

The Influence of the War in Cyprus on Turkish Cypriot Families

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ABSTRACT

In this ethnographic research, Akım Family was used to investigate the influence of the Cyprus conflict on Turkish Cypriot families and to find out about their significant problems and living conditions in those days. Data was collected through the use of ethnographic interviews. Data results reveal that major difficulties were faced at the time of war and the effect of these difficulties on the Cypriot families was great

Keywords: *ethnographic research, Cyprus, war and its influence on Cypriot families*

INTRODUCTION

War is the biggest problem for every country. Since ancient times, the world has witnessed many wars. People who have to endure the unpleasant experience of war are affected in different ways; some are injured physically, some psychologically, some in both ways. For this reason, the researcher aimed to display real war experiences in this research. The researcher is a Turkish Cypriot and to elicit data on Turkish Cypriot families' war experiences, she chose AKİM FAMILY as a sample.

THE STUDY:

The study aimed at investigating the life style of Cypriot families, their experiences, living conditions and major problems at the time of war. Qualitative methodology was employed as it is a research type that has grown out of diverse disciplines (anthropology, sociology, psychology etc.) marked by distinctive interest, theories, issues and research methods. In conducting the study, ethnographic research approach was adopted.

Key definitions:

Ethnographic Research:

Ethnographic research is the most complex of all research methods. A variety of approaches are utilized in an attempt to get as holistic a picture as possible of a particular society, group, institution, setting, or situation. The focus of ethnographic research is to document or portray the everyday experiences of individuals by observing and interviewing them with relevant others. Ethnographic studies use in-depth interviewing and ongoing participant observation of a particular situation. Fraenkel and Wallen (2008) claim that

"It involves establishing rapport in a new community; learning to act so that people go about their business as usual when you show up; and removing yourself everyday from cultural immersion so you can intellectualize what you've learned, put it into perspective, and write about it convincingly. If you are a successful participant observer you will know when to laugh at what your informants think is funny; and when informants laugh at what you say, it

will be because you meant it to be a joke.”(p.511) (As cited in Bernard (n.d)).

Society:

“[T]he aggregate of people living together in a more or less ordered community. A particular community of people living in a country or region, and having shared customs, laws, and organizations” (http://www.askoxford.com/concise_oed/society?view=uk)

Community:

“[A] group of people living together in one place. [B] (the community) the people of an area or country considered collectively; society.” (http://www.askoxford.com/concise_oed/community?view=uk)

Culture:

In Anthropology culture is described as “the acquired knowledge that people use to interpret experience and to generate behavior” (Spradley and McCurdy 1980)

Population and Sample

AKIM family consists of 5 members: Hayriye (Ülviye) Akim and Salahi Akim and their children: Arzu, Arkin and Arman. Hayriye Akim was born in 1947, Salahi Akim in 1940, Arzu Akim in 1971, Arkin Akim in 1972 and Arman Akim in 1977.

Ethical Issues in Design, Data Collection, and Analysis

In the design of this research, attention was paid to ethical issues in data collection and data analysis procedures. Instead of using names, a number was allocated to each participant to provide confidentiality. During this process, informed consents were important as they included verbal contracts for all of the participants in the research. These contracts were designed to give the participants the opportunity to change their decision on continuing with the study if they wanted to. Thus, within the boundaries of this research, Akim family members were voluntary participants of the study.

DATA COLLECTION AND INSTRUMENTATION

The interview is the most important tool that ethnographers employ to collect data. Through interviews, the researcher can put what he or she has seen, heard or experienced into a larger context. Similarly, in this study, data was collected through the use of interviews.

Ethnographic interview

“An ethnographic interview is a particular kind of speech event. Every culture has many social occasions identified primarily by the kind of talking that takes place;” (Sprad 1979) Ethnographic interview is discovery oriented in that the informant, the participant or the client controls what he wants to share with the interviewer. It is a way for the interviewer to discover, to understand, to learn the subjects’ views of their own world. Also, ethnographic interview is an interactive data collection process. It requires spending an extensive amount of time with the participants. To yield better results, it is recommended that the researcher lives with client for about a year- depending on the budget and time allocated for the study- to observe, interview and record the process as it occurs at the location. (Joseph and Reed, 2008)

DATA ANALYSIS**Records on the interviewees’ background:**

HAYRİYE (ÜLVİYE) AKIM : She is 63 years old. She was born in 1947. She graduated from elementary school. She was able to go to secondary school only for one year because her parents did not allow her to continue. Her parents thought that girls should not go to school because if girls go to school, they can find a husband there. Hayriye Akim’s teacher tried to persuade her family. She even offered to pay for her education and all her needs related to her education but her parents wouldn’t change their decision. Hayriye Akim got married when she was 23 years old in Limasol. She has 3 children. Two of them are boys and one of them is a girl. They got married in Çamlica in 1970.

SALAHİ AKIM: He was born in 1940. He graduated from elementary school. He can speak Greek and English like his native language. He got married when he was 30 years old. He said that, “I got married late because I wanted to

immigrate to foreign countries. I applied to one company that dealt with migration issues but they did not respond so I gave up because I do not like waiting". He claimed that Ülviye (Hayriye)'s uncle helped to get married with Ülviye.

Records of the interview:

Ülviye Akim talked about her pre-1963 experiences in the following way: "We were coming back from my sister's wedding ceremony, from Kyrenia, I fell asleep on the way and dreamed of one group of military people riding horses coming to our hometown. Their leader was Atatürk. 3 days after this dream, 1963 events started. I remember it was right after the new year. In those days, people could not walk in the streets because Greek Cypriots were checking the roads and were monitoring travelers going from one place to another. Everyone was afraid of going anywhere. Only specific groups of people could travel mainly to go to school or work. Even those going to work were in fear. In 1960s, mujahedeens offered to provide protection for people voluntarily.

In those days, people used different techniques for communicating. Some high-ranking soldiers came from Turkey to Cyprus. Greek Cypriots did not allow Turks to go to Nicosia. Greek Cypriots employed women to work for the police forces. When checking girls or women, they made them strip off all their clothes. In 1974, again we had fearful days. I remember on the Elision (???) day, we were in Larnaca. I was with my 2 children alone for 22 days. Salahi could not come home. He made a small lamp that worked with batteries and for 22 days, I could only use this small lamp. Bullet sounds were heard from everywhere. All Turkish Cypriots were in shelter in Kocatepe. İskele (Larnaca) was occupied. United Nations asked Turkish Cypriots to surrender. Turkish Cypriots who lived in İskele were asked to assemble in the open air cinema garden. Important people burnt all important papers, documents, and some commanders escaped from Larnaca. I stayed with my children until 1 pm. They were hungry and felt hot under the burning sun. We returned home but I did not want to stay there any more. One guy told us "take your ID and follow me". We went with him.

According to rumours Greek Cypriots were taking people to concentration camps, Again on one of those days, I went downstairs (we were living upstairs) to get water from the tap in the garden. Generally, there was no water but that day it was running. Suddenly, Greek Cypriot soldiers appeared next to me. They asked: anybody upstairs?, I said no, if you don't believe, you can go and check. They believed me and they left but my husband and children were upstairs. Only electricians and bakers were allowed to leave the camp. Others had to stay on the camp for one month. Some congressmen escaped from Larnaca. Some people who got the opportunity crossed to the Northern part. I sent my children to Pile. I tried to go to Pile two times and the second time I could cross the border. My husband's sister helped us to go to Pile. She worked at "Doğanın Sesi Radyosu".

My mother-in-law went to Trikomo. In those days, most of the people who lived in Larnaca migrated to Trikomo. I also went to Trikomo with my children. I found a house in front of my mother-in-law's house. As the house was by the side of the main road, I thought we could get help easily from soldiers if anything bad happened. In this house, there was only one bed and a fridge which did not cool. Some important people asked for Salahi's help because he could speak English, Greek and Turkish. They said "please come with us, when the trouble ends, we will satisfy all your needs." After 5 months (in April 1975) Salahi could come to Trikomo, but those people did not keep their promises. Salahi went to find a house with them but he could not find one.

My family lived in Akrotiri and they moved into a dormitory in Lapta. My husband tried to look for a job. We came from South to North with 10 shilling. We could only buy bread with this money. We did not have any money. I had to sell my bracelets to pay the rent of our house in Larnaca when we were there. We were still paying for the house goods we bought. When we moved to the Northern part, we were really in a very difficult situation. In those days, Turkey helped us to maintain our needs. Food was given to us and my husband sent money to me for the children's medicine. We lived like that for about a year. That period was very different. We shared pains, thoughts and everything we had but now it's not like that.

Salahi Akim joined the conversation saying that he started a radio channel with his friend, Sadi. They named it "Doğanın Sesi".(Figure 4). Salahi Akim talked about this experience in the following way: "I could make good equipments and other radio channels like Bayrak wanted me to produce the same kind of tools for them because they couldn't do it. Greek Cypriot had these equipments but Turkish Cypriot didn't. I could produce these. For broadcasting we used car batteries"

As these stories shared by the Akim family show Turkish Cypriots faced a lot of difficulties and serious problems during the war in Cyprus. They lost their houses and some of them lost their lives. In short, they lost their past and could not dream about a future for themselves and their families for a certain period of time.

Limitations of the study:

This study was conducted within a limited time frame. More time was needed to investigate the AKIM FAMILY in more detail. Shortage of information is another limitation of the study. While conducting the interviews, the

researcher did not want to interrupt the interviewees to collect information on other relevant topics.

CONCLUSION

In this ethnographic research, the researcher tried to explore the war experiences of one Cypriot family in year 1974. In this research, significant information was gathered from the interviews held with Hayriye (Ülviye) and Salahi Akım. For future studies, this research can be improved by collecting more information and by making it more comprehensive. Every war is traumatic. It destroys people's lives no matter at what age they are; in wars old and young people die but the most distressing loss is the death of many innocent children.

Figure1.Salahi Akım at 15 years of age.



Figure 2. Salahi Akım and Haluk Gara, the oldest mayor of Trikomo.



Figure 3. Salahi and Hayriye (Ülviye) Akım on their wedding day in 1970.



Figure 4. Salahi Akım while he was working for “Doğanın Sesi Radyosu” in the 1970s.



Figure 5. Salahi Akım with British soldiers



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