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**Doctoral Dissertation**

**CULTIVATING OFFICIAL CULTURE THROUGH  
VISUAL COMMUNICATION: STAMP DESIGN IN THE  
REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS, PERCEPTIONS OF CITIZENS  
AND IDEOLOGY**

**Sonia Andreou**

**Limassol, November 2017**



CYPRUS UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY  
FACULTY OF FINE AND APPLIED ARTS  
DEPARTMENT OF MULTIMEDIA AND GRAPHIC ARTS

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## **Approval Form**

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### **CULTIVATING OFFICIAL CULTURE THROUGH VISUAL COMMUNICATION: STAMP DESIGN IN THE REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS, PERCEPTIONS OF CITIZENS AND IDEOLOGY**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Postage stamps play a significant role in the establishment of a country's image, as they carry a variety of meanings through their visual representations. They are artefacts of national identity, since they are simultaneously defined by the official culture of a nation, and can be considered 'visual ambassadors' of the country they represent. These images address and transfer messages to both internal and external audiences, serving a role that remains of utmost importance for stamp-designing programs. The particular purpose of stamp imagery however, has not been empirically researched and therefore created an issue for consideration. The inclusion of the citizen's perspective (internal audiences) aside from introducing a new approach in researching the particular subject, was required in order to substantially explore how ideological meanings are constructed through stamp design, since these everyday objects contribute to the shaping of collectiveness within a state. The country which the study concentrates on is the Republic of Cyprus, a relatively 'young' post-colonial state, founded in 1960. A mixed methods design was adopted for the particular dissertation in order to aid us in studying not only the messages sent by the government through stamp design, but also the perceptions of citizens. The dissertation involves three stages that took place sequentially, while their findings informed each other. The first study employed quantitative content analysis in order to investigate through a sample of 998 postage stamps issued by the Republic of Cyprus, the predominant themes appearing in this corpus, and the messages they carried as defined by the official culture. The second study built on these findings and explored the views and preferences of 384 Cypriot citizens in relation to their country's official representation as depicted on stamp imagery, through a survey research. The final study was designed following the need to gain in-depth information and understanding of the citizens' perceptions, as these emerged from our previous findings. Following this rationale, for the last part we chose to conduct focus group interviews with 20 Cypriot citizens who have already participated in the second study. Our findings revealed the need for an ideologically inclusive repertoire coming from both the existing official culture, as well as the citizens, expressed in different manners. We demonstrated how the government and citizens are in search of a renewed approach to the Republic of Cyprus' image-construction, through the semiotics of stamps; one that highlights their local cultural identity, respects older forms of representation, and is simultaneously independent from

that of any other country. Concluding, this dissertation proved how postage stamps as subtle carriers of ideological messages can cultivate and influence the official culture, as well as the views of the citizens. We have additionally shown how the citizens do not necessarily accept and adopt all of these messages, mediating and modifying them in order to reflect their own views, positions and experiences. It can be therefore observed that the perceptions deriving both from the government's decisions and from the citizens can get altered over time, and are particularly susceptible to the ever-changing historical, political and social differentiations that take place. In this sense, we argue that studies such as the one presented contribute to the uncovering of various aspects of the societies in question, as well as their citizens and their decision-making centres, as they go through important changes.

The dissertation concludes with suggestions for future research regarding the role of the citizen and the implications for the authorities regulating stamp-designing programs, national collectiveness through visual communication, the designers themselves, as well as educators.

**Keywords:** postage stamps, visual communication, official culture, citizens, Republic of Cyprus.



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	vi
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	viii
LIST OF TABLES.....	x
LIST OF FIGURES.....	xi
LIST OF PLATES.....	xiii
Introduction.....	16
Definition and main characteristics.....	18
A brief note on Cyprus' postal history.....	20
1 Literature review.....	25
1.1 The postage stamp as a political messenger.....	26
1.1.1 Postage stamp imagery in respect of geographical and political transitions.....	33
1.1.2 Postage stamp as a propaganda tool.....	36
1.2 Social issues through postage stamp imagery.....	39
1.3 Postage stamps as objects of popular culture.....	45
1.4 Graphic design in the service of meaning through postage stamps.....	49
1.5 The usage and role of postage stamps in education.....	51
1.6 Thematic collecting.....	52
1.7 Gaps in literature.....	57
1.8 Research purpose.....	59
1.9 Concluding remarks on literature review.....	60
2 Research questions.....	62
3 Theoretical framework.....	66
3.1 Imagined communities and representation through postage stamp imagery.....	66
3.2 The cultural dimension of postage stamp imagery: official and mainstream.....	71
3.3 Semiotics of postage stamp in visual communication: shaping and reflecting culture.....	79
3.4 Concluding remarks on theoretical framework.....	90
4 Methodology.....	93
4.1 Methodological approaches in the study of postage stamps.....	93
4.2 The methodology of the current study (Mixed methods design).....	94

4.3 Ethics and limitations of the research .....	101
5 First study (based on quantitative content analysis): identifying official culture representations through the Republic of Cyprus' postage stamps .....	103
5.1 Aims, methodology, instrumentation and implementation .....	103
5.2 Results .....	113
5.3 Discussion .....	140
5.4 Summary .....	157
6 Second study (based on survey research): exploring official culture and ideology on the Republic of Cyprus' postage stamps through the views of citizens .....	160
6.1 Aims, methodology, instrumentation and implementation .....	160
6.2 Results .....	171
6.3 Discussion .....	196
6.4 Summary .....	210
7 Third study (based on focus groups interviews): gaining in-depth information on the ideologies behind citizens' perceptions in relation to the design of the Republic of Cyprus' postage stamps .....	214
7.1 Aims, methodology, instrumentation and implementation .....	214
7.2 Results .....	223
7.3 Discussion .....	234
7.4 Summary .....	255
8 Conclusion, contribution and directions for future study .....	257
9 Bibliography .....	265
APPENDICES .....	283

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Cohen’s kappa measure of agreement between the first and second coder .....	109
Table 2: Cohen’s kappa measure of agreement between the first and third coder .....	110
Table 3: Cohen’s kappa measure of agreement between the second and third coder.....	110
Table 4: Fleiss’ kappa values of agreement among all of the coders.....	111
Table 5: Numbers and percentages for all postage stamp categories.....	115
Table 6: Frequency distribution for the final stamp classification among periods.....	121
Table 7: Percentage distribution for the final stamp classification among periods.....	125
Table 8: Frequency distribution for the final stamps’ classification before and after 1974 until 2013.....	131
Table 9: Percentage distribution for the final stamps’ classification before and after 1974 until 2013.....	132
Table 10: Frequency distribution for the final stamps’ classification during the periods between 1974 – 2003 and 2004 – 2013.....	134
Table 11: Percentage distribution for the final stamps’ classification during the periods between 1974 – 2003 and 2004 – 2013.....	135
Table 12: Frequency distribution for the final stamps’ classification before and after 2004 until 2013.....	137
Table 13: Percentage distribution for the final stamps’ classification before and after 2004 until 2013.....	138
Table 14: Overview of key findings that emerged from the first study.....	159
Table 15: Frequency and percentage distribution for the demographic characteristics of the study’s subjects.....	172
Table 16: Memory of specific postage stamp imagery .....	177
Table 17: Ideology and thematic categories on stamps .....	178
Table 18: Ideology and thematic categories on stamps .....	179
Table 19: Colour semiotics and postage stamps.....	183
Table 20: Question six.....	184
Table 21: Question seven.....	189
Table 22: Citizens’ perception on suitable stamp topics.....	195
Table 23: Overview of key findings that emerged from the second study .....	213
Table 24: Overview of key findings that emerged from the third study .....	256

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Anderson’s (1991) theory on Imagined communities and Edensor’s (2002) theory on everyday objects constructing official narratives.....	71
Figure 2: Analyzing visual messages.....	81
Figure 3: Encoding / decoding messages through stamp imagery.....	82
Figure 4: Hall’s (1980) model of meaning reception.....	84
Figure 5: Saussure’s (1974) analysis of the sign.....	87
Figure 6: Barthes’ (1972) diagram on the analysis of sign.....	89
Figure 7: Mixed methods design (explanatory sequential) for the present study.....	98
Figure 8: The methodological tools and research questions for the present study.....	99
Figure 9: Numbers for all postage stamp categories.....	116
Figure 10: Frequency distribution for the final postage stamp classification among time periods (1960 – 2013).....	120
Figure 11: Frequency distribution for the final postage stamp classification among time periods (1960 – 2013).....	122
Figure 12: Percentage distribution for the final postage stamp classification among time periods (1960 – 2013).....	123
Figure 13: Percentage distribution for the final postage stamp classification among time periods (1960 – 2013).....	124
Figure 14: Percentage distribution for the final stamps’ classification before and after 1974 until 2013.....	133
Figure 15: Percentage distribution for the final stamps’ classification during the period between 1974 – 2003 and 2004 – 2013.....	136
Figure 16: Percentage distribution for the final stamps’ classification before and after 2004 until 2013.....	139
Figure 17: Interest in philately (percentage distribution).....	174
Figure 18: Usage of post offices by the citizens (percentage distribution).....	174
Figure 19: Memory of specific postage stamp imagery (percentage distribution)....	175
Figure 20: Messages transferred through stamps and ideology (political messages).....	185
Figure 21: Messages transferred through stamps and ideology (social messages)...	186
Figure 22: Messages transferred through stamps and ideology (messages concerning tradition) .....	187

Figure 23: Messages transferred through stamps and ideology (messages concerning religion) .....	188
Figure 24: Messages transferred through stamps and ideology (messages concerning antiquities) .....	188
Figure 25: Topics influencing stamp design and ideology (political developments).	190
Figure 26: Topics influencing stamp design and ideology (economy).....	191
Figure 27: Topics influencing stamp design and ideology (social changes).....	192
Figure 28: Topics influencing stamp design and ideology (design trends).....	193
Figure 29: Importance of the country's representation through stamp .....	193
Figure 30: Role of the citizen in the process of stamp design (percentage distribution) .....	194

## LIST OF PLATES

Plate 1: The constitution of the Republic.....	23
Plate 2: The great leader .....	104
Plate 3: Hala Sultan Tekkesi.....	141
Plate 4: The Virgin Mary.....	143
Plate 5: The Virgin Mary and Baby Jesus.....	143
Plate 6: Kyrenia II.....	148
Plate 7: Kyrenia II.....	148
Plate 8: Kyrenia II.....	148
Plate 9: Kyrenia II .....	148
Plate 10: 25 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Cyprus Airways.....	150
Plate 11: Forest.....	150
Plate 12: Rosa Damascena.....	152
Plate 13: Origanum Dobium .....	152
Plate 14: Jasminum Grandiflorum .....	152
Plate 15: Sea anemone.....	153
Plate 16: Sea fan coral.....	153
Plate 17: Opuntia Ficus - Barbarica.....	153
Plate 18: Eleonora's falcon.....	153
Plate 19: Eleonora's falcon .....	153
Plate 20: International children's book day.....	155
Plate 21: Europe - Children's literature .....	156
Plate 22: Europe - Children's literature .....	156
Plate 23: 25 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Cyprus Airways .....	199
Plate 24: Cyclamen cyprium .....	199
Plate 25: 20 years of the Republic of Cyprus .....	200
Plate 26: The flag of the Republic of Cyprus .....	200
Plate 27: Cyprus 1974 .....	205
Plate 28: Cyprus 1974.....	206
Plate 29: Cyprus 1974 .....	206
Plate 30: Cyprus 1974 .....	206
Plate 31: Cyprus 1974.....	206
Plate 32: Virgin and Child from Liopetri.....	238

Plate 33: Mother and Child on the way of becoming refugees .....	239
Plate 34: Wooden Cross from Stavrovouni.....	241
Plate 35: Jesus Christ - icon from the Arakas church in Lagoudera .....	241
Plate 36: Virgin Mary and Jesus Christ .....	241
Plate 37: 100 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Saint Andrew the Apostle's monastery .....	241
Plate 38: Aphrodite .....	243
Plate 39: Salamis Amphitheatre.....	243
Plate 40: Europe's abduction.....	243
Plate 41: Kyrenia shipwreck.....	243
Plate 42: Aphrodite .....	246
Plate 43: Aphrodite .....	246
Plate 44: Elaeagnus Angustifolia.....	248
Plate 45: Cyclamen Cyprium Kotschy.....	248
Plate 46: Cyprus Mouflon.....	248
Plate 47: Cyprus donkey.....	248
Plate 48: Traditional dances.....	252
Plate 49: Commandaria.....	252
Plate 50: Omodos village.....	252
Plate 51: Carved pumpkin on a sunny beach.....	252

## INTRODUCTION

Postage stamps have been issued by governments and used as a prepayment method for the delivery of parcels since 1840. However, these tiny objects became transmitters of important messages throughout the years. At some point many governments figured out that postage stamps could act as a valuable agent for conveying and transmitting their policies (Adedze, 2012). It is a fact that if someone does not pay particular attention to the imagery on stamps it can automatically be assumed that they are insignificant. It seems however that this characteristic makes stamps valuable to governments. Due to their small size and their repetitive and 'discreet' appearance in people's lives they can carry significant socio - political messages, without the intention becoming apparent. A quite interesting example of this repetition would be in Great Britain, where the postage stamp was first introduced to the audiences. The image of the reigning monarch appears on every stamp and even in the corner of every 'special edition stamp', alongside the imagery chosen for the occasion. The strength of this quite simplistically designed portrait of the monarch became so strong through repetition that it has replaced the name of the country itself. The United Kingdom became the only country which does not need to inscribe its name on its stamps.

It has been widely noted and accepted by many scholars that the postage stamps a country issues are exceptionally strong political and sociocultural texts (Scott, 2004; Raento and Brunn, 2005; Bushnell, 2011). However, due to the quite mundane and prosaic nature of postage stamps they are often overlooked in contrast to other elements of visual culture. They 'rate low in the hierarchy of modern cultural taste', and are simultaneously and somewhat surprisingly ignored by historians (Frank, 1997). Reid (1984) noted that while numismatics has gained a wide recognition as a scholarly discipline, philately has never managed to reach that level simply being better known as a widespread hobby. It seems that only philatelists spend considerable time cataloguing, noticing and discussing anything related to postage stamps and their imagery. This is unfortunate, Reid continued, as stamps 'are more varied and less conservative' than coins, thus enabling a useful 'reading' for the researcher. According to Reid (1984) stamps could prove an excellent primary resource of information for the historian, or any other scientist who seeks to address the 'hidden' messages a state attempts to direct to its citizens and abroad. Reid (1984) mentioned how only a few people could remember the image on a postage stamp, even if they had sent a parcel the very



previous day. Although this statement seems to be quite accurate, it has to be noted that the author did not gain this information from empirical study, and it seems to be an account of Reid's personal opinion on the matter. One might argue that postage stamps are not memorable enough, or even not that useful anymore in the days of electronic mail. As compelling as this statement may be, stamps are still in circulation and still produced in a vast quantity every single year by most countries. In fact even states with limited recognition such as the Republic of Kosovo, the Republic of South Ossetia and the Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic strive to publish and circulate their own postage stamps. They have the ability to circulate nationally and internationally on an interpersonal level and also as part of stamp collections (Raento, 2006). Alongside coinage, banknotes, flags and national anthems, just to name a few, the postage stamp is produced, or at least authorised to an extent by the state itself. As part of the official national repertoire it carries ideological meanings to audiences that are worth researching.

The present study aims to investigate the notion of official representation of a state through stamp imagery, while at the same time discuss it in relation to the perceptions of its citizens. Having agreed on the fact that each country or government, adopts specific repertoires and narratives for different historical periods in order to promote the desired messages and spread a sense of belonging within its members, it would be of interest to study in more depth the case of Cyprus, as a relatively 'young', post - Colonial state. At the same time the views of Cypriot citizens on their country's representation through stamps, is a crucial feature of this study. It is of interest to explore the dialogue developed between official representations such as stamps, and citizens. It could be assumed that the messages promoted through official documents are somehow absorbed and accepted by the citizens, however we consider this exchange akin to a dialogue where the parties can agree, negotiate or reject certain messages and even replace them with more suitable ones.

This idea of a cultural interaction between a state and its citizens will be further developed in subsequent chapters following a literature review and the theoretical and methodological frameworks adopted for this study. It is clearly evident that stamps carry a subtle ideological power that is both carefully constructed by the state which produced them, as well as interpreted, influenced and used by the audiences that encounter them. The present chapter will outline some key definitions in the study of

stamps and will conclude with a brief postal history of Cyprus in order to give the reader a historical and socio-political background of the country in question.

## **Definition and main characteristics**

A postage stamp is a small piece of paper which is displayed on a mailed item as evidence for payment of the postal service. A cancellation mark is applied over the stamp once the parcel has been dispatched. In this way the postal departments are able to prevent the re-use of stamps. They are printed on custom-made paper, otherwise called postage stamp paper. The main components that a stamp must always feature in order to be valid is an image, perforations, denomination and the issuing country's name. They are usually created in the shape of rectangle with its edges perforated, although there have been some cases where triangles, circles or other shapes have been preferred for added interest (Hosain, 2013). The designs that appear on postage stamps are usually determined between the designer or artist and the administrative officials of the state (Mallon, 2006).

While stamps used to be considered to be one of the main national and international promotion tools, they had and still do possess some characteristics that make their design and any attempt at artistic expression more complicated and difficult to achieve. The requirements that make the designer's task difficult is the small space available for the image (usually only a few centimetres), the necessity of including the county's name, as well as the value since it is the only evidence for the payment. Moreover, some countries may choose to add a reminder of mail usage, the names of the creators of each stamp, the name of the printing office and finally a short text or even a slogan (Lefrère and Danic, 2010). This results in a rather peculiar blend of attempted artistic expression on the one hand, and bureaucratic resolutions on the other, all impressed on the quite small space of the stamp.

There are around 32 different categories of postage stamps in total and they can be organised in groups according to the way and purpose of their printing. These categories are the following: Airmail stamp, booklet stamp, carrier's stamp, certified mail stamp, coil stamps, commemorative stamp, computer vended postage, customised stamp, definitive stamp, express mail stamp, late fee stamp, local post stamp, military stamp, mini-sheet stamp, newspaper stamp, official mail stamp, occupation stamp, non-denominated postage, overprint, perforated stamp, personalised stamp, pneumatic post

stamp (only in Italy), postage currency stamp, postage due stamp, postal tax, self-adhesive stamp, semi-postal/charity stamp (often found in Belgium and Switzerland), souvenir sheet of stamps, specimen stamp, test stamp, variable value stamps, war tax stamp, water-activated stamp, Revenue stamp and Telegraph stamp.

The most common way of categorizing stamps however, is by knowing the purpose of their publication, thus arranging them under the terms ‘definitive’ or ‘commemorative’. The term ‘definitive’ refers to a postage stamp that belongs to the regular issues of the state, it is sold by all the post offices within the country for a long period of time and it serves everyday postal needs. On the other hand, a ‘commemorative’ postage stamp is issued by the state for a limited time period, in order to commemorate and honour an important person, event or place (Carlton, 1997). It should be noted however, that commemorative stamps can be used alongside definitive stamps without the production of the first affecting the other. It has been noted that some postal departments release a large number of commemorative stamp sets every year. For the first day of issue, ceremonies connected with the subject or location on the stamps, are held (Hosain, 2013). Every stamp carries significant messages, but the messages transmitted through commemorative stamps are considered to be much more essential. In fact to be featured on a commemorative stamp has become a prestigious way of gaining recognition and thus various groups and institutions argue for their cause to be carried on these stamps (Adedze, 2012).

The very first postage stamp was published in the United Kingdom in May 1840 and immediately got nicknamed the ‘Penny Black’. The design featured a young Queen Victoria’s (1819 – 1901) profile and was created by artist William Mulready (1786 – 1863). The unique characteristic of this stamp design was that it did not bear any formal indication of the country of issue, aside from the monarch’s head. It became a symbol of the country’s strength, as well as a reminder of its pioneering role in the development of stamp design (Jeffery, 2006). The creation of the Penny Black was part of a general proposal to reform the British mailing system at the time, as the recipients used to be charged for the postage upon delivery. Rowland Hill (1795 – 1879), an English reformer introduced the idea of postage stamp among other drastic changes in the entire postal system in a pamphlet he issued in 1837 (Holyoake, 2013). The initial reason for this invention was to easily guarantee the reception of the letter or parcel without an expensive delivery fee by the addressee. The boost in thematic choice and design took place only after the collectors became interested in stamps, and therefore governments

realized they might have a mass medium in their proverbial arsenal. We should note that even in those early days of postal reform the symbolism and messages promoted by the government were not absent. The envelope which accompanied the first Penny Black, also designed by Mulready used symbols signifying the strength and vastness of the imperial Kingdom. Simultaneously across the globe, two Canadian stamps were issued and circulated, featuring a world map with all of Britain's possessions in the colour red. The words 'We hold a vaster empire than has been', clearly pointed out the messages of pride and sovereignty the authorities wanted to convey to their audiences. As in reply, France decided to circulate its very own postage stamp with the same phrase, while modifying the world map on purpose in order to mark in red French colonies, instead (Reid, 1984).

The first stamps issued by the United States of America in 1847 on the other hand, celebrated democracy and the nation through two of the most important figures in American history: Founding Fathers Benjamin Franklin (1785 – 1788) and George Washington (1789 – 1797). Furthermore the first stamps dedicated to a social issue circulated in the British Crown colony of New South Wales in 1897. They were produced on the occasion of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee and depicted a number of charity themes, while being sold 12 times their usual value to aid consumptives (Lefrère and Danic, 2010). The first commemorative stamp was released by the United States of America in 1876 in order to honour the Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia, and specially designed stamps were sold in order to mark this event (Boggs, 1938). However, the historical moment that signalled a new era in stamp design was undoubtedly World War I (1914 – 1918). During this period the various states needed to use a tremendous amount of propaganda, using whichever advertising technique they could employ. Consequently this time was perfect for commemorative stamp design and release, with personifications of the government such as Uncle Sam, sending their important messages to the people in quite a drastic manner (Boggs, 1938).

### **A brief note on Cyprus' postal history**

Since the main focus of this study is the corpus of stamps issued by the Republic of Cyprus we provide a brief overview of the development of postal history on the island. It should be noted that while no substantial empirical research was recorded on the topic

of Cyprus' stamps, the history of postal services in Cyprus had been explored in detail in Castle's writings (1987).

The postal history of Cyprus is quite long and difficult to disentangle. There is evidence claiming that letters were sent and received from Cyprus during the last years of Lusignian Kingdom (1192 – 1489). The earliest known letter from Cyprus dates back on the 17<sup>th</sup> of June 1353, which was sent to Constantinople. The sender seems to have been a merchant and member of a Venetian guild, who probably handed his letter to the captain of a ship sailing to Constantinople for safer delivery. This detail suggests that there was no regular postal service at the time. After 1572 there is a gap of almost 100 years without any letter being recorded. However, during the Ottoman Period the availability of mailing services seems to have increased in the Mediterranean (Castle and Members of the Cyprus Study Circle, 1987). During these years the number of letters being sent from Cyprus to various destinations is quite remarkable: Venice, London, Dublin, Trieste and Marseille.

The British postal service was established in Cyprus on the 12<sup>th</sup> of July 1878, marking the beginning of an official and organized postal system on the island, as well as the period of British colonialism. The new regime almost immediately established a large number of post offices across the island, both in towns and some provincial areas (Castle and Members of the Cyprus Study Circle, 1987). The actual postage stamp history of Cyprus starts on the 1<sup>st</sup> of April 1880 when the United Kingdom issued a variation of the 'Penny Black' with the word 'CYPRUS' emblazoned on it, as the island was now a colony. This stamp was supposed to serve the postal needs from, to and within Cyprus now under the British Rule (Castle and Members of the Cyprus Study Circle, 1987). In 1928 a new type of pictorial stamps were issued in order to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the 1878 obtainment of the island. These stamps featured ten denominations and their designs represented persons, objects and events associated with the tradition of Cyprus and the British rule. During the reign of King George V (1910 – 1936) Cyprus continued to circulate the ordinary 'Shield type' postage stamps, which featured the ruler's profile and a number of Cyprus' landscapes, such as the archaeological excavations in Salamina. Following the death of King George V in 1936, his son King George VI (1895 – 1952) ascended to the throne. The sovereign's portrait continued to appear on every definitive postage stamp alongside maps of Cyprus or historical landscapes, such as the Othello Tower in Famagusta (Castle and Members of the Cyprus Study Circle, 1987). The most notable among the

postage stamps of King George's VI was the one designed to celebrate the victorious end of World War II in 1944. This particular issue of stamps was specifically dedicated to the efforts of the citizens in reconstructing peace and hope after the turbulent war period.

The last years before Cyprus' independence coincided with the reign of Queen Elizabeth II (1926 –). Her Majesty's portrait continued to appear on the stamps printed during this time period. Even after Cyprus' official declaration of independence in 1960, the country remained a member of the Commonwealth, and since the Queen was considered to be the head of this intergovernmental organisation, a political connection remained intact. In terms of stamp design, there were similarities between Queen Elizabeth's II stamps and those of her predecessors. Relevant sources recorded that a set of 15 different stamps was issued in 1955, and special care was taken in order to highlight the feminine grace of the new ruler in the way the Queen was portrayed (Castle and Members of the Cyprus Study Circle, 1987). The subjects of these stamps varied, including depictions of copper pyrite mines, ancient relics, harbours, churches and scenes from everyday life.

Similar postage stamps continued to be issued in Cyprus until the 16<sup>th</sup> of August 1960 when the island was proclaimed an independent state following the Zurich Agreement. Upon this agreement, the newly-founded Republic of Cyprus began the printing of its own postage stamps. It has to be noted, that in terms of postage stamp design the Republic of Cyprus made the announcement of the new era as clear as possible. The first stamps issued consisted of two different sets. The first one was a set which featured three commemorative stamps and the second, the full overprinted set. These designs were presented on the same day that the Zurich agreement was signed. The three *Independence Commemoratives* also appeared under the title *The Constitution of Republic* (Plate 1). They were extremely simplistic in design, featuring an unlettered map of Cyprus with the words 'Cyprus Republic' in Greek and Turkish, but completely avoiding to use the English language (Castle & Members of the Cyprus Study Circle, 1987). These three were considered to be the official languages of the state and therefore they were supposed to all be present on the stamps. However the decision to completely ignore using English on this design spoke volumes of the feeling towards the end of the Colonial period and the sovereignty of the island that now lay in the hands of Cypriots.



**Plate 1:** The constitution of the Republic,  
16 August 1960, Bradbury Wilkinson & Co. Ltd

An important event concerning the politics of the Republic of Cyprus and consequently its philatelic policies occurred in 1961, when the decision was taken for the country to participate in the *Conference of European Postal and Telecommunications Administrations*. Since then the Republic of Cyprus has remained a *Europa* country issuing every year special commemorative sets which stay in circulation for an entire year. Up until the beginning of 1970's and more precisely, 1974 when the circumstances changed, the Republic of Cyprus had issued 163 stamps. The separation of the two communities (Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot), following the events of the coup d'état in order to overthrow the elected president Archbishop Makarios III (1913 – 1977), the tension between the two communities and finally the Turkish invasion on the 20<sup>th</sup> of July 1974, had naturally influenced the postal history itself. No stamps produced by the Republic of Cyprus from the 20<sup>th</sup> of July 1974 onwards, had any significance or use in the North. The Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, albeit its limited recognition, also circulated its postage stamps, as of the 21<sup>st</sup> of April 1975. All of the stamps both definitive and commemorative issues were to indicate the year of issue and have certain validity, but no watermarks. Concluding, it should be noted that this study is focused solely on the postage stamps issued by the Republic of Cyprus and is not concerned with any postage stamps issued by the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. Thus the researcher will not delve deeper on this matter.

The corpus for this research was gathered with the kind aid of the Cyprus Postal Museum and the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Works, which also granted the author permission for the reproduction of stamp imagery for the present study. The relevant corpus was issued between 1960 and more recent years, 2013 in particular. It contains 1120 postage stamps, but our study employed 998 out of them, since we did not consider doubles. Subsequent chapters present the ways in which these

stamps were studied for this research, the aims of it, the theoretical framework we adopted, and finally we discuss our results in relation to the socio-political background of Cyprus.



## 1 Literature review<sup>1</sup>

This chapter is concerned with presenting the various studies conducted up to 2017 having postage stamps as their main topic. Furthermore we were interested in grouping the studies found, under thematic umbrellas that would allow us to investigate their content, while making constructive comparisons between them. In this way we were able to find and report similarities and important differences that informed and aided us in developing our own arguments and research. The socio-political background of these studies is certainly different to the one we are exploring, which is the Republic of Cyprus, however we were able to note large patterns in research concerning our main topic, which is stamps. These patterns or trends were usually related to the main topic of the studies. In few cases however, we were able to note various theoretical frameworks adopted and also alterations in the methodology used by the other authors. By conducting this literature review we were able to find and report the most common research methodologies employed in the study of stamps. However, as this chapter is concerned only with the subject matter of the studies found, any methodological trends were separately reported in the chapter dedicated to methodology (see Chapter 4).

More specifically this review of literature sought to address any possible gaps in knowledge, as well as understudied areas in the broader field of postage stamps and stamp design. Through the process of noting and reporting the most popular topics and areas of study, we were equally able to determine which ones needed further exploration. Most importantly though, this process enabled us to define some specific and important gaps in the study of postage stamps and stamp design that needed to be articulated and eventually answered.

Additionally, we were interested in reporting whether any relevant works discussing postage stamps produced by the Republic of Cyprus could be located. Aside from the book project on Cyprus' postal history written by Castle and members of the Cyprus Study Circle in 1987 (see Introduction), we were able to locate one Bachelor of Arts dissertation on the broader topic of Cyprus' postage stamps.

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<sup>1</sup> For a complete list of the literature found, as well as the most relevant theories and methodological tools that are being employed by them, see APPENDIX 1.

## **1.1 The postage stamp as a political messenger**

As Raento and Brunn (2008) explained there are multiple ways to view and comprehend postage stamp imagery, making their reading and hence studying a bit more complicated. First, there is the perspective of the consumer who buys a postage stamp in order to mail a package and his/her view is admittedly quite different from the perspective a philatelist uses upon carefully regarding and categorizing the object in his/her collection. These perspectives are even more dissimilar to those of the state representatives responsible for the production of various stamp issues. They consider stamps to be highly important, or even propagandistic tools of self-representation, as well as part of a profitable practise for their state (Raento and Brunn, 2008). Due to the confusion created because of these clashing viewpoints, people tend to dismiss the fact that postage stamps are official visual products. Alongside banknotes, flags, national anthems and official touristic branding just to name a few, the postage stamp is produced or at least authorised by the state itself.

Nonetheless, the majority of writers that use postage stamps as a resource for their hypotheses, or even place them as the focal point of their respected studies seem to agree on one thing. The most important and therefore, meaningful component of these small items is certainly the imagery (Sexty, 2000; Jones, 2001; Child, 2005, 2008; Deans, 2005; Dobson, 2005; Penrose and Cumming, 2011) and in some cases typography as part of the image itself, aiding or adding to the comprehension of a message (Jung, 1981; Scott and Hoek, 1994; Scott, 1995, 1999; Tirefort, 2012). The strength and importance of the visual aspects of a country's official repertoire (including stamp design) has been explained rather accurately by Brunn (2011, p.19) who asserted: 'when states emphasize "the visual", which includes maps, postage stamps, currency, and official web sites, they inform and educate their own populations and those beyond, about where they are, who they are and what they are about'.

And how they wish to be presented and regarded by others, someone could add to Brunn's assertion. The strength of imagery for stamp design is further emphasized by Scott's example of British definitive stamps (1995). As Scott (1995) argued, the ruling monarch's profile on the stamps was a sufficient indicator of the country, even without including the country's name. This strategy Golden (2010) claimed, was used in order to facilitate the rapid, almost instant recognition of the state, as well as to enhance a

specific national profile supported by a strong monarchy. As Britain became the first country to use this design strategy on its stamps it ensured that nothing else save for the monarch's motif, would be needed in the future in order to establish a strong identity through stamps (Jeffery, 2006). Something similar, albeit with the inclusion of compact typography, has been followed in France, since 1850. The symbolic figure of Marianne would be equally suitable to ensure, in a similar fashion to the monarch's portrait, that the country's stamps would be recognizable around the world and within the country itself, with the aid of the aforementioned imagery (Scott, 1995). These examples coming from pioneering countries in the field of stamp production indicate the importance of carefully choosing the imagery suitable for each state's stamp design program, as well as the symbolic nature that these images can eventually acquire. In this sense a symbolic figure such as Marianne, or even a historical figure in the case of Great Britain's monarchs, when employed as part of official visual repertoire could be elevated in order to represent the identity and unity of an entire nation. In both cases this was vital as we are discussing two countries with an imposing military and political power and a large amount of colonies around the world. For this reason it seemed even more important for the state to represent itself in a strong and robust way that indicated not only its uniqueness, but also its inherent dominance, as well as internal integrity.

By carefully studying the aforementioned examples we can safely conclude that the imagery selected for a country's official visual repertoire, such as the images on stamps have the potential of becoming strong ambassadors of the state itself. This is consequently the reason why various authors focused on the decisions taken by the authorities in relation to stamp design, as well as the importance of this selection (Deans, 2005; Dobson, 2005). As a growing amount of literature suggested, visuals on official products tend to play a crucial role in the construction and legitimization of states. These objects and their imagery furthermore, have been used in order to instil important values such as loyalty and unity within the country itself (Billig, 1995). Both currency and postage stamp imagery can be equally considered as products of the state that establish 'a link between the state's political identity and its citizens via sometimes banal imagery', as Raento, Hämäläinen, Ikonen and Mikkonen (2004, p. 930) reported. This link and the effectiveness of its development is what we seek to research in this work, by studying postage stamp imagery and consequently relating it to important historical periods and their socio-political background. The theoretical framework selected, furthermore highlighted the need for studying imagery within nations and

imagined communities, as they tend to be used for transferring important messages to their members in order to cultivate in them a sense of belonging and oneness.

As postage stamps are commissioned and issued by official (or even unofficial) governments, politics obviously play a rather crucial role in stamp design and production. As discussed by Raento and Brunn (2005) and Raento (2006) who examined the case of Finland's stamp production, while being quite 'mundane' as objects, stamps promote a sense of collective identity within the country. According to the authors, by studying stamp imagery they gained a useful insight into the value structures and the messages promoted in order to be consumed by the Finnish society. A significant social progress was noted on these visual representations, which according to Raento and Brunn (2005) reflected the need of the Finnish governments to promote the image of a peaceful and progressive country, alienating itself from Russia with whom they shared a turbulent past and conflicts in 1939. However, while social progress was heavily promoted through stamp imagery, potentially sensitive topics were avoided. Such an example according to the two authors, would be the lack of representation of the LGBT (non-heterosexual / cisgender) community on Finland's stamps. This certainly indicated an instance where social policies and official culture did not align with each other. While the general sense of advocating and embracing tolerance and social progress were being promoted by Finland, some of these topics seemed to be too sensitive or even provocative in order to be openly depicted on stamp imagery. This case demonstrated the importance and serious thought that goes behind issuing each stamp, as even certain official policies of the state might be deemed a bit too progressive or even inappropriate for their depiction and wide circulation on stamps.

While the aforementioned authors studied the ways in which politics reflected on the stamps of a specific country, others compared and contrasted the stamp-issuing processes and stamp design of different or disputing countries. For example, Jonsson (2005) studied the case of stamp designs issued by North and South Korea between the years 1948 and 2002. In this instance we are presented with the case of two countries which after their separation in 1945 have remained conflicting and therefore in dire need for the building of a strong and opposing repertoire towards one another. In order to locate relevant results the author was not only interested in the quantity of stamps issued by each state per decade, but also in the predominant thematic categories (motifs) existing in this corpus, as he followed a quantitative content analysis procedure. With the aid of this categorization, Jonsson (2005) discussed the implications behind each

state's choice of motifs for their stamp designs and linked it with their political profiles. The designs chosen for North Korea, were significantly less informative than those of South Korea in terms of culture, nature and history. On the other hand lots of stamps were issued in order to commemorate major political events, as well as honouring their leaders. Moreover North Korea has issued a vast amount of designs celebrating their 'victory' in Korean War (1950 – 1953), which certainly reflected their point of perception of this event. In terms of foreign policy South Korea's alliance with the United Nations, as well as with the United States of America is obvious on stamps, while on the other hand, North Korea predictably related itself with China and the Soviet Union. Jonsson's proposal of outlining the political profiles of the two countries based on the motifs and imagery they had been using proved to be quite efficient, in terms of sketching a general framework of their internal and foreign policies at least. Jonsson's (2005) study highlighted the role of official imagery on stamp design and how this can be an efficient way of advancing on findings regarding not only the political image of each country, but also gain deeper insight into certain social issues, or even the regard in which aspects such as history, culture and nature are held in each nation, thus gaining a broader picture of the country and the people that are being considered.

Dobson (2005) on the contrary, investigated the stamp-issuing process followed by two seemingly unrelated countries, Japan and the United Kingdom, based on information gathered from relevant research conducted by Deans and Dobson (2005). According to the author these two states follow a quite similar, very precise procedure, with some key differences which his study highlighted. Firstly as Dobson (2005) asserted, while Japan's history with Asia is marred by 'imperialism', the United Kingdom's relationship with Europe is not, a statement that is not entirely accurate as the country has a record of colonialism with states such as Malta and the Republic of Cyprus. In terms of stamp-issuing policies Japan is following a tripartite model for the design of stamps, namely the bureaucracy, the long standing Liberal Democratic Party and big business. On the other hand the apparatus in the United Kingdom is contrasting as the Royal Mail is quite open to the public's suggestions concerning stamp design, while the Stamp Advisory Committee and the Queen herself are consulted on the process (Dobson, 2005). This attempt at bringing non-state actors into the consultation process is the main difference for the author, which actually came into alignment with the United Kingdom's general policy of extending decision-making processes towards

those directly, or indirectly affected by them. It is generally accepted that the official government takes the time and even considers the expertise of various specialists in order to issue a set of postage stamps (Dobson, 2005). This group of people studies in depth the socio-political and even economical events that take place during this time, bearing in mind the history of the country that they are representing and most importantly the image it seeks to present. This image can obviously change and transform according to the political and social situation the nation is going through during that time and the stamp is there to serve this purpose.

What is common in both of these studies is their agreement on the fact that all of the aforementioned countries seek to demonstrate their unique characteristics, the common history which ties its citizens and additionally the image of a solid and unified nation. An interesting path for future research would actually be the investigation of how and to what extent the privatisation of postal services in both of these countries would affect the future of stamp design, taking into consideration their significant differences.

The next study presented somewhat of a different case. While we have seen that various countries tend to aggrandize their image through stamps in the eyes of both foreigners as well as natives, this does not apply in the case of African stamps where the prospect of monetary gain dictated the themes and images selected for stamps. Posnansky (2004) studied the stamp production of Liberia, Guinea, the Comoro Islands, Tanzania, Senegal, Togo, Niger, the Gambia, the Central African Republic, Sierra Leone, and Lesotho, as it dramatically increased during the past two decades. A similar kind of research was carried out by Tirefort (2012) using as an example the stamps produced by the Antilles and the French Guiana. As Posnansky (2004) argued, with the exception of the representation of a few national heroes and public monuments commemorating the struggle against imperialism, most of the imagery is chosen in order to be appealing to outside collectors. The reason for this strategy lays in the fact that the ruling national elite behind the stamp production, is interested in the big sales benefiting them, rather than the national treasury. Under this light African stamps often portrayed imagery that would be pleasing to the eye of the foreigner, as well as cater to their need for viewing 'exotic' images of African wildlife and tradition (Akou, 2012). Furthermore stamps honouring international personalities, such as Frank Sinatra (1915 – 1998) and Elvis Presley (1935 – 1977), can be found many times throughout the corpus, while the commemoration of local musicians and artists was virtually non-existent. This

trend of issuing collector-specific stamps escalated up to the point where Asia oriented imagery became a trend on African stamps, featuring topics such as Chinese art and Asian New Year. Something similar was noted by Tirefort (2012) in the case of old French colonies, where the stamps depicted idealized and picturesque versions of the landscape, aggregating the notion of the ‘exotic’.

Due to the commercial expansion of stamp design, a gap could be clearly noted in subsequent years, up to the present day, as Posnansky (2004) asserted. The smaller-sized definitive issues depict local themes, while the more elaborate and larger commemorative issues are solely designed for the overseas market. One could note how in this case the authorities decided to override the idea of stamp imagery representing the country and its citizens, appropriating topics and messages irrelevant to the country in order to attract collectors worldwide for financial gain. In this case, we had a complete elimination of the role of the postage stamp as an official document of the state, while the citizen’s perception is not only overlooked, but considered blatantly inessential. Additionally we can observe how this phenomenon is associated with areas colonized by European powers who recognized the potential monetary gain out of colonial stamp collecting (Cusack, 2005). In this sense, while these countries have gained their independence, they have continued to issue stamp designs with the same logic, clinging to a form of colonial ‘legacy’. On the other hand, the case we are investigating in our study, the Republic of Cyprus has acted in a completely different manner in relation to its stamp design program. As soon as it entered its post-Colonialism era in 1960, the Republic of Cyprus decided to concentrate on advocating its own image, heritage and uniqueness as a manifestation of sovereignty. It even went as far as completely eradicating the use of the English language on its stamps for some time, despite it being one of the three official languages of the state. In this sense the Republic of Cyprus presented quite a different approach to post-Colonialism in relation to stamp design which makes it an even more interesting case for further study.

The process for the gain of independence, and the main characters involved in this, as well as the way in which these were presented and honoured during the 2008 – 2010 Mexican Bicentennial were studied by Hoyo (2012). The author compared these stamps with older versions of similar celebratory events and noted the changes and any continuities on them. Under this light the author was able to gain an indication of how the imagery used for national narratives had developed in Mexico throughout the years. According to Hoyo (2012), the representation of national heroes has changed, in the

sense that more recent issues avoided icon-like depictions, rather preferring to show them as real persons taking part in complex historical moments. Due to this approach, the viewer, both internal and external could relate more to the pictured heroes, contrasting with older versions of revolutionary nationalism where the depictions remained distant and untouchable. Despite the ‘humanization’ process that stamp imagery went through, the general account of Mexican history remained concentrated on certain national figures. Furthermore, according to Hoyo (2012) these images still lack a deeper consideration of the social, as well as political goals that the various revolutionary groups acted under. Additionally, these Bicentennial stamp designs remained as much as their predecessors had focused on the events during the revolution period, rather than the resulting creation of the Mexican state. One could certainly conclude that while official products such as stamps were revised to some extent and even the figures were presented in a less idealized manner, there were still certain political limits kept by Mexican authorities, that could not be crossed in order to offer a more contemporary, fresh, or even objective view of the past.

The studies presented in this section showcased how in their own way and respecting the specificities of each nation or state, the various governments have used stamp imagery in order to promote important political messages, without excluding from their repertoire other crucial aspects for them such as social issues or historical events. This included the commemoration of the past, their relations to other countries, their disputes with them, or even the need to attract foreigners in the case of African stamps. The process of deciding what and how they would depict each topic was meticulous and excluded anything that would negatively or ambiguously affect the official image that each country attempted to cultivate, such as the cases of both Finland and Mexico. What we could note however as a general and dominant characteristic that all of those cases have in common is the need of every nation to spread a sense of sovereignty and importance of their state abroad, while maintaining the notion of belonging and pride within the members of the country through stamp imagery. Political messages such as these seem to have been carefully cultivated not only in order to be interpreted by other countries as a proclamation of dominance and strength, but also to construct the desired image in the minds of the citizens of other states, and simultaneously embed them in the conscience of internal audiences.



### **1.1.1 Postage stamp imagery in respect of geographical and political transitions**

The study of stamp imagery as significant political and geographical texts has already been presented and as Altman (1991) stated, the governments employ them in order to send important messages concerning their country's image at home, as well as abroad. However, from a historical standpoint this process is not linear, as a country goes through various phases that command a shift in politics and therefore in the official representation. The works presented in this section are concentrated on the stamp production of various states, taking into consideration the processes of transition and how these affected stamp imagery.

Raento and Brunn (2008) investigated Finland's stamp history, using images, themes and colours as resources in order to trace the country's gradual transition from the 'East' to the 'West'. This closeness to the 'West' became even more apparent when Finland joined the European Union and adopted the Euro (2008). According to the authors, stamp imagery used to be quite propagandistic and intense during the years of domestic conflicts, while their tone towards the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics was far more cautious due to the unstable situation the Cold War (1947 – 1991) presented for Finland's geopolitical position. As the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics collapsed, Finland became increasingly associated with international matters, while emphasis was given to instilling the feeling of 'Finnishness' among the citizens. This was further managed by choosing stamp imagery, which would interest not only the national elites, but also the middle-class, using topics deriving from popular entertainment and Finland's international acclaims in various fields.

This study investigated how global politics and gradual changes opened Finnish society to the outside world. According to the authors this was a common understanding of both the national elites and ordinary citizens. This statement can be found in other relevant papers (Raento, 2006) and while national elites were certainly observed through analysing stamp imagery and socio-political events taking place at the time, the same cannot be said for the citizens. One could certainly develop an idea of the ways in which various socio-political and even economic factors had an impact on citizens and stamp design, but it is a farfetched claim that the citizens' understanding coincided with that of national elites, or with postage stamp imagery. It might actually be the case to some extent, but it would be more adequate to separately study the citizens and their own perceptions as they might differ, as we argued in the present study.

Kevane (2008) approached the comparison of Sudan's and Burkina Faso's stamp design program using content analysis in order to identify ways in which their very different socio-political backgrounds affected the imagery. The two states have followed contrasting paths since their 1960 independence from France. Burkina Faso followed a milder, unifying policy that resulted in no significant, regionally based civil strife. On the other hand, Sudan's political power favoured the Muslim north, while simultaneously marginalising the country's south region. This affected both regions as a 50-year long civil war erupted in the south, followed by similar misfortunes in the country's other regions. According to Kevane (2008), these distinctive differences in politics were directly reflected on the strategies of representation used for postage stamps. While Sudan's stamps focused on the political centre and the dominant elite, Burkina Faso's promoted the image of a multi-ethnic, development oriented society which favoured the arts and general progress.

However, the most fundamental part of this paper could be found in its conclusion where Kevane questioned the strength of the current tools used for studying state iconography. As the author commented (2008), other more elaborate ways should be developed in order to measure more efficiently the impact of state iconography on citizens. It is true that while content analysis can supply us with useful patterns on the ways in which a state aspires to be represented, our findings based solely on this tool may be lacking. As Kevane (2008) affirmed, the popular understanding of this imagery is a completely different subject of study and it should not be taken for granted, but rather investigated from a different perspective.

The reading of postage stamps as political texts has been considered by Deans (2005) in his study on the designs of stamps produced by the Republic of China (Taiwan) since 1949. According to Deans (2005) the Republic of China has increasingly used its postage stamps as a vehicle for differentiating its identity from that of the People's Republic of China. This identity differentiation through stamps has been attempted by increasingly using symbolic imagery of local social and cultural phenomena. These decisions show the importance of the particular items of visual communication in the construction of a distinctive official culture, taking into consideration both internal and external audiences. Deans' quantitative content analysis had been based on two pillars: 'what is Taiwan' and 'what symbols and images can be considered Taiwanese'.

However this particular method is quite ambiguous and as the author himself stated he was conscious that the process he followed, as well as the reading of the imagery might be considered over-politicized and mainly based on his own opinions (p. 10). The contribution of citizens in helping decipher the imagery chosen for Taiwan's stamps was briefly mentioned by Deans, as he presented earlier versions of his paper along with images in various conferences, gaining feedback from the attendees while also discussing a sample of images with Taiwanese residents of London. While the paper was focused on quantitative content analysis and semiotic analysis of the imagery on stamps, Deans' admission that included the opinions of the citizens in relation to the representation of their own country on stamps is quite important for future research. Furthermore Deans asserted that as his opinion was considered for deciding whether the postage stamps' images are Chinese or 'Taiwanese', the results are not necessarily representative of the received impact that they have on their audience.

The topic of the People's Republic of China and Republic of China's (Taiwan's) dispute over the sovereignty of the island was also explored by Wachman (2005), using only carto-philatelic imagery, that is postage stamps featuring maps. Through that material the author discussed the changing boundaries of the People's Republic of China as these appeared on the selected stamp imagery. The promotion of the country's territorial integrity was of crucial importance, as prominent changes took place in the status of both Mongolia and the Republic of China as they declared their independence. These events however, were not always consistently represented on stamp imagery. For example, while recognizing the independence of Mongolia there was an ambiguity on the maps depicted on postage stamp imagery, as in some cases the territory of Mongolia was absent, where in others it still appeared as part of the People's Republic of China. However, gradually after its establishment in 1949 the visual language of China's stamps became far more aggressive in their position that the recognition of the Republic of China was not acceptable. This can be clearly seen on relevant stamps on which they still represent the territory of the Republic of China united with that of China's. It was more of a demonstration of power and a message to external audiences, than an actual political reality when in fact the People's Republic of China did not exercise any control on the island.

As Kallen (2002) claimed, postage stamp imagery transfers 'an idea of the nation', meaning a perspective of how the nation or country was supposed to be represented during a certain timeframe. This author's paper looked on the postal production of

Greece from 1924 until 1982 and how it was modified through the years under different governments and regimes. The different variations of the country's name, different cultural objects and symbolizations, the role of monarchy as reflected on stamp imagery, and the representation of the 'post-World War II period' created a framework where eras such as the civil war between pro and anti-communist forces (1946 – 1949), as well as the military junta governing from 1967 to 1974 could be presented. According to Kallen (2002) this period could be considered quite turbulent and the images referenced three major types of symbolism accordingly to the occasion. References to Antiquity and a glorified past, the events of the liberation after WWII, as well as references to the military junta government can be seen alternating on stamp designs.

These kinds of symbolisms and references created an explicit 'library of references' which the various governments used in order to emphasize or downplay certain ideologies and promote their own perspective of the various events. It is obvious in this section, even more than before, that various governments proved to have quick reflexes when it comes to postage stamp design while adjusting their policies and the image promoted accordingly. This highlights how official culture is not unmoving and set, but rather a changeable construction that adjusts according to social and political developments, while interacting with the people and events taking place in the respective country. This ability to transform and adapt gets to be even more pronounced when the society in question goes through a transitional phase, something that is clearly evident in its stamp production. As this literature review showed, certain important historical periods present a challenge as visual communication through stamps needs to promote a new image for the state, integrating fresh or altered elements, making it clear for external audiences and easily assimilated for internal.

### **1.1.2 Postage stamp as a propaganda tool**

The aspect of promotion of a certain image for a country, nation, or regime through stamp imagery has already been discussed, but this need has often reached the level of brazen propaganda (Stoetzer, 1953). Lauritzen's (1988) study of the Third Reich's stamps gave us an example of the multi-layered and intricate nature of propaganda through official documents such as stamps. In particular the author looked into the corpus of stamps since the Third Reich's emission in 1933 until its fall in 1945.

Interestingly enough, the collection was quite large (a total of 334 stamps) for such a small period of time, and it demonstrated the importance of these objects regarding the education of the citizens on the cause. As Lauritzen (1988) asserted, the depicted imagery was carefully selected in order to honour the main protagonists of that era, creating a feeling of insecurity and fear to their opponents through depicting war scenes, as well as various machinery used. Simultaneously, they attempted to spread the feeling of pride and unity among the citizens, not only regarding Nazi Germany's successes during the warfare, but also in relation to its promised, bright future. Through this stamp collection one could certainly trace the timeline of Nazi Germany, as the stamp designs became bolder and 'louder' during the first and middle stages of the war, while on the contrary their aggression started to diminish during the last period before the fall of Nazi Germany.

Rowley's findings (2002) about the production of postage stamps in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics suggest the existence of a dual audience that the iconography of stamps served. Rowley argued that as the Bolshevik regime sought to establish a new type of citizen, propaganda in the form of stamps was mobilised. On the one hand, the stamps would reach worldwide audiences and inform them about the changes within the nation through relevant imagery. On the other hand, they would operate on a mass scale within the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics itself, where the citizens of the new regime were encouraged to take up stamp collecting as a hobby. According to Rowley (2002) the main goal of this was for the citizens to view the images depicted on the postage stamps repeatedly. The designs spoke volumes of the changes within the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the attempted construction of a new citizenship as new heroes were designated and the history of the country appeared modified. Kolchinsky (2010) confirmed the same point by showcasing his example of the gradual increase of Joseph Stalin's (1878 – 1953) image usage on stamps of that era. These stamps were often targeted at international audiences and wanted to convey crucial political messages regarding the authority of the Soviet leadership after World War II, as well as to promote the communist movement in Eastern Europe and China. Additionally, the greatest literary and scientific achievements were celebrated in order for the citizens to gain role models, as well as a sense of pride and unity. Moreover, there was a consistency in the representation of the country as a modern nation and a proverbial paradise for all the groups of people who previously ranked as low in class hierarchy, such as the 'New Soviet woman' who was exemplified and was made a symbol of

agricultural production (Rowley, 2002). A lot of the Soviet propaganda was counter-represented when the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics had already fallen, as Gates Elliott (2010) asserted. A number of countries including Poland, Lithuania, Hungary and Ukraine released series of stamps commemorating events and honouring victims of the Stalinist (1927 – 1953) and USSR (1922 – 1991) eras, in cases such as the ‘Ukrainian mass murder’ of 1932 – 1933, the executions in Ketyn forest in 1941, the 1941 deportations in Lithuania, as well as the Hungarian Revolution in 1956.

Additionally the widespread circulation of stamps paired with the representation of sporting events created the perfect combination of subtle propaganda (Lebed, 2005; Adedze, 2012). Lebed (2005) studied stamps depicting sport themes issued by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics during the period of 1960’s and 1970’s. By studying both numbers of issues and relative percentages the author noted a significant increase of sport related stamps in the 1960’s. These facts can be directly linked to the fact that during the decade of 1960 the Cold War became more intense. While no actual conflict between the two sides took place, this period was saturated by tension and conflict, most prominently the Cuba crisis (1962), the building of the Berlin wall (1961), the war in Vietnam (1955 – 1975) and the repression of the ‘Prague spring’ (1968). The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics promoted the superiority of its social system, as well as the advantages of its society in comparison to the ‘Western’ lifestyle, as expected. In this sense the increased use of sport imagery on stamps celebrated the great achievements of their athletes and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics’s infrastructure. In a sense, as Lebed (2005) affirmed, sport victories played the alternative role to military victories, fuelling the ongoing hostility both through official and mainstream means.

Adedze (2012) argued that stamp design has followed the development of football as a national brand with propagandistic and economic dimensions, as in the case of African countries that gained their independence in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In particular the author used examples from Cameroun, Côte d’Ivoire, Egypt, Ghana, Nigeria, Senegal, Uganda and Zambia. Adedze (2012) asserted how as soccer was elevated to a significant social and political position, and the hosting of soccer tournaments became perennial for African countries, it brought a sense of pride within these nations and their national elites; something that was clearly reflected on relevant stamps. These stamps are regarded as prized collectibles and a means for bringing revenue and foreign exchange into African countries. Furthermore, they accentuate the notion that the

aforementioned countries constitute a highly suitable destination for soccer lovers around the world, as they are organized, promoted and represented by mega-events, such as the World Cup. Additionally, African countries Adedze (2012) wrote, create and promote through stamps their own new national heroes, all of them from the world of sports, and particularly soccer. The images of players, especially household names, are the ones chosen for stamp design mainly, targeting collectors and soccer fans around the world. And while African countries exhibit themselves as sport-oriented nations, to such extremes; it all remained highly masculine. While there are female athletes and soccer players who could be commemorated on stamps, their images are not preferred. The reason for this gap is a blend of indigenous cultural beliefs, religious factors, reproductive obligations and colonial and post-colonial attitudes that consider women's sports negatively, a fact that reveals again much more about the society that is being researched and could potentially open a broader discussion aside from political aspects, fuelled by stamp imagery.

The previous section has showcased how stamp design has contributed to the shaping of propaganda in various cases. The researcher believes that the need to exploit biased or even misleading messages for one's state has accurately functioned through stamps, especially during times that various countries were experiencing tensions and political conflicts, or even more so during wartime periods. This of course was to be expected as turbulent situations like the aforementioned demanded an even stronger internal national consciousness, as well as more aggressive approach towards the opposing sides that inevitably lead to be considered propagandistic.

## **1.2 Social issues through postage stamp imagery**

Due to the fact that postage stamp imagery consists of official representations commissioned by the state itself, the explicit and implicit messages promoted through them can be perceived as direct reflections of the attitudes of an entire nation towards certain issues (Bushnell, 2011). Furthermore, as stamp imagery has been a widely-spread tool for studying history, geography and sociology as early as in primary school education (Ogletree, Merritt and Roberts, 1994), it is even more crucial to pay close attention and monitor what kind of messages are communicated to these sensitive audiences.

One of the most popular topics in this category is the investigation of gender roles, as they are presented on postage stamp imagery. Ogletree et al. (1994) reported that gender representation on the United States' postage stamps can be considered consistent with the general tendencies of female and male portrayal in other forms of media, throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Male-oriented representations were predominately more and traditional role representations were significantly higher than non-traditional ones, as could have been expected. However it is notable how a small decline was noticed concerning traditional male portrayals after the 1980's. This hopeful finding, according to the authors, indicated the beginnings of an emerging awareness towards gender bias and the commencement of a broader discussion on altering gender roles, a fact which was reflected on stamp representations as well.

Similarly, Bushnell (2011) measured the relative frequency of postal homage to female figures in Argentina, Colombia, Cuba and the United States of America from 1893 – 2006, using the standpoint of women's studies. In this case however, the author sought to compare different Latin American and Caribbean countries to a non-Latin American country, such as the United States of America (Bushnell, 2011). In all cases the author's hypothesis about the existence of a 'philatelic ceiling', limiting the appearance of females on stamps was confirmed. However, varying shades of emphasis of female representation was reported. For example, a significant increase in the usage of female figures of diverse professions on the stamps of both Cuba and United States of America was noticed after the 1940's. Indeed, the United States of America started celebrating more of their own female 'national heroes', especially scientists, avoiding the usage of internationally renowned personalities. On the other hand, the selected Latin American and Caribbean countries tended to express their own locality less, in favour of presenting themselves in close contact with the rest of the world.

Bushnell (2011) argued that the decision to use notable women for stamp imagery constituted a general recognition of feminine accomplishments and a conscious effort to be seen in a favourable light not only by the feminist movements, but also by the general female population. While this statement may be quite accurate, let us not forget that in parallel with the celebration of women's achievements, female figures were and still are employed in order to represent various allegories with stereotypical roles such as liberty and motherhood. Cusack's (2005) research on the dominant ideologies and discourses on stamp imagery of Portuguese colonies in Asia and Africa reflected similar findings, especially in regards to nationalism, imperialism and patriarchy. Obviously the



colonies had adopted almost a sense of identity affected by the founding and prolongation of the Empire they belonged to. These stamps were heavily focused on Portuguese history and the activities of the country overseas. The female figure was used only to accentuate the messages on stamps, usually acting as an allegorical figure, as a muse, a Madonna, or as a native. The male figure on the other hand, was employed in order to commemorate all of the great exploits, discovering new territories, fighting, or evangelising India; all active deeds for the forging of the nation.

The aforementioned studies on gender representation through stamp design reflected the findings of two separate works on the postage stamps of the Republic of Cyprus (Andreou, Stylianou and Zantides, 2016; 2017). The corpus of stamps issued by the Republic of Cyprus between 1960 and 2013 showcases through content analysis that female figures appear in fewer stamps on their own without the presence of a male figure. Furthermore women tend to be presented through their maternal role, associated with emotional notions such as tenderness and care, while they have been symbolically parallelized with allegorical figures and the image of the Virgin Mary. On the other hand male figures tend to be presented as energetic, while they also hold important roles connected with authority, leadership and strength (Andreou et al., 2016; 2017). The images on postage stamps however, tend to reproduce social roles and stereotypes, which might have already been altered in the society of Cyprus through the years. Some of the images that continue to be reproduced come in contrast with the actual role of females in Cyprus society as it has been developed and modified, a change that does not seem to be reflected on the country's postage stamps.

Another broad theme with social dimensions discussed by various authors is that of science, medicine and disability representation through stamp imagery. According to Jones (2001; 2004) it has been reported that British scientists feel dissatisfied with the recognition and celebration of their work in national repertoire, considering it minimal in contrast to continental Europe. Jones (2001) compared, by conducting content analysis, the amount of stamps where the broader notion of science, or a specific scientist appears on the stamps of Great Britain, France and West Germany. In fact, Jones' findings (2001; 2004) contrasted the claim of British scientists, but it simultaneously justified it. Jones (2001; 2004) found that the way science is celebrated in Britain differs from the other two nations. In Great Britain, the institutional aspects of science seemed to be commemorated more often, while the other two nations gave prominence to individual scientists. It should be noted that relevant studies on British

national representation on stamps (Jones b, 2004) suggested that the country's programme in fact, accentuated the notions of technological and scientific achievements in efforts of promoting the country as being as advanced and progressive as possible.

Swan, Meade, Klein, and Serlin (2006) focused on the representation of disability themes on public documents, and more specifically postage stamp imagery. In order to investigate the historical and political implications of disability, the authors collected a worldwide variety of them, drawing general conclusions, rather than studying them as separate nations with different political agendas and image. A favourite theme on relevant stamps was found to be what disability activists would call 'the spectacular disabled'. In other words, the representation of individuals who managed to triumph over the limitations of their physical impairments and performed activities popularly associated with non-disabled people, such as a variety of sports. Another usual pattern in the design of stamps related to disability was the usage of children as symbols of hope and future prospects in medicine. The most worrying pattern that the authors noted however was the one where disabled people were not present on relevant stamps. This decision could be seen as purely artistic, without any other implications hiding behind it. However, the representation of this specific group of people in an almost abstract way where they are not even present and especially on public documents such as stamps may actually have other, more dangerous connotations, such as their virtual disappearance. For this reason according to Swan et al. (2006) official documents, such as stamps should be properly contextualized and their contents thoroughly examined before and after their issuing, in order to ensure that the messages they transfer are not in any way harmful towards certain groups such as the disabled, but on the contrary to aim to promote equal rights and opportunities.

The working class and more specifically Canadian labour was discussed in Frank's (1997) study on the politics of identity in Canada, as well as by Ašćić and Binički (2012) in their study on workplace safety promoted through stamps. Frank (1997) was concerned about its representation in public culture, as well as the messages this would exude to the public. Frank (1997) used the theoretical tool of the 'gaze' in order to investigate the type of imagery used and whether these were inclusive, exclusive, marginalizing, subordinating, or assertive towards the working class. As the author asserted there are very few stamps found which depict labour organizations, leaders, or their history, unlike other countries with similar socio-economic situation. However, a variety of evidence throughout the text suggested that while workers are mostly

represented in subordinate positions, Canadian postal issues have slowly begun the adoption of a more inclusive representation of the particular class, on public imagery. Similar findings were reported by Aščić and Binički (2012) as they noted an increasing amount of stamps dedicated to the promotion of workplace safety and health worldwide. Despite this fact, since these topics are highly important the number should certainly be higher.

On the other hand, Canadian business activity and its depiction on postage stamps has been investigated, without concentrating however on the working class or workers (Sexty, 2000). In particular this paper sought to review the ways in which Canadian business development has been depicted on stamps from 1898 to 1998. In parallel with Frank's (1997) findings, this study reported that in more recent years the repertoire became deliberately more inclusive and diverse. In the first half of the period studied, stamps reflected the importance of agriculture in Canada's society. During the second half of the period the emphasis shifted towards mining, technological advances, and inventions. In combination with Frank's (1997) report on Canadian stamps we note how the country developed an inclusive repertoire through the years in order to promote cultural changes within the country, tolerance and equal opportunities. This became increasingly sophisticated in comparison to its early stamp designing program towards both Canadian business and most importantly its workers.

Aside from social classes, ethnic and cultural minorities were also investigated in relevant research, reflecting the idea that nations consider social inclusion in their official repertoire as part of their state's agenda. Jenkins (2012) explored the appearance of local Bushmen and their rock art on the postage stamps and postal items of South Africa as national symbols and part of the country's iconography. According to the author, rock art has been reproduced on postage stamps of other countries as well, but for South Africa being a new-found state, it became something of an official national symbol aiming to promote the country abroad, as well as to construct a sense of cultural unity in the state itself. The Bushmen became a topic of discussion in various fields through the years from anthropology, cultural studies and archaeology to poetry and novels. This interest in them must have helped shift the general opinion about them from simple savages, to childlike and romanticized versions of themselves. Let us not forget that the fascination in the idea of the 'noble savage' was still a trend in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century with the 'Primitivism art movement' being inspired by it. The central theme of the movement was the return to a pre-civilization era and to a more 'real' state of

being (Ellingson,2001). Famous artists such as Gauguin (1848 – 1903) who left for Tahiti in order to live with natives were inspired by this movement and the values they thought it held, as opposed to the ‘corrupted’ civilization they belonged to. However it was not earlier than 1992 that rock art emerged under the status of the national symbol of South Africa. As Jenkins (2012) stated, the process to familiarize the audience with the idea of rock art as a symbol of the nation has been slow.

A similar, although less subtle approach was adopted by post-Civil War United States of America where racial and sectional divisions were still very apparent. Under this light the authorities needed to employ imagery on stamps that would evoke a sense of unification and national identity. For this reason as Sabol (2010) asserted, the stamps of this period addressed a national sense of nostalgia of a more ‘innocent’ past, that of westward expansion. In line with these types of representations the image of the Native American as a ‘noble savage’, who was offered a chance to become accepted as completely American was needed. This was mainly represented through stamps depicting Native Americans being educated, learning about democracy, or provided salvation through Christianity. Both easterners and westerners could comprehend and sympathize with the image of Natives willing to turn their backs on savagery and become a member of a unified American nation (Sabol, 2010). Let us not forget that this period was marked by a growing fascination with Native Americans, as ethnologists researched their way of living and even sought to immerse themselves in their ‘savage culture’. Of course, despite the visual claims the stamps were making, natives were not truly seen as Americans during 1898. As offensive or aggravating as this notion might seem to us today, it was considered a valid strategy at the time in order to bring easterners and westerners closer under the umbrella of a united, democratic, superior and solid nation.

The aid of cultural history and education has been used in order to ‘legitimize’ the aforementioned imagery and then present them to the audience as a national symbol, in order to inspire collectivism under the umbrella of a solid nation which respects the past and promotes equality and diversity. It is clear that in order to ‘create’ official symbols, and therefore to cultivate the official culture a long process is needed. Studies such as the aforementioned highlight the importance of tracking the changes in visual texts published within a society in order to gain a deeper understanding of the society per se.

This legitimization of symbols and historic figures was the object of discussion in Brennan’s (2010) paper. This work investigated the stamps issued in the United States

of America honouring Polish military heroes Casimir Pulaski (1745 – 1779) and Theodore Kosciuszko (1746 – 1817), two prominent personalities of the American Revolutionary War (1775 – 1783). The battle for the recognition of the importance of these war heroes on a stamp, reflected the struggles of certain minorities in the United States in relation to immigration restrictions and obtaining of citizenship in the country. Polish, as well as other Eastern European immigrants were defined as racially different from the older inhabitants who arrived from Western Europe. The release of these commemorative stamps in the 1930's therefore, were considered a great achievement and a significant step towards recognition from Polish heritage organizations for two reasons. Firstly, these stamps inspired an amount of ethnic pride in them, while simultaneously highlighted their positions as important members of the racially white population of the country, a status which was often questioned due to their Eastern European origins (Brennan, 2010).

Even in this propagandistic way the authorities attempted to cultivate a notion of belonging within the members of the imagined community as Anderson (1991) would suggest, in order to strengthen the way in which the nation is viewed abroad, as well as within the country. Social themes and issues hold a pivotal point for a country's stamp designing program as this section proved, since they have the capacity to unveil aspects regarding a country's image aside from its political agenda and memorable historical achievements. By including a variety of topics revolving around a country's society, the authorities can simultaneously alert their own citizens of important and sensitive matters. Furthermore, in this manner the nation promotes abroad a human-centric and progressive image that aids in the cultivation of the notion that the particular country presents a tolerant and contemporary environment and therefore a safe and ideal destination. In this manner we believe that the nation defines itself as an independent authority holding a status of sovereignty and power, all shown through these small artefacts that are stamps.

### **1.3 Postage stamps as objects of popular culture**

The study of postage stamps seems to have been restricted to specific topics through the years, mostly focusing on 'official repertoire' and 'national identity'. However a quite different approach to postage stamps has been noted, but not studied extensively. There are strong indications that postage stamps are to be included in the sphere of popular

culture, as shown by a number of authors (Inge,1981; Franco,1999). However there are not many empirical studies or theoretical accounts that further discuss this possibility.

Child (2005, 2008, 2012) has notably proposed the idea of studying postage stamps as objects of popular culture, concentrating specifically on Latin America. Child has used philatelic examples from Argentina, Venezuela, Cuba, Peru, Ecuador, Bolivia, Brazil, Paraguay and Chile in order to test his theory and compare their cases. The author attempted to prove how persons or imagery that belonged to the sphere of mainstream culture was chosen for postage stamps. One of the most notable examples would be that of Argentina where according to Child (2008), the postage stamps followed the 'cult of Evita'. This term refers to the profound interest of the public in the face of First Lady Eva Perón (1919 – 1952), not only as an important figure in the socio-political life of the country but also as a fashion icon and a role model. This fascination continued even after her early death in 1952. The former First Lady was regarded as a controversial personality in Argentina due to her personal choices and attitude. According to Child the postage stamps followed the trend of the time in depicting Perón as a central figure on a large number of stamps. The First Lady has also appeared with a symbolic and popular figure of the time, the 'Descamisado' which translates as the 'Shirtless'. The shirtless man was a favourite symbol for the working poor at the time, but it simultaneously identified with the supporters of the Perón regime. Perón's rise from poverty to the height of national and international prestige created a myth around her motives, personal life and ambitions. A large number of people elevated her to the status of a saint-like figure for the underprivileged, an image that Perón herself supported.

This type of representation continued to appear even after her death, obviously trying to maintain the ideology of the fading Perón regime. This example by Child (2008) showed how Eva Perón, a woman with celebrity status, became a suitable image for postage stamp design in order to promote a certain regime. Furthermore, something similar happened in the case of the symbolic figure of the 'Descamisado', proving how symbols and figures that are considered mainstream can be employed into serving the official representation of a country.

Subsequently Child strengthened his argument about studying postage stamps as objects of popular culture using quite a different example. This time the author chose to focus on stamps produced in the area of South American Antarctica (2012). This work included selected stamps from Argentina, Chile, Brazil, Uruguay, Peru, and Ecuador,

and also from islands situated in the South Atlantic such as the Malvinas. Child argued that the exploratory drilling for oil by British companies that began in the area in 2010 put a strain on the relationship between the United Kingdom and Argentina, over competing claims to the islands and to large areas of Antarctica. According to Child this antagonistic relationship and claim for sovereignty in the area is presented on the postage stamps imagery. Additionally, as Child (2005) argued stamp imagery in the framework of popular culture, could also be read as an instrument for good citizenship promotion. This can be achieved by supporting notable and well-known organizations and charities, and presenting social issues which the citizens should be made aware of, whether these are related to the adoption of healthy lifestyles, or raising awareness for certain illnesses (2005). Consequently, according to Child (2005, 2008, 2012) the choice to represent topical themes on stamps, makes them legitimate objects of popular culture. This strategy works as official culture is in constant need for topics which are familiar to the mainstream (Debord, 1957) and consequently to the citizens. These are incorporated in its repertoire and transfer through familiar and everyday themes and imagery, important messages related to the profile the state wishes to uphold.

Osmond (2008) discussed postage stamp imagery as artefacts of cultural memory for the masses in his study on the 2002 stamp honouring Hawaiian athlete and popular icon Duke Kahanamoku (1890 – 1968). It was released after more than 30 years of campaigning of various interest groups. The author argued that alongside other forms, stamps have the potential to be read as texts of cultural memory. This, according to Osmond (2008) can be measured through the impact of the stamp on a wider scale. While the circulation of the stamp was undoubtedly wide, as 62.8 million stamps had been issued at the time, their impact on viewers according to the author is not possible to be determined. Or at least in this case, different and quantitative approaches should have been applied.

Undoubtedly however, the circulation of this stamp design was a cause of celebration in Kahanamoku's birthplace, Hawaii. As the general public considers the athlete a major national icon and a role model, the recognition of his personality and achievements were celebrated on the day marking what would be his 112<sup>th</sup> birthday, the same day that his stamp was issued. In fact the particular stamp imagery was featured on t-shirts sold to the participants of the celebrations, while an enlarged copy was escorted to the event by a flotilla of canoes, as part of the ceremony. Certainly in this case we had a stamp design with special meaning and significance for the Hawaiian

people and one could claim that it is a very specific case and it cannot be generalized into considering stamps as a medium of cultural memory. However the intriguing part of Osmond's study is how easily a stamp which is a symbol of the official government was adopted and became integrated into the sphere of mainstream. This is to indicate how one can study the relationship between these two poles through stamp imagery and even this particular paper could be developed further by involving the citizens of Hawaii in the quest of measuring the impact instead of theorizing about it.

Trammell (2010) discussed the nature of the postage stamp as a cultural marker. This author also claimed that stamps can actually reveal quite a lot about Western cultures and the way these evolved, not only historically but also culturally. Trammell parallelized the procedure of identifying, categorizing and labelling stamps with the way in which Western societies operate in general, especially after the phenomenon of Modernism. It is true that if the Modern era is loosely defined between 1850 and 1950, then this time period coincides with the 'golden period' of stamp usage. Trammell (2010), argued that stamps symbolically represent convenience and ordinariness in people's lives as their shape appears on various items of everyday use as part of the design. The author presented a number of everyday objects such as a coffee cup and a wallpaper design which were created in order to remind the viewer of a postage stamp.

While it may be accurate that the postage stamps' shape and appearance can be considered a commodity in our societies, studies of their nature as cultural artefacts can potentially reveal much more about the ideologies behind stamp production, as well as the official cultures that they represent; a topic we are interested in studying and further discussing in the present research. As it was discussed in the previous section stamp design employed imagery and even historical figures that during their time had been considered mainstream and even popular in their countries or even worldwide. While these types of images may seem unrelated to the strict and 'sterilized' official image of a state at first, the aforementioned studies prove the opposite. In fact official culture is always related to an extent with the mainstream as it draws topics and 'popular heroes' from it, before accumulating them and adapting them in its own repertoire (Debord, 1957). We can safely come to the conclusion that this approach serves two different purposes. Firstly the country adds a sense of approachability and even fun in its otherwise imposing promotion abroad, something that would probably appeal to a larger amount of people, or even individuals who do not know much about the country and its history. On the other hand, and most importantly, the various governments are enabled



to transfer the desired messages more easily to their citizens if they employ imagery, topics and personalities which are familiar, admired and accepted by them. In this way, by creating and elevating popular icons and figures into national heroes, the citizens can relate to each other, as well as their nation through a sense of collectivism. The citizens therefore, get to be rallied around role models who have lead ordinary lives up to a point, but also exhibited commendable characteristics that have set them apart from the rest. In that sense people can see themselves and their nation's best qualities through these heroic figures and experience collective pride and belonging through their famous personas and creditable deeds.

#### **1.4 Graphic design in the service of meaning through postage stamps**

One of the most notable examples in the study of postage stamp design is David Scott's *European stamp design: a semiotic approach to designing messages* published in 1995, as well as his 1994 article on Dutch stamp design (Scott and Hoek, 1994). Since then this seminal book served as a starting point for authors who wished to apply semiotic analysis on postage stamps, coming as a breath of fresh air for many writers who more than twenty years later continue to use Scott's proposed way of examining stamps. Scott (1995, 2004) was based on Charles Sanders Peirce's (1839 – 1914) rather philosophical taxonomy of the sign as 'Index', 'Icon' and 'Symbol' in order to define the nature of the stamp and explain the rationale behind the 'philatelic design strategies'. For Scott the first function of a stamp is to identify a country, which means to play an indexical role. Additionally the stamp functions as an index of the amount of money needed to post a letter. The second general function of a stamp, according to Scott (1995) is to symbolically represent the country in question in the eyes of the viewer. Finally, the third function of the stamp, is to represent a specific aspect of the country (a monument, or event for example), thus operating 'iconically'. Scott's way of studying the postage stamp although philosophically eluding and even somewhat puzzling has been widely accepted and unquestionably used vastly in research.

A newer approach on the ideological and aesthetical aspects of stamps through design strategies, has been suggested by Vardopoulou (2014). The author studied a corpus of Greek postage stamps issued between 1861 and 1961. This era covered important historical landmarks for the postal services and stamp design, as well as for the entire country. These included the Balkan Wars (1912 – 1913), WWI (1914 – 1918),

the Asia Minor Disaster (Greco – Turkish War 1919 – 1922), as well as WWII (1939 – 1945). Aside from the socio-political conditions taking place at the time and the effects these had on stamp production, this work concentrated on the role of stamp designers in the artistic output. In particular Vardopoulou (2014) looked into the work and contribution of two of the most pioneering figures in the area of Greek engraving and stamp design, Jean Kefalinos (1894 – 1957) and Anastasios Alevizos Tassos (1914 – 1985). Vardopoulou (2014) argued how the two artists have not only imprinted their own distinctive styles, but clearly differentiated the way in which a stamp should be designed both technically and artistically, in order to be aesthetically correct and pleasing to the eye. Both Kefalinos and Tassos significantly improved Greek stamp design by employing dynamic and innovative forms of xylography, thus creating some of the most celebrated issues. Their notable input came in contrast with many preceding and less efficient methods which tended to treat stamps as miniature paintings where the same rules applied. The works of Kefalinos and Tassos, as Vardopoulou (2014) affirmed, should be taken as an example and a case study for the aesthetics and design of stamps in order for them not only to effectively spread the intended messages, but also to be considered a form of art following its own rules of creation and interpretation. It should be mentioned that even in the case of Cyprus’ corpus of stamps the most notable and well-known design was created by Tassos in his signature style in honour and memory of the hundreds of displaced and lost people following the Turkish invasion in 1974. In fact the stamp issued in 1977, has been circulating ever since and its influence in the artistic production of Cyprus has been notable as it was reproduced in various ways, from graffiti art to poetry.

The possible redesign of Cyprus’ stamps was studied by Christodoulou (2011) as part of her BA dissertation. The author proposed that the stamps produced by the Republic of Cyprus should start reflecting a more contemporary sense of design, without changing the topics pictured, or losing their distinct characteristics and symbols. Christodoulou (2011) created a set of ten stamps, redesigning older or well-known existing stamps, using influences of Baroque and Modernism, without however giving clear indications how these two styles connected to the country, or topics represented. The need for a clear guide of how to design postage stamps with more efficiency was emphasized as Christodoulou (2011) stated that she encountered difficulties related to the size of the objects, the perspective of the viewer, as well as the inclusion of details on such a small piece of paper. This admission came in parallel with the argument of

Vardopoulou (2014) on the need for the stamps to be treated as unique mediums of expression which follow different rules of design, respecting their special characteristics. Christodoulou's (2011) thesis additionally was quite important for the present research as it gave us some useful information on Cyprus' stamp design program. Further details for stamp design issued by the Republic of Cyprus were also found in the *Cyprus philatelic quarterly magazine*. It is published by the Cyprus Philatelic Society four times a year and discusses new stamp series, their topics and characteristics. It might not contain empirical or scholarly findings, but alongside the collection of the Cyprus Postal Museum and Cyprus' Ministry of Transport, Communication and Works publication *Cyprus stamps 1880 – 2004. Linking history and culture* (2005) it provided a source of invaluable information for the present study, mainly concerning the stamp designing processes, as well as the historical background around stamp production in Cyprus.

This section consisted of studies that had as their central topic stamp design and its importance both in efficiently transferring the desired messages, as well as the creation of stamps which are aesthetically pleasing and engaging. It has been reported by relevant research that when correctly designed, stamps can not only be efficient vehicles of official culture, but far more than that, small artworks that ideologically influence the viewer.

## **1.5 The usage and role of postage stamps in education**

The role and importance of images and generally visuals in pedagogy is undisputed, since it is considered that they enhance comprehension, enrich the subject and initiate discussion (Sieber, 2012). Postage stamps in particular, have been used as teaching materials for various subjects. In the local context of Cyprus for example, they can be found in history textbooks of both Gymnasium and Lyceum level. Researchers such as Elton (1979), Jung (1981), Kirman and Jackson (2000), as well as Boyle (2013) discussed the suitability and application of teaching methods involving postage stamp imagery in primary, secondary and higher education in topics such as physics, foreign languages, history, geography and social studies. As Kirman and Jackson (2000) argued, stamps can tell the story of an event or a person from the perspective of the government of each period. Stamps as complementary materials to the main text can reveal extra information on the profile a country want to be represented through during

a certain time period. Since the variety of topics commemorated on stamps is almost endless, students can discuss issues around politics, society development, advancement of technology, as well as compare the situations in different countries. Moreover it was suggested for younger students to design their own postage stamp in response to what they have seen already being issued. Elton (1979) and Jung (1981) described how the civilization and history of a nation can be discussed and juxtaposed with the ways in which this nation strives to be seen through stamp imagery. Jung (1981) presented an example of that, using stamps of Germany deriving from different time periods. For example, the teacher could structure a number of relevant questions including the role of women on stamps, the treatment of various minorities, the predominance of certain professions and the underrepresentation of others. Moreover as Elton (1979) asserted, a number of stamps provide interesting case studies on art, due to their famous designers, or specific artistic styles they follow. Generally speaking, the aforementioned authors agreed that the stamp is suitable material for studying a variety of subjects for different educational levels due to their role as official documents, as well as their variety of topics.

This section dealt with studies that had as their central topic the role of postage stamps in education. As has been noted, the suitability of stamps in the primary, secondary and higher education is multifaceted and can cover a large range of topics. A variety of subjects can be discussed with the aid of postage stamp imagery, from politics, propaganda and state representation, to social circumstances and issues of a certain period, or country. Furthermore, trends in design and art can also be discussed through postage stamp imagery. In the case of the Republic of Cyprus stamps have been mainly used as teaching materials in history textbooks in secondary education. Certainly their role could be expanded in the aforementioned ways and hopefully our research will aid the relevant Ministries in this direction by discussing social and ideological aspects through these objects.

## **1.6 Thematic collecting**

Thematic collecting (or themately collecting) of postage stamps is the type of philately that collects, studies and discusses stamps grouped together not in chronological or geographical order, but rather under thematic umbrellas. This type of categorization was first developed in the 1930's with flora and fauna, art, authors and music being the most

popular topics among them (Boggs, 1938; Fidgen, 1956). This widespread hobby had consequently inspired a trend in the study of postage stamps that we cannot ignore in our literature review.

The oldest thematic collecting report the researcher managed to find, was published in 1938 in *Musical Quarterly*. Boggs attempted to showcase how the production of postage stamps was closely tied with arts and most specifically music. In order to prove this claim the author collected and showcased in his report a total of 53 stamps from various countries such as Belgium, France, Great Britain, Poland, Hungary, Hawaii, Brazil, the Netherlands, Germany, U.S.A., Norway, Italy and Luxembourg. All of these stamps were selected as they featured scenes from musical history, events associated with music, famous composers and musicians or any other miscellaneous musical associations (Boggs, 1938). According to Boggs the first stamps showing a musical theme was issued in 1919 in Poland. As Boggs (1938) stated this fact serves as a clue in order to see how the relationship between music and postage stamp design is not one-sided. This statement sadly was not developed and explained further by the author in order to help the reader comprehend clearly the connection between postage stamp design and culture. It should also be noted that any specific methodological approach or methodological tools employed in the research have not been reported.

Fidgen (1956) collected and examined the stamps produced for the Bicentenary of Mozart in his review. These stamps have been issued by a variety of countries, mostly in Europe, such as Austria, Germany (East and West Germany), Belgium, Luxemburg and Czechoslovakia. The most promising part of the article was its epilogue in which the author argued about the importance of cultural events' depiction on stamps and how these should not be left unnoticed. Fidgen (1956) used as an example a discussion in British Parliament on the dissatisfaction of many people with British postage stamps and their continuous use of the profile of monarchs, instead of pictorial stamps. Despite this statement Fidgen chose not to elaborate on the matter and gave no further explanation as to where he gathered the information about the Parliament discussion, or in which way the negative opinion of people was measured.

Some of the studies under the umbrella of thematic collecting however seem to present a slightly more cohesive manner in terms of methodology, or at least in the rationale for the collection of a specific corpus. Orrick (1975) conducted a review on the stamps dedicated to lawyers and legal themes issued in the United States of America between 1847 and 1971. Through this research Orrick managed to note some patterns in

topics and categorize the various stamps in thematic groups: notable chief justices, presidents and other lawyers, pioneering legislative acts and social problems involving the law. Lutschg published three reports on the topic of anti-tobacco stamps, or rather stamps that depict themes about tobacco control (1992, 1993, 1994) as well as a short article related to the topic (2000). The author found that there was at least one stamp promoting the health consequences of excess tobacco use, from at least one country in every continent. However as Lutschg noted, these stamps were designed by the World Health Organization and not directly by the countries. This for Lutschg (1992) presented a major issue in the promotion of the cause. Most developed countries seem to have strived to promote their concerns about smoking in order to raise awareness, bring about a discussion and subsequently make tobacco and smoking safer for the users. As artist Friedensreich Hundertwasser (1928 – 2000) noted ‘the postage stamps are the measure of the cultural standing of a country’ (Lutschg, 1992, p. 5). For the author this fact seems to have been rather concerning and problematic as an attitude, especially since the United States of America held one of the highest positions in cigarette export across the globe. Nonetheless, as Lutschg (2000) reported, the American Postal Services recently started paying more attention to the messages concerning health and welfare getting transferred through stamps, while simultaneously raising awareness on issues concerning medical conditions and their prevention, as well as the promotion of education and science (Morgan, 1996; 2006).

While the previous thematic collecting studies were concerned with topics that influence contemporary societies such as science and the promotion of health and welfare, others have been interested in the way in which history is presented on stamps. Medical philately and most notably the Persian physician and mathematician Avicenna (980 AD – 1037) is a rather favoured topic under this umbrella. O’ Rahilly (1997), and Afshar (2010 a, 2010 b) have all examined the particular topic both in Iranian and worldwide stamp production. According to the authors Avicenna’s scientific heritage has been crucial to the development of medical history and therefore he came to be appreciated and therefore honoured on stamps, not only in his country Persia (modern day Iran) but also elsewhere. Avicenna’s undeniable body of work is not the only reason that he has been featured on stamps outside Iran. According to Afshar (2010 a) many Islamic countries considered Avicenna the most renowned of all physicians coming from the Islamic world. Moreover, a number of countries have developed from the now divided Persian territory and therefore must feel a historical and/or cultural connection

to him. However following this rationale of shared cultural heritage of Islam that ties these countries with Avicenna, the authors seem to have left a gap in the explanation of his appearance on the stamps of countries such as France, the Soviet Union, Hungary, Poland and the German Democratic Republic. A specific methodological approach or methodological tools employed in these works have not been reported.

Afshar presented another report on medical philately and most specifically the author attempted to follow the history of Iranian medicine with the aid of stamp representations (2010 b). As Afshar noted the collection of commemorative stamps helped him review the historical events behind Iranian medicine. Afshar divided the timeline into two periods for better categorization, the first one being before the Islamic Revolution in 1979 and after the Revolution. The collection prior to 1979 consisted of a total of 69 medical postage stamps. The topics of these stamps reported by Afshar were quite varied and included medical personalities, the founding of medical education centres, stamps honouring nurses and midwifery, various charities, stamps promoting health programmes and policies in order to prevent diseases, international medical events and the inauguration of medical congresses. On the other hand, only 23 medical stamps were issued after the Islamic Revolution, while the topics remained similar to the ones before 1979. Afshar (2010 b) however chose not to delve deeper into the reasons behind this sudden and significant decrease in the numbers of medical stamps in Iran.

Blodi (1988) conducted his report on medical postage stamps and more specifically the ones who represent issues of blindness and general eye symbolisms in both religion and mythology. As Blodi stated, vision and the lack of it played a significant role in nearly all religious beliefs, something that the author attempted to prove with the aid of stamps. The author demonstrated this link by showcasing examples of postage stamps from across the world on which the aforementioned topics appeared. The selection included protagonists, scenes and events deriving from various mythological and religious backgrounds in a chronological order. This categorization seems to be rather problematic as it does not allow the researcher to distinguish the theoretical framework and differences between the notions of religion and mythology. It should also be noted that Blodi had not reported any specific methodological strategy or tool that has been employed in the specific study.

Lefrère and Danic gathered and studied the topics of transfusion and blood donation in their worldwide review (2010). The authors' aim for this study was to highlight the recurring characteristics in the portrayal of this topic and the observation of emerging

new characteristics if there were any. In order to accomplish that Lefrère and Danic conducted a review on the 189 postage stamps issued by 87 states between 1942 and 2008. This review took note of the following parameters: country of emission, year, face value, slogans, expressions or wording, possible surtaxes, dominant colours, notion of series, themes of the illustrations, symbols, type of message, national specificities, and international characteristics. Although this work seems to have been conducted with a procedure similar to that of a quantitative content analysis, the authors did not mention this term in the document. Lefrère and Danic (2010) have also categorized stamps employing semiotical aspects, such as the dominant colour, albeit not using the term itself or any other bibliographical reference in order to explain their conclusions. The colour red was found to be unsurprisingly the dominant colour. It was used on various symbols and imagery such as, a blood drop, a blood bag, The Red Cross symbol, and The Red Crescent. According to the authors red represented the joy of life and optimism on these stamps. The colour green was also quite popular as a complementary or background colour in order to symbolically allude to hope and rebirth (Lefrère and Danic, 2010).

Cardiac surgery is yet another example of a medical topic depicted on postage stamps. Hosain (2013) collected a quantity of 30 stamps which celebrate the progress of cardiac surgery as a field, especially in the area of organ transplantation. The review conducted was supposed to be worldwide, though the author did not state it clearly anywhere. It should be also noted at this point that Hosain had not reported any specific methodological strategy or tool that has been employed in the specific study. Throughout his review the author hinted that there is a link between ideology and some of the stamps' imagery.

While this last section could not inform the present research neither in terms of methodology, nor regarding the theoretical framework, it was still informative due to the socio-political aspects of stamp design that were revealed even in the case of simple thematic collecting. Furthermore, thematic collecting is the oldest form of stamp study that can be found in worldwide literature and one can argue that it presents the first organized attempts at empirically investigating stamp designs as a form of content analysis. For these reasons this particular category of studies cannot be ignored and certainly need to be included in a dissertation that engaged the topic of postage stamp design.



## 1.7 Gaps in literature

As indicated by the literature review presented, a significant number of authors investigated the potential role of stamp imagery in promoting the idea of a united and solid nation to its citizens, as well as the audiences abroad (Raento and Brunn, 2005; Dobson, 2005; Jonsson, 2005; Wachman, 2005; Hoyo, 2012). These authors were clearly based on the theoretical frameworks outlined by Anderson (1991) and Billig (1995) on the construction of a nation's image through targeted and sometimes banal or common everyday images. These two theories have been of great importance for the present study and informed the construction of its theoretical framework, as outlined in the relevant chapter (see Chapter 3). Moreover a number of studies discussed the different ways a nation goes through times of transition and how this process is reflected on the images chosen for stamps (Brunn 2001, 2002; Deans, 2005, Jonsson, 2005; Kevane, 2008; Raento, 2008), even if in some cases this reached the level of propaganda as many scholars proved (Lauritzen, 1988; Rowley, 2002; Cusack,2005; Jeffery,2006). Additionally, our literature review indicated how the study of stamps might uncover important information regarding the social issues within a nation, or even the social status of a certain group or minority within the population (Ogletree et al., 1994; Sexty,2000; Bushnell, 2011; Adezde, 2012).

A slightly different perception in the study of stamps has been discussed by a smaller number of authors who expressed the idea of stamp imagery belonging in the sphere of popular culture, in other words, the mainstream and everyday culture. This idea was briefly mentioned by most of them (Inge, 1981; Hinds and Tatum, 1988; Franco, 1999; Trammell, 2010) and stayed strictly on a theoretical level, while Child (2005, 2008, 2012) argued how imagery deriving from the sphere of the everyday was implemented on the stamps of Latin American countries. This particular group of works, albeit limited in numbers has been quite important for the development of the present research. It enhanced the idea that stamp design while being a tool for the official representation of a country, does not exclude from its repertoire the depiction of topics and images which are mainstream or well-known and enjoyed by the general public. On the contrary, as the aforementioned studies showcased, it is assimilated and included on stamp imagery, therefore becoming part of a larger official narrative, a characteristic that Edensor (2002) reported in relation to various forms of everyday images and practices in the context of official representation.

As the literature review indicated stamps have already been studied in the context of politics and geography, as well as historical artefacts. However, several gaps in literature were found that according to the researcher present a significant problem in the study of the particular government documents (Andreou, 2015). Firstly, there seems to be a lack of research concerning the cultural aspects that such an object transfers to its audience, as well as the ways in which society itself influences the official culture that the stamp represents. These two sides seem to be almost alienated from each other according to the existing scholarship on postage stamps. The citizens who are also the primary users of postage stamps before they are sent abroad, and the message that the stamps attempts to convey are also directed towards them (Lauritzen, 1988; Deans, 2005; Kevane, 2008) have not been studied. On the contrary their views have been erroneously omitted or taken for granted. This alone came in contrast with the nature of visual texts (images) as the production of images aims to transmit messages, especially if we are discussing the means of mass communication such as stamps. Let us not forget that the task is to successfully deliver messages from a single, specific source to multiple receivers (Pearce, 2009). Therefore the reactions from citizens are a rather crucial part of the entire process of communication. In other words if we were to examine the citizens' reactions and opinions we could determine whether a message has been transmitted correctly or not, and how the senders (in our case the state itself) were less than successful in their task, as suggested in the model presented by Hall (1980). Furthermore such an approach would potentially uncover significant aspects of the way the members of the society in question view the postage stamps' imagery and consequently it could be rather informative to the authorities who are in charge of their production. A study showing the views of the audience would be of interest to the officials not only for attempting to grasp the perspective of the user, but also further analyse it and even attempt to include these views in future production.

Another significant gap that the literature review indicated was that the case of the Republic of Cyprus has not yet been empirically studied at all. Cyprus has a long history of postal services but at the same time a rather short one as a stamp-issuing country. The messages contained in the almost 1121 postage stamp designs published from 1960 until today have not been empirically studied, only documented. This fact alone makes the island a rather 'untouched' and consequently interesting case to explore. Furthermore, what makes Cyprus an even more intriguing case is the lack of a specific national identity. Recent studies have shown the difficulty of the population of

Cyprus to express their own identity, as well as their collective identity (Koulouri, 2000; Akcali, 2007; Hadjipavlou, 2010). This makes us wonder how an official document, a postage stamp for example, is perceived by a population of an imagined community that seems to find it difficult to express a collective national identity. As it is, the study of postage stamp design as an object of official culture in the context of Cyprus could provide us with significant insights related to the country's socio-cultural structures, prevailing social norms and national imaginings.

## **1.8 Research purpose**

The purpose of this study is to examine the ideological aspects of postage stamp imagery as a product of official culture and object of visual communication and as it appears in the context of the Republic of Cyprus, while taking into consideration the perspective of Cypriot citizens. Most importantly the present study aims to investigate and hopefully highlight the importance of studying the relationship between official culture and society, rather than focusing solely on the political, or propagandistic aspects. The important and intricate relationship between the audience (citizens) and the sender of messages and ideologies (government) is not only indicated by the gaps in the existing literature, but also highlighted by the theories of visual communication that the researcher has chosen to incorporate in this work (Hall, 1980; Corner, 1983) (see Chapter 3). By studying stamps within the framework of official culture and visual communication the researcher hopes to broaden the ways in which these items are being internationally studied, to enrich the existing bibliography, as well as update the theoretical framework employed in this particular field.

At the same time however, both the semiotic landscape, as well as visual communication will be informed by a structured and empirical research as opposed to the more theoretical approach that tends to be used for studies in these fields. This study hopes to offer a structured basis for the researchers who wish to incorporate the relationship of official culture and its audience in their work, especially those who concentrate on the aspects of visual communication and semiotics. The findings aim to be useful in the fields of cultural studies, especially regarding the study of government documents which contain images. Simultaneously the field of postage stamp design and philately will be aided in better comprehending ideological constructions. Furthermore this study hopes to open a dialogue regarding the ideological aspects of these items not

only in academia, and stamp design, but also in their role as educational materials in (public) schools today; a role that has been unfortunately limited only on the documentation of historical events.

## **1.9 Concluding remarks on literature review**

This literature review sought to report the research trends in the study of postage stamps, to identify understudied topics and find any possible gaps in the existing literature. This revealed patterns and favourite topics of discussion in the study of postage stamps. However, it also indicated a number of gaps and therefore possible routes for future research.

It was generally accepted throughout relevant literature that an official (or even unofficial) government takes the time and even considers the expertise of various specialists in order to issue a set of postage stamps. They study the socio-political and even economical events that take place during the time having in mind the history of the country they are representing (Dobson, 2005). This image can obviously change and transform according to the political and social situation the nation is going through. As indicated by a number of scholars, the official repertoire has included imagery from the mainstream and popular culture (Child, 2005; 2008; 2012) as a way of becoming easier to comprehend and bring the citizens together. The rationale behind the choice of imagery on stamps by the official governments has been discussed at length by a number of scholars using various examples from different countries, regimes and historical periods.

Most importantly though, this literature review indicated the lack of research concerning the users of postage stamps, in other words the citizens who come in contact with them. While it was accepted that the stamps direct their messages not only abroad, but also to the members of a community, (Lauritzen, 1988; Deans, 2005; Kevane, 2008) their views have not been examined at all. One could argue that this happens as bureaucratic decisions, such as the stamp issuing process, do not and perhaps should not involve the users in most cases. This perspective is certainly of great importance in order to comprehend the 'silent' role of these 'paper ambassadors' as Reid (1984) and Osmond (2008) asserted. On the other hand, the potential interest in studying this opposite and unexplored perspective has been hinted at by Deans (2005) where the author expressed his concern over the fact that stamp designs in relevant studies are

interpreted only by the researchers, a fact that tends to render the findings overly-politicized and subjective.

If we accept that one of the aims of official representations is to influence and congregate the majority of the population around a sense of collectiveness and pride towards their nation, it becomes even more imperative to study if and how this is transferred to the citizens and what is their own perspective on the topic. In this sense the role and views of the citizens towards the official representations of their country through stamp imagery would be the most important gap we are required to fill. However if one wanted to test the impact the imagery of postage stamps has on its primary users, a different and rather new methodological approach in the field of postage stamps should be used. Taking into consideration all of the aforementioned information the author formulated and presents in the following chapters, a number of research questions for this study, as well as the theoretical framework and methodological tools that are to be employed in order to study postage stamps following the proposed approach.

## 2 Research questions

The present study aims to discuss the postage stamp as an object of official culture that interacts and is influenced by the government as well as the society which represents, the Republic of Cyprus in our case. The meanings that stamp imagery carry, as well as the ideological connotations developed through them are the central focus of this research. As our literature review indicated stamp-issuing processes have been mainly studied in relation to government policies, as well as their role in geo-politics. On the other hand, what the aforementioned literature review also indicated was the lack of any type of study regarding the users of the postage stamp. While it is accepted that the stamps direct their messages not only abroad, but also to the citizens of a state, (Lauritzen, 1988; Deans, 2005; Kevane, 2008) their views have not been examined at all. This study argues that while it is a well-established fact that the governments employ the expertise of various specialists before issuing a set of postage stamps, we should not take for granted the acceptance of these messages from the audiences. This certainly is not to claim that these experts do not study the socio-political and economic events taking place during a particular time, or even the history of the country they represent through stamp design (Dobson, 2005).

On the contrary we argue that while the process of designing stamps is quite meticulous, the reception of these images by the citizens has not been taken into consideration by relevant studies. This fact alone is quite contrasting with the nature of producing, or even studying visual texts since the perception of the audience is equally important as the intentions of the makers. The task is to successfully deliver messages from a single, specific source to multiple receivers (Pearce, 2009) and therefore the views of the audience present a very crucial part in the entire process. In other words, testing the audience's reaction can determine whether a message has been accepted by the citizens, rejected, or if the meaning is negotiated and altered by them.

This approach, we believe is the most suitable in order to uncover and discuss significant aspects of the dialogue developed between official culture and citizens, and more specifically images such as the ones depicted on stamps. Consequently and due to the nature of this study, our findings aim to be informative and useful to the authorities responsible for stamp design, as well the promotion of tourism through them. A study discussing the perceptions of citizens in relation to official culture would certainly be of interest to the Ministry of Communication and Works, as well as the Ministry of

Energy, Commerce, Industry and Tourism. It is not only for the sake of noting the citizens' views, but further analyze them, attempt to incorporate them in future production and develop new strategies for stamp design. Moreover, our findings could certainly be helpful to the Ministry of Education, since stamps have been used as teaching material in the books supplied to secondary education students as part of the mandatory curriculum.

Taking into consideration all of the above, the author formulated the following research questions. They were developed in order to accommodate the study of this particular corpus, as well as the purpose of the present work. In the subsequent section we introduce the dissertation's research questions and explain the rationale behind them, their role in the research, as well as the methodological tools we will be using in order to answer them.

**Research question 1:**

Which are the predominant themes that appear in the corpus (Cyprus postage stamps 1960 – 2013)? Are the quantities of stamps in these thematic categories affected by historically important dates in the island's timeline (1974, 2004)?

**Sub – question 1:** How is official culture constructed and socio-politically interpreted through the imagery used for the Republic of Cyprus' postage stamps?

The first research question is crucial to the development of the study as it gives an initial idea of some favoured and less favoured topics and imagery in the postage stamp production of the country. It also serves practical needs as it helps the researcher deal with the rather large corpus she handles and keeps it organised in groups. This question is very popular among the scholars who are interested in stamp production as many of them use quantitative content analysis in order to get answers. This results in a meaningful reading of the information and in recognising patterns in the way communication is constructed (Babbie, 2010). After the process of content analysis was completed and results gathered, the researcher was able to draw important conclusions regarding favoured and less favoured themes used for Cyprus' stamp design. Furthermore by running a set of chi-square tests we were able to track the way in which themes have developed through the years. Finally, elements from selected semiotic resources were incorporated in order to allow the researcher a critical perspective on the corpus, as well as to better link it with Cyprus' socio-political situation. By interpreting our findings in this manner, we were able to associate them with the framework of

Cyprus and study them as cultural products, which influence and are being influenced by the society that created them (Andreou, 2015).

**Research question 2:**

What imagery and messages does the Republic of Cyprus attempt to communicate via its stamp program, according to its citizens? And what kind of imagery and messages do Cypriot citizens consider suitable for the representation of their country on its stamps?

**Sub – question 2:**

Can the perceptions of citizens, on their country's stamp imagery, be attributed to their socio-cultural background and to the socio-political situation of their country?

This research question aims to involve Cypriot citizens and note their own perceptions on the postage stamp imagery as a product of official culture with the aid of visual communication. For this reason the particular research question was approached by using both quantitative (survey research) and qualitative (focus groups) methodological tools. In this way the researcher was enabled to note patterns in the answers of a large population of citizens and then carefully select the topics which needed to be discussed in more depth by using a qualitative methodological tool. This part could have been carried out by using relevant literature and the views of the researcher on the matter; however our perception would have been incomplete. The findings gathered with the aid of questionnaires indicated important patterns and points that needed further interpretation. There have been no other studies focusing on the citizens and no studies attempting to interpret official culture through the stamps of the Republic of Cyprus. For these reasons it was quite important for the researcher to further explore the aspects that the survey's results indicated by going back to the source; the citizens. The goal was to collect data which would enrich our findings and help the researcher interpret them socio-culturally. The researcher deepened the interpretation of findings by using discussion and the method of photo elicitation in focus groups as a means to comprehend the reason that the population congregates around certain images and colours and considers them to be the most representative of its own country. Furthermore, the researcher was interested in understanding the kind of images that the population seems to have memorized throughout the corpus of stamps they have seen in the past and the reasons that made them memorable in the first place.



**Research question 3:**

Are the perceptions of Cypriot citizens in agreement with the official culture representation promoted through stamps? Or is there any differentiation noted through their perceptions?

This final question needed to be answered after both quantitative and qualitative data was gathered and interpreted. In this manner the researcher assembled all the necessary information in order to compare the perceptions of the citizens with the messages and aims of official culture on stamp imagery. First the categorization of stamp themes through content analysis was combined with relevant literature, as well as information coming from special editions, albums and first day covers provided by the Postal Museum and the Cyprus Ministry of Communication and Works. This aided us in comprehending through visual communication the messages and topics that official culture projected to citizens. Simultaneously the perception of Cypriot citizens on the matter was taken into account and the researcher sought to understand in more depth their views through relevant literature, as well as data gathered with the aid of questionnaires and focus groups. The development of the literature in respect of postage stamps and ideology indicated a tendency to study the messages promoted through stamp imagery without simultaneously studying the recipients (citizens). The researcher aimed to compare and contrast the aforementioned views with the existing literature and draw conclusions which help in enriching the existing bibliography. Our objective was to prove that the role of citizens is not a passive one in this process and how their collectiveness around certain parts of their official culture is being manifested and can be empirically studied. As a result, the conclusions derived from this final research question constitute the most significant contribution of the proposed study.

### **3 Theoretical framework**

This chapter is dedicated to presenting and explaining in detail, the relevant theoretical models surrounding this dissertation to the reader. The selected theoretical framework will be used in order to form an umbrella under which the research questions posed will be discussed and eventually answered. Our research questions aim not only to explore the messages promoted by the authorities through stamp imagery, but also the way in which Cypriot citizens perceive these messages, whether they readily accept them, or whether their perceptions are in line or not with those of their government. These topics will be further observed, interpreted and discussed taking into consideration the socio-political and cultural background of the country in question in order to gain an in-depth understanding not only of this topic but also of the particular society.

In order to accommodate the examination of these research questions, as well as a corpus of stamps containing heterogeneous images, the researcher incorporated theories from the field of cultural studies, visual communication and semiotics, aiming to move the study of postage stamps away from a solely political, or geographical scope and focus on their cultural role and value which remained understudied until now. The researcher aims to explain stamp production as a process which interacts with culture and can be influenced by it, therefore carrying ideological meanings. In this way, for the first time in a completed work, we concentrated on the active role and the perception of the citizens regarding stamp design. This approach comes in contrast with earlier studies that tend to take for granted the citizens' perception in favour of studying what is considered to be the bigger picture, in other words a country's self-representation mechanism as developed by the government.

#### **3.1 Imagined communities and representation through postage stamp imagery**

Even if stamp imagery is considered to be mundane and banal (Reid, 1984) this does not reduce its potential to be meaningful, or effective as a tool in a country's quest for image construction. In fact the term 'banal', as well as objects and ideas belonging under the umbrella of being banal are considered to be highly important when studying the mechanisms behind a state's self-representation. This is certainly one of the fundamental notions around which we constructed our arguments. Social scientist

Michael Billig coined the term 'banal nationalism', deriving from the book under the same title (1995) in order to discuss how everyday and somewhat mundane representations are able to promote an imagined sense of solidarity between a community and a nation. Billig agreed with other researchers such as Benedict Anderson (1991) that it is the strength of repetition of this repertoire that enables symbols and most importantly for this research imagery, to influence the members of a nation, or in Anderson's (1991) words, an 'imagined community'. As this notion is related to the process of creating a sense of belonging to the members of each 'imagined community' through the image of a solid nation by repeating and employing everyday ideas and objects, it certainly presented a rather important foundation for this study.

Within this framework we can study stamps and stamp imagery as products deriving from a certain imagined community, thus revealing important socio-political aspects regarding a country's self-representation, and also how this constructed image interacts and is influenced by the active members of the community. This term accommodates the idea of a nation's image which is somehow easy to define if you belong in it. As Anderson (1991, p.224) stated, 'these communities have finite if elastic boundaries beyond which lay other nations. We might never see someone in our imagined community but we know they are there through communication'. In other words the members of each imagined community are able to distinguish their own among others. While this notion was firstly associated only with banal nationalism, it was later transformed in order to accommodate a broader discussion. In this sense an imagined community can be a characterisation describing a group of people sharing interests or beliefs, whether they belong to the same nation or not. Despite this, we should note that the present study examined the case of the Republic of Cyprus and its citizens, and therefore the community we are discussing here is certainly defined by a common citizenship rather than just interests or beliefs. It should be clarified that this includes all citizens who reside in the area controlled by the Republic of Cyprus and have Cypriot citizenship.

It would be erroneous to refuse that the idea of a common and shared nation is one of the most prominent features in the formation of someone's identity. It is a way of experiencing one's surroundings and can be defined as one of the strongest psychological ways to identify the differences between the notions of 'them' and 'we'. It furthermore refers to the feeling of belonging experienced by the members residing within a nation or a state (Hearn, 2004). It is closely tied with a number of common

traits that the members of each community share, from national symbols and imagery, language and culture, to national colours, music and most importantly common history (Reichl, 2008). It should be highlighted that in all of the aforementioned variations and additions to the theory, the constant repetition of ideas through imagery was one of the most prominent features of promoting a state's self-representation and identity. This approach leaves plenty of room for critical analysis related to the ways in which this formation of self-representation is experienced through everyday life, and consequently through the visual objects these people encounter, such as postage stamps.

Since Anderson's influential text on imagined communities informed this study we should acknowledge one of the most crucial critiques on his work, as well as the theories that filled the aforementioned gaps. A common argument is that while Anderson highlighted the role of imagined communities, he ignored the socio-political realities which influenced and helped their actual construction (Edensor, 2002). However, according to Tim Edensor's (2002) reading of Anderson's text, the historian included in his rationale the sense of a common and shared culture among the members of the community. According to this reading, nations and therefore imagined communities certainly are not only maintained by social and cultural experiences, but they are actually conceived through them. Anderson's whole argument in fact is based on the experience of everyday life and repetition, an idea that certainly included cultural manifestations and is influenced by society. James (1996, p.123) appointed the term 'coterminous' to the uses of 'this society' and 'this community' when presented in the discussion regarding a nation. Additionally as Urry (2000) explained the notion of 'society' remains within any kind of argument that might contain the ideas of nation-state, or citizenship. Billig (1995) elaborated on the matter, stating that society is a direct reflection and a creation of the nation-state. The idea of a nation as a perennial material for identity and society construction remains crucial as the aforementioned authors have argued.

Taking into consideration these arguments we cannot detach Anderson's (1991) theory from socio-political and cultural factors that are present in different imagined communities. Let us not forget that Anderson explained the need of repetition of a specified repertoire in order to promote homogeneity within an imagined community, something that is achieved either by the media or even more so by government instruments and the products they issue. This rationale can definitely include postage stamps and stamp imagery, as they simultaneously are objects that can be found in our

everyday lives, while on the other hand they are still official documents (Clausen, 2010).

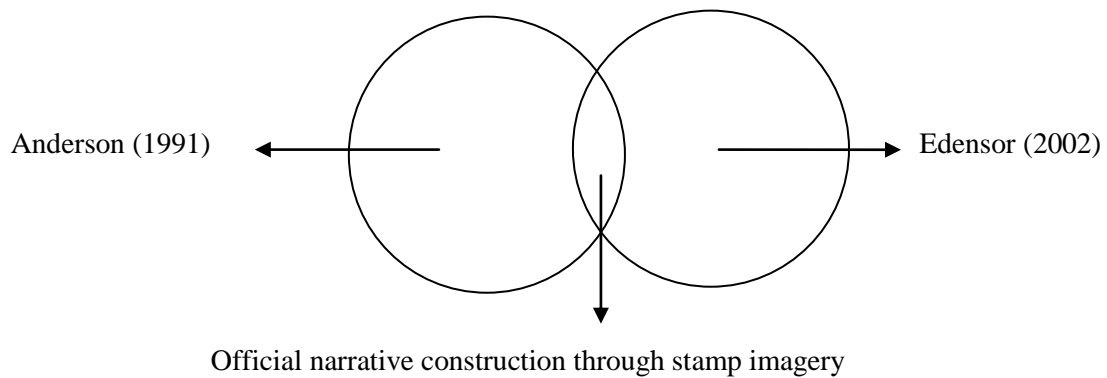
More specifically, Anderson's argument was based on the invention of the printing press, and its subsequent popularity. For Anderson (1991), the habit of regularly reading a newspaper in synchronization with the rest of the imagined community transfers the idea of shared interests, for example its content. In this way, and using Anderson's example a common newspaper becomes a channel for conveying a sense of belonging, through a very simple and mundane practice. Using his own words, in this way 'the imagined world is visibly rooted in everyday life' (1991, p. 36), a crucial parameter in the formation and maintenance of the feeling of inclusion within the community. This example was in fact of great importance to this research as Anderson did not focus on sporadic spectacles of great importance for the development of his theory. On the contrary, he offered the suggestion that the sense of belonging is practically administered by prosaic and everyday practices and objects. These practices certainly are not supposed to draw attention on themselves, and their appearance is rooted in the form of 'common sense', reminding us of the ways in which stamp imagery also functions. Postage stamps and their imagery can certainly be counted as an everyday, mundane object since we send and receive letters or parcels multiple times a year, without paying much attention to the process which is considered to be fairly easy and usual. In fact the Republic of Cyprus issues approximately 4212000 postage stamps every year, according to information the researcher gathered from Cyprus' Ministry of Transport, Communication and Works. These stamps are distributed both within the country and abroad.

In Anderson's example, reading and discussing the contents of a newspaper played the role of the common sense practice, in the case of this research it would be using postage stamps for sending and receiving letters. As Clausen (2010) argued postage stamp imagery uses similar mechanisms as newspaper does, in order to transfer messages of homogeneity within the community. This happens as both mediums employ a great amount of issues, material durability through the years, easily comprehensible motifs and symbols, and imagery which is instantly recognizable by the community as their own. Due to the fact that the postage stamp is an official government product, it is regarded as a means for influencing the way the country, or nation is viewed abroad, and simultaneously promotes the idea of a shared identity within the community (Lauritzen, 1988). A variety of authors have implemented

Anderson's rationale in their own studies on stamps, in order to highlight the feeling of homogeneity within an imagined community as advocated by different governments (Raento and Brunn, 2005; Dobson, 2005; Jonsson, 2005; Wachman, 2005; Hoyo, 2012). Postage stamp research has claimed that the imagery depicted on stamps showcases topics that tie the members of an imagined community and contributes to the construction of a sense of unity and identification within the nation or the country (Brunn 2001, 2002; Deans, 2005, Jonsson, 2005; Kevane, 2008; Raento, 2008). However in certain cases stamps have not only been used in this way, but have also served brazen propaganda. The nature of postage stamp imagery even as unassuming as it is, has actually been employed by a number of regimes, from Nazi Germany to the Soviet Union, in order to promote their superiority and uplift them in periods of crisis, (Lauritzen, 1988; Rowley, 2002; Cusack, 2005; Jeffery, 2006).

These studies highlighted the importance of stamp production for various regimes and authorities throughout the years, even when a number of them resorted to propaganda. It is true that institutions like post offices have played a decisive role in the formation of organizational methods of order, therefore helping to shape power relations. As Aldeman (2010) explained the postal office of the United States of America (USPS) has contributed in the development of a national infrastructure for the necessary political communications. Additionally the undeniable fact that postage stamps are still being circulated without any hint of stopping their production given, cements their materiality and their presence in our everyday lives, as well their usefulness to the authorities.

It should be noted however, that while Anderson's idea of a shared sense of belonging communicated through every day practices is highly important and influential, he remained concentrated on a historical perspective and printed media. For this reason, and this dissertation the combination of Anderson's theory with that of Edensor (2002) was deemed necessary. Edensor (2002) suggested that the realm of everyday objects used for constructing a national sense of belonging in contemporary societies is quite vast. This idea proved perennial for our study as we sought to study not only the intentions of the authorities, but also the perceptions of the citizens in relation to Cyprus' stamp design (Figure 1).



**Figure 1:** Anderson's (1991) theory on Imagined communities and Edensor's (2002) theory on everyday objects constructing official narratives

### **3.2 The cultural dimension of postage stamp imagery: official and mainstream**

In order to apply the notion of culture to the present research and discuss it in relation to the production of official documents such as postage stamps, one should first define it. However, this remains quite an intricate task, even nowadays. In the following section the researcher will present the problem of defining culture as a notion, and explain which dimensions of culture we are concerned with in this work. Numerous authors have attempted to outline this term in order to accommodate their own work throughout the years. It is indicative how American anthropologists Kroeber and Kluckhohn noted the existence of 164 different definitions explaining culture, as early as in 1952. Relevant discussions moreover, have been concerned with the difficulty of theorists in agreeing on a specific and common definition of the term (Edensor, 2002). Apte (1994) included in the *Encyclopaedia of language and linguistics* a summarized version of this problem stating that despite a century worth of efforts in defining culture adequately, there was no actual agreement among anthropologists regarding this term. For this reason the word remained quite fluid, hosting under its umbrella various interpretations and perspectives. Consequently the term may cause confusion and misinterpretations if authors do not explicitly state the usage of it. For instance it can allude to someone 'being cultured' in a knowledgeable and even elitist way, or it can describe a collection of artistic and intellectual works which are deemed hierarchically important.

On the other hand, the term has gained additional meanings that are more relevant to this research and will be subsequently listed in order to better frame the term 'culture' for the purposes of the study therefore avoiding misapprehension. Beginning with an early but quite important definition by Edward Tylor (1871), culture consists of patterns (explicit and implicit) which are transmitted through symbols, imagery and artefacts (objects). According to the author these objects, symbols or imagery would have no meaning if they were not part of a culture and they need to be interpreted in relation to it. In this sense all of the aforementioned elements hold ideas and most importantly values, which according to Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952) is where the core of each society lays. Adding to the previous definitions, Schwartz (1999), asserted that culture relies on experience, learned or created by the individuals of a population, sometimes as transferred from previous generations, from contemporaries, or even formed by the individuals themselves. A more recent contribution to this logic was that of psychologist David Matsumoto who affirmed that culture can be understood as 'a set of attitudes, values, beliefs and behaviours, shared by a group of people but can be differentiated for each individual and communicated from one generation to another' (1996, p.16).

These views on culture are fundamental for our research as they place the formation and maintenance of a culture in direct dialogue with the various objects, as well as the society they belong to. This is crucial as we deal with postage stamps which are issued in order to represent a certain country and its society, that of the Republic of Cyprus. We are interested furthermore in exploring the ways that the citizens of this society perceive their country's stamp imagery and therefore an approach such as Schwartz's (1999) and Matsumoto's (1996) allows room for discussing cultural artefacts in synergy with the viewpoints of individual citizens. In fact as the society plays a significant part in the formation of what we call culture, it should be always studied while taking into consideration the specificities of each social framework (Giles and Middleton, 1999). This social sphere according to the authors can include anything from a small sub-culture to an entire nation or country. This admission opposed older theories which concerned themselves only with objects belonging to 'high culture', placing them in the focus of cultural studies. 'High culture' refers to all cultural products that are considered important either by the upper class or the intelligentsia of a certain society (Gans, 1974). As Arnold (1960) explained the study of culture and cultural artefacts should be concentrated on the 'study of perfection' and nothing less. In this strict manner, other



forms of culture which were not generated from a society's upper class were automatically considered meaningless or as the derogatory term used proclaims, 'low'.

Postage stamps certainly cannot be placed within the frame of high culture. On the other hand they are government documents, whose imagery is chosen carefully by the authorities in order to ensure a desirable representation of the whole country, or a certain regime. In this sense stamps as objects do not fit in the description of low culture either, even if they are quite prosaic. The imagery chosen for representation on them though can belong in any of these two broad categories since the topics include anything from significant architectural landmarks to popular performers and national cuisine. In this sense, by being pictured and distributed on postage stamps they belong in the official culture of the country and as such the state carefully selects which of their themes and visual representations will be used.

The term official culture is sometimes incorrectly considered to be the same as high culture. It is true that they are interrelated and many times studied in parallel while they actually do not originate from the same place. While high culture derives from a need to create the best and greatest that ever existed in the world, as Arnold (1960) asserted, official culture has a different character and role. The need for a certain official repertoire creates what we call 'official culture'. Official culture can be defined as the form of culture that has been socially accepted and most importantly politically legitimized (Lewis, 1992). This also implies the existence of institutional support given by the society. Institutionalization occurs in order to guarantee consistency, hierarchy and to preserve the imagined community's values and cultural norms (Edensor, 2002). Often the notion of official culture is associated with conservative ideals, or even with ideas that were subversive once, but have been eventually 'sterilized' and integrated into the public discourse as theorist Guy Debord asserted (1957). In the subsequent paragraphs we will delve deeper into the clarification of this term and explain further its suitability in the study of postage stamps. Furthermore we will see examples of postage stamp imagery which originally belonged in the mainstream or 'low' culture, and was finally integrated and used for official national representation.

As previously suggested the process of creating an official culture requires the institutionalisation and 'sterilization' of objects, images and practices. The institutional support needed for this process has long been associated with the production of high culture. This is the main reason that official and high culture are many times studied in homogeneity, however their absolute association does not find the researcher, as well as

other authors agreeable. Their main difference is not only the purpose they serve, but also their origin. High culture is presented by the national elites, governments and patricians as something that the country or nation must definitely be associated with in order to gain valuable international prestige. They are marks of status and part of a national heritage. If we were to design a postage stamp using only imagery deriving from high culture, we would depict the artworks held in national galleries, national theatres, or architectural wonders for example. These are clearly not the only topics represented on stamps. Despite the range of topics Edensor (2002) explained, high culture did not manage to hold onto its hierarchical eminence on its own. It would be erroneous to deny their existence at the centre of a country's self-image, but certainly they are not alone. According to Cubitt (1998) the decentering of high culture in its role in a country's image construction, resulted from a need to include an increased range of activities and manifestations which became well-known not only on a national, but on an international level too. In the contestation of official culture representation one could certainly note, how formerly looked-down upon even despised forms and practices can become valuable and necessary.

Such an example as Coffey (2012) explained would be Mexican muralist art. Although the author has not placed it under the term of official culture, it certainly fits the criteria. Mexican muralist art was created as a radical public art movement, popularly admired for its depictions of the struggle of lower classes and the need for social justice. Later on however, this art movement became institutionalized and as part of official culture served various Mexican governments in promoting their own views, aspirations and agendas (Coffey, 2012). This required a strategic process by the political system and government bureaucracy, by representing and producing official culture in their quest to integrate the themes of Mexican muralist art that they needed and to use them accordingly. As Debord (1957) affirmed ideas and therefore messages seem to be firstly detected and recognized as potentially useful, then understood, redefined, adopted and presented by the dominant hegemony.

We should not forget that in contemporary societies official culture must incorporate the tastes and desires of numerous classes, ethnic groups and minorities, within a pluralistic and multicultural society (Edensor, 2002). Even in this rather expanded form however, a nation or country has to establish a commonsense image, a repertoire which will aid it in defining itself (Crang, 1998). In order to be cultivated, refined and finally promoted, official culture requires comprehending all of the aforementioned aspects and

channelling them into its most common products, such as postage stamps. A recent documentary on postage stamps, by the United States' Public Broadcasting Service (PBS), entitled *American Stamps* (2009), explained how the official image of a country is promoted through them, both directly and indirectly. The documentary emphasized simultaneously that this feat is accomplished as stamps are a big part of the everyday life. In more detail the narrator stated that envelopes and stamps 'carry the messages most important to us: our declarations of love, our job applications, and congratulations to our friends and family', they simultaneously 'play a significant role in memorializing national icons and showcasing important features of our culture and history'.

It is clear that postage stamps and their imagery while actually representing the official aspects of the culture of an entire country, they are doing so in a subtle, almost 'hidden in the mainstream' way. In fact we tend to dismiss from our minds their official dimension due to their association and integration in everyday practices. As Edensor (2002) explained, the everyday is perceived to be difficult to define as it is so apparent and even commonly assumed to be uninteresting to social sciences. In this sense the messages contained in these objects are taken for granted. This might also happen as postage stamps, albeit being official documents, lack the sense of spectacular, the exceptional, or symbolic, coming in contrast with other aspects of a country's image-making system (Edensor, 2002). For example, they are not as exciting as a national touristic campaign. They are missing the prestige and feeling of pride of a national anthem and they even lack the symbolic (and actual) value of a banknote. It is interesting how due to their inclusion in our everyday lives, stamps easily transgress to the territory of mainstream and popular. For example, in his comprehensive three-volume *Handbook of American popular culture*, Inge (1981) included postage stamps in a list of various other manifestations of mainstream, and the culture of everyday. In fact Inge (1981) dealt in a separate chapter of the very first volume with stamps. The author discussed that even if postage stamps are indeed objects directly commissioned by the official state, their inclusion in the sphere of mainstream cannot be prohibited. This happens not only as their nature is prosaic enough, but also due to the variety of depicted topics. In this sense the official and the mainstream aspects of culture are brought even closer, in the example of postage stamps.

Despite the lack of acknowledgment in the importance of everyday practices in the construction of the official, certain writers have aided us in developing the arguments for this dissertation. Theorist Raymond Williams asserted in a notable quote that

‘culture is ordinary’ (1961, p. 57). Williams developed the thought that culture describes particular meanings and values including ordinary and everyday behaviour. This creates a feeling of a communal way of viewing the world with consistency, through sharing an array of reference points. According to Edensor (2002) there lays the root of shaping a common sense understanding of someone’s belonging. In the case of stamps, a cultural categorization that would omit including both the aspects of mainstream and official would actually hinder the researcher from comprehending the cultural dynamics, as well as the socio-political background. Even more so in the case of the present study where the official culture is being studied in parallel with the perceptions of the citizens. In fact, as Jean Franco (1999) theorized any institutionalized form of culture can be studied in relation to what is considered to be mainstream, popular or familiar to the broad audiences. Through this dialogue of institutionalized and official aspects of culture with the more mainstream parts of it, senses of collectiveness and belonging can be developed through the society and therefore the nation. In this way we believe that the country gains its own ‘unique’ voice and identity that can further benefit its political agenda or quest for sovereignty.

Supporting the aforementioned rationale Hinds and Tatum (1998) asserted that in order for any forms of culture to be considered mainstream, or manage to become ways of expressing identity and collectiveness, they need to be accepted by a large number of people. This can be achieved in two different ways. The first one concerns widely held artefacts, symbols, beliefs or myths, which become well-known and accepted by the members of a society through repetition, even from one generation to the next. This statement reflects in fact, Anderson’s (1991) idea about the formation of collectiveness among the members of an imagined community. The second method according to Hinds and Tatum (1998) is different and perhaps less imposing. It actually relies more on the participation of the members of the imagined community as the viewer gets to be involved in some aspect of culture that seeks to be integrated in the sphere of the everyday.

The aforementioned theoretical approaches that discuss how postage stamps and their imagery, while promoting the official culture of a state can still be considered part of the everyday are certainly enlightening. However, they are very few and the potential research interest of the topic has certainly not been fully explored yet. The present study argues that stamps are in fact quite an enduring and dynamic cultural construction which as part of official culture has accepted in its repertoire aspects that could be

considered mainstream or prosaic. As Hinds and Tatum (1998) affirmed though, in order to better comprehend this combination we should note the ways in which the members of the society comprehend the construction of belonging, through stamp imagery and whether they consider them part of their everyday life. The presented study paid close attention to the members of the society, in our case the citizens of the Republic of Cyprus. Their interactive stance towards the imagery of their official culture through stamps, proved to be quite unexpected and even contradictory at times in relation to the image promoted by the authorities, in our case Cyprus' Ministry of Transport, Communication and Works and more specifically the Department of Postal Services.

It is actually quite a misguided assumption that all of the aspects presented under the umbrella of official culture, manage to get efficiently and uncritically absorbed by the members of the respective society, or nation. This is the main reason according to Edensor (2002), that the vast majority of studies explaining the idea of culture construction within an imagined community do not present any sense of contestation or cultural dynamism. This is the argument that we sought to elaborate on through the present research. The role of the citizens and their perceptions in relation to their official culture as presented on stamps gave us further evidence on how dynamic this relationship really is. For culture is not something that is already fixed and steady, it is a negotiated subject open to dialogue and influenced by the society which produced it. In a similar fashion an official culture, should not be considered as something stable, but rather a dynamic and fluid construction which does not exist solely on its own. As Edensor (2002) asserted, the image that a nation projects, is in fact part of a cultural matrix of images, ideas, discourses and practices. In order for this interaction to take place the everyday mundane manifestations of the 'usual', the 'habitual' or the commonsense practices, are needed.

As can also be noticed in the relevant chapter dedicated to literature review (see Chapter 1) stamp research did not concentrate on internal or external audiences (citizens), but rather on the decision-making centres behind their production. Philatelic scholarship tends to mention the existence of parts of the government or even of a certain elite which determines and influences the choice of imagery on stamps, obviously related to their own agenda. For example the rather detailed work by Frewer (2002) regarded the Japanese stamp production and especially the Head of the Postal Bureau and the Art Director responsible for the design, as key positions with significant

strength in transferring the desired messages to the public, such as feelings of belonging and national pride. In a few cases this type of research sought to trace the shift of power from government institutions to non-government ones in relation to stamp production. Dobson's (2005) research on the comparison of stamp design processes in Japan and the United Kingdom argued that since the 1990's Japan's decision-making centres controlling the stamp production have been altered. In the tripartite elite of ruling political party, state bureaucracy and big business owners, another fourth 'player' has been added; some other 'non-governmental' political actors. While Dobson (2005) did not explain in detail how and in what ways all of these elements within Japan influenced the entire process, it was obvious that the final decisions on stamp design are the responsibility of the Ministry of Post and Telecommunications.

Similar research from Raento (2006) and Raento and Brunn (2008) on Finnish stamps, have shown that in some countries the design process tends to shift a little over time. While the undefined by the authors 'national elite' used to have complete control over the stamp production and the choice of topics, there seems to have been a noticeably different trend in the last years. As post offices became commercialized the themes on stamps were more concerned with the citizens, and in some cases the designs themselves were requested by the public. The reason behind this strategy, according to the authors was entirely unrelated to the governments attempting to comprehend the way their citizens view the representation of their country. On the contrary the Finnish governments believe that their national iconography was already established and therefore the only reason for involving the public was financial consideration, in other words a greater profit. The views of the citizens regarding their country's visual representation are therefore taken for granted (Raento and Brunn, 2008).

It is obvious both from the literature review chapter as well as this brief mention above, that while scholars have acknowledged the transfer of messages through official culture products, such as stamps, a framework that would allow a closer analysis of this interaction was not adopted. The admission that official culture representations enter the sphere of mainstream too makes the role of the citizens even more crucial for research. It is certainly wrong to assume that the communication is linear and the citizens enact a passive role. In order to study this relationship between the Cypriot citizens and the official culture of the Republic of Cyprus through stamps we needed a combination of theories that would allow us to examine this proverbial interaction. Theories from the fields of semiotics and visual communication were adopted by the researcher as a means

for studying and analyzing not only the messages transferred through stamp imagery, but most importantly the perceptions of the citizens. In the subsequent section the terms semiotics and visual communication will be explained, as well as the way in which they will be employed in our study.

### **3.3 Semiotics of postage stamp in visual communication: shaping and reflecting culture**

Visual communication is a term used to describe the forms of communication which are provided through visual means or aids; in other words through the process of seeing and understanding. According to Lester (2014) the term can be described as the form of communication which relies on vision and is usually presented through two-dimensional images. Their purpose is the transfer of messages and the persuasion of an audience. This can include some, or all of the following means: signs, typography, drawings, animation, industrial design, illustrations, and web design. Ideas or any type of information can be therefore transferred via forms that can be looked upon, or read. Taking into consideration how broad of a term visual communication is, it certainly becomes somewhat difficult to trace its history. Nevertheless, evidence suggests that it is one of the oldest forms of communication. For some researchers the earliest forms of visual communication are considered to be the cave paintings which were created thousands of years ago and found in various areas around the globe.

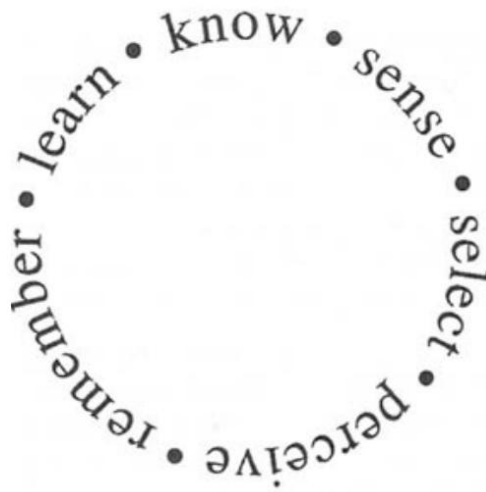
Visual communication relies on vision and the process of comprehension that the spectator experiences. In this sense visual communication creates what can be described as a visual language where images are used as forms of communication in quite an accurate manner. This is achieved by methodically visualizing an idea instead of verbalizing it. This field also explores the relationship between the visual message and the text that accompanies it. It is believed that this combination enhances the message, giving it a greater strength in order to inform, educate, or persuade a single person or an audience (Smith, Moriarty, Kenney and Barbatsis, 2005).

In this sense we can think of stamps as small-sized advertisements, or paper ambassadors of their state, addressing both internal and external audiences in a repetitive manner through visual communication. Graphic designers and consequently postage stamp designers rely on methods derived from this field in order to promote messages, whether undertaking a task of commercial advertising, or developing

strategies for a nation's self-representation. Most importantly for this research visual communication does not solely focus on the intentions of those designing and sending the intended messages via imagery, but also on the comprehension and interpretation of the audience (Frascara, 2004). This enabled us to study not only the messages promoted by the authorities through stamp design, but also the way in which the citizens comprehend their official culture through that imagery and to compare and discuss these two perspectives. In fact the evaluation in visual communication many times arises from measuring the comprehension by the audience, instead of personal aesthetic and artistic preferences, as there is a difficulty in setting a way of judging what is 'aesthetically acceptable' and what is not.

All of the messages that are sent through visual communication have both literal and symbolic components, which can be memorized and understood with the aid of repetition. This also helps the audiences to perceive a deeper or emotional connection with the image's content (pride for one's nation, feeling of belonging, happiness, empowerment, etc.), something that certainly aids the transfer of official culture through stamps. Based on Aldous Huxley's (1894 – 1963) writings (1942) Lester explained that visual communication is circularly developed around seeing and understanding (Figure 2). Being almost blind since his teenage years Huxley described the process and experience of 'seeing' as a sum made of 'sensing', 'selecting', and 'perceiving'. Based on Huxley's famous quote 'The more you see, the more you know', Lester (2014) developed his own theory of visual messages. In other words: the more you see and perceive, the more you will understand and remember and simultaneously, the more you remember, the more you will sense in the first place. As previously indicated the repetition of imagery is essential to the construction of official culture as the messages promoted are easier to transfer and embed in people's minds this way.





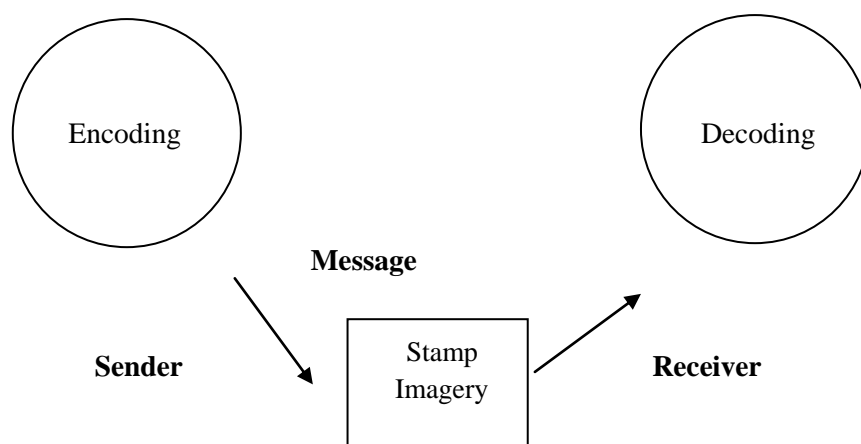
**Figure 2:** Analyzing visual messages. Courtesy of P.M. Lester.

However the ways in which people comprehend these messages and which of them are memorable should not be taken for granted and needs to be studied separately. As visual communication relies on image aspects, the interpretation can often be subjective, and in order to understand the depth of meaning or multiple meanings analysis is required. What is more crucial for this research in particular, is the notion that the communication of messages can depend on many factors and be interpreted in different ways by the audience (citizens in our case). The audience and the way in which the ideas promoted through official culture are perceived constitute the ultimate goal of the entire system of producing visual communication, yet they do not seem to have been studied at all regarding stamp design and imagery, as well as the messages promoted through it. As we pointed out before, the study of postage stamps wrongly assumed that the communication of messages through stamp imagery resembles a straight line, where the messages are transferred and automatically comprehended and accepted by the receivers. This point of view seems quite unlikely to be valid as the construction and transfer of messages can be thought of as a process that includes both dominance and subservience of messages produced, altered and reproduced within societies while at the same time appearing to be 'natural'. As this model is based on the notion of 'transmission' it might be also assumed that it does not allow space for the importance of social contexts, codes and audiences. Let us not forget how Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (1857 – 1913) described that signs and their comprehension is a process and a part of social life (1974; 1983).

As the aim of the present research was to study the way stamp imagery is understood, accepted or rejected by the citizens, we needed a theory which would allow the conversation between the intentions of the sender and the perception of the

receivers, rather than treating this exchange as a monologue. For this reason we adopted a more recent interpretation of the theory of ‘encoding and decoding’ messages in visual communication. The term encoding refers to the process of converting a message in the form of symbols, ideas or concepts in order to transfer it to the desired audience. Decoding on the other hand, is the process of extracting the meaning of a message in order to comprehend it. This synergy can be understood almost as a form of translation, including both verbal and non-verbal forms of communication.

The essay entitled *Encoding / Decoding* written by cultural theorist Stuart Hall (1980), as well as its original version published in 1973 under the title *Encoding and decoding in television* emphasized the need for an active form of interpretation by the viewers within relevant codes and social contexts. Furthermore Hall (1980), rejected the idea that a decoding must inevitably follow from an encoding and in contrast to earlier models, this one gave the decoder a significant and active role as much as the encoder always retained. Hall named the phases in his model of communication, ‘moments’ which are considered to be equally important (Corner, 1983), and their usage highlights the social factors and background around a person, or a message. This model is highly important for the present research as it comprehensively divided the phases of transferring messages in visual communication. In this way we are able to study the intentions of the authorities who attempt to send messages related to the country to the citizens, while at the same time comparing and contrasting the citizen’s comprehension and acceptance of these ideas, separately (Figure 3).



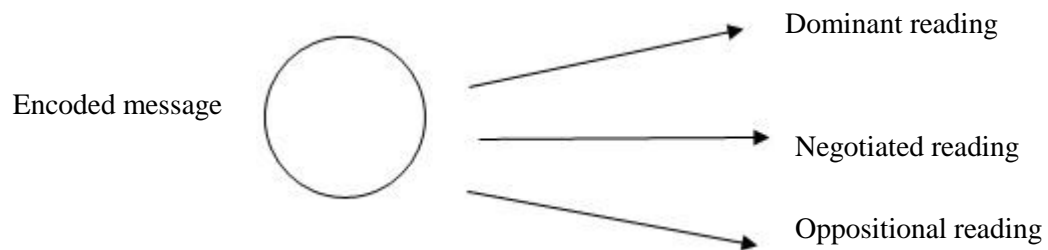
**Figure 3:** Encoding / decoding messages through stamp imagery

These three phases, or according to the author ‘moments of communication’ were explained in more detail by Corner (1983).

- *The moment of encoding*: encoding consists of the institutional and production practices, as well as organizational conditions that transmit a particular message. In this sense we can consider this phase as the one centred on the authorities responsible for designing and issuing postage stamps and their intentions. When studying this first ‘moment’ we focused on the qualities and image the authorities wished to promote through the official culture and in particular for this study, through postage stamp imagery.
- *The moment of the text*: it is the form and content of what is being published or broadcasted. In other words it is the symbolic construction, arrangement and performance of a particular image or text, in our case postage stamp imagery.
- *The moment of decoding*: decoding refers to the moment when the viewer receives the message, and does not simply recognize it but also interprets it in his/her own way and evaluates it, rather than passively accepting it. In the framework of the presented research we studied how the Cypriot citizens perceive the imagery used for their official culture, and particularly postage stamp imagery. This gave us the opportunity to compare and contrast how the messages encoded through stamp design by the authorities, might be decoded in a different way by the Cypriot citizens, not necessarily accepted, but rather negotiated and modified.

As Corner (1983) asserted the aforementioned ‘moments’ are to be considered socially contingent practices, which can be in alignment at times, but certainly should not be viewed as a mere chain of ‘sending and receiving messages’. Especially regarding messages promoted through mass media and designed to influence a vast number of people, such as postage stamp imagery, it is likely that the decoding might not always be the intention of the encoder. In fact the larger the audience, the more diversity it adds in the decoding and therefore there is a higher possibility for divergence to appear between the intentions of the encoder and the interpretation of the decoder. This admission was very useful for this dissertation as it allowed us to study the viewpoints of both the source of stamp imagery, in other words the authorities, and the perceptions of the citizens. We can note how the socio-political and even cultural framework of Cyprus and its citizens influence not only the messages that are being sent, but also the interpretation of the receivers. In fact, Hall (1980) stressed the importance of the social

conditions influencing the cycle of message transmission and interpretation, from the stage of production and circulation, to consumption and finally reproduction. As Hall (1980) suggested there are three interpretive and distinct codes, or positions of reading (Figure 4).



**Figure 4:** Hall's (1980) model of meaning reception

- *The dominant (or hegemonic) reading:* when the receiver / viewer shares and accepts the message fully, agrees with it and therefore reproduces this preferred reading. The reading might not be the result of a conscious effort or intention and therefore it seems natural and transparent.
- *The negotiated reading:* this occurs when the viewer partly shares the presented idea. He/she may broadly accept the particular notion, but sometimes he/she resists some aspects of it and modifies it, in order to reflect his/her own position, experiences and interests. This is considered a rather contradictory reading.
- *The oppositional (counter-hegemonic) reading:* the viewer's social background forces them to take a directly oppositional stance to the dominant reading and therefore, reject it. The receiver understands which the preferred reading would be, but cannot share it, bringing therefore an alternative frame of reference in the discussion.

This model is rather influential particularly upon studying visuals among the members of a specific society and their culture (Morley, 1983; 1992), in our case this would be Cypriot citizens. As opposed to theories that consider the encoding as the most important factor, this theory gives the researcher the opportunity to study the audience as being equally important. In fact it is considered that even the same individual might make an 'oppositional' reading of the same material in one context and a 'dominant' reading in other contexts. Morley (1992) noted that upon researching the readings of

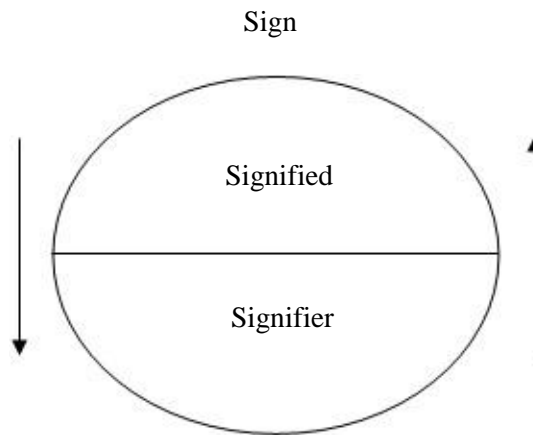
viewers one should not only pay attention to the issue of agreement, that is if the individual accepts or rejects something, but also what they propose instead, as well as what they consider to be relevant.

This point was further explored in our research, as we did not simply seek to detect whether and in which instances the citizens disagreed with the representation of their official culture, but also what they believed would be the most adequate way of showcasing it through stamps. The aforementioned theory of decoding aided the particular work especially in the cases where the readings of the citizens proved to be negotiated, or oppositional. As Edensor (2002) specifically stressed, a shared sense of belonging cultivated through official culture among the citizens of a state does not necessarily imply a common accord. It rather means that certain objects, concepts, ideas and symbols are being shared and used, but interpreted in different ways. However we can identify shared meanings, symbols and objects, creating a common 'library' of cultural resources, facilitating communication and managing to establish a sense of national belonging, or even pride among the members of the imagined community. In order to comprehend on a deeper level and implement Hall's readings (1980) in this study, we included a number of semiotic aspects, as in this manner we could facilitate the study of symbols and 'second layers of meaning' of stamp imagery.

The term semiotics can be explained as the field studying the role of signs as a part of social life. In general it is assumed that it can be included in general psychology, as a part of social psychology. The term 'semiology' was coined by Saussure, deriving from the Greek word 'semeion', which means 'sign'. This field was firstly focused on the nature of signs and their laws, regarding linguistics as part of a broader field of human knowledge (Saussure, 1974). The term 'semiosis' was expanded by Umberto Eco (1932 – 2016) in order to describe the process by which a culture produces its own signs, or attributes meanings to signs. It should be noted that this process contributes to the individuality of each person, while at the same time meaning construction remains a social activity. In other words, there are two different pillars which influence the production and transfer of meaning. On the one hand, the influence of Lacanian psychoanalysis considers the process of meaning-construction to be highly individualistic. On the other hand however, semiotics also stress the social aspect of signification in relation to practical and aesthetical matters, and most importantly for this study, culturally-constructed ideological aspects. This statement, according to de Lauretis (1984) highlighted that meaning, as semantic value is produced through

culturally shared codes; that is codes that are being created, transferred and understood within each community which shares a culture. This theory considers humans as a species with a strong drive to make and interpret meanings, therefore this process happens only through creating and deciphering 'signs'. A sign can be considered anything around us which holds a meaning. It can be a word, image, sound, odour, flavour, behaviour, or object which has already been given a certain meaning and refers to something. This point is extremely important as philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce (1931) stressed: 'nothing is a sign unless it is interpreted as a sign' (1931, p. 2,172). In this sense we interpret things considering them as signs, mostly unconsciously, by linking them to previously gained knowledge and conventions we have memorized.

The present research adopted Saussure's two-part model for the analysis of the sign: a 'signifier' and a 'signified' (Figure 5). This theory provides a great analytical model that aided us in finding reflections and meanings of culture in respect of their context, in our case the Republic of Cyprus, using two axes, the official culture of the state, as well as citizens. A signifier therefore, is the form which the sign takes, while the signified is the represented idea, or concept. The signified is often considered to be a mental construction, while it can refer to a concept of actual things (Langer, 1951). The sign is in fact the entirety resulting from the relationship between the signifier and the signified (Saussure, 1983). This combination and its dynamics are referred to as a 'signification'. In order for a sign to function it must have both a signifier and a signified. As Saussure mentioned (1974) there is not a meaningless signifier, or a totally formless signified. A sign furthermore, is the result of a certain signifier paired with a particular signified. In fact, the same signifier can be associated with a different signified, thus creating a new sign. In the same way many signifiers can be combined with a specific concept, resulting again in different signs. The two terms are therefore distinctive and separated. However according to Saussure (1974), these two particles of the sign, though different, are simultaneously as inseparable as the two sides of a single piece of paper. They are therefore, linked and associated with one another, each of them triggering the existence of the other (Saussure, 1974).



**Figure 5:** Saussure's (1974) analysis of the sign

Semiotics in particular, are of interest in this study, not in the sense of their theoretical classification of sign systems, or the level of their structural organization, but in relation to the exploration of the production of stamp imagery, its meanings and furthermore its introduction in social practice. Codes and meanings interact with the individuals, influencing them and becoming influenced by them, within the framework of a particular society. Under this umbrella we studied meaning within a society, without taking for granted that messages are simply 'transmitted' and understood by a recipient through stamp imagery. On the contrary, the members of each society actively aid in the construction, reproduction and alteration of meanings and codes. This echoes the ideas of authors such as Edensor (2002), who believed that in the framework of a society, repetition and a sense of commodity, are considered to be great strategies in the quest of transferring complex messages to the citizens. With the aid of semiotics therefore, the researcher undertakes the task of going deeper than convention, 'reading' meanings that have been embedded within a society and are many times considered falsely to be 'transparent'.

As semiotics consists of a vast amount of theories with various applications we needed to draw a line in relation to which in particular would be used in this research. The main concern around that was to accommodate our corpus and its specificities. Stamps and in particular our own corpus is quite large, containing various topics and heterogeneous imagery which was created using different means from lithography, to photography, painting and Photoshop collage. Due to this we needed a combination of semiotic resources that would allow us to study selected imagery without obliterating

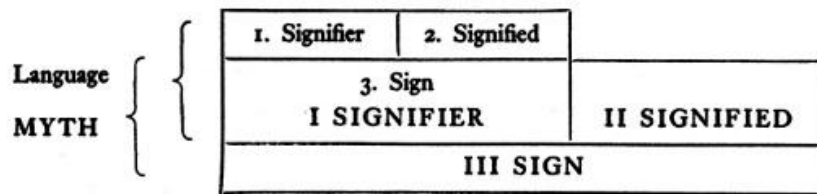
their unique characteristics. Following this rationale our study adopted a flexible combination of semiotic resources by various theorists, as assembled and presented by Zantides (2016). In particular we separated the linguistic or verbal message from the non-verbal aspects of stamp imagery and studied them separately, whenever this applied. It is true that in the case of stamps, the emphasis is usually found on the image and rarely in the text. When it comes to verbal elements the typical stamp plate features a denomination, the country's name in the official language of the state and an international language, the year of issuing, while sometimes it might display a short, explanatory title of the image. Using this combination of various semiotic resources, we were able to study postage stamp imagery comprehensively and holistically, taking into consideration the specificities of the corpus in relation to the verbal and non-verbal elements it displays. Since our aim for this research was to study the perceptions of both authorities and citizens regarding postage stamp imagery, we were aware that some of the ideas that would be uncovered through this process would not stay in the sphere of a mere signified. As we discussed ideas and perceptions of Cyprus' official representation through stamp design, socio-cultural, or even political associations were discovered. For this reason, our research considered the notion of ideology as presented and discussed by Barthes (1972), Wilden (1987), as well as Steger and Paul (2013).

In order to better explain how this notion is applied on stamp imagery we should examine it from Roland Barthes' (1915 – 1980) semiotic perspective. Apart from an 'actual' or 'literal' meaning, called a 'denotation', a stamp image or a sign might include other, less literal meanings, called 'connotations' (Barthes, 1972, 1973, 1988). Denotation's nature goes as far as to describe the meaning in dictionary terms, the definitional, obvious, or common-sense meaning. The term connotation is used in order to refer to a meaning taking into consideration the socio-cultural and 'personal' associations of an image, or generally speaking a sign, such as feelings, emotions and ideals (Wilden, 1987). Connotation therefore, is more open to interpretations in comparison to denoted meanings, and considers factors such as class, age, gender and ethnicity. It should be noted however that usually the meaning in societies includes both denotations and connotations, even more so if we are discussing objects of visual communication. In this sense we have multiple levels of representation, or multiple levels of meaning (Barthes, 1973). In our study we were interested in both literal and less literal levels of signification on stamp imagery. Apart from that, since we decided to involve the citizens and their perspectives on official culture through stamp design,



we were confident in expecting to get ideas with multiple levels of meaning, as they have drawn from personal experience, memories and ideals in order to express their views.

Through the discussion of the relationship between a signifier and its signified we can position the notion of ideology in the analytical separation which is made between two types of signifieds: denotative signifieds and connotative signifieds (Figure 6). As Barthes (1972, p. 92) asserted ‘we might say that ideology is the form of signifieds of connotation’ and is engaged in close communication with culture, history and prior knowledge that the person has acquired. Ideology furthermore, was described as belonging in the third level of signification, also called the ‘mythological, or ideological order’. In this sense ideology enables the expression of larger ideas, accepted within a specific community or country, and therefore can be considered culturally-variable. As Steger and Paul (2013) described, ideology creates forms of ‘common sense’ and it is more noticeable through objects and manifestations of everyday life, in our case this would be stamp imagery.



**Figure 6:** Barthes’ (1972) diagram on the analysis of sign

By implementing semiotic analysis and taking into consideration the perceptions of citizens on the matter, we were able to argue that postage stamps are in fact brimming with ideological meanings in their visual representations. In fact, semiotic analysis has been employed throughout the research on selected postage stamps, especially in regards of the first part of the research, which was the quantitative content analysis and the interpretation of its findings (Andreou and Zantides, 2017a). Concluding, semiotic analysis, the ideological order, as well as Hall’s (1980) readings enabled us to study stamp imagery as well as citizens’ perspectives, without ignoring transpiring notions, such as freedom, individualism, collectiveness, nationhood and nationhood, whenever this applied.

### **3.4 Concluding remarks on theoretical framework**

Concluding this chapter, we have discussed how visual communication is responsible for constructing a solid framework for transferring messages to the public through imagery, thus making the relationship effective yet discreet (Olson, Finnegan and Hope, 2008). In fact the repetition of imagery and ideas creates a circle through which we can constantly perceive, learn and gather whatever information is being sent from different sources each time, creating impressions and further transferring these messages (Lester, 2014).

The visuals we are studying in the present research however can be considered as balancing on two axes and therefore their reading should always respect these parallel characteristics. Postage stamps as objects of visual communication simultaneously address two different audiences and serve different needs. On the one hand they are relevant to the citizens of the state and can be considered ordinary everyday objects, and on the other hand they are official documents of the country representing it to audiences abroad. In this sense our research adopted a framework that explains the presence of ordinary, mundane and ephemeral objects and imagery in the construction of a solid profile for a nation. We positioned stamp production through Billig's (1995) and Anderson's (1991) idea of the banal, lending the foundations for the creation of a national sense of belonging. Furthermore Edensor's (2002) arguments on how official manifestations of a state can be directly influenced by the mundane, everyday and mainstream aspects of a culture, has aided us in discussing stamps as government documents without neglecting the fact that we are dealing with quite prosaic and usual objects. In fact as Anderson (1991) and Edensor (2002) stated as soon as objects such as stamps become a commodity in the citizen's eye, they begin to relay ideas through repetition, while drawing little attention to themselves.

In order to better frame the duality in the nature and therefore study of stamp imagery, the present research adopted the term 'official culture', as expressed by both Debord (1957) and Lewis (1992). Official culture can be defined as the form of culture that has been socially accepted and most importantly politically legitimized (Lewis, 1992). In order for it to be consistent the state uses various sources including the mainstream, popular and everyday forms of culture. This also implies the existence of institutional support given by the society. Institutionalization occurs in order to preserve the imagined community's values and norms (Edensor, 2002). Under this umbrella we

could study stamps and their imagery as objects serving the official needs of their state, without excluding the fact that they might have been influenced by mainstream, everyday and popular aspects.

This research is focused on the Republic of Cyprus' stamp production in particular. The specific topic has not been empirically studied at all, as literature review indicated. This fact alone makes the island a rather untouched and consequently interesting case to explore. Furthermore, what makes Cyprus an even more intriguing case is the lack of a specific national identity. Recent studies have shown the difficulty of the population of Cyprus to express their own identity, as well as their collective identity (Koulouri, 2000; Akcali, 2007; Hadjipavlou, 2010). How then is stamp imagery promoting official culture, perceived by a population that seems to find it difficult to express a collective identity? In fact the Republic of Cyprus provides a fine example of a 'young' state attempting to construct its own official image, transitioning from a colonial to a post-colonial period, while at the same time experiencing serious interior disputes. These facts combined with the difficulty in formulating a collective identity, experienced by the population (Koulouri, 2000) makes the citizens of the Republic of Cyprus an even more unique example for researching official culture through visual communication.

Our study and its research questions aimed in discussing Cyprus' stamp production from the standpoint of the official state through examining the corpus gathered, without excluding the perceptions of citizens, as we treat the entire process as a dialogue. In other words the interest of this research is concerned with studying stamp production as a process that interacts with culture and stamp imagery as a cultural manifestation that influences and is being influenced by the society that produced it. This approach allowed us to concentrate on the role and the perception of the citizens in this process for the first time, instead of taking their views for granted in favour of studying a country's mechanism of self-representation through stamps, solely from the scope of the government. In order to manage this crucial aspect of this study we had to employ theories that encourage this interaction.

For this reason Hall's (1980), as well as Corner's (1983) interpretations of communication have been adopted. Firstly, Hall (1980) outlined a structured manner in order to study the exchange of meaning, in our case through postage stamp imagery. Encoding can be considered as the act of creating a meaning and attempting its transfer to the desired audience, in our case the citizens. On the other hand, decoding is the act of receiving this message and attempting to comprehend its meaning, in our case this

would be the role of the citizen. Building upon this relationship, Corner (1983) aided us in studying the side of the citizen as an active participant, rather than a mechanical and passive receiver of the messages sent by its government, an important aspect that was ignored by most researchers interested in postage stamp design. As Corner (1983) noted the person who receives a message, even through imagery, does not have to readily accept it and transfer it to others, but rather filter it, attempt to comprehend it, mediate it, even modify it in order to fit his/her own beliefs, or completely reject it. With the aid of the aforementioned theoretical tools we were able to approach the position of the citizens methodically and study them as active participants in a dialogue that creates culture, rather than passive spectators whose role is simply to accept whatever messages are manifested through official imagery. Certainly this type of reading revealed to us a vast number of views and opinions that many times were concerned with the expression of larger ideas accepted within the specific community of the Republic of Cyprus, and therefore can be considered culturally-variable, in other words and using Barthes' (1972, 1973) term; ideological.

Concluding, the present dissertation emphasized that the shared feeling of belonging, among the members of a state does not necessarily imply a common understanding among them, or even between themselves and the government. The various symbols and objects, as well as the meanings the images held can indeed be shared, but their usage or semiotic interpretation might vary. Certainly, the citizens of a country are able to identify the shared meanings, manifestations, objects and symbols and use them as a resource in order to construct a sense of inclusion and enable communication, but this does not imply the existence of an established, set-in stone understanding. On the contrary, what was highlighted and studied in this research is the fluidity and alterations that can be found within a nation in terms of official culture construction and comprehension. In this sense we hope to offer a framework and an example for study on the dynamic reading of cultures through visual communication and specifically postage stamps, where the official aspects co-exist, compete and blend with emergent perceptions and ideas.

## **4 Methodology**

In this section the researcher presents the need for an alternative way of studying postage stamp imagery, and in particular how a mixed methods approach would be beneficial to works concerned with the particular item as an object cultivating official culture and ideologies through visual communication, within a community of citizens.

### **4.1 Methodological approaches in the study of postage stamps**

The most popular method for studying postage stamps is historical analysis which employs data collection and archival research in order to explain a specific political or social event. Visual analysis is equally used for studying the representations, although we can note that authors avoid using this term.

The most favoured method employed by researchers of bigger and more rigorous studies however, is a combination of data collection (archival research) and content analysis.<sup>2</sup> Content analysis is frequently used in order to determine the thematic groups that appear in a specific corpus of postage stamps or how often that occurs. It is a helpful approach when a country's entire postal collection is being studied or if the researcher aims to explore the stamps issued during a certain period of time. Moreover content analysis is also preferred when attempting to compare the thematic groups on stamps issued by two different or conflicting countries.

A reoccurring trend in postage stamp research especially in recent years is the combination of content analysis and semiotic analysis on a smaller scale. Semiotic analysis can be defined as the study of signs in the framework of a specific community and society. In other words semiotic analysis is the study of the process of meaning-construction as a system of signification (Barthes, 1973). As Barthes (1973) wrote, semiology's aim is to study the entire system of signs, without ignoring their substance and differences. These signs can be anything from written texts in linguistics to visual texts (images) studied by visual semiotics, but also take the form of gestures or music. In the case of stamps the analysis would include any verbal and non-verbal elements that appear on the plate.

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<sup>2</sup> This methodology has been used by the researcher in two separate occasions when we were studying the corpus of Cyprus postage stamps in relation to official culture representation and gender roles (Andreou, Stylianou and Zantides, 2016; 2017)

Scott's *European stamp design: a semiotic approach to designing messages* served as a starting point for authors who wanted to apply semiotic analysis on postage stamps. Scott (1995) has been based on Peirce's rather philosophical taxonomy of the sign as 'index', 'icon' and 'symbol' in order to define the nature of the stamp and explain the rationale behind 'philatelic design strategies'. Scott's approach on studying stamp imagery although quite philosophically eluding has been widely accepted and frequently used in research.

#### **4.2 The methodology of the current study (Mixed methods design)**

This research is based on the need to study the significations of imagery on official documents (postage stamps), released by the Republic of Cyprus, the prevailing messages they are trying to convey and the ways in which these are interpreted by the citizens of the country. In this sense the researcher needed to consider the views of the citizens without neglecting the fact that stamps are still objects of official culture. In order to do so, a crucial variety of materials and methodological tools were to be used. In regards to the corpus, the researcher gained the copyrights of the entire collection of postage stamps issued by the Republic of Cyprus (1960 – 2013). Furthermore, the researcher gathered significant information about the design and the topics depicted on stamps from the Cyprus Postal Museum as well as all of the relevant material she was given access to.<sup>3</sup> In order to establish the thematic categories, and to understand the reasons behind the choice of topics/themes as well as the ways in which these are comprehended by the citizens, the researcher has chosen to follow a mixed methods approach.

The essential reason for selecting this approach was the need to tackle and investigate the research questions posed from different angles as a form of triangulation, not only that of the researcher and the government issuing the stamps, but also the citizen so as to achieve more accurate results. A mixed-methods design offers the research both quantitative and qualitative features. On the one hand there is the efficiency that quantitative data gives the research, and on the other hand the in-depth and contextualized insight of qualitative data (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003). As the authors stated, such an approach is far more comprehensive than seeking to answer a question by using only one point of view. This methodological triangulation and data

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<sup>3</sup> This material includes the Philatelic encyclopaedia *Cyprus Stamps-History and Culture, 1880 – 2004*, as well as special albums and first day covers.

triangulation process can be described as an attempt to map out, or even explain in more depth the richness and complexity of human behaviour and societies by studying them from more than one standpoint (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000). The process gives the researcher a far more detailed and balanced picture of a situation involving people and their behaviour (Altrichter, Feldman, Posch and Somekh, 2008), while simultaneously seeking the correspondence and corroboration of results from the various methods used in the process.

Additionally, a mixed methods design seeks ‘complementarity’ (Greene, Caracelli and Graham, 1989) among the methods employed in the study. This entails that all of these methods elaborate, enhance, illustrate or clarify each other’s results as the research progresses, therefore being ‘complementary’ to one another. In this sense we have a development from one method to the next as the results gathered during each step, help in developing the course of action through the next method. Due to this gradual construction and development of the research, the discovery of paradoxical or contradictory examples or even new emergent perspectives is to be expected, according to Greene et al. (1989), especially if the study in itself deals with various perspectives of a certain topic, such as in the case of the present research. With reference to our own work on postage stamps, the diversity of opinions was not only anticipated, but in fact even encouraged. Since we were not only interested in documenting the perspective of the researcher, or merely trying to analyze the intentions of the authorities, but also that of the citizens we were certain that both similarities and dissimilarities of opinion would emerge. As a final step we were to compare them, thus resulting in answering the third research question posed in this study (Figure 8). Furthermore, the difference in opinions and views was revealed among the participants, a fact that could be expected and certainly was important to document.

Mixed methods designs might be fixed and/or emergent depending on the approach the researcher employs, as well as the data gathered. A fixed mixed methods design can be defined as the research strategy where the use of quantitative and qualitative methods is predetermined at the beginning of the entire process and therefore the procedure is implemented as planned. An emergent mixed methods design on the other hand, is usually developed out of the researcher’s need to add a second approach while the study is underway. This happens when one of the methods employed in the study is found to be insufficient to answer the entirety of the research question (Morse and Niehaus, 2009). The added method can be either quantitative or qualitative. These two

approaches should not be seen as being separated by a clear dichotomy, but rather as a continuum since many studies fall somewhere in the middle with both fixed and emergent designs (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2011). In the case of the present study we were presented with a similar situation. The design of this particular study consisted of both quantitative and qualitative aspects from the beginning of its planning. However, during the second phase, quantitative results that needed further interpretation by the respondents emerged. This happened as our aim was to study official culture representation through everyday objects such as stamps, taking into consideration the perceptions of the citizens of the state. The need to study these results in more depth and comprehend them more accurately from the standpoint of the citizens made the need for the addition of qualitative methods even more crucial.

Aside from choosing a fixed or emergent design for a mixed methods study, researchers are additionally adopting various approaches in order to explore their topic more suitably. In fact as Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) mentioned as many as 15 different approaches can be found, when designing a mixed methods study in accordance to the discipline it belongs to. This wide typology serves to highlight the imperative need for mixed methods to be a dynamic form of research that allows the interrelation of various components and the selection of the most appropriate course of action for each work. As Maxwell and Loomis (2003) asserted, mixed methods should be understood as a synergy that respects and serves the study's purpose, the selected theoretical framework, the research questions posed, as well as any validity issues.

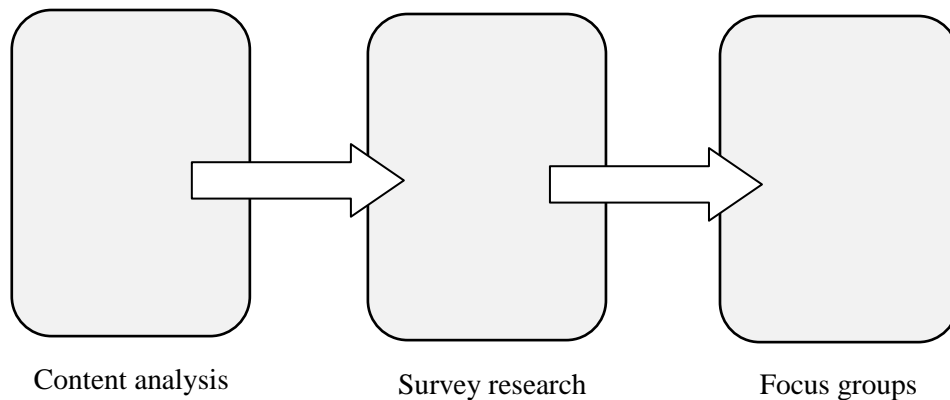
In the case of the present research an explanatory (sequential) design has been used. This particular design occurs in different and distinct phases that nevertheless interact with one another (Lindlof and Taylor, 2011). It starts with the researcher gathering and analyzing quantitative data. This phase is followed by the collection and analysis of qualitative data. For the present research the first quantitative phase was crucial as it allowed us to categorize, with the aid of quantitative content analysis, a rather large corpus of stamps and study the messages that the issuing state aims to transfer to its audiences. Furthermore, by employing a survey research we initiated the exploration of the perception of citizens on the representation of their official culture through stamp design. The present mixed-methods explanatory research was designed to conclude with the use of a qualitative tool which is focus groups, and they enabled us to study the perceptions of citizens as they emerged from the survey in more depth. This model aided the researcher in designing each phase with reference to the previous sections of



the study. Furthermore, the qualitative data, in our case collected with focus group interviews helped in explaining the initial results found via quantitative methods. The importance of this phase lays in the fact that we needed to describe in more depth our results, something that certainly could not be achieved by discussing merely the results gained from the conducted survey research. As Morse (1991) argued, this design is extremely useful to researchers who deal with questions related to certain participants, for example the members of a community, especially when he/she has the opportunity to return to the same participants for collecting both quantitative and qualitative data. This permits us to take into consideration multiple views, opinions and perspectives and gain in-depth descriptions from the sample we are interested in studying.

The basic methodological tools used in the proposed study are the following: quantitative content analysis, survey research and finally, focus groups (Figure 7). Quantitative content analysis was used in order to determine the thematic categories of the corpus of stamps and significant findings emerged regarding the kind of topics and messages that the state attempts to send to the citizens. This was also the first research question posed for this study (Figure 8). Based on this content analysis (and on relevant literature), a survey research has been designed in order to detect the views of the citizens regarding, the messages / topics reflected on stamps, their design and the significance of this practice. This has been a crucial point regarding the proposed research, mainly because the citizens' views had never been examined before. For this reason the researcher needed a tool that would allow her to contact a large number of citizens in order to notice patterns in their viewpoints and opinions. The results of this survey indicated points that needed more exploration in order to better comprehend the citizens' views. In other words there seemed to be various parts where one could ask the participants 'why' they expressed a particular opinion. This lack of in-depth interviewing remains one of the disadvantages of survey research. For this reason the researcher has chosen to incorporate focus groups as the final point of triangulation (Figure 7) in order to answer sufficiently the second research question (Figure 8). This method allowed us to interact with the participants, and also observe them discussing amongst themselves the ideas and patterns which emerged from the questionnaires. The researcher has chosen focus groups over the method of in-depth interviews, as it is believed to give an added dynamic since the participants were allowed to interact amongst themselves instead of having to deal with the 'authoritative' gaze of the

researcher, something that happens during the administration of surveys (Lindlof and Taylor, 2011).

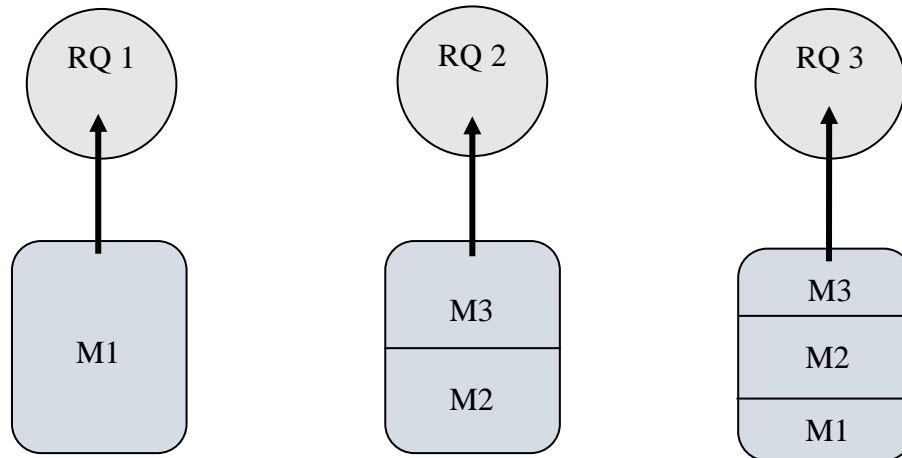


**Figure 7:** Mixed methods design (explanatory sequential) for the present study

Furthermore since the data collected with the aid of questionnaires indicated certain differences in opinions among gender and age groups, having them interact was expected to give us interesting and useful data for interpretation (Greenbaum, 2000). For this reason the design of the focus groups' protocol was based on the questions of the survey which had shown potential for further interpretation. This design gave to the researcher a variety of data with both quantitative and qualitative characteristics resulting in a more comprehensive interpretation of the findings. The participants belonged to the sample that had already been used for the administration of the survey and had volunteered to further aid the researcher. This was an advantage since we needed to align and explain the answers given in the preceding survey research.

It is also important to address the priority of the methods used in this study. Priority refers to the importance of the quantitative and qualitative methods used serving to answer the research questions posed. As mentioned before, the design of this study has been sequential, meaning that each method was used when the data from the previous method had been collected and evaluated by the researcher. The phases in this design are distinct and specific, and in our case the quantitative parts of the research took place before the qualitative which was the last part of it. In relation to the importance of the methods employed there certainly was equality among them (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2011). While the two first steps included quantitative methods (quantitative content analysis and survey) the input of qualitative data in the form of focus group interviews was valuable in order to decipher the meaning behind the views of the citizens,

something that we could not achieve if not for the qualitative data we collected. Since our aim was to study both the ways in which the official culture of Cyprus is being constructed and promoted through stamp imagery and the perceptions of Cypriot citizens we needed each step to be performed separately and its findings to inform the next. In this way the data we collected, as well as the research questions they served could be placed in a constant dialogue.



**Figure 8:** The methodological tools (M1 quantitative content analysis, M2 Survey research, M3 focus groups) and research questions for the present study

The explanatory design we adopted as the most suitable for our research possesses important strengths, and also presents a number of challenges that we needed to acknowledge before moving on to a more detailed account of the research tools we used and the results we collected. Firstly, it is considered to be one of the most straightforward approaches to mixed methods research, giving the researcher a clearer and concise framework to develop in comparison to others (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2011). The fact that the implementation happens in different phases allows us to collect only one type of data each time, something that certainly makes the task unambiguous and easy to follow. Additionally the final report resulting from this design can be written in an equally concise manner. The data resulting from quantitative methods can be explained first, followed by the qualitative section, something that enables the reader to comprehend the study with ease. The next important strength of this design is exceptionally relevant to the present research. This mixed methods design lends itself to emergent approaches where the second (qualitative) phase can rely on what we learned

from the preceding quantitative phase, and therefore be adjusted to better suit the research and research questions.

Albeit the significant strengths this design presents for the research and its implementation there are certain challenges in its use that we need to acknowledge. One of the most common obstacles that the researcher needs to overcome is that of time, as explanatory design is considered to be quite time consuming, according to Creswell and Plano Clark (2011). The qualitative phase is the one that takes more time to implement as we rely on it to get answers in more depth. Furthermore the researcher must decide which quantitative results need to be further explained with the aid of the qualitative methods, something that is determined precisely after the quantitative methods are complete. Significant results are evaluated and determined and therefore selected for the implementation of the qualitative methods. Additionally the researcher must decide what criteria to use for participant selection. For this reason, as Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) suggested for the second phase of this research we selected individuals from the same sample we used for the quantitative phase. In this way we could provide some valid explanations and criteria choices such as demographic characteristics, based on our initial sample.

This section outlined the mixed methods design that was selected for this research, as well as the way it is implemented in it. Additionally the tools that are being used in this study were introduced. Moreover, the strengths, as well as the challenges of this approach were outlined for the reader. In the next sections we will explain in more detail the relevant methodological tools, as well as the way in which these are employed for answering the research questions posed. It should be noted that the different phases of this explanatory sequential mixed methods design are presented and explained further in separate chapters. The first of them will be concerned with quantitative content analysis, the second with the undertaken survey research and the last one will be introducing the qualitative tools used in this work, namely focus groups. The data and results we gathered from this process are showcased further in three different sections, followed by a discussion for each one of them. The aforementioned discussion revolves around our research questions and takes into consideration the theoretical framework selected for this study, the specific corpus of postage stamps, as well as the socio-political background of the Republic of Cyprus.

### **4.3 Ethics and limitations of the research**

The application of ethics in the proposed study, had dealt with two different parts. The first part had to do with the copyrights of the material the researcher wished to study, that is the postage stamps issued by the Republic of Cyprus. The copyrights of the Cyprus' postage stamps belong to the Cyprus Ministry of Transport, Communications and Works. The permission for their usage was granted to the researcher for this dissertation, provided that they always appear smaller or larger than their original size while bearing on them a diagonal line (APPENDIX 5). The second part dealt with the ethical issues that occurred during the design and administration of content analysis, survey research and focus groups. More details on these can be found in the sections dealing with the proposed methodology and the limitations of the research.

The proposed study presented a number of limitations concerning the methodology chosen, as well as the topic itself, that need to be acknowledged. By using content analysis the researcher managed to bring in a quantitative approach that ensured statistically significant findings, however there are some disadvantages that need to be noted. The first limitation stems from the nature of the research, which implies the codification of the corpus by a human coder. This means that the particular person might bring into the procedure their own opinions, background and prior knowledge of the corpus or anything related. As relevant studies suggested (Neuendorf, 2002) this is to be expected and therefore it cannot be completely eliminated as an effect. However, the researcher included three coders who rated the corpus separately in order to eliminate this issue as much as possible (Krippendorff, 2013). The second and most important limitation is that the categories and their analysis were drawn from the corpus itself. This means that the findings cannot be generalised beyond the given data and their social background (Krippendorff, 2013).

Considering the parts of methodological design that required the presence of participants the challenges and limitations were quite different (survey research and focus groups). Firstly some of the participants selected were not available during the time of the research, something that made the whole process time-consuming for the researcher, as well as expensive. Furthermore, while the researcher's presence might help some of the participants in comprehending the process, others might be wary, apprehensive or feel intimidated. The researcher eliminated these possibilities as much as possible by explaining the concept of the research, briefing the participants and

committing to using the results only for research purposes and respecting the participants' anonymity. This part was rather important as it is well known that upon facing the researcher or even other participants (for example in focus groups) some people tend to feel the need to answer in a 'socially appropriate' manner due to fears of being judged (Sapsford, 2007). This was certainly one of the biggest concerns for this study as we selected participants who had already answered our survey.

Finally the lack of empirical or even theoretical research that dealt with stamps as objects of official culture from the perspective of citizens and the lack of research focusing on Cyprus' stamps has also been crucial to the development of this work. The methodology was designed having in mind the intentions of the authorities, while at the same time focusing primarily on the citizens. For this reason both quantitative and qualitative tools were used in order to get a holistic account of their perspectives and then study them in more depth during the focus groups. Certainly this method could be tested in other environments (societies) and the results could be quite different. For this reason our findings remain Cyprus-specific and cannot necessarily be generalized. At the same time, this study hopes to open new routes in the research of official documents worldwide, and their relationship with the citizens of the state.

## **5 First study (based on quantitative content analysis): identifying official culture representations through the Republic of Cyprus' postage stamps.**

### **5.1 Aims, methodology, instrumentation and implementation**

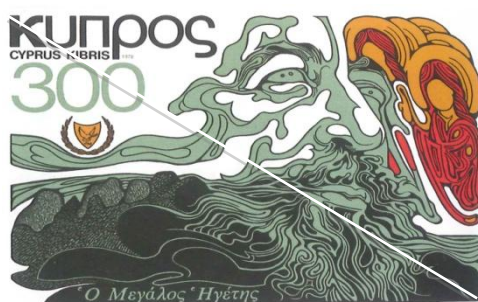
The first methodological tool that was implemented in the presented research was that of quantitative content analysis. The reason for this decision stems from the nature of the corpus, as well as the first research question posed. This question was concerned with the identification of predominant themes in the corpus of Cyprus' stamps and how these could be affected by historically important events in the island's timeline. Additionally, we were interested in discussing and socio-politically interpreting official culture construction through stamp imagery in the case of Cyprus (for more information on this study's research questions see Chapter 2). As we were researching the stamps issued by the Republic of Cyprus, from its establishment in 1960 till recent years (end of 2013) we had to collect and count all the stamp designs included within this time period. This resulted in a corpus of 1121 postage stamps. Naturally we excluded all doubles as we wished to study each stamp design only once. In the end we were left with 998 different stamp designs from various time periods, created by different artists who followed diverse briefs. In order to manage this particular corpus and even more so study the messages it promoted in relation to different periods of time, we needed to organize it into groups, therefore making its analysis more straightforward and concise. The most suitable tool for accomplishing this task was found to be quantitative content analysis. In the next section we will explain the particular methodological tool, its nature and use, as well as the way it has been adopted for the purposes of this research. In subsequent sections we will be presenting the results from this first phase of the mixed methods design we followed and discussing them in relation to the socio-political background of Cyprus, with the aid of the selected theoretical framework.

Content analysis can be generally described as the wider technique for contextualizing interpretations of documents which were produced by communication or signification processes. These techniques can be manual or computer-assisted. Broadly speaking, content analysis serves the goal of studying and gaining meaningful information from various documents whether these are texts or artefacts. It can include anything from written or oral text, images, audio-visual text such as a movie, or even

hypertext meaning the texts that can be found online (Hodder, 1994). Furthermore Kerlinger (1986) defined this method as a tool for the study and analysis of communication in a systematic, objective and quantitative way for the purpose of measuring. More recently under the umbrella of this method have been included references to social media, the analysis of sentiments and approaches to big data, making it more inclusive and flexible to various researchers.

This method enables the researcher to work with large amounts of information in a systematic manner, and furthermore analyze its properties and contextualize it within the desired framework of communication (Kerlinger, 1986). This type of data, albeit useful, needs to be categorized in order to provide a meaningful reading of its content. For this reason a cohesive coding frame with a specific unit of analysis needs to be created. A coding frame enables us to show how verbal or visual data has been converted for the purposes of analysis. In this way a link between the visual or verbal data and the numeric data that represents them is being developed.

In the case of the present study the ‘text’, were the images featured on Cyprus’ postage stamps between 1960 and 2013, a period that starts from the founding of the Republic of Cyprus until present days. This selection included any written text that appeared on the stamp, albeit these instances were very few. Normally stamps depict a certain image, while they feature the denomination, the year of publication and the issuing country’s name. These characteristics are included in the image of the stamp, however in a small number of cases supplementary texts could be found. Such an example would be the plate depicted underneath (Plate 2).



**Plate 2:** The great leader, 3 August 1978, A.A. Ioannides

This particular stamp is an example of designs that do not include the typical characteristics, namely the country’s name and the denomination but also extra



information regarding the image itself. In this case, a stamp commemorating the birthday of the Republic of Cyprus' first president Archbishop Makarios III (1913 – 1977) featured the line 'The great leader' (O megālos igētis). This commending phrase was added in the image and therefore in the coding process in order to assist with the selection of categories. Although these instances were few, they need to be mentioned.

A number of authors who write on content analysis prefer to call these 'texts', coding or units of enumeration (Krippendorff, 2013), especially in regards to quantitative content analysis. Following this logic textual or visual units end up in categories for better analysis, or for their conversion and measurement in numerical terms. These may describe the sizes or quantities of the units within their categories, or may result from statistical analysis, such as cross - tabulations. They are therefore formed in the process of analysis and do not describe the characteristics of the units themselves. In our case the coding units were to be organized in thematic categories. In other words we asked the coders to place each stamp in one thematic category, the most appropriate according to the image on the stamp. They were requested to follow a system of coding that would enable the process to be easily comprehended by the researcher, but also fast and clear for them: 1 represented the presence of a certain stamp in the thematic category of their choice, while consequently 0 represented its absence in the rest of them.

A sample of 998 postage stamps (out of the collected corpus of 1121) was studied as the researcher did not consider stamp designs that simply reproduced earlier postage stamp depictions, for the coding to be valid. In other words the remaining 123 postage stamps were excluded from the process since the image they displayed had been used on previously issued stamps and remained unchanged. The entire corpus was studied without sampling taking place. The reason for this decision lies in the framework the researcher wanted to investigate, that is all the postage stamps issued by the Republic of Cyprus since its independence until the present day (1960 – 2013). In order to make this process more coherent the stamps were arranged into clusters, each of them containing stamps from a single decade. For example the first cluster included only stamps issued between 1960 and 1969, and so on. This proved beneficial for the researcher herself, as we were further interested in studying the amount of stamps in each category in relation to various time periods, and especially important dates in the history of Cyprus.

The corpus was evaluated by three coders separately. When human coders are preferred for the study, there is always the issue of bias to be tackled and handled by the researcher. As Neuendorf (2002) suggested in these cases two coders should be used at

least. The level and measurement of reliability of human coders used in content analysis is named in statistical terms ‘intercoder reliability’. In other words the term implies the amount of agreement and correspondence among two or more coders.

The briefing process lasted around 15 to 20 minutes for each coder, using 10 different examples of postage stamps that did not belong to the corpus, while the general topic and aim of the study, as well as the thematic categories for the analysis were also explained. Furthermore the coders were evaluating the sample in different rooms in order to avoid the chance of them influencing one another during the process. They were allowed to consult relevant material on the stamps issued by the Cyprus Ministry of Transport, Communications and Works such as the first day covers. The role of the researcher has been mainly that of aiding the process with general briefing and its implementation without giving any more information on the stamps. The three coders had the opportunity to classify each stamp in only one of the 21 stamp categories given by the researcher. The categories were based on the relevant studies of (Sexty, 2000; Deans, 2005; Jonsson, 2005; Raento and Brunn, 2005; Kevane, 2008) though they had to be modified in order to accommodate the topics that emerged from the specific corpus.

The thematic categories that were developed and used for this study are the following:

*Archaeological findings and sites* – This category included any type of archaeological findings discovered in Cyprus whether they belonged in an excavation site in a museum, or private collection.

*Architecture* – The subsequent category included any type of architectural styles found in Cyprus, as well as notable buildings commemorated on stamps.

*Education and research* – Included in this thematic category could be found representations dedicated in the general field of education and research carried out in Cyprus, as well as stamps commemorating national and international days and important figures dedicated to these wider topics.

*Fine arts* – Therein were categorized representations honouring creative art products, mainly from the field of visual arts, whether these were related to international artistic practise or local productions. Additionally stamps commemorating specific artists and their works were categorized in the same group.

*Flags* – This thematic category featured stamps which had as their central topic flags belonging either to the Republic of Cyprus, or foreign countries.

*Flora and fauna* – The coders placed in this group, postage stamps depicting Cyprus' endemic species of flora and fauna, as no alternative options were found to exist in the corpus we studied.

*Folklore and traditional culture* – This group contained representations of the local culture of Cyprus including various customs, traditions, events and objects.

*Heritage and its preservation* – This category was dedicated to the organized efforts of the government to preserve and promote its heritage, cultural and historical, through certain actions, such as the building of various museums in Cyprus and the establishment of a number of foundations.

*Landscapes* – In this group the coders placed stamps that promoted Cyprus' natural and manmade landscapes and it included images of various mountains, hills, water bodies and villages.

*Maps* – This thematic category featured stamps which had as their central topic maps belonging either to the Republic of Cyprus or foreign countries.

*Notables* – The next group included stamps honouring personalities who were considered important and suitable for being commemorated on Cyprus' stamps due to their body of work or significant achievements.

*Other* – This category was used for postage stamps whose imagery could not be clearly assigned to the rest of the groups, nor any other that the coders could alternatively suggest.

*Professions* – The subsequent theme dealt with stamps honouring various professions, their struggles, contribution to society and achievements through the years.

*References to other countries/states* – This category featured stamps which had as their central theme issues and topics specifically related to the celebration or commemoration of countries outside the Republic of Cyprus.

*References to the Republic of Cyprus* – This category consisted of stamps which directly honoured the founding of the Republic of Cyprus, and its achievements. In a sense it could be said that this category is the one mainly referring to the official government and the state itself.

*Religion* – This category consists of imagery that derives from the Greek Orthodox religion, as no alternative options were found to exist in the corpus. This category emerged and was added by the researcher in order to accommodate the corpus of stamps we studied.

*Social themes* – This thematic category contained stamps dealing with social problems, vulnerable social groups, and in the case of Cyprus a number of stamps promoting the issue of the refugees and missing persons of the 1974 war.

*Sports* – The next thematic group featured imagery influenced by the importance of recreational activities, the promotion of various sports in Cyprus and the commemoration of important international events, such as the Olympic Games.

*Technology and technological achievements* – In this category stamps honouring technological accomplishments and their importance for humankind were placed.

*Transport and communications* – The next thematic group included images concerning methods of transport and communications, both in Cyprus and abroad, including airmail and postal services.

*Tourism* – This category promoted the touristic aspects of Cyprus and its suitability as a touristic destination.

After the main process of having the corpus evaluated by the coders was concluded, the next step in order to ensure the validity of the method we followed was to check the percentage of agreement between the three of them. Cohen's kappa has been used to measure the agreement between the evaluations of the coders in pairs when both of them rated the same stamps. Cohen's kappa is a statistic used for measuring the inter-coder (rater) agreement for items which are categorical. It is considered to be a more vigorous approach than the far simpler percentage agreement calculation, especially considering the fact that it takes into account the possibility of agreement occurring by chance (Peat, 2002). We should note that in our case the coders used were three, rather than two and therefore we evaluated their answers and the agreement among them in pairs. Subsequently Cohen's kappa was used to measure the agreement between the evaluations among two coders each time, when both rated the same stamps.

Kappa values range from -1 to +1, where the higher the value of kappa, the stronger the agreement. It must be noted that a value of 0 indicates that agreement is no better than chance. A value equal to 1 indicates that perfect agreement exists. On the other hand, a negative value indicates that the agreement is weaker than expected and caused by chance, though such an occurrence is rather rare. We should note that Cohen's kappa measure of agreement is based on a square table in which row and column values represent the same scale. Typically and practically a kappa value of at least 0.70 is required, but kappa values close to 0.90 are preferred.

The measure of value agreement between the first and second coder was equal to 0.990 ( $p < 0.001$ ) as Table 1 indicated. According to Peat (2002), this value represents a strong agreement, almost perfect in this specific case. On Table 2, the agreement between the first and the third coder is shown where the kappa measure of agreement value is equal to 0.997 ( $p < 0.001$ ). This value represents an almost perfect agreement between the first and the second coder of the stamps' categories. Lastly, the kappa measure of agreement value between the second and the third coder was equal to 0.987 ( $p < 0.001$ ) as shown on Table 3. This represents an almost perfect agreement for the stamps' categories between these two coders.

**Table 1:** Cohen's kappa measure of agreement between the first and second coder

Category	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
1	144	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2	0	9	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
3	0	0	16	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
4	0	0	0	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
5	0	0	0	0	78	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
6	0	0	0	0	0	59	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
7	0	0	0	0	0	0	83	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	131	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	16	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
10	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	55	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
11	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	46	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
12	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	16	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
13	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	14	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
14	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	11	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
15	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	145	0	0	0	0	0	0
16	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	0	0	0	0	0
17	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	0	0	0	0
18	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	25	0	0	0
19	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	36	0	0
20	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	11	0
21	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	71
Total	144	9	16	7	79	60	83	132	18	55	48	17	14	11	145	8	8	26	36	11	71

**Table 2:** Cohen's kappa measure of agreement between the first and third coder

Category	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
1	145	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2	0	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
3	0	0	16	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
4	0	0	0	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
5	0	0	0	0	78	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
6	0	0	0	0	0	59	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
7	0	0	0	1	0	0	82	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	132	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	16	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
10	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	57	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
11	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	47	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
12	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	16	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
13	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	14	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
14	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	11	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
15	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	147	0	0	0	0	0	0
16	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	0	0	0	0	0
17	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	0	0	0	0
18	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	25	0	0	0
19	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	36	0	0
20	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	12	0
21	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	69
Total	145	10	16	8	78	59	82	132	16	57	49	16	14	11	147	8	8	25	36	12	69

**Table 3:** Cohen's kappa measure of agreement between the second and third coder

Category	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
1	144	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2	0	9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
3	0	0	16	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
4	0	0	0	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
5	0	1	0	0	78	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
6	1	0	0	0	0	59	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
7	0	0	0	1	0	0	82	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	131	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	16	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
10	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	55	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
11	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	46	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
12	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	16	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
13	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	14	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
14	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	11	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
15	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	145	0	0	0	0	0	0
16	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	0	0	0	0	0
17	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	0	0	0	0
18	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	25	0	1	0
19	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	36	0	0
20	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	11	0
21	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	69
Total	145	10	16	8	78	59	82	132	16	57	49	16	14	11	147	8	8	25	36	12	69

In order to evaluate the agreement of the three coders once more, Fleiss' kappa has been used. Fleiss' kappa is an extension of Cohen's kappa, or rather a version of it, which was chiefly designed in order to evaluate concordance or agreement between multiple coders. For this study the Fleiss' kappa values are presented on Table 4. From a total of 998 stamps, coders agreed on 986, which lead to a percentage of 98.80%. A 95% confidence interval for the percentage of assessment agreement is 97.91% – 99.38%. On Table 4 we can observe that the Fleiss' kappa value for the overall assessment agreement is 0.991, which consequently indicated an almost perfect agreement among the three coders. It can be furthermore noted that for all 21 categories Fleiss' kappa values are greater than 0.954 and are therefore significant at 1% level of significance. Thus, it can be concluded that there was an almost perfect agreement among the coders for each category, as well as overall.

**Table 4:** Fleiss' kappa values of agreement among all of the coders

Response	Kappa	SE Kappa	Z	P(vs > 0)
1	0.997	0.018	54.570	0.000
2	0.965	0.018	52.812	0.000
3	1.000	0.018	54.717	0.000
4	0.954	0.018	52.212	0.000
5	0.995	0.018	54.465	0.000
6	0.994	0.018	54.391	0.000
7	0.996	0.018	54.477	0.000
8	0.994	0.018	54.399	0.000
9	0.959	0.018	52.492	0.000
10	0.987	0.018	54.031	0.000
11	0.964	0.018	52.722	0.000
12	0.979	0.018	53.582	0.000
13	1.000	0.018	54.717	0.000
14	1.000	0.018	54.717	0.000
15	0.995	0.018	54.425	0.000
16	1.000	0.018	54.717	0.000
17	1.000	0.018	54.717	0.000
18	0.987	0.018	53.979	0.000
19	1.000	0.018	54.717	0.000
20	0.971	0.018	53.136	0.000
21	0.990	0.018	54.159	0.000
Overall	0.991	0.006	176.956	0.000

The process of content analysis was extremely important for this research as it proved to be a tool that aided us significantly, having lots of advantages over other

methods. On the other hand it also exhibits a series of disadvantages that need to be mentioned. One of the strengths of applying content analysis in one's research is the fact that this method tends to look directly at the communication enabled through texts or visuals, therefore giving us an insight into the centre of social interaction. Due to its nature therefore it can provide the research with valuable information concerning the historical, social and cultural development of a certain community. This was essential to the present work as the corpus covered a time period from 1960 until 2013. This method allows various ways of handling one's corpus, alternating from specific categories, to the study of relationships and even statistical analysis. It provides an insight into complex models of human thought, interactions, language use and rationale in an unobtrusive manner. This comes in direct contrast with other types of methodology seeking to comprehend human communication through text or visuals. For example methodological tools such as focus groups or even surveys require the interaction of the participants with each other, or even the researcher with the participant. This would be quite a different approach that has its merits and for this reason we will see how it was implemented in the present study. Nevertheless, content analysis is considered to be a relatively clear and 'exact' research method, as it is uncomplicated and subjective, if conducted in the correct manner. Finally, it allows for both quantitative and qualitative operations and it enables the researcher to pair it with tools coming from any of these two scopes. In our case the follow-up methods belong in both categories, as we have conducted a survey research and focus group interviews.

On the other hand the limitations and challenges of this research method need to be equally addressed. It is a time-consuming process, particularly if the corpus is large, or if more than one coder is being used. When we are dealing with complex images or long texts it can be difficult to computerize and create categories that are cohesive. Moreover, as it is an inherently reductive method the researcher needs to ensure that the categories created are quite comprehensive both to the coders and the reader, and represent the contents of image or text analyzed in the most accurate way possible. If this does not happen there is always a high possibility of ending up with a simple word count, or an over-analysis of an image that does not produce any real or useful knowledge. However the most crucial challenge that the researcher is facing is the actual context of the corpus. It is often noted that in order to attain a higher level of interpretation, or a unique reading of the coding units, the researchers attempt to liberally draw meaningful inferences and conclusions without having a strong



theoretical framework. Additionally, they can get carried away by the results and disregard the context that produced the corpus, as well as the events that took place after the corpus was produced.

For this reason in the subsequent sections we will be presenting our results and furthermore analyze them in relation to important historical periods for Cyprus, taking into consideration the particular socio-political conditions existing during that time in the country.

## **5.2 Results**

The following section presents the data we gathered through the process of quantitative content analysis, as well as elaborates on the findings. As it has been already mentioned, 1121 postage stamps issued by the Republic of Cyprus between 1960 and 2013 have been collected for this research. Upon excluding stamps that appeared more than once unaltered in the corpus, we were left with 998 and these were subsequently evaluated by three coders separately. These coders therefore could classify each stamp only in one of the 21 categories we presented in the previous section.

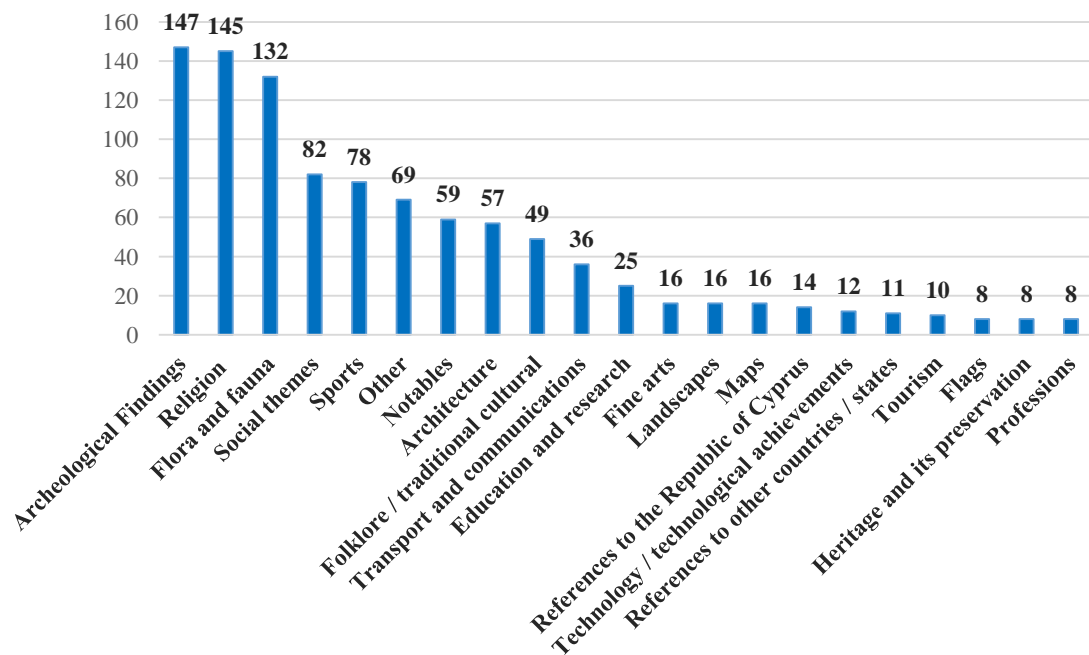
Once we determined and reported the inter-coder agreement between our three coders, we established which categories were the most popular in our corpus, according to the frequency and percentage distribution of their quantities. The first thematic category that appears on Table 5 and Figure 9 is the one entitled ‘Archaeological findings and sites’, and holds the largest amount of stamps (147). The second largest thematic category is related to topics concerning religion, and most specifically Greek Orthodox Christianity. We can note how its amount of stamps is not much smaller than those of the first category (145). The subsequent thematic category is that of ‘Flora and fauna’ containing 132 stamps with endemic species of plants and animals that can be found in Cyprus. Stamps that depicted topics revolving around social themes and including the ongoing issue of Cypriot refugees after the war of 1974, ranked fourth (82). The following category is related to the commemoration of sporting events, as well as the importance of recreational activities and it included 78 stamps. The sixth thematic group that appeared in the corpus is entitled ‘Other’ and was composed of postage stamps that could not be easily assigned in a specific category by any of the three coders. Categories such as ‘Notables’ and ‘Architecture’ held a similar amount as they consisted of 59 and 57 postage stamps respectively. The ninth thematic group was

concerned with the representation of Cyprus' traditional / folklore forms of culture and it featured only 49 stamps, while the next category 'Transport and communications' held 36 stamps. The next category 'Education and research', albeit quite important for the progress of any country and society was rather small, containing only 25 postage stamps. Next we can note how the three subsequent groups 'Fine arts', 'Landscapes' and 'Maps' contained the same amount of stamps (16). Following, topics showcasing direct references to the Republic of Cyprus and /or its government were depicted on 14 stamps, while direct references to other countries only appeared on 11 stamps. The category commemorating technological achievements and important inventions was rather small containing only 12 stamps, although this was to be expected from a small country like Cyprus without significant presence in heavy or technological industry. On the other hand the number of stamps in the next category 'Tourism', were surprisingly low (10) for Cyprus, considering that tourism is one of the main sources of the country's income. Finally, the three smallest thematic categories 'Flags', 'Heritage and its preservation' and 'Professions' contained 8 stamps each.

**Table 5:** Numbers and percentages for all postage stamp categories

CATEGORY	QUANTITY	%
1. Archaeological findings/sites	147	14.729
2. Religion	145	14.529
3. Flora and fauna	132	13.226
4. Social themes	82	8.216
5. Sports	78	7.815
6. Other	69	6.913
7. Notables	59	5.911
8. Architecture	57	5.711
9. Folklore/traditional culture	49	4.909
10. Transport and communications	36	3.607
11. Education and research	25	2.505
12. Fine arts	16	1.603
13. Landscapes	16	1.603
14. Maps	16	1.603
15. References to the Republic of Cyprus	14	1.402
16. Technology/technological achievements	12	1.202
17. References to other countries/states	11	1.102
18. Tourism	10	1.002
19. Flags	8	0.801
20. Heritage and its preservation	8	0.801
21. Professions	8	0.801
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>998</b>	<b>100</b>

**Figure 9:** Numbers for all postage stamp categories (1960 – 2013)



Subsequently we moved on to create a final classification for each postage stamp belonging in the 21 thematic categories. This classification concerns the frequency and percentage distribution among different time periods as it can be seen on Tables 6 and 7, as well as on Figures 10 and 12. Time periods and final stamp classification are not statistically significant independent ( $\chi^2_{100}=295.574$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). In other words there is significant association between the time period and the stamps' categories. However it must be noted that the assumptions of the chi-square test are not met, due to the fact that 68 cells (54.0%) have expected count less than 5. Thus the researcher must be very careful about the conclusions drawn from the aforementioned test.

For example category 'Archaeological sites and findings' seems to present a significant alteration in percentages among different time periods. Where initially the 18.6% of postage stamps during the period 1960 – 1969 belonged to this category and it increased its numbers in the 1970's to a 21.9%, we can observe that during the time period of 1990 –1999 and even more so after 2010, only the 3.6% and 1.0% of stamps respectively belonged in this category.

Another large category is the one concerned with topics deriving from Greek Orthodox Christianity and has been fluctuating in its numbers. We can note how during

the period of 1960 – 1969 only an 8.8% of the corpus belonged in it. In the subsequent decade it almost doubled in its numbers, reaching a 16.6%, while in the next three decades it continued being rather large occupying 14.0%, 19.8% and 14.1% from the entire corpus of stamps belonging in this category. However, entering the last period we can observe how the numbers began decreasing once more and the thematic group contained only 8.3% of all stamps falling under this category.

Furthermore the third largest category which is ‘Flora and fauna’, presented an equally interesting example, where we can see somewhat of an increase of percentages of the stamps that belong in this category during different time periods. Both on Tables 6 and 7, as well as Figures 10 and 12 we can observe how the particular topic was not very popular in the 1960’s (8.8%), reaching its lowest point in 1970’s (5.9%). On the contrary, during recent years it has been boosted reaching a 20.8% in the period between 2010 and 2013.

The next category entitled ‘Social themes’ presented a case that started with a 7.8% in the 1960’s, experienced an increase during the next three decades and started declining once more after 2000, finally reaching a 3.1% between the time period 2010 – 2013.

The thematic category honouring sports and commemorating related events is the next category presented and the fifth largest of the overall corpus. The particular topic has been rather favoured as we observe that during the first decade of its stamp designing program the Republic of Cyprus had issued a 10.8% of all the stamps belonging in this category. However, a notable decrease of this percentage took place during the period 1970 – 1979 where the corpus occupied only the 4.7% of the entire group.

On the contrary the next category ‘Notables’ seems to have been considered rather unpopular during the first period of stamp production in the Republic of Cyprus, as it included only the 2.9% of the entire group of stamps under this theme. However this changed during the subsequent time periods where its percentage rose to an 8.3% and the particular category remained mostly stable in its numbers as we can note that during the last period we are studying, 2010 – 2013, it featured the 9.4% of the entire thematic category.

The subsequent thematic category entitled ‘Architecture’ is characterized by a relative stability throughout all of the decades presented, as it began with an 8.8% in the 1960’s and remained quite high with the only exception being the periods of 1990 –

1999 and 2010 – 2013. During these times the particular thematic category decreased to 3.6% and 2.1% respectively.

Stamps depicting scenes from traditional (folklore) culture were the topic of the ninth largest thematic category of the corpus. The particular group has not been exceedingly popular on stamps during the first few decades of the foundation of the Republic of Cyprus, as we can note how only 1.0% and 3.0% belonged in it during the 1960's and 1970's. On the other hand its numbers increased during later time periods, in particular 1990 – 1999 and 2010 – 2013.

'Transport and communications' was the next category in terms of the quantity of stamps. The group has been boosted through the years, as during the first period studied (1960 – 1969) only a 2.9% fell in it. On the other hand we can note how the numbers of stamps issued under this theme, increased during the most recent period. In particular during 2010 – 2013 'Transport and communications' contained 7.3% of the entire corpus of stamps in this thematic category.

Something similar happened with the subsequent thematic category which is 'Education and research'. This theme was not initially preferred for stamp design in the Republic of Cyprus, as during the time period of 1960 – 1969 it contained only 2.0% of the entire corpus of stamps belonging in this category. During the next period its numbers remained quite low rating between 1.8% in its highest and 0.5% in its lowest. However, it can be observed how during 2010 – 2013 the particular thematic group drastically increased its numbers to 13.5%.

The thematic group entitled 'Fine arts' as we can see both on Tables 6 and 7, as well as Figures 10 and 12 it contained no stamps at all during the first period studied, that is 1960 – 1969. It appeared for the first time in the 1970's and it remained in the corpus of stamps issued throughout the rest of the decades.

Next we encountered a rather small thematic category which contains only 16 stamps. 'Landscapes' has been a rather favoured topic for Cyprus' stamp design during the three first decades of its foundation. In particular during the 1960's, 1970's and 1980's the stamps in this category occupied the 2.0%, 2.4% and 2.8% of the entire corpus belonging in this thematic category. However the popularity of this topic faded and consequently during the last periods we studied, that is 2000 – 2009 and 2010 – 2013 it held only 1.4% and 0.0% respectively.

'Maps' was an equally small thematic category as it also contained 16 stamps. Similarly with the previous group, its popularity lessened through the years. It occupied

a 2.9% of the entire corpus of stamps belonging in this category during the period 1960 – 1969 and 3.6% throughout the 1970's. However these percentages decreased, starting from the subsequent decade reaching 1.0% in the period 2010 – 2013.

The subsequent thematic group, 'References to the Republic of Cyprus' made its appearance in the 1980's, occupying the 1.9% of the entire corpus of stamps belonging under this thematic umbrella. The most notable alteration in its percentages came during the last period studied, that is 2010 – 2013 where its numbers became slightly larger, reaching the 3.1%.

The category commemorating technological achievements and important inventions was rather small and while it started with a 2.9%, by 2000's its percentage dropped to 0% and it remained so in the next period as well. However this finding was to be expected from a small country like Cyprus without significant presence in heavy or technological industry.

The thematic group containing stamps referencing other countries or states first appeared in the period between 1970 and 1979, where its percentage was the largest in comparison to the following ones. In particular it reached the 1.8% of the entire corpus of stamps belonging in this thematic category. The percentages of the particular group remained similar and the last measurement indicated 1.0% during the last period studied.

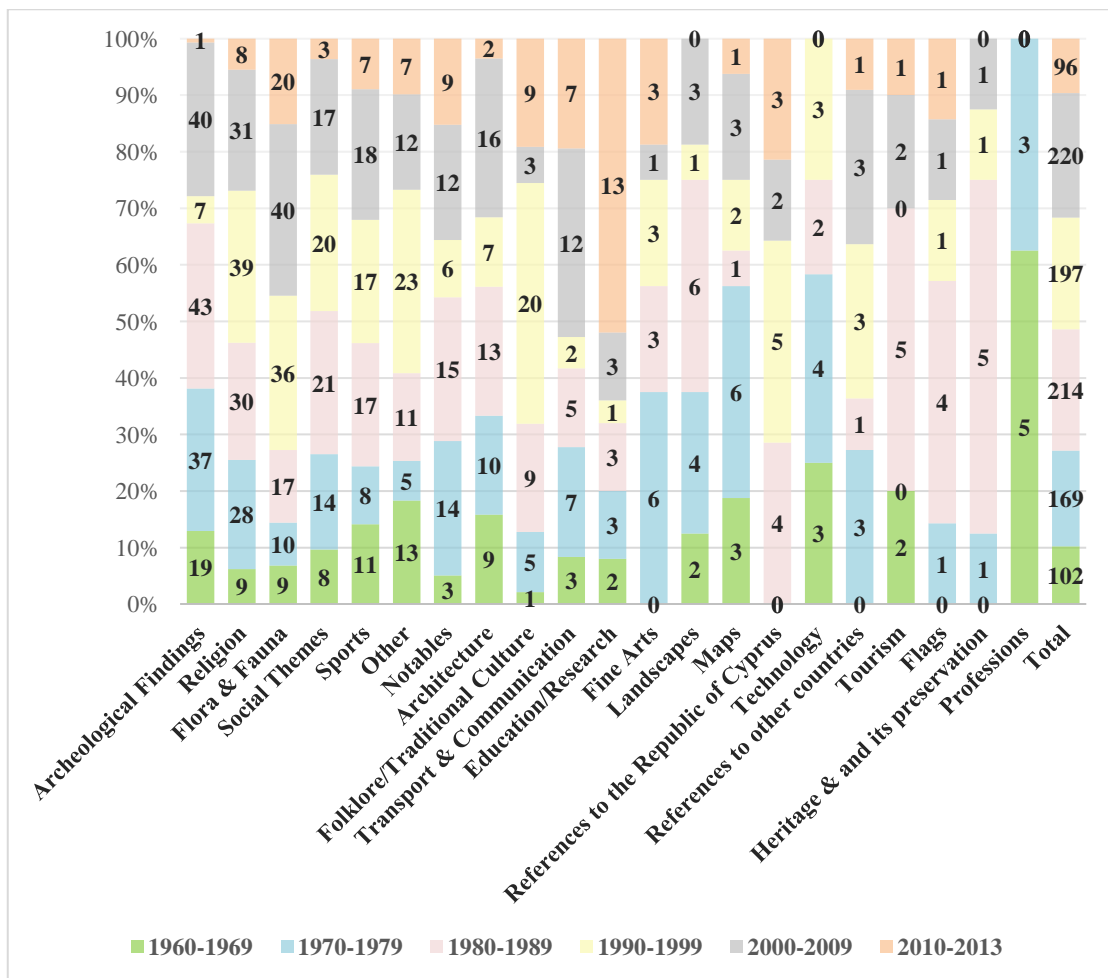
The thematic category 'Tourism and recreation' clearly was not considered very important during any of the periods presented as it started with a 2.0% in the 1960's, while during certain periods such as the 1970 – 1979 and 1990 – 1999 no stamps at all have been issued under this category. Finally a small amount of postage stamps in this category appeared again after 2010 (1.0%).

'Flags' is a thematic group that appeared during the period 1970 – 1979 for the first time. The particular theme stayed small throughout the timeframe studied although we can note a few alterations. The highest peak for the theme came during the 1980's with a 1.4% and in later years during the period 2010 – 2013 with a 1.0%.

'Heritage and its preservation', as well as 'Professions' were two equally small categories. They both contained only 8 postage stamps, the same number as 'Flags'. The similarities between them did not stop there as both of them ceased appearing in the corpus after certain periods. In particular 'Heritage and its preservation' reached its peak in the 1980's with a 2.3% of the corpus that contained stamps belonging in this category and its numbers decreased after that reaching a 0.0% in 2010 – 2013.

Something similar happened with the thematic category ‘Professions’. We can note how during the first decade of its appearance its percentage reached a 4.9%. The commemoration of professions on Cyprus’ postage stamps had decreased ever since. From 1980 and onwards the theme disappeared entirely from stamps, as all of the subsequent decades contained 0.0%, showing how the particular topic became less significant in the country’s official repertoire.

**Figure 10:** Frequency distribution for the final postage stamp classification among time periods (1960 – 2013)

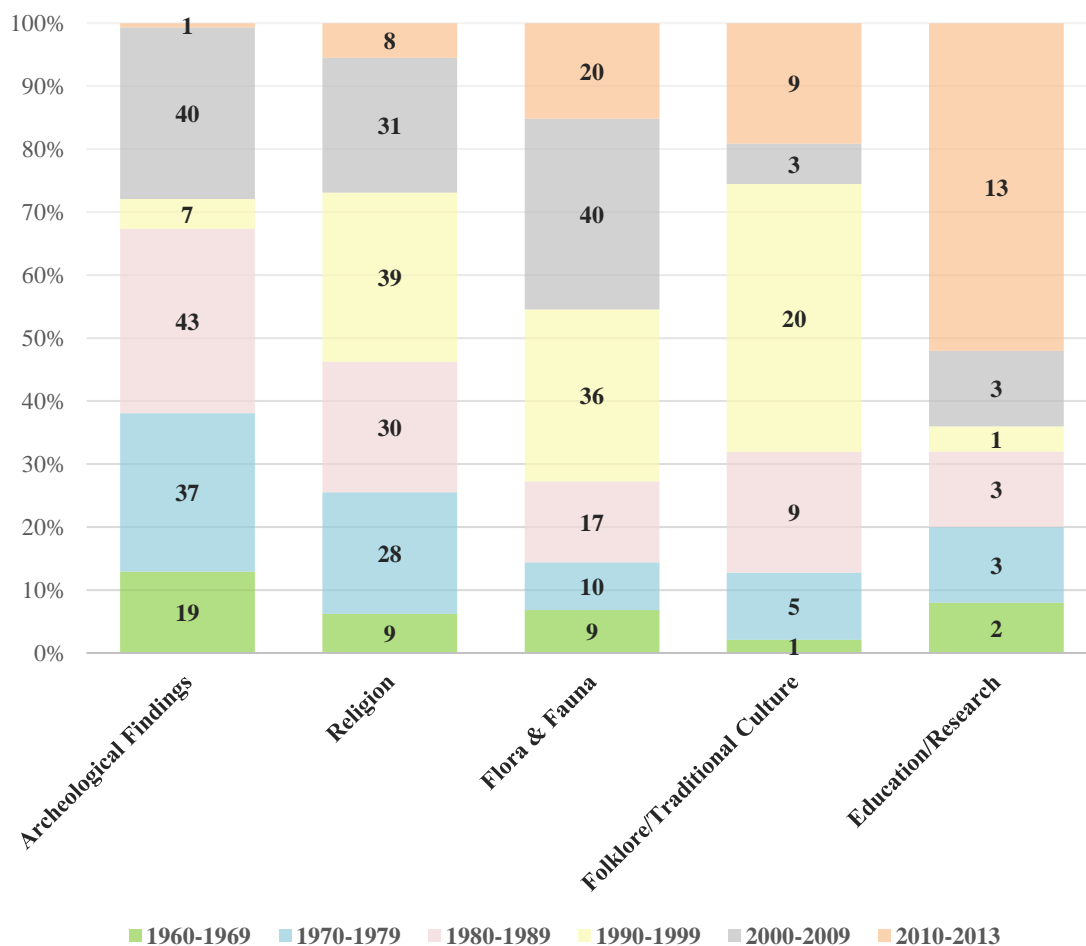




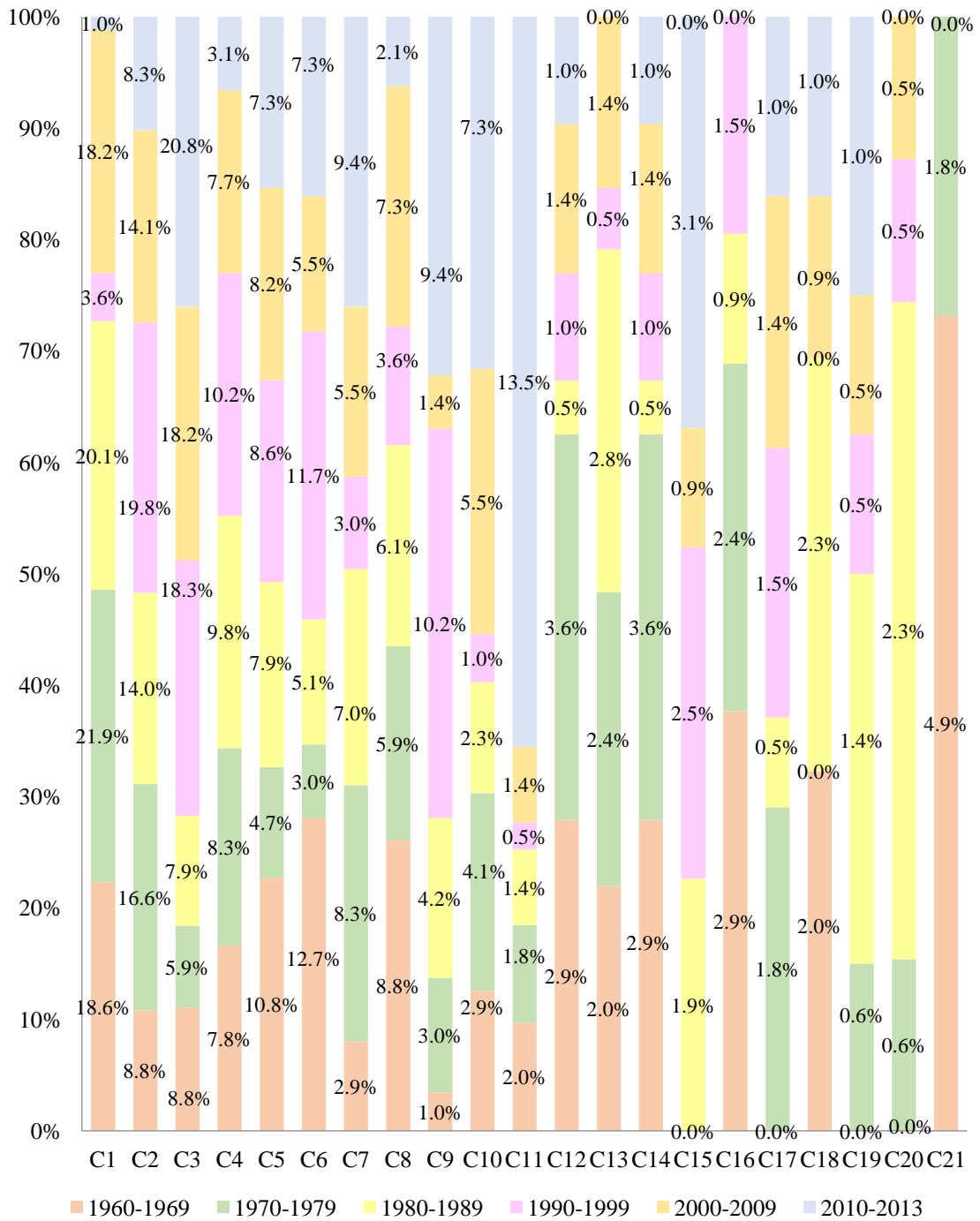
**Table 6:** Frequency distribution for the final postage stamp classification among time periods (1960 – 2013)

Category	1960-1969	1970-1979	1980-1989	1990-1999	2000-2009	2010-2013	Total
1	19	37	43	7	40	1	147
2	9	28	30	39	31	8	145
3	9	10	17	36	40	20	132
4	8	14	21	20	17	3	83
5	11	8	17	17	18	7	78
6	13	5	11	23	12	7	71
7	3	14	15	6	12	9	59
8	9	10	13	7	16	2	57
9	1	5	9	20	3	9	47
10	3	7	5	2	12	7	36
11	2	3	3	1	3	13	25
12	0	6	3	3	1	3	16
13	2	4	6	1	3	0	16
14	3	6	1	2	3	1	16
15	0	0	4	5	2	3	14
16	3	4	2	3	0	0	12
17	0	3	1	3	3	1	11
18	2	0	5	0	1	2	10
19	0	1	4	1	1	1	8
20	0	1	5	1	1	0	8
21	5	3	0	0	0	0	8
Total	102	169	214	197	220	96	998

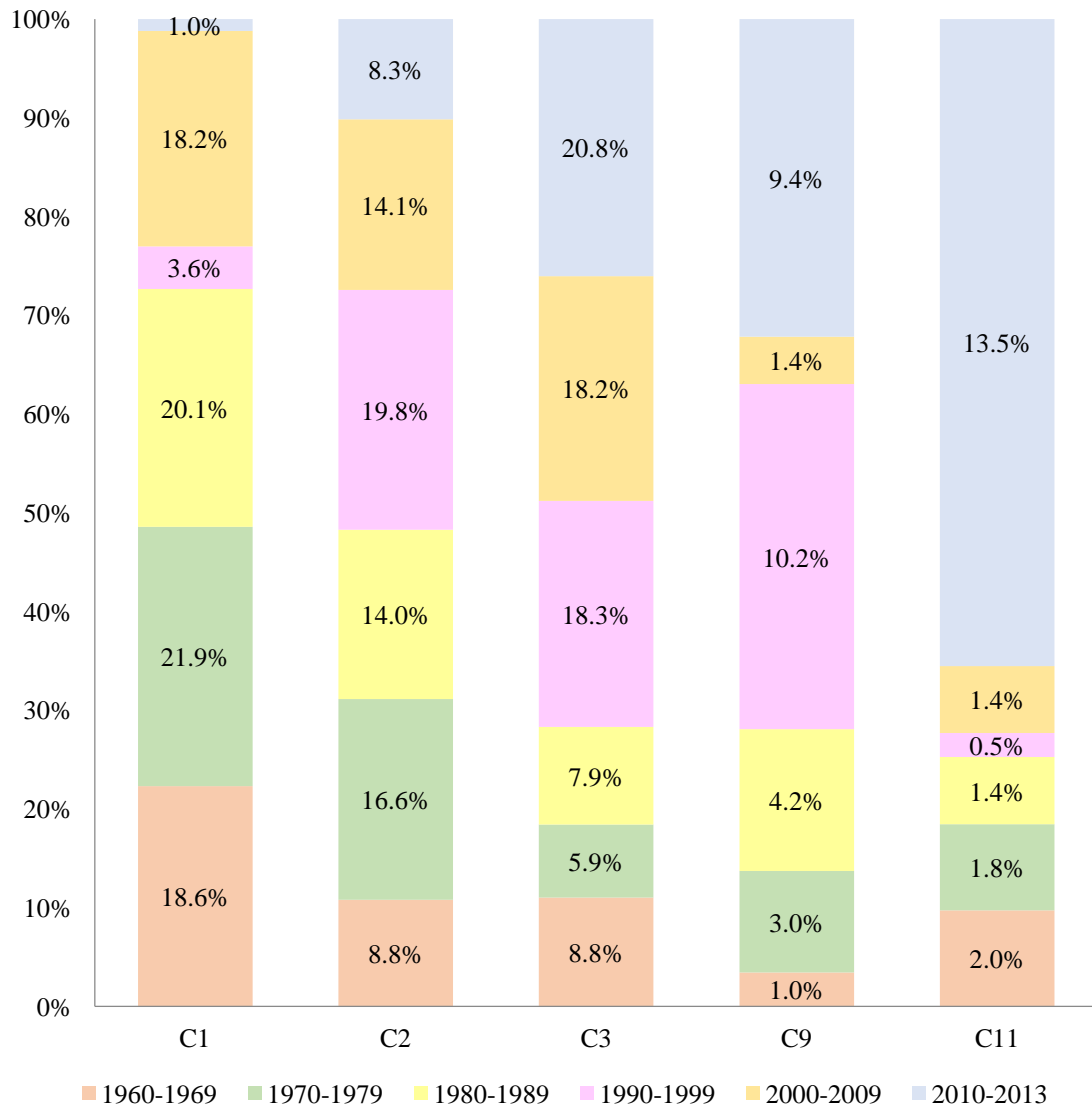
**Figure 11:** Frequency distribution for the final postage stamp classification among time periods (1960 – 2013) – Thematic categories used for ‘Discussion’



**Figure 12: Percentage distribution for the final postage stamp classification among time periods (1960 – 2013)**



**Figure 13:** Percentage distribution for the final postage stamp classification among time periods (1960 – 2013) – Thematic categories used for ‘Discussion’



**Table 7:** Percentage distribution for the final postage stamp classification among time periods (1960 – 2013)

<b>Category</b>	<b>1960-1969</b>	<b>1970-1979</b>	<b>1980-1989</b>	<b>1990-1999</b>	<b>2000-2009</b>	<b>2010-2013</b>	<b>Total</b>
1	18.6%	21.9%	20.1%	3.6%	18.2%	1.0%	14.7%
2	8.8%	16.6%	14.0%	19.8%	14.1%	8.3%	14.5%
3	8.8%	5.9%	7.9%	18.3%	18.2%	20.8%	13.2%
4	7.8%	8.3%	9.8%	10.2%	7.7%	3.1%	8.3%
5	10.8%	4.7%	7.9%	8.6%	8.2%	7.3%	7.8%
6	12.7%	3.0%	5.1%	11.7%	5.5%	7.3%	7.1%
7	2.9%	8.3%	7.0%	3.0%	5.5%	9.4%	5.9%
8	8.8%	5.9%	6.1%	3.6%	7.3%	2.1%	5.7%
9	1.0%	3.0%	4.2%	10.2%	1.4%	9.4%	4.7%
10	2.9%	4.1%	2.3%	1.0%	5.5%	7.3%	3.6%
11	2.0%	1.8%	1.4%	0.5%	1.4%	13.5%	2.5%
12	0.0%	3.6%	1.4%	1.5%	0.5%	3.1%	1.6%
13	2.0%	2.4%	2.8%	0.5%	1.4%	0.0%	1.6%
14	2.9%	3.6%	0.5%	1.0%	1.4%	1.0%	1.6%
15	0.0%	0.0%	1.9%	2.5%	0.9%	3.1%	1.4%
16	2.9%	2.4%	0.9%	1.5%	0.0%	0.0%	1.2%
17	0.0%	1.8%	0.5%	1.5%	1.4%	1.0%	1.1%
18	2.0%	0.0%	2.3%	0.0%	0.9%	1.0%	1.0%
19	0.0%	0.6%	1.4%	0.5%	0.5%	1.0%	0.8%
20	0.0%	0.6%	2.3%	0.5%	0.5%	0.0%	0.8%
21	4.9%	1.8%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

As we noted from the previous results, postage stamps and the themes they were categorized into went through different alterations throughout the periods studied. The subsequent actions we took were to investigate whether certain important landmark dates in the history of Cyprus could affect and influence these changes in the corpus. The following chi-square test was performed in order to examine any possible associations between stamps' categorization before and after 1974, as well as before and after 2004. Additionally we checked the periods between 1974 – 2003 and 2004 – 2013. These dates were set as landmarks in the island's timeline due to their historical significance. The first date, 1974, signals the Turkish invasion and occupation of a significant part of the island while the second date 2004, marks Cyprus' induction in the European Union (E.U.).

On Tables 8 and 9 the frequency and percentage distribution for the final stamp classification before and after 1974 respectively, can be seen. Furthermore, Figure 14 presents the percentage distribution for the final stamps' classification before and after 1974. There is a statistically significant association among the final stamp classification and the periods before and after 1974 ( $X^2_{20}=54.372$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). Tables 10 and 11 present the frequency and percentage distribution for the final stamp classification between 1974 – 2003 and 2004 – 2013. Additionally, Figure 15 presents the percentage distribution for the final stamps' classification for the periods 1974 – 2003 and 2004 – 2013, while Figure 15 depicts the percentage distribution for this classification. There is a statistically significant association between the final stamp classification and the aforementioned two periods ( $X^2_{20}=57.248$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). Tables 12 and 13 present the frequency and percentage distribution for the final stamp classification before and after 2004, respectively. Additionally, Figure 16 presents the percentage distribution for the final stamps' classification before and after 2004. Once again, there is a statistically significant association between the final stamp classification and the periods before and after 2004 ( $X^2_{20}=60.129$ ,  $p<0.001$ ).

Starting from the largest thematic category that was 'Archaeological findings and sites' one could note that the percentage of postage stamps has been more affected by the landmark date of 2004, and less by 1974. The number of stamps produced under this thematic umbrella decreased after 1974 from 19.6% to 13.7%, while the period after 2004 saw an even more drastic difference where the percentage of the category fell from a 16.3% to a 9.1% of the overall percentage of stamps belonging in this category. Additionally, we note how the particular category showcased a 15.5% of the overall

percentage of stamps belonging in this category between 1974 and 2003 and a mere 9.1% during 2004- 2013.

The second largest thematic group of stamps was that representing scenes and figures from the Greek Orthodox tradition. The particular theme seems to have remained mainly unaffected by the 1974 events as it merely rose from a 14.1% to a 14.6% of the overall number of stamps occupying this category. On the other hand we can note how the period after Cyprus' induction in the European Union brought a decrease of the percentages in this category, from a 15.2% to 12.2%. Additionally, the period between 2004 and 2013 held the 12.2% of the overall number of stamps occupying this category while the period 1974 – 2003 the 15.5%.

On the other hand certain categories experienced a boost in their percentages both after 1974 and 2004. For example, the percentage of stamps in category 'Flora and fauna', was almost doubled after the Turkish occupation, when from 7.3% has increased to 14.3% of the overall stamps that belong in this category and to a 13.5% between the years 1974 and 2003. The particular category seems to have increased its numbers after 2004 as well, since we can note how they have risen to 16.5%.

The next thematic category was concerned with alerting the citizens for the social issues existing in the country, as well as worldwide. Additionally, it contained stamps depicting the ongoing issue of Cypriot refugees after the Turkish invasion and occupation of 1974. As expected the category increased its numbers after the war from 6.7% to 8.6%. Furthermore the percentages of stamps in this category stayed similar during the period from 1974 to 2003 as they merely rose to a 9.7%. Contrary to that, the particular theme stopped being preferred as much after 2004, where from an initial 9.1% it dropped to 5.6%.

The subsequent thematic group, 'Sports' and its production has been negatively influenced by the events of 1974 when from 8.5% it fell to 7.6% of the overall percentage of stamps belonging in this category, while during the period from 1974 to 2003 it became 7.1%. On the other hand the period after 2004 brought about an increase concerning the quantity of stamps issued under this thematic umbrella. In particular from 7.4% the quantity rose to 9.1%.

The next group of stamps were concerned with the commemoration of important and noteworthy personalities and their achievements. The number of stamps issued under this topic became almost three times larger in the period after 1974, increasing its numbers from 2.4% to 6.5% of the overall percentage of stamps belonging in this group.

The differences between the time periods before and after 2004 were not as large, but we could still note an increase where the percentage rose to 6.9%, while between the years 1974 and 2003 the percentage of stamps in this category was 6.4%.

‘Architecture’ was the eighth largest thematic category that appeared in this corpus of stamps. As we noted the preference of the authorities in depicting this particular theme has dwindled after 1974, as it fell from 9.2% to 5.0% of the overall percentage of stamps belonging in this category. The second historical landmark we investigated, that is 2004 did not have any significant effect on the particular thematic category as the percentages fell from a 5.7% to a 5.6%. Additionally, the particular category contained even less stamps between 1974 and 2003, a mere 4.7% to be precise.

The thematic group entitled ‘Traditional / folklore culture’ increased its percentages after both of the historical landmarks took place. After 1974 the percentage rose from 3.0% to 5.0% and after 2004 from 4.5% to a 5.2%, while during the period between 1974 and 2003 the overall percentage of stamps belonging in this category was 4.9%.

The subsequent thematic group ‘Transport and communications’ remained similar in its numbers when we compared the periods before and after 1974. In particular the percentage rose from 3.0% to 3.7%, thus not providing us with any significant alterations to study. On the other hand though, the particular theme rose after 2004 from 2.6% to 6.9%, while the period 1974 – 2003 contained the 2.4% of the overall percentage of stamps belonging in this category.

The group of stamps under the title ‘Education and research’ showed significant alterations in respect of the periods before and after 1974, as well as 2004. After 1974 the percentage went from 1.2% to 2.7% almost doubling in number. The period between 1974 and 2003 contained the 1.1% of the overall percentage of stamps belonging in this category. The particular thematic category has further increased its percentages after 2004 where we noted that they have risen to 6.9%. The percentage of stamps that belong in this category became six times larger from 2004 onwards.

The thematic category ‘Fine arts’ did not appear before 1970. After 1974 however, its percentages fell from 4.2% to 1.0% of the overall percentage of stamps belonging in this category. The percentages under this thematic umbrella decreased even more during the period 1974 – 2003 as they fell to a 0.8%. The particular thematic group did not present any other significant alterations as it merely rose from 1.5% to 1.7% after 2004.

Subsequently one could note how the percentage of stamps belonging in the group ‘Landscapes’ had been more affected by the second landmark date we set. The number



of stamps issued under this thematic umbrella decreased after 1974 from 2.4% to 1.4%, while the period after 2004 saw an even more drastic difference where the percentage of the category fell from a 1.9% to 0.4% of the overall percentage of stamps belonging in this category. The period between 1974 and 2003 held the 1.8% of the overall percentage under this theme.

The next thematic category which was 'Maps', had increased after 1974, from a 0.0% to 1.9% of the overall number of stamps occupying this group. On the other hand we can note how the period after Cyprus' induction in the European Union did not present significant alterations considering the percentage of stamps under this thematic umbrella as it merely fell from 1.6% to 1.3%. The period between 1974 and 2003 held the 2.1% of the overall percentage under this theme.

The subsequent thematic group, 'References to the Republic of Cyprus' made its appearance in the 1980's, occupying the 1.7% of the entire corpus of stamps belonging under this thematic umbrella. The most notable alteration in its percentages came during the other landmark date we studied, that is 2004 where its numbers became almost twice larger, rising from 1.1% to 2.1%. Additionally, the period between 1974 and 2003 contained the 1.4% of the overall percentage of stamps belonging in this category.

The category of stamps commemorating technological achievements and important inventions is one of the smallest thematic groups of the corpus. This finding of course was to be expected from a country like Cyprus with no heavy or technological industry. We can note how this group's percentages were not significantly modified if we compare the periods before and after 1974 as they merely dropped from 1.8% to 1.0%. The period from 1974 to 2003 contained the 1.4% of the overall percentage of stamps belonging in this category. This decrease continued, and after 2004 the category disappeared completely since its percentages fell from 1.5% to 0.0%.

The thematic group which contained stamps referencing other countries or states first appeared in the 1970's and its percentage remained similar before and after the events of 1974, merely dropping to 1.0% from 1.2%. The period from 1974 to 2003 contained the 0.8% of the overall percentage of stamps belonging in this category. The next historical landmark we were interested in studying, that is 2004 seems to have brought a positive influence on the particular topic as it almost doubled its numbers from 0.9% to 1.7% of the overall percentage of stamps belonging in this category.

We expected the thematic group 'Tourism and recreation' to be larger and therefore more important, as the Republic of Cyprus bases a significant part of its economy on it.

However, as we can note none of the two historical landmarks had any positive effect on the percentages of this category. The percentages decreased after 1974 from 1.2% to 0.9% and likewise after 2004 from 1.1% to 0.4%. Furthermore, the period from 1974 to 2003 contained the 1.1% of the overall percentage of stamps belonging in this category.

The subsequent thematic group was 'Flags', which first appeared during the period 1970 – 1979. For this reason we can note how the percentages of this group rose from 0.0% to 0.8% after 1974. The second historical landmark we studied, 2004, seems to have had small or even insignificant impact on the percentages of the category which increased from 0.6% to 0.8%. Additionally, the period from 1974 to 2003 contained the 0.8% of the overall percentage of stamps belonging in this category.

One of the smallest thematic categories was the one containing stamps representing the preservation of heritage in the Republic of Cyprus. The particular category increased its percentages following the events of 1974 from 0.0% to 0.9%. The period from 1974 to 2003 contained the 1.1% of the overall percentage of stamps belonging in this category. The induction of Cyprus in the European Union in 2004 however, did not seem to affect the numbers of stamps issued under this thematic umbrella as much. In particular the percentage of stamps belonging in this category merely fell from 0.9% to 0.4%.

The final and one of the smallest thematic categories studied was 'Professions'. A general conclusion regarding this theme is that it used to be more popular in the earliest years of the Republic of Cyprus and it gradually disappeared. In particular its numbers failed dramatically after 1974, from 3.0% to 0.3%. The period from 1974 to 2003 contained the 0.5% of the overall percentage of stamps belonging in this category. Similarly, the percentage of stamps belonging in this category decreased from 1.0% to 0.0% after 2004.

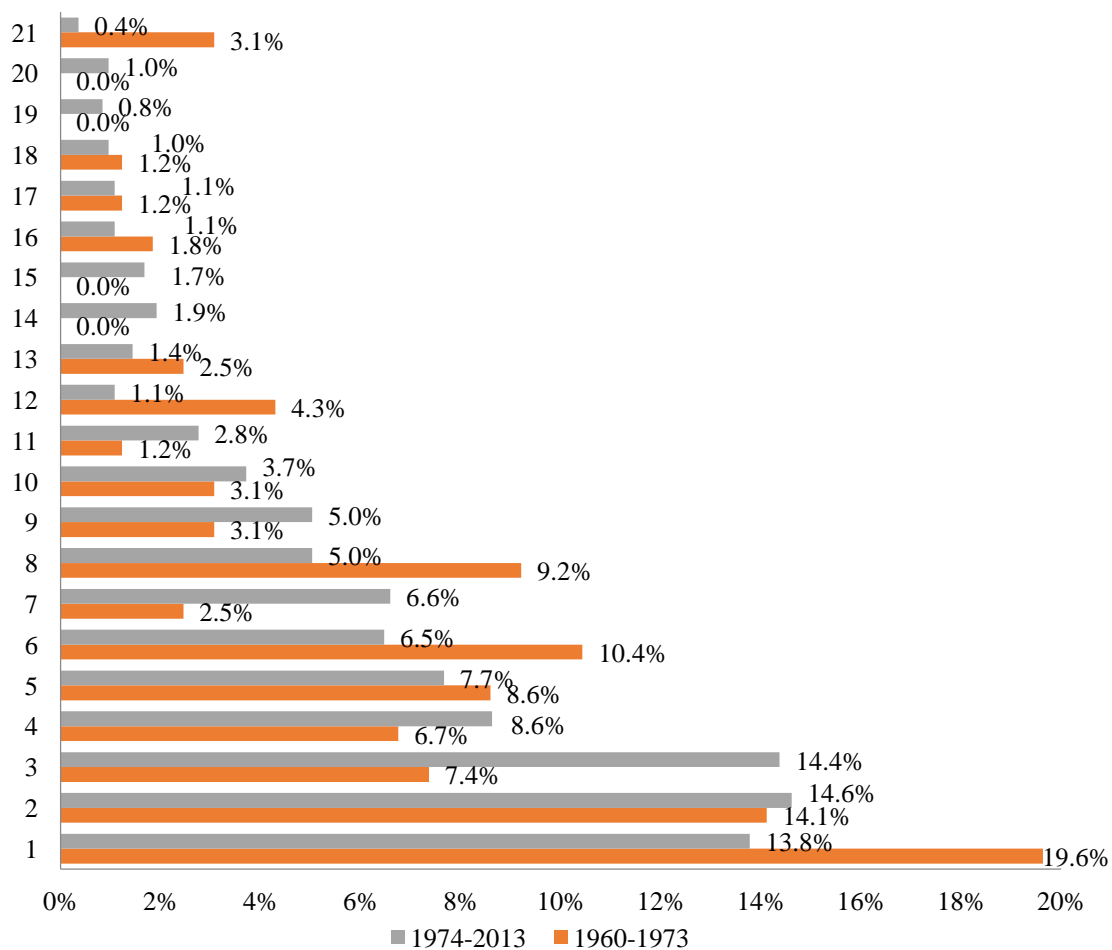
**Table 8:** Frequency distribution for the final stamps' classification before and after 1974 until 2013

Category	1960-1973	1974-2013	Total
1	32	115	147
2	23	122	145
3	12	120	132
4	11	72	83
5	14	64	78
6	17	54	71
7	4	55	59
8	15	42	57
9	5	42	47
10	5	31	36
11	2	23	25
12	7	9	16
13	4	12	16
14	0	16	16
15	0	14	14
16	3	9	12
17	2	9	11
18	2	8	10
19	0	7	7
20	0	8	8
21	5	3	8
Total	163	835	998

**Table 9:** Percentage distribution for the final stamps' classification before and after 1974 until 2013

Category	1960-1973	1974-2013	Total
1	19.63%	13.77%	14.73%
2	14.11%	14.61%	14.53%
3	7.36%	14.37%	13.23%
4	6.75%	8.62%	8.32%
5	8.59%	7.66%	7.82%
6	10.43%	6.47%	7.11%
7	2.45%	6.59%	5.91%
8	9.20%	5.03%	5.71%
9	3.07%	5.03%	4.71%
10	3.07%	3.71%	3.61%
11	1.23%	2.75%	2.51%
12	4.29%	1.08%	1.60%
13	2.45%	1.44%	1.60%
14	0.00%	1.92%	1.60%
15	0.00%	1.68%	1.40%
16	1.84%	1.08%	1.20%
17	1.23%	1.08%	1.10%
18	1.23%	0.96%	1.00%
19	0.00%	0.84%	0.70%
20	0.00%	0.96%	0.80%
21	3.07%	0.36%	0.80%
Total	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

**Figure 14:** Percentage distribution for the final stamps' classification before and after 1974 until 2013



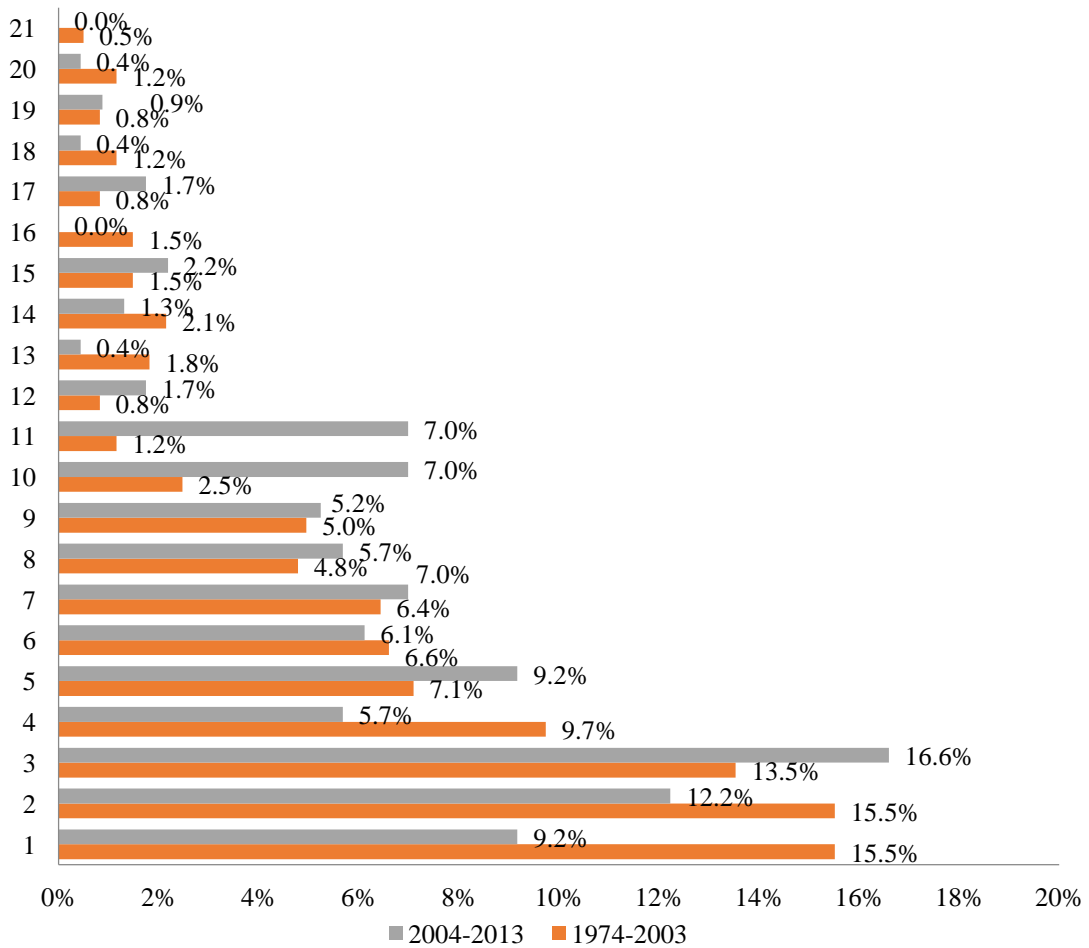
**Table 10:** Frequency distribution for the final stamps' classification during the periods between 1974 – 2003 and 2004 – 2013

Category	2004-2013	1974-2003	Total
1	21	94	115
2	28	94	122
3	38	82	120
4	13	59	72
5	21	43	64
6	14	40	54
7	16	39	55
8	13	29	42
9	12	30	42
10	16	15	31
11	16	7	23
12	4	5	9
13	1	11	12
14	3	13	16
15	5	9	14
16	0	9	9
17	4	5	9
18	1	7	8
19	2	5	7
20	1	7	8
21	0	3	3
Total	229	606	835

**Table 11:** Percentage distribution for the final stamps' classification during the period between 1974 – 2003 and 2004 – 2013

Category	2004-2013	1974-2003	Total
1	9.17%	15.51%	13.77%
2	12.23%	15.51%	14.61%
3	16.59%	13.53%	14.37%
4	5.68%	9.74%	8.62%
5	9.17%	7.10%	7.66%
6	6.11%	6.60%	6.47%
7	6.99%	6.44%	6.59%
8	5.68%	4.79%	5.03%
9	5.24%	4.95%	5.03%
10	6.99%	2.48%	3.71%
11	6.99%	1.16%	2.75%
12	1.75%	0.83%	1.08%
13	0.44%	1.82%	1.44%
14	1.31%	2.15%	1.92%
15	2.18%	1.49%	1.68%
16	0.00%	1.49%	1.08%
17	1.75%	0.83%	1.08%
18	0.44%	1.16%	0.96%
19	0.87%	0.83%	0.84%
20	0.44%	1.16%	0.96%
21	0.00%	0.50%	0.36%
Total	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

**Figure 15:** Percentage distribution for the final stamps' classification during the period between 1974 – 2003 and 2004 – 2013





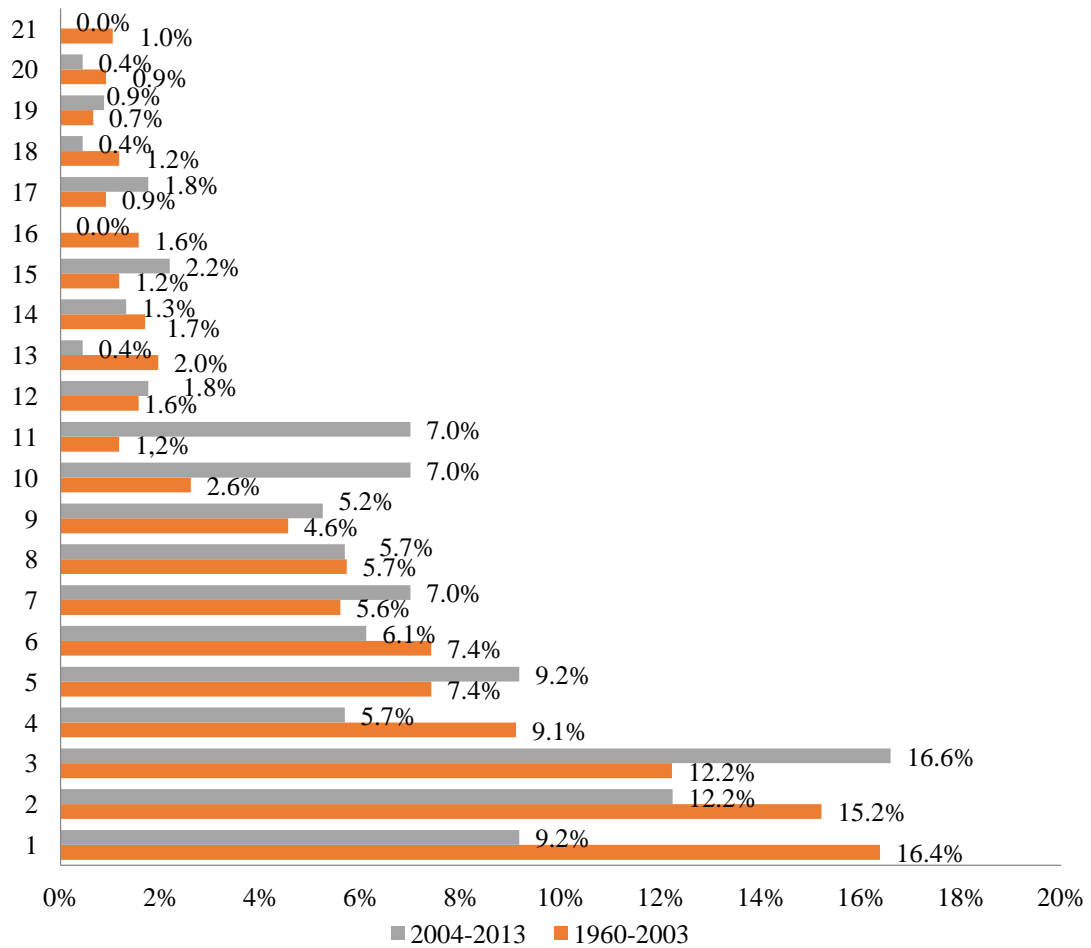
**Table 12:** Frequency distribution for the final stamps' classification before and after 2004 until 2013

Category	1960-2003	2004-2013	Total
1	126	21	147
2	117	28	145
3	94	38	132
4	70	13	83
5	57	21	78
6	57	14	71
7	43	16	59
8	44	13	57
9	35	12	47
10	20	16	36
11	9	16	25
12	12	4	16
13	15	1	16
14	13	3	16
15	9	5	14
16	12	0	12
17	7	4	11
18	9	1	10
19	5	2	7
20	7	1	8
21	8	0	8
Total	769	229	998

**Table 13:** Percentage distribution for the final stamps' classification before and after 2004 until 2013

Category	1960-2003	2004-2013	Total
1	16.38%	9.17%	14.73%
2	15.21%	12.23%	14.53%
3	12.22%	16.59%	13.23%
4	9.10%	5.68%	8.32%
5	7.41%	9.17%	7.82%
6	7.41%	6.11%	7.11%
7	5.59%	6.99%	5.91%
8	5.72%	5.68%	5.71%
9	4.55%	5.24%	4.71%
10	2.60%	6.99%	3.61%
11	1.17%	6.99%	2.51%
12	1.56%	1.75%	1.60%
13	1.95%	0.44%	1.60%
14	1.69%	1.31%	1.60%
15	1.17%	2.18%	1.40%
16	1.56%	0.00%	1.20%
17	0.91%	1.75%	1.10%
18	1.17%	0.44%	1.00%
19	0.65%	0.87%	0.70%
20	0.91%	0.44%	0.80%
21	1.04%	0.00%	0.80%
Total	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

**Figure 16:** Percentage distribution for the final stamps' classification before and after 2004 until 2013

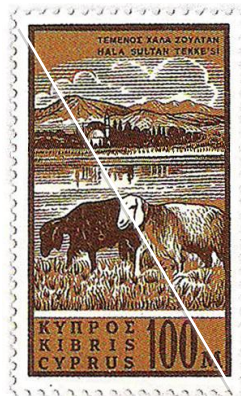


### 5.3 Discussion

The process of quantitative content analysis that was previously conducted on the chosen corpus, as well as its evaluation by the three coders, the statistical analysis and the report of the results, aided us in advancing on a number of observations. In this section we will be discussing these findings, taking into consideration the socio-political background of the Republic of Cyprus and the selected theoretical framework. By combining the aforementioned theoretical framework and the results stemming from the quantitative content analysis that was conducted, the researcher was enabled to develop a number of observations and elaborate in regards of the nature of the postage stamp as a modest ambassador of official culture in the context of visual communication in the Republic of Cyprus, thus proceeding with important findings and conclusions in respect of the first research question posed for this study. It should be noted that a study based on this chapter's findings has been accepted for publication in the *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern studies* and is expected to be issued by the end of 2017 (Andreou and Zantides, 2017a).

As mentioned before, postage stamp imagery can certainly be considered ephemeral but simultaneously it substantially reflects the society that produced it (Inge, 1981; Deans and Dobson, 2005). Let us not forget that stamp imagery, alongside other mundane and everyday manifestations of culture, presents a part of the official narrative which is constructed in order to represent a country and its citizens under a sense of common and shared sense of belonging (Anderson, 1991; Edensor, 2002). Under this light, this section discusses the most important aspects of Cyprus' self-representation through stamp imagery, as they appeared with the aid of content analysis, as well as their development through the years and in conjunction with historical landmark dates in the country's history. As indicated through the corpus, the official culture of Cyprus has mainly relied on two particular aspects, especially during the period before its induction into the European Union: religious imagery and imagery connected and showcasing the island's 'glorious' past through ancient ruins and impressive archaeological findings. The first thematic category we will be discussing is 'Religion'. This group of stamps contains imagery representing figures and events connected to Eastern Orthodox Christianity, its tradition and teachings (145 out of 998 stamps). We should highlight that representations belonging in the sphere of any other religion did not exist in the corpus. Of course one could assume that such a finding was to be

expected as the 78% of the entire population residing in the Republic of Cyprus, identifies with Eastern Orthodoxy and more specifically the Greek Orthodox Church (Pew Research Centre, 2010). On the other hand however, other smaller religious communities existed in the country, including the Armenian Apostolic community, a Roman Catholic one, the Jewish community, and the Turkish Cypriot community which identified with Islam (Sunni Islam) and occupied the 18% of the entire population (Pew Research Centre, 2010).<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless and interestingly enough only one postage stamp in the entire corpus can be found depicting any form of imagery related to Islam and its tradition.



**Plate 3:** Hala Sultan Tekkesi, 17 September 1962, A. Tassos

This particular design was issued in 1962 as part of the Republic of Cyprus' first ever definitive stamp series (Plate 3). It should be noted that the general theme of the entire series had nothing to do with religion or pilgrimage sights. It was supposed to mainly showcase archaeological sites, the endemic flora and fauna of the island, as well as a number of landscapes. The postage stamp in question was specially designed in order to showcase the Mosque of Umm Haram or as it is better known 'The Hala Sultan Tekkesi', a Muslim shrine located on the shores of the Salt Lake of Larnaca. This shrine is listed as an ancient monument and its significance lies partly in the belief that Umm Haram, Muhammad's (570 – 632 AD) wet nurse was buried there during the first Arab raids in Cyprus that took place in 650 AD. Nevertheless while this stamp was issued in order to demonstrate the aforementioned mosque, the representation is quite paradoxical.

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<sup>4</sup>It should be noted how these findings are purely statistical and are certainly not meant to disregard the cultural role that the various minorities have played in the island's history, as well as their existence and contribution in contemporary Cypriot society.

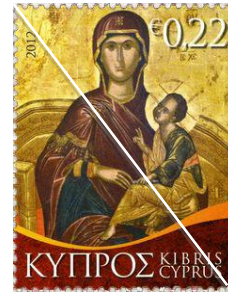
The representation lacks any conscious effort by the designer to depict the particular mosque as something of great historical or religious significance (Andreou and Zantides, 2017a). In other words, the designer does not seem to have consciously attempted the aggregation of this mosque's importance as it was set distinctly in the background without any connotative associations such as the ones Barthes (1973) suggested for the imposition of second meanings, for example a closer point of view, a vivid colouration, or larger scale. On the contrary, the entire image is shown through a combination of brown and black colouration, with a few hints of white space. If we were studying a picture of Larnaca's Salt Lake we could easily claim that it is shown quite accurately on this stamp, where a pair of goats added a sense of the types of endemic species found on the island. In fact the two animals occupy a large and central part of the image, being the first elements that the viewer encounters on the foreground. On the other hand, the Mosque of Umm Haram appears quite small in contrast, and it almost gets lost among the trees depicted in the background. Its positioning renders the viewer unable to closer inspect it, or even architecturally or religiously appreciate it, while even its reflection in the salt lake is almost non-existent (Andreou and Zantides, 2017a). As a matter of fact if not for the stamp's caption the viewer would certainly experience difficulty in perceiving the mosque as being the main topic of the stamp.

However this single stamp design spoke volumes in relation to the ideological and political framework the authorities were following during that time (Andreou and Zantides, 2017a). The lack of any other stamp representing the Islamic religion or religious sites and the ambiguous way in which this one is designed comes in contrast with the large number of postage stamps issued under the thematic umbrella of Eastern Orthodoxy, as shown on Table 5 and Figure 9 (145 out of 998 stamps). Furthermore the thematic category 'Religion' became three times larger (from 9 to 28 stamps) by the end of the 1960's (Tables 6 and 7, Figures 10, 11, 12 and 13). It can be furthermore noted how other relevant studies conducted in parallel with the research presented, confirm our findings on the importance of Greek Orthodox Christianity in Cyprus' official culture, and most importantly its stamp designing program. As reported by Andreou et al. (2016; 2017) the figure of the Virgin Mary is the one that appears the most in the corpus of Cyprus' stamps (Plates 4 and 5). We should highlight that even when separate content analysis was conducted in order for the corpus to be categorized in relation to gender representations, as well as the frequency of the appearance of various figures, religious imagery and most importantly that of the Virgin Mary were among the most

popular ones (Andreou et al., 2016; 2017). This fact alone further illuminated the high position that religion and the Church hold in Cypriot society. Interestingly enough the portrayals of the Virgin Mary had a direct influence on the design of separate groups that depicted women as mother figures and in particular the role of the mother – refugee (Andreou et al., 2016; 2017).



**Plate 4:** The Virgin Mary, 10 November 2005, C. Chatzichristodoulou



**Plate 5:** The Virgin Mary and Baby Jesus, 14 November 2012, K. Tsaggarides and A. Chatzigeorgiou

The image of the Virgin Mary seems to have the maternal dimension of her personality as the dominant quality, making her accessible to the pilgrim not unlike an ordinary woman who understands humanity’s anguish. According to the study conducted by Kalavrezou (1990) on Virgin Mary’s status in religion, her role as ‘Holy Vessel’ shifted to accommodate the image of a Mother for all the believers, thus changing her title to ‘Mother of God’, during the period of Iconoclasm (8<sup>th</sup> century). This introduction of Mary as a now accessible, understanding and sentimental motherly figure was slow and is reflected on the distinctive iconography of each period. The role of the Virgin Mary as a strong mother figure is additionally indicated by the Gospels (PG 100, col. 1476D), where Jesus Christ while addressing Saint John exclaims: ‘Here is your Mother’, and then towards the Virgin Mary ‘Woman, here is your son’. Christ himself goes on to explain the above statement: ‘Be for them what all that mothers are naturally for their children’ (Kalavrezou, 1990). Furthermore, Mary’s human qualities of affection and maternal feelings towards the pilgrim are also reflected in various Christian Hymns, notably ‘The Akathist Hymn’ where Virgin Mary is referred to as ‘Christianity’s Mother’. Her human nature is highlighted as it is also her ability to feel pain due to the loss of her only child, thus making her able to sympathize with anyone’s suffering in the eyes of the pilgrims (*O Akāthistos Īmnos: Ī eklisiastikoī īmni īs tin Iperagīan Theotōkon*, 1998).

Upon closer examination of the two plates presented above (Plates 4 and 5) we can note how typography plays a significant role in transmitting important messages through a seemingly ordinary stamp that reproduced a religious piece of art. It is true that the aforementioned icons were photographed and placed on stamps without any significant changes on their design or layout. One could claim that their colouration might seem accentuated, especially the golden hues, but this can easily present a farfetched conclusion since in fact the two icons greatly resemble their actual hues. Typography on the other hand, was an added feature on the icon, its presentation being solely in the hands of the designer and the officials responsible for the stamp production. As we can see in both cases the word 'Cyprus' is present in all of the three official languages of the state, Greek, Turkish and English, as expected. However, the one that occupies the largest space and dominates over the others is the island's name in Greek. Furthermore, it is noteworthy how the particular word is placed directly and almost protectively under the figure of the Virgin Mary, who in a metaphorical sense guards and gives her blessings to the country. In this sense typography not only acts as a means for emphasis (Ades and Steedman, 1982), but also ideologically links the close relationship of Cyprus with its Orthodox roots.

Our findings therefore can be ideologically and politically linked with the events taking place during the Cyprus dispute period, prior to the events of 1974 and even after that, the need for self-representation and sovereignty. This dispute took place between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots over the sovereignty of the island, from 1955 until 1967, resulting in the outbreak of inter-communal clashes, as well as the constitutional breakdown between Greek and Turkish Cypriots (Richter, 2010). Additionally in the case of Cyprus, religion and politics were and still are closely intertwined. The close bond between the Church and the broader society has been the subject of many discussions and its existence cannot be disputed (Roudometof, 2009). Unlike Catholic and Protestant Churches, the Church of Cyprus and Orthodox Church in general does not distinguish between its institutional structure and the community of believers (Roudometof, 2009; 2011). It is not a coincidence that the most prominent figure and authority of the Republic had been president Makarios III, who was at the same time the Archbishop and spiritual leader of the Greek orthodox community of the island. As the Greek Cypriots, the largest community in the country, felt threatened the need to reinforce their symbolic bonds and identity became urgent. In order to enhance the boundaries of the imagined community, the need for a certain official culture became



crucial and as Lewis stated (1992) this called for institutional support through official visual documents such as stamps. It is important to bear in mind that the Republic of Cyprus was still considered a relatively new state (founded in 1960), emerging from a post-colonial period and therefore the need for a specific identity has been extremely important. In this sense the larger community of the island visually communicated its sovereignty through stamps by highlighting the ideologically charged topic of religion. This choice demonstrated the fact that while socially and politically the new state might have been accepting of the various communities, it simultaneously made clear which of them ought to be considered the leading one. While the island was in fact a rather multi-cultural place this identity cannot be seen on the second largest category of the corpus, which is religion.

The reason for this we believe, can be found in Cyprus' past, as it is a long tale of showcasing identities, among communities and between conflicts, conquests and long periods of colonisation. The island's history proved that many times the rulers and the ruled have been establishing their differences and defining their positions through linguistic and religious characteristics, especially between 1191 and 1960. The Greek Cypriot community therefore, rallied around its Orthodox religion and turned to the west for a sense of identity since they have identified with Greece and Greek culture by tracing their lineage to the Mycenaeans who reached the island over 3000 years ago. As Ware (1983) and Ertl (2008) also asserted, Cyprus' imagined community became equivalent and almost synonymous concepts with the strong presence of a Helleno-Christian civilization and conscience.

Historical evidence and research reveals that the ideology cultivated during this time, was in fact in close proximity and simultaneously reflected the findings of this research concerning the particular time period. There seems to have been a conscious effort to pursue a closer relationship with Greece, in order to re-affirm the Cypriot society of its Greek identity, while at the same time convince any outsider and avoid further doubts over the sovereignty of the state (Bryant, 2004). During the same time the motto 'Cyprus is Greek' or 'Cyprus belongs to Greece' in contrast to 'Cyprus belongs to its people', became a rather favoured quote used by numerous political sides, becoming even a part of popular culture (Mavratsas, 1998).

Though the notion of identity is multi-layered and may cover various aspects from politics to history, in the case of Cyprus we believe, that it has been based on religion and its placement in the broader notion of culture. Since an actual union with Greece

was not considered an option any more, especially after 1960, the cultural relationship with the country has been the closest alternative. However, as Calotycho (1998) and Papastephanou (2005) noted, these ideas should not be necessarily understood as purist conceptions of culture and bloodline. We should take into account that Cyprus, all the while being the meeting place of various civilizations, just like other Levantine locations, has been from antiquity shaped by the Greek cultural tradition and this Greek dimension of its identity has been part of the collective self-understanding of the island's people even after the Ottoman conquest in 1570. In this way and through the constant maintenance of the Greek influence, the aspiration of unification with the Greek metropolis has been preserved.

Quantitative content analysis had shown that an equally important thematic category in the creation of Cyprus' official culture has been 'Archaeological findings and sites' containing 147 out of the 998 postage stamps, thus making this category the largest one. Other themes that could have been promoting the 'unique' image and official culture of Cyprus have been found to be significantly smaller. Such an example would be the category entitled 'Folklore/Traditional culture', which holds only 49 out of the 998 stamps. Another example of this would be 'Tourism and recreation' which contained only 10 stamps out of the total 998. This finding can be considered quite unexpected as tourism occupies a dominant position in the island's economy (World Economic Forum, 2011). Additionally, there is evidence that approximately two million tourists choose the Republic of Cyprus as their holiday destination, providing both economic growth and employment for the citizens (CYSTAT, 2015), and therefore it would be expected that this group of stamps would be larger than it is.

On the other hand the thematic category 'Archaeological findings and sites' presented a significant rise in its numbers by the end of the 1960's (Table 6 and 7, Figure 10, 11, 12 and 13). The stamps in this category almost doubled in quantity by the end of 1960's, from 19 to 37 stamps. It can be easily assumed that such imagery held the proof of a long history and civilization on the island, elevating this newly-founded, post-colonial state in terms of culture and heritage. As history is based on events past which have been documented it acts as a guide for the construction of a narrative. Furthermore one should have in mind that because of its nature, written and documented history is many times considered a 'true' account of the past (Liakos, 2007; Akter, 2011). This ideological construction promoted through stamps can definitely be

considered a safe choice, as it relied on the ‘authenticity’ of history and its objective documentation.

The idea of revoking imagery from the (ancient) past can also be found as a strategy in the case of South African stamps. South Africa’s official repertoire used the Bushmen and their rock art in order to create a symbol that promoted the country, simultaneously paying homage to the past and attempting to show the diversity of the population (Jenkins 2012). The prehistoric Bushmen’s art might have acted as a neutral symbol for the country as lineage celebrates the local indigenous people and their culture, while at the same time incorporating it into the sphere of official culture which belongs and represents all the ethnic groups found in South Africa.

While the application of ancient relics on Cypriot stamps might be considered a similar tactic to this performed in South Africa, there are certain differences that need to be acknowledged. The imagery of Cyprus’ stamps falling under the thematic category ‘Archaeological Findings and sites’ presents quite a heterogeneous corpus starting from Neolithic times. There are postage stamps showing the well-preserved village Khirokitia, while there is also a large number of stamps depicting relics and archaeological findings belonging to the second millennium BC when Mycenaean Greeks settled on the island, relics and sites belonging to the Classical and Eastern Roman period, as well as a number of stamps depicting findings from the French Lusignan dynasty and Venetian period.

Under the light of such a varied group of imagery it becomes difficult to assign ‘ownership’ and one could wonder which of those images might correctly represent a common Cypriot heritage shared by the major ethnic groups of the island. The topic of the identification of a common heritage among the members of Cypriot society has been a rather complicated matter due to the ethnic conflict that the Cyprus dispute presented, with the violent events and division of 1974 making matters even more problematic. As Constantinou, Demetriou and Hatay (2012) explained, the conflict had provoked the ethnicization of culture and cultural artefacts, such as archaeological sites and findings. Obviously not all of them can be used in such a manner due to their different historical periods and various origins. Nevertheless the ‘ancient Greek connection’ proved to be extremely important to the Republic of Cyprus as it boosted the perennial link between Hellenism and the island. This aided the state in increasing its ‘ownership’ rights on the island in public discourse. Despite Cyprus’ independence in 1960, the aspiration of union with Greece was still alive during the subsequent decades (Mavratsas, 1998).

And while the idea of a political union with Greece was certainly a challenging feat, the ideological connection to the larger country was definitely easier to accomplish. Additionally symbols and images that revoked ‘Greekness’ became symbols of resistance used by the Greek Cypriots after the events of occupation of the northern part of Cyprus by the Turkish army, in 1974 (Constantinou et al., 2012).

An example of such an emblematic and simultaneously politically important image is that of the ancient ‘Kyrenia ship’, the wreck of a 4th century BC Greek merchant ship discovered in 1965. As Constantinou et al. (2012) noted this event was celebrated in numerous writings and documentaries, elevating Andreas Kariolou (n.d.) the Greek Cypriot diver who found the wreck to a heroic figure. While the actual ship remains in Kyrenia Castle on the northern part of the island the image of the Kyrenia ship is vastly reproduced by the Republic of Cyprus in the Cypriot passport, on Cypriot euro coins and most importantly for this study on Cyprus’ postage stamps.



**Plate 6, 7, 8 and 9:** Kyrenia II, 3 October 1987, G. Pantsopoulos

This set of postage stamps was issued in 1987 in order to commemorate firstly the restoration of Kyrenia ship, but most importantly the construction of an exact replica of the ship-wreck named Kyrenia II. It is notable how the replica was used as a ‘floating ambassador’ for the Republic of Cyprus, while visiting West Germany, New York and Japan in the late 1980’s (Constantinou et al., 2012). The construction of another replica of the same ship, under the name Kyrenia-Liberty was not extraneous. This proverbial

ambassador has been simultaneously showcasing the official culture constructed by the Republic of Cyprus while at the same time serving as an ideological reminder of the unsolved Cypriot problem and the Turkish army's occupation of the island's northern part where the actual ship is kept. This idea is dramatically highlighted by the inscription on Plate 6, which reads 'Ancient ship imprisoned in occupied Kyrenia castle'. The ancient artefact is referred to almost as a human entity who is held captive in a castle waiting for the time of liberation, after a long period of imprisonment.

Furthermore the inscriptions referring to the state's name on these stamps are once more slightly different and they transfer significant information on the shift of power and the sovereignty of the island. This time the Greek word 'ΚΥΠΡΟΣ' appeared first, the English version of the name came second, while the Turkish 'KIBRIS' appeared last. The chosen sequence was definitely a conscious decision in the visual representation of the country's official culture, highlighting the dominance of the Greek word in the inscription, followed by the translation of the word in the international language which is English, and leaving the last space for the Turkish word. Moreover the symbolic importance of this ancient relic was accentuated on the stamps with careful design. The position of the ship is central and it is quite large in comparison to the rest of the image's elements, while additionally it is the only coloured one (Plates 6, 7, 8 and 9). The absence of a clear frame for the ship brings it in close-up and sets it further apart from the background. As Jewitt and Oyama (2004) asserted, these attributes bring the imagery closer to the viewer and makes it appear more accessible, while intensifying its significance. In this case however, this approach is also used to add motion to the ship and treat it more like an energetic subject that sails around the world transferring the message of its country's ongoing issue of occupation, coming in contrast with the motionless, grey and dull background. It should be noted that this archaeological finding, the importance of its preservation as well as the symbolism it carries have been highlighted through the educational system as well. In particular, educational programs that allowed students and children to visit the shipwreck's replica, board it and learn about its history and significance were designed and carried out until 2017 (Parēmvasi giā prostasīa tū Karaviū tīs Kerīnias, 2016; Imēra gnorimīas me to Karāvi tīs Kerīnias, 2017).

Nonetheless recent changes in thematic categorization have been indicated by quantitative content analysis of the corpus. The two prevailing thematic categories 'Archaeological findings and sites' and 'Religion' have declined in their numbers from

the induction of the Republic of Cyprus in the European Union in 2004, onwards (Tables 11 and 13 and Figures 15 and 16). On the contrary thematic categories that could be considered ‘neutral’ or charged with weaker ideological connotations than that of religion and heritage were preferred. Such an example would be the thematic category ‘Flora and fauna’ which became a favoured topic on stamps rising from 12.2% to 16.5% of the entire corpus after 2004 (Tables 11 and 13 and Figures 15 and 16). This thematic category contains postage stamps that reproduce images of endemic flora and fauna, which can be found in Cyprus.

One of the most favoured images that appear in this category is that of an endemic species of Mouflon (wild sheep), the Cypriot Mouflon or Agrino. This wild sheep is considered to be the biggest animal of the Cyprus fauna and is also a protected species under the federal law of the Republic of Cyprus (Press and Information Office, 2012). The particular animal has not only been used on postage stamps, but also on Cypriot euro coins and as the logo of Cyprus Airways, the flag carrier airline of Cyprus (Plates 10 and 11).



**Plate 10:** 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Cyprus Airways, 24 September 1973, A. Tassos      **Plate 11:** Forest, 4 May 2011, S.Karamallakis

The expression of collective identity in official culture construction through endemic species is a common strategy. Countries such as Lebanon and Canada have both favoured endemic flora species for their respective flags. The choice of Cedrus Libani (Lebanon Cedar) as a suitable image for the flag of the country was made in 1943, in the midst of political crisis. The Cedar of Lebanon is mentioned in the Bible numerous times giving the tree an emblematic value and making it the oldest symbol of the country. At the same time the image of an evergreen tree can be perceived as a metaphor for hope and prosperity (Lamb, 1944). Similarly Canada adopted the leaf of

endemic maple trees for its own flag in 1965, in order to distinguish the representation of Canada's official culture from the influence of Great Britain. As Barney and Heine (2015) explained this symbol seemed to be the right choice for the representation of collective identity as it has already been familiar among the people of Canada, thus making it more easily acceptable, as well as recognizable.

In the case of the Republic of Cyprus, the changes in the political scene have also triggered alterations in the official culture representation. According to relevant studies (Bryant, 2004) the induction of the country in the EU, as well as contacts between the two sides starting in 2003, have provoked new actions and conversations that attempt a reconciliation or even a future co-existence. It is obvious that such a process would be rather slow and steady in order to be successful. These important events have definitely signalled a new phase for the country which had a direct influence on its visual communication. The official culture is now following a 'milder' repertoire that reflects and encourages the need for discussion and reconciliation. The Republic of Cyprus additionally proceeded in selecting its own national plant in 2006. The Cyprus cyclamen was chosen as the official national plant of the country by the Cypriot Council of Ministers. This decision seemed to be related to the representation of official culture through visual communication, as the Press and Information Office (2012) declared. In particular this report explained the need to specify a national plant stating that while there are no certain known reasons for a country to select a national plant, tree or animal, it is still considered a significant 'cultural and communication feature' for the state as well as 'a formality that has cultural and historic significance' (Press and Information Office, 2012). The report also stated that the procedure for the choice of a national plant or animal as a symbol is dependent on 'culture' and 'the expectations of people in the respective country' (Press and Information Office, 2012).

It was not the first time that the Republic of Cyprus had used imagery of flora for the construction of a 'neutral' official culture. The flag of the Republic of Cyprus was presented in 1960 and created by İsmet Vehit Güney (1923 – 2009), as a result of a design competition. The designers were instructed to create a flag that promoted the peaceful co-existence of Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots. Colours such as blue and red and symbols alluding to Greece and Turkey were asked to be avoided by the participants. Güney's flag design won the competition as the white colour on the background, and the olive branches surrounding the map of Cyprus were considered to promote the peaceful and harmonious future of all ethnic groups living on the island

(Evripidou, 2009). In fact the olive branch has been considered to be one of the most popular and recognizable symbols of peace for over two millennia. The Roman poet Vigil (70–19 BC) associated this symbol with Pax, the godly entity responsible for peacefulness. Furthermore in Ancient Greece, olive wreathes were given as a symbolic award to the winners of Olympiads, the athletic games during which the Olympic Truce was respected and all types of disputes and military attacks were prohibited. As Rosenthal (1994) wrote, the olive branch could be also perceived as a symbol of new prosperous beginnings in the Biblical story of Noah.

This thematic category containing the endemic species of flora and fauna has been deliberately accentuated in terms of design.



**Plate 12:** *Rosa Damascena*,  
23 March 2011, E. Eliadou



**Plate 13:** *Origanum Dobium*,  
2 May 2013, P. Apostolou



**Plate 14:** *Jasminum Grandiflorum*,  
2 May 2012, E. Eliadou

The position of the objects pictured is always central, they are quite large in size and the absence of a frame brings them almost at close-up in many cases (Plates 12, 13, 14, 15, 16 and 17). These characteristics make the imagery appear open to the viewer, accessible and familiar (Jewitt and Oyama, 2004). Moreover, as Danesi (2004) asserted, the colouring is a semiotic system of its own, which carries both sensory and emotional meanings. The colours used for the flora and fauna species on stamps were intensified, many times to the point of having the spectator wondering whether these are their natural colours or if they have been digitally enhanced in order to perhaps make them appear more vivid, bright and joyful (Plates 12 and 13). The special attention that has been given to the colouration of this category comes in contrast with stamps belonging in other categories, such as the one depicting archaeological findings. Even the typography used on these stamps gives away important hints related to the attempts at reconciliation among the two communities. In fact typography has the ability to function as a means for emphasis (Ades and Steedman, 1982), something that



undoubtedly happens here. We can note that while the Greek word for Cyprus remained hierarchically first, it is now followed by the Turkish equivalent, leaving the word in English last (Plates 15 and 16), thus bringing typographically at least the two communities closer. Furthermore there were even more design decisions involved in order to make this thematic category more noticeable.



**Plate 15 and 16:** Sea anemone and Sea fan coral, 5 June 2013, S. Malekou

**Plate 17:** Opuntia Ficus - Barbarica, 15 June 2006, K. Panayi



**Plate 18 and 19:** Eleonora's falcon  
25 September 2003, G. Theophylaktou

For the first time in the corpus of Cyprus' stamps a design which is not rectangle or square shaped was issued (Plates 18 and 19). In order to honour an endemic species of falcons, a triangular stamp design was produced, giving the image a dynamic tension that did not exist in previous stamp designs. Let us not forget that triangles are regarded as rather ideal and dynamic forms in Western cultures (Danesi, 2004). Furthermore, the introduction of more than one sense in the design of Cyprus' stamps has to be the most important differentiation in the state's postage stamp strategy and a new approach in transmitting the importance of this particular thematic group in the official culture of the state. A new set of stamps now combined both the senses of sight and smell for the first

time (Plates 12, 13 and 14). In fact, in 2011, 2012 and 2013 the Republic of Cyprus issued three different sets of aromatic stamps representing endemic species of flora and evoking the actual smell of the plants and flowers represented when rubbed. The authorities used all of the aforementioned ways to enhance the presence of this type of imagery in its official repertoire.

Lastly, another aspect that Cyprus' official culture seems to have gravitated towards since its induction in the European Union is that of the promotion of the ideas of research and education. This interestingly enough coincided with the establishment of new universities, as well as a change in the relevant law in order to allow the operation of private universities in the country (The Cyprus agency of quality assurance and accreditation in higher education, 2005). Thematic categories that promoted education and research existed prior to Cyprus' induction in the European Union of course but their numbers increased drastically after that significant event took place. In particular we can note how from 1.1% of the entire corpus containing stamps from this thematic group, the percentage rose to 6.9% after 2004 (Table 13 and Figure 16).

Education in Cyprus was one of the social aspects that the Orthodox Church took responsibility for and was established in the decades prior to the arrival of the British (Dodd, 2010). The education system, even during the British colonial period promoted the long history of the island, as well as the Greek influence since the classical period. The rise of urbanization taking place during that period therefore, as well as the improvement of accessibility to education contributed to the spread of these ideas. However, as our findings show the importance of this topic in relation to stamp design, as well as the messages transferred through it have been notably changing through the years and most noticeably after the island's induction into the European Union. This of course, can be interpreted as the country's need for the citizens to sense and realize their new identity within a wider family of nations with different ideologies, values and ideas that is the European Union.

The postage stamp we are using as an example was published in honour of the *International children's book day* in 1976 (Plate 20). It was the first time that Cyprus was issuing a postage stamp celebrating this date since its establishment in 1966. The ideology behind such a postage stamp could be associated with the myth of literacy. This meaning has been integrated in our society as one's ability to not only read and write, but also to critically evaluate the world around him/her in order to solve everyday problems connected with the activities of the society. As mentioned before and

according to Barthes (1972), myths are interrelated with the dominant ideologies of our time. These ideologies are a product of the combination of denotation and connotation in order to create some deeper, cultural assumptions. Therefore, many of these ideologies are taken for granted by the members of each culture and are integrated into the society as dominant ideas and values.



**Plate 20:** International children's book day, 27 September 1976, A. Tassos

This illustration consists of three children (two boys and one girl) in a library setting. It is interesting to note how the little boy is standing in front, much larger in size than the girl as the spectator watches him in close-up, holding his book with seriousness and gripping it with confidence not even removing his hand in order to turn the page. He is clearly engaged in it. These traits reflect Jhally's (1987) findings about the portrayal of men in media. On the other hand, the female figure is shown from behind, standing in the background and being much smaller than the boy. This characteristic is discussed by Goffman in his seminal work *Gender Advertisement* published in 1979, where he talks about the dimension of relative size, which is the tendency for male figures to be represented much larger and/or taller than female. Furthermore, the boy seems to have picked a book and is already immersed in the topic while the female figure is indecisive. She seems to have chosen a book depicting a female portrait on the cover and assumingly having a female oriented topic. The choice to portray the female figure turning her back to the audience could be associated with what Goffman calls 'licensed withdrawal'. Whereby, the male is presented as having an energetic role in the scene, the female is restricted to a passive one. The male's mere presence in the picture allows its female's counterpart to withdraw from the environment and preoccupy herself with something else without paying much attention to the viewer's gaze. According to Goffman (1979), characteristics such as the aforementioned tend to create stereotypical images where men are presented to be more active, energetic and in our case literate, while on the other hand women are defined as being quite passive. These types of

representations manage to cultivate the specificity of each gender role and create stereotypes associated with them, thus segregating and limiting the genders from a very young age and perhaps sending a somewhat distorted message to the citizens of what actual education represents.

After the induction of the Republic of Cyprus into the European Union however, we noted a differentiation in the representation of this category (Plates 21 and 22), as well as a dramatic rise in its numbers (Table 13 and Figure 16).



**Plate 21 and 22:** Europe - Children's literature, 5 May 2010, Ch. Vassileiadou

The first thing we note on these two 2010 examples is the absence of human figures as the idea of promoting the value of literacy in young ages is presented through the depictions of popular book titles. Additionally, the word 'Europa' on two of the covers indicates that these stamps have been designed in cooperation with the responsible Ministries of other European Union countries in order to promote their common culture and build awareness on certain topics, the value of literacy amongst children, in this instance (Posteurop, 2017). For this reason the assortment consists of international book titles such as *The merry adventures of Robin Hood*, *The adventures of Tom Sawyer*, *Gulliver's travels* and *Cinderella*. Noticeably there was no further explanation on why these particular books were selected, aside from the fact that they are considered to be classical novels. The colouration of the covers did not provide any indication towards which are the 'female-oriented' books, as even *Cinderella's* cover is in green colour. Additionally, the notion of literacy and its importance in the creation of a better society is symbolically displayed using the background image, as the books do not appear anymore as part of a formal looking library but in a much friendlier environment of a meadow. Prosperity and hope for the future is presented to the younger generation

of the need for their literacy and education, something that it was metaphorically connoted in the form of blooming nature and evergreen trees (Lamb, 1944). It is obvious from these representations that albeit small in numbers, the thematic category depicting aspects of education and research was given careful consideration and was chosen to showcase the progressive profile of a contemporary European Union country. A country, in other words which values the strength of knowledge for all of its citizens. Simultaneously, representations which could show education as cold and clinical, or even gender-oriented (Plate 20) have been avoided.

## **5.4 Summary**

This section aimed to discuss the findings of the content analysis conducted and to relate its findings with the socio-political background of Cyprus, as well as the theoretical framework chosen for the present research. In this part of the research we dealt with the official representation of the country as it appeared through its stamp designing program, and therefore with the topics and themes chosen to be promoted by it, thus answering the first research question posed as well as its sub-question. The key findings (Table 14) that emerged from the first study and guided the design of the survey research were the following:

1. The predominant themes that appear in the corpus of stamps we studied have indeed being affected by the important historical events we set, that were 1974 and 2004, as we expected. As we speculated since stamp designs are created and issued by governments it would be highly unusual to remain completely detached from their politics, significant events or even social changes. That would suggest that these objects were designed without any specific reason or second thought behind them, something that would be at odds with their very persistent existence even nowadays in the era of electronic mail.
2. According to our findings, the official culture of the state favoured topics that highlighted the country's ancient ancestry and accentuated the importance of religion as part of the official repertoire (Tables 6 and 7, Figures 10, 12 and 13) at least until 2004, and especially during times of internal struggle. As we expected the archaeological findings on the postage stamps of the Republic of Cyprus accentuated the long history of the island. Simultaneously the choice of portraying Greek Orthodox imagery on stamps gave the Greek Cypriot

community a sense of ‘ownership’ and sovereignty, something tremendously important for a newly-formed and almost immediately divided country that was challenged to present a solid front despite its internal struggles.

3. Nonetheless, there are strong indications deriving from the analysis of the corpus that there was a shift in the representation of the official culture, as the country became a member of the European Union towards ‘neutral’ topics, as well as themes that promote the concept of education and progress (Table 13 and Figure 16). In this case we considered these findings to be unexpected as other thematic categories that could be suitable were avoided, such as the one representing the promotion of tourism, in favour of the depiction of endemic species. An explanation of this choice was sought in the past where once more flora and fauna presented a plausible rationale, when the Republic of Cyprus turned to representations of nature when it needed to design its flag in 1960. A brief of creating a picture that promoted peacefulness and prosperity, and avoiding connotations of conflict between the communities residing on the island was given. As negotiations for uniting Cyprus restarted in 2003 and the country became a member of the European Union in 2004, the need for an official repertoire that exuded positivity and avoided heavily charged ideological messages emerged once more.

Concluding this chapter, we underlined the importance of stamp imagery in the cultivation of official culture representation and the various messages contained in them, as well as how they change based on important socio-political events. These messages although heavy with political and ideological connotations are transferred nevertheless through every day and ordinary images that depict practices, customs and objects that the citizens can relate to in a collective manner due to their experiences and interaction with them. In the subsequent chapters we will be looking into the parts of the research concentrated on the perceptions of Cypriot citizens in relation to their official culture as it is presented through stamp imagery with the aid of survey research and focus groups.

**Table 14:** Overview of key findings that emerged from the first study (quantitative content analysis)

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**Key findings**

1. We confirmed that the postage stamp themes issued by the Republic of Cyprus are influenced and modified in accordance to important events, such as the 1974 war and the country's induction in the European Union in 2004.
  2. During times of struggle (internal conflict) the Republic of Cyprus has employed imagery deriving from religion (Greek Orthodoxy), while additionally showcasing archaeological findings found on the island as a means to boost the country's ties to its ancient heritage and underline its sovereignty.
  3. 'Neutral' topics with universal meanings, such as imagery deriving from the endemic flora and fauna have been favoured during recent years, as the country became a member of the European Union and talks for the reunification of the island started taking place in 2003.
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## **6 Second study (based on survey research): exploring official culture and ideology on the Republic of Cyprus' postage stamps through the views of citizens.**

### **6.1 Aims, methodology, instrumentation and implementation<sup>5</sup>**

The outcomes gathered and analyzed with the aid of quantitative content analysis were encouraging in order to further understand the messages and ideas transferred through stamps in the Cypriot framework, from a different scope this time; the citizens of the state itself. By examining which images or symbols on stamps the citizens consider noticeable and memorable, what colours they consider to be representative of their country and what kind of imagery they would have proposed to be included in stamp design, the researcher hopes to gain a more holistic understanding of official culture. Especially we were interested in terms of its creation but also its interpretation as a collective response from the targeted local audience. The researcher had chosen questions aiming to make the imagery on stamps the focus of conversation, using semiotic resources such as colour and symbols in order to see how the citizens decode the messages sent, which of them they accept and reproduce, where they negotiate and modify these messages, and if some of them are fully rejected. This survey will also give answers to the second research question posed, as well as its sub-question which investigated the views of citizens in relation to the messages promoted through their country's stamp designing program, their perception on the most suitable representation of their country on its stamps, investigated through the socio-political background of the country, as well as our participants. Additionally, the third research question posed will be answered in synergy with the findings of the first and third study as it aimed to compare the existing official culture representation and the perceptions of citizens (for more on this study's research questions see Chapter 2).

A survey is generally considered a research method for extracting specific information from a group of people by using a list of questions. It is particularly favoured in areas such as psychology, education and social sciences as it many times deals with assessing human behaviour, thoughts, emotions and views. Surveys are generally used to best effect if we are looking for factual information related to large numbers of people, such as who they are, what they think and how they act

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<sup>5</sup> For the entire questionnaire designed and used for this study, see APPENDIX 2.



(Denscombe, 2010). It can be limited to studying a certain group of population, like in our case where we aimed to study Cypriot citizens, or it may have a more global, widespread goal. Generally a survey consists of questions that have been predetermined by the researcher and given to a sample. The term sample refers to a representative part of a larger population, one that due to its size can give an accurate picture of the attitudes or beliefs of its entirety (Shaughnessy, Zechmeister and Zechmeister, 2011). Furthermore the researcher can compare the views and attitudes of various populations, or their development over time. A relevant and good sample is considered to be the one that allows the researcher to generalize his / her findings to the entire population (Shaughnessy et al., 2011).

The researcher decided to focus only on individuals who are citizens of the legal state of the Republic of Cyprus, in other words people who have nationality of the Republic of Cyprus. The survey research was conducted between June 2015 and September 2015 covering all of the areas controlled by the Republic of Cyprus. It should be noted that areas belonging to the Republic of Cyprus but currently under Turkish occupation (UN Security Council Resolution 541, 1983; UN Security Council Resolution 550, 1984) were not included in this research. This survey included a sample of 384 adults (above 18 years old) Cypriot participants. The population of adult Cypriot citizens, residing in the Republic of Cyprus was around 672000 according to the 2013 demographic report (Statistical Service, 2013). The researcher decided to take a sample of 384 participants with a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error.

Sampling in general can be random or non-random (purposive). Random sampling is considered to be the one used more often in surveys. The individuals are chosen entirely by chance and therefore every member of the population has the same and predicted amount of possibility to be included in the research. On the other hand a non-random sampling implies that the researcher chooses the respondents in relation to accessibility, convenience or a particular purpose (Hill and Alexander, 2006). The main disadvantage of relying on the accessibility or convenience is that the particular sample might not be representative of the entire population we are interested in studying.

In the case of the present study the sample was random, as we wanted any member of the population to have an equal opportunity of appearing in the sample. It had been organized in clusters in order to be more easily maintained in an attempt to gain answers from all of the areas in the country in a systematic manner. The survey research covered all of the areas controlled by the Republic of Cyprus. These are: Nicosia district,

Limassol district, Larnaca district, Paphos district and a part of Famagusta district. By using this technique the researcher divided the total population into clusters, according to their district of residence. Cluster sampling is one of the main methods of probability sampling and it involves the process of dividing the sample population into groups. The logic followed is based on the notion that the sample can be divided into convenient clusters, rather than strata. In this sense we can pick respondents randomly from within the clusters we created, and therefore obtain a representative number of responses from within the particular groups we are interested in. For the sample within the clusters to be considered incidental, the researcher used Excel 2010 in order to come up with randomized numbers that matched the addresses of the various participants.

Once the sampling process was determined, the researcher sought to find out the most suitable form for the present study. Broadly speaking, surveys can be divided into two categories: questionnaires and interviews. Questionnaires are in their more usual form instruments given to the respondent to complete on his / her own, while interviews are completed by the researcher based on the answers given by the respondent. For this step of the research we decided to conduct a survey with the use of questionnaires. There are different methods for administering questionnaires: mail surveys (postal), telephone surveys, online surveys, door-to-door and email surveys. In our case the required information was collected via administering door-to-door, printed questionnaires. This method of personally delivering the survey to the sample certainly has its shortcomings like any other method, while on the other hand it bears lots of positive aspects too, making it the most suitable for our own research. It is true that it is the most time consuming among all of the methods of administering questionnaires, while at the same time it can prove to have high costs for the researcher who wishes to travel and meet the participants. It is also the riskiest approach for the researcher in comparison to the others as he / she may find himself / herself faced with the indifference of the audience, or even in more extreme cases with abusive responses, especially if the sampling is random as was the case with our study. It is therefore a process that requires self-confidence and close attention by the researcher in order not to find themselves in unpleasant or potentially abusive environments. Additionally, since the presence of the researcher is mandatory in the process there is always the possibility of the respondents trying to appease him / her, by giving socially appropriate answers or attempting to respond in a manner that they think would leave the researcher satisfied. We should also realise that since the respondents have to complete the questionnaire in

the presence of the researcher and hand it back to them at the same time, their time of reflecting on the topic is limited. In this sense this method does not allow the respondents to answer at their leisure, think more deeply, or even change their opinion.

On the other hand the method of handing door-to-door printed questionnaires has lots of advantages and in the case of our research it was considered the best option. Since we were researching a topic that has not being empirically studied before from the perspective of the citizen, we needed to ensure that the participants fully comprehended the questions as well as the general purpose of the study. In this sense it was easier and more concise to answer to any enquiries the respondents had by delivering the questionnaire directly to them in printed form, instead of mailing it to them, or even attempting to explain it via a phone call. This also allowed us to note the parts of the questionnaire that seemed more interesting to the citizens, which parts they found easy to answer and which of them would evoke a conversation if we were to progress into taking interviews. This was the next step of the research. Certainly this would not be possible through an online, postal or email survey and more difficult via a phone survey. It is moreover considered to be the method that results in improved response rates (Hill and Alexander, 2006).

In addition to these positive attributes of the method, the particularities of our research made its use even more imperative. Our sample was to be studied in clusters in the form of Cyprus' towns as in this manner we would ensure that the citizens we sought out came from all over the country and not specifically from the small community of a specific town or village. As the number of citizens included in each cluster were calculated in relation to the actual population residing in each district we needed to keep the numbers of respondents precise for each cluster. This would be very difficult to track had we decided to use any form of online surveys. Furthermore we wished to gather data from different age groups, something that would make the use of phone survey very inconvenient. Usually younger generations prefer not to use home phones, in favour of owning mobile phones. On the other hand the elderly would be easier to communicate with in person rather than via phone calls or online. Lastly, some of our questions were posed in the form of multiple-choice with 21 categories. These types of questions would be very difficult and confusing to answer efficiently through a phone survey, as it would get nearly impossible for the respondent to memorize all 21 of the categories and finally choose one. Following the aforementioned logic and taking

into consideration all of these parameters we decided to adopt the method of door-to-door, printed questionnaires as the most suitable option for this study.

The participants were shortly briefed regarding the research and its topic, as well as notified that the questionnaires will remain anonymous and the data gathered will be only used for research purposes. It is important to note that the participants were deliberately not shown any of the postage stamps contained in the corpus. This decision was taken in order to ensure that the participants' replies would not be biased. On the other hand, the researcher wanted the participants to try and recall any images they might have seen on Cypriot stamps. Furthermore, it was important for the citizens to express their own views regarding what kind of images/symbols they consider suitable for the representation of official culture.

This survey research was designed in order to aid the researcher to identify the ideologies behind the construction of official culture through objects, in this case stamps, from the perspective of the citizens. For this reason the questions were primarily focused on the factors affecting the choice of topics/images on stamps, and also on the visual representation of official culture on stamps, as viewed from the perspective of the citizens. The questions were informed by the field of visual communication and concentrated on the memorization of specific imagery on stamps, on messages transmitted via stamps, factors affecting the choice of imagery on stamps, as well as topics and colours that the citizens consider suitable for visually representing their country. Each survey item was a different variable, related to the imagery on stamps but also aiming to gather results that could be socio-politically (and ideologically) interpreted in the discussion. By examining which images or symbols on stamps the citizens consider memorable, what colours they consider representative of their country and what kind of imagery they would have proposed to be included in stamp design, we hope to gain a more holistic understanding of official culture, in terms of its creation but also its interpretation.

The researcher posed questions aiming to make the imagery on stamps the focus of conversation, using semiotic resources such as colour and symbols in order to see how the citizens interpret the messages sent, which of them they accept and reproduce, where they negotiate and modify these messages and if some of them are fully rejected. The formatting of questions and the scales used for each of them was a crucial aspect in the design of the survey. Variables such as gender, age and educational attainment were tested in relation to the variables related to visual communication via stamps

(memorization of stamp imagery, color, messages promoted through stamps). By implementing quantitative methods of gathering data in this study on stamps, the researcher ensured statistically significant findings that will definitely aid us in order to further explore official culture through visual communication objects, such as stamps. The first category of questions posed were a series of inquiries on general demographical characteristics of the respondents. These types of questions are better placed at the beginning or the end of the survey. In our case the demographic questions were the very first ones the respondents were asked to answer and the information we sought to collect were general characteristics including gender, age category, district of residence and education level (see APPENDIX 2). In some other cases data on the participant's income or nationality are asked but in our case that was not relevant.

The most frequent type of questions in the design of this survey was closed-ended, albeit including one open-ended at the end of the questionnaire (Question 10). Open-ended questions are considered to give the participants the opportunity to express their views, or even add a new perspective to the knowledge of the researcher as it opens a route for a more qualitative approach (Fowler, 2009). This inclusion aided us in gaining insightful and somewhat unexpected suggestions from the respondents that cemented the need for the next step of this study, namely interviews in focus groups.

The rest of the questions posed were closed-ended as the respondents were restricted to selecting from a number of predetermined options (Questions 1 – 9). The main advantage of including these questions in the design is the ability to gather data in a concise and clear manner that would allow us to run statistical analysis, note patterns and relate them to the various demographical characteristics (Fowler, 2009). Naturally closed-ended questions are further divided to different typologies. For the present study we decided to include Importance questions (Questions 1 – 3), Likert questions (Questions 6 – 9), as well as more simple multiple choice questions (Question 4).

Importance or Frequency questions are used to rate the importance or frequency of a particular issue or event on a rating scale. The most usual rating scale used is of one to five as this option is considered to produce richer and more precise data, in comparison to a scale of three. In our case the scale used for the questions ranked from 'not at all', to 'extremely', with the options of 'slightly', 'moderately' and 'very' available in between. Questions employing the Likert scale have the ability to help us further in ascertaining how strongly the respondents feel or agree with a particular statement (Fowler, 2009). The respondents could choose among the options of 'strongly disagree',

‘disagree’, ‘undecided’, ‘agree’ and ‘strongly agree’. Moreover the alternative of ‘no opinion’ could have been selected by the participants, as well as ‘other’. Finally, simple multiple choice questions were included, and the participants could pick only one out of the categories given to them, or alternatively suggest a new one.

Subsequently we will be presenting the questions used for this survey, as well as the reasons for posing them and the type of information we aimed to gather:

*Question 1. Are you interested in philately?*

*Question 2. Do you use Cyprus Post for sending your mail or parcels?*

The first two questions were mostly aiming to be introductory, easy to answer to and give us a broader idea of how many people actually come in contact with stamps while posting or receiving mail, even as philatelists.

*Question 3. Do you remember any images used for the postage stamps of the Republic of Cyprus?*

The third question aimed to be less broad and more specific as it drew the attention of the respondent to the corpus we are studying, namely the postage stamps issued by the Republic of Cyprus. In order to ensure interesting and valuable information we asked the respondents to write down, or even describe the images they recalled.

*Question 4. Which of the thematic categories presented below do you consider to be the most suitable for a postage stamp representing the Republic of Cyprus?*

This question was based directly on the previously undertaken content analysis and its results. In particular we were interested in seeing what type of imagery the citizens would propose for the representation of the official culture in Cyprus. We furthermore prompted the respondents to suggest a particular image that they would consider the most suitable for the thematic category they had already suggested (Question 4a). In this way we could get a clearer and straightforward answer, better comprehending how they visually ‘translated’ their selection.

*Question 5. Which colour would be more suitable for representing the Republic of Cyprus?*

A semiotic resource we were interested in studying aside from the images themselves was colour. The participants were asked to give only one colour, as the most representative of their opinion. It is a well known fact that colour in itself is considered to be a strong medium for the transfer of messages, as it evokes emotions, memories and consequently ideologies (Almalech, 2016). Furthermore the importance of colour in

relation to stamp design and the emotions or messages promoted through it has been mentioned by a number of writers (Jonsson, 2005; Vardopoulou, 2014).

*Question 6. The following messages are being sent from the government to the citizens of the state:*

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree	No opinion
<b>A. Political</b>						
<b>B. Social</b>						
<b>C. Tradition</b>						
<b>D. Religion (Greek Orthodox Christianity)</b>						
<b>E. Antiquities</b>						
<b>F. Other message (explain):</b> _____						
<b>G. No messages at all.</b> <input type="checkbox"/>						

The need for this question was based both on relevant literature that highlighted the political and social implications of stamp design, as well as the findings we gathered through the process of quantitative content analysis (Andreou and Zantides, 2017a). That part of our study proved the role of Greek Orthodox Christianity in the society of Cyprus, as well as its stamp production. Furthermore the promotion of its antiquities was also a crucial aspect in the island's stamp design program. The third option given on the table is related to tradition, as the particular theme has been frequently mentioned during the pilot study we conducted in order to test the suitability of this survey before administrating it onto the sample. In this sense we wanted to see how important the

Cypriot citizens consider these factors that are essentially linked with their country's postage stamps, if they are aware of their importance and to what degree. Finally we added the option of providing a different message, and even the opinion that stamps do not promote any messages at all.

*Question 7. Which of the factors presented below might influence the design of the Republic of Cyprus' postage stamps.*

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree	No opinion
<b>A. Political developments</b>						
<b>B. Economy</b>						
<b>C. Social changes</b>						
<b>D. Design trends</b>						
<b>E. Other (explain):</b> _____						
<b>F. I do not believe that any type of factor could influence the choice of thematic categories for stamps.</b> <input type="checkbox"/>						

Question 7 has been formed following the Likert scale in order to give the respondents the opportunity to rate the various factors accordingly, or claim that they do not have an opinion regarding the topic. The importance of political and economical developments as well as social changes was discussed in relation to postage stamp design in the Republic of Cyprus through the process of quantitative content analysis (Andreou and Zantides, 2017a). For this reason they were included parameters in Question 7. Additionally the aspect of current design trends influencing the process of stamp creation has been added as a variable since relevant studies discuss it as an important factor (Scott and Hoek, 1994; Child, 2008; Akou, 2012; Vardopoulou, 2014). The



respondents were allowed to suggest a parameter of their own if they considered it to be relevant. Finally, they had the option of not choosing any of the factors given if they believed that none of them can affect the design of postage stamps.

*Question 8. The postage stamps represent the image of my country abroad.*

*Question 9. It is important to take into consideration the opinions of the public (citizens of the Republic of Cyprus) regarding the choice of topics on postage stamps.*

Questions 8 and 9 were formed as statements since they were to be answered using the Likert scale. As the questionnaire was progressing we focused on issues such as ideology and official representation in a more direct manner. It has been stated by a number of authors that postage stamps as government documents are representatives of their countries (Lauritzen, 1988; Jones, 2001; Kevane, 2008). In fact the state's self-representation is the most significant role of the stamp (Clausen, 2010). Let us not forget how everyday objects such as stamps, as well as their imagery have the ability to transfer messages both within the community and abroad, as suggested by Edensor (2002). We aimed to test this statement from the side of the citizens, as well as if they could consider their own potential role in the process of stamp design necessary and important, especially since we know that in the case of the Republic of Cyprus at least, citizens are not significantly involved.

*Question 10. Which messages should be promoted through the postage stamps of the Republic of Cyprus, concerning audiences both home and abroad?*

The last question was formed in order to be of qualitative nature and give the respondent the chance to include any other idea or information he/she might have wanted to add. In this way the participants could elaborate on the official representation of Cyprus on its stamps, as well as on the topic of the desired form of representation. Finally, we requested that the participants leave their contact information with us in case they would like to aid in the following stage of the present research.

After gathering the relevant data the next step we undertook was statistical analysis. Both IBM SPSS 19 and Excel 2010 were used for data analysis. Descriptive statistics, as well as correlations have been implemented in order to report significant findings (chi-squares) and test whether certain variables were dependent and affected the answers that the citizens gave us. Additionally, discriminant analysis has been used, in order to determine whether a set of variables were effective in predicting the category membership of our participants, as explained by Klecka (1980), as well as Green and Salkind (2008). Variables such as gender, age and educational attainment have been

tested in relation to the variables related to visual communication via stamps (memorization of stamp imagery they have seen in the past, colour, messages promoted through stamps). By implementing quantitative methods of gathering data in this study on stamps, the researcher ensured statistically significant findings that will definitely aid us in order to further explore official culture through visual communication objects, such as stamps. This survey enabled us to collect the views and opinions of a significant amount of Cypriot citizens, giving us a good platform for the discussion and exploration of this topic.

In our case the use of survey research in the form of questionnaires has been based on the key advantages that this methodological tool holds over others. Firstly, since we studied the representations of official culture on Cyprus' stamps we consequently got an idea of the ways in which the country is being promoted and the image that is constructed around it. Our work aimed however to also study the Cypriot citizen. For this reason we needed a tool that would allow us to gather relevant perceptions in large numbers, a crucial attribute of survey research. As Denscombe (2010) noted survey research is ideal for collecting mass data in a relatively clear and concise way. Additionally when researching the views and opinions of a socially heterogeneous amount of respondents, like in our case, it is important to use a straightforward tool in order to gather information that is meaningful and not ambiguous. It presupposes for the researcher to define which are the issues that they are dealing with. It is preferable to know in advance the factors worth exploring and information needed in order to avoid getting carried away by the entire process (Denscombe, 2010). We ensured that the questions of the survey were constructed when the process of content analysis ended and its results have been analyzed. Since the use of surveys as tools for studying stamps have not been used before we had no previous related research to be based on. Instead we concentrated on the findings of the first phase of the present study and designed the questionnaire having in mind both the general literature found on postage stamps, but most importantly the data we gathered and analyzed via content analysis.

The third important feature that we needed to incorporate by employing survey research was the need to identify specific patterns in the opinions of citizens as a group, rather than individuals. In this sense we could study in more depth variables such as age and gender within the community of Cypriot citizens and link them with the socio-political background. Furthermore, in our case it was rather important to note patterns in the replies of a large amount of Cypriots in order to get a first glimpse into their way of

viewing and comprehending their official culture representation, through stamp design. It should be noted that surveys are usually best suited in gathering data on a relatively uncomplicated manner and certainly does not possess as a method the subtlety and depth of a qualitative approach. Since the questions are predetermined, surveys are not the best way of gathering and exploring new emerging aspects, aside from the ones the questionnaire was being designed to collect. Without disregarding this fact and since no relevant research could be found on the topic we needed to take the step of incorporating survey research in the present study as a means of identifying patterns, opinions and views that were considered significant by a large number of people. This gave us clear indications of the topics and opinions we needed to study in more depth in the final step of the research design, the qualitative one. Since we are discussing complex issues of representation and culture, we needed to have clear indicators of significance before delving deeper into conducting interviews in focus groups.

In the next sections we will lay out the results gathered with the aid of questionnaires and explain these findings taking into consideration the socio-political background of Cyprus. We will additionally indicate the topics that required in-depth analysis and discussion, thus leading us to the final phase of the study, namely the interviews conducted in focus groups.

## **6.2 Results**

Both IBM SPSS 19 and Excel 2010 were used for data analysis. Variables such as gender, age and educational attainment have been tested in relation to the variables related to visual communication as presented through stamps (remembering specific stamp imagery that they have seen in the past, colour, messages promoted through stamps). By implementing quantitative methods of gathering data in this study on stamps, the researcher ensured statistically significant findings that aided us in order to further explore official culture through objects of visual communication, such as postage stamps.

For this study a sample of 384 adults residing in Cyprus were contacted, provided that they were Cypriot citizens. In other words adults who reside in the territory controlled by the Republic of Cyprus and own a Cypriot passport. The population of adults Cypriot citizens, residing in the Republic of Cyprus was around 672000 according to the 2013 demographic report (Statistical Service, 2013). It should be noted

that areas belonging to the Republic of Cyprus but currently under Turkish occupation (UN Security Council Resolution 541, 1983; UN Security Council Resolution 550, 1984) have not been included in this research. The researcher decided to take a sample of 384 participants with a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error.

The frequency and percentage distribution for the demographic characteristics of the sample used in this study are presented on Table 15. As it can be seen, 159 (41.4%) respondents were males whereas 225 (58.6%) were females. Furthermore, 97 (25.3%) of the respondents were between 18 and 30 years old, 105 (27.3%) between 31 and 40 years of age, 90 (23.4%) between 41 and 50, 49 (12.8%) between 51 to 60 and 43 individuals (11.2%) were above the 60<sup>th</sup> year of their age. Furthermore, 181 (47.1%) respondents, that is the majority of the sample, indicated that are holders of a bachelor's degree. Additionally, 124 (32.3%) indicated that the highest level of education they have completed was secondary education, 62 (16.1%) were college's degree holders, whereas 17 (4.4%) indicated primary education as their highest level of education completed. Lastly, 150 (39.1%) respondents answered that Nicosia is their district of residence, 108 (28.1%) indicated Limassol, 65 (16.9%) chose Larnaca, 40 (10.4%) indicated Paphos and 21 (5.5%) indicated Famagusta.

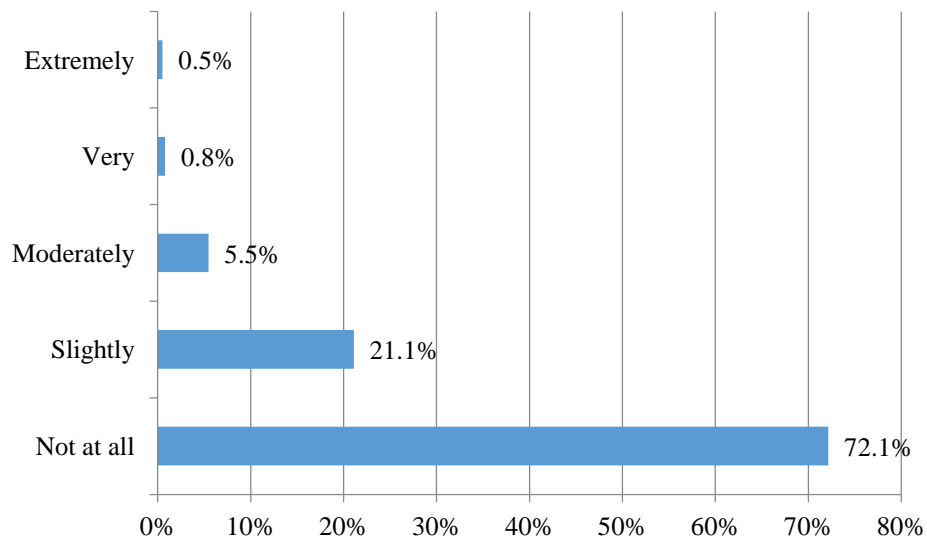
**Table 15:** Frequency and percentage distribution for the demographic characteristics of the study's subjects

		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	159	41.4%
	Female	225	58.6%
Age	18 – 30	97	25.3%
	31 – 40	105	27.3%
	41 – 50	90	23.4%
	51 – 60	49	12.8%
	60+	43	11.2%
Education	Primary	17	4.4%
	Secondary	124	32.3%
	Higher (College)	62	16.1%
District of Residence	Higher (University)	181	47.1%
	Nicosia	150	39.1%
	Limassol	108	28.1%
	Larnaca	65	16.9%
	Paphos	40	10.4%
	Famagusta	21	5.5%

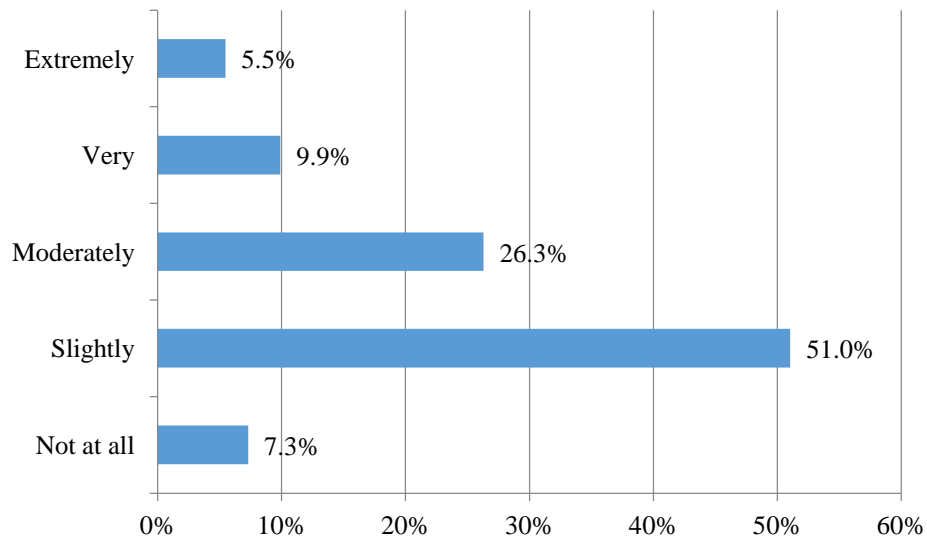
There was no significant association between the interest in philately (Question 1) ( $X^2_2 = 4.323$ ,  $p=0.115$ ), the usage of post offices by Cypriot citizens (Question 2) ( $X^2_4= 8.964$ ,  $p=0.062$ ), the memory of specific imagery used on Cyprus' stamps (Question 3) ( $X^2_4= 8.403$ ,  $p=0.078$ ) and gender. It must be noted that responses related to the question 'Are you interested in philately?' (Question 1) had to be recoded due to the size of responses that indicated 'moderate', 'very' and 'extremely' as their preferred option. Thus a new category was created for these three categories.

The relationship between the interest in philately (Question 1) ( $\rho= 0.029$ ,  $p=0.574$ ), the usage of post offices by the Cypriot citizens (Question 2) ( $\rho= 0.029$ ,  $p=0.574$ ) and the memory of specific imagery used on Cyprus' stamps (Question 3) ( $\rho= -0.005$ ,  $p=0.919$ ) with the education level of the respondents was investigated using Spearman's rank order correlation, and no significant association was revealed. Furthermore, there was no significant association between the interest in philately (Question 1) ( $\rho= 0.084$ ,  $p=0.101$ ) and the age of the participants. On the other hand, there was a significant positive association between the usage of post offices by the Cypriot citizens (Question 2) ( $\rho= 0.124$ ,  $p=0.015$ ) and age, with high levels of usage associated with older age groups. Furthermore, there was a significant positive association between the memory of specific imagery used on Cyprus' stamps (Question 3) ( $\rho= 0.145$ ,  $p=0.004$ ) and age, with high levels of memory of specific imagery associated with older age groups. For the results of these three first questions see Figures 17, 18 and 19.

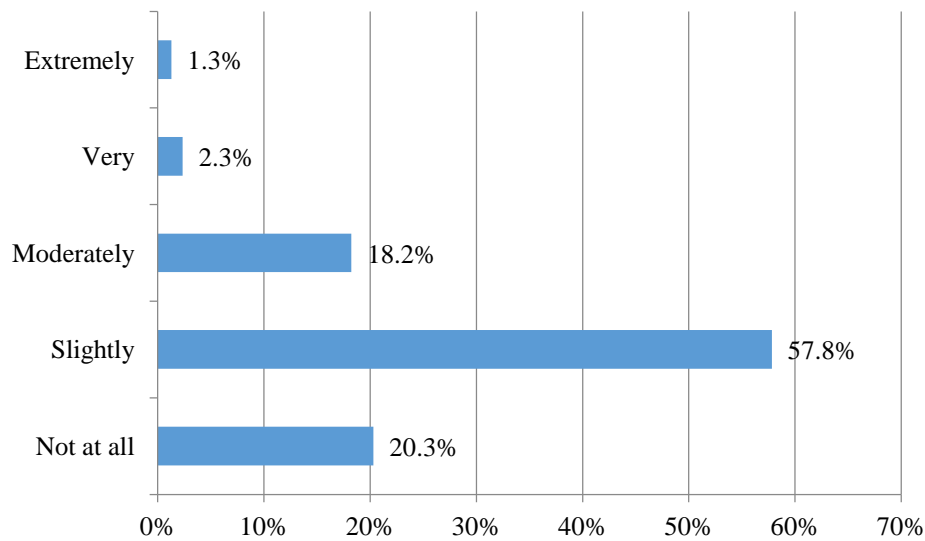
**Figure 17:** Interest in philately (percentage distribution) – Question 1: Are you interested in philately?



**Figure 18:** Usage of post offices by the citizens (percentage distribution) – Question 2: Do you use Cyprus Post for sending your mail or parcels?



**Figure 19:** Memory of specific postage stamp imagery (percentage distribution) – Question 3: Do you remember any images used for the postage stamps of the Republic of Cyprus?



In light of these findings, we should explain in more detail some of the solutions preferred and methods chosen for the analysis. As one could observe many times we combined categories with expected frequencies less than five and therefore we should discuss the reason behind this.

Beginning with the Chi-squares employed, it should be noted that the assumption of the Chi-square test is not that the observed value in each cell is greater than five. Instead, it is that the expected value in each cell is greater than five (the expected value for each cell is  $\text{row total} \times \text{column total} / \text{overall total}$ ). As Fisher (1922) explained, the number of observations in each cell should be large, but the term large is actually debated by statisticians. Fisher's exact test can be used in cases where the expected values are less than five. Additionally it can be used when we have two nominal variables, but in our case we do not.

Regarding the assumptions of chi-square test it must be noted that the lowest expected frequency in any cell should be five or more. Some authors suggest less stringent criteria: at least 80 per cent of cells should have expected frequencies of five or more. If you have a two by two table, it is recommended that the expected frequency should be at least ten. If you have a two by two table that violates this assumption, you should consider using Fisher's 'Exact Probability Test' instead. This is generated automatically by SPSS and provided as part of the output from chi-square. (Pallant, 2011). There is one problem with the chi-square test however, which is that the

sampling distribution of the test statistic has an approximate chi-square distribution. The larger the sample, the better this approximation becomes and in large samples the approximation is good enough to eliminate any worries of it being an approximation. However in small samples, the approximation is not good enough, making significance tests of the chi-square distribution inaccurate. This is why we often read that in order to use the chi-square test the expected frequencies in each cell must be greater than five. When the expected frequencies are greater than five, the sampling distribution is probably close enough to a perfect chi-square distribution. However, when the expected frequencies are too low, it probably means that the sample size is too small and that the sampling distribution of the test statistic is too deviant from a chi-square distribution to be of any use (Field, 2009).

Fisher (1922) came up with a method for computing the exact probability of the chi-square statistic which is accurate when sample sizes are small. This method was called 'Fisher's Exact Test' even though it's not so much of a test, but a way of computing the exact probability of the chi-square statistic. This procedure is normally used on two  $\times$  two contingency tables (two variables that each of them has two options) and with small samples. However, it can be used on larger contingency tables and with larger samples, but on larger contingency tables it becomes computationally intensive and we might find SPSS taking a long time to give us an answer (Field, 2009).

It should be obvious that the chi-square test does not rely on assumptions such as having continuous normally distributed data (categorical data cannot be normally distributed because they are not continuous). However, the chi-square test still has two important assumptions. For the chi-square test to be meaningful it is imperative that each person or item contributes to only one cell of the contingency table. Therefore, we cannot use a chi-square test on a repeated-measures design. Moreover, the expected frequencies should be greater than five. Although it is acceptable in larger contingency tables to have up to 20 percent of expected frequencies below five, the result is a loss of statistical power and thus the test may fail to detect a genuine effect. Even in larger contingency tables no expected frequencies should be below one (Howell, 2006). If we find ourselves in this situation we should consider using 'Fisher's Exact Test'.

Finally, although this is not an assumption, it seems fitting to mention that proportionately small differences in cell frequencies can result in statistically significant associations between variables if the sample is large enough, although it might need to be very large indeed. Therefore, we must look at row and column percentages to



interpret any effects we get. These percentages will reflect the patterns of data far better than the frequencies themselves because these frequencies will be dependent on the sample sizes in different categories. Lastly, SPSS will only do a ‘Fisher’s Exact Test’ for a two × two table. As a final solution in our case and due to the reasons explained above, categories with expected frequencies less than five were combined.

**Table 16:** Memory of specific postage stamp imagery (frequency and percentage distribution) – Question 3 and 3a: Do you remember any images used for the postage stamps of the Republic of Cyprus? Give specific examples.

Categories	Observed Frequency	Percentage	Expected Frequency	Residual
None	84	21.9%	25.6	58.4
Refugee	56	14.6%	25.6	30.4
Cyprus Mouflon (Agrino)	41	10.7%	25.6	15.4
Endemic Flora	33	8.6%	25.6	7.4
Makarios III	28	7.3%	25.6	2.4
Cyprus Flag	21	5.5%	25.6	-4.6
Other	21	5.5%	25.6	-4.6
Aphrodite	19	4.9%	25.6	-6.6
Cyprus Map	18	4.7%	25.6	-7.6
Ancient Coinage	13	3.4%	25.6	-12.6
Endemic Birds	12	3.1%	25.6	-13.6
Virgin Mary	11	2.9%	25.6	-14.6
Church	11	2.9%	25.6	-14.6
Barbed Wire	9	2.3%	25.6	-16.6
Kyrenia Ship	7	1.8%	25.6	-18.6
Total	384	100.00%		

The categories with less than five observations were combined and a new category (other) was created. The chi-square test indicated that the categories shown on Table 16

presented significantly different percentages ( $X^2_{14}=240.922$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). Taking into consideration the residual analysis, the categories entitled ‘None’ (58.4), ‘Refugee’ (30.4) and ‘Kyrenia ship’ (- 18.6) appear to have the greatest contribution to the chi-square test’s result.

**Table 17:** Ideology and thematic categories on stamps (frequency and percentage distribution) – Question 4: Which of the thematic categories presented below do you consider to be the most suitable for a postage stamp representing the Republic of Cyprus?

Categories	Observed Frequency	Percentage	Expected Frequency	Residual
Folklore/Traditional culture	84	21.9%	27.4	56.6
Archaeological findings	60	15.6%	27.4	32.6
Flora and Fauna	45	11.7%	27.4	17.6
Religion	35	9.1%	27.4	7.6
Landscape	32	8.3%	27.4	4.6
Maps	21	5.5%	27.4	-6.4
Flags	20	5.2%	27.4	-7.4
Sports	17	4.4%	27.4	-10.4
Social Themes	15	3.9%	27.4	-12.4
Heritage and its Preservation	14	3.6%	27.4	-13.4
Notables	12	3.1%	27.4	-15.4
Tourism	11	2.9%	27.4	-16.4
Architecture, Professions and Education	10	2.6%	27.4	-17.4
Fine Arts	8	2.1%	27.4	-19.4
Total	384	100.0%		

The categories with less than five observations (Professions and education) were combined and a new category (Architecture, Professions, Education) has been created. The chi-square test indicated that the categories shown on Table 17 present significantly different percentages ( $X^2_{13}=232.510$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). Taking into consideration the residual analysis, categories ‘Folklore/Traditional culture’ (56.6), ‘Archaeological findings’ (32.6) and ‘Fine arts’ (-19.4), appear to have the greatest contribution to the chi-square test’s result.

**Table 18:** Ideology and thematic categories on stamps (specific suggestions on imagery) (frequency and percentage distribution) – Question 4 and 4a: Which of the thematic categories presented below do you consider to be the most suitable for a postage stamp representing the Republic of Cyprus?

Thematic Categories	What image do you consider as the most suitable for the thematic category you have chosen above?											
Folklore/ Traditional culture	Folk Costumes		Folk dances		Traditional Professions		Traditional Easter celebrations		Traditional embroidery		Traditional wedding celebrations	
	35	41.7%	11	13.1%	2	2.4%	7	8.3%	9	10.7%	4	4.8%
	Traditional cuisine		Loom		Farming Scythe							
	2	2.4%	11	13.1%	3	3.6%						
Archaeologica l findings	Aphrodite		Khirokitia		Salamina		Ancient Coinage		Amathounta		Tombs of the Kings	
	24	40.0%	7	11.7%	3	5.0%	4	6.7%	6	10.0%	2	3.3%
	Curium		Apollo		Ancient mosaics							
	9	15.0%	2	3.3%	3	5.0%						
Flora and Fauna	Cyprus Mouflon (Agrino)		Roses		Endemic Flora							
	21	46.7%	13	28.9%	11	24.4%						
Religion	Virgin Mary		Church		Jesus Christ		Saint Andrew the Apostle					
	23	65.7%	8	22.9%	2	5.7%	2	5.7%				
Landscape	Village		Areas under Turkish Occupation		Beach		Sea		Rock of the Greek		Larnaca Salt Lake	
	6	18.8%	8	25.0%	1	3.1%	9	28.1%	4	12.5%	4	12.5%
Maps	Map of Cyprus											
	21	100.0%										
Flags	Flag of Cyprus											
	20	100.0%										
Sports	Olympic Games		P. Kontides									
	11	64.7%	6	35.3%								

Social Themes	Refugees							
	15	100.0%						
Heritage and its Preservation	Museums		Libraries					
	10	71.4%	4	28.5%				
Notables	Makarios III		T. Papadopoulos					
	11	91.7%	1	8.3%				
Tourism	Beach		Sea					
	9	81.8%	2	18.2%				
Fine Arts	Cypriot painters		Cypriot poets		Painting by T. Kanthos			
	4	50.0%	2	25.0%	2	25.0%		
Architecture	Nicosia Municipal Library		Church Architecture		Building Restoration		Limassol Municipal Library	
	1	12.5%	3	37.5%	3	37.5%	1	12.5%
Professions	Traditional Professions							
	1	100.0%						
Education	Universities of Cyprus							
	1	100.0%						

The most preferred thematic category as indicated by the survey's participants has been the one depicting topics from Cyprus' folklore and traditional culture (Tables 17 and 18). Under the particular thematic umbrella the respondents indicated a number of images they would have chosen as the most representative for the topic. The most popular suggestion has been 'folk costumes' with 35 people favouring it, followed by other suggestions such as 'folk dances' (11), 'loom' (11), 'traditional embroidery' (9), 'traditional Easter celebrations' (7), 'traditional wedding celebrations' (4), 'farming scythe' (3), 'traditional professions' (2) and 'traditional cuisine' (2).

The second most suitable thematic category for the stamps of the Republic of Cyprus, according to the participants has been the one showing archaeological findings found on the island. The solutions for image representation in this category were given by our participants as follows: 'Aphrodite' was chosen by 24 Cypriots, 'Curium' (9), 'Khirokitia' (7), 'Amathounta' (6), 'ancient coinage' (4), 'Salamina' (3), 'ancient mosaics' (3), 'Apollo' (2) and 'Tombs of the Kings' (2).

The third largest thematic category as preferred by the citizens who took part in our survey was 'Flora and fauna'. Under the umbrella of the particular topic the respondents presented a slightly more limited array of suggestions. The representation of Cyprus' Mouflon was indicated by 21 respondents, 'endemic roses' by 13 and other unnamed endemic flora species by 11 respondents.

The next thematic category suggested has been the one depicting themes deriving from religion and most specifically Greek Orthodox Christianity. The most popular suggestion has been that of the Virgin Mary, preferred by 23 participants, followed by images of unnamed churches (8), icons of Jesus Christ (2), and Saint Andrew the Apostle (2).

The thematic category 'Landscapes' was suggested by our respondents next. In more detail the participants associated this theme with the following images: 'sea' (9), 'areas under Turkish occupation' (8), 'unnamed villages' (6), 'unnamed beaches' (1), 'the Rock of the Greek' (4) and 'Larnaca Salt Lake' (4).

'Maps' was the subsequent thematic group given by the survey's participants. It is notable how all of the 21 participants who have chosen the particular category as the most suitable for Cyprus' stamps, suggested using the map of Cyprus (21). A similar case was presented by the next thematic category which contained flags. The flag of Cyprus was the preferred choice for all of the 20 people proposing this theme.

The commemoration of Olympic Games (11), as well as Cypriot Olympic medallist Pavlos Kontides (1990 –) (6) were the topics proposed by the participants in order to be featured on stamps representing the category ‘Sports’.

The subsequent theme proposed by the respondents has been the one concerned with the depiction of social themes. All of the respondents believed that the most suitable topic for it was the commemoration of the ongoing issue of Cypriot refugees following the events of 1974 (15).

Next, was a smaller category proposed for its suitability in being depicted on Cyprus’ stamps by 14 respondents, ‘Heritage and its preservation’. It was suggested using images depicting ‘museums’ (10), as well as ‘libraries’ (4) which remained equally unspecified by the participants of the survey.

The thematic group containing notable personalities and their achievements was also proposed by 12 participants as the most suitable for stamp representation. In more detail, our respondents have chosen two former presidents of the Republic of Cyprus for this theme, Archbishop Makarios III (1913 – 1977) (11) and Tassos Papadopoulos (1934 – 2008) (1).

The topics of tourism and the promotion of the country as a touristic destination were proposed by a smaller number of participants (11). They associated this thematic category with the image of sea (2) and certain beaches in Cyprus (9) which remained unspecified.

The next three categories contained less than five observations and thus were combined and created a new category. These have been ‘Architecture, Professions and Education’. ‘Professions’ was associated with images depicting old, traditional and even forgotten professions that once existed in the society of Cyprus (1). The thematic category ‘Education’ was represented equally by only one image suggestion, that of the commemoration of Cyprus’ universities which remained unspecified. Finally, the thematic group ‘Architecture’ contained a larger variety of image examples given by the respondents such as, the Nicosia (1) and Limassol Municipal Libraries (1), ‘church architecture’ (3), and the restoration of notable buildings in Cyprus (3).

The last and smallest thematic category proposed by our participants has been the one featuring the appreciation and promotion of the fine arts in Cyprus. The citizens noted that the most suitable imagery for this category should be the following: the commemoration of various unspecified Cypriot painters and their work (4), the

commemoration of various unspecified Cypriot poets and their work (2), as well as artworks created by Cypriot painter Telemachos Kanthos (1910 – 1993).

**Table 19:** Colour semiotics and postage stamps (frequency and percentage distribution) – Question 5: Which colour would be more suitable for representing the Republic of Cyprus?

Categories	Observed Frequency	Percentage	Expected Frequency	Residual
Yellow	103	26.8%	48.0	55.0
White	62	16.1%	48.0	14.0
Blue	54	14.1%	48.0	6.0
Brown	48	12.5%	48.0	0.0
Light Blue	45	11.7%	48.0	-3.0
Orange	41	10.7%	48.0	-7.0
Green	24	6.3%	48.0	-24.0
Black, Red, Grey	7	1.8%	48.0	-41.0
Total	384	100.0%		

The categories ‘Black’, ‘Red’ and ‘Grey’ presented less than five observations, so they were combined, creating a new category. The chi-square test indicated that the categories shown on Table 19 presented significantly different percentages ( $X^2_7=116.083$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). Taking into consideration the residual analysis, ‘Yellow’ (55.0) and the newly combined category ‘Black, Red, Grey’ (-41.0) appear to have the greatest contribution to the chi-square test result.

**Table 20:** Question 6 – The following messages are being sent from the government to the citizens of the state.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree	No opinion
<b>A. Political</b>						
<b>B. Social</b>						
<b>C. Tradition</b>						
<b>D. Religion (Greek Orthodox Christianity)</b>						
<b>E. Antiquities</b>						
<b>F. Other message (explain):</b> _____						
<b>G. No messages at all.</b> <input type="checkbox"/>						

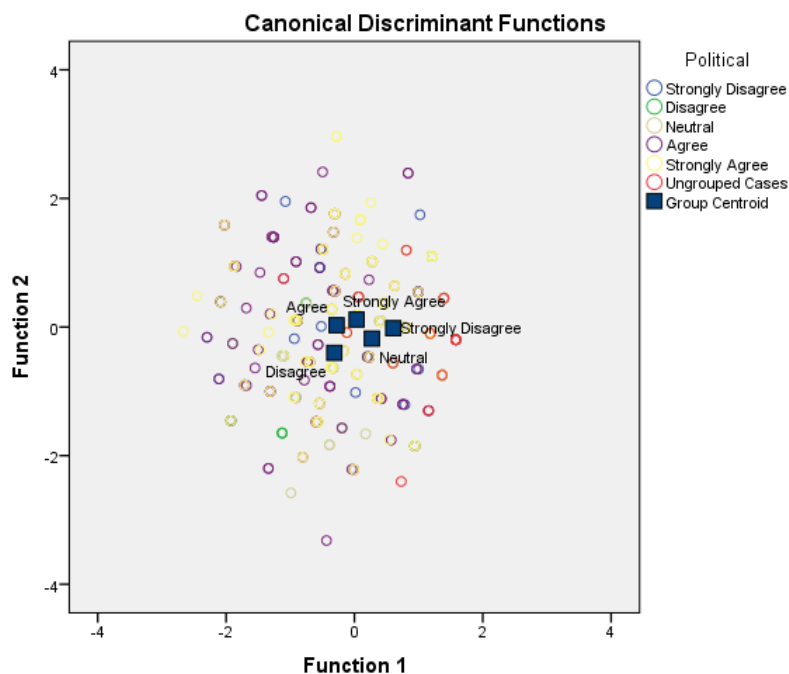
Discriminant analysis has been conducted for all of the variables. The analysis for political messages, revealed four discriminant functions. The four independent variables used were: ‘Gender’, ‘Age’, ‘Education’ and ‘District of Residence’. The first explained 76.2% of the variance, canonical  $R^2 = 0.088$ , the second explained only 14.9%, canonical  $R^2 = 0.018$ , whereas the other two explained less than 9.0% each. In combination these discriminant functions significantly differentiated the treatment groups,  $\Lambda = 0.885$ ,  $X^2(16) = 44.208$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , but upon removing the first function, it was indicated that the second function did not significantly differentiate the ‘political groups’,  $\Lambda = 0.971$ ,  $X^2(9) = 10.848$ ,  $p = 0.286 > 0.05$ . Furthermore, the third and fourth function did not significantly differentiate the ‘political groups’,  $p > 0.05$ . The



correlations between outcomes and the discriminant functions revealed that education loaded fairly highly in the first functions ( $r = 0.748$ ); age loaded higher on the second function ( $r = 0.606$ ) than the first function ( $r = -0.497$ ). The discriminant function plot did not show any discrimination of groups from the four interventions. The standardized discriminant function is:  $discriminant\_score\_Political = 0.542*Gender - 0.238*Age + 0.563*Education - 0.256*District\ of\ Residence$ .

Therefore we assume that females and more educated people tend to agree more with the statement that political messages are being transferred through stamp imagery (Figure 20).

**Figure 20:** Messages transferred through stamps and ideology (political messages)

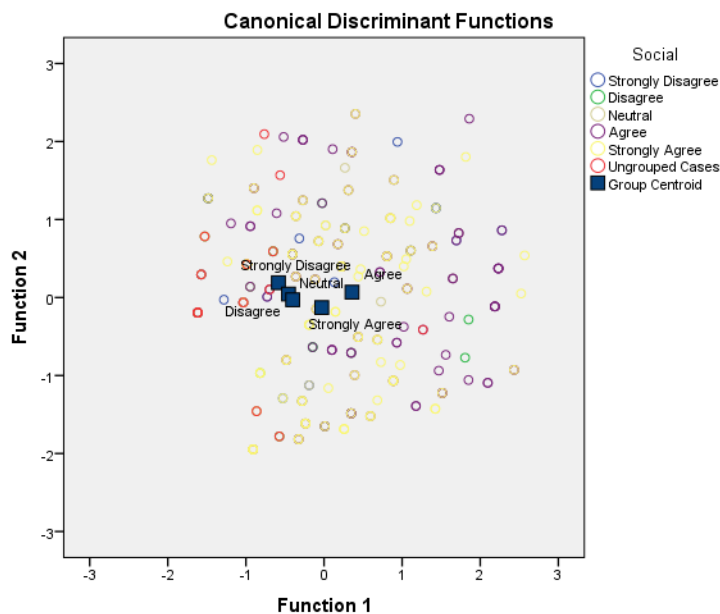


Four independent variables ‘Gender’, ‘Age’, ‘Education’, and ‘District of residence’ were used. Discriminant analysis for the ‘social messages’ revealed four discriminant functions. The first explained 87.6% of the variance, canonical  $R^2 = 0.103$ , the second explained only 8.7%, canonical  $R^2 = 0.011$ , whereas the other two explained less than 3.7% each. When combined, these discriminant functions significantly differentiated the treatment groups,  $\Lambda = 0.883$ ,  $X^2(16) = 45.198$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , but removing the first function indicated that the second function did not significantly differentiate the ‘social groups’,  $\Lambda = 0.984$ ,  $X^2(9) = 5.850$ ,  $p = 0.755 > 0.05$ . Also, the third and fourth function did not significantly differentiate the ‘social groups’,  $p > 0.05$ . The correlations between

outcomes and the discriminant functions revealed that age ( $r = 0.863$ ) and education ( $r = -0.650$ ) loaded fairly high in the first functions; whereas gender loaded higher on the second function ( $r = 0.748$ ) in comparison to the first function ( $r = -0.422$ ). The discriminant function plot showed that the first function discriminated somehow the ‘social messages’ categories. The standardized discriminant function is:  $discriminant\_score\_social = -0.348*Gender + 0.730*Age - 0.327*Education + 0.054*District\ of\ Residence$ .

Therefore we assume that both older and less educated people tend to agree more with the statement that social messages are being transferred through stamp imagery (Figure 21).

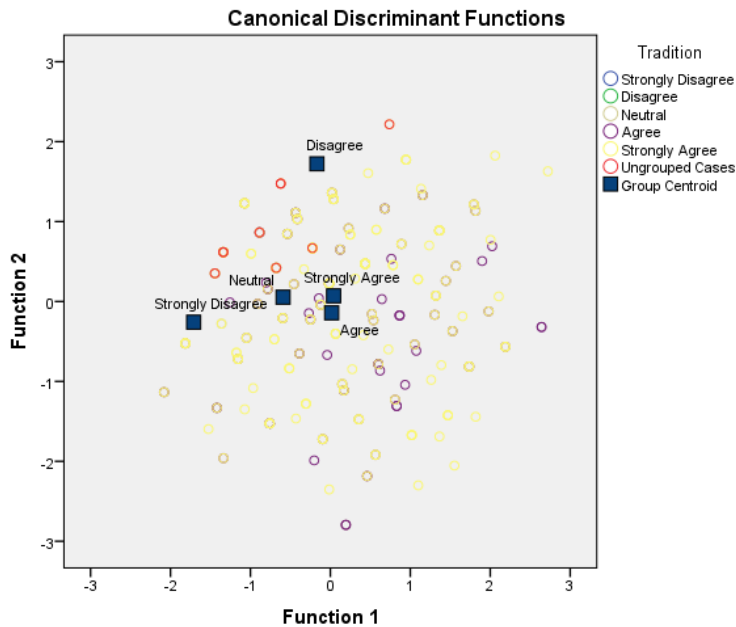
**Figure 21:** Messages transferred through stamps and ideology (social messages)



Discriminant analysis for the messages concerning tradition, revealed four discriminant functions. The first explained 48.2% of the variance, canonical  $R^2 = 0.024$ , the second explained only 36.7%, canonical  $R^2 = 0.018$ , whereas the other two explained less than 14.0% each. When combined these discriminant functions did not significantly differentiate the groups,  $\Lambda = 0.951$ ,  $X^2(16) = 18.384$ ,  $p = 0.301 > 0.05$ , also removing the first function indicated that the second function did not significantly differentiate the ‘tradition groups’,  $\Lambda = 0.975$ ,  $X^2(9) = 9.36$ ,  $p = 0.389 > 0.05$ . In this case the discriminant dimensions are not significant and therefore no conclusions can be drawn. Thus, none of the variables ‘Gender’, ‘Age’, ‘Education’ and ‘District of

residence' tend to agree more or less with the statement that messages concerning tradition are being sent through Cyprus' stamps (Figure 22).

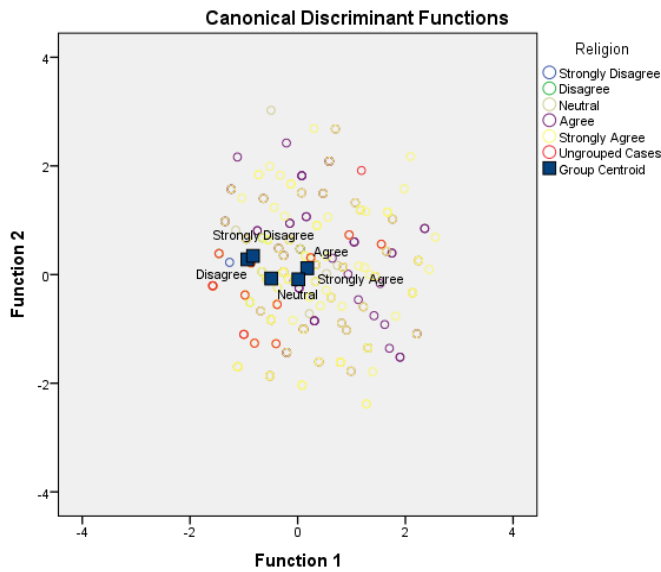
**Figure 22:** Messages transferred through stamps and ideology (messages concerning tradition)



Discriminant analysis for 'religion messages' was conducted and revealed four functions. The first explained 70.0% of the variance, canonical  $R^2 = 0.056$ , the second explained only 15.4%, canonical  $R^2 = 0.013$ , whereas the other two explained less than 11.0% each. In combination these discriminant functions significantly differentiated the groups,  $\Lambda = 0.921$ ,  $X^2(16) = 29.918$ ,  $p = .018 < 0.05$ , while removing the first function indicated that the second function did not significantly differentiate the 'religion groups',  $\Lambda = 0.975$ ,  $X^2(9) = 9.136$ ,  $p = 0.425 > 0.05$ . Also, the third and fourth function did not significantly differentiate the 'religion groups',  $p > 0.05$ . The correlations between outcomes and the discriminant functions revealed that age loaded fairly high in the first functions ( $r = 0.902$ ); whereas none is related significantly on the second function. The discriminant function plot showed that the first function discriminated somehow the five 'religion messages' groups. The standardized discriminant function is:  $discriminant\_score\_religion = -0.228 * Gender + 0.759 * Age - 0.306 * Education + 0.139 * District\ of\ Residence$ .

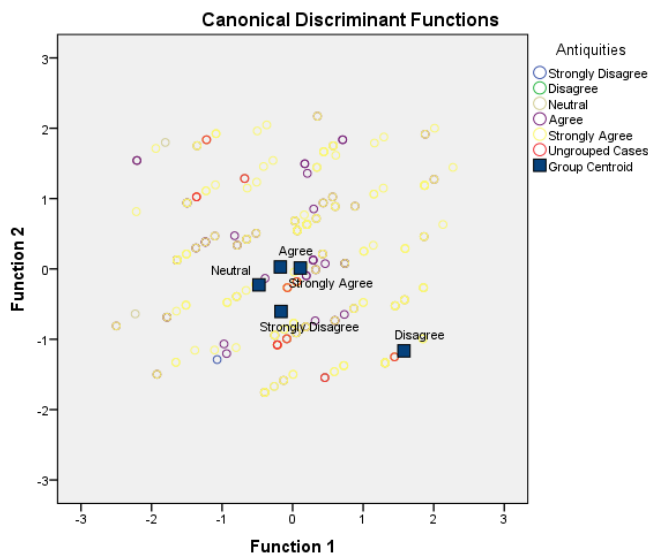
Older people therefore tend to agree more with religion messages, or in other words younger people tend to agree less with the statement about the transfer of messages concerning religion through stamps (Figure 23).

**Figure 23:** Messages transferred through stamps and ideology (messages concerning religion)



Discriminant analysis for messages concerning antiquities, revealed the four aforementioned discriminant functions. The first explained 68.8% of the variance, canonical  $R^2 = 0.033$ , the second explained only 16.8%, canonical  $R^2 = 0.098$ , whereas the other two explained less than 12.1% each. In combination these discriminant functions had not significantly differentiated the treatment groups,  $\Lambda = 0.952$ ,  $X^2(16) = 18.103$ ,  $p = 0.318 > 0.05$ , also removing the first function indicated that the second function did not significantly differentiate the ‘antiquities groups’,  $\Lambda = 0.985$ ,  $X^2(9) = 5.704$ ,  $p = 0.769 > 0.05$ . In this particular case the discriminant dimensions were not significant so no conclusions could be drawn. Thus, none of the variables ‘Gender’, ‘Age’, ‘Education’ and ‘District of residence’ tend to agree more or less with the statement that messages concerning antiquities are being sent through Cyprus’ stamp imagery (Figure 24).

**Figure 24:** Messages transferred through stamps and ideology (messages concerning antiquities)



**Table 21:** Question 7 – Which of the topics presented below might influence the design of the Republic of Cyprus’ postage stamps.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree	No opinion
<b>A. Political developments</b>						
<b>B. Economy</b>						
<b>C. Social changes</b>						
<b>D. Design trends</b>						
<b>E. Other (explain):</b> _____						
<b>F. I do not believe that any type of factor could influence the choice of thematic categories for stamps.</b> <input type="checkbox"/>						

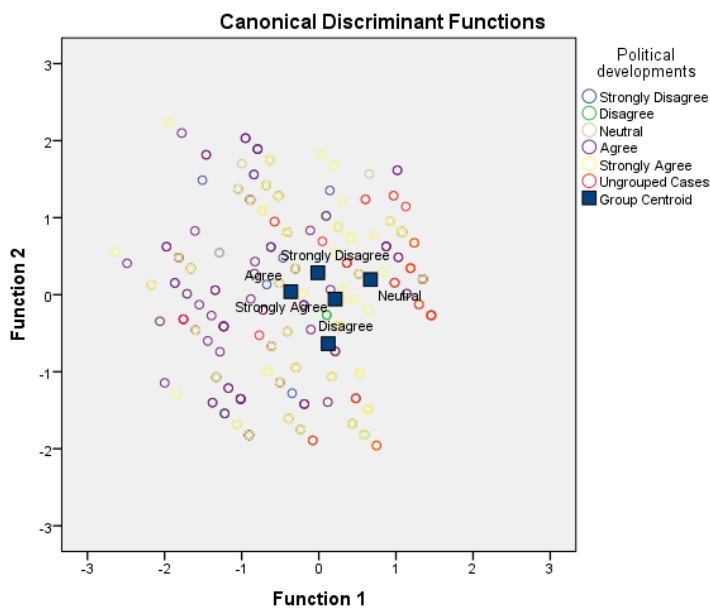
Once again the four independent variables ‘Gender’, ‘Age’, ‘Education’ and ‘District of residence’ used for further analysis via discriminant analysis. Discriminant analysis for the ‘political development’, revealed four discriminant functions. The first explained 69.9% of the variance, canonical  $R^2 = 0.111$ , the second explained 22.2%, canonical  $R^2 = 0.038$ , whereas the other two explained less than 7.6% each. In combination these discriminant functions significantly differentiated the treatment groups,  $\Lambda = 0.843$ ,  $X^2(16) = 60.849$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , whereas removing the first function indicated that the second function, significantly differentiated the political development groups,  $\Lambda = 0.949$ ,  $X^2(9) = 18.877$ ,  $p = 0.026 < 0.05$ . On the other hand, the third and fourth function did not significantly differentiate the ‘political development’ groups,  $p > 0.05$ . The correlations between outcomes and the discriminant functions revealed that education loaded fairly high in the first functions ( $r = 0.900$ ); gender loaded higher on the second function ( $r = 0.747$ ) than the first function ( $r = 0.487$ ). The discriminant function plot did not show any discrimination of groups from the four interventions. The standardized discriminant

functions are: 1<sup>st</sup> *discriminant\_score\_Political development* = 0.343\*Gender – 0.141\*Age +0.785\*Education – 0.189\*District of Residence.

2<sup>nd</sup> *discriminant\_score\_Political development* = 0.819\*Gender +0.605\*Age - 0.064\*Education+0.169\*District of Residence.

This lead us to the conclusion that both more educated and male participants tend to agree more with the statement that political developments influence the design of stamps (Figure 25).

**Figure 25:** Topics influencing stamp design and ideology (political developments)

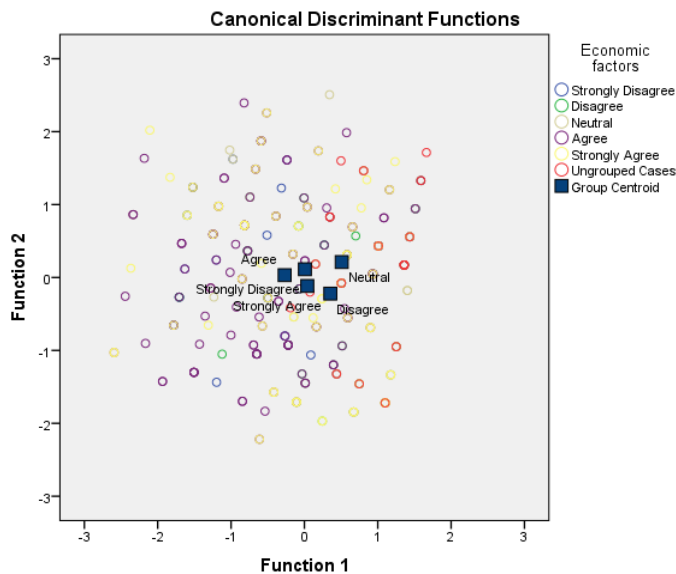


Discriminant analysis for the ‘economic factors’, revealed once more the aforementioned four discriminant functions. The first explained 76.0% of the variance, canonical  $R^2 = 0.073$ , the second explained 15.7%, canonical  $R^2 = 0.016$ , whereas the other two explained less than 7.1% each. These discriminant functions combined, differentiated significantly the treatment groups,  $\Lambda = 0.904$ ,  $X^2(16) = 36.348$ ,  $p < .001$ , but removing the first function indicated that the second function did not significantly differentiate the ‘economic factors’ groups,  $\Lambda = 0.975$ ,  $X^2(9) = 8.948$ ,  $p = 0.442 > 0.05$ . The third and fourth function did not significantly differentiate the ‘economic factors’ groups,  $p > 0.05$ . The correlations between outcomes and the discriminant functions revealed that education ( $r = 0.854$ ) and age ( $r = -0.781$ ) loaded fairly high in the first functions ( $r = .854$ ). The discriminant function plot did not show any discrimination of groups from the four interventions. The standardized discriminant function is:

$discriminant\_score\_economic\ factors = 0.128 * Gender - 0.546 * Age + 0.641 * Education + 0.091 * District\ of\ Residence.$

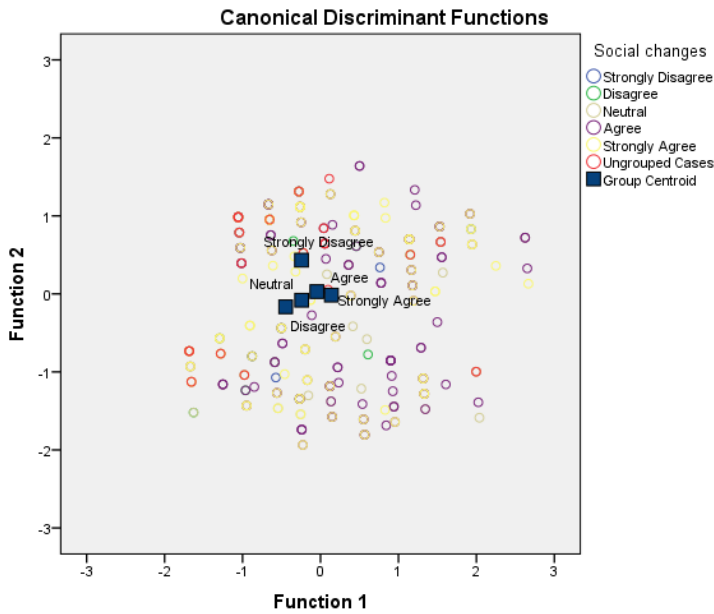
Both more educated and younger participants tend to agree more with the statement that economic factors influence the design of stamps (Figure 26).

**Figure 26:** Topics influencing stamp design and ideology (economy)



Discriminant analysis for ‘social changes’, revealed the four aforementioned discriminant functions. The first explained 61.0% of the variance, canonical  $R^2 = 0.027$ , the second explained only 19.9%, canonical  $R^2 = 0.009$ , whereas the other two explained less than 17.4% each. In combination these discriminant functions did not significantly differentiate the treatment groups,  $\Lambda = 0.956$ ,  $X^2(16) = 16.194$ ,  $p = 0.439 > 0.05$ , while removing the first function indicated that the second function did not significantly differentiate the ‘social changes’ groups,  $\Lambda = 0.982$ ,  $X^2(9) = 6.353$ ,  $p = .704 > 0.05$ . The third and fourth function did not significantly differentiate the ‘social changes’ groups,  $p > 0.05$ . In this particular case the discriminant dimensions were not significant, and therefore no conclusions could be drawn. Thus, none of the variables ‘Gender’, ‘Age’, ‘Education’ and ‘District of residence’ tend to be related more or less with social changes (Figure 27).

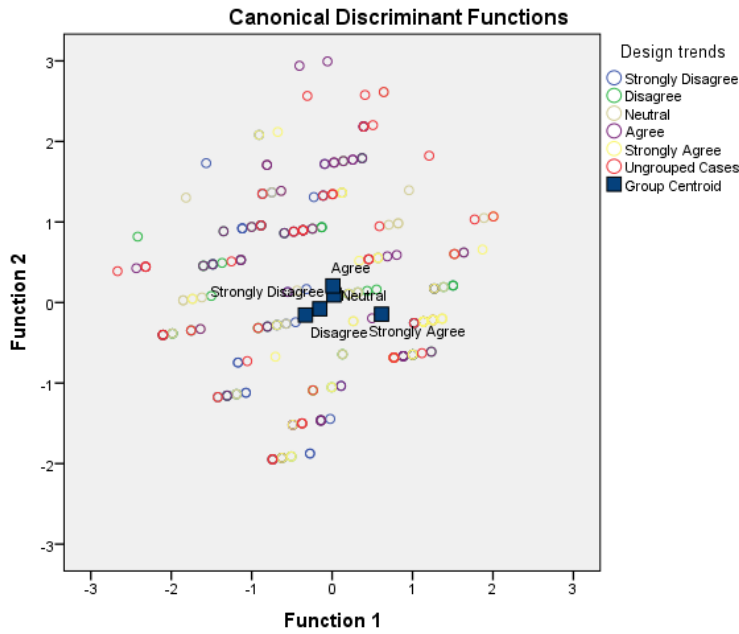
**Figure 27:** Topics influencing stamp design and ideology (social changes)



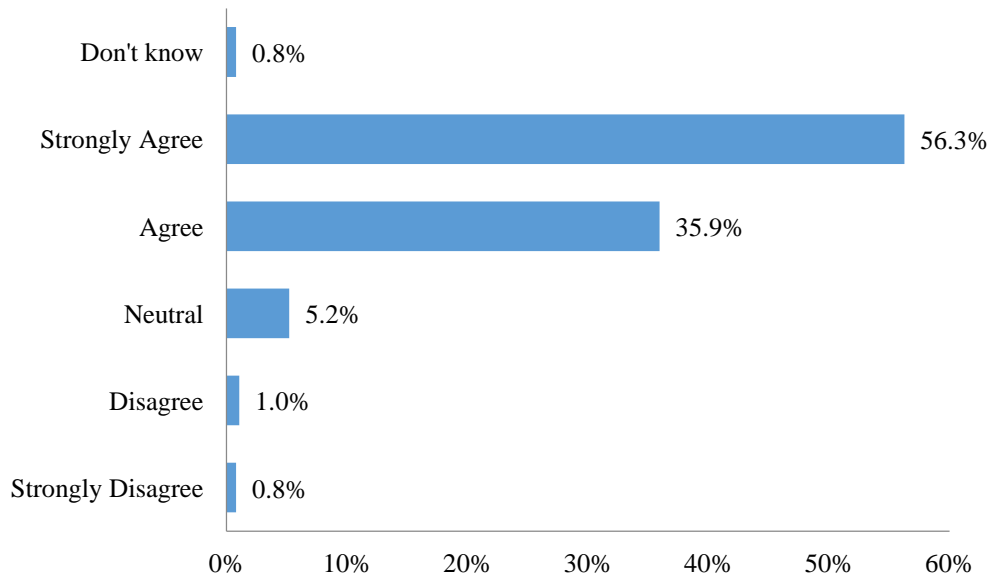
Discriminant analysis for ‘design trends,’ revealed the four aforementioned discriminant functions. The first explained 71.3% of the variance, canonical  $R^2 = 0.074$ , the second explained only 18.3%, canonical  $R^2 = 0.020$ , whereas the other two explained less than 8.9% each. When combined these discriminant functions significantly differentiated the treatment groups,  $\Lambda = 0.897$ ,  $X^2(16) = 36.711$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , while when removing the first function indicated that the second function did not significantly differentiate the design trends,  $\Lambda = 0.969$ ,  $X^2(9) = 10.757$ ,  $p = 0.293 > 0.05$ . Also, the third and fourth function did not significantly differentiate the ‘design trends’,  $p > 0.05$ . The correlations between outcomes and the discriminant functions revealed that gender loaded fairly high in the first functions ( $r = 0.763$ ); education loaded higher on the second function ( $r = -0.711$ ) than the first function ( $r = 0.677$ ). The discriminant function plot did not show any discrimination of groups from the four interventions. The standardized discriminant function is:  $discriminant\_score\_design\ trends = 0.730 * Gender + 0.150 * Age + 0.651 * Education + 0.293 * District\ of\ Residence$ . Thus, we conclude that female participants and more educated participants tend to agree more with the statement that design trends influence stamp design (Figure 28).



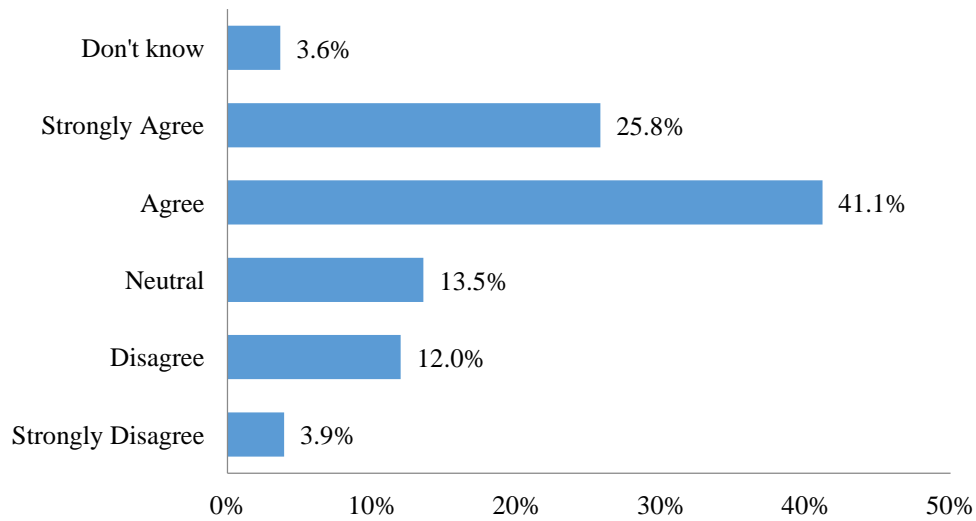
**Figure 28:** Topics influencing stamp design and ideology (design trends)



**Figure 29:** Importance of the country’s representation through stamp imagery (percentage distribution) – Question 8: The postage stamps represent the image of my country abroad.



**Figure 30:** Role of the citizen in the process of stamp design (percentage distribution) – Question 9: It is important to take into consideration the opinions of the public (citizens of the Republic of Cyprus) regarding the choice of topics on postage stamps.



There was no significant association between the importance of a country's representation through stamps (Question 8) ( $X^2_2 = 4.321$ ,  $p=0.116$ ), and the role of the citizen in the process of stamp design (Question 9) ( $X^2_4 = 8.956$ ,  $p=0.059$ ), with any of the variables we have tested. These were 'Gender', 'Educational level' and 'Age' of the participants. It must be noted that the responses related to Question 8 had to be recoded due to the size of responses that indicated 'Do not know', 'Neutral', 'Disagree' and 'Strongly disagree' as their preferred option. Thus a new category was created for these four categories. A similar approach was taken in relation to the responses related to Question 9, as they needed to be recoded due to the size of responses that indicated 'Do not know' and 'Strongly disagree' as their preferred option. For the results of these two questions see Figures 29 and 30.

**Table 22:** Citizens' perception on suitable stamp topics (frequency and percentage distribution)  
 – Question 10: Which messages should be promoted through the postage stamps of the Republic of Cyprus, concerning audiences both home and abroad?

	Frequency	Percentage
No suggestions	80	20.80%
Culture / History of Cyprus	70	18.20%
Traditional culture	56	14.60%
Peace	49	12.80%
The Cyprus dispute	38	9.90%
Financial Crisis	24	6.30%
Tourism	21	5.50%
Freedom / State independence	16	4.20%
Ecology	15	3.90%
Greek Orthodoxy	7	1.80%
Democracy	6	1.60%
Hellenism	1	0.30%
Cyprus' flag	1	0.30%
Total	384	100.00%

The last question posed for this survey (Question 10) followed a qualitative approach in order to get a broader sense of the participants' opinions and capture any added dimensions of the topic that we might have overlooked. Furthermore the particular question gave us a first indication for the necessity of proceeding into conducting the next step of research, focus groups (Table 22).

As we can see on Table 22, 80 participants (20.80% of the entire amount of participants) offered no further suggestions. The second most popular answer was that the messages promoted through the stamps of the Republic of Cyprus need to highlight the history and culture of the island, without actually distinguishing the two notions (18.20%). The third most popular answer given, was solely describing the preference towards the representation of traditional culture on Cyprus' stamps (14.60%). The next suggestion occupied the 12.80% of the total amount of answers and was concerned with the promotion of the ideal of peace and its importance for the country, in relation to its turbulent past. A similar suggestion was represented through the 9.90% of the total amount of answers, being the unresolved issue of 'The Cyprus dispute' and the need for its promotion and discussion through official documents, such as stamps. The sixth

suggestion of our participants presented an equally contemporary problem, the economic crisis and its consequences for the island (6.30%). The promotion of tourism has been chosen as a suitable topic for Cyprus' stamp design by 21 participants (5.50%). Another abstract notion has been suggested by our participants next, namely the need for the representation of Cyprus as a free and independent state (4.20%). A quite different approach was preferred by a smaller amount of participants (3.90%) who asked for more representations concerning ecology and the advertisement of the adoption of an eco-friendly lifestyle. Religion and in particular Greek Orthodox Christianity in Cyprus has been suggested as the most suitable message to be promoted through the country's stamps, by the 1.80% of the participants. Subsequently, the value of democracy was considered as the most important message Cyprus should transfer via its stamp designing program by the 1.60% of the participants. The last two suggestions have been supported by a 0.30% of the respondents each, the first one being concerned with the highlight of Cyprus' ties with Greece and its Hellenistic ancestry, while the second with the showcase of the country as a completely different country through its own state symbols, such as its distinctive flag design.

### **6.3 Discussion**

In the subsequent section we will be discussing our findings in relation to the socio-political background of the Republic of Cyprus and the theoretical framework adopted for this study. Hopefully this will aid us in uncovering in what ways the citizens have differentiated their view on official culture representation, in comparison to the existing one as this appears on stamp design. As Edensor (2002) specifically stressed, a shared sense of belonging cultivated through official culture among the citizens of a state does not necessarily imply a common accord. It rather means that certain objects, concepts, ideas and symbols are used, but interpreted in different ways. However we can identify common meanings, symbols and objects, creating a 'library' of cultural resources, facilitating communication and managing to establish a sense of national belonging, or even pride among the members of the imagined community. It should be noted that a study based on this chapter's findings is under review for journal publication (Andreou, Zantides and Ioannou, 2017).

As has been already mentioned, the first three questions aimed to introduce the respondents to the topic of the questionnaire, while simultaneously gathering some general information regarding their relationship with philately using stamps and sending mail. The relationship between the interest in philately (Question 1) ( $\rho=0.029$ ,  $p=0.574$ ), the usage of post offices by the Cypriot citizens (Question 2) ( $\rho=0.029$ ,  $p=0.574$ ) and the memory of specific imagery used on Cyprus' stamps (Question 3) ( $\rho=-0.005$ ,  $p=0.919$ ) with the education level of the respondents was investigated using Spearman's rank order correlation, and no significant association was revealed. Furthermore, there was no significant association between the interest in philately (Question 1) ( $\rho=0.084$ ,  $p=0.101$ ) and the age of the participants. On the other hand, there was a significant positive association between the usage of post offices by the Cypriot citizens (Question 2) ( $\rho=0.124$ ,  $p=0.015$ ) and age, with high levels of usage associated with older age groups. Furthermore, there was a significant positive association between the memory of specific imagery used on Cyprus' stamps (Question 3) ( $\rho=0.145$ ,  $p=0.004$ ) and age, with high levels of memory of specific imagery associated with older age groups. For the results of these three first questions see Figures 17, 18 and 19.

One of the initial questions posed to the participants was associated with the memorization of specific stamp designs they had seen in the past. Furthermore we were interested in seeing whether they truly remembered actual stamp designs that exist in the corpus. This is a significant finding due to the importance of repetition of official culture repertoire in order for it to be embedded in the citizens' collective conscience, especially when we are discussing printed media as Anderson (1991) asserted. In other words: the more you see and perceive, the more you will understand and remember and simultaneously, the more you remember, the more you will sense in the first place (Lester, 2014). As previously indicated the repetition of imagery is essential to the construction of official culture as the messages promoted can be more easily transferred and embedded in people's minds.

57.8% of the participants claimed that they slightly remember some images in particular that were used for the designs of stamps of the Republic of Cyprus (Figure 19). It is important to note how age seems to be an important factor in this case. It appears that older people (51+ years of age) tend to believe that they memorized more of the images they saw on postage stamps of Cyprus during the years ( $\rho=0.145$ ,  $p=0.004$ ). One could argue that stamps are not as popular as they used to be so less

people tend to view them in the first place, as the rise of electronic mail has substituted the more traditional ways of correspondence. However things are not that simple.

While a number of participants claimed that they could not remember a specific stamp design belonging to the corpus, the majority of them (78.1 %) recalled imagery that in fact exists in the corpus (Table 16). This might be indicative of how stamps are in fact discreet ambassadors of official culture, contributing to the construction of national narratives, collective memory and a country's self-image as Raento and Brunn (2005) asserted. Some of the images that our respondents indicated were in fact connected with the endemic species of Cyprus, such as plants and animals, most importantly the Cyprus Mouflon (Agrinō). This particular species of goats has been used as part of the state's national iconography quite a few times, thus becoming an essential part of the official culture's visual representation. As has been noted by Andreou et al. (2017a) the Republic of Cyprus had adopted the image of this animal not only on stamps, but also on Cyprus' euro coins, as well as for the logo of Cyprus Airways, the flag carrier airline of Cyprus (Plate 23). The expression of a collective identity in official culture construction through endemic species, as we mentioned before is quite a common strategy. Countries such as Lebanon and Canada have both favoured endemic species for their respective flags. As Barney and Heine (2015) explained, endemic species as symbols seem to be the right choice for the representation of a collective identity as they are already familiar among the people, and they are quite neutral symbols, sharing the universal feeling of closeness and attachment to nature.

The Republic of Cyprus had additionally proceeded in selecting its own national plant in 2006, the Cyprus cyclamen (*Cyclamen cyprium*) (Plate 24). This decision seemed to be related to the representation of official culture through visual communication as the Press and Information Office (2012) declared. In particular this report explained the need to specify a national plant, stating that while there are no certain known reasons for a country to select a national plant, tree or animal, it is still considered a significant 'cultural and communication feature' for the state (Press and Information Office 2012).



**Plate 23:** 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Cyprus Airways, 24 September 1973, A. Tassos



**Plate 24:** Cyclamen cypricum, 5 November 1990, E. Megaw

The use of endemic species is not only a common strategy for the official representation of a country but as the responses of our survey indicated it is also a way for the citizens to symbolically visualize their imagined community. The patriotic poem *Discussion with a flower* (Kuvēnta mē ēna lulūdi) is an indication of that. This poem written by Greek poet Yiannis Ritsos (1901 – 1990) has been set to music as part of a larger collection of songs and was included in the album *Eighteen short songs for the bitter homeland* in 1974 (Cyprus Pedagogical Institute, 2012). Despite the poem and the rest of the album referring to Greece it also became popular in Cyprus, especially during the troubled war period of 1974. *Discussion with a flower* in particular was associated with Cyprus and became a favourite song for concerts organized in protest of the Turkish military invasion and continuous occupation. It is interesting how the flower in question is in fact a cyclamen. The song symbolically addresses a nation and its people as the cyclamen grows through hardship and survives, even as it is planted in the crack of a stone. This patriotic feeling is accentuated as the poet admires the cyclamen for its strength of will and asks how it can still be so brightly coloured during such hard conditions. The anthropomorphic cyclamen replies that it gains strength through the shed blood and sacrifices of heroes and for this reason precisely, it can still look out for sun and therefore hope for the future. This symbolism, its patriotic ideology, as well as the song itself have remained alive in the consciousness of people ever since, and it has been adopted by the official culture, as it became a poem/song included in public school curriculum (Cyprus Pedagogical Institute, 2012).



**Plate 25:** 20 years of the Republic of Cyprus, 1 October 1980, A. Tassos



**Plate 26:** The flag of the Republic of Cyprus, 1 October 2010, M. Eustathiadou, L. Petridou-Mala, G. Theophylactou

Aside from the various symbolisms that the imagery on stamps conveys, colour is an equally important and semiotically rich aspect that needed to be discussed via our survey. We have asked as part of the survey, which colour would the participants deem to be the most suitable in order to represent the Republic of Cyprus on its stamps (Table 19). It is interesting how the respondents associated their official culture with colours that already exist on their flag's design, proving how efficiently ideologies can be transferred via visual communication (Plates 25 and 26). The first colour of their choice was yellow, with 103 participants claiming that this colour would be the most suitable to be featured on the stamps representing Cyprus, while white came second with 62 participants believing it to be the most representative. Surprisingly and despite the Hellenistic connotations that Cyprus' stamp design program has been following for years (see Chapter 5.3), colour blue ranked third with 54 of the participants believing that it represents the country more accurately. It would appear that our survey's respondents considered yellow as an option that enhances the feeling of locality and represents their country in a way that does not allude to any other, a sentiment equally reflected in the focus groups presented in Chapter 7.

Someone could argue that this choice is completely unrelated to the map of Cyprus appearing on its flag and that it is actually associated with the general symbolic values of the yellow colour. Yellow tends to be associated with optimism and amusement, while it is being described as the colouration of sunshine (Heller, 2009; Pastoureau and Simonnet, 2007). The latter could definitely be an indication for the choice of participants regarding stamp design as Cyprus has a Mediterranean climate with mild winters and hot summers receiving on average double amounts of sunshine in



comparison to northern Europe (Department of meteorology, 2016). However we believe that behind the colour choice there is a strong ideological connection with the flag design, tying two different forms of official culture representation and showing how they inform each other. İsmet Vehit Güney designed the flag and used a colour that alluded to copper in order to represent the Republic of Cyprus, influenced by a popular speculation about the etymology of the island's name. According to this theory the name derives from the Sumerian word for copper, 'kubar', as during antiquity large amounts of this element were found in the area. While someone could assume that the colour of copper is in fact a warm orange, it sometimes appears to be more yellowish when appearing in printed form (Plate 25). Furthermore even in official records such as the website of the Presidency of the Republic of Cyprus, in the section devoted to the explanation of the flag's elements the particular colour is described as 'the yellow colour of copper'. (Presidency of the Republic of Cyprus, 2016). It is obvious that in this case the participants (citizens of the Republic of Cyprus) were influenced by the visual representation of other objects of official culture, in our case the flag. This influence seems to have been transferred onto other objects of official culture that they were asked to imagine, such as stamps (Andreou et al., 2017a).

As shown on Table 17 the participants were asked to choose which of the categories based on the previously conducted content analysis they would have chosen in order to represent the Republic of Cyprus more accurately on its stamps. The largest categories of the content analysis, such as 'Archaeological findings and sites', 'Flora and fauna' and 'Religion' were selected by considerable numbers of participants, proving that in this case they were reaching a 'dominant reading'. As Hall (1980) asserted this understanding of promoted messages happens when the viewers accept its meaning and importance and therefore choose to further reproduce it considering it to be the most appropriate answer. However the views of the majority of citizens participating in this survey on the matter, proved to be quite contradistinctive, thus making the perceived 'reading' more complicated. While the aforementioned categories appeared in second, third and fourth place, the participants proposed for themes concerning traditional culture of Cyprus and folklore to be represented on stamps the most (Table 17). In fact they believe that this particular topic is the most representative among 20 other topics the researcher presented. This finding came in contrast with the content analysis of the same corpus of stamps where this thematic category was ranked ninth featuring a rather small amount of stamps (Andreou and Zantides, 2017). The particular category is not

only small in the actual corpus but it also seems to be of secondary importance as both older and recent stamp designs depicting traditional culture lack the obvious and deliberate attempts at creativity that some other aforementioned categories, such as ‘Flora and fauna’ exhibited (Plates 12, 13, 14, 18 and 19).

In this case the ‘reading’ of how Cyprus’ official culture could be presented through stamp imagery was quite contradictive between the actual corpus and the participants’ perceptions. While certainly acknowledging the role and importance of themes dealing with Cyprus’ Hellenistic and Orthodox roots, they still considered traditional culture to be a more suitable approach for official state representation. In this sense we were presented by these respondents with a ‘counter-hegemonic reading’ (Hall, 1980) where the viewers understood the importance of Hellenism and Orthodoxy for Cyprus but nevertheless felt that their own traditional and folk culture expressed them more accurately as citizens, as well as their country. In this manner they showed their preference towards the manifestation of a ‘unique’ locality that separates the representation of their state from any other and at the same time relates to their everyday life and experiences as a form of identity-creation, especially during recent years, which were fuelled by the financial crisis and general disappointment by the political system (Andreou et al., 2017a).

The second part of the same question asked the participants to suggest specific images that they would have included under the umbrella of their chosen topic in order for the researcher to better comprehend their point of view, even within the natural limitations of a quantitative tool. It is interesting how the respondents essentially and accurately described in this manner many forms of traditional culture which was their first choice, by giving numerous examples. Their selection included various aspects of folklore: national costumes, traditional forms of dance, customs related to several celebrations, national cuisine, and even objects related to the agricultural way of life. However this appreciation and acceptance of traditional forms of culture to the point of suggesting that it should be included more often in the representation of the state on its stamps is not something that seems to be cultivated in the formal environment of schools. Pieridou-Skoutela conducted an ethnographic research (2007) in Cypriot primary schools, studying the ways in which Greek Cypriot students react towards folklore/traditional forms of music. The author claimed that many children appeared to feel unfamiliar with the traditional music components and even expressed disdain towards it. On the other hand, children whose families and environment cultivated this

type of music felt that they are protecting a part of their heritage by learning folk music. Pieridou-Skoutela noted how the Cyprus public education does not help the students understand and approach the traditional forms of music and expression, fuelling instead a contradictory ideological understanding. One could suggest that this unfamiliarity with tradition would also appear in our case when discussing visual communication materials, such as stamps. However Cypriot adults seem to favour and feel the need to preserve and showcase folk aspects of their culture, even on the level of official representation of the state.

This apparent attachment to folklore that the respondents showcased is rooted in the beginnings of the previous century, as Demetriou (2015) explained in her study on Cyprus' traditional music and its role in society. The strong preservation of folk aspects of culture can be considered the result of huge wave of internal migration from rural to larger urban centres, as well as the appearance of labour conscience among the citizens (Demetriou, 2015). These factors redefined the relationship of Cypriots with what they considered to be 'authoritative' or 'official', aiding customs, cuisine and music linked with folklore to act as a 'purer' way of expression, one that was providing an alternative both to colonialism and nationalism. In fact we believe that traditional culture serves as a symbolic identity within a community, an identity which is not imposed by the hierarchy. It is transmitted from one generation to another, rejuvenating itself in the process and adapting to the environment. According to Dundes and Bronner (2007) and Morrison (2003) folklore can be used as a constructive power of internationalism as many aspects of it, such as folk tales, rely on universal or quasi-universal human experiences. For this reason many aspects of folklore belonging to a specific nation may have certain similarities with another nation's without losing of course its distinctive nature.

In the case of Cyprus however, the instability occurring after 1960 and particularly after 1974 brought about a strong need to highlight the island's perennial link with Greece, as well as with Europe in its new quest of self-representation and fight for sovereignty. As expected, the notion of 'modern' sidelined the need of expression and self-identification through folklore. As Demetriou (2015) asserted the period following 1974 saw the effective collapse of older village structures and consequently the lifestyle and forms of expression they represented. As a result, folklore forms of culture were slowly turned into something 'old' and cherished with nostalgia, but not actively taking

part in contemporary society, restricted to remaining a testament to peaceful, prosperous and pleasant historical periods long past.

However these attitudes seem to have shifted in favour of traditional forms of culture in recent years as Cypriots started approaching folklore with renewed interest. Demetriou's (2015) findings mirrored ours in relation to this rekindled preference in Cyprus' society. Older generations naturally gravitate towards it as a resource for memory and nostalgia, for example the setting of one's birthplace, the food they used to eat there, certain customs and important events, or the distinct way they used to dress. On the other hand we can note how even younger people seem to have acquired a new relationship with traditional culture, as this is transmitted by the popular and mainstream aspects of everyday life. Popular music in Cyprus has lately been influenced by tradition, as contemporary bands that manifest the representation of a combination of Cyprus' folkloric music with fresh arrangements and its enrichment with modern genres. In this sense, we can view the new relationship built with tradition, through everyday aspects of life and even more importantly under the safe guise of modernity.

While there seems to be a prevailing sense of peacefulness in official culture and a need to make traditional culture the focal point according to the citizens, a rather contrary image seems to be embedded in their memory. As shown on Table 16, the social problem of refugees seems to be the image they recall the most out of all the stamps they might have seen issued by the Republic of Cyprus. This stamp was designed by Greek engraver Anastasios Alevizos (Tassos) (1914 – 1985) in 1977, honouring the victims of the Turkish invasion in 1974, the 200000 displaced refugees reminding us of the continuous human rights violation due to the ongoing occupation of a large part of the island. The engraving featured on the stamp is in black and white, a colour combination that tends to be associated with notions such as mourning and loss (Gage, 1999) resulting in a highly dramatic depiction of the little girl surrounded by barbed wire (Plate 27). The Republic of Cyprus has continued issuing this stamp design each year since then without making any significant changes to it, thus becoming a rather recognizable image in the repertoire of the country's national iconography (House of the Representatives, 2015).

The selection for the artist behind this ideologically charged stamp design was not a coincidence either. Tassos, or Anastasios Alevizos is considered to be one of the most important Greek engravers, whose work was celebrated due to its unique style and skill

in depicting intricate images on the small space that a stamp provides (Mörtoglu, 2005). Alevizos was responsible for a new and pioneering way of designing imagery for stamps using engravings and later on offset printing, while he additionally introduced the usage of colour for these tiny objects. He created countless stamp designs for the Hellenic Post from 1954 till 1967, while simultaneously collaborating with the Cyprus Post. His personal style is not only characterised by its artistic integrity, but most importantly by its ability to be emotionally charged and compassionate towards the subjects depicted, yet minimal and seemingly effortless (Mörtoglu, 2005). In this way Alevizos managed to implement raw feelings of pain and despair on the image of the young refugee, while at the same time giving her a feeling of dignity and respect (Plate 27).



**Plate 27:** Cyprus 1974, 10 January 1977, A. Tassos

Interestingly enough this well thought out and ideologically charged design by Tassos went through a significant change many years after his death. While it is obvious that the artist meant for the image to appear in black and white due to its dreary subject, the authorities have lately issued coloured versions of it (Plates 28, 29, 30 and 31). These designs first appeared in 2009 where a dark purple/grey replaced the white background of the past, keeping the image dark. From 2011 onwards however the colouration became more 'daring' and certainly lighter, as light green, blue and orange coloured versions of the stamp were issued. Peculiarly there is not an apparent reason or an explanation for this decision, as Tassos could have added colours to his original design, since he was known for his introduction of colours in his work for Greece's postage stamps. It should be noted that no explanation was given by the authorities for this rationale, or for any technical reasons behind it. Under this light we could assume that the change in colouration may be associated with the topic of the stamp and the ideological meanings it carries. On other hand, taking into consideration how this

particular topic is highly charged and certainly very delicate in its handling, this design decision was more likely a matter of ‘refreshing’ this rather old image up, without significantly changing it and had nothing to do with altering its topic and tragic meaning in any way.



**Plate 28, 29, 30 and 31 (from left):** Cyprus 1974, 12 March 2009, 4 May 2011, 31 January 2012, 30 January 2013, A. Tassos

Let us investigate the other side of the spectrum now as the choice of this image by the participants certainly carries important ideological connotations related to the way they decode the messages of this rather iconic stamp. According to relevant studies (Zetter, 1999; Dikomitis, 2012) the refugees constantly relive in their memory and imagination the trauma associated with their exile. On the one hand they tend to reproduce and keep alive the memory of their own home as it used to be, while at the same time they question their own hopes of returning there (Zetter, 1999). This feeling is certainly reflected on this stamp, where the small girl is sitting in the middle of barbed wire unable or unwilling to move back or forward, seemingly trapped in her own situation. The strength of the specific image in the visual communication among the citizens of the Republic of Cyprus is further highlighted if we consider that this stamp inspired a poem about the violent displacement of refugees. Greek Cypriot poet Angela Kaimaklioti (1967 –) a refugee herself from Famagusta, was moved by the design of Tassos and addresses *The child on the stamp* (2014). Kaimaklioti calls it ‘barefoot, ragged and tearful for the past forty years’ alluding to the events of 1974, and goes on to assert with certainty how the little refugee on the stamp ‘wants to finally walk and live free’ ‘away from the darkness residing in her soul’ due to the exile she has faced. The poet speculates that this stamp and therefore the social problem it represents, ‘has accompanied millions of letters’ around the world, thus advocating this unresolved issue. However the poem leaves the reader and the refugee herself with little hope of returning to the home land as the last phrase states that any amount of effort is ‘to no

avail'. This statement emphasized the role of the stamp in promoting the crucial message of the unresolved problem of Cypriot refugees, as well as the continued violation of their human rights.

There are additional indications that Cypriot citizens tend to associate the messages promoted through stamps with social and political issues, such as the aforementioned (Figures 21 and 25). The citizens who belong to older generations tend to exhibit a stronger and traumatic bond with social events that happened in the past, as well as their implications (Figures 21 and 25). On the contrary as Zembylas and Bekerman (2008) argued the younger generations of Cypriots feel the need to detach from the past and create new narratives of hope, away from previously encountered political and social difficulties. As a previous study has indicated (Andreou and Zantides, 2017) the official culture promoted by the Republic of Cyprus on its stamps during the last decade is heading towards a neutral rhetoric. The younger age groups of Cypriots might have also been influenced by that and therefore do not associate the stamp imagery with the promotion of social issues, especially traumatic experiences of the past as much as the older members of the society do.

Older participants furthermore, tend to believe that the messages transferred through stamp imagery are concerned with the promotion of religion that is, Greek Orthodox Christianity (Figure 23). This is another finding that was expected as the official culture of Cyprus has indeed relied on religious imagery in stamps' design, especially prior to 2004. In this sense we could argue that the older generations used stamps more actively for sending and receiving mail in the past and therefore they tend to recall the usage of religious imagery on the country's stamp designs with ease. Additionally as Latif (2014) explained, historically speaking the role of religion, religious institutions and leaders were crucial in the lives of Cypriot citizens, especially Greek Cypriots. In the past the Church also played an important role in the promotion of a union with Greece and has remained a strong factor in the politics and everyday life on the island. Let us not forget how Archbishop Makarios III, the head of the Greek Orthodox Church became a president from 1960 until his death in 1977. This fact alone highlights the association between the Church, religion and the official culture of the island.

Furthermore the participants tend to believe that the various political developments happening in or concerning Cyprus have a direct influence on the choice of topics for Cyprus' stamps (Figure 25). This is to be expected as the Cypriot citizen is aware of the importance of politics in the life of the island, especially regarding the unresolved

Cyprus dispute. As Kumar (1997) asserted, the constant state of division in Cyprus might be experienced as a prolonged stand-off, and the dynamic of politics around this situation are possibly making the citizens more aware of their presence. In fact these thoughts are shared by both genders as more female participants claimed that political messages are transferred via the imagery on stamps (Figure 20), while at the same time male Cypriots believe that the imagery is actively chosen under the influence of various political developments concerning the island (Figure 25). What is interesting in both cases however is that the aforementioned statements were expressed by the more educated individuals (Figures 20 and 25). This is something that can be expected though, according to Trimikliniotis (2001) who asserted that the entire Cypriot educational policy has been inseparably associated with the events of the unresolved Cypriot problem. However this fact might actually change in the younger generations' education, especially the ones attending school at present, as the negotiations for resolving the Cyprus dispute have recently been intensified.

Contrary to the constant struggle with politics, a rather new topic seems to have emerged recently in Cyprus and it is reflected in the views of the citizens on official culture representation. According to our findings, younger and more educated participants believed that issues related to the economy and Cyprus' economic situation influence the topics selected to be presented on stamps (Figure 26). This is another finding that reflected the situation in Cyprus and the fact that citizens do believe in its actual connection with official culture representation. Younger participants and especially younger educated individuals are certainly being affected by the financial crisis in Cyprus as well as its consequences. Relevant studies reflect this finding. Eurostat (2016) reported that 32.8% of young people in Cyprus were unemployed during 2015, making the Republic of Cyprus the fifth European Union country with the largest percentage of unemployment among its youth. At the same time the Cyprus News Agency (2015) reported that the Republic of Cyprus ranks fourth among the European Union countries dealing with issues of unemployment among its citizens.

Finally the last figure (Figure 28) describes the opinion of citizens on whether current design trends might influence the process of stamp production, or rather the choice of depiction of imagery on Cyprus' stamps. As we can note, female participants and especially more educated participants recognized that this aspect, though not as obvious as the rest of them, may still affect the decisions taken during stamp production. This answer seems quite interesting as one could have expected both



educated female and male participants to recognize that even if the various trends in image depiction might not be the most important factor of all, it is still something to be considered by the authorities and stamp designers. This however might be a hint of the views and certain gender roles still existing in Cyprus. There were indications by other writers such as Cockburn (2004) and Hadjipavlou (2010) that female and male roles in Cyprus are still distinct, as well as the interests and views that go along with that in a patriarchal society. Furthermore, as Hadjipavlou (2010) claimed, the role of women in Cyprus still holds some aspect of being domesticated or even bothered by superficial or material things, while men are considered to occupy themselves with more 'important' or less 'materialistic' things linked with activities taking place outside of the household such as political discussions. In this light, it can be understood on some level why the male participants felt the need to support other 'more serious' topics as being influential in stamp design, such as political or economical factors, probably considering design trends an unimportant, trivial, or even 'female-oriented'.

Hadjipavlou's (2010) research mentioned that women in Cypriot society have learned to take the presence of men in the political and public life for granted and therefore continue feeding the existing attitude. Thus, mostly men are voted for higher political positions, their role in public life and the commemoration of their achievements is regarded as more significant. The low participation of women in public decision-making centres seems to reflect their low participation in sectors of economy and matters of public affair. An example of this would be the total of 22 government positions taken by women out of 262 in 1991 (Cyprus Gender Equality Observatory, 2008). This phenomenon can be associated with the prejudice that the social role of woman is primary the one of mother and wife, as indicated by the patriarchal society system. These social roles created further stereotypes associated with female morality. They indicated the responsibility of woman, working or not, to combine her social life and her work, with the care of home and children as the latter was considered her natural role (Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies, 2005).

It has been reported that there is a continuous and increased participation of women in labour and society, although the distribution of roles has remained traditional (Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies, 2005). The legislation of gender equality in 1960 helped women to progress, even if some attitudes were not altered in the society as a whole. It is apparent that women's participation and discussion of related topics has brought about some positive changes. The concepts of gender stereotypes in society

have been differentiated through the decades, with the constant climb of women in high positions. As a result, the standardized roles and stereotypes tend to continuously be questioned and debated, something that aids in the general discussion on what is considered to be the social role of each gender. The process might not be steady or quick but it is apparent that slow steps have been taken in the right direction for the change of concepts.

## **6.4 Summary**

Through the analysis of this survey research we managed to gather important data related to the views of the citizens regarding their official culture. We interpreted them based on the framework of Cyprus and its socio-political background, thus answering the second research question posed, its sub-question, as well as the third research question. Our findings reveal a rather fluid and sometimes contradictory view of the official culture representation through stamps. On the one hand there seems to be a strong indication for the need of an inclusive official repertoire with universal meanings expressed via stamps depicting flora and fauna, while at the same time highlighting the need for a strong local cultural identity independent from that of any other country. The citizens seem to be influenced by the imagery chosen for the official culture representation, have memorized actual images that appeared in the corpus of stamps issued by the Republic of Cyprus, while the 92.2% of the participants consider their role important for the representation of Cyprus abroad (Figure 29). On the other hand we received messages concerning an unresolved part of the island's history, namely the troubling issue of the continuous Turkish occupation of a large part of the country, which affected and traumatized hundreds of citizens. The key findings (Table 23) that emerged from the second study and guided the design of the next step of the research were the following:

1. We have proved how stamps as objects of visual communication transmit messages to the public, influencing their views and even the cultural production of the country they represent. According to the findings, the views of the citizens regarding their own official culture are quite fluid and sometimes ambivalent. The citizens recognized and placed themes that depicted both Greek Orthodox religion, as well as local archaeological findings, in quite high positions, being two forms of representation that the government has favoured in the past. On the

other hand, they have a strong tendency to associate their official culture with traditional/folklore forms of culture, believing that it represents their country as well as themselves as citizens more accurately.

2. The inclusion of the citizens' opinion is a new approach which we believe is quite significant when discussing objects of visual communication that serve as parts of official culture. In fact the 66.9% of the participants claimed that their perspective should be taken into consideration in regards of Cyprus' stamp design, as well as the topics selected for them (Figure 30). This statement was accentuated by the findings of the last question of our survey where the participants were asked to name what kind of messages they would choose to include on the stamps of the Republic of Cyprus addressing audiences both home and abroad. The results we gathered cemented our belief that further investigation should be conducted on the topic, including a qualitative tool this time that would allow the respondents to fully express their ideas and beliefs. New topics that have not been mentioned at all on the printed questionnaire appeared (Table 22). A number of citizens considered topics such as ecology and the preservation of nature to be an important theme, while others considered that more symbolic and abstract notions such as the value of democracy, peace and freedom should be also showcased. Finally, we noticed conflicting ideas where some of the citizens who partook in the survey, expressed the need for peaceful messages to be transferred while on the other hand there were individuals who asserted that 'difficult' subjects such as the Cyprus dispute and the recent financial crisis should not be avoided.
3. We have furthermore showcased how citizens interact, agree, or disagree actively with their country's official culture representation turning this exchange into a dialogue. There were certainly instances where the citizens' perspective matched and reflected that of the existing official culture, for example the need for religious imagery on Cyprus' stamps was obvious both in the results of content analysis (see Chapters 5.2 and 5.3), as well as in the respondents' views. Most importantly however, we noted instances that brought in contrast the citizens' opinions with the results of content analysis which revealed the thematic groups that the existing official culture preferred to employ. Such an example would be the turn of Cyprus' official culture to represent neutrality and peacefulness through flora and fauna, a view not necessarily shared by some of

the respondents who could not regard this theme as a suitable form of their country's representation. Additionally, we investigated cases where the two sides had a completely different idea on the most suitable way of representation, in the form of folklore which was a topic overlooked by the existing official culture on stamps (see Chapters 5.2 and 5.3). On this note we proved how our respondents gravitated towards their traditional culture as a means of showcasing locality and a form of uniqueness that is not imposed by any authority and expressed through every day practices, manifestations and objects. In fact we argued that in Cyprus' case folklore serves as a symbolic identity, not suggested by any 'hierarchy', a sentiment and need fuelled by the recent events of financial crisis that lead the citizens to question and even distrust to an extent the political and social system around them.

Concluding, this chapter discussed the findings gathered from the survey research conducted, as well as their relation with the socio-political background of the Republic of Cyprus, mostly concentrating on the perceptions of the citizens. Their views and opinions on their official culture representation through stamp imagery and the relevant analysis presented a new approach to the study of stamp design, as we essentially attempted to decode the messages sent through stamps and how these are interpreted. This way of studying stamp imagery considered the relationship between objects promoting official culture and citizens, as a dialogue where the ideas can be accepted, modified or even rejected and replaced with other more suitable ones. Our findings have showcased how the citizens might share the same views regarding official culture with their governments, but they may also disagree, or consider other topics and themes as better representatives of the country and themselves. However, since the focus of this study is the citizens and their perceptions, we wished to gain a deeper understanding of the reasons guiding these views, by going back to them and employing a qualitative approach. In the subsequent chapter we will be introducing the use of focus groups and the way in which they were used in this study.

**Table 23:** Overview of key findings that emerged from the second study (survey research)

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**Key findings**

1. According to our findings the citizens have a fluid perception of the representation of Cyprus' official culture through stamp design, as they gravitate between strong ideologically charged topics, topics revealing old traumas, and themes with universal and inclusive meanings.
  2. The majority of the citizens stated that their opinion on the imagery chosen for stamp design should be consulted more frequently, and they presented us with topics for consideration that the researcher did not mention at all in the printed survey being given.
  3. We proved how the role of the citizen is not a passive one, but on the contrary they tend to modify or even disagree with the themes selected for their country's official representation through stamp design. In other words, the relationship between citizen and official culture is a dialogue and the citizen an active participant.
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## **7 Third study (based on focus groups interviews): gaining in-depth information on the ideologies behind citizens' perceptions in relation to the design of the Republic of Cyprus' postage stamps.**

### **7.1 Aims, methodology, instrumentation and implementation<sup>6</sup>**

The findings gathered with the aid of survey research encouraged us in our belief that the role of the citizen in the construction of official culture is not necessarily a passive one. On the contrary, we proved how at times they might agree with the existing official culture, or suggest modifications in its repertoire that they consider to be more suitable and relevant based on their own views, beliefs and ideology. As important as this survey was to our research as it uncovered significant patterns in our respondents' views it naturally lacked the deeper analysis that a qualitative tool can ensure. In other words, the analysis of the aforementioned survey research indicated certain points that could afford a more detailed and in-depth interpretation and understanding of topics concerned with stamp imagery and ideology. Relevant literature can discuss and explain to an extent some of the views expressed through the survey however this approach would not be enough. As Fink (1995), asserted focus groups are able to enrich the findings and patterns indicated by quantitative research methods, aiding us in better comprehending a specific topic. Furthermore, as we are studying a topic concentrated on culture and society, focus groups allow us to notice patterns concerned with age, gender, education level, through the interaction of the participants. This is something that we cannot achieve with other methods such as in-depth interviews (Zafeirōpoulos, 2005), which is crucial for this part of the research as we aim to better comprehend the citizens' views and get qualitative results to the questions we posed in our earlier survey.

A focus group can generally be defined as consisting of a small but simultaneously demographically diverse assortment of individuals whose reactions, feelings and opinions are studied by a moderator who is usually the researcher (Denscombe, 2010). It is a qualitative form of research that consists of interviews conducted in the form of natural conversation within a group, rather than during separate personal interviews. The role of the researcher in this case is to be the facilitator for a productive

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<sup>6</sup> For the protocol design of the focus groups see APPENDIX 3, and for the relevant consent form see APPENDIX 6.

conversation, rather than lead it. The study takes place through a guided or entirely open discussion revolving around a certain topic. In this way the researcher aims to gather various reactions and opinions that will potentially mirror that of a larger population. The questions are deliberately posed in interactive groups whose members are freely encouraged to talk with each other and exchange views and knowledge (Denscombe, 2010). During the entire process the researcher or in some cases an assistant takes notes or records the discussion with the consent of the participants. The researcher should also ensure that he/she has carefully selected the corresponding group of participants for effective and meaningful results (Stewart and Shamdasani, 1990).

Typically focus groups can last from one to two hours. In our case and including the time needed for the briefing process, as well as general familiarization of the participants with the venue, the researcher and each other, they lasted around one hour each. Ideally, focus groups should consist of no more than nine people for each session (Denscombe, 2010). The number of participants should be large enough to allow an assortment of views and opinions to emerge, while on the other hand it should not be too large as to become unmanageable in terms of discussion. It should be noted however that in smaller research, or research that employs other additional methodological tools the number of participants can be smaller (Denscombe, 2010).

For this study we used a sample of 20 people, divided into four groups. These participants had already been used in the process of the survey research and expressed their interest in being further involved, an advantage in the case of the present study as our aim was to decipher the answers already given in the previous part of the research. These included the administration of printed questionnaires. Each session lasted approximately 40 – 50 minutes including a short briefing session where the members of the group were acquainted with the general topic of the research as well as with one another. Some of the words and terms applied in this study were explained in order to avoid misunderstandings. Such an example was the word ‘representation’ and what the particular term entails. The sample included both genders and people with different ages and level of education. The researcher designed a protocol based on a number of modified questions of the survey research that showed potential for qualitative analysis. It should be noted that the questions used had already been tested and altered during two pilots conducted before the focus groups took place.

The protocol was designed in order to include actual postage stamp imagery at the end of each session. Up to that point the researcher had not shown the participants any

visuals (postage stamp imagery) in order to be able to link their answers to the survey's results. We should note that during the process of the survey research they had not been shown any stamp imagery either. This was done in order to ensure that we were not affecting or influencing the opinions of the participants, and their answers were based solely on prior knowledge or their opinion. However as the conversation was drawing to a conclusion (sixth question), the researcher introduced actual postage stamp imagery for the first time, with the aid of 'photo elicitation'.

Photo elicitation as a methodological tool is based on the notion of inserting images or photographs into an interview. It is considered that participants will respond in a different way when presented with imagery, in comparison to a traditional interview, as verbal and visual information affect them in different ways (Collier, 1957; Harper, 2002). The reason lies in the assertion that images can evoke stronger feelings in comparison to verbal information, thus gaining deeper information on the selected topic. Additionally, photo elicitation is considered to add validity and reliability to studies that included word-based surveys (Harper, 2002; Bignante, 2009), such as the one presented. One of the most underlying arguments for the use of photo elicitation is that the form employed enables the participants to share tacit knowledge and information they might be hesitant to share otherwise. Imagery helps to draw out in the open even some views or memories of events that might be considered socially difficult to express without this added stimuli taking into consideration the limitations of spoken or written word (Hatten, Forin and Adams, 2013). It should be noted however that photo elicitation might not be necessarily the focus of the interview, and can rather be used as a departure point in order to better examine and comprehend participants' perceptions.

In this sense the images should be carefully chosen in order to aid and complement the rest of the research, rather than confuse or lead the respondents to unrelated conversations. The selected imagery for this study derived from the most popular thematic groups that the participants indicated during the survey (APPENDIX 2 - Questions 4 and 4a).<sup>7</sup> The method of photo elicitation has been used, aiming to fuel the conversation, gather insightful comments and trigger answers linked with emotions, experience and memory (Harper, 2002; Bignante, 2009). Introducing a sample of

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<sup>7</sup> 'Most popular': the four thematic categories that made up the 50% of the entire portion of answers. Furthermore these categories present specific interest due to relevant socio-political and cultural literature concerning Cyprus.



postage stamps the researcher aimed to fuel the conversation and allow the participants to express themselves further with the aid of visual stimuli.

The rationale behind this choice, as well as the way in which photo elicitation was employed in this study will be further discussed in the following section where we present the questions used for the process of focus groups (for the protocol see APPENDIX 3).

*Question 1: Are you interested in postage stamps? Have you ever being a philatelist (a stamp collector)?*

This is the initial engagement question used, which served as a general introduction to the discussion. A similarly framed question has been used in the preceding survey research (APPENDIX 2 and Chapter 6). It aimed to involve the participants in the wider theme which is stamps without being too specific, but rather neutral and easy to answer. Simultaneously questions like that act as an ice-breaker among the members of the group.

*Question 2: Do you recall (remember) any of the postage stamps issued by the Republic of Cyprus? Which were the characteristics that in your opinion made this/these image (s) memorable for you?*

The second question posed was based on a similar one used in the survey. This is the case with all of the questions that appear in this protocol since the reason for resolving to the use of focus groups was to gather qualitative information regarding the answers we got during the survey research (APPENDIX 2 and Chapter 6). In this case we were able to seek elaboration on what made the images mentioned by the citizens memorable, as well as give a more ‘human’ and ideological dimension to the quantitative data we collected.

*Question 3: What kind of topics (subject matter) would you propose to be used on the stamps issued by the Republic of Cyprus? What would be the reason (s) for this choice?*

*Question 4: And which images would be the most suitable for the representation of the topics you proposed? How do you think these images represent the topic you have proposed?*

This set of question is directly linked to Questions 4 and 4a that appeared in the survey research (APPENDIX 2 and Chapter 6). They aimed at investigating which of the topics proposed and based on the content analysis of the corpus would the citizens choose as the most representative of the Republic of Cyprus. Furthermore since there was a notable division between the largest categories used to officially promote the country

through stamps and the opinions of Cypriot citizens we were even more interested in exploring qualitatively this division in opinions and the reasons behind it. For this reason we decided to further explore the answers and seek the ideological reasons behind the proposed themes. In order to make the conversation more interesting for the participants, as well as clear for the researcher we also asked them to give us examples of specific images that they would use for the topics chosen.

Question 5: *Which is the colour you would use as the most suitable for a postage stamp representing the Republic of Cyprus? And how do you think this would be the most representative choice / how it is connected to Cyprus according to your opinion?*

As commented in the section explaining the survey's questions, colour is a semiotic resource we found to be important and needed to be studied. It is a well known fact that colour in itself is considered to be a strong medium for the transfer of messages, as it evokes emotions, memories and consequently ideologies (Almalech, 2016). Furthermore the importance of colour in relation to stamp design and the emotions or messages promoted through it has been mentioned by a number of writers (Jonsson, 2005; Vardopoulou, 2014). Since the participants were asked to give only one colour, we needed to explore the reasons behind this choice, the connoted messages and ideology it carried.

Questions 6, 7, 8 and 9: *What comes to your mind / what do you think as you are looking at these images?*

This is the final phase of the protocol of focus groups and up until this point the participants had not been shown any images, as we did not want to affect or influence their responses. On the contrary we aimed for their answers and explanations to be based solely on prior knowledge and their personal views. However from the sixth question until the ninth, the group was being shown a series of images in thematic groups following the method of photo elicitation (APPENDIX 4). These four groups of images had been created in accordance with the most significant results gained from the previous steps of the present research, which is the quantitative content analysis and survey. As shown through these processes, the most important themes for the representation of the Republic of Cyprus through its stamps were: images showing archaeological findings found in Cyprus, images depicting scenes and figures from Greek Orthodox religion and imagery featuring Cyprus' endemic species. These three categories aside from being the largest additionally constitute 50% of the entire corpus of stamps (Andreou and Zantides, 2017). As survey research indicated by using the

same thematic categories, Cypriot citizens tend to believe that the most suitable themes for the representation of the country would be: imagery deriving from Cyprus' traditional culture (a category that is rather small in reality as it ranks ninth in the content analysis of the corpus) alongside previously mentioned categories such as the one comprised of imagery depicting archaeological findings, as well as scenes and figures from Greek Orthodox religion (Andreou et al., 2017a).

The four categories shown to the participants had four different postage stamps each. The stamps selected have also been based on previous findings and more specifically those of survey Question 4a (see APPENDIX 2 and Chapter 6.2). The stamps were placed on A5 black cardboards while the participants were also given the option of removing them and having a closer look (APPENDIX 4). The choice for this type of presentation is based on the way that stamps are usually examined in philately. It should be noted that the members of focus groups were shortly briefed on the representation of each stamp, as well as the title of the series and the year that each of them was issued. Aside from that, no other information was provided as if not to influence the views and opinions of the respondents.

The aim of this last group of questions was to further explore the ways in which our participants comprehend the visual representations of their country on stamp design, and especially when it comes to topics and images they have already proposed themselves. Throughout the focus groups' interviews the researcher ensured that additional questions would be asked in order to stimulate the conversation in the group, clarify and better explain various opinions expressed and simultaneously encourage the emergence of ideological perspectives.

*Question 10: Would you like to add anything in relation to the topic discussed that is the Republic of Cyprus' postage stamps, or their design?*

This was the final question posed during the session and served as an exit question. The purpose was to draw the conversation to a close, while at the same time give the members of the group the time and chance to add any piece of information or even go back to any topic they had been discussing before.

When the process of obtaining the necessary data had been completed the researcher moved to the process of analysis. As Krueger mentioned (1994) the most common purpose for conducting focus group interviews is to obtain in depth data on a topic that was not studied in this manner before. It is in fact a common strategy to use focus group interviews in order to study some hypotheses or findings that emerged from a larger

sample of people, as happens with surveys. In this sense a descriptive method of analysis is quite appropriate but the steps should be clearly outlined (Krueger, 1994). The transcription of the entire focus group interviews is one of the most crucial aspects of it. The researcher has edited some parts, mostly in order to finish incomplete sentences or explain some words and phrases formed in Cypriot dialect in Modern Greek. However, due to the fact that these focus groups were conducted in order to find out how the respondents think and why they present these opinions, further editing and ‘cleaning’ of the transcript has been avoided. When the transcription was finished, the decision whether the data should be analyzed in a quantitative or qualitative manner was taken. For the nature of the present study however and since the focus groups have been conducted in order to complement and explain the findings of the survey research, we decided to analyze the focus group interviews in a qualitative manner which could allow us to study each pattern separately and with equal importance unrelated to the number of times it appeared in the discussion. The next step involved the development of a coding system that emerged from the text and it was further narrowed down and reworked by the researcher based on the detailed transcripts. The coding process took into consideration spontaneous or inconsistent comments made by the participants, as well as repetition and changing of opinions as suggested by Krueger and Casey (2000). This resulted in the identification of patterns and separate cases but most importantly the relationship between ideas and concepts, thus creating categories. Through this process we were able to recognize key concepts in the participants’ answers and further discuss them with the aid of the chosen theoretical framework, while taking into consideration the socio-political background of the Republic of Cyprus. This specific part will also give answers to the second research question posed, as well as its sub-question which investigated the views of citizens. These were related to the messages promoted through Cyprus’ stamp designing program, the citizens’ perception on the most suitable representation of their country on its stamps, investigated through the socio-political background of the country, as well as our participants. Additionally the third research question posed was answered in synergy with the findings of the first and second study, as it aimed to compare the existing official culture representation and the perceptions of citizens (see Chapter 2).

The methodological tool that is focus groups has certainly aided us in this study in order to delve deeper into the responses we gathered from the questionnaires. This tool presents strong advantages on which we relied for the present research, but also a

number of disadvantages that need to be mentioned and acknowledged. Focus groups were chosen in our case due to their ability to extract information regarding complex topics that involve social and cultural issues. They are useful in obtaining detailed accounts on personal and group perceptions, opinions and feelings through the interaction of participants (Krueger and Casey, 2000). Since the discussion takes place between people from different backgrounds, age groups and education levels we are to expect a variety of opinions. Additionally, we might be able to note subtle changes in their attitude in regards to the topics discussed. Furthermore, through the course of the conversation the participants might be reminded or motivated by the answers of the rest of the groups, prompting them to offer their personal memories of an event, or any type of additional information they would normally not be sharing. In other words, the procedure of interviewing in focus groups adds a human dimension to otherwise impersonal data gathered in questionnaires, or in other quantitative means (Stewart and Shamdasani, 1990).

Due to the demographic and personality variety we may not only gain a broader range of relevant information, but also useful and insightful quotes that make our analysis richer. Additionally this process allows the researcher the opportunity to seek clarification, especially in complex topics related to ideology and society as happened in our case. Focus groups were rather helpful and enriching in the process of completing the present research as they allowed us to seek the reasons behind the answers of the participants of the quantitative part of the study. While questionnaires were able to uncover significant patterns in the opinions of the respondents, focus groups gave us the opportunity to uncover why they give certain answers and how this can be related to the socio-political background. Some of these answers could be clearly seen reflecting the findings of the questionnaire, but with this added process we aimed not only in verifying them, but also clarifying the results. Furthermore, and due to the nature of our study the participants were enabled through focus groups to give us interesting potential solutions for the representation of Cyprus on its stamps, that many times has been rather different from the one followed in the existing corpus. These pose some of the most important reasons for the fact that focus groups are considered to be a valid complementary way for researching and understanding statistical data that result from questionnaires (Krueger, 1994).

On the other hand the aforementioned methodological tool naturally bears certain disadvantages that need to be mentioned. Firstly it is always difficult to locate people

who have a prior or basic knowledge of the topic. Such an instance might result in a conversation that does not uncover any significant information on the topic. Additionally it might be hard to locate and ensure the participation of people coming from a diverse demographical range (Stewart and Shamdasani, 1990). In our case and taking into consideration the topic studied we preferred to include people who have already participated in the survey we conducted prior to focus groups. In fact we requested from the respondents who took part in the survey to kindly leave their contact details at the end of the questionnaire if they wished to be further involved in this project. This resulted in the participation of 20 Cypriot citizens who had already filled the relevant questionnaire during the previous phase of the study. These respondents had left their contact information with the researcher in order to further aid in the study if needed. This particular sample of people possessed different demographic characteristics as they reside in various areas of the country, belong in different gender and age groups and come from diverse educational backgrounds.

The second crucial disadvantage of focus groups in comparison to personal interviews is rooted in its nature of involving a larger number of people and having them interact with one another. While this can be considered a great advantage, as well as its most recognized characteristic, it involves a number of issues that the researcher needs to tackle. Since the groups are created due to the participants' knowledge of the topic or certain demographics, they are usually strangers. The experience of sharing information, opinions and even more so memories and feelings in the presence of unknown people can be experienced as an intimidating or off-putting procedure by some. A number of participants may find themselves feeling pressured by the rest of the group to agree with the dominant views, or express socially acceptable opinions in an attempt to avoid making a bad impression to the rest of the respondents (Stewart and Shamdasani, 1990). This situation can be avoided or at least improved by an introductory session which aids the participants in being acquainted with each other, as well as the researcher and the general aim of the study. Something like that would certainly not eliminate the issue in its entirety, but at least create a friendlier atmosphere.

Furthermore the conversation within the group is an unpredictable factor which heavily relies on the individual personalities that constitute it. It is to be expected that some of the participants can be naturally expressive or authoritative, thus influencing or intimidating the rest of the respondents (Krueger and Casey, 2000). As a result

disagreements can arise and the members of the group might get distracted from the main focus, or carried away by irrelevant discussion. In this sense, managing and controlling the conversation can prove to be difficult to supervise for the researcher. He/she needs to ensure the active participation of all members involved, while simultaneously paying close attention to any parts of the conversation that need clarification or further discussion. Researchers therefore, are encouraged to involve another person in the management of the focus groups (Stewart and Shamdasani, 1990). In our case this second person aided the researcher in various ways throughout the process. Aside from ensuring the audio recording of the conversations, she ensured that all of the participants had enough time to express their opinions and that no forms of tension among the members of the focus groups had arisen, aside from the expected and productive disagreements.

Taking into consideration all of the aforementioned parameters, advantages and disadvantages we proceeded with transcribing the interview and inscribing separate codes for the themes that emerged from the discussion. This resulted in the diagram presented in the next section which bears all of the themes that we acquired from focus groups.

## **7.2 Results**

The following section presents the data we gathered through the process of focus groups, elaborating on these findings, taking into consideration the research questions we aimed to answer as well as our chosen theoretical framework. As mentioned before, four groups were formed containing five participants in each of them. Aside from being briefed on the process, the participants were given a consent form to sign (APPENDIX 6). As part of the specific form the respondents were assured that would remain anonymous throughout the data report and analysis of the findings. In order to ensure the anonymity and protect their personal information, their full names were replaced only by the first initial and in a number of cases it was also substituted by a random letter upon their request. Below we will be presenting the demographic characteristics of the participants and the groups they formed.

The first focus group was composed by the following five participants: Female 1 – (G.), 25 years old, Higher (University), Limassol; Female 2 – (N.), 40 years old, Higher (College), Paphos; Female 3 – (M.), 65 years old, Secondary, Limassol; Male 1 – (S.),

28 years old, Higher (College), Nicosia; Male 2 – (M.), 50 years old, Higher (University), Larnaca.

The second focus group was composed by the following five participants: Female 1 – (E.), 60 years old, Secondary, Limassol; Female 2 – (Ma.), 20 years old, Secondary, Larnaca; Male 1 – (C.), 30 years old, Higher (University), Nicosia; Male 2 – (Y.), 48 years old, Higher (University), Paphos; Male 3 – (N.), 55 years old, Higher (College), Limassol.

The third focus group was composed by the following five participants: Female 1 – (A.), 54 years old, Higher (University), Famagusta; Female 2 – (O.), 25 years old, Higher (College), Larnaca; Female 3 – (P.), 58 years old, Secondary, Paphos; Male 1 – (Ni.), 25 years old, Higher (University), Limassol; Male 2 – (Ch.), 72 years old, Primary, Nicosia.

The fourth focus group was composed by the following five participants: Female 1 – (Mar.), 60 years old, Higher (College), Nicosia; Female 2 – (C.), 20 years old, Secondary, Nicosia; Male 1 –(P.), 30 years old, Higher (University), Nicosia; Male 2 – (L.), 65 years old, Primary, Larnaca; Male 3 –(A.), 45 years old, Higher (University), Limassol.

When the process of focus group interviewing has been completed, we transcribed the interview, inscribing separate codes for the themes that emerged from the discussion. This resulted in the following list of codes:

- Disinterest
- Curiosity
- Collector
- Notables
- Repetition
- Historical importance
- Refugee stamp
- Imagery evoking emotions
- Traditional culture
- Personal interests/taste
- None
- Endemic species
- Archaeological findings
- National pride
- Greek Orthodox Christianity
- Nature
- 2016 wildfires



- Tourism
- Cyprus' unique identity
- Connection with Greece
- Positivity
- Familiarity
- Everyday life
- Not shameful
- Contemporary Cyprus
- Connection with the European Union
- Hope
- Financial crisis
- Turkish occupation
- Orange
- The Republic of Cyprus' flag
- Blue
- White
- Peace
- Yellow
- Nature
- Green
- Respect
- Detachment
- Aphrodite
- Symbolic
- Kyrenia shipwreck
- Sadness
- Peaceful past (Turkish Cypriot community)
- Salamis' amphitheatre
- Europe's myth (coin)
- Strategically/Politically important
- Strong presence in society
- Majority's religion
- Importance of minorities' representation
- Virgin Mary (icon)
- Jesus Christ (icon)
- Byzantine Cross
- Saint Andrew the Apostle (icon)
- Neutrality
- Not a strong symbol
- Olive branch
- Cyprus Mouflon

- Cyprus Airways
- Currency
- Cyprus donkey
- Cyclamen
- Folklore dance and music
- Traditional embroidery
- Commandaria
- Curved pumpkin
- Not contemporary
- Other priorities
- Citizens' involvement

The coding process resulted in the creation of a diagram (concept map) depicting the themes and the way these were developed through the focus group interviewing (questions and photo-elicitation). The relevant concept map is presented below. Furthermore, the findings shown on the concept map will be linked with the questions posed during the focus group interviews, for the reader to comprehend the map easier.

### **Concept map**

- **Attitude towards stamps/philately**
  - Disinterest
  - Curiosity
  - Collector
- **Memorable stamp designs**
  - Notables (political personalities)
    - Repetition
    - Historical importance
  - Refugee stamp
    - Repetition
    - Historical importance
    - Imagery evoking emotions
  - Traditional culture
    - Personal interests/taste
    - Imagery evoking emotions
  - None
  - Endemic species
    - Personal interests/ taste
    - Imagery evoking emotions
  - Archaeological findings
    - Personal interests/taste

- National pride
  - Greek Orthodoxy
    - Personal interests/taste
- **Proposed topics and images for stamp design**
  - Nature
    - 2016 wildfires
    - Tourism
  - Greek Orthodoxy
    - Cyprus' unique identity
  - Archaeological findings
    - Tourism
    - Cyprus' unique identity
    - Connection with Greece
  - Traditional culture
    - Positivity
    - Tourism
    - Cyprus' unique identity
    - Familiarity
    - Not shameful
  - Contemporary Cyprus
    - Connection with the European Union
    - Hope
      - Financial crisis
  - Notables (non-political personalities)
  - Turkish occupation
- **Representative colouration**
  - Orange
    - The Republic of Cyprus' flag
  - Blue
    - Nature
    - Connection with Greece
  - White
    - Peace
    - The Republic of Cyprus' flag
  - Yellow
    - The Republic of Cyprus' flag
    - Nature
  - Green
    - Hope
- **Perceptions on largest stamp categories (Archaeological sites)**
  - Connection with Greece
  - National pride
  - Tourism
  - Respect

- Detachment
- Aphrodite
  - Symbolic
    - Tourism
- Kyrenia shipwreck
  - Sadness
  - Peaceful past (Turkish Cypriot community)
  - Symbolic
    - Turkish occupation
- Salamis' amphitheatre
  - Sadness
  - Peaceful past (Turkish Cypriot community)
  - Symbolic
    - Turkish occupation
- Europe's myth (coin)
  - Connection with the European Union
- Strategically/ Politically important
- Perceptions on largest stamp categories (Religion)
  - Strong presence in society
  - Strategically/Politically important
  - Cyprus' unique identity
  - Tourism
  - Majority's religion
    - Importance of minorities' representation
      - Detachment
  - Virgin Mary (icon)
    - Respect
  - Jesus Christ (icon)
    - Respect
  - Byzantine Cross
    - Respect
  - Saint Andrew the Apostle (icon)
    - Symbolic
      - Turkish occupation
    - Sadness
      - Turkish occupation
- Perceptions on largest stamp categories (Endemic species)
  - Familiarity
  - Cyprus' unique identity
  - Neutrality
  - Positivity
  - Not a strong symbol
  - Olive branch

- Historical importance
    - Symbolic
      - The Republic of Cyprus' flag
      - Peace
    - Everyday life
  - Cyprus Mouflon
    - Symbolic
      - Cyprus Airways
      - Currency
  - Cyprus donkey
    - Not a strong symbol
    - Everyday life
  - Cyclamen
    - Everyday life
    - Symbolic
      - Cyprus' unique identity
- Perceptions on largest stamp categories (Traditional culture)
  - Familiarity
  - Not shameful
  - National pride
  - Everyday life
  - Cyprus' unique identity
  - Not contemporary
  - Other priorities
  - Folklore dance and music
    - Familiarity
  - Traditional embroidery
    - Everyday life
  - Commandaria
    - Cyprus' unique identity
  - Curved pumpkin
    - Tourism
    - Everyday life
    - Familiarity
- **Other**
  - Citizens' involvement
  - Cyprus' unique identity

The first question that the participants commented on was the initial, introductory question on their past or present interest in philately. This revealed that our focus groups consisted of three categories, the people who were, or still are actively involved with stamp collecting, the participants who do not own a stamp collection but are curious

about the imagery chosen for them, and the ones who are entirely disinterested in the topic.

Subsequently we proceeded to ask which (if any) of the images being used on Cyprus' postage stamps had they memorized from seeing it in the past, and for what reasons were the particular ones memorable. There was a group of participants who replied that they could not remember any stamp design in particular. A second opinion that was heard has been that the most memorable Cyprus' stamp designs were the ones commemorating notables, politicians to be more precise. This type of imagery was memorable to them as it was connected with individuals who have earned their place in history, are quite impressive and this type of stamps have been circulating quite repetitively over the years. Images commemorating the ongoing issue of Cypriot refugees and in particular the stamp designed by Tassos was a favourite among the participants. Once more repetition was mentioned, as well as the historical and emotional importance of the particular stamp that evokes both memories and feelings of sadness. Traditional culture on stamps was another memorable topic according to our participants, due to their personal interests or taste and the fact that this sort of imagery evokes emotions such as nostalgia and happiness. The same reasoning was followed for the choice of stamp designs that showcase various plants from the endemic species that can be found in Cyprus. Personal interests, aesthetics as well as beliefs, have been given as the reasons for remembering stamps celebrating Greek Orthodox Christianity by a number of respondents. Finally, images depicting archaeological findings and sites from various areas of Cyprus both occupied and not, have been considered quite memorable by the participants as well. Once more they included their own personal interests or pastimes as reasons for this choice, but also a sense of national or collective pride that they experience upon seeing such imagery.

The next topic posed to the participants for discussion was concerned with the themes or imagery they would have chosen if they were to create a stamp representing the Republic of Cyprus. Topics such as the promotion of Greek Orthodox Christianity and archaeological findings have been some of the suggestions proposed. The reasons behind these two choices were quite similar: the expression of Cyprus' unique identity through the majority's religion and its past, the connections with Greece, as well as the appeal these two topics might have to different types of tourists, people interested in historical sightseeing and faith tourism. Traditional culture was also believed to be quite an important and suitable topic for Cyprus' stamp design. The reasons behind this

choice were slightly different. The participants emphasized that it is a way of expressing Cyprus' uniqueness in a way that they consider positive and familiar in the everyday life of the island. Moreover, since it showcases a fun and light side of the country it might also attract tourism. Finally, the participants insisted that Cypriots should be proud of their traditional culture, but instead there is a sense of inferiority or even shame attached to it by some. The focus group discussions lead us to understand that citizens grasp the idea of a nation's representation through endemic flora, fauna and nature, as they believe it to be a plausible solution, and tourism attraction. Tourism according to a number of the participants is an aspect we always need to bear in mind as it is a source for economical stability, especially in the case of Cyprus.

A different opinion on the promotion of nature through Cyprus' stamp design was additionally expressed. Deeply shocked by the wildfires that took place during the summer of 2016 and caused the death of a number of citizens, the focus group participants claimed that we need to accentuate the values of respect and care for nature, through the official stamp designs, as a small measure that might aid in avoiding such terrible events in the future. The ongoing Turkish occupation of a significant part of the island was another theme that our participants considered crucial to be showcased abroad, also serving as a reminder for the citizens of Cyprus. On the other hand a far more positive note was suggested by some of the respondents as they believed that Cyprus' contemporary profile should be promoted instead. In other words, this would include the presentation of new projects undertaken on the island, contemporary architecture, and even the country's connection with the European Union. This would aid in the representation of Cyprus' profile as a progressive European country that aims to have a hopeful future and overcome the recent financial crisis. Lastly, a number of participants asserted that Cyprus needs to promote through its stamp designing program notable and important personalities from various fields such as, science, the arts and sports in order to celebrate the achievements of the nation. They insisted that personalities from the political arena should be avoided due to the public's distrust in them.

Next, the participants were requested to share their thoughts on the colouration that would seem the most representative and suitable for Cyprus on its stamps. The answers we got, as well as the reasons behind these choices vary. Both the colours orange and yellow have been associated with the flag of the Republic of Cyprus. Additionally yellow was mentioned to be closely associated with Cyprus' nature and geographical

traits. Something similar happened with the explanation given by the participants who considered white as a colour representing Cyprus. They claimed that Cyprus' flag contains a lot of white space, this being a notable symbolism for peace. Similarly green colour was considered a symbolism for prosperity and hope for the unification of the island, as well as for a better and brighter future. On the other hand blue colourations were being associated with the fact that Cyprus is an island and therefore blue hues are inseparable from its image. Additionally, some of the respondents considered blue a symbolic way for connecting Cyprus with Greece and its ancient heritage.

The process of photo-elicitation (APPENDIX 4) brought to light even more details on the ways the citizens perceive official representation through stamps. The images shown derived from the largest categories as resulting both from the process of content analysis and survey research. The first examples presented, were taken from the thematic category 'Archaeological findings and sites' and the reactions varied. Some of the images, such as the figure of Aphrodite, as well as that of Europe were considered to be symbolically connecting Cyprus with the European Union and Greece, or even promoting Cyprus as a touristic destination. On the other hand images such as the Kyrenia shipwreck and the Amphitheatre of Salamis were linked with painful memories. These included the Turkish occupation and they evoked feelings of sadness due to the unresolved issues and the remembrance of a peaceful past alongside the Turkish Cypriot community of the island. The feelings of respect for the ancient civilization and ancestors, as well as national pride were also expressed. On the other hand, the polar opposite feeling of complete detachment from the ancient ruins was equally obvious.

The presence of the thematic category 'Religion' in Cyprus' official repertoire was considered to be of strategic importance due to the island's geographical position and unresolved political issues. The particular category was discussed as a whole by the participants as they considered that any type of image that belonged in it would serve a similar purpose. According to the participants religion in general occupies a strong place in Cyprus' society and since Greek Orthodox Christianity is the majority's religion of choice its appearance on stamps is justified. However the importance of the representation of minorities and consequently their religions has been expressed by a number of participants. Furthermore, our participants mentioned the feelings of respect towards the icons shown, as well as their sadness for some of those who are now symbolically linked with the Turkish occupation, such as the icon of Saint Andrew the



Apostle. Finally, the idea that the promotion of religion may attract tourists, while some of the citizens remain detached from it was also expressed.

The subsequent category that the focus group participants were requested to discuss contained examples of imagery depicting endemic species of flora and fauna that can be found on Cyprus. The uniqueness of the country is presented through familiar and everyday images, according to the participants. Moreover, a different pattern was presented throughout the discussion and it involved the usage of this type of images in order to evoke a sense of neutrality. A third opinion that was expressed throughout the discussion was that this category is not symbolically strong, or meaningful enough for the purpose it serves, at least if compared with the rest of the themes. For example, imagery such as the olive branch, the image of a cyclamen or even the Cyprus Mouflon were considered to be showcasing the island's unique identity, as well as having historical significance and symbolisations more powerful than those of the image of a Cyprus donkey, albeit of it being used in the promotion of touristic merchandise.

Finally, the thematic category 'Traditional culture' elicited feelings of familiarity in the participants, as they explained that this type of imagery promotes aspects that are embedded in their everyday lives. In this sense the opinion that Cypriots need to be proud for their unique tradition was expressed. A number of participants noted that Cypriots tend to wrongly feel the sense of shame or inferiority when discussing, or displaying parts of their traditional culture, especially music, certain folklore events, or even the local dialect. On the other hand some participants disagreed with these statements and commented that tradition cannot be considered contemporary, that it does not follow the profile of a progressive and modern Cyprus and therefore stamps should be showcasing them less in favour of other more relevant topics.

Concluding, the participants asserted that especially in the case of Cyprus authorities should be very careful in the ways the country is being presented. Firstly, due to its unresolved political issues and secondly since Cyprus bases a significant part of its economy on tourism. Furthermore, the participants commented on the lack of information they get for the official representation of their country, as well as the need for them to be further involved or at least made aware of the entire process.

In this section we presented the concept map that resulted from the focus group interviews, as well as the themes that were developed. Moreover the findings were linked with the coding frame. In this sense, we can now proceed to discuss the findings in relation to our theoretical framework and the results we gained from the previous

sections of this research, always taking into consideration the socio-political background of the Republic of Cyprus.

### **7.3 Discussion**

The two previous chapters studied the stamps of the Republic of Cyprus and their role in the construction of official culture from two different perspectives. Quantitative content analysis was first chosen to group the stamps of the corpus in smaller manageable thematic categories in order to discuss them in relation to the representation of official culture and the various socio-political circumstances that might have affected their numbers, as well as design. The next part of our research was concerned with the development and implementation of a survey research that investigated the views of adults Cypriot citizens on postage stamps and their role in officially representing the country. We were interested in the public's views regarding the way in which they consider that Cyprus should be promoted through stamp design, and how these ideas 'translated' into images through the respondents' suggestions. This process revealed noticeable patterns in their answers which could be connected with various ideologies stemming from the socio-political background of Cyprus, as well as specific important events in its timeline. It should be noted that a study based on this chapter's findings, combined with aspects from the two previously discussed studies, was presented at the *XI International Conference on Semiotics* in 2016 and is currently under review for publication in the respective proceedings (Andreou and Zantides, 2017b).

We gathered significant findings through this process and were able to discuss them to a certain degree from the researcher's perspective. What we lacked was the rationale behind these opinions of the people who expressed them, our participants and citizens of the Republic of Cyprus. Additionally, the process of analyzing the survey's findings allowed us to pinpoint which parts needed further interpretation and therefore the aid of the respondents. Following this logic we developed the questions posed and incorporated the additional tool of photo elicitation. In the next section we will be discussing these results, in relation to the framework selected for this study, the socio-political background of the Republic of Cyprus, as well as the findings reported previously in this research.

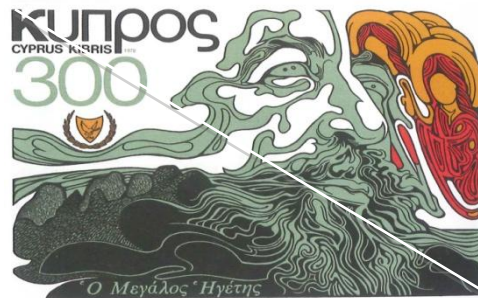
We will not be discussing the results of the first question posed in the focus groups at length since it was an initial, introductory question aiming to ease the participants into

the topic and additionally note whether any of them are active philatelists. The results showed that our focus groups consisted of three categories of participants, the ones who were or are still actively involved with stamp collecting, the participants who do not collect stamps but are curious about the imagery chosen for them, and the ones who are entirely disinterested in the topic. In this sense various attitudes towards the object could be recorded, making our findings more thorough. What was interesting about the participants' answers on this question are their admissions that they had memories of stamps being shown to them as part of regular classes during their schooldays. A 72 year old participant furthermore asserted that they were '*urged*' to create a small collection of stamps by their teachers, during his schooldays. It is a fact that stamps are still present in schoolbooks issued by the Republic of Cyprus.

The second question, asked of the participants to discuss Cyprus' stamp designs that they remembered and explain what made these memorable. A common reasoning had to do with the aspect of repetition of certain imagery. 25 year old Georgia highlighted the importance of repetition in official representations by stating that '*maybe it depends on how many times we have seen an image. Repetition probably... It is not so much about something being memorable, but rather how many times you see it*'. At the same time, 40 year old Niki added that certain stamp designs have been circulating in other forms such as graffiti art, thus making them far more noticeable. Inadvertently these participants reflected parts of the theoretical framework of our study, especially concerning the role of reiteration of official repertoire in order to embed it in the citizens' conscience, an aspect highlighted by both Anderson (1991) and Edensor (2002). Additionally the statement made by Niki proved how official aspects of culture such as stamp imagery can be influenced or influence elements of the mainstream and everyday life, proving their dialogue as Inge (1981) and Lewis (1992) would have argued.

A recurring trend arising from our focus group discussions has been the opinion that stamps representing notable politicians from Cyprus' history are quite memorable for two reasons, according to the respondents' views. Firstly, the historical importance of figures such as former Presidents Makarios III (1913 – 1977) and Tassos Papadopoulos (1934 – 2008) was accentuated by the design itself, as well as the number of times these figures appeared on stamps throughout the years. It is true that at least when it comes to President Makarios III his presence on Cyprus' stamps has been frequent, as his figure appeared on 16 different designs and numerous reproductions of the very same imagery.

Additionally, the representation of his figure has been elevated on a higher level by designs such as the one pictured below (Plate 2).



**Plate 2:** The great leader, 3 August 1978, A.A. Ioannides

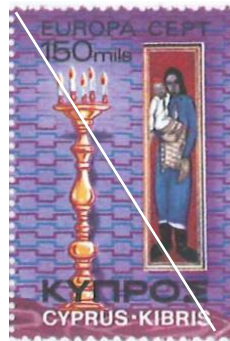
The profile of President Makarios III takes the most space on this particular stamp (Plate 2) where obviously no framing has been used and therefore the portrait gets to be closer to the viewer. The deceased president is pictured in an almost whimsical manner that blends his portrait with the landscape underneath him, while angels can be seen directly on his right. The colouration of his figure accentuated by the blue and white hues could easily allude to clouds or the vastness of skies. In this sense his presence is ideologically augmented and his status elevated in a spiritual level where he becomes one with the country he served both as Archbishop and president, while he appears to be guarding it from the afterlife. Typography and its hierarchy is a telltale sign for messages concerning the deceased former president. In fact typography has the ability to function as a means for emphasis (Ades and Steedman, 1982), something that undoubtedly happened here. All three of the official languages are present; the word in Greek however is almost four times larger and placed on top of the other two. ‘CYPRUS’ and ‘KIBRIS’ were written in uppercase, but the word in Greek exudes a far more personal sense, as it is both written in lower case and was placed closer to the head of President Makarios III. In this sense we assume that all of these design decisions were not coincidental, but rather conscious efforts to ideologically tie the pictured figure with the Greek Cypriot community of the island, in a showcase of political and social sovereignty. Finally in order to underline the importance and positive contribution of President Makarios III in the island’s history once more, the phrase ‘The great leader’ was placed at the bottom of the image, using italics for added elegance on the script. It is notable how this line was written only in the Greek language avoiding the inclusion of a Turkish or English translation. The script was written using

polytonic orthography since the Greek Orthodox Church and consequently its representatives continue to employ it in their writings (Betts, 2004).

A quite different but equally charged group of imagery that the participants memorized are various stamps depicting refugees. Some of them mentioned in particular the stamp designed by Tassos that we discussed in previous chapters (Plate 27). Our participants showcased the ability to describe the particular stamp in detail, and furthermore assign to it strong emotions. A 25 year old female participant called it *'the most memorable stamp of the entire collection'*, while 60 year old Elli explained the feelings associated with it in detail *'I have seen it being used for artistic purposes too. I guess it is a symbol of resistance, of the idea that we do not forget these sad events and their consequences. I think that symbolically speaking it is a strong symbol, a very sad image, a miserable one... It certainly evokes emotions from the viewers'*. Some of the participants, such as 58 year old Panayiota, expressed her exasperation with the lack in promotion of the issue of the ongoing occupation of Cyprus' territory stating that *'we could promote important issues through stamps. We could showcase our 'enslaved' monuments, we could also promote the issue of the refugees. This is important! I think we are trying to bury all of these events, as they do not suit our governments nowadays. We had this one stamp reminding of the refugees' tragedy. And what do we do? We go and make it pink! This is ridiculous. In this sense I believe topics such as these could remind us Cypriots of certain events, not just the foreigners. Instead... instead we are trying to erase everything associated with what happened only 40 years ago... [] a nation is not only its present but its past too'*. Panayiota's oppositional reading (Hall, 1980) of the intentions behind the colourized version of Tassos' stamp, uncovered how due to her social background the image was rejected and an alternative frame of reference was brought into the conversation.

On the other hand some of the participants did not mention this particular stamp but described some general characteristics of stamps depicting refugees instead. It is interesting how most of the participants discussing this topic were females and how most of the times they would refer to the figures on relevant stamps as a 'she'. In this case we see a general tendency coming from both the official culture and our participants to use the figures of female refugees as a symbolic way of expressing their sadness for the division of the island and the horrific consequences on its people (Plates 32 and 33). In the words of 60 year old Maria, a refugee herself from Famagusta, *'I come from Famagusta you know... We are all refugees. I think that our governments*

*should not only remind the nations abroad, but Cypriots too about this situation. Cypriots tend to forget! We are getting comfortable in our lives and we tend to forget the horrors that took place then. I don't mind the political implications, behind these stamps'. In fact this symbolism is so strong both in official culture representation and in the participants' opinions that it has been elevated to represent not only pain, but also an almost spiritual mourning process.*



**Plate 32:** 'Virgin and Child from Liopetri', 28 April 1975, A. Tassos

The first example (Plate 32) is a postage stamp designed by Tassos issued on the 28<sup>th</sup> of April 1975, almost a year after the Turkish invasion and features a work by the Cypriot painter George Paul Georgiou (1901 – 1972). Starting from the title of the image *Virgin and Child from Liopetri*, sometimes referred to as *Virgin Mary from Liopetri* we can spot connotations with both the figure of Madonna and the notion of being a refugee, as Liopetri is a village situated in the geographical district of Famagusta, which was affected by both the invasion and occupation. On a first level of analysis we can easily note how the pose prepares the reader to perceive the connotations of a signified (Barthes, 1973). The way the woman is holding the child has clear connotations with the idea of motherhood and could be linked to the caring and loving way the Virgin Mary herself is holding Baby Jesus. The woman is almost attaching the child to her body in a protective manner and their heads are tenderly touching as in a gentle embrace (Andreou et al., 2016; 2017).

On a deeper level of analysis we can notice the meaning constructed by colours and the values they help to create (Barthes, 1988). Nevertheless, we should always have in mind how colours tend to create a multitude of codes, depending on the societies and cultures they are used by. There definitely are broader trends and tendencies with the aid of which psychologists and other researchers attempt to construct a single and

universal ‘language of colours’, but there are still associations with limited contexts (Leeuwen, 2011).

Starting from the main figure, which is the mother or according to the title of the postage stamp ‘the Virgin’, we can notice that her hair is covered with a black scarf. This sign has clear connotations of death, in this context the demise of a close family member, most probably a husband (Pastoureau, 2008). Additionally, the rest of the woman’s clothing points to a poor and socially low background. More specifically, she is wearing the traditional rubber boots usually worn by land workers and farmers. The child she carries is simply wearing a white shirt alluding to the values of the colour white, such as innocence and pureness of soul (Beasley and Danesi, 2002; Leeuwen, 2011). Next to the group of figures which seem to be almost compressed by their own frame, stands a candleholder. On the level of iconology which takes into account the cultural and historical context of the image (Panofsky, 1939), this item is rather significant as it is a part of the Divine Liturgy, a process of Greek Orthodox Christianity and it alludes once more to the spiritual nature of the woman/Virgin. The main colours of the depiction are a combination of burgundy and gold, related to religious imagery, while the background is a deep hue of purple usually signalling emotional devastation and mourning (Gage, 1999).



**Plate 33:** Mother and Child on the way of becoming refugees, 7 October 1991, A. A. Ioannidis

The second example presented (Plate 33) is a postage stamp designed by Antis Ioannidis (1939 –), issued in 1991 on the occasion of the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. The engraving featured on the stamp is in black and white, a colour combination that tends to be associated with notions such as mourning and loss (Gage, 1999). The postage stamp is entitled *Mother and Child on their way of becoming refugees*. This title is intersemiotically translated (Jakobson, 1959) by placing in the middle of the picture a group of tents, used as temporary housing in emergency situations, more specifically a war in our case – 1974.

Furthermore, the framework is deliberately narrowed down in order to be associated only with the refugees of Cyprus, thus stopping the production of any other associations. This is achieved by placing the outline of the island's shape next to the woman's figure making it clear to the viewer that we are discussing the Cypriot refugees. These types of depictions could be associated with a gender-specific trauma due to the events of 1974, and relates to the inability of women to accomplish their role as caretakers. As Cockburn (2004) asserted, during that period women were considered the primary caretakers of the children due to the fact that men were forced into military recruitment, having as a consequence for the mothers to experience the anxiety of keeping the children safe as their main responsibility. Furthermore, alluding ideologically to a more spiritual state, it seems that in some cases the female figure serves as a metaphorical vehicle for the mother's pain while employing forms and even phrases that remind the viewer of the Virgin Mary and her own loss of a child (Andreou et al., 2016; 2017).

As the first day cover accompanying the stamp explained, this design's goal was to show how these refugees were fleeing away from destruction and death and were headed towards an immaterial salvation as they had lost everything that mattered to them (Cyprus Post, 2017). The devastation is highlighted by the fact that we cannot see any specific surroundings, as well as the darkness of the background. Furthermore the Cyprus Post's publication (2017) mentioned how the stamp accurately depicted the emptiness, as they left behind everything that they loved including their home, the dead, their church and finally their way of life.

It became obvious throughout this research that both the official culture representation through stamps and the citizens who took part in our survey and focus groups exhibited a great deal of trauma when faced with topics reminiscing the year 1974 and its consequences, especially the ongoing issue of the refugees. In 54 year old Antonia's words '*[] as I said our past is our past, it should not be forgotten. Both the country and its people! On the other hand the Turkish occupation is a crime and should not be forgotten either*'. Furthermore, a sense of spirituality and closeness to the Church was surprisingly present when discussing this topic, and to be more precise with a particular figure; the Virgin Mary. During focus group discussions the stamp representing the Virgin Mary (Plate 36) gathered a much more sentimental reaction from the participants as she has been repeatedly called '*the mother that guards us all*'. Additionally it was the choice of the majority (65.7%) in the survey research we



conducted, when they were prompted to pick one image in order to represent the thematic category ‘Religion’ for Cyprus’ stamps (Table 18).



**Plates 34, 35, 36 and 37 (from left to right):** Wooden Cross from Stavrovouni, 22 November 1993, A. Malekos; Jesus Christ - icon from the Arakas church in Lagoudera, 5 November 1979, A. Malekos; The Virgin Mary and Jesus Christ, 26 November 1973, A. Tassos; 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Saint Andrew the Apostle’s monastery, 8 November 1967, A. Tassos

The crucial role of Church in the society of the Republic of Cyprus, as well as the promotion of Greek Orthodox Christianity through official culture and in particular through postage stamps, specially before 2004, has been discussed in previous chapters (See Chapter 5.3). The process of photo-elicitation however, allowed us to add important insights to the ways in which this thematic category is regarded by the participants of our survey and focus groups, the citizens of the Republic of Cyprus that is. Plates 34, 35, 36 and 37 were showed and discussed by the participants of all four groups and the reactions we gathered have been really useful in better comprehending the role they give to this thematic category.

Aside from the very emotional and spiritual manner that the figure of the Virgin Mary was perceived, the reactions of the participants to this category of stamps have been equally enlightening in relation to the representation of a state and its citizens, or as they put it, the attempt of a creation of ‘*identity*’. The presence of these figures was commented on by the majority of the participants as a rational decision, since they represent ‘*the majority’s religion*’. In the words of one of our participants, 50 year old Marios ‘*one’s nationality and religion create a mark, or an identity if you prefer this word. I am not saying this is necessarily the best thing to categorize people like that, but it is a reality. This is what nations are for. They create identities*’. Some of them, while accepting the presented idea went a step further and tied the importance of this category of stamps in official culture with geo-politics, while simultaneously the view that the promotion of minorities’ religions should be celebrated has been voiced. This opinion

fuelled the discussion as the opinions were conflicting and the reading of these images and the intentions behind them negotiated. This division or rather the contradictions of those stamps' reading were voiced in detail by 25 year old Olga who explained *'Well...Greek Orthodoxy... I am thinking of expressing two polarizing opinions right now. Hm... I will tell you what I'm thinking of. Alright, so on the one hand religion is a form of defining who you are, as a person and of course as a country. Cyprus is situated in an area where most countries are Muslim, close to Turkey of course, and we all know the difficulty in this geographical position. This is a difficult place to be if you are Christian, geographically speaking. So I guess this is a strong message that's been sent there. We are Christians it says... On the other hand, someone could suggest that since there are minorities living on the island their religious views and symbols should also be present. Yes... [] That's what I'm thinking but I cannot decide what's right and wrong... Sorry...'*

Aside from its importance for geopolitical reasons, and as a form of identity, the participants were less engaged with this category than with thematic groups such as the ones representing endemic species of flora and fauna, or aspects of traditional culture. They considered it *'serious'* and as this characterisation appeared frequently during the discussion, the researcher asked for a definition from the members of the groups. As 60 year old Maria explained, *'Here we are seeing a collection of images associated with people's religion, with their religious beliefs. It's definitely a serious matter. What you believe in religion-wise, is always a serious choice that you carry all your life. This choice follows your children too... In this sense it is very serious. [] So when a country decides to issue stamps like these, it means that the country adopts the particular religion as its own. It means that this is the religion of the majority, and of the country itself. So you see? It's quite a serious matter (laughs)'*. Furthermore this feeling was also accentuated by participants who did not experience any particular closeness to this theme, but comprehended its importance for the country's self-representation, nevertheless. Such an example would be 25 year old Georgia who stated that *'religious imagery exists on our stamps since religion and Church is a live entity in Cyprus. [] I do not feel any closeness to images such as these, necessarily. But on the other hand... Why not... Like we said, images such as these the Cross, the Virgin Mary, Jesus Christ, Saint Andrew the Apostle... All important figures in our religion... [] And yes, I shall agree that it represents our country and us, since this is our religion. There are*

*minorities in Cyprus of course and their religion could be celebrated as well, to some extent. [ ] Without a doubt the official religion of the majority is important '.*

The thematic category 'Archaeological findings and sites' was another group of stamps which proved to be strongly preferred by the Republic of Cyprus' official culture, especially before 2004. This conscious effort for the country to be closely tied with its past and Hellenic roots through its official culture has been discussed in detail in previous chapters (see Chapters 5.3 and 6.3). The participants of our survey acknowledged its importance by considering this theme to be the second most suitable for the representation of their country (Tables 17 and 18). Let us now see through the discussion in focus groups and with the aid of photo-elicitation (Plates 38, 39, 40 and 41) what their perceptions towards this category were and in which manner its importance was justified by the participating citizens.



**Plates 38, 39, 40 and 41 (from left to right):** Aphrodite, 21 November 1966, A. Tassos; Salamis Amphitheatre, 5 June 1964, A. Tassos; Europe's abduction, 29 April 1974, A. Tassos; Kyrenia shipwreck, 3 October 1987, Y. Pantsopoulos

The most predictable stance came from the participating citizens who claimed that they felt 'pride' upon looking at the stamps representing archaeological findings of Cyprus. They expressed their amazement for these 'elaborate objects and architectural feats of our ancestors' that point towards the country's history. As 50 year old Marios explained, 'well... They also show our roots, our past. A better past one could say. And let's face it, these are few of the things we can be proud of and showcase abroad with pride. That's what I mean by saying beautiful. Beautiful as in elaborate, as in important and artistic. People abroad can see these and relate them to our country'. As 60 year old Maria asserted, ancient civilizations are 'worldwide treasured and respected' and therefore represent a country in the best manner possible. These types of representations gained the participants' respect as they used phrases such as 'serious', 'important', 'imposing' and 'impressive' in order to describe them. In fact few of the respondents

claimed that when the state decides to depict topics such as these on stamps it is done in order to boost the country's prestige. Like, 30 year old Panikos who exclaimed that he felt pride since, '*[] these were our ancestors! I just hope that today's Cypriots could be equally great. I doubt that... But... I can still hope (laughs)*'. This fact however does not necessarily equal with feelings of pride for some other participants, such as 25 year old Georgia who stated '*I believe a stamp should showcase a country's history and achievements. Since we do not have huge achievements in the form of science, medicine or sports for example, we should choose to include our history on stamps. Or the best aspects of it anyway (laughs). I would say archaeological findings are a safe choice. Good for the potential tourist, pleasant enough, no negative connotations since these objects are so very old. And as it's been mentioned before they are elaborate and interesting in their own way. I wouldn't go as far as saying I am proud of them. I mean this is an ancient civilization. It is not us, per se*'.

It is obvious that some of the participating citizens, like Georgia, while may not feel a very strong connection or pride for these ancient monuments, have nevertheless adopted a dominant reading of the stamp imagery and reproduced in speech the messages intended by the authorities. As it was further clarified, she considered these representations necessary as '*every country needs monuments in order to seem more... more I don't know important or legitimate, historically speaking*'.

A contrasting opinion was present throughout the focus group discussions providing a diverse, oppositional reading of these images. We could interpret these claims as an admission that while they do not feel pride or connection with the monuments, or do not necessarily consider them part of contemporary Cyprus, they still acknowledge them as a potential advantage for tourism, or even as a way to establish Cyprus as a country with a rich past and therefore a legitimate part of the European Union.

As 65 year old Lukas affirmed '*[] sure, they show where we are coming from, what's in our past. A good or a bad past... Not everything in the past is glorious, you know. There were wars and tragedies in those times too. Um... I'm not sure if younger generations are truly interested in them, though. These monuments are the reasons that make foreigners visit your country. And as we all know quite well, tourism is crucial for Cyprus' economy*'. Additionally, 45 year old Andreas expressed a negotiated reading of the images asserting that although he was not convinced that these images represent him personally as a citizen, they still might be good for his country's profile as a touristic venue, '*I don't know if something old like these images represents me. They are too old!*

*You could say they are our heritage, they show our roots. But since it's good for our tourism I believe they should be on stamps advertising the country*'. A number of participants claimed that Cyprus should concentrate less on 'old and outdated' ideas and events, and more on anything that can present it as a potential contemporary, safe, fun and interesting touristic destination. This can include anything faith tourism, to the promotion of the island through luxurious resorts and its modern clubbing scene. In 2014, tourist arrivals reached about 2.4 million (CYSTAT, 2015), while tourism revenue amounted to 2.44 billion Euros contributing approximately 14 % to Cyprus' Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (CYSTAT, 2015). Under this light the opinion of the participants seems legit, as they considered tourism a means for Cyprus to promote itself and therefore perhaps recover from the recent financial crisis.

According to the majority of our participants, their feelings toward the imagery shown under this category were ones of pride for these admirable objects and sites, acknowledgment of their importance in the construction of a country's official repertoire and even detachment. The only exception to this rule was presented through the two stamps which showed a place and an object that are connected with the events of 1974 and the unresolved Cyprus dispute. We have already discussed in previous chapters (see Chapter 5.3) the importance of objects such as the 'Kyrenia shipwreck' for the official culture of the island. A similar role is played here by the stamp depicting the 'Salamis Amphitheatre' situated near Famagusta, a ghost-town fenced off by the Turkish army in 1974. Our participants seemed more eager to discuss these two stamps and showed far stronger and emotionally charged reactions. Such an example would be 40 year old Niki who hurriedly interrupted one of the other respondents in order to stress her point, *'May I add something slightly different? I feel emotional upon looking at the amphitheatre. We all know that it is situated in the occupied part of Cyprus, don't we? It is not just an ancient theatre, like the rest of them'*. It is clear from Niki's response she differentiated how she considered this particular stamp from the rest of them as she added to the image an ideologically charged meaning, that of her own past experiences, memories and trauma. Interestingly enough, even younger participants seemed to react similarly to these two images in contrast to the far more detached and objective manner they commented on the rest of them. 20 year old Christina explained that, *'It's quite important to have sites like that, ancient sites in your country. They give your nation heritage, roots, you know? On the other hand some of these images make me sad, as they are a constant reminder of the division of our country'*.

Let us now see how contrary the participants expressed themselves in relation to one of the most notable and popular symbols of Cyprus, Aphrodite. This figure was adopted by the Cyprus Tourism Organization as part of its logo, but it has also been depicted on Cypriot Pound, the currency used in the country before the induction of Euro, as well as postage stamps (Plates 42 and 43).



**Plate 42:** Aphrodite, 12 March 1979,  
G. Simonis



**Plate 43:** Aphrodite, 12 March 1979,  
G. Simonis

The design of these postage stamps was influenced by various myths deriving from Ancient Greek mythology concerning the birth of the goddess (Mystery Religion, 2014). Hesiod and Homer, as well as Euripides (480 BC – 406 BC) in his play *Hippolytus*; referred to Aphrodite using the epithet ‘Kypris’ thus associating her with the island (Rudhardt, 1986/1996). According to local myths, Cyprus claims to be the birth place of the goddess who assented from the froth on the waterfront of the town of Paphos (Plates 42 and 43). It is unclear when and by whom this myth was adopted first but it is a fact that this local narrative is quite popular on the island. Many tourist attractions are dedicated to Aphrodite and her figure is also part of the official touristic brand of the island. The informal epithet ‘Aphrodite’s Island’ is also quite popular both in Greek and international literature when referring to Cyprus, although it is quite unclear when it first started and what the reasons were motivating this choice. In a separate research conducted by Andreou et al. (2016) and concerning the role of female figures on Cyprus’ stamps we found and reported that Aphrodite, the goddess of love and beauty, was the figure that appeared more often in contrast to other mythological female characters whose presence was scarce. Additionally, the presented research indicated that the majority of the survey’s participants (40%) chose Aphrodite as the most representative image for the thematic category ‘Archaeological findings and sites’ (Table 18).

The citizens participating in our focus group discussions seemed to acknowledge this figure as the most well-known from the category, but associated it only with touristic

and commercial aspects, providing an oppositional reading of the particular image. As 20 year old Marilena asserted *'Something popular such as the figure of Aphrodite is a good way of representing one's country on stamps. There is nothing bad or offensive there... Nothing that would bother anyone... These are ancient things. We shouldn't necessarily associate them with politics'*. We believe that though quite popular and frequently used in official culture representation, be it currency, stamps or the country's touristic branding the participants could not find and associate any strong or emotional ideological connotations with this figure. Some of them even questioned the reason behind its popularity. Such an example would be 60 year old Elli who wondered, *'I mean that I don't know how this myth got connected to Cyprus in particular. Why not with Crete for example? Or why is it Aphrodite and not a different goddess? Hera for example (laughs)! OK, she was supposedly born here but this is a myth. It's something man-made'*. It was proven that the inability to trace the reasons for the figure's popularity in their country's representation, but also the fact that they could not link it with their contemporary lives and problems resulted in the figure being acknowledged but hardly considered significant in the discussion. The contrast between the figure of Aphrodite on stamps and some others that allude to more painful and 'real' events was summarized by 40 year old Niki who asserted *' [ ] well, stamps like the one depicting the Kyrenia shipwreck provide iconic images. They symbolize our pain for our heritage being occupied, as well as half of our country. Aphrodite on the other hand... It is just a symbol for tourists. No more and no less! It is not a strong symbol for me but simply put, a commercial one...'*

It is obvious from our findings that this thematic category of stamps was considered necessary for the representation of the country regardless as to whether the participants felt that it represented them personally or not. They mostly discussed these images as *'serious'* and *'important'*, while some of them were associated with the tragic events of 1974, thus holding a different position in their preferences. They reminded the participants of memories, providing an example of negotiated reading in relation to the messages transferred through the imagery. It was made clear that the participants felt a closeness and therefore considered that they are represented more by imagery that was tied to their own experiences.

The next thematic category we discussed was related to endemic species of flora and fauna on Cyprus' stamps, as this appears to be a topic that the official culture favoured especially after 2004 (see Chapter 5.3). It would be therefore of interest to pay attention

to how the citizens of Cyprus view this important, thematic category. The citizens who took part in our survey seemed to also consider this category to be at least moderately important as it ranked third in the participants' preferences (Table 17) (see Chapter 6.3). A very notable pattern of behaviour that appeared throughout the discussion of this thematic group was its closeness with the notion of everyday life. This was the only thing this group had in common with the most popular and suitable category according to the citizens, which was the one depicting images deriving from Cyprus' traditional culture (Table 17).



**Plates 44, 45, 46 and 47 (from left to right):** Elaeagnus Angustifolia, 15 June 2006, K. Panayi; Cyclamen Cypricum Kotschy, 5 November 1990, E. Megaw; Cyprus Mouflon, 28 April 1986, Y. Simonis; Cyprus donkey, 5 June 1979, A. Tassos.

The focus group discussions lead us to believe that citizens actually do grasp the idea of a nation's representation through flora and fauna and believe it to be a plausible solution (Plates 44, 45, 46 and 47). In fact it was considered to be quite a neutral choice, something that we discussed in previous chapters in relation to the promotion of this category (see Chapters 5.3 and 6.3). In fact some of the participants seemed to echo the need for these types of stamps representing the country, employing a rather dominant reading of them. Marilena, a 20 year old participant asserted *'I like them! I have seen all of these species in reality. All of them... Cyclamens, Mouflons, donkeys, etc... They are neutral images, you know... Everyone feels happy around nature. [ ] No political or religious images or anything'*.

According to them images such as these tend to *'seem familiar'* or even *'good-natured and cute'*, as well as serving in *'highlighting what is unique in our country without being too severe'*, as 25 year old Georgia explained. Interestingly enough, this category was highly associated with the senses of smell and hearing throughout the discussion, something that was noted in all four groups. The participants were more



open to the idea of discussing their own experiences, especially those associated with living in the countryside, or going to visit relatives there (Andreou and Zantides, 2017b). During the discussion of this category the majority of the participants expressed themselves with fondness and nostalgia recalling mostly pleasant memories and fuelling the conversation. 28 year old Stelios is a good example of this, asserting: *'[ ] this is Cyprus, you know... A country is formed by its people yes, but it is also formed by its nature. You cannot comprehend, or even imagine a country correctly if you do not visit the countryside. Every place has its own sounds and smells. I am not talking only about food. I mean the nature. [ ] I do not know how to explain this any better, you know...Smell and taste define a place though, you know'*.

Furthermore the symbolisms that endemic species on stamps carry were discussed by the participants, especially in the context of Cyprus. As 30 year old Constantinos stated *'If you manage to elevate a simple animal in a symbol then sure, of course! Like the dove, or in our case the Mouflon. So in our case here some of them can be considered symbols'*, while 28 year old Stelios added *'There is a song about the cyclamen. It's related to our country, to our heroes. Then the olive branch is related to peace and harmony. Stuff like that. I'm just saying we should pay them more attention. They are not just plants!'*. Some of them brought examples in the conversation related to the expression of official culture through endemic species, as well as their presence in everyday life. An older participant 72 year old Christodoulos explained this connection *'I consider the image of the branch of olives the most important. It's essentially a product that Cyprus always had in ample amounts and a product that brought profit to our ancestors. It was a form of commerce since ancient times. When I was young I remember how entire families worked on olive plantations, kept some amounts of oil for themselves and the rest was sent abroad. This is an important image for me. The second most important image here is the one depicting the Mouflon. It's an endangered species and a symbol for Cyprus. It's been used lots of times as we all know. Cyprus Airways, banknotes, coins, post cards, stamps, etc...'*.

The expression of a country's identity through aspects of everyday life, or mainstream culture was discussed in length by Edensor (2002) and our participants conveyed this preference through their discussion. For example, 65 year old Maroula and 48 year old Yiannis inadvertently provided a fine confirmation of this rationale. *'These images do not show us only objects and animals related to fun or good times in our villages. Let's not forget that for some of us and our parents and grandparent these*

animals and plants were related to our daily life and full time job. For people who were employed as workers in the various fields these donkeys were the most important helpers. My grandfather owned four of them! They helped them carry things, making their life significantly easier. In this sense it is part of who we are. As for the cyclamen you are showing us, I know there is a popular song on them... I can't really recall anything more than that. As for the olive, well we have an olive branch on our flag don't we? It is therefore a significant aspect of our country's representation after all' and 'Memories of seeing these animals during school excursions! We used to go and watch Mouflons back then. Or...for example... riding a donkey during summer breaks with my siblings. Or... these flowers, these cyclamen I remember seeing them lots of times here and there. And there is a song dedicated to them! A song parallelizing them with one's homeland, Cyprus in particular! I don't remember the lyrics or anything, but I remember the existence of such a song. But if you need me to assign a feeling... I guess good feelings, positive ones since these memories are all positive''. It thus becomes obvious that the perception of the respondents in regards to how the official culture and by extension themselves should be represented was very much affected both by their personal encounters with the subjects on the stamps, as well as their own everyday life, experiences and memories.

An oppositional reading of these stamps' imagery was equally present throughout the discussion. The main arguments that appeared were concerned with the fact that ideologically and symbolically these stamps were not strong enough and did not represent the country and consequently the citizens in an 'appropriate' manner. Nektarios, 55 years old, and also a much younger participant 25 year old Olga explained this stance: 'I think we should depict more important topics on stamps. Animals and plants are fine, but I think they shouldn't be on stamps. We should have more... more human-oriented topics on stamps. Things that represent the people of this country. Animals... Animals are fine, but not for stamps. They don't really say anything about us. Just that in this country you can find this sort of goat for example. So what? Well, they don't exude any strong messages. They are ... They just exist in Cyprus these species, no more and no less' and 'I don't feel anything about them to be honest. I don't feel like these images represent me or even more a whole country. They are nice sure, I love animals and I think we should protect the wildlife. But ... a donkey or a Mouflon, or even a flower? Hm... What could I feel towards them? Nothing really... I don't believe

*they represent us to be honest. They are great endemic species and they represent the animal kingdom, not a country (laughs)*'.

Even though a number of participants seemed to question the suitability of depicting endemic species on official documents, they did not question that they felt a casual closeness to this category of images. In fact they were willing to share personal stories and memories and according to some of them this was the characteristic that made this category suitable for their country's representation. Furthermore, what was obvious throughout the discussions was that the participating citizens found these stamp images to be neutrally charged, positive and removed from any political connotations. According to our findings (see Chapter 5.3) this would be translated into a dominant reading of these images as the citizens appeared to comprehend and even agree with the prevailing sense of neutrality that these stamps exuded.

Moving on to the last thematic category shown through photo-elicitation, 'Folklore/Traditional culture' we were interested in seeing how the citizens view this theme on stamps since it presented a paradox. 'Folklore / Traditional culture' appeared to be not particularly important to the authorities as it ranked ninth in the content analysis conducted, containing a mere 49 stamps (Table 5). On the other hand, this seemingly insignificant theme was chosen as the most popular and suitable for representing the country according to the majority of our survey's participants (Tables 17 and 18).

In similar fashion the vast majority of the focus group participants agreed that a thematic category representing folk aspects of Cyprus' culture would be suitable for its stamps (Plates 48, 49, 50 and 51). Throughout the discussion we had the opportunity to ask the participants why their positive opinion was so strong, especially if we consider official culture's lack of favouring this category. All of the participants agreed that this aspect showcases a more '*fun and light side of Cyprus*', one that can be enjoyed, or even understood both by tourists and locals. 54 year old Antonia claimed that '*we all know these objects and things more or less. They are also images that are quite lively in the sense that they share the feeling of having a good time and enjoying yourself. Except maybe the lady sitting there knitting... But then again this is also a positive image. We are all reminded of our grandmother, or even our mother having a similar hobby. So again this is something positive... On the other hand I believe that traditional culture can be understood by people all over the world, more or less. We might not share the same customs, but we all share the need for having a good time, or being close to our*

family, to enjoy ourselves during a gathering, and savour our food, etc... In this sense I believe that yes this is a good way to represent us'. Maroula 65 years old added, 'This is the spirit of Cyprus! And these images you are showing us have a sense of happiness about them. Despite all of the hardships, we Cypriots are quite happy people'.



**Plates 48, 49, 50 and 51 (from left to right):** Traditional dances, 12 April 2006, Y. Theophilaktou; Commandaria, 29 October 1964, A. Tassos; Omodos village, 26 November 1984, I. Iakovides; Carved pumpkin on a sunny beach, 20 September 1971, A. Tassos.

Some of the participants claimed that tradition is an inherent feature that distinguishes each country, but on the other hand it is an aspect that can be appreciated and understood even by non-locals to some extent. As 48 year old Yiannis explained 'We should not look down at our tradition at all. It is a form of expression... [] Something that we understand and something we can relate to. Everyday life, that is'. A younger participant, 28 year old Stelios very similarly asserted that 'I have seen lots of those objects in my life. This is Cyprus, you know... I can recognize this flask you are showing us. I have seen it many times. In traditional restaurants, my grandparents' house, I even think we had one at school. Hm... Well, I sort of feel I know these objects and representations well enough, they are hm... well-known to me. Here you have this couple dancing. Again, it's something familiar. [] This is how I feel about them. You get invited to a wedding in certain places of Cyprus and you can see people dancing similarly. In this sense, I mean judging by the familiarity of these images I can say that they represent the country'.

The majority of the participants shared this view of connecting to topics related with tradition, as it is not something to be admired and regarded only from a distance, but experienced in their everyday lives. The examples that the participants gave us reflected aspects of convention and ordinariness and included a combination of other senses, apart from sight. They described various tastes from local traditional cuisine, as well as the sounds of folklore instruments, songs, festivals and events (traditional wedding

festivities), both older and contemporary. According to them they show a side of Cyprus, that is not only tied to its heritage, but at the same time remains contemporary and embedded in today's society. Some of the participants referred to folklore as an 'inside joke' that can be understood and appreciated by the Cypriot society, thus tying its members together through a 'fun and familiar way'. Morrison (2003) argued that in fact traditional culture serves as a symbolic identity not imposed by the hierarchy within a community. It is transmitted from one generation to another, rejuvenating itself in the process and adapting to the environment. According to Dundes and Bronner (2007) folklore can be used as a constructive power of internationalism as many aspects of it rely on universal or quasi-universal human experiences. For this reason many aspects of folklore belonging to a specific nation may have certain similarities with another nation's without losing its own distinctive nature.

According to Demetriou (2015) the idea that Cypriot folklore should be preserved and 'mutated' in order to become a part of contemporary Cyprus has been an emergent narrative in the public discourse of the country. Crucial and unexpected circumstances such as the current financial crisis that the island is going through has urged people to 'look inside' for forms of expression and reinvent them to fit their everyday needs. As part of her study on Cyprus' folklore, Demetriou (2015) interviewed Monsieur Doumani a Cypriot band formed in 2011, whose focus is to rearrange Cypriot traditional songs adding modern sounds to them. As the members of the band described 'we cannot keep turning our backs to folklore music. There is something to it that we call "roots", when you hear it'.

The participants of our focus groups seemed to echo Monsieur Doumanis' opinion. 50 year old Marios explained that folklore aspects of culture have lately made their way to national TV channels and this is a positive step towards abolishing the idea of it being somehow 'lower' than other forms of expression and therefore not suitable for representing the country and its citizens as official parts of culture. Maroula, a 65 year old participant highlighted this by adding 'Well maybe this promotion both on TV and the government, through stamps for example can help our youngsters get close to their traditional culture once more'. Another account coming from 65 year old Lukas addressed the issue of feeling shame in being represented by forms of folklore by stating 'I guess that forms of folklore wouldn't be posh enough for them [referring to the part of the population who might not accept it as a suitable form of representation []]. They wouldn't be very modern or "foreign-like" enough for them. But see, I'm

wrong. Having said that, I've noticed more and more of our folklore being shown on TV nowadays, not only by RIK [Cyprus' public broadcasting service], but other channels too. Maybe we have decided that tradition is not shameful. As for the images you are showing us, what can I say? I recognize these images from my own everyday life, memories of festivals, various celebrations... This is us!'.

Despite these claims the younger generation amongst our participants seem to have found ways of bonding with traditional culture through contemporary forms of expression quite interestingly. An example of this would be 25 year old Georgia's attitude towards local festivals organized in Cyprus such as the *Fengaros music festival* 'We can combine our local tradition and the images from our picturesque villages with contemporary ideas, music, workshops, and performances. These events attract us locals, but could interest tourists as well. It's a good idea to bring our tradition closer to the contemporary aspects of art and expression'. These accounts reflected both the findings of our survey (see Chapter 6.3) as well as Demetriou's (2015), concerning folkloric forms of expression in Cyprus. It became obvious how even the younger generations have negotiated the reading of traditional forms of expression whether they encounter them in music, TV or even official documents such as stamps. They have mostly exonerated the notion that they present something 'peasant' and now they perceive it as part of 'ours' with the connotations of authentic and therefore acceptable firmly attached on them. The arrival of these views seem to have coincided with a generalized turn towards 'all things traditional' and a much needed rediscovery of what we might brand 'Cypriotness'. This can be considered a result of a period that perhaps due to the financial crisis or the negotiations for the reunification of the island, the citizens felt the urge to turn towards, get closer to, and perhaps even wish to be represented by their own 'locality'.

The last two thematic categories discussed, but mostly the one concerned with traditional forms of culture revealed how the participants prefer and feel a strong connection to their own local culture, highlighting the importance of its preservation. It is not a coincidence how they tied their official culture with notions of everyday, an aspect of identity-creation discussed by Anderson (1991), Lewis (1992) and Edensor (2002). These perceptions were further accentuated by the participants when they chose to mention their own experiences not only based on sight, but on other senses such as smell, taste and hearing, making the discussion and their arguments in favour of the last two categories more clear, vivid and strong.

## 7.4 Summary

This section aimed to give a deeper analysis of the findings we gathered in the second study, thus gaining a deeper comprehension of the citizens' opinions regarding official culture representation through stamp design. The relevant discussion naturally took into consideration the theoretical framework chosen for this dissertation and the socio-political conditions of the Republic of Cyprus. In this sense we provided answers for both the second and third research question. The following key findings (Table 24) emerged from the third study, thus allowing us to better comprehend the perceptions of the citizens:

1. The larger and more favoured topics of Cyprus' official culture, such as depictions concerned with religion and archaeological findings are certainly understood and accepted by the citizens as sources of crucial political and ideological messages. Additionally, a few of those images were linked by the participants with the events of 1974 and the existing trauma caused by that. It is obvious from our findings and the subsequent analysis that while respect for the past and for institutions such as the Church is embedded in the citizens, they tend to choose other forms of representation for themselves and their country today.
2. The need for an inclusive and neutrally-charged repertoire was favoured by the citizens through local folklore culture. This choice sent clear messages of the need of Cypriots to remember their past and respect it, but at the same time find a manner to highlight their local cultural identity, independent from that of any other country. This newfound interest in folklore forms of expression has intensified in recent years and was accentuated due to the difficulties arising from the financial crisis of 2012, the renewed approaches for solving the Cyprus dispute, as well as the country's recent role as a member of the European Union. While the older generations turn to traditional forms of culture in remembrance of better times, the younger citizens have approached it as a means of expression that is almost 'rebellious' since it does not seem to be imposed by any elite or authority, but rather it springs from a shared sense of everyday. In fact the younger generation amongst our participants seems to have found ways of bonding with traditional culture through contemporary forms of expression quite interestingly.

3. What we have proved through this part furthermore, is how forms of culture and expression which are common and ordinary have the ability to not only enter the mainstream and everyday life, but be considered to be suitable ways for expressing a shared sense of belonging within a state, as well as officially representing it.

Concluding, this chapter employed the methodological tool of focus groups in order to further study the perceptions of Cypriot citizens in relation to their official culture representation through postage stamp design. As previously explained we have already gathered and analyzed findings from a quantitative tool which was survey research, thus noting significant patterns coming from a large number of participants. However, as this dissertation deals with perceptions on official culture and ideologies the additional aid from qualitative analysis has been crucial for the exploration and better understanding of the views of citizens. We have proved through the combination of these tools how official culture, albeit elusive as a notion can be discussed, felt and transferred to an imagined community whose members actively interact with it, by mediating and negotiating the messages, rather than simply reproducing them.

**Table 24:** Overview of key findings that emerged from the third study (focus groups)

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### **Key findings**

1. The citizens have proven to grasp the political and ideological importance and implications of the largest categories in the corpus, such as the ones depicting religion and archaeological findings, but nevertheless favour and seek a renewed way for the official representation of their country.
  2. The citizens processed the idea of a neutrally-charged repertoire that the authorities promote through the depiction of endemic species of flora and fauna. They have modified the particular message however, and the majority proposed for a similar sense of inclusivity and expression of locality through representations of traditional culture. This newfound interest was further boosted by events such as the recent financial crisis, the talks for the island's reunification, as well as Cyprus' position in the European Union.
  3. We proved how forms of culture that are embedded in the everyday and the mainstream, can be considered and justified as legitimate forms of official culture through the shared sense of belonging they transfer to the citizens of a state.
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## **8. Conclusion, contribution and directions for future study**

The present research aimed to study official documents containing imagery, such as postage stamps, from different perspectives which have been excluded from relevant conversations up until this point, in order to better comprehend this 'interaction' among them, as well as the full potential of these objects as mediums of a country's image construction. In particular our interest was focused not only on the ever-changing 'language' that official documents, namely stamps, employ, but equally we focused on the views and perceptions of the citizens residing in this country. While it is true that stamp imagery has been studied in the past as a vehicle for geo-political promotion and propaganda, our literature review indicated the gap in the field to discuss it as a cultural product that interacts with the society that created it, as well as the citizens. We have proved and given various examples throughout the research of this proverbial interaction. By studying closely the example of the Republic of Cyprus and its citizens we explained how subtly objects of visual communication, such as stamps, transfer messages to the public, influencing their views and the cultural production. On the other hand though, we have demonstrated how the audience (citizens) do not necessarily accept and adopt all of these messages in the same way, and their views on what images/themes represent their country do not always match the views of the existing official culture. The inclusion of the citizens' opinion is a new approach which we believe to be quite significant when discussing objects of visual communication that serve as parts of official culture.

This was managed through a combination of mixed methods in the form of quantitative content analysis, survey research and focus group interviews, and a theoretical framework that allowed us to study both the need of official culture in the cultivation of a common feeling of belonging and of pride, as well as the differentiations in the views of citizens as individuals with their own backgrounds and perceptions. The research questions of the thesis alongside with the methodology were designed in order to focus on the citizens' views using both quantitative and qualitative methods. In this way we were able to gather statistically significant findings which revealed important patterns in citizens' perceptions in order to later study them in-depth.

The theories of Anderson (1991) and Edensor (2002) on the cultivation of a shared sense of belonging within the members of a country through every day and prosaic

manifestations and objects, as well as Debord's (1957) and Lewis' (1992) writings on official forms of culture aided us in constructing a framework that would guide the entire research and its research questions. The contribution of these authors allowed us to study stamp imagery and the perceptions of the citizens in relation to official manifestations of culture, without excluding the sphere of the everyday and mainstream. In this sense our 'reading' of stamp imagery would be able to begin from the bottom up, instead of studying them as cultural products not influenced by the society and the citizens. Certainly, this sort of reading revealed a large number of views and opinions both from the changing landscape of official culture representation, as well as those of the citizens, that many times were concerned with the expression of bigger ideas accepted within the specific community we studied, that is the Republic of Cyprus. These 'deeper' meanings were naturally considered culturally-variable and related to the background and prior knowledge of the individuals. In other words and as Barthes (1972) would explain, we treated them as belonging in the 'ideological order'.

Following this rationale, we worked on answering the first research question using a methodological tool that would allow us to locate favoured and less favoured topics and imagery in the postage stamp production of the country, quantitative content analysis. After the process was completed and results gathered, the researcher was able to draw important conclusions regarding favoured and less favoured themes used for Cyprus' stamp design, as well as track the way in which themes have developed through the years. This process led to a meaningful reading of the information and the recognition of structures of visual communication in the corpus. By interpreting our findings socio-politically we linked them to the context of Cyprus and studied them as cultural products, which are influencing and are being influenced by the society that created them.

The official culture of the Republic of Cyprus has been going through significant changes during its rather short history as an independent state. The official culture promoted via visual communication has been found to get slowly modified during recent years. The findings concerning the frequency and percentage distribution for the largest thematic categories in the corpus indicated the prevailing trends, but also a shift in the official culture's imagery through the years. The perennial link between Hellenism, Greek Orthodox Christianity and Cyprus has been boosted through postage stamps, especially during troubled times of inter-communal clashes, in order to serve ideologically as an anchor for sovereignty on the island. In this sense these two pillars

were not only ideologically important, but additionally strategically utilizable for the Republic of Cyprus and therefore their promotion through official repertoire became more crucial than ever. As we have proved however, these strategies in stamp design can definitely be altered when the situation and historical period calls for it. Through the years and as the country adapted to its joining the European Union, as well as beginning cautious attempts at reconciliation for the unification of the island, the official culture as presented to us through stamp imagery adopted a different way of self-fashioning. As our study indicated the adoption of topics related to endemic species of flora and fauna can be seen as a way to showcase the country's uniqueness and its people's peaceful intentions for living collectively, and hopes for a prosperous future. This milder and certainly neutrally charged repertoire is a far cry from the strong ideologies of the past concerned with ethnicity and religion. Our findings related to the first research question lead us to better comprehend how a culture that consists of learned ideologies can definitely be influenced and modified with time as the corpus indicated, proving that visual communication through cultural artefacts like stamps is indeed relevant and brimming with important information. Undoubtedly, through our first study we realised that stamps carry a national agenda that adopts the ever-transforming historic, social and political changes. This practice establishes the presence of an independent state with unique characteristics and contributes to the formation of a collective belonging among its citizens.

The second research question aimed to involve Cypriot citizens and note their own perceptions of the postage stamp imagery as a product of official culture with the aid of visual communication. Finally, the third and final research question had as its outcome the comparing and contrasting the existing official culture of Cyprus as it is presented through stamp imagery with the views expressed by the citizens. In this manner the researcher assembled all of the necessary information in order to compare the perceptions of the citizens with the messages and aims of official culture on stamp imagery. The researcher's objective was to prove that the role of the citizens is not a passive one in this process, and how their collectiveness around certain parts of their official culture is being manifested and can be empirically studied. As a result, the conclusions derived from this final research question constitute the most significant contribution of the proposed study. As a consequence these two research questions have been approached by using both quantitative (survey research) and qualitative (focus groups) methodological tools. In this way the researcher is enabled to note patterns in

the answers of a large population of citizens and then carefully select the topics which need to be discussed in more depth by using a qualitative methodological tool. This part could have been carried out by using relevant literature and the views of the researcher on the matter; however our perception would have been incomplete. For these reasons it was quite important to further explore the aspects that the survey's results indicated by going back to the source; the citizens. The goal was to collect data which would enrich the findings gathered with the aid of questionnaires and help the researcher interpret them socio-culturally. We deepened the interpretation of findings by using discussion (and the method of photo-elicitation) in focus groups as a means to comprehend the reason that the population congregates around certain images and views, thus contrasting, negotiating and altering the messages and images promoted by the existing official culture on stamps. For this reason, our theoretical framework needed to incorporate a way for the researcher to address the different stances and reactions towards the encoded messages the participants received from the existing official culture. Hall's (1980) three positions of reading and interpretation of the received messages allowed us to note the importance of the social conditions influencing the cycle of message transmission and interpretation, from the stage of production and circulation, to consumption and finally reproduction. In this way we could establish an analysis that respected the different reactions of our participants, through their ability to accept, negotiate and alter the messages according to their opinions and experiences, or even oppose them and replace them with something more accurate.

Through the analysis of both survey and focus groups we accomplished the gathering and later analysis of the perceptions of citizens in relation to the official culture of Cyprus, as presented on stamps. The interpretation was once more based on the socio-political conditions of the particular country, while in order to note the differences with the existing official culture we employed the use of Hall's (1980) interpretations of encoded messages, as well as the notion of ideology as presented by Barthes (1972, 1988).

The findings and analysis of both survey and focus groups revealed a rather fluid and sometimes contradictory view of the official culture representation through stamps, which many times agreed, but mostly negotiated and altered the messages received from the existing official culture. When it comes to large categories depicting archaeological findings and religion, the citizens comprehended rather clearly and correctly the strong ideological and political messages of sovereignty in Cyprus that the various

governments wanted to communicate, as the notion of their importance and prominence in the official national repertoire was firmly established. Furthermore, some of this imagery was linked to the unresolved part of the island's history, namely the troubling issue of the continuous Turkish occupation of a large part of the country which affected and traumatized hundreds of citizens. It is obvious from our findings and the subsequent analysis that while the respect for the past and for institutions such as the Church is embedded in the citizens, they tend to choose other forms of representation for themselves and their country today. In the same manner, the official culture of Cyprus began favouring more neutrally-charged imagery for stamp design after 2004, such as the depiction of endemic species of flora and fauna. The need for an inclusive repertoire was interestingly selected by the citizens as well, when our participants favoured images deriving from Cyprus' folklore culture. This choice spoke volumes of the need of Cypriots to remember their past and respect it, but at the same time find a manner to highlight their local cultural identity, independent from that of any other country. It is obvious from our findings that both government and citizens are in search of a renewed approach to the idea of their country's image construction, without necessarily abandoning completely older forms of it.

There are several reasons behind this, beginning from the ongoing issue of Turkish occupation that left the citizens traumatized and tired from their past, as well as Cyprus' relatively new role as a member of the European Union and finally a financial crisis that became evident in 2012 whose consequences can still be felt in 2017. Our findings and especially the opportunity to discuss the topic of Cyprus' representation on official imagery with the island's citizens, lead us to believe that all of the aforementioned factors made them seek a new way of self-representation, or at least a remodelled one. The new-found inclination towards traditional forms of culture has been documented and discussed in terms of mainstream and popular manifestations of everyday life, such as TV shows, music, commercials, as well as various contemporary and hip festivals and events that take place on the island and mainly attract younger audiences. While the older generations turn to folklore as a way of expressing nostalgia and remembering older, better and less complicated times, the younger audiences have approached it through the lens of a contemporary form of expression that is almost 'rebellious' since it does not seem to be imposed by any elite or authority, but rather it springs from a shared sense of the everyday. This newfound interest in folklore forms of expression intensified in recent years and was accentuated due to economical and socio-political

discussions and difficulties arising from the financial crisis, as well as the renewed approaches for solving the Cyprus dispute. What we have proved through our research furthermore, is how forms of culture and expression which are common and ordinary have the ability to not only invade the mainstream and everyday life, but most importantly be considered a most suitable way for expressing a shared sense of belonging within a state, a finding that mirrors Edensor's (2002) and Debord's (1957) ideas on the construction of a country's image.

It becomes obvious from our findings how these views, deriving both from the government's decisions and from the citizens can get altered over time, and are particularly susceptible to the ever-changing historical, political and social differentiations that take place. In this sense, someone could argue that studies such as the one presented contribute to the uncovering of various aspects of the societies in question, as well as their citizens and their decision-making centres as they go through important changes. Our study therefore, aims to substantially contribute in theory and also present practical value. In regards to the field of postage stamp research, this study filled important gaps which have been presented both in regards of theory and methodology. Furthermore this study aimed to introduce to the field of postage stamp research the need for empirical research using both quantitative and qualitative tools as opposed to the methodology that had been in use. In order to study and maintain our knowledge on culture, we need to track any possible modifications through artefacts such as stamps and examine how visual communication and culture are interrelated and influence one another (Andreou, 2015). By conducting empirical studies, we manage to discuss objects of visual communication in a more holistic manner, as our reading of the objects takes into consideration not only the intentions of the creators, but also the points of view expressed by the receivers of these messages regarding official culture. Under this framework we examined how these small 'unseen' artefacts function as carriers of ideological meanings. Most importantly however, this research addresses the most important gap found in literature. That is the need to be able to examine how visual communication and culture are interrelated and influence one another, through the opinions and views of its main audience; the citizens of the state.

The conclusions derived from the research might constitute the most significant contribution of this study, as they inform the field of postage stamp design in the Republic of Cyprus (and abroad). This corpus of stamps had not been empirically studied at all and the cultural and social implications will aid the authorities (Ministry of

Transport, Communications and Works and Ministry of Energy, Commerce, Industry and Tourism) in understanding and incorporating the perception of the citizens in the development of their stamp design strategy, both regarding the promotion of official culture and the use of stamps as part of touristic branding. This idea has already been communicated to the authorities, which have shown interest in this study by granting the researcher the copyrights of the entire corpus of stamps, as well as other relevant material and significant information regarding the process of stamp production and the messages presented via postage stamps.

Furthermore an ideological analysis of the culture promoted through the imagery on stamps will enable new routes to open in its use as a pedagogical tool and especially in cultivating ideologies of peace and collectiveness, a notion that the researcher would further like to explore. Stamp imagery has been traditionally incorporated by educationalists as a tool in pedagogy, especially concerning history and geopolitics (Kirman and Jackson, 2000). This strategy is based on the idea that stamps as official documents depict the political and social conditions that each state wished to promote during the time they were issued. Important events such as wars and the gradual political and social changes within a country are being studied, as well as the relationship development between two different countries (Wachman, 2005). Postage stamp imagery is incorporated into the teaching of history in the Republic of Cyprus as well, with the Ministry of Education and Culture including a large number of plates in the history books of Secondary Education. As elements of visual communication stamps prove to be an important and meaningful ‘tool’ for education due to the accessibility they present as materials, but most importantly due to the messages they carry through imagery. A work such as the one proposed will possibly aid and influence other studies in order to incorporate into the study of postage stamps all the different ideological, social and cultural aspects that such an item presents. Furthermore, as stamps are used as teaching materials (Kirman and Jackson 2000) in secondary education, especially concerning history classes in Cyprus, we believe that studies such as the one presented, (or even the continuation of this research), would be able to better inform the particular educational process. It could aid the students to understand in more depth these objects, the messages they carry and the way these are being interpreted. In this sense we hope this dissertation is going to inform the stamp design production mainly in Cyprus, and even influence the field of stamp design research worldwide.

Concluding our dissertation, we can safely argue that postage stamps and the imagery depicted on them contain notable historical evidence regarding the country and time period studied, while at the same time they can be involved in the broader conversation of official culture creation and its relationship with the citizens. The vast array of themes which can be encountered on stamps hand us an equally large and multifaceted range of topics we could discuss in relation to the social reality of the country we are studying. Consequently, this makes stamp imagery one of the strongest means to study official documents and a country's changing politics and social situation. However, as our research proved, if we consider the relationship between official culture and citizens to be a monologue and we do not seek to empirically study their perceptions with equal vigour, we are certainly bound to overlook the significant gaps these might present, thus crippling the process of truly comprehending the development of a country's self-representation. On the other hand and as we hope to have achieved through this research, if we accept that official documents, such as stamps, should be discussed in relation to the society that created them and in which they circulate as everyday objects, we enable a more holistic comprehension of the ideologies that are cultivated through them. In this manner we can achieve broadening the study of such objects in hopes of maintaining the aspects and messages considered advantageous for the country's self-representation, without ignoring the citizens' perceptions and the society's ever-changing needs for adopting, developing and thus promoting beneficial beliefs and attitudes.



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## APPENDICES

## Appendix 1

Authors	Main topics / theoretical framework	Methodology
Adezde, 2012	National identity, propaganda	Historical research, semiotic and visual analysis
Afshar, 2010a;b	Thematic collecting	Thematic collecting, historical research
Akou, 2012	Banal nationalism, ‘otherness’, colonialism	Historical research, visual analysis
Altman, 1991	National identity, banal nationalism	Historical research, visual analysis
Andreou, Stylianou and Zantides, 2016; 2017	National identity, socio – politics, gender studies	Historical research, quantitative content analysis, semiotic analysis
Aščić and Binički, 2012	Socio – politics	Historical research, visual analysis
Blodi, 1988	Thematic collecting	Thematic collecting

Boggs, 1938	Thematic collecting	Thematic collecting
Brennan, 2010	National identity, socio – politics	Historical research, visual analysis
Brunn, 2001, 2002	National identity, geopolitics	Historical research, visual analysis
Bushnell, 2011	National identity, socio – politics, gender studies	Historical research, quantitative content analysis
Castle and members of the Cyprus Study Circle, 1987	Postage stamp design, geopolitics	Historical research, visual analysis
Child, 2005; 2008; 2012	National identity (official representation), popular culture	Historical research, semiotic and visual analysis
Christodoulou, 2011	National identity, postage stamp design	Historical research, semiotic analysis, applied research
Cusack, 2005	Banal nationalism, ‘otherness’, colonialism	Historical research, visual analysis
Deans, 2005	National identity, geopolitics	Historical research, quantitative content analysis,

		visual analysis
Deans and Dobson, 2005	National identity, geopolitics	Historical research, visual analysis
Dobson, 2005	National identity, socio – politics	Historical research, visual analysis
Elton, 1979	Geopolitics, socio – politics, education	Historical research, visual analysis
Fidgen, 1956	Thematic collecting	Thematic collecting
Frank, 1997	National identity, socio – politics	Historical research, semiotic analysis
Gates Elliott, 2010	National identity, geopolitics	Historical research, visual analysis
Golden, 2010	National identity, geopolitics, colonialism	Historical research
Hosain, 2013	Thematic collecting, socio – politics	Thematic collecting
Hoyo, 2012	National identity, socio – politics	Historical research, visual analysis

Jeffery, 2006	National identity, colonialism	Historical research, visual analysis
Jenkins, 2012	National identity, socio – politics	Historical research, visual analysis
Jones, 2001; 2004	Socio – politics	Quantitative content analysis, Semiotic analysis
Jones (b), 2004	Socio – politics	Historical research, visual analysis
Jonsson, 2005	National identity, propaganda	Historical research, quantitative content analysis
Jung, 1981	National identity, propaganda	Historical research, visual analysis
Kallen, 2002	National identity, propaganda	Historical research, visual analysis
Kevane, 2008	National identity, geopolitics, socio – politics	Historical research, quantitative content analysis, visual analysis
Kirman and Jackson, 2000	Geopolitics, socio – politics, education	Historical research, visual analysis

Kolichinsky, 2010	Propaganda, socio – politics	Historical research, visual analysis
Lauritzen, 1988	Propaganda	Historical research, visual analysis
Lebed, 2005	National identity, propaganda	Historical research, quantitative content analysis, visual analysis
Lefrère and Danic, 2010	Thematic collecting	Thematic collecting, quantitative content analysis
Lutschg, 1992; 1993; 1994; 2000	Thematic collecting, socio – politics	Thematic collecting
Morgan, 1996; 2006	Thematic collecting, socio – politics	Thematic collecting
Ogletree, Merritt and Roberts, 1994	National identity, socio – politics, gender studies	Historical research, quantitative content analysis
O’ Rahilly, 1997	Thematic collecting	Thematic collecting, historical research
Orrick, 1975	Thematic collecting	Thematic collecting, quantitative content analysis



Osmond, 2008	National identity, cultural memory, popular culture	Historical research, visual analysis
Posnansky, 2004	Banal nationalism, 'otherness', colonialism	Historical research, visual analysis
Raento, 2006	National identity, banal nationalism	Historical research, visual analysis
Raento and Brunn, 2008	National identity, geopolitics	Historical research, visual analysis
Raento, Hämäläinen, Ikonen and Mikkonen, 2004	National identity, geopolitics	Historical research, visual analysis
Rangappa, 2008	Thematic collecting	Thematic collecting, historical research
Reid, 1984	National identity, education	Historical research
Rowley, 2002	Propaganda	Historical research
Sabol, 2010	National identity, socio – politics	Historical research, visual analysis

Scott, 1995; 1999;2004	National identity, socio – politics, postage stamp design	Historical research, semiotic and visual analysis
Scott and Hoek, 1994	Socio – politics, postage stamp design	Historical research, visual analysis
Sexty, 2000	National identity, socio – politics	Quantitative content analysis, visual analysis
Stoetzer, 1953	Propaganda	Historical research, visual analysis
Swan, Meade, Klein, and Serlin, 2006	Socio – politics	Historical research, visual analysis
Tirefort, 2012	Banal nationalism, ‘otherness’, colonialism	Historical research, visual analysis
Trammell, 2010	Cultural memory, popular culture, socio – politics	Visual analysis, historical research
Vardopoulou, 2014	National identity, socio – politics, postage stamp design	Historical research, visual analysis
Wachman, 2005	National identity, geopolitics, propaganda	Historical research, visual analysis

## Appendix 2

This questionnaire is part of a PhD research conducted at the Cyprus University of Technology (Department of Multimedia and Graphic Arts). The data gathered from this questionnaire will be solely used for research purposes and the participants will remain anonymous.

**Part A': Demographics** (Tick in the appropriate box – select only one response)

**Gender:** Male  Female

**Age:** 18 – 30  31 – 40  41 – 50   
51 – 60  60 +

**Education:** Primary Education  Secondary Education   
Higher Education (College)  Higher Education (University)

**District of Residence:** Nicosia   
Limassol   
Larnaca   
Paphos   
Famagusta

**Part B': General Questions**

**1. Are you interested in philately?**

Not at all  Slightly  Moderately  Very  Extremely

**2. Do you use Cyprus Post for sending your mail or parcels?**

Not at all  Slightly  Moderately  Very  Extremely

**3. Do you remember any images used for the postage stamps of the Republic of Cyprus?**

Not at all	Slightly	Moderately	Very	Extremely
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Please note any images that you remember:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Part C'**

**4. Which of the thematic categories presented below do you consider to be the most suitable for a postage stamp representing the Republic of Cyprus? (please select only one category)**

Professions	<input type="checkbox"/>	Architecture	<input type="checkbox"/>
Technology	<input type="checkbox"/>	Folklore/Traditional culture <sup>8</sup>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Maps	<input type="checkbox"/>	Flora and Fauna	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fine Arts	<input type="checkbox"/>	References to the Republic of Cyprus <sup>9</sup>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sports	<input type="checkbox"/>	Tourism	<input type="checkbox"/>
Flags	<input type="checkbox"/>	International Events	<input type="checkbox"/>
Social Themes	<input type="checkbox"/>	Heritage and its Preservation <sup>10</sup>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Landscape	<input type="checkbox"/>	Notables	<input type="checkbox"/>
Religion	<input type="checkbox"/>	Transport and Communications	<input type="checkbox"/>
Education	<input type="checkbox"/>	Archaeological findings	<input type="checkbox"/>

Other  \_\_\_\_\_

**4a. Please suggest an image which you consider to be the most suitable for the thematic category you have chosen above.**

**Image:** \_\_\_\_\_

<sup>8</sup> Including: traditional art, national costumes, customs, etc.

<sup>9</sup> Including: references to the official state, laws, institutions, etc.

<sup>10</sup> Including: the preservation of heritage, establishment of museums, etc.

**5. Which colour would be the most suitable for representing the Republic of Cyprus?**

**Colour:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Part D’:** Tick in the appropriate box.

**6. The following messages are being sent from the government to the citizens of the state:**

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree	No opinion
<b>A. Political</b>						
<b>B. Social</b>						
<b>C. Tradition</b>						
<b>D. Religion (Greek Orthodox Christianity)</b>						
<b>E. Antiquities</b>						
<b>F. Other message (explain):</b> _____						
<b>G. No messages at all.</b> <input type="checkbox"/>						

**7. Which of the factors presented below might influence the design of the Republic of Cyprus' postage stamps.**

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree	No opinion
<b>A. Political developments</b>						
<b>B. Economy</b>						
<b>C. Social changes</b>						
<b>D. Design trends</b>						
<b>E. Other (explain):</b> _____						
<b>F. I do not believe that any type of factor could influence the choice of thematic categories for stamps.</b> <input type="checkbox"/>						

**8. The postage stamps represent the image of my country abroad.**

Strongly Disagree      Disagree      Undecided      Agree      Strongly Agree      No opinion

**9. It is important to take into consideration the opinions of the public (citizens of the Republic of Cyprus) regarding the choice of topics on postage stamps.**

Strongly Disagree      Disagree      Undecided      Agree      Strongly Agree      No opinion

**10. Which messages should be promoted through the postage stamps of the Republic of Cyprus, concerning audiences both home and abroad? Please, explain.**

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Thank you for your time and valuable help. If you would be interested in providing more information concerning this research, please leave your contact information below.

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### **Appendix 3**

**Question 1:** Are you interested in postage stamps? Have you ever being a philatelist (a stamp collector)?

**Question 2:** Do you recall (remember) any of the postage stamps issued by the Republic of Cyprus? Which were the characteristics that in your opinion made this/these image (s) memorable for you?

**Question 3:** What kind of topics (subject matter) would you propose to be used on the stamps issued by the Republic of Cyprus? What would be the reason (s) for this/these choice/s?

**Question 4:** And which images would be the most suitable for the representation of the topics you proposed? How do you think these images represent the topic you have proposed?

**Question 5:** Which is the colour you would use as the most suitable for a postage stamp representing the Republic of Cyprus? And how do you think this would be the most representative choice / how it is connected to Cyprus according to your opinion?

**Question 6, 7, 8 and 9** (repeated questions for different sets of stamps): What comes to your mind / what do you think as you are looking at these images?

**Question 10:** Would you like to add anything in relation to the topic discussed, that is the Republic of Cyprus' postage stamps, or their design?

We should note that during the interviews conducted in focus groups, the researcher was asking additional and clarifying questions when needed.



## Appendix 4

### *Archaeological findings / sites*



From left to right: Aphrodite, 21 November 1966, A. Tassos; Salamis Amphitheatre, 5 June 1964, A. Tassos; Europe's abduction, 29 April 1974, A. Tassos; Kyrenia shipwreck, 3 October 1987, Y. Pantsopoulos.

### *Religion*



From left to right: Wooden Cross from Stavrovouni, 22 November 1993, A. Malekos; Jesus Christ - icon from the Arakas church in Lagoudera, 5 November 1979, A. Malekos; Virgin Mary and Jesus Christ, 26 November 1973, A. Tassos; 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Saint Andrew the Apostle's monastery, 8 November 1967, A. Tassos.

## *Flora and fauna*



From left to right: *Elaeagnus Angustifolia*, 15 June 2006, K. Panayi; *Cyclamen Cyprium* Kotschy, 5 November 1990, E. Megaw; *Cyprus Mouflon*, 28 April 1986, Y. Simonis; *Cyprus donkey*, 5 June 1979, A. Tassos.

## *Traditional (folklore) culture*



From left to right: Traditional dances, 12 April 2006, Y. Theophilaktou; Commandaria, 29 October 1964, A. Tassos; Omodos village, 26 November 1984, I. Iakovides; Carved pumpkin on a sunny beach, 20 September 1971, A. Tassos.

## Appendix 5

18/12/2014

Εκτύπωση μηνύματος Outlook.com

[Εκτύπωση](#)

[Κλείσιμο](#)

### Παραχώρηση άδειας χρήσης εικόνων γραμματοσήμων

Από: [miraculous@dps.mcw.gov.cy](mailto:miraculous@dps.mcw.gov.cy) εκ μέρους [philatelic@dps.mcw.gov.cy](mailto:philatelic@dps.mcw.gov.cy)  
Εστάλη: Τρίτη, 16 Δεκεμβρίου 2014 11:00:00 πμ  
Προς: [andreousonia@hotmail.com](mailto:andreousonia@hotmail.com)

Κυρία Ανδρέου,

Έχω οδηγίες να αναφερθώ στην επιστολή σας ημερ. 8 Δεκεμβρίου 2014 με την οποία ζητάτε άδεια χρήσης απεικονίσεων γραμματοσήμων σχετικών με τη λαϊκή κουλτούρα της Κύπρου. Σας πληροφορώ ότι η άδεια για απεικόνιση των γραμματοσήμων σας παραχωρείται, νοουμένου ότι η απεικόνιση δεν θα είναι στο ίδιο μέγεθος με τα γραμματόσημα δηλαδή πρέπει να είναι μικρότερα ή μεγαλύτερα από το μέγεθος που εκδόθηκαν και να φέρουν διαγώνια γραμμή.

Μαρία Ηρακλέους  
για Διευθυντή  
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## Appendix 6

### Focus Group Consent Form

**Research project title:** The views of Cypriot citizens on the Republic of Cyprus' postage stamps

**Researcher:** Sonia Andreou

- I agree to participate in the aforementioned focus group carried out by Sonia Andreou of the Cyprus University of Technology, to aid with a part of her PhD research.
- I have been informed on the topic of the research and understand the aims of this project.
- I am aware of the topics to be discussed in the focus group.
- I am fully aware that I will remain anonymous throughout data reported and that I have the right to leave the focus group at any point.
- I am fully aware that data collected will be stored securely, safely and in accordance with Data Collection Acts.
- I am fully aware that I am not obliged to answer any question, but that I do so at my own free will.
- I agree to have the focus group recorded (dictaphone / tape recorder), so it can be transcribed after the focus group is held. I am aware that I have the right to edit the transcript of the focus group once it has been completed.
- I am aware that I can make any reasonable changes to this consent form.

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Printed Name**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Participant's Signature**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Researcher's Signature**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

#### ***Contact Information***

If you have any further questions or concerns about this study, please contact:

Name of researcher: Sonia Andreou      Tel:              E-mail: