

Report to the Honor Frost Foundation:

AKROTIRI SALT LAKE'S LIVING HISTORIES: UNCOVERING/RECOVERING MARITIME CULTURES IN FAMILY PHOTOGRAPHS AND ORAL HISTORY: INTERIM REPORT

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Akrotiri Salt Lake's Living Histories: Uncovering/Recovering Maritime Cultures in Family Photographs And Oral History project ran a pilot scheme in October 2019 to assess the viability to establish a photographic and oral history project in Akrotiri. The project, kindly part-funded by the Honor Frost Foundation, was designed to capture deep local knowledge of the archaeological heritage possessed by both the local Cypriot villagers and serving and past members of the UK military community. The Living Histories project contributes and complements the Ancient Akrotiri Project objective to explore and understand the archaeology of the Akrotiri peninsula as a maritime cultural landscape, and to elucidate the exploitation of Akrotiri's maritime landscape, including inshore waters.

The proposed fieldwork for October 2019 aimed to cultivate a mixed Cypriot and British community of photographic and oral history documentarists from Akrotiri village and the RAF base with a view to recording historical and current maritime cultural heritage in Akrotiri. The intention was to run a series of workshops to make the Akrotiri village and RAF base communities aware of the potential of family photographs to inform social and cultural research, provide training to qualify the two communities to conduct oral history and photography-based interviews and to document cultural knowledge and historical information meaningful to researchers and members of the communities in order to maintain good data organisation practices.

Figure 1. Participants from Akrotiri village showing family photographs outside their home



Calls for participants and volunteer documentarist were sent out in both Greek and English to the local communities via the Environmental Education Centre, RAF Hive and social media. Unfortunately, no members of either community registered to partake in the workshops. With a lack of volunteer documentarists, our specialist consultant Dr Gil Pasternak, Reader in Social and Political Photographic Cultures in the Photographic History Research Centre at De Montfort University and the director of the

DigiCONFLICT research consortium, carried out the interviews and documentation of family albums as a pilot project with the view to inform us of the viability of establishing this type of project in this specific community, facilitated by Mireya González Rodríguez, director of the Outreach and Community Engagement programme of the Ancient Akrotiri Project.

Fourteen families from Akrotiri participated in the pilot programme. The participants were informed about the nature and purpose of the interviews, and voluntarily gave their consent to be interviewed and understood that they can withdraw from the interview or refuse to answer a question at any time. Over 150 photographs from their family albums were scanned and basic information was documented with the view to establishing a digital archive, which will be hosted by the Akrotiri Environmental Education Centre as and when the necessary measures to maintain the archive and its data are in place. At the end of the project all families received a USB drive with a digitised copy of the photographs.

The week of photographic digitisation and interviews with the people of Akrotiri culminated with a photographic public display on Sunday 27 of October about the sociocultural history of Akrotiri as presented through the family albums of its residents. The community engagement initiative intended to develop awareness of the benefits and limitations of digital heritage, and instil appreciation of the value of family photographs to the preservation and narration of the history of the Akrotiri peninsula. The public display and reception received over one hundred visitors and provided a space for the community to share their experiences, allowing cross-generational conversations about Akrotiri's sociocultural past and enthused younger generations to continue exploring the history of Akrotiri.

Figure 2. Photography public engagement event at Akrotiri's Environmental Education Centre.



On 25 October we co-delivered a class on digitised photographic cultural heritage to year 6 pupils at Episkopi Primary School for British Service families. Intended as an enrichment educational activity to their history curriculum, the lesson included many interactive exercises. Among others, the pupils were guided to consider photographs as historical primary sources, identify the advantages and limitations of photographic digital heritage, and explore what can be learnt about the history of British-Cypriot relations from the digitised versions of photographs that Pasternak helped scan from albums of Cypriot families living in Cyprus' British Overseas Territory.

The Ancient Akrotiri Project would like to reiterate their thanks to Dr Pasternak and to the Honor Frost Foundation for making this experiment possible.