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Resisting clearance and reclaiming place in Cyprus' State Forests through the work of heritage

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The British took over administrative control of Cyprus in 1878 and three years later all uncultivated land was converted into State Forest. The removal of people from the forest over the following 60 years had long term social impacts. Today clearance is manifest in the absence of a connection and knowledge of the forest and its past inhabitants.

This paper explores how clearance is resisted in rural Cyprus through the practice and performance of heritage. It is derived from the community-engaged Pathways to Heritage Project that sought to understand the places and practices of significance to the village of Nikitari located on the outskirts of the Adelphi State Forest, Cyprus.

I focus on two stories of resistance. Elder Panayiotis Alexandrou Loppas grew up in the forest and spent his life resisting clearance through visiting his places of significance and performing memory. He reworks the past in order that he and his ancestors are remembered into the future. Teachers and pupils of the Asinou Regional Primary School chose the abandoned village of Asinou as the anchor for a new school identity. Their research transformed this forgotten place into a heritage site while setting the foundations for a new regional identity.

Key words

Cyprus State Forest
Resistance
Unofficial Heritage
Community-engaged research
Storytelling
Memory

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Introduction

> *Lapped by the golden meadows of a mountain valley, the little church of the Mother of God Phorbiotissa seems suspended in time. Isolated, it stands out alone against the layered green of the lower Troodos, the mountain massif that dominates Cyprus's inland center. The village of Asinou that gave the building its familiar nickname had vanished already in the Ottoman times; the monastery it served had ceased to function by 1825; and today only the church remains, a lone, intensely picturesque survivor* (Weyl Carr 2012, 1)

This statement opens the exquisitely produced Dumbarton Oaks monograph *Asinou Across Time. Studies in the Architecture and Murals of the Panagia Phorbiotissa, Cyprus* and illustrates how successfully the British Colonial administration physically (1878–1960) and ideologically cleared Cyprus' forests of its people. While Weyl Carr and fellow authors later acknowledge the business of this 12–16th century landscape, they overlook those who more recently lived, worked, and maintain connections to the area in and around Asinou. Like many of the settlements within and near the forest, the village of Asinou was inhabited up until the mid–1940s, and continues to be a meaningful place today that is woven into recent and distant childhood memories.

Weyl Carr's introduction touches on an important aspect of this paper—the power of absence. This paper considers how people were made absent from the forests of Cyprus through physical and ideological processes of clearance initiated by the British Colonial Government in the 19th

century. I argue that physical clearance from the forest challenged peoples' ability to maintain relationships with the places, people, ancestors and land that they knew as "home". Forced to relocate to new villages in the foothills and plains and take up different ways of making a living, their connections to the forest changed and gradually memories of life in the forest faded.

The long-term effect of this clearance was the rupture of peoples' connections to the forest—their past places, landscapes and people of significance. The absences created as a result prompted the development of new relationships with the forest. New places of significance emerged as people negotiated their individual and collective identities, reworking and reshaping the past to suit their contemporary needs. I draw on two such cases here: Elder Panayiotis Alexandrou Loppas and the Asinou Regional Primary School. While their stories differ in many ways, together they illustrate how heritage—the work one does in order to create and maintain relationships with the past in the present—is resistance to clearance.

The story of Elder Panayiotis Alexandrou Loppas is unique. He grew up in the forest but, unlike many, he resisted clearance throughout his life by maintaining connections to his places of significance in the forest. He mobilises these places and their ancestors through memory, visitation and storytelling—doing the work of heritage—in order that they (and he) are remembered into the future. He reminds us that heritage is an active collaborative process of building relationships with the past in the present as Harrison (2015, 35) states, '[w]hile heritage is produced as part of a conversation about what is valuable from the past, it can only be assembled in the present, in a state of looking forward, and an act of taking responsibility for, the future'.

Even though the new Asinou Regional Primary School is located within 5km of the boundary with the Adelphi State Forest, teachers and pupils have little connection to the forest or knowledge of its past places beyond the church for which the school is named. In 2016 they initiated a student-led research project on the abandoned village of 'Asinou' (referenced by Weyl Carr above). In choosing a "forgotten place" they hoped that they would create new connections among pupils, the school, the abandoned village and the forest while fostering feelings of communal identity and belonging. Their story reminds us that identity is continually 'created and negotiated as people, communities and institutions reinterpret, remember and reassess the meaning of the past in terms of the social, cultural and political needs of the present' (Smith 2006, 83). It will become evident that the social networks and relationships that connect Panayiotis and the Asinou Regional Primary School with the forest are not confined to what is visible but equally include people, places and things that are absent (Bille, Hastrup and Sørensen 2010, 10).

While this paper focuses on the geographic region of Cyprus, it addresses larger themes of heritage, identity and power relevant to areas and social contexts beyond this island. I begin by establishing the background to this paper. A brief overview of fieldwork is followed by a discussion of the processes through which forests were cleared in the 19th century. I then turn my attention to the results of ethnographic research carried out through the Pathways to Heritage (PATH: 2016–2018) Project with Panayiotis Alexandrou Loppas and the Asinou Regional Primary School. I reflect on my position within the Authorised Heritage Discourse (AHD; Smith 2006 discussed below) and the impact I had on the heritage work that I witnessed, facilitated, recorded and thus co-created.

Research Context

This paper draws on data spanning six field seasons from 2000–2004 (Troodos Archaeological and Environmental Survey Project, TAESP and from 2016–2018 (PATH) in the Asinou River Valley located in the foothills of the Troodos Mountains, Cyprus (Figure 1). Archaeological survey completed through TAESP and my own PhD research sought to better understand human interaction in the forested mountains—an area assumed to be largely devoid of human activity and thus mostly neglected by archaeologists. Quantitative data (e.g. pottery and tile counts, path widths, soil depths) were merged with qualitative site descriptions, structured and semi-structured interviews, archival and historical data (Gibson 2005, 2013) to produce a rich and complex view of this land.
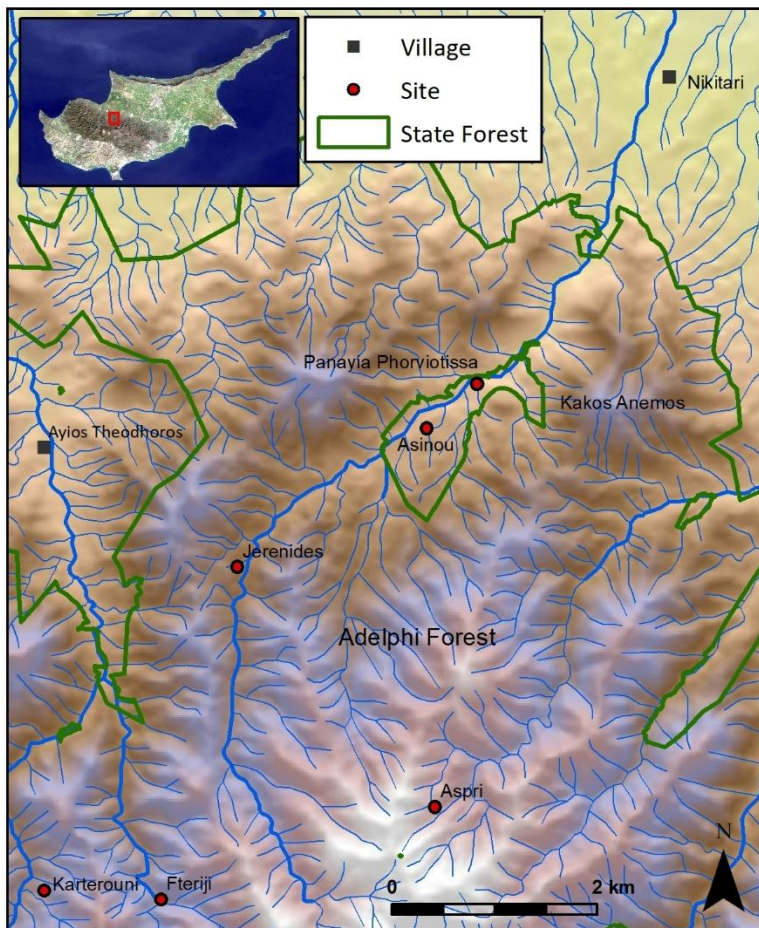
Figure 1. Map of Asinou and Rotson River Valleys showing places mentioned in text. Map: Michael Given.

My previous research on TAESP and interest in human interaction in and with the forested Mountains of Cyprus formed the genesis of the PATH Project. PATH explored the places and practices of significance to the inhabitants of the small rural village of Nikitari located approximately 1.5 km to the north of the Adelphi State Forest. This community-engaged research project asked a question that is unprecedented in the discipline of archaeology in Cyprus: 'what is important to you about this area where you live?' Rapid ethnography, participant observation, interviews (structured and semi-structured) and participatory techniques from visual and sensory anthropology were used to elicit heritage making (Gubruim and Harper 2013; Pink 2007; Pink and Morgan 2013) Thirty-one villagers participated including members of the Nikitari Women's Group, the Youth Association, and the Community Council. The local Asinou Regional Primary School was actively involved in the PATH project with participation of all 75 pupils aged 8 to12 years old. In this paper I focus on the participation of the Grade 5/6 class (20 pupils and two teachers) and their investigation of the abandoned village of Asinou.

The Physical and Ideological Clearance of Cyprus' Forests

I became aware of how relevant the concept of "clearance" is to the forested landscape of Cyprus during the early stages of the PATH project. The importance of the 12th century UNESCO listed church of Panayia Phorviotissa (Asinou Church) physically and spiritually in the lives of the villagers was confirmed. Located on privately owned land at the forest boundary, the church was specifically mentioned by more than half of the project participants while only three individuals (two of whom are sisters) referred to abandoned villages, pathways, seasonal settlements and other places and remains of past human activity within or at the boundaries of the Adelphi State

Forest. Those places and practices associated with past life in the forest (even as recently as 1–2 generations ago) were forgotten. When a member of the Nikitari Youth Group was asked if she knew about the abandoned village of Asinou located just 400m southwest of Asinou Church she responded: 'as I remember from my childhood, I have never heard anyone talking about Asinou village, not even my grandparents. I do not know why. A good explanation, in my opinion, is that they didn't have any connection with Asinou and as it was abandoned, they stopped caring.' (Antigoni Tsiarta, September 26, 2018).

I argue that the abandonment of settlements and other places and practices in and near the forest and the disconnect that resulted (when they 'stopped caring') is linked to the colonial project of clearing the forest. While the term 'clearance' is most commonly associated with the 18th and 19th century Highland Clearances of Scotland, I use it here in a broader sense as defined by A. Smith (2008, 23), making it applicable to other colonial contexts such as the forests of Cyprus:

> Clearance of landscapes is about rupturing the sense of belonging, home, identity, and meaning; it is about the politics of remembering and the politics of forgetting; it is about violence, colonialism, forced movement, and removals; and it is about postcolonialism, diaspora, migration, asylum seekers, and refugees.

When the British assumed administrative control of Cyprus from the Ottoman Empire in 1878 they did so with the belief that Cyprus was an oriental country whose despotic leadership had resulted in degradation of the landscape and its resources (Given 2004, 73). They learned about the island, controlled and ordered it through a program of map making, road building, delimiting State forests, implementing censuses and producing cadastral surveys (Given 2002, 2; Schaar, Given and Theocharous 1995, 24). The management of Cyprus' forests was part of a larger

process of demarcation and control that was 'a general feature of imperial rule … affecting every aspect of the administration of a colony such as Cyprus' (Given 2002, 2). The changes which took place in the 19th and 20th centuries had a long term impact on how people could maintain relationships with their places, ancestors and landscapes of significance within the newly created – and cleared– State Forests (see below).

The treatment of Cyprus' forests was (and I argue still is) influenced by attitudes towards nature more generally. Macnaghten and Urry (1998) provide rich historical and cultural accounts of the concept of nature and how it shifts meaning through time. I focus briefly on the relationship among nature and the forest here in 19th and 20th century Cyprus.

By the 19th century in the 'West' nature was viewed as dichotomous to culture and society. It was held at a distance to be understood through scientific inquiry (Macnaghten and Urry 1998,7). In Britain the expansion of industry placed nature and the natural under threat and pushed it to the rural margins of growing cities (1998, 13–14). It became increasingly regulated and managed in order to safeguard it for the future. Thus when the British arrived in Cyprus they were confronted with concepts of nature different to their own. Nature was not separate from people or everyday life. They found uncultivated land actively inhabited and its resources used. British administrators argued that the forest had been overused and blamed its poor state on Ottoman mismanagement (for a detailed account see Harris 2007, 2012). The condition of the forest was well documented by individuals like M. Madon (one of the first Forestry Officers on the island) whose impassioned accounts must be read not only with "a grain of salt" but with the British ideal of nature and culture as separate and opposed entities in mind:

…even to those solitary heights the Cypriot has penetrated with his unsparing axe, and

has created a desolation that must be seen to be understood. There is no sight so

exasperating as this uncalled for destruction. Throughout the entire mountain range there

are not 5 per cent of pines free from mutilation! (Report on Cyprus Forestry, Hutchins

1909, 12).

Protecting the forest required the imposition of a new concept of nature—one that was objective

and managed. The new government believed that with proper management and an education

program to instil *the* value of the forest in Cypriot people they could return it to a 'natural'

unspoiled state, improving climate, rainfall and thus the health of people while also increasing its

economic viability (Harris 2007; Thirgood 1987, 77–85). Thus in 1881 the Forest Delimitation

Commission declared all uncultivated lands (scrub, forest and brushwood) as State Forest (Given

2002, 14, 2004, 73–79), physically marking it off from private land with forestry cairns. In 1909

British Forestry expert David Hutchins lists 1812.99 km^2 of Cyprus as reserved forest land

(1909; Harris 2007, 10, 32). Previous activities such as resin production, felling timber, goat

grazing, and collecting wood were all forbidden unless one obtained a permit (Given 2004, 75).

Villages located within the State Forests became enclaves unable to draw on the resources that

had previously sustained them (Christodoulou 1959, 112). These villages became economically,

socially and geographically marginalised (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Asinou Village abandoned in the late 1940s. Looking north with Panayia Phorviotissa in distance (right). Photograph: author.

Goatherds, shepherds and their flocks were viewed as the main obstacle to maintaining an ordered forest as they did not readily adhere to the rules around grazing their herds. The stereotype of the 'wandering shepherds… the vagabonds of the island' proliferated in the colonial forest department (Hutchins 1909, 25). The clearance of people from the forest would "save" the forest from the goats while providing the opportunity to convert herders into farmers by relocating them onto the plains (SA1/450/1927). As true for many places in the British Empire, agriculture was part of the colonial toolkit used to settle and "civilise" those who made their living through less static means (e.g. see Dorsett 1995 regarding Canada and Australia).

Throughout the 19th and 20th centuries Cyprus' forests were reimagined according to the shifting economic and political priorities of its British Administration. The self-sufficiency clause imposed on Cyprus, like all British colonies at the time, required that the island cover its own costs without any assistance from Britain (Angelides 1996, 209). British attempts to develop the forests were often unsuccessful, '[t]he Cypriot shows little desire to conserve what he has in the way of Forests and until the attitude of the villages undergoes a distinct *volte-face*, considerable schemes will result in considerable waste' (SA/1159/1920). As part of relief measures necessary during the economic hardship of the 1920s and 1930s, pathways were replaced by roads and expanded in order to increase access to forestry resources and provide better surveillance to prevent wildfires and illegal grazing while at the same time creating new opportunities for tourists to access the painted churches of the Troodos such as Asinou (SA1/444/1933).

Even though in the Second World War Cyprus' forests supplied wood for the war effort (see Thirgood 1987, 190), the British Administration soon realised that the forest held more value for its aesthetic qualities than for its natural resources. In the 20th century nature and the natural became increasingly objectified through the prioritisation of the visual in European culture. Nature became spectacle—something that could be visually captured and consumed (Macnaghten and Urry 1998, 113–114). In Cyprus the forest was transformed into a backdrop that aligned with a romantic and timeless vision of the island that could be easily packaged for tourism.

> Since time immemorial the Cyprus Forests were known for their health giving properties.
> The evidence of Shrines to Aphrodite in the hills and mountains shows that the ancients
> appreciated the cooling shady glades of the woods and the murmur of the sparkling

streams. At the present day in the Forests of Troodos, Paphos, Adelphi, Machera,

Stavrovouni and the northern range, the country possesses assets of immense scenic

value. (Red 47-42: SA1/444/1933)

Cleared of its human inhabitants by the late 1940s, Cyprus' forests were remade according to a

vision of nature that included flora and fauna but not people – a vision still communicated

through the Cyprus Forestry Department's website (http://www.moa.gov.cy/moa/fd/fd.nsf/).

Today, tourist itineraries such as 'Off the Beaten Track' designed by the Cyprus Tourism

Organisation (CTO) that feature churches located in or near State Forests describe the forest as if

it were a one dimensional backdrop separate from the human-made architecture. Like Weyl

Carr's (2012, 1) description of the church of Panayia Phorviotissa ('that stands alone against the

layered green' of the Troodos), to the CTO the 15th century church of Ayios Nikolaos Tsakistra

is similarly '[t]ucked away in the mountainous reaches of the Paphos Forest' (CTO, Authentic

Route 8).

The separation of nature and culture initiated through the British administration of Cyprus and

management of the forests in the 19th century has influenced and continues to influence people's

relationships and connections to the forest and ancestors whose lives were once entangled in the

forest. The delimitation of the State Forest displaced people from their land and identity, and

transformed the forest into something separate, disconnected, opposed to culture and removed

from history—a separation that is still evident today.

Clearance and heritage

Relationships with the past and our past selves are built through drawing on material objects,

places, people, stories, smells, tastes and movements. They have the affective power to 'take you

back' (Byrne 2013, 602, 606) while simultaneously pushing you forward. Entwined with our previous lives, they can transcend time, draw us in and engage with us in meaningful (though different) relationships which serve our contemporary needs (Harrison 2015, 27; Smith 2006, 1). Heritage is the work that we do in order to create or maintain these connections with the past (Byrne, Brayshaw and Ireland 2001, 67–68).

The physical and ideological dislocation of people from the forest limited their ability to do the relational "work" of heritage—maintaining their connections with the past as embedded in the land. The forest was not separate from everyday experience; the land was understood through interaction among people, places, animals, plants, water, air and soil (see Given 2013). This embodied sensory knowledge was born from daily life (Taussig 1992, 141–42) before the clearances—grazing sheep and goats, maintaining pathways, collecting wood to stoke ovens, tapping pine trees for resin, cutting golden oak to make the handles of tools, collecting mushrooms, catching crabs from streams, hunting hare and partridge. These non-human players were not background noise to a human-centred experience. Links emerge among human and non-human through active engagement that today pulls the past into the present—e.g. walking past the remains of your grandfather's house, saying the name of family grazing areas out loud, traveling along pathways known by name. Based on a concept of nature that is not only separate but dichotomous to culture, the Forest Delimitation Law threatened the maintenance and construction of such relationships by managing and regulating interaction in the State Forest. People "stopped caring" as Antigoni earlier stated, because they no longer had access to the land they "cared for". Their acts of care, so embedded in their daily lives, were no longer possible. Gradually abandoning their land, many were not able to maintain links with the past—they could not do the "work" of heritage. Today the absence of memory of life in the forest is a striking

reminder of the power of clearance to 'rupture a sense of belonging, home, identity, and meaning' (Smith 2008, 23).

Making the Past Visible through the Authorised Heritage Discourse

The Troodos Archaeological and Environmental Survey Project (TAESP) and my PhD research on communication routes included the Asinou and Rotson River Valleys in their survey design. We challenged assumptions about human activity in the mountains and forest—landscapes perceived as "isolated" (Gibson 2013, 204).

Through the process of archaeological survey, asking questions of the local villagers about what we found, formal interviews and informal conversations we defined a version of the past based on what was important to *us*—a model of research common to archaeological projects working in Cyprus. Our archaeological evidence "proved" that the Asinou and Rotson River Valleys were busy lived landscapes occupied continually from the Roman period onwards to the 1950s, that the people who lived in and near to the forest used its resources (e.g. pitch kilns and resin tapping scars), managed its landscape (e.g. checkdams and terraces) travelled along pathways and dwelled in permanent and temporary settlements (Figure 3; Gibson 2003).

Figure 3. Resin tapping scar located by Caroline Torres (TAESP), Asinou Valley. Photograph: author.

While we brought this past into a 'realm of discourse' (Buchli and Lucas 2001, 16), our work was embedded within what L. Smith (2006, 4) terms the "Authorised Heritage Discourse" (AHD)—a discourse of power that creates and reproduces ideas about the nature and meaning of heritage while prioritising the knowledge and values of heritage professionals over the values and experiences of subaltern groups. While our various informal and formal interactions with local villagers enlivened particular memories and meanings among those key knowledge holders involved in the project, understanding their heritage values was superficial and secondary to project aims. The central question of the Pathways to Heritage project—'what is important to you about this place where you live?'—was developed out of this prior research experience in order to challenge such research models and broaden my understanding of heritage as process and practice.

In the following section I focus on the PATH research beginning with work completed with Elder Panayiotis Alexandrou Loppas—the only resident of Nikitari who still remembers living in

the Adelphi State Forest. Panayiotis maintains connections with his meaningful places in the forest through site visits, reminiscence and storytelling. His heritage work assesses and reworks his past while creating new memories and meanings that continue to embed him within this landscape. This process of heritage making is how he negotiates his identity and reaffirms his place in the past, present and future. This case highlights how the absent can impact our lives, how we see ourselves and our place in the world (Bille, Hastrup and Sørensen 2010, 4).

Pathways to Heritage: What is important to you in this place where you live?

I spent a minimum of 21 hours working with Panayiotis between 2016 and 2018: 6 hours of structured and semi-structured interviews and approximately 15 hours of "on site" engagement (e.g. car rides, walking along pathways, moving within "sites"). This does not include time spent in informal conversation over coffee and lunches. Our interviews and trips to the mountains together were sensorial and affective encounters that created 'emplaced ways of knowing' (Pink 2015, 76–80). I wanted to learn how he viewed the forest, to see first-hand how he interacted within it and to learn about his process of heritage making through his interactions with me.

The great grandchild of shepherds, Panayiotis has a vested interest in the mountains and forests of the Asinou and Rotson River Valleys—his identity is tightly linked to this land. He learned this land as a child walking along pathways to school, visiting the settlements of family, taking the goats to grazing areas, milking them, watching family collect wood to sell to those living on the Mesaoria plains—he 'lived' in this land and knows himself and his family through it. This knowledge born of everyday life is not "out there" but is internalised, embodied and sensate (Taussig 1992, 141–142; Vergunst 2008, 120). The below excerpt took place during fieldwork in the mountains and highlights his unique connection to the region born through growing up and living in it.

There weren't many people that grew up, I mean children that grew up in this area like I

did. There are people of my age that come from Asinou, they know only Asinou. But

because my parents are from Spilia, they came down to Karterouni, and from Karterouni

to Fteridji, from Fteridji to Asinou, I met all this area and all the forest and the hills.

(Panayiotis at Aspri abandoned village August 2, 2017)

In the manner of his father and grandfather before him, he physically resisted clearance by going

against regulations governing access and use of the forest. As a child he illegally took the family

goats to the forest to graze and again as an adult with his own herd. In the early 1990s he was

persuaded to take a job with the Forestry Department as fire watchman in return for selling his

goats, retiring in 2002. Panayiotis maintained connections with the land, its place names and the

important places he "met" as a child through integrating them into daily practice and visiting

them while on patrol. He watched over the forest, its places and pathways he learned as a child,

from the forestry watchtower (Kakos Anemos). Heritage emerges through such interaction.

Walking, touching, smelling and hearing invoke new authentic connections to the past (Küchler

1999; also see Harrison 2004, 214–215 for a similar perspective involving the indigenous

Murawari people of New South Wales, Australia and their relationship with the "lost place" of

Dennawan).

Asserting and Inserting Identity in a Cleared Landscape

As Smith (2006, 52) relates, heritage is a political and cultural tool that can be used to define and

legitimate identity, experiences and social or cultural standing. The pasts that we resurrect are

chosen in the present in order to serve a specific future (Smith and Campbell 2017, 623). As

mentioned earlier, Panayiotis' connection with the forest is unique—it is an integral part of his

identity. He actively reworks the past and brings back to life the people and places that serve his contemporary needs. He seeks recognition and respect for himself, his family and ancestors whose lives were entangled in the forest but have now been largely forgotten. It is through his heritage work that he asserts his place and legitimizes his presence in the forest (past and present)—his response and resistance to clearance.

Emotions are integral to the formation and maintenance of relationships with the past—including that which is materially present and that which is absent (Smith and Campbell 2016, 2017, 615). As the below quote attests, Panayiotis *feels* that he is a descendant of the first people who came to the mountains and forest of the Asinou and Rotson River Valleys, those who paid for building the church of Panayia Phorviotissa in the 12th century. Panayiotis' love of Asinou, Aspri and Jerenides is entangled with his experience of growing up with these areas. They connect him in a powerful relationship with the land and embed him in the genealogy of its past people, places and practices.

> It seems that the *ktitores* [the people who paid for the building] of the church as well as the rest of the people that were there, they left descendants, the old people died, the young were born, then again the next and the next and so on…I imagine that my family comes from that period because I love so much the area up there, especially Asinou, Asprous (Aspri), Jerenides. I was around when people lived with their flocks, then they left, they died, my father was left, after my grandfather it was my father, then me. (This makes me) think that my family comes from these people.
>
> (Panayiotis at Aspri abandoned village August 2, 2017)

He mobilises the past and connects his own history and that of his family with the foundations of Panayia Phoriviotissa—UNESCO listed and therefore the "official" heritage of the area. Like

much of his heritage work, he is making claims about his own legitimacy, the authenticity of his important places, their rightful spot in history and thus the future (Smith and Campbell 2016, 450).

Panayiotis creates and recreates the past and his links to the past through visiting the places he "met" through his life in the forest. He negotiates his identity through physically engaging with his important places, reworking memories that serve to keep his knowledge alive while creating new memories and meanings (Crouch and Parker 2003, 396; Smith 2006, 46¬48). His trips to the forest create a sense of authenticity of land, place and self (Jones 2016, 135).

Identified as one of Panayiotis' favourite places in the forest, Aspri village was abandoned long before it was used by his family as a grazing area; to him it has only ever been known as a place of ruins (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Panayiotis Alexandrou Loppas (left) storytelling at Aspri with Andri Evrypidou (centre) and Christophoros Christophorou (right). Photograph: author.

Panayiotis has maintained connections with Aspri on and off over the past 75 years, first as a child, later as an employee of the Forestry Department, and today as a storyteller. He asserts his place and legitimizes his presence in the forest through coming to Aspri and walking amongst its ruins. He negotiates his identity through intentionally embedding himself in a deep relationship with the place and its past inhabitants through this heritage 'work' as he states:

> If you looked at their houses there, looked at their pithoi, the running water. All that slowly, slowly, slowly, slowly is lost. And even if you go there by yourself and sit, and I bring to mind the memory of all that stuff it's like I live with them, like I was one of the people of the area and I live with them.

> (Panayiotis Alexandrou Loppas, Interview, Nikitari, August 20, 2018)

The authenticity of objects and places (like the ruins of Aspri) is connected to the web of relationships they invoke with the past and present (Jones 2010, 189, 2016, 134–135). It is also born of the interplay between present and absent—those who once lived here, their material remains and their re-imagining through the memory work of Panayiotis as he moves through the abandoned village (Bille, Hastrup and Sørensen 2010, 18). His interactions with the abandoned village—its position, landscape, ruins—engage his senses and create a sense of emotional authenticity that collapses time and connects him not only with his recent past, as entangled in Aspri, but the distant past (Smith 2006, 70–71). As illustrated below, he attributes a magical quality to these ruins—a belief that their evocative qualities might take him back in time to when he visited Aspri as a child with his goats.

> The area attracted me, especially at Asprous (Aspri) because we had the flock up there. I thought, when I went up there, that I would find the same place that I was there (*in the*

20

past). I thought I would see the flock, I would see the area we lived. It is something that attracted me to go and see. (Panayiotis interview, Nikitari, August 20, 2018).

Panayiotis and Aspri share a genealogy and have a stake in each other's past, present and future. Aspri (its ruins, trees, pottery and the pasts these evoke) relies on the work of Panayiotis to make it visible so that it can remembered into the future. Panayiotis draws on his important places like Aspri in positioning himself in the social, cultural and physical world (Smith 2006, 75).

Storytelling mobilises the past; it keeps connections with people, places, "things" and their landscapes alive into the future. As van Dooren (2014, 285) states, 'stories breathe new life into the dead, keeping them moving and enabling them to "haunt" our lives and future possibilities'. Telling stories can bring a sense of balance or cohesion to a person's life. They can be used as a way of mourning for the past while simultaneously being used as a call for social action (see Abrams 2016, 146; Cruikshank 1998, 28; van Dooren 2014, 284). Storytellers may express and negotiate identity through stories while at the same time making comments about larger social issues. They (the stories and the storyteller) are part of 'setting the record straight' (Halilovich 2016, 91).

Panayiotis is a skilled storyteller. He sustains his attachment to the Adelphi State Forest through his stories, using them as a way to revitalise connections with the land and keep his ancestors alive (see also Roberts 2018 for the role of storytelling in sustaining attachments in Shankleville, Texas). He deploys his knowledge through story in order to revise and "destabilise" history, to assert his, and his ancestors' presence back into the mountains and forest in ways that the Authorised Heritage Discourse cannot (Abrams 2012, 108; see Bakhtin, Benjamin, Innis in Cruikshank 1998, 154–155)

Whenever possible he told his stories "on site" in the land. While most were followed up later over coffee or lunch at his home, the context of their initial telling was essential to their message. As Abrams (2016, 139) reminds us, oral history is not only a language but involves the whole body; stories are inseparable from the context in which they are performed. Therefore to be remembered "correctly" Panayiotis performed his stories in the landscape that produced and continues to sustain them.

As many storytellers, Panayiotis' accounts move between life in the 21st century, life in his past, and life in the distant past—the time of his first ancestors (Abrams 2016, 60). His stories are about both presence and absence—he comments on the remains in front of him but in the next breath speaks of their decay, loss, and hope for their recovery and protection. In this way his stories are as much about the future as they are about the past.

Panayiotis' stories commonly include a sense of loss and nostalgia, even grief—the loss of the physical (i.e. eroding buildings) and the loss of memories and knowledge. Smith and Campbell (2016, 616, 2017, 615) explore how the feeling of nostalgia does not necessarily indicate a desire to return to the past but rather a need to have ones past acknowledged (Smith and Campbell 2017, 622). The below quote is taken from an excursion to Fteriji, the place where Panayiotis lived from six months to three years of age (Figure 5). His last trip to the area was over 70 years ago.

Figure 5. Panayiotis Alexandrou Loppas at Fteriji following the 2016 wildfire. Photograph: Andri Evripidou.

You know this area here had a special importance. Because when it was getting dry everywhere else, this was the only ditch where the water was still flowing. My father was here with his herd but other shepherds used to bring theirs as well. And this area was important for them. Fteriji.…If I could I would climb up there to find the house. The house is in there I guess, where those pine trees are. How many days and nights spent here alone… a kid, his mother and father. The bad thing was that we didn't have much to eat. Only some *halloumi* cheese and *anari*. Nothing else. My father used to go to Petra with the donkey loaded with wood, to bring some bread, some beans, beetroots, oranges from Lefka. And he didn't buy oranges of good quality. He used to buy those called "pesiarika". The ones that used to fall down from the tree, they were cheap. (Panayiotis Alexandrou Loppas, Fteriji, July 22, 2017)

Panayiotis tells his story of life in Fteriji—living on little food and in a house that he calls a 'ditch'—not because he wants to relive this past but because he wants people to know what life was like for shepherds like his family who lived in the forest prior to their forced removal. He uses story and nostalgia as a way of making space in history for those who have been forgotten (link to video https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DJI2lfucTQY).

As mentioned previously, Panayiotis and I shared 15 hours of 'on site' engagements as we visited his important places together. Driving along the forestry roads he recited the names of mountains, pathways and localities. He guided me along pathways and through abandoned villages on foot, pointing out important elements and stopping periodically to tell stories relevant to the area. This embodied performance of memory was part of his heritage making process—negotiating identity and values in order to re-establish his relationship with the land, its past people and places (Smith 2006, 47).

I was an active part of this process. Sarah Pink (2015) usefully reminds us that in ethnographic practice we use the whole sensory body in our engagements with human and nonhuman world. Researchers and research participants are emplaced and the multisensorial experience of *doing* research impacts how we come to understand and communicate meaning. Thus while my intention in participating in Panayiotis' guided visits to the forest was to create a deeper understanding of his process of heritage-making, I learned that by sharing this experience with him I became "a constituent of place…and an agent in its production" (Pink 2015, 97). I was part of Panayiotis' process of negotiating meaning and creating new understandings of his past and present in this landscape. Our understandings of places like Aspri and Fteriji shifted as we walked through the sites together, Panayiotis smoking as he told stories, pointing out important

features in the landscape, and me recording them in my notebook, digital recorder and/or video. These collaborative multisensory experiences created new understandings of these places.

To summarise, Panayiotis' heritage work was motivated by a desire to have his past and that of his ancestors remembered. As Laurajane Smith's (2006, 45–46) research with the women of the Indigenous Waanyi community in northern Queensland, Australia illustrated, passing on knowledge, stories and experiences through present interactions can be both an act of heritage and a strategy for heritage management. Panayiotis drew on my position as a foreign academic embedded in the authorised heritage discourse to give his 'unofficial' heritage weight and to legitimate his heritage values (Harrison 2013, 14–15). As a Canadian scholar holding an EU Fellowship at a UK university, I offered Panayiotis the possibility of communicating his knowledge, stories, and experiences of life in the forest to an audience far beyond the local village archive. At the same time my academic background meant I had the skills and resources necessary to record and thus preserve his knowledge through media like video, photographs and digital recordings. In essence, I offered him the best chance of having his story of the forest remembered into the future. His heritage work with me was strategic—it was an act of resistance and a means of asserting his rightful place within the forested landscape.

As has been made clear, links between heritage and identity are actively and continually made and remade to serve contemporary needs (Smith 2006, 304). In the section that follows I discuss how the abandoned village of Asinou was chosen as the focus for the creation and negotiation of a new collective identity for the Asinou Regional Primary School.

The Asinou Regional Primary School: Forging New Relationships with an Abandoned Village

Asinou village (see Figure 2) is approximately 750 metres to the southwest of Panayia Phorviotissa. Located as an enclave within the Adelphi State Forest, the ruins consist of multiphase mudbrick buildings, two ovens, three threshing floors and the remains of at least one sheep enclosure (Gibson 2013, 221–226). There is archaeological evidence of occupation from the 18th to 20th centuries while 16th century tax registers attest to its earlier foundations (1572 fiscal survey: Ankara Tapu ve Kadastro Arşivi, T.T. 64). Up until the middle of the 20th century (late 1940s) it was inhabited by shepherds (including Panayiotis' family) who took their flocks to graze in the forest. By 1950 most inhabitants had moved to Nikitari. While there are some exceptions, memory of life in the village faded as the Elders who left the village passed away.

The regional school, named for Asinou Church (Panayia Phorviotissa) opened in 2009, replacing local village schools throughout the area. When I visited in 2016 to discuss the possibility of working with the teachers and pupils as part of the PATH project, I was surprised to learn that they did not know of Asinou village. This absence of memory and knowledge of the village attracted the teachers who were looking to create an identity and collective sense of belonging at their new school. The abandoned village became a cultural tool through which to forge this new identity (Smith 2006, 276).

With the permission of the Ministry of Primary Education and the Department of Antiquities, a program with a seminar and fieldtrip to Asinou village was co-designed with the school teachers and principal that would include a tour of the village with storytelling by Panayiotis Alexandrou Loppas. The intention was for students and teachers to be introduced to the village in its forest

enclave through experiencing it in person—to engage them in the 'emotional performance of creating meaning of the past in the present' (Smith and Campbell 2016, 449).

As it is impossible to drive to Asinou village by bus, pupils arrived at the village by foot. While all live in villages located within 10km of the boundary of the Adelphi Forest and Asinou Church, few had ever travelled along the road beyond the church and certainly none had ever walked on the forestry service road, nor so close to the forest itself. The 15-minute walk along the narrow dirt road then up a small hill and along its spur created a sense of mystery and adventure among pupils while reinforcing the impression that this was a remote and forgotten place.

Asinou is in various states of decay with some buildings appearing as though their owners are just gone for the afternoon while others are roofless with melting mudbrick and overgrown vegetation. The more recently abandoned houses contain a jumble of old clothes, broken windows and blackened hearths. These material traces conjure up those who once lived in these houses; as Bille, Hastrup and Sørensen (2010, 12–13) state, they 'stir an empathetic flow between the body in the present and the body that is absent'.

Ruins engage the body and through their unfamiliarity invite the body to interact with them (Edensor 2005, 325–6). At Asinou the students were drawn to the ruins—they played with the long blades of dead grass that surrounded the decaying houses, etched designs into the hardened soil at their feet, watched ants as they moved within the walls, and used the hardened stalks of dead plants that grow between the walls to tickle the ears of fellow classmates.

Figure 6. Asinou Regional Primary School Grade 5/6 Class at Asinou Village with Panayiotis Alexandrou Loppas. Photograph: Tracy Ireland.

Panayiotis toured the students and their teachers through the village making sure to weave the disconnected and alien "things" that made up these ruins together through his stories of growing up in the village and of the people who lived and worked in the forest (Figure 6; link to video https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ziRAENdeNC8). He showed where he slept, acted out how his family communicated through the walls to his aunt's house next door. He pointed to the roofless structures and named their owners making sure to outline connections to families living in the Nikitari area. Panayiotis' performance of memory coupled with the individual and collective experiences of the children enlivened Asinou and transformed it into a heritage place.

This transformation was a process of attachment that connected children, the place and its past inhabitants and instilled a sense of communal identity and belonging (Byrne 2008, 169; Smith and Campbell 2017, 617). Their physical and social engagement with Asinou gave the past a sense of authenticity and emotional weight.

Less than a month after the fieldtrip, students and teachers of the Grade 5/6 class initiated a student led project on Asinou to learn about its distant and recent past. Their research was motivated by a desire to learn more about this place that so few knew about, then to share their findings with their parents and village communities (see Johnston and Marwood 2017 for a similar case in the UK). Questionnaires were distributed by the students who also conducted interviews of their parents and grandparents, consulted TAESP's survey reports and, with the assistance of their teachers, accessed colonial documents from the State Archives. They learned about the people who lived in Asinou and the forest in the distant and recent past and why they had to leave. This research was both an act of heritage making and an attempt to legitimise a newly emerging collective identity.

Over the course of one year Asinou shifted from an abandoned and largely forgotten village to the cornerstone for a new collective identity that goes beyond the school to the small rural villages that it serves. The past has been reworked and new narratives have emerged (Smith and Waterton 2009, 76) in order to accommodate this new identity. When I interviewed the children who worked on this research and asked: why is it important for people to know about Asinou? One student responded, '[i]t is important because grandpas and grandmas used to live there and they loved their village; it is very important for our ancestors'. Even though a large mural of Panayia Phorviotissa (Asinou Church) adorns the walls of their school gymnasium, Asinou Regional Primary School has proudly and loudly adopted Asinou village as their namesake, as one grade 5 students stated, Asinou is 'important because our school's name comes from the name of that village'.

Conclusion

This paper has discussed the construction of Cyprus' State Forests as "clearance" for the first time. The British colonial administration sought to physically and ideologically clear Cyprus' forests of its people—past, present and future. I argued that such acts of colonisation had long term effects on how Cypriots connect to and understand their pasts as entangled in and with the forest.

The Cypriot case studies used here support Denis Byrne (2008) and Rodney Harrison's (2010) argument that heritage is a form of social action where connections with the past may be created or mobilised in order to suit particular contemporary social needs. While Panayiotis' heritage work has focussed on reaffirming his identity and maintaining his place in the forest landscape and genealogy of those who once lived there, the work of the Asinou Regional Primary School was motivated by absence. In their search for a new collective identity they turned to an abandoned and forgotten place—Asinou village. They enlivened and reworked its past, created new meanings based on their own embodied experiences, and in so doing produced a powerful narrative to serve a new regional identity.

Together Panayiotis and the Asinou Regional Primary School "re-placed" the Adelphi State Forest through heritage practices that created new relationships, memories and meanings with abandoned, overlooked or forgotten places and landscapes. Telling stories, visiting sites, curating "things", feeds identities, reworks the past and reminds people of who they are, were, and might be.

Thus while this paper has focussed on rural Cyprus, it has addressed broader issues of heritage that are relevant beyond this island. If 'clearance of landscapes is about rupturing a sense of

belonging, home, identity, and meaning' as Smith (2008, 23) states, then this paper has illustrated how heritage can be used to resist clearance through the process of connecting and reconnecting with the past in the present.

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SA1: Unpublished Chief Secretary's Minute Papers, preserved in the State Archives of the Republic of Cyprus. Copyright remains with the Government of Cyprus.

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