

## **Kyrenia in the Memories of its Displaced Greek Residents**

### **[Η Κερύνεια στις Μνήμες των Εκτοπισμένων Ελλήνων Κατοίκων της]**

**Theophano Kypri**

**Kyrenia Folklore Society**

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The work of Theophano Kypri *Kyrenia in the Memories of its Displaced Greek Residents / (Η Κερύνεια στις Μνήμες των Εκτοπισμένων Ελλήνων Κατοίκων της)*, Nicosia 2021, is a book meticulous and rich in primary sources, which was published by Kyrenia Folklore Society and contains 87 oral testimonies from the Archive of Oral History of the Cyprus Research Centre (CRC).

The work of Kypri and the other researchers at the Science Centre is both invaluable and critical work for our nation. Their approach, which involves the careful selection of interviews that most effectively capture the lived experiences and cultural heritage of Kyrenia, underscores the methodological rigour and academic value of the work. With the publication of this book and the use of the oral testimonies collected at the centre, Kypri pays tribute to all those whose oral testimonies contributed to the preservation of the customs of the occupied areas. That is why her one-by-one, careful selection of the most illustrative and qualitative interviews, presenting in detail the world of Kyrenia, is of utmost value. The Archive of Oral History and this book are of extreme importance both to the academic and research community and our culture.

From a scholarly standpoint, Kypri's work aligns with the foundational principles of oral history as articulated by Alessandro Portelli and Paul Thompson. The use of lived memory as historical evidence bridges the gap between official narratives and personal experience, turning Kypri's book into an important contribution to the democratic production of history.

Kazamias' work also draws from the same archive, yet his approach is more focused on situating the experiences of the displaced within broader political and historical frameworks. His volume offers a valuable counterpoint to Kypri's more

ethnographic lens, demonstrating how the same source material can yield different interpretative outcomes depending on the methodological focus.

In total, the book contains 87 testimonies, comprising of 38 testimonies from women and 49 from men. These testimonies provide a detailed examination and analysis of everyday life, cultural practices, social structures, and the contributions of Kyrenia's residents to historical events, including wartime efforts. Additionally, they document occupational patterns and socio-economic developments from the early 20th century up to the Turkish invasion of 1974. Through personal narratives, the book offers valuable insights into the lived experiences of the displaced Greek residents of Kyrenia, contributing to a broader understanding of historical memory and cultural heritage.

Teachers, craftsmen, fishermen, housewives, civil and public servants, doctors, lawyers, and entrepreneurs of the local community narrate their experiences, and share their memories for the first time through this programme. Additionally, by using the tool of oral history they communicate their experiences to the general readership; experiences which would not have been rescued but would have been lost over the years without oral history and T. Kypri.

This publication is invaluable for the coming generations and it is an important contribution to the conservation and preservation of our historical memories of the occupied areas. In addition, it is of extreme value and it promotes various cultural elements of Kyrenia as it outlines the unsung heroes of the city. Moreover, it is a national legacy for the anthropography of Kyrenia, since it contains original testimonies, important memories, various life experiences of the people, and it unfolds and brings to life, through the years, the people of Kyrenia as well as their daily life, their beliefs, values, customs, traditions and their contribution to the national fights.

As in the comparable work *The Turkish Invasion and the Uprooting of Kyrenia Residents* by George Kazamias, Kypri's book is rooted in a rigorous oral history programme and shares the same institutional source: the Archive of Oral History of the Cyprus Research Centre. Both works demonstrate how memory serves as a mechanism of resistance and identity preservation. However, while Kazamias offers a macrohistorical contextualisation of the testimonies, Kypri centres the local folklore and microhistorical detail of everyday life.

The published narratives reveal previously undocumented aspects of Kyrenia's society, bringing to life the experiences and actions of its residents from the early 20th century until the tragic events of July 1974. In compiling this work, Theophano Kypri placed particular emphasis on reconstructing the historical and cultural

landscape of Kyrenia across the centuries. Her focus was primarily on preserving and highlighting elements of Greek folklore and cultural identity, despite the transformations imposed by the Turkish occupation after 1974. Through this approach, the book not only serves as a historical record but also as a testament to the enduring heritage of Kyrenia's displaced Greek community.

The conservation of the local dialect, the vivid oral testimonies, and the direct and firsthand graphic descriptions, showcase the area and certainly the people of Kyrenia, along with their daily life, habits, customs, traditions, folklore, beliefs, and views. This is a linguistic treasure as it is unique in its kind and it helps preserve the local dialect.

Within the pages of the book, both well-known and lesser-known individuals from Kyrenia -ranging from ordinary citizens to members of the educated class- offer authentic and vivid accounts of their lives. These firsthand testimonies provide a rich and multifaceted portrayal of the region's social and cultural fabric. To ensure a structured and chronological representation, the narratives are systematically classified according to the birth dates of the individuals, allowing for a comprehensive examination of intergenerational experiences and perspectives.

The content of the book is rich, with a plethora of information, apt and lively descriptions which transfer the reader to eras gone. They all allow the reader to travel to the past and relive life in Kyrenia, thus achieving the goal of this publication, which is to conserve the memories of the younger generation, the historical, cultural, and folklore of the Municipality of Kyrenia.

Her work can easily be classified as a reference book which reminds readers of their origins as through the book, people and other civilisations are presented and continue to exist through our memories, determining our national and cultural identity.

The book serves as a crucial repository of the memories of both the region and its people, preserving their lived experiences through vivid oral testimonies. These firsthand accounts enable readers to envision daily life in Kyrenia during the period under study, offering a nuanced reconstruction of the past. This is further enhanced by the author's meticulous and objective approach, as she skillfully maps the historical and cultural landscape of Kyrenia. Through these narratives, readers are able to relive the realities of that era, gaining deeper insight into the traditions and social structures that defined the community. Among those featured in the book is Kypri's close friend, Rina Katselli, a fellow scholar and advocate for the preservation of local

folklore and traditions, whose contributions further underscore the significance of cultural heritage in shaping historical memory.

This book is a written depiction of the town, with both the central parts as well as the lesser known parts of the town, the important and unseen places of it, which presents the residents with all the things they should remember until their return.

Every line adds up to our knowledge through the authentic testimonies of the displaced people of Kyrenia and highlights the city's structural points. This illustrates the entirety of Cyprus and it predetermines the future of our collective memories.

Each narration included in Kypri's book is unique, contributing to the creation of a comprehensive mosaic that captures the history and cultural identity of Kyrenia across different periods. The testimonies collectively reconstruct the town's social fabric, traditions, and historical developments, offering valuable insights into its evolution. Additionally, the structure of the book allows for a flexible reading experience, as each section can be read independently. This enables readers to navigate the contents and index, selecting the topics that align with their specific interests, whether related to everyday life, cultural practices, or historical events.

The title of the book indicates the subjectivity of the book, since it is a record of the memories of the displaced Greek inhabitants and does not include the memories of the Turkish Cypriot residents of Kyrenia.

This limitation reflects a broader challenge in oral history: the potential for partiality when only one community's voice is documented. As noted in Kazamias' volume and in global oral history scholarship (Thompson, Portelli), the inclusion of multiple perspectives fosters a fuller reconstruction of collective memory. The absence of Turkish Cypriot, Maronite, and other residents' accounts -also present in Kyrenia before 1974-restricts the multi-ethnic narrative of the city.

While Kypri's book offers a valuable and in-depth look at the memories of the Greek Cypriot residents of Kyrenia, it does present a significant limitation in its scope. The absence of narratives from Turkish Cypriots, Maronites, foreigners, or tourists who lived or worked in the picturesque neighborhoods of Kyrenia, represents a notable gap in the historical and cultural narrative of the town. The book exclusively includes the oral testimonies of those born in Kyrenia, omitting the perspectives of individuals who, despite hailing from other cities such as Larnaca or Nicosia, lived in Kyrenia for many years, contributing to the town's cultural and social fabric. So the book can easily be termed as subjective and one-sided, since it only highlights the view of the local Kerynians about Kyrenia and "silences" the rest. *As a reader, I*

*would be interested to find in this book the diversity of the worlds of Kyrenia, Turkish Cypriots, Greek Cypriots, English and others.*

In my opinion, another weakness of the book is the absence of photographic evidence. The issue is that there is a lot of material available at the Press and Information Office and the author could have used that. Had the narratives been accompanied by photographic material, the reader would have had the opportunity to glean a complete picture of the human geography of Kyrenia.

By contrast, the two-volume publication on the Dome Hotel, authored by Rina Katselli, includes extensive photographic documentation alongside chronological testimony. This integration offers a more immersive view of the lived experience and demonstrates how visual archives complement oral histories in shaping historical understanding. Kypri's book would benefit significantly from similar visual enrichment.

Moreover, the inclusion of audio recordings -perhaps via QR codes-could allow readers to engage more deeply with linguistic variations, emotional tone, and vocal authenticity, aligning with current digital humanities practicing in oral history archiving.

In my humble opinion, this book should be read by both locals and foreigners due to its rich exploration of Kyrenia's spiritual and cultural life. It offers valuable insights into the town's schools and their activities, religious practices, churches and chapels, historical monuments, the port's labour movement, and the tourist development that took place prior to the Turkish invasion.

The preservation of local narratives is of great importance, as it safeguards the customs of folk traditions, many of which have been displaced or erased by the occupying forces. Furthermore, the book meticulously documents original place names that have since been altered, ensuring that these aspects of the Kyrenian identity are not lost. Through its careful recording of these traditions and stories, the book serves as an essential tool in maintaining a cultural connection to the past, especially in the face of continuous changes.

The book preserves and conveys to the readership (third generation of refugees) the popular perceptions of their ancestors, fairy tales, folk songs, proverbs, and so much more that is important for the folk tradition and popular culture of the Kyrenia area.

The narratives of this book bring the reader in contact with the old people of Kyrenia, with leading figures of the city, spiritual people, scientists, businessmen, sailors, craftsmen, as well as with ordinary people; the heroes, the fallen and the missing because of the Attila invasion. The thematic axes of this book are enough, and the

descriptions and information are inexhaustible and lead up to the events of the coup and the invasion, since small and peaceful Kyrenia paid a very high price in the tragic events of July 1974. We owe a debt of gratitude to Kypri for the complete mapping she did on the Kyrenia anthropogeography.

In conclusion, Theophano Kypri's work stands as an important microhistorical documentation of a lost city. While it excels in detail, narrative richness, and cultural preservation, its scientific merit is further enhanced when examined alongside other publications, such as Kazamias' institutional volume or the Dome Hotel testimonies, which offer broader perspectives and visual material. However, it must be noted that all three works lack intercommunal narratives -a limitation that reflects the one-sidedness of Greek Cypriot memory production. From one perspective, this absence constitutes a significant shortcoming in terms of inclusivity and historical representation. Yet, from another, it could be seen as the core strength of Kypri's book, as it provides a thorough and focused account of one community's lived experience, allowing for a deeper and more intimate exploration of Greek Cypriot identity and memory.

**Ioanna Alexandrou**