied all. He said to me that next time if the horse sweats, you need to take it to a barn and wipe the sweat. I was still denying that I took the horse because I was afraid of him. Then I admitted that I took the horse. He said me to be careful next time and to take good care of the horse. He said that he was aware of secret activities around and that he knew that the horse was needed. This way I appeased him.

A sense of fear and hostility accompany childhood memories of these political conflicts and chaos. However, although their narratives return to the present-day and they situate these events into their proper contexts, the resilience of childhood manages to find its way into these narratives. Although, on the final note, we see the concern to call the “old enemy” as an infidel, showing how later acquired education surrounds the childhood memories.

I remember that Greek-Turkish animosity was present in 1958. On the way to school we were anxious because the Greek village was in the same direction. We were anxious whether the Greeks would waylay us on the way to school. We liked our friends. However, we could not sleep well at night because there were frequent disturbances. Back then there were not any vehicles in the village other than a tractor. Everybody would run around asking what was going on. For example, when someone would say “the Greek poisoned the water of the village” everybody would run there. As far as I know the struggle between Greek and Turkish Cypriots is present until now. Back in the old days, when we were going through these anxieties we did not have television. We would gather on the harvest field and play various games. We would also keep guard to alert our parents and the village so that the gavour [infidel/foreigner] could not kill us. I said gavour, will it be a prob-

lem? (Muzaffer Artan, 1949 born in Topçuköy, personal communication, July 30, 2009).

5. Conclusive Remarks

Memory and history are inextricably entangled and an individual's memories shape and are shaped by social memories. As Bhabba puts it, in the process of recollecting memories, the dis-membered elements are re-membered to form up a seemingly coherent whole. During this process individual's memories are likely to be altered by socially learned memories. Thus, trying to recapture the childhood memories of the Cypriots we have also captured the above-mentioned re-membering process to a considerable extent.

This project has revealed interrelated issues regarding memory, narratives of borders and barriers and politics. Oral history studies give us clues to two important aspects of borders/barriers. They reveal the emergence or perhaps the shift of perceptions of alterity with the development of political changes, whether these are ideological or geographical real politics. Interviews disclose the difficulty and complexity of memory and the perceptions of borders for children and their grown up narratives. The borders or perhaps the barriers are not just geographical but also mental, and the latter are much more concrete. In a disintegrating society – or the formation of nationhood as it is generically called – a major memory of a child is fear that creates the borders of the other both in terms of form and concept. This feeling put into light with nationalistic narratives acquired at school and social environment form the body of a nation in a divided society like Cyprus.

Gumpert and Drucker (1998, p. 237) remind us that “Observers of the Cyprus phenomenon have noted that while the separation of people by natural barriers, such as rivers, seas, and mountains, is understandable, the separation that occurs along artificial lines of hostility is horrifying. For here, one is stunned by the fact that “borders are not just geographic barriers, but that they are the enemy of talk, of interaction, of the flow of ideas, in short, they are the opponents of

communication.” Although personally the informants claim that they have no problem with their neighbours, social memory and national sentiment shapes their childhood memories into hostile narratives. Certainly, it is an impossible task to separate social and personal memories, and even though some of the more educated informants were certainly aware of theories of identity building, they too seem to adopt conflict and victimisation narratives.

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