

Anthology of Historical and Analytical Texts on the Evolution of the Positions in Relation to Cyprocentrism, Cypriot Consciousness, Cypriot Identity and Cypriotism

**[Ανθολογία Ιστορικών Κειμένων και Αναλύσεων
για την Εξελικτική Πορεία των Θέσεων για τον
Κυπροκεντρισμό, την Κυπριακή Συνείδηση, την
Κυπριακή Ταυτότητα και τον Κυπριωτισμό]**

Andreas Panayiotou, Anna Misiaouli, Nikos Moudouros (eds)

New Cyprus Association

Nicosia, 2022 [pp. 501]

ISBN: 978-9925-568-56-7

The Anthology of Historical and Analytical Texts on the Evolution of the Positions in Relation to Cyprocentrism, Cypriot Consciousness, Cypriot Identity and Cypriotism is an ambitious and daring volume, that will retain its significance as a contribution to Cypriot scholarship in the following decades. Edited by Andreas Panayiotou, Anna Misiaouli and Nikos Moudouros, the Anthology collects and presents a rich array of resources, including interview extracts, political texts, academic articles, independent studies and literary art, bringing back to life sources that had remained largely under-represented and inaccessible to contemporary readership. In terms of content, the end result is nothing short of impressive, as the 501 pages spanning the Anthology contain resources on a multiplicity of themes, ranging from counter-hegemonic historical narrations and alternative conceptions of (national) identity, to literary explorations and left-wing visions of modernity, retaining at the same time communal particularity through the consistent inclusion of texts originating from both the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities of the island. The scope of the volume essentially covers all of modern Cypriot history, presenting sources from the late Ottoman period until the Christofias presidency of 2008-13.

Arguing that Cyprocentrism is characterised historically by two fundamental elements, the ‘(cultural/political) emphasis placed on the autonomy of the Cypriot space’ and ‘the recognition of the existence of an internal de facto pluralism in modern Cyp-

riot history',¹ the Anthology does not merely offer a collection of texts, but is further accompanied by a broader historical narration, utilising its presented texts as its source material. Characterised by this duality, the volume is therefore not an anthology in the strict sense of the word, moving beyond mere collection and documentation to further encompass historical reinterpretation. Placing its sources in a dialectical relation to the hegemonic ethnonationalist ideologies of Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot nationalism, the Anthology re-evaluates modern Cypriot history from the perspective of non-hegemonic positions and articulations, formulating a genealogy of Cypriotness from the premodern to the late modern period, identifying in these articulations the evolution of a set of Cyprocentric political and cultural identities. This interpretation becomes theoretically possible through the utilisation of the concept of the 'residual',² of cultural, social, historical and political remnants that are argued to have neither been subsumed nor eradicated by Greek and Turkish national homogenisation, enabling multiple expressions of Cypriotness to survive and develop in parallel to the historical unfoldment of Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot nationalism.

There is little doubt that the genealogy offered in the Anthology will remain controversial in the near future, since the resignification of various historical moments and figures as expressions of this unwinding Cyprocentrism stands in contradiction both with hegemonic historical narratives and established academic interpretations of Cypriot history. For example, the politics surrounding the Diaskeptiki conference of 1947-48 are argued to crystallise the formation of a political Cyprocentrism acting as an alternative to the demand of enosis, the Makarios presidency (1960-77), with its eventual acceptance of an independent Cypriot polity, is reinterpreted as a pivotal moment in its historical evolution, while the campaign for a 'No' vote in the Greek Cypriot community during the 2004 Annan Plan referendums is argued to be characterised by significant Cyprocentric elements, expressed through the evocation of the Republic of Cyprus for its political argumentation. The originality characterising the interpretations offered in the Anthology enriches the literature surrounding Cyprus, offering novel critical readings, new points of departure for future analysis and a plethora of historical resources waiting to be scrutinised, evaluated and incorporated in future scholarship.

¹ Andreas Panayiotou, Anna Misiaouli, Nikos Moudouros *Anthology of Historical and Analytical Texts on the Evolution of the Positions in Relation to Cyprocentrism, Cypriot Consciousness, Cypriot Identity and Cypriotism* (Ανθολογία Ιστορικών Κεμμένων και Αναλύσεων για την Εξελικτική Πορεία των Θέσεων για τον Κυπροκεντρισμό, την Κυπριακή Συνείδηση, την Κυπριακή Ταυτότητα και τον Κυπριωτισμό) (Nicosia: New Cyprus Association, 2022), page 50.

² Panayiotou, Misiaouli, Moudouros (no 1) 56.

In its conclusion, the Anthology provides a clear position regarding its subject matter, arguing that ‘Cypriot identity, as well as forms of Cyprocentrism more generally, can be understood as an alternative identity in modernity (in relation to national identity)’.³ While not phrasing its conclusion with reference to alternative interpretive paradigms, this interpretation can be contrasted with the more dominant analytical schema associated with Caesar Mavratsas⁴ and Nicos Peristianis,⁵ which perceives Cyprocentrism as an expression of a civic form of nationalism counterweighting the hegemony of Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot ethnonationalism. In offering an alternative interpretation, the Anthology thus contributes to broader debates surrounding the nature of (national) identity in Cypriot modernity, adding to the existing literature both empirically and analytically.

The Anthology, however, is not without its limitations, of which two should be highlighted here. The first limitation is the absence of any description relating to the methodology employed for the locating of sources. There is no discussion explaining which magazines, newspapers, archives or personal collections, were surveyed during the research period, why some collections may have been preferred over others, what difficulties the editors faced in locating sources, and whether the compilation of the Anthology was preceded by other relevant activities, such as holding informal interviews with political activists, establishing networks with members of cultural and political groups, or exploring extensively the available academic and non-academic literature. The inclusion of this information in a future edition would improve the academic merit of the Anthology tremendously, as without it; it becomes extremely difficult to evaluate the Anthology methodologically, as well as to identify and explore additional collections that may not have come to the attention of the editors during the long process of research preceding the publication of the volume.

The second limitation is fundamentally theoretical. Since the Anthology formulates

³ Panayiotou, Misiaouli, Moudouros (no 1), 457.

⁴ Caesar Mavratsas, *Facets of Greek Nationalism in Cyprus: Ideological Contest and the Social Construction of Greek Cypriot Identity 1974-1996* (Όψεις του Ελληνικού Εθνικισμού στην Κύπρο: Ιδεολογικές Αντιπαραθέσεις και η Κοινωνική Κατασκευή της Ελληνοκυπριακής Ταυτότητας 1974-1996) (Athens: Catarti, 1998), page 88.

⁵ Nicos Peristianis, ‘Boundaries and the Politics of Identity’ in *Cyprus and the Eastern Mediterranean. Identity Formations: Historical Perspectives and Contemporary Issues: Proceedings of the Colloquium Held in Lyon, 1997, Lumière-Lyon 2 University, University of Cyprus (Chypre et la Méditerranée Orientale. Formations Identitaires: Perspectives Historiques et Enjeux Contemporain: Actes du Colloque Tenu à Lyon, 1997, Université Lumière-Lyon 2, Université de Chypre)* (Lyon: Maison de l’Orient et de la Méditerranée Jean Pouilloux, 2000) 185-195, page 187.

an alternative historical narration, the theoretical concepts employed are central in influencing both specific interpretations, as well as the broader narrative accompanying the Anthology itself. The Anthology is however burdened by significant conceptual obscurity, as a series of utilised concepts remain either undefined, or not discussed in sufficient detail, including the concepts of ‘postmodernism’, ‘nationalism’, the ‘nation’ and the ‘nation-state’. As these concepts have been ascribed multiple meanings by different, and sometimes antithetical theoretical traditions in the social and political sciences, the meanings attached to them within the pages of the Anthology are not self-evident, making it difficult at points to determine with sufficient clarity how specific conclusions were drawn. This is particularly notable in relation to the concept of ‘nationalism’, which carries a fundamentally different meaning within the field of nationalism studies than it does in everyday political discourse. The absence of a detailed discussion surrounding the concept makes it tempting to wonder whether Cyprocentrism can simply be adequately described using Benedict Anderson’s definition of the nation as an ‘imagined political community’ that is ‘imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign’,⁶ or Ernest Gellner’s definition of nationalism as ‘primarily a political principle, which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent’,⁷ since Cyprocentrism expresses the claiming of a unique, limiting political/cultural identity ascribed to the Cypriot population, as well as the attachment of this population both to a particular territory, and to a state formation corresponding to that territory.

Despite these limitations, the Anthology remains a rare contribution to the academic literature surrounding Cyprus, with its interesting insights and extensive resources marking it as a reference point for the study of Cyprocentrism and Cypriot identity. Cypriot scholarship being characteristically interdisciplinary, the Anthology will unequivocally act as a useful resource for scholars working in the fields of history, sociology, anthropology, political science and literary criticism, providing a firm basis upon which future empirical research can develop. Hopefully, the volume will eventually see an English and a Turkish translation, making its contents available beyond merely Greek-speaking audiences, removing linguistic barriers that have so often accompanied Cypriot academic works.

Antonis Pastellopoulos

⁶ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (Revised Edition, London: Verso, 2006), page 6.

⁷ Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism: New Perspectives on the Past* (New York NY: Cornell University Press, 1983), page 1.