



MUSLIM PLACES
OF WORSHIP
IN CYPRUS

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MUSLIM PLACES OF WORSHIP IN CYPRUS

Fifth Edition

**«Damage to cultural property belonging
to any people whatsoever means damage
to the cultural heritage of all mankind.»**

Preamble of the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection
of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict

Nicosia, 2015

Foreword

Muslim Places of Worship seeks to present a brief historical illustration of the places of worship of Islam in Cyprus. It also sheds light on the persistent and continuous efforts of the government of Cyprus to protect these monuments through restoration and maintenance in order to keep them ready for the performance of religious services and prayers.

The present volume highlights the reality of peaceful coexistence that prevailed for centuries between the Christian Greek and Muslim Turkish ethnic communities. It shows the extent of integration and interaction between these communities in a unique coexistence that has come to be recognised as the salient characteristic of the culture of Cyprus during various historical stages and which is reflected in the main features of these old monuments.

The book provides ample information regarding the extensive and expensive repair and maintenance projects for Islamic cultural monuments. Such projects are undertaken within the context of a special government program designed to restore, protect and maintain the Islamic cultural heritage on the island.

It should be emphasised, as indicated in the book itself, that the government of Cyprus considers the Islamic monuments of the island to be an integral part of the vast cultural heritage of the country. This position is consistent with the recognition of the multicultural nature of the society in Cyprus and with the deep commitment to the principle of freedom of religion. Accordingly, the government has declared seventeen Islamic monuments (located in Nicosia, Limassol, Larnaka and Pafos) as ancient monuments and added them, along with many other religious and cultural monuments, to the list of significant monuments that are part of the rich civilisation and cultural heritage of the island. The protection and preservation of these specially designated religious and cultural monuments is now the responsibility of the Cyprus Antiquities Department.

The government of Cyprus also cooperates with the United Nations to repair some of these monuments of worship. Included among these cooperative projects is the impressive Mosque of Hala Sultan located just outside the city of Larnaka. Since 2012, European Union funds of €6.7 million have been provided by the European Commission to implement the programme of the bi-communal Technical Committee on Cultural Heritage in Cyprus for the preservation of the island-wide cultural heritage, within the framework of UNDP's (United Nations Development Programme) assistance.

The Islamic monuments in Cyprus form a rich and important subject for researchers and scholars, particularly Muslim scholars specialising in the field of Islamic archeological monuments. Those interested in studying monuments that blend together expressions of different civilisations, cultures and architecture, with their beauty and artistic features revealed through this intermixture, may also find here a rewarding field of study. This intermarriage of cultures, civilisations and architectural modes is not evident only to experts in the field but can be easily seen throughout the island by the naked eye.

Given their intrinsic aesthetic and artistic value, the renovation of these Islamic sites can serve as an incentive for encouraging and reinvigorating religious tourism to several areas on the island. This in turn could augment rapprochement among peoples, enhance cultural exchanges, reactivate dialogue and strengthen peaceful interaction among civilisations and peoples. It also helps to counter ideas inviting the so-called clash of civilisations.

Muslim Places of Worship also draws attention to the understanding, on the part of the government of Cyprus, of the importance of the cultural wealth enjoyed by the island; an understanding that has led to the policy of renovating and preserving mosques and other shrines and places of worship. Within this context, it is worth noting that several mosques in various parts of the free, government-controlled areas of Cyprus have recently been reconditioned and reopened for worshippers. Prayers are held in these mosques, thereby fulfilling the spiritual needs of Turkish Cypriots and other Muslims residing in Cyprus or visiting the country from the Middle East, Southeast Asia and elsewhere.

A vivid testimony attesting to the freedom of religion and multiculturalism in Cyprus is the Muezzin's call to prayer that is heard throughout the capital city of Nicosia. This call at times blends harmoniously with the chimes of church bells into a beautiful and soothing sound that serves as a reminder of the religious harmony that prevails throughout Cyprus. It recalls the ability of the people, irrespective of religious background, thought or creed, to coexist peacefully and live together and alongside each other.

The visits in recent years by successive Presidents of Cyprus (Tassos Papadopoulos in May 2006 and Demetris Christofias in April 2009) to His Eminence the Grand Imam of Al Azhar Dr Mohammed Sayyed Tantawi, in Cairo, are indicative of the great respect shown by the government of Cyprus for the religious symbols of Islam. In the same spirit was also the meeting between His Beatitude the Archbishop of Cyprus Chrysostomos II and the Grand Imam of Al Azhar that took place in the Egyptian capital in July 2007. Further proof of such respect was expressed through the meeting in February 2007 between the Archbishop of Cyprus and His Eminence Ahmed Yionlouer, the Mufti of the Turkish Cypriot community, as well as through the historic meeting in September 2015 of President Anastasiades and Turkish Cypriot leader Mustafa Akinci with the religious leaders of the island. It is also noted that several more meetings have taken place in recent years between Archbishop Chrysostomos and the Mufti of the Turkish Cypriot community Dr Talip Atalay as part of an effort to promote interreligious dialogue in Cyprus.

Such meetings are positive steps in reinvigorating an atmosphere of confidence between the two communities of Cyprus, which in turn can help to facilitate the path towards the achievement of a peaceful, acceptable solution of the Cyprus issue, through the reunification of the island.

The following point should be emphasised: Finding a solution that reunifies the island of Cyprus, its people, its territory, its economy and society, is a hope entertained by all those, in Cyprus and elsewhere, who are sincerely dedicated to the cause of peace. Positive steps and prospects of initiatives for confidence building measures may therefore nourish the hope to utilise every opportunity to achieve a mutually acceptable, peaceful settlement for the benefit of all the people of Cyprus.

Given the prevailing conditions in the region and developments in the international arena, no promising opportunity should be lost. The people of Cyprus should not wait any longer to enjoy permanent peace and stability in their beautiful, multicultural island where major civilisations and regions blend harmoniously as it is evident by the Muslim places of worship shown in the present volume.

Dr Tarek Radwan

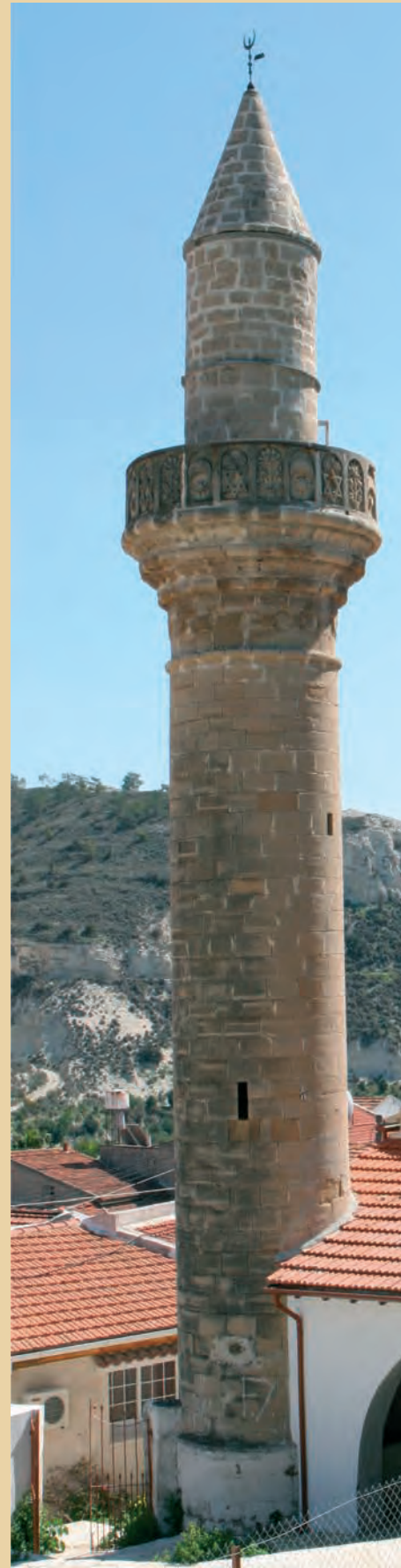
*Professor, Al-Azhar University
Cairo, Egypt*

Introduction

Cyprus has been throughout its history at the crossroads of great civilisations and cultures, a bridge between East and West. Though predominantly Greek and Christian in character, the island has a varied cultural heritage, bearing the marks and influences of the foreign powers that conquered and ruled it over the centuries.

The Ottoman conquest and rule (1571-1878) introduced Islam and left a lasting impact on the island, evidenced by the presence of a Muslim population which amounts to almost one fifth of the island's total.

Mosques and other places of worship are an integral part of the heritage of the island. Their protection and preservation have a particular significance for all Cypriots as special respect is accorded to religion in general.





Consequently, the government of Cyprus has consistently undertaken systematic efforts for the protection of all places of worship, as well as other monuments and cultural sites on the island, considering them part of the world's cultural legacy.

Unfortunately, the forcible division of Cyprus and the military occupation of its northern part by Turkey since 1974, have not allowed such protection to extend to the whole island. As a result, artefacts and monuments in the occupied area have been plundered, damaged or destroyed.

More than ever, in today's world, with Cyprus being a member of the European Union, multiculturalism, tolerance and respect for all people have become fundamental. The people of the island envisage a future in a reunited country, where religious and other freedoms and protection of all places of worship and of their cultural heritage will be fully respected.

This publication offers a brief historical context of the presence of Islam in Cyprus through the Muslim places of worship on the island. It will hopefully contribute to a better understanding of part of the rich cultural legacy of Cyprus, and help inspire a common vision of their homeland for all Cypriots.



Cyprus in History - An Overview

The first traces of history in the island go back to 9000 BC. Thus, the Pre-Neolithic Age is the beginning of human presence on the island. From several sites of the Neolithic, the Chalcolithic and the Bronze Ages scholars have been gathering information about the people of Cyprus. Their finds show the kind of relations they had with other people and particularly with the civilisations that flourished in the Eastern Mediterranean basin. Throughout its long history Cyprus played a role both as a blend of cultures and as a bridge or a platform of contact and interaction between East and West.

The second millennium BC marked the arrival of Greeks and a long process of hellenisation. There is evidence that following the Trojan War, several of the participating Greek leaders settled in Cyprus and founded a number of city - kingdoms, such as Lapithos, Keryneia, Kythrea, and Salamis. These are only a few examples of places that have maintained the names given to them 4000 years ago.

Many great powers dominated Cyprus since: Assyrians, Persians, Alexander the Great and his successors of the Ptolemy dynasty of Egypt, as well as the Romans.

“... Lapathos ...built by the Laconians and Praxander (...), Teucer who first founded Salamis in Cyprus, (...) Paphos built by Agapenor, (...) Soloi built by Phaleros and Acamas, Athenians...”

Strabo, “Geografica”, cf. Claude Delaval Cobham, *Excerpta Cypria*. Cambridge 1908, p. 1



“The island of Quprus is in the power of whichever nation is overlord in these seas.”

Muqaddasi “Description of Syria”.
Baghdad 985, cf. Claude Delaval
Cobham, *Excerpta Cypria*.
Cambridge 1908, p. 5

Following the division of the Roman Empire, in the 4th century AD, Cyprus remained under the rule of the Eastern Empire and subsequently became part of the Byzantine Empire. Between the eighth and tenth centuries, the Arabs and the emperors of Byzantium, preferred, for various reasons, a status of neutrality for the island; Cypriots suffered later under the tyranny of Isaac Comnenus until he caused the wrath of the crusaders of King Richard I of England, the Lionheart, who conquered the island and became the new ruler for a very brief time. Richard sold Cyprus to the Knights Templars. Subsequently, the Frankish Lusignan family, the Venetians and the Genoese established an oppressive rule on Cyprus. Consequently, many Cypriots saw the arrival of the Ottoman Turks, in 1571, as a promise for better conditions. They had the same hopes and expectations upon the arrival of the British in 1878 who agreed to grant independence to Cyprus in 1960, but only after a four-year armed liberation struggle by the Greek community.

During the Roman rule, Apostles Paul and Barnabas introduced Christianity in Cyprus. The ensuing christianisation, and the autocephaly of the Church of Cyprus along with special privileges accorded by the Byzantine Emperor Zenon to the Archbishop of Cyprus in the 5th century AD, have since played an important role in the history of the island.



Islam in Cyprus: The Arab Raids

From the establishment of Islam, its followers have tried to spread it to as many areas as possible. Although the island was near the already islamised regions, numerous raids (649 - 964 AD), and attempts to islamise Cyprus, were unsuccessful. Arab presence and influence thus remained incidental and sporadic.

During the conflict between the Arabs and the Byzantine Empire, the Cypriots found themselves in a peculiar situation. Their culture, religion and sentiments placed them on the side of Constantinople. But because of its location, Cypriots and Byzantines were convinced that the island could not be adequately defended against the Arabs.

At the same time, the Arabs realised that they could not rule the island permanently. As a result, both powers preferred to ensure the neutrality of Cyprus under the status of a condominium or through its division into two sectors or some other arrangement. At times, attempts to violate this tacit agreement resulted in raids, destruction and harsh suffering for the inhabitants.



“Over against Tyre lies the island of Qubrus... It is full of populous cities, and offers the Muslims many advantages in their trade thither, by reason of the great quantities of merchandise, stuffs and goods, which are produced there.”

Muqaddasi “Description of Syria”.
Baghdad 985, cf. Claude Delaval
Cobham, *Excerpta Cypria*.
Cambridge 1908, p. 5

“Mu'awiyah made terms with the 'Cypriots' on condition that: (a) they would pay him 7200 dinars annually (...) i.e. as much as they used to pay to the Byzantine state of which Cyprus was a province; so they 'would, from now on, pay two tributes' in Baladhuri's words, the Moslems undertaking 'not to prevent them from paying the tribute to the Greeks'.”

Costas Kyrris, *History of Cyprus*,
Nicosia 1985

"The Arab inroad of 653 resulted in the sacking and capture of Paphos (not Lapethos as previously accepted), where an Arab garrison of 12000 men recorded in the register were settled and a mosque was built for them; to these were added a number of Syrian colons from Baalbek, who were settled in a city specially erected for them, no doubt at Paphos, with a mosque for their services, hence the plural mosques in Baledhuris passage relating to the demolition of the Arab installations at Paphos in 680, when the Arab garrison was withdrawn from Cyprus."

Costas Kyrris (1985)

"...it may equally reflect a symbiosis of two communities living side by side, in separate sectors or groups of sectors or enclaves such as those described by Ibn Hawkal probably referring to a rather later period (IX-X cc.) and stressing the existence of two different civil and military administrations with distinct jurisdictions: 'The Moslem authorities were pleased with the Christians protected by them, and the Christians behaved to them as to fellow-inhabitants'."

Costas Kyrris (1985)

Following the first incursions, a garrison of 12.000 Arab soldiers were stationed in Cyprus. In addition, there were quarters of Christian Greeks and Muslim Arabs coexisting. Their relations depended on many factors. They were all, however, expected to pay annual tribute to both powers and observe neutrality.

The first mosques were built in Pafos in the middle of the 7th century, and served the needs of both the army and civilian Muslims. The mosques were demolished following the departure of the garrison some decades later.

The above marked the first relatively long-term presence of Islam in Cyprus, as well as the beginning of peaceful coexistence between Christians and Muslims on the island.



The Ottoman Muslims

More than six centuries after the withdrawal of the Arabs from Cyprus (963-964 AD), Islam reappeared with the Ottoman conquest of the island in 1570-1571.

Following the fall of Cyprus, the Sultan left a small regiment of cavalry and other soldiers and issued a “firman” (imperial order) for the transfer to the island of 12.000 families from Asia Minor. The bad conditions that prevailed during the Venetian rule and the year-long war had caused a severe population depletion. Moreover, following the fall of Nicosia and Famagusta, dignitaries and others, were slaughtered. This prompted many Latins and Greek Orthodox Christians to leave the island, while others returned to their countries of origin.

“Before the conquest in 1571 Cyprus had no residential Muslim communities.”

Ronald C. Jennings,
*Christians and Muslims in Ottoman
Cyprus and the Mediterranean World,*
1571-1640, New York University Press,
New York 1993

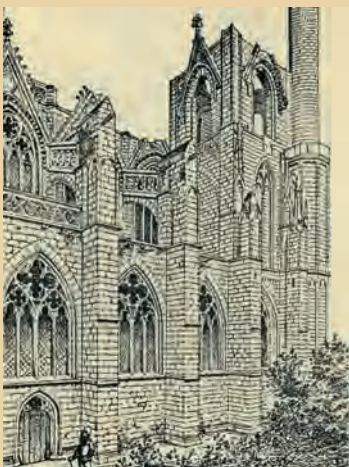


"An order to the governor of Cyprus presents the magnitude of the problem: Since the conquest of Cyprus, there have been 12,000 families banished. You made a petition saying that there are now 800 adult males registered in the new register, and at present only half of them remain in Cyprus."

Ronald C. Jennings (1993)

"Some of those evkaf (pious foundations) belonging to Christian communities no doubt antedated the Ottoman conquest; but perhaps among the Muslims the disparate individuals and families, whether as immigrants from scattered communities in Anatolia or as local converts, had finally lived together long enough to find common interests, to develop mutual trust, and to give for the benefit of their neighbors."

Ronald C. Jennings (1993)



Based on reliable accounts from Turkish scholars and his own research, Ronald Jennings concluded that the actual number of people transferred to the island was far lower than the banished 12,000 families by the Sultan. The composition of the newcomers varied in terms of religion and ethnic origin and included both Muslims and Christians.

Muslims, who belonged to the military and the new ruling classes, settled in big numbers in towns and administrative centres; the indigenous Greek and other Christian population were on many occasions forced to retreat into the countryside. In Famagusta, security reasons made it necessary to ban all non-Muslims from spending the night within the walled city. In time, however, Ottoman Turkish communities could be found dispersed throughout the island, while Turkish Cypriots were also living in ethnically mixed communities in towns and rural areas, scattered throughout Cyprus.



Descendants of the Ottomans and also of Christians

During the three centuries of Ottoman rule there was continuous demographic change caused by migrations, plague, famine, and by the way the island was administered by certain governors.

Furthermore, conversions of Christians to Islam seem to have taken place on a large scale. Forced conversions were not the only cases recorded in history; in the Empire's everyday reality, the line for crossing to either faith was sometimes very thin. According to census reports from the late Ottoman and the early British periods the ratio of the Muslim population to the total was about twenty percent.

Historical accounts, including Ottoman sources, show that the present day Turkish Cypriot community has evolved from two categories: the descendants of the conquering Ottoman army and settlers from Anatolia, as well as Greeks and other Christians who converted to Islam.



“In the decades following the Ottoman conquest of Cyprus many of the island's Christians converted to Islam. (...) Although the level of conversion cannot be measured precisely, there are several indicators of its extent. In 1593-1595 (...) more than a third of such Muslims appearing at court at that time were converts. (...) In the earlier decades the numbers of converts must have been very large, (...).”

Only a few cases of conversion to Islam are recorded in the surviving sicils, although in fact converts did have to register their change of religion at court if only to adjust their tax status.”

Ronald C. Jennings (1993)

“Forced population transfers were an important part of Ottoman social and economic policy, particularly from the time of Mehmed the Conqueror. (...) The policy of banishment to Cyprus, then, was just another aspect of such population policies.”

Ronald C. Jennings (1993)

“Very soon after the conquest of the island, the Porte assigned garrisons to castles located in strategic places. A sum was budgeted (...) for the defense of Tuzla. Several classes of soldiers, 1045 in all, (...) were assigned there.(...) 1130 soldiers assigned to Lefkosa.(...) a breakdown (...) of soldiers was not provided for Magosa, The defense of Baf, (...) was the responsibility of 310 soldiers.”

“The greatest number of janissaries recorded at any time were 963.”

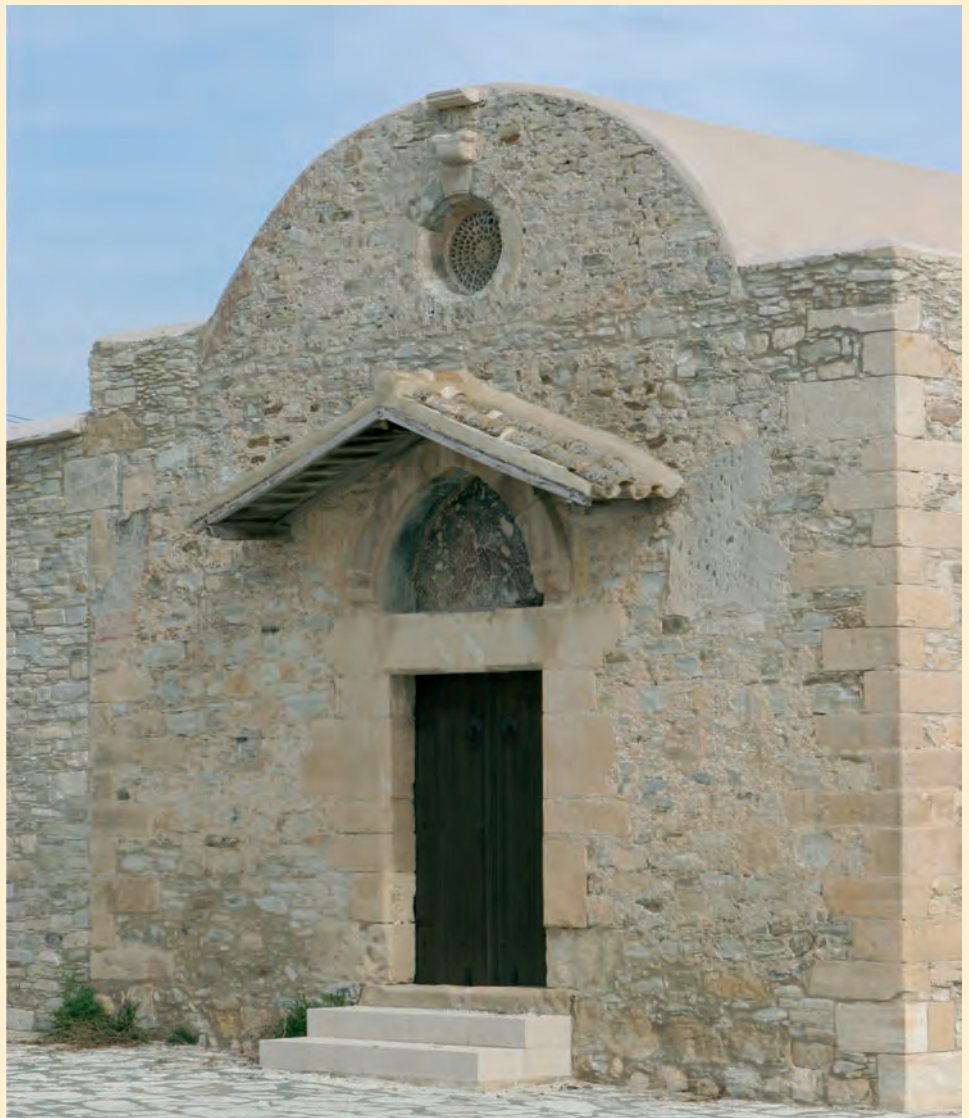
Ronald C. Jennings (1993)

The Linovamvakoi

The very thin line separating the conversion from one to the other faith is illustrated by a category of people, known as “the Linovamvakoi”. The term was used for the first time in 1863 and means “of flax-cotton”, a characterisation that described their double identity. The majority of these people were adherents of Islam in public but continued to practice Christianity in the privacy of their homes.

Newspapers during the first decades of British rule report cases of return to Christianity. The Orthodox Church of Cyprus, however, attempted a coercive return of the Linovamvakoi to the Christian faith, by banning them from religious ceremonies unless they officially adhered to Christianity. This alienated most of them, thereby consolidating their adherence to Islam.

The existence of the Linovamvakoi in Cyprus continued until the 1950s.



“The existence of numerous crypto-Christians is easy to document from that time period. Possibly that community was established right from the very beginning in Cyprus.”

Ronald C. Jennings (1993)

“Many professed Moslem are in secret Greeks, and observe all the numerous fasts of that church.”

William Turner,
Journal of a tour in the Levant,
London 1820

“Cases of Crypto-Christian families which abandoned Islam and embraced Christianity openly and for good occurred with increasing frequency under British rule, but some cases of Greeks, particularly women, who adopted Islam also occurred in continuation of a process going on since the Ottoman period (...)

In Neon Kition, II, 92, 27/8 April 1881, p. 8 col. 2 we read: “From many parts of the island each week it is reported that two or three Muslim families are baptized.”

Costas Kyrris,
Peaceful co-existence in Cyprus,
Nicosia 1977

Muslim Places of Worship

The Mosques

With the advent of the Ottomans in Cyprus in the 16th century, mosques began to make their appearance. Two major categories can be discerned:

A. Churches converted into Mosques: In order to meet their immediate needs the new rulers of Cyprus turned churches into mosques. In most cases they erected minarets onto them. In towns, where the new rulers first settled, there were magnificent examples of Gothic architecture. These churches were the first to be seized by the new rulers and used as places of worship of Islam.

“The Ottoman conquerors converted most Latin churches into mosques, although they handed over several to the large Greek Orthodox community and at least one to the Armenian Gregorians.”

Ronald C. Jennings (1993)



“In 1589 the Greeks of Larnaca bought back from the Turks the church of St. Lazaros, which the latter had taken at the conquest, but they allow the Latins to make occasional use of a chapel in the north side.”

Costas Kyrris (1985)

B. New Mosques: Over a period of time, new mosques were constructed some of which have historical as well as architectural importance. These can be mostly found in urban areas. With the passage of time, construction materials from ruined or damaged churches or even their sites were used for the new buildings. In contrast, mosques constructed in the countryside were of simple design.



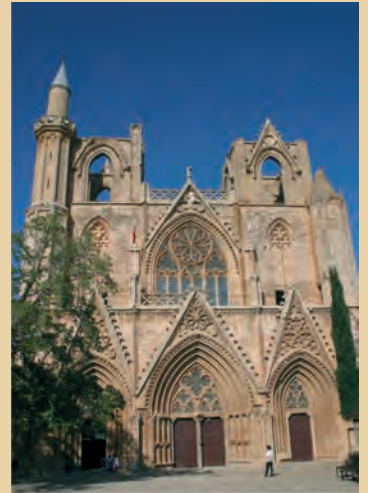
Gothic and Other Churches

The most architecturally important mosques still in existence in Cyprus are former churches of the Gothic and Byzantine eras and a few others. The Cathedral of Agia Sophia (Selimiye Mosque) in Nicosia and that of Agios Nikolaos (Lala Mustafa Mosque) in Famagusta are the most distinguished ones. Those of Agia Aikaterini and of the Virgin Mary of the Augustinian Order (Omeriye Mosque) in Nicosia also fall into this category.

In a number of remote villages, with an exclusively Muslim population, mosques were originally Byzantine Christian churches. This might be the result of massive conversions or forced departure of the indigenous Christians.

In recent years, restoration and maintenance work in a number of Byzantine churches that had been turned into mosques, revealed Christian frescoes (wall paintings) under plaster and coats of paint. Some are fine examples of iconography of the period that preceded the Ottoman rule in Cyprus.

Frescoes are preserved in the mosques of the township of Polis tis Chrysochous, in the Pafos district and in the village of Episkopi, in the Limassol district. These Christian churches were dedicated to Agios Andronikos and to Agios Georgios respectively.



"The only thing which we were expected to look at was a mosque ...built by some Sultana or other, which is in great repute among the Moslem as a place of pilgrimage."

Delaroiere, "Voyage en Orient", Paris 1836, cf. Claude Delaval Cobham, *Excerpta Cypria*, Cambridge 1908, p. 459

The Hala Sultan Tekke and Other Mosques

The Hala Sultan Tekke, located on the shore of the Salt Lake in Larnaka is one of the most famous sites in Cyprus and considered to be the most important religious shrine for Muslims on the island. It is a complex of structures made up of a mosque, a mausoleum, a minaret and living quarters for men and women. At its present form it was built in the 18th and early 19th centuries and is revered as the burial site for Umm Haram.

According to one tradition, Hala Sultan (Ottoman Turkish for "Revered Aunt") or Umm Haram (Arabic for "Revered Mother") was the foster mother or aunt of the Prophet Mohammed. But another account claims that she was one of the women who accompanied the Prophet on his way from Mecca to Medina.* In 649 AD, after Cyprus was conquered by the Arabs, according to this account, Hala Sultan was fatally injured after a fall from her mule and was buried on the spot where she died. A 9th century Arab source suggests that Umm Haram accompanied the leader of the Umayyad dynasty (as the wife of one of his officers) on his expedition against Cyprus in 649 AD, but makes no reference to her death.

Other mosques of significance are those of the Bayraktar (flag-carrier) which was built on the spot on the Nicosia walls where the flag-carrier fell during the siege of Nicosia by the Ottomans in 1570. Also important are the Yeni Djami (the "new mosque"), built on the ruins of a medieval church, the mosque in the village of Peristerona and others in the towns of Larnaka and Limassol.



* In Saheeh Al-Bukhari, the following incident was reported: "Narrated Anas bin Malik: Allah's Messenger used to visit Umm Haram bint Milhan and she was the wife of Ubada bin As-Samit. One day the prophet, peace be upon him, visited her and she provided him with food and started looking for lice in his head. The Allah's Messenger, peace be upon him, slept and afterwards woke up smiling. Umm Haram asked, "What makes you smile, O Allah's Messenger?" He said, "Some of my followers were presented before me in my dream as fighters in Allah's Cause, sailing in the middle of the seas like kings on the thrones or like kings sittings on their thrones." Umm Haram added, I said, "O Allah's Messenger! Invoke Allah, to make me one of them". So Allah's Messenger invoked Allah for her and then laid his head down (and slept). Then he woke up smiling (again). Umm Haram added I said, "What makes you smile, O Allah's Messenger?" He said, "Some people of my followers were presented before me (in a dream) as fighters in Allah's Cause". He said the same as he had said before. I said, "O Allah's Messenger! Invoke Allah to make me from them." He said, "You are among the first ones." Then Umm Haram sailed over the sea in the time of Mu'awiya bin Abu Sufyan, and she fell down from her riding animal after coming ashore, and died."

Saheeh Al-Bukhari, Kitab Al-Jihad, Hadith 2604

Maintenance of Mosques

In the aftermath of the inter-communal strife in December 1963, extraordinary conditions prevailed on the island for several years. Many Turkish Cypriots abandoned their villages to join larger communities or moved to the cities.

Consequently, a number of mosques were left unattended and the Cyprus government assumed responsibility for their maintenance. The task was not an easy one because of natural damage due to the passage of time but also due to random acts of vandalism.

The 1974 military invasion by Turkey that resulted in the occupation of 36.7 percent of the territory of Cyprus and the de facto forcible partition of the island, created serious problems for the maintenance of places of worship.

The Greek Cypriots were forced out of their homes and properties in the occupied areas and Turkish Cypriots moved to the northern part of the island. As a result, churches in the northern occupied part and numerous mosques in the government-controlled areas were left unattended. The government made efforts to maintain these mosques, which number about one hundred, and undertook restoration work where necessary.

“Professor Saleh Lamei Mostafa, the world famous Egyptian specialist in preserving ancient buildings who was appointed by the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) to head up the team restoring Hala Sultan Tekke, one of the most revered sites of Islam, has recently reported significant progress in the initial phase of the restoration work.”

*Daily press, Egypt, 30 July, 2002
<http://www.arabicnews.com/ansub/Daily/Day/020730/2002073046.html>*



Desecration and Destruction of the Religious Monuments in Occupied Cyprus

The forced expulsion of the indigenous Greek Cypriot population from the occupied north left many cultural and religious treasures unattended and unprotected. Some date back to thousands of years and have a unique place in the cultural heritage of the world.

Unfortunately, no serious effort was made by Turkey for their protection in the aftermath of the invasion. On the contrary, a large-scale systematic desecration and destruction of churches started with the acquiescence of the occupation authorities.

Christian symbols and religious ornaments were destroyed while a number of churches were turned into mosques. One of the first churches to be turned into a mosque in 1974 was the historic church of Panayia (Virgin Mary) Acheiropoiitos in the now Turkish occupied town of Lapithos in the Keryneia district. Large scale plundering and smuggling of icons, frescoes and other religious artefacts continued for years. The Cyprus government has been forced to buy numerous such items at international auctions.



International Focus on Cultural Plundering

- A USA court ordered in 1989 the return to the Church of Cyprus of four pieces from the Kanakaria mosaics, dating to the early Byzantine years (6th-7th centuries AD). These unique treasures were stolen from the church of Kanakaria in the village of Lythragkomi and sold by a Turkish national to an American art dealer.
- The Menil Foundation in Houston, Texas USA, with the consent of the Church of Cyprus, bought magnificent Byzantine frescoes of the 13th century which were unlawfully removed from the chapel of Agios Euphemianos or Themonianos in the village of Lyssi. The Foundation agreed to restore and exhibit them on loan for a specific period in a specially built chapel before turning them over to the Church of Cyprus which remains their legal owner.
- In 1997 the German police arrested a Turkish national involved in smuggling Cyprus treasures. The police found in his possession hundreds of pieces from frescoes and mosaics from the church of Christos Antifonitis and the church of Panagia Kanakaria. The court of Bavaria ordered in June 2004 the restitution of some of these pieces of the Church of Cyprus.

The saddest aspect of the whole affair is that precious monuments and artefacts have been destroyed or permanently damaged in attempts to remove them from their sites. As a result, part of the world's cultural heritage has been lost forever.



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1. The Pantocrator from the Agios Euphemianos chapel, bought by the Menil Foundation.
2. A mosaic from the church of Kanakaria sold in the USA.
3. Frescoes from the church of Christos Antifonitis, seized by the German police from a Turkish national whom they arrested.

Lefkosia (Nicosia)

Nicosia is the capital of Cyprus. In the old part of the town within the Venetian wall, there are fine examples of Gothic and other churches that were converted into mosques. This took place following the Ottoman conquest of Cyprus in 1570-1571. One of the most prominent features of the capital is still the Cathedral of Agia Sofia converted into the Selimiye mosque. Camille Enlart in his work "Gothic art in Cyprus" called it "a noble building" expressing "the vitality and dynamism of the kingdom whose first architectural achievement it was."

The Arablar, the Omeriye and other mosques are also old churches of the pre-Ottoman times.

There are also a number of mosques built by the new rulers, such as the Bayraktar and the Taht El Kale in the capital and those in the villages of Peristerona and Dali.

4. The Taht El Kale mosque.





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- 5. The Omeriye mosque.
- 6. The Bayraktar mosque.
- 7. The Arablar mosque.
- 8. The Selimiye mosque.
- 9. The mosque in the village of Peristerona.



9

“...the cathedral of St. Sofia is a remarkably interesting example of XIIIth -XIVth century architecture as practised in the Levant by European colonists of the middle ages. It betrays not the slightest trace of any oriental or native influence either in plan, mason-craft, or decoration. It is purely an example of the combination of all the characteristics of the European styles at a period before the distinctions between those styles became very marked.

The work of Eustorge de Montaigu may be defined as more especially French in character, owing doubtless to the influence and munificence of St. Louis on his Crusade: the later building of the west end, but for a continuance of the French style of stone-work, is as reminiscent of Naples, Sicily, or Spain as of anything in France. The absence of high-pitched gables and spires usually associated with the mediaeval art of Europe produces an impression of incompleteness and want of style in the Cyprus buildings, but a very similar defect is noticeable in all the districts which border on the Mediterranean from Spain to the Holy Land.”

George Jeffery, *A Description of the Historic Monuments of Cyprus*, Nicosia 1918



10. The interior of Agia Sofia.



11



12

11, 12. The Agia Sofia or Selimiye mosque is a Latin cathedral. It is characterised as “the largest monument surviving in Cyprus”. Construction work started in early 13th century and completed about 150 years later. It is the oldest and finest example of Gothic architecture of the 12th century, an imposing monument with French influences. It was converted into a mosque soon after the Ottoman conquest of Nicosia in 1570, and named Selimiye mosque.



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13, 14, 15, 16. The Cathedral of Agia Sofia – internal views.



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17, 18, 19. Other external views from the Cathedral of Agia Sofia or Selimiye mosque.



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“This small church now used as a mosque is a monument of considerable interest. It is situated on the east side of the Phaneromene enclosure.

The plan of the building is of a domical Byzantine type of a nave with two shallow aisles and a semicircular apse. Architectural decorations are however of the XVIth century style, and the whole forms a curious mixture of different characteristics. The windows and doors have the usual mouldings of the period and the gables are ornamented in a curious manner with small inverted trusses to represent crockets. Regular Gothic buttresses support the walls on every side.



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20, 21, 22. The Arablar mosque is an old chapel, known as “Stavros (Cross) tou Missirikou”. The building dates to the 16th century; it is of domical Byzantine type with a mixture of Gothic elements, characteristic of the Venetian period in Cyprus. The name Missirikou is assumed to derive from the Arabic Misr, meaning Egypt.



In converting the church into a mosque the west and south doors have been closed up and a porch built along the north side. A singularly small minaret was also built at the north-east corner. The building was repaired a few years back, when the gypsum plastering usual in a mosque was renewed;

This small church or chapel is an excellent example of the style of art and the mixture of architectural elements which seems to have prevailed in Cyprus during the Venetian Occupation. The cruciform plan crowned by a cupola is Byzantine, the buttresses with dripstones suggest the mediaeval period, whilst the decorative stone carving is evidently copied from drawings of a classic or renaissance description. It was doubtless the intention of the builders to imitate one of the small churches so common in a Venetian city. It has been supposed that this church is referred to by Dapper ('Les iles de l' Archipel') as belonging to the Italian Missionaries in the XVIIth century-the name corrupted from 'the Cross of the Missionaries'. Its Turkish name seems to be 'Arab-jami', or the mosque of the Arab slaves, and the most probable derivation of 'misericou' is from the Arabic 'Misr' meaning Egypt, the land from which most of the Arab slaves would have come, although the prefix 'Stavro' seems odd applied to a mosque."

George Jeffery (1918)

23. The Arablar mosque next to the Faneromeni Church.

“The Pairaktar Djami, with a Persian wheel and a water trough in front of it, has a Gothic vaulted hall with side arches, a latticed wing, and a minaret. Over the door we read a Turkish inscription; three arches carry the flat roof. The stone Mihrab and Mem Ber decorated with gold, but somewhat heavy and obsolete, are standing on the left: there is a balcony over the entrance. On the left of it the grave of the first Turk coming to Levkosia: it has a green cover and a flag of the same colour; by the side of it an alms-box. The floor is covered with roe-skin rugs.”

Louis Salvator,
Levkosia - The Capital of Cyprus, 1881



24

24, 25. The mosque of Bayraktar is built on the Constanza Bastion, in honour of the flag-carrier who first climbed onto the walls of Nicosia during the siege of the town by the Ottoman troops in 1570. The mosque dates to 1820. It was restored and opened for worship in late 2003.



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26, 27, 28. The mosque of Bayraktar.

Omerghe (Omeriye)

“In 1570, the important church situated close to the south of the city and between the Costanza and Podocataro received the full force of the bombardment. As a consequence the building was completely shot away down to the level of the window sills. The remains of the side walls were afterwards utilized for a mosque by the Turks who have covered over the area of the church with a plain wood roof supported on pointed arches after the fashion of the local bazaar.

According to a legend the Caliph Omar visited Nicosia on his way from Damascus to Egypt and lodged in the porch of a ruined church. When Mustapha the Turkish General heard of this in 1570, he proceeded to identify the Augustinian church with its porch as the lodging of Omar, and the mosque then instituted called the 'Omerie'.

Although the upper portion of the church was completely demolished in 1570, certain features of the original building survive to give an idea of its important architectural character.”

George Jeffery (1918)

29. The Omeriye mosque used to be the Church of Saint Mary of the monastery of the Augustinian monks, dating back to the 14th century. Ruins of the monastery were preserved up to the 17th century. It has a minaret with two galleries. The mosque is open for services on a permanent basis.





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30, 31, 32, 33. The Omeriye mosque.

“The New Mosque (Yeni Cami) was a Latin church built in the fourteenth century which was converted to a mosque in 1571 immediately after the Turkish conquest. In 1740 the old building was demolished by Menteszade Haci Ismail Agha who conducted an excavation around the area. Today very little remains of either the Latin church or the old mosque.

The New Mosque (Yeni Cami) was built some twenty metres away from the old building. It was constructed in the middle of the eighteenth century, a few years after the old one was demolished.

The ceiling of the mosque is supported by three arches. There is an inscription over the arched entrance door. The old minaret was demolished in 1979 because of its dangerous condition and a new minaret was then built by Evkaf, the historic Turkish religious foundation.

There are four stone tombs beside the mosque. (...) There are other graves in the courtyard of the mosque belonging to Turkish nobles.”

Ahmet Gazioglu, *The Turks in Cyprus - A Province of the Ottoman Empire*, London, 1990

34. The Yeni Djami (“the New Mosque”) was built by a Turkish governor of Cyprus in 1772 on the site of a Latin church of the 13th century. The church was at first converted into a mosque. However, it was demolished in the mid-18th century and a new mosque was built nearby.





35

“Arab Ahmet Mosque, is famous both for its beautiful Turkish architectural style and for the graves of historically important people in its courtyard. It was built in the early eighteenth century in memory of Arab Ahmet Pasha, one of the Turkish commanders during the conquest of Cyprus. It was restored in 1845, having needed a substantial amount of renovation.

It is the only mosque in Cyprus to have characteristic Turkish domes. The mosque is rectangular in shape with a large central dome covering the main body of the building, and three smaller ones over the entrance. There are four more small domes, one over each corner of the building.”

Ahmet Gazioglu (1990)

35, 36. The Arab Ahmet mosque, is of the classic Ottoman style of the 14th century.



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37, 38, 39. The small Taht El Kale mosque in the quarter of Nicosia with the same name.



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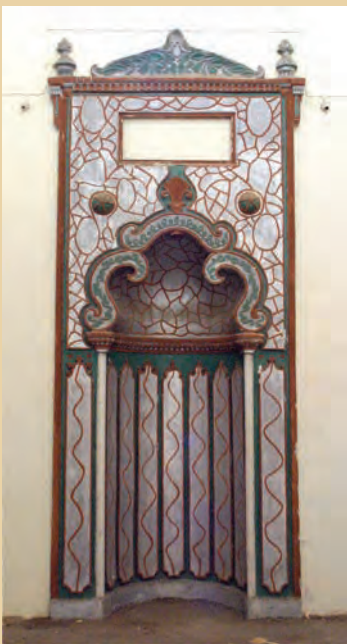
41

40, 41. The Taht El Kale mosque in the town of Nicosia.

42, 43, 44. The mosque in the village of Peristerona is an 18th century monument with historical and architectural value. It bears a minaret with two galleries, the second example after the Omeriye mosque in Nicosia. Built next to a magnificent five-dome Byzantine church, it has many interesting architectural features, such as tinted windows and sculptured parts.



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45, 46. The mosque in the village of Peristerona.

47, 48. According to records the mosque in Dali was built in 1837 and took its name Ziyia Pasha Mosque after restoration in the Islamic year of 1279 (1862/1863), in the name of Sultan Abdulazziz, by poet Ziyia Pasha, who served as administrator of Cyprus when Ali Pasha was Grand Vizier. A school was also built next to the mosque and dedicated to Sultan Abdulazziz. Ziyia Pasha also established a fund for the maintenance of the mosque and the school. The minaret was designed and constructed by building master Tooulis Karakannas, who was an Evkaf employee, and the structure was repaired in 1891 and again in 1930.



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Reopening ceremony of Dali mosque after its restoration

“Minister of Interior Neoklis Sylikiotis handed over to the Municipal Authority of Dali, south of the capital city of Nicosia, the restored mosque of Ziyia Pasha, in the presence of former Minister of Interior Andreas Christou.

Restoration began in 2001 under an initiative of the Dali Municipal Authority and was completed during year 2006. Its financing was undertaken by the Department for Administration of Turkish Cypriot Properties and the Ministry of Interior.

Speaking at the ceremony for the reopening of the mosque at Dali, Sylikiotis said the Ministry of Interior for the last three years has made many efforts to restore the Turkish schools, cemeteries and mosques and that € 1.469.397 were spent for this purpose.

He said the government deems the religious monuments of each community as part of the joint heritage of the people of Cyprus.

The Minister described the restoration of the mosque, as an important event and said that former Minister of Interior Andreas Christou was 'the soul of this effort'.

Replying, Christou said when a religious or cultural monument is restored, it underlines the coexistence of the two communities.



49, 50. The Ziyia Pasha mosque in Dali.



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The Mayor of Dali Nikos Nikolaou expressed the wish that the mosque will help to enhance contacts between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots, and towards a Cyprus which will be free of occupation troops where all its inhabitants can live together in peace.

Present at the ceremony was Islamic preacher Sheikh Nazim Kibrisi Alhakkani with a number of his followers and representatives of the local administration. Sheikh Nazim expressed his happiness and gratitude for the restoration of the mosque and after the ceremony he and his followers had the Friday prayer in the mosque."

Cyprus News Agency,
Nicosia 8 September 2006

51, 52. The Ziyia Pasha mosque.



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53, 54. The mosque in the village of Potamia.

Restoration of mosque at Denia village

Conservation work at the mosque in Denia village, Nicosia district, was completed in early December 2014 and a ceremony celebrating its restoration took place which was attended by Greek Cypriots and several Turkish Cypriots. Work at the mosque began in 2012 and following the completion of emergency measures in April 2013, upon request of the Technical Committee on Cultural Heritage for complete restoration of the mosque, further works were implemented to provide the mosque with a roof, hence ensuring a longer-term preservation of the monument as well as its possible reuse.

Conservation work was implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in cooperation with UNDP-PFF (United Nations Development Programme- Partnership for the Future), was fully funded by the EU and its cost amounted to €123,667, including works, design and a new roof.

In his address at the ceremony, on 5 December 2014, Greek Cypriot co-chairman of the Technical Committee, Mr Takis Hadzidemetriou, said “a new message emerges from the churches and the mosques that we restore, a message for the Cyprus of tomorrow, in which priests and imams along with common people, Greek and Turkish Cypriots alike, will walk along the pathway of peace”.





Turkish Cypriot co-chairman of the Technical Committee, Mr Ali Tuncay, said this was the first time in almost 50 years that the mosque was opened and he was happy to see it reach this stage.

Mrs Tiziana Zennaro, Programme Manager of the UNDP-PFF said that in the beginning, the works carried out were emergency but as they continued and with the collapse of the walls, it was decided that the whole structure was strengthened. This project shows how cultural cooperation can be the cornerstone for a better future, she added.

Imam Mustafa Samile, who attended the ceremony on behalf of EVKAF, stated that “we are all brothers and this is part of our brotherhood”. He said he was very happy to be at the mosque, adding that “it is the best feeling to be here and pray after 50 years”.



Inside the mosque Turkish Cypriots placed the Koran in different languages, as well as pictures with excerpts from the Koran. They also placed three prayer rugs on the floor. The mosque’s outdoor area was also restored, a pavement was constructed and olive trees, pine trees and flowers were planted. Greek and Turkish Cypriot volunteers worked throughout the project.

Lemesos (Limassol)

The Great Mosque or Djami Kebir is the most significant in the town of Limassol, which hosts another two mosques.

In the district of Limassol there are about 30 Muslim places of worship.

The mosque in the village of Episkopi is a fine example of an old Byzantine church turned into a mosque. Magnificent frescoes were revealed in recent years after removing layers of plaster.

The mosque in the village of Silikou is of architectural and historical value.



55. The Great Mosque (Djami Kepir) in the town of Limassol.



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- 56. The mosque in the village of Avdimou.
- 57. The New Mosque in the town of Limassol.
- 58. The mosque in the village of Malia.
- 59. The mosque in the village of Kantou.
- 60. The mosque in the village of Episkopi.

“Cami-i Kebir mosque was built by Mestan Agha a few years earlier than the one in Larnaca (1829-1830). Its interior is divided into six sections by columns, with arches connecting the columns to the walls in an almost identical way to the mosque of the same name in Larnaca.

This mosque was built beside an ancient graveyard containing the graves of two Turkish notables, namely Mehmet Efendi, who died in 1758, and the Admiral of the Fleet, Suleyman Pasha, who died in 1715.”

Ahmet Gazioglu (1990)



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61, 62. The Great Mosque or Djami Kebir is open for services to the Muslim visitors and residents of Limassol.



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63, 64, 65. The Great Mosque.



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66, 67, 68, 69. The Great Mosque in the town of Limassol.



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“Cami-i Cedit (New Mosque) or Koprulu Ibrahim Camii, was built by Koprulu Ibrahim Agha in 1825. It is also called Dere Camisi, “the mosque of the stream”, being situated at the side of the stream which, during heavy rains, runs through the town. The grave of a Turkish Pasha called Suleyman lies within its courtyard.”

Ahmet Gazioglu (1990)

70, 71, 72, 73. The mosque of Ibrahim Agha or Djami Djedit (New Mosque) in the town of Limassol.



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74, 75, 76. The Meskit mosque in the town of Limassol, currently under the process of a comprehensive renovation.



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77, 78, 79, 80. The mosque in the village of Silikou has historical and architectural value. The interior is separated in two by a double arche.



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81, 82. The mosque in the village of Moniatis.



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83, 84. The mosque in the village of Mouttagiaka.



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85, 86, 87. The mosque in the village of Malia.



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88, 89, 90. The mosque in the village of Kato Polemidia.



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91, 92, 93. The mosque in the village of Avdimou.

94. The mosque in the village of Episkopi, west of Limassol, is an old Byzantine church, dedicated to Agios Georgios and dating to the 16th century. Ongoing restoration work in the past 20 years has revealed magnificent wall-paintings. Despite damages from the effects of time and, eventually, deliberate destruction, some paintings keep their impressive features. They represent a fine example of the iconography of the times of Venetian rule in Cyprus.





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95, 96, 97. The mosque in the village of Episkopi.



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98, 99. The mosque in the village of Paramali.



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100, 101. The mosque in the village of Pano Polemidia.



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103

102, 103. The mosque in the village of Kantou.

Larnaka

The Hala Sultan Tekke near the town of Larnaka is one of the most venerable places for the followers of Islam in Cyprus.

The Great Mosque and the mosques of Zoukhour and Tuzla bear interesting architectural features and have historical value. The latter used to be an old Byzantine church.

In the district of Larnaka, the mosque in the village of Klavdia used to be an old Byzantine church. Only fragments of wall-paintings are saved.



104. The Hala Sultan Tekke.



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- 105. The mosque in the village of Menogeia.
- 106. The mosque in the village of Lefkara.
- 107. The mosque of Tuzla in the town of Larnaka.
- 108. The mosque in the village of Kofinou.
- 109. The mosque in the village of Kalavastos.
- 110. The mosque in the village of Kalo Chorio.

“Hala Sultan Tekke, a complex made up of a small mosque, a mausoleum, a minaret, and living quarters for men and women, is set amidst palm trees on the shore of the Larnaka Salt Lake, and is one of the most famous sites in Cyprus, familiar to many millions of travelers who pass through the nearby airport.

The mosque and the mausoleum, built between 1174H/1760AD and 1211H/1796AD, is revered as the burial place of Umm Haram (...)

Professor Mostafa, (...) explained, ‘If Hala Sultan Tekke has been left to its own devices it would have crumbled, the walls could not have continued to hold the roof, and the edifice would have collapsed’.”

Daily press, Egypt, 30 July, 2002
<http://www.arabicnews.com/ansub/Daily/Day/020730/2002073046.html>

111, 112, 113. The Hala Sultan Tekke.



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114



115

“(Tekkye is) The chief Moslem shrine of Cyprus. A tradition of unknown date associates this monument with the first invasion by the Arabs in 644. According to this account Umm Haram was a near relative of the Prophet, and whilst accompanying the expedition, or raid, upon Cyprus, commanded by an Arab Sheik named 'Mabias,' a fall from her donkey terminated her existence, and she was buried under the trilithon now known as her tomb. By Mavias the natives possibly mean the famous Sultan Moawiyeh of Damascus.

Professor Sayce accurately describes the appearance of the shrine: 'In the pretty Moslem sanctuary- of the Tekkye, above the Salt Lake is the reported tomb Umm Haram ...The tomb is built under a megalithic structure, consisting of two upright stones, some fifteen feet in height, and a third stone of great size, which rests upon them. The two uprights have been defaced by carving, stucco, and whitewash, but the third stone remains pretty much in its original condition. The legend runs that the stones were conveyed from Palestine by invisible agency like the Holy House of Loretto. The archaeologist, however, will prefer to see in them a relic of the Phoenician, or pre-Phoenician age, whose sanctity was respected down to the time when a Mohammedan tomb was erected under it.'



114, 115. The Hala Sultan Tekke.

The last paragraph of the Professor's description must however be modified by the fact that during the middle ages there does not appear to have been any recognition of the trilithon as a shrine, either Moslem or Christian.

In fact it is not so much as mentioned, Cornelius Van Bruyn ('Travels,' 1674) is one of the first writers on Cyprus to mention this monument, which he describes as consisting of three stones, two upright, and the third resting on them above, and about twenty-six palms high to the underside of the upper stone; the whole covered with gypsum."

George Jeffery (1918)

116, 117, 118, 119, 120. The Hala Sultan Tekke, built near the salt lake west of Larnaka, dates back to the 18th-19th centuries. It is dedicated to Umm Haram, who died and was buried there during one of the first Arab incursions, in 649 AD. Inscriptions in Arabic script refer to historical events or verses from the Holy Koran. Also found in the Hala Sultan Tekke is the grave of Khadija Adila, the wife of his Majesty Hussein Ibn Ali, King of Hijaz, who died in the island on 12 July 1929. The British exiled King Hussein to Cyprus at that time.



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“The Grand Mosque (Cami-i Kebir - Ulu Cami) was built in 1835-6 by Seyit Elhac Mehmet Agha, the Turkish Governor.

It is a two-storey building with large windows, and has five arches in front and one on its left flank. The interior of the mosque is divided into three parts by two rows of columns, each row consisting of five round columns connected to the walls by arches.

At the north-west corner of its front courtyard there is an octagonal fountain built in 1748 by Ebubekir Pasha, then Governor of Cyprus, who constructed chains of wells and aqueducts in the Arpera region eight miles east of the town to supply fresh drinking water to Larnaka.”*

Ahmet Gazioglu (1990)

* The Arpera region is actually located southwest of Larnaka.



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121, 122, 123. The Great Mosque in the town of Larnaka.



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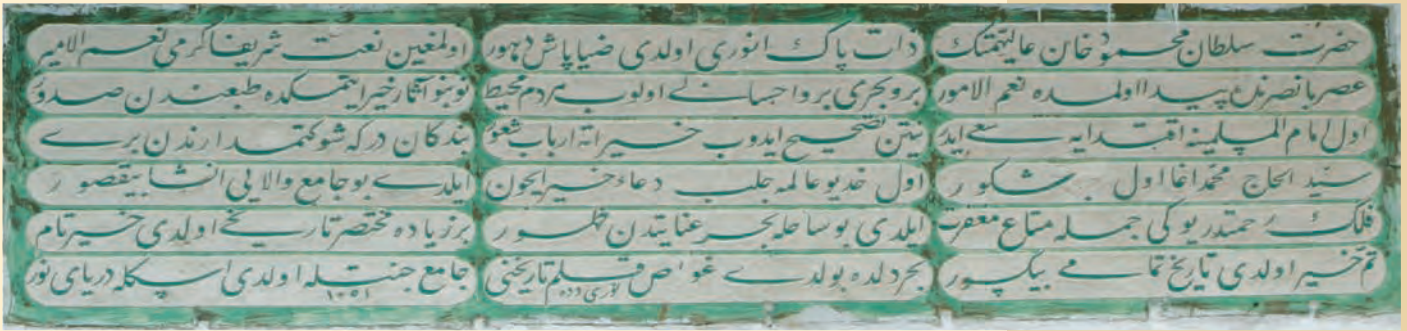
124, 125, 126. The Great Mosque - Djami Kebir was built on the site of a Byzantine church dedicated to the Holy Cross. It dates to 1835-1836, and is of about the same age as the mosque in Limassol bearing the same name and identical architecture. The building has two levels. Rows of columns divide its interior in parts and arches connect the columns to the walls.



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127, 128, 129, 130. The Great Mosque in the town of Larnaka.

131, 132. The Zoukhouri mosque is a shrine in the Ottoman style, with two domes. It was built in the 19th century. It is in the process of restoration.



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133, 134, 135. The Zoukhouri mosque in the town of Larnaka.

136, 137, 138. The mosque of Tuzla is an old Byzantine church partly demolished. The old material was used for the addition of new parts. A very small fragment of wall-paintings is in the process of restoration.



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139, 140, 141, 142, 143. The mosque of Tuzla in the town of Larnaka.



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144, 145, 146. The mosque in the village of Kalo Chorio bears a minaret constructed in 1923 as attested by an inscription in Ottoman script.



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147, 148. The mosque in the village of Pyrga.

149. The mosque in the village of Agia Anna is a small building with no minarets.

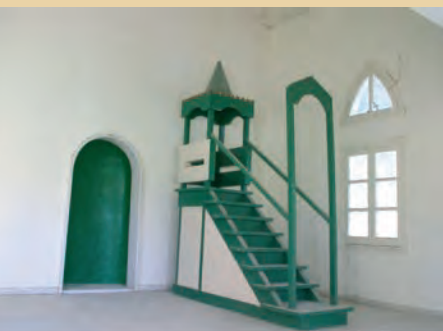


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150, 151. The mosque in the village of Mari.



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152, 153. The mosque in the village of Menogeia.



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154, 155, 156. The mosque in the village of Lefkara.



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157, 158. The mosque in the village of Agios Theodoros is on the second floor of a building in the centre of the village. It bears no minaret.



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159, 160, 161. The mosque in the village of Kofinou is a spacious building with a tall minaret.



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162, 163. The mosque in the village of Tochni.



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164, 165. The mosque in the village of Kalavasos has a unique minaret, with symbols from the three monotheistic religions.



166

166, 167, 168. The mosque in the village of Klavdia is an old Byzantine church converted into a Muslim shrine. Fragments of wall-paintings dating to the 16th century were visible in the past.

Recent works have revealed more fragments. It seems, though, that the wall-paintings were lacerated following its conversion into a mosque and few parts are saved. Archaeologists have also preserved the symbols of Islam, traces of the use of the church as a mosque.



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169, 170, 171. The mosque in the village of Klavdia.

Pafos

There are more than 30 mosques in the Pafos district. Most of them are relatively recent buildings with limited value. The significant ones used to be old Byzantine churches.

In the town of Pafos, the Agia Sofia is of the classical Byzantine style with a dome. The mosque in Timi is also of the Byzantine type, single-aisled with two domes, while those in Chrysochou, Polis tis Chrysochous and Pelathousa are single-aisled and have no dome.

Recent restoration work on the mosque of Polis tis Chrysochous has revealed magnificent frescoes.



172. The mosque in the town of Pafos.



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- 173. The mosque in the village of Chrysochou.
- 174. The mosque in the village of Asprogia.
- 175. The mosque in the village of Fasoula.
- 176. The mosque in the township of Polis tis Chrysochous.
- 177. The mosque in the village of Agios Georgios.

178, 179. The mosque in the town of Pafos used to be an old Byzantine Church known as Agia Sofia. This is a classical Byzantine cruciform building with a central dome. A tall minaret was added in the northwest corner. The building is undergoing extensive restoration work.



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180, 181, 182, 183. The mosque in the town of Pafos.

184, 185, 186. The mosque in the village of Timi used to be an old Byzantine church known also as Agia Sofia. It is single aisled with two domes. It is under the protection of the Antiquities Department as are all the mosques that were to be old Byzantine churches and the most significant mosques in the cities. The walls were covered with frescoes, which were lacerated and destroyed following its conversion into a mosque. Restoration works revealed only isolated fragments, a testimony to the monument's past.



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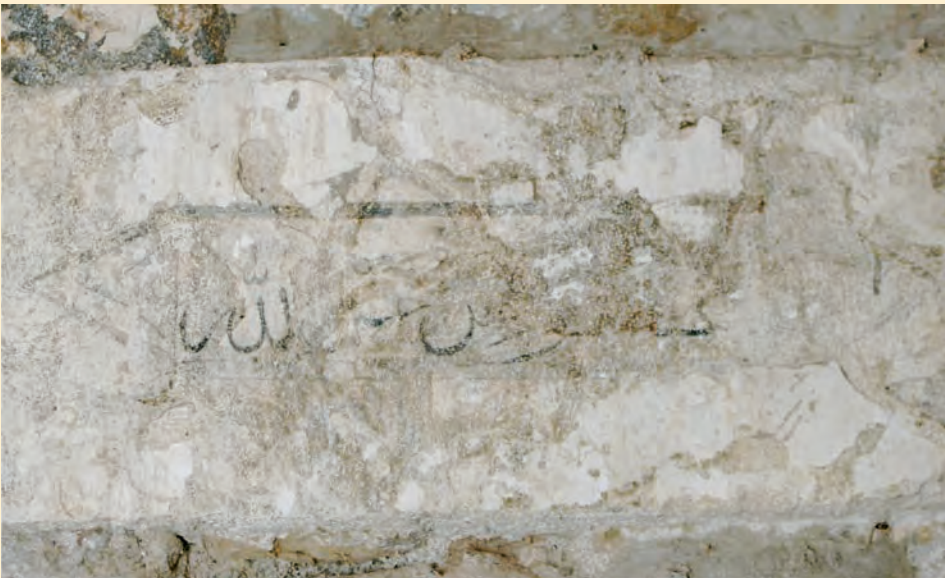
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187, 188, 189. The mosque in the village of Timi.



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190, 191. The mosque in the village of Agios Nikolaos on the Troodos mountains.



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192, 193. The mosque in the village of Tera.



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194, 195. The mosque in the village of Kato Arodes.



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196, 197. The mosque in the village of Mandria, near Pafos.



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198, 199. The mosque in the village of Gialia.



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200, 201. The mosque in the village of Akoursos.



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202, 203. The mosque in the village of Agios Georgios.



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204, 205. The mosque in the village of Fasoula.



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206, 207. The mosque in the village of Melandra.



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208, 209, 210. The mosque in the village of Androlikou.



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211, 212. The mosque in the village of Asprogia.



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213, 214. The mosque in the village of Agia Varvara.



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215, 216. An old church, the mosque in the village of Pelathousa has an added aisle on the north side. The ceiling of this part has suffered the effects of erosion and needs restoration. Two decorative paintings of Muslim origin are visible in this old church.



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217, 218. The mosque in the village of Pelathousa.



219

219, 220. The mosque in the township of Polis tis Chrysochous used to be an old Byzantine church, as testified by its architecture and its magnificent frescoes. It was dedicated to Agios Andronikos.

Restoration work completed in the early 1990s revealed rich wall-paintings dating to the 16th century. Some parts are very well preserved; unfortunately in the lower parts of the walls no paintings have been saved.



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221, 222, 223. The mosque in Polis tis Chrysochous used to be an old Byzantine church.



224

224, 225. The mosque in the small village of Chrysochou, used to be an old Byzantine church dedicated to Agios Nikolaos. Restoration work and the removal of plaster revealed only traces of paint (reminiscent of frescoes?) and some decorative paintings of the Ottoman period. The minaret collapsed following an earthquake in 1996 and was rebuilt in 2000. Adhering to prevailing international standards, the restoration respected both the Christian and Muslim features of the monument.



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226, 227, 228, 229. The mosque in the village of Chrysochou.



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229

Conservation works of Evretou Mosque

The completion of conservation works of the Evretou Mosque was celebrated during a special ceremony on 1st March 2015 in the presence of several Greek Cypriots as well as tens of Turkish Cypriots former residents of the village.

Evretou Mosque was built at the beginning of the XX century on the main road of the small village of Evretou, which is located in the Paphos district. The mosque has been selected as part of the priority intervention emergency projects of the Technical Committee on Cultural Heritage.

Conservation works focused on the cleaning of the site including the removal of vegetation, the excavation for the purposes of natural drainage as well as on the prevention of further erosion of the external stonewall, on the repair of windows and the entire reconstruction of the roof.





The project also included repairs to internal and external walls, as well as the rebuilding and sealing of joints, flooring and painting of the internal wooden roof. The total cost of the project was €136,000 and it was fully funded by the EU.

The Greek Cypriot co-chairman of the Technical Committee on Cultural Heritage Takis Hadjidemetriou said that this as well as other similar projects demonstrate that there is a prospect for the future not only for the village of Evretou, but for Cyprus as a whole.

On his part the Turkish Cypriot co-chairman of the Technical Committee Ali Tuncay expressed his happiness that the Committee was able to conserve the religious monument after 40 years. It is very important for us because the people who lived here had beautiful memories from this region, he pointed out.



Famagusta

Famagusta has been under occupation by the Turkish army since 1974. At the time of the Ottoman conquest, it was a rich and flourishing commercial centre. The Gothic Cathedral of Agios Nikolaos, converted into the Lala Mustafa mosque, is a good illustration of the town's glory at the time of its construction (14th century). The cathedral, hit during the siege of the town by the Ottomans, remains a dominating feature in the town to this date. Its plan is similar to the cathedral of Reims in France. It followed the original design, with no alterations or modifications.

Other mosques in Famagusta are the following: The Sinan Pasha mosque, a former old Latin church of the Franco-Byzantine style, dedicated to the Apostles Paul and Peter. The Mustafa Pasha mosque Tamisi, which used to be an old church of the 16th century. George Jeffery in his *Description of the Historic monuments of Cyprus* (1918) writes that "this is an example of the style affected by the Orthodox during the Venetian occupation (...) full of curious medieval archaisms...". The Tabak Khane Mesjit or Tanners mosque also used to be an old medieval church with Byzantine influences.



230. The Lala Mustafa mosque.



231

“The Gothic Cathedral of St Nicholas dominates the city. The landmark of Famagusta, it soars above the wide expanse of roofs. For centuries (since 1571), it has stood under the Sign of the Crescent. A Gothic consecrated interior in which Islamic doctrine is preached is for Western visitors a peculiarly disquieting yet at the same time cosmopolitan sight. It took only 28 years, from 1298 to 1326, to build the Cathedral of Famagusta. The Lusignans who ruled Cyprus were also Kings of Jerusalem. They demonstrated their right to two thrones by celebrating their coronations as Kings of Cyprus in the Cathedral of Nicosia and by being crowned Kings of Jerusalem in the Cathedral of Famagusta. The Gothic Cathedral has the pure lines and unadulterated features typical of the unadorned French Gothic style. Heavy piers support the arcades. Above them the shafts of the compound piers soar high above into the vaulting. Three lancet arches with six form-piece (tracery) windows articulate the central elevation above the west portal. They are surmounted by rosettes. It is all purely Gothic without later changes. The only visible external change is that the northern pinnacle with its buttress and finial was converted into a minaret. The Gothic style represented by the Cathedral of St. Nicholas became the model for all the other buildings in Famagusta”.

Klaus Gallas, *Cyprus - Seeing and Experiencing*, Süddeutscher Verlag, München 1990.

231, 232, 233. The Cathedral of Agios Nikolaos was converted by the conqueror of Famagusta (1571) into a mosque named Lala Mustafa.



232



233



234

234, 235. The Lala Mustafa mosque in the town of Famagusta.



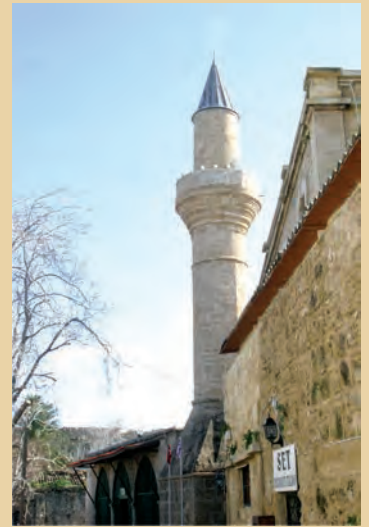
235

Keryneia (Kyrenia)

236, 237, 238. The Agha Djafer mosque in the town of Keryneia.



236



237



238

“The U.S. Agency for International Development announced the completion of the initial phase of two major restoration projects in Cyprus. The renovations will restore two of the country's most important cultural sites - the Greek Orthodox Monastery of Apostolos Andreas and Hala Sultan Tekke, a Moslem mosque.

As part of USAID's \$60 million grant to the United Nations Development Program, the \$5 million restorations were hailed by U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan as a 'very constructive step forward'. The projects promote mutual understanding and tolerance between the geographically separated Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities...”

Press Release, USAID, 17 July 2002.

International Assistance

The maintenance of mosques needs consistent efforts. Time and nature take their toll. In recent years earthquakes in the Limassol and Pafos areas damaged the minarets of some mosques.

In the context of efforts to help bring together Greek and Turkish Cypriots, international organisations and foreign governments assisted in the restoration of religious monuments. For example, the United Nations and the government of the United States have joined forces with the Cyprus government, local authorities and other groups through the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) for the restoration of Christian monuments, the Bayraktar Mosque in Nicosia and the Hala Sultan Tekke in Larnaka.

For the first time since 1974, Turkish Cypriot spiritual leaders participated in a ceremony with Greek Cypriots on the occasion of the reopening of the Bayraktar Mosque, in November 2003, following its restoration. “All Cypriots, Greek Cypriots, Turkish Cypriots, Latins, Maronites and Armenians can and should live together, side by side, accepting and respecting each other’s religious and cultural background”, said Minister of Interior Andreas Christou on that occasion.



But there is more to do in order to save and preserve cultural sites and monuments. Soon after the invasion by the Turkish army in 1974, the government of Cyprus sought international assistance that could avert the destruction of the island's cultural heritage. Efforts to find ways to protect treasures in the occupied areas proved largely unsuccessful.

In a series of goodwill initiatives for the Turkish Cypriot community, announced in April 2003, the government reiterated its readiness to cooperate closely with the Turkish Cypriots to protect and restore all monuments and proposed to establish an international foundation to this end. Special emphasis was given to mosques and cemeteries.



Cultural Heritage

“The Government adopts the proposal made by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (subcommittee on cultural heritage) for the establishment of an international foundation for the protection of the cultural heritage of Cyprus. The proposal is inspired by the need to protect the cultural heritage of the whole of Cyprus and provides for cooperation with the Turkish Cypriot side. In this context, emphasis will be given to the maintenance of Turkish Cypriot sites (e.g. mosques, cemeteries) in the Government controlled area and of churches, cemeteries and archaeological and other sites of the island's cultural heritage in the occupied area.”

Press Release,
Cyprus Press and Information Office
(PIO), “Measures for Turkish Cypriots
after the partial lifting of restrictions
on movement along the ceasefire line”
(30 April 2004)

“More and more Muslims and Christians would become neighbors. Although the sample is modest, it shows a similar pattern continuing over four decades (1593 - 1637). ...the Christian and Muslim people of Cyprus in that period lived by their own preference in the greatest of intimacy - as neighbors.”

Ronald C. Jennings (1993).

“Besides weddings, the Greeks' most respected holidays (...), and the Turkish equivalent (...) or analogous (...) were opportunities for mutual exchange of complimentary visits, presents and wishes between families and/or individuals of the two communities.”

Costas Kyrris (1977).

“The Wednesday vespers at Ayios Mamas cathedral in occupied Morphou dominated the press on both sides of the divide with only minor exceptions. (...) 'Politis' which is strongly in favour of the Annan Plan, used a big picture under a banner headline saying 'Greek Cypriots celebrated the Saint and Turkish Cypriots celebrated peace - Beginning of a beautiful tomorrow' (...) The daily “Kibris” under the banner headline “A peace lesson from Morphou”, wrote that despite the various provocations made by fanatic groups in the previous days and the bombing of St Mamas church, the religious ceremony as well as the rally organised by the platform “This country is ours” were held without any unpleasant events.”

Cyprus Weekly (Cypriot newspaper),
3 September, 2004.

Peaceful Coexistence Then and Now

The people of Cyprus have lived together in peace and harmony for centuries. Even during difficult times of tension and conflict, ordinary people continued their contacts and everyday relations.

After decades of forcible separation imposed by Turkey, the partial lifting of the illegal barriers to movement across the 1974 UN ceasefire line, in April 2003, allowed Greek and Turkish Cypriots to interact again. This reunion of people showed, once again, that Cypriots wish to live together in peace. Despite the hard and painful experiences of the past and the traumas caused by displacement and loss of loved ones, no serious incidents have taken place. Instead, people recall their positive experiences with friends from the other community, including common struggles through trade unions.

Cypriots are well aware that years of forcible division have caused erosion and destruction to cultural sites and monuments. Abandonment, natural forces, acts of vandalism and other causes have brought about important changes to places of worship as well.

Nevertheless, once they were able to communicate and meet with each other, groups of people from both communities started again to celebrate together on the occasion of religious and other holidays.



A Future in Freedom of Worship in a United Island

Religion and its symbols constitute part of the cultural heritage of mankind. Cyprus has a rich history of thousands of years. One can see on the island monuments belonging to the Christian and Muslim faiths, but also to various other ethnic and religious groups and civilisations. Some monuments of Cyprus have been declared by UNESCO part of “World Heritage”.

All monuments are an integral part of the island's heritage and reflect the cultural patrimony of its population. The Cyprus government, fully cognizant of this rich legacy, continues to maintain and protect mosques and other places of worship.

In recent years, more mosques than in the past operate in the government-controlled areas of the island; they serve the religious needs of the Turkish Cypriots as well as of the many other Muslims residents and visitors in Cyprus.

Today, the multicultural environment in Cyprus, with people from different countries and various cultures living, studying and working together, render the division of the island imposed by the Turkish army more anachronistic than ever. The people of Cyprus hope that the partition of their country will come to an end soon, so that all Cypriots can, once again, move and settle freely wherever they want and be able to worship without any restrictions, in churches, mosques and other holy places, throughout the island.

“It is true that both in the south and in the north some of the respected places left behind suffered very badly...houses, graveyards, holy places were demolished, turned into ruins; properties inherited from the parents changed title deeds and owners. However it is not the time to bring these to the surface and agitate people; it is high time to redress the mistakes of the past.”

Ortam
(Turkish Cypriot newspaper),
24 March 2003.



TEMENOS CHRYSOCHOUS (Byzantine church of Agios Nikolaos)

This document presents the history of the mosque (Temenos) in the village of Chrysochou, an old Church dedicated to Agios Nikolaos. It provides an account of the restoration work done in the mosque, describing also the principles, which the authorities that carried out the work adhered to; the restoration guidelines demonstrate respect for all the elements that formed the history of the building, both Christian and Muslim. The framed document is on exhibit in the mosque with a number of related photographs.

The church of Agios Nikolaos was constructed in the 16th century, during the period of Venetian rule. It is a single-aisled vaulted building with two blind arches on each side, a well-known type of the period with a close parallel in the church of Agios Andronikos at Polis Chrysochous. During restoration work traces of the base of an iconostasis were found. A built tomb near the north wall, may belong to the founder of the church, who was buried within it. It is also possible that the interior of the church was painted, as was the usual practice in this period, but no traces have been preserved.

After 1571, the year of the conquest of Cyprus by the Turks, the church was converted into a temenos. Most of the modifications that have altered the character of the monument were made in this period. On the north side a room was added which was used as the women's quarters, while on the south side the door was blocked and the "mihrab" (prayer conch) was constructed.

The minaret was constructed in the northeast corner of the church. The temenos of Chrysochous was used until 1974 when the Turks of the village immigrated to the occupied parts of the island. From 1974 onwards it has been under the custody of the Service for the Management of Turkish-Cypriot properties while the Department of Antiquities declared it into an ancient monument in 1979 and undertook its restoration.

The first phase of restoration work of the monument began in 1984 with the annex on the north side where severe static problems had appeared. During its restoration, two earthquakes occurred consecutively in the District of Pafos, in 1996 and 1997 and the monument suffered severe damages. The minaret partly collapsed damaging the north annex while serious cracks appeared on the walls of the church.

On the completion of the study of the condition of the monument, the Department of Antiquities, in collaboration with the Service for the Management of Turkish-Cypriot Properties and the Service for the Rehabilitation of Damages, initiated a three-year restoration programme which began in 1998 and was completed in 2000. The restoration of the naos and the annex to the north were completed. The minaret was dismantled, as it was declared to be dangerous and was reconstructed. All the plastering of the interior walls was removed but, unfortunately, no wall-paintings were revealed. A small scale excavation in the interior of the church revealed traces of the original floor, the base of the iconostasis and the built tomb mentioned above, which may have belonged to the founder, unfortunately looted. Only traces of bones were found and sherds which date the tomb to the 16th century. The surrounding area of the monument was landscaped and the Moslem tomb on the north side was also restored.

Restoration of the monument followed the general rules and principles applicable worldwide. Due to its character as a place of worship of both the Christian and Moslem religions, a conscious effort was made to respect and preserve the features of both religious phases. The peaceful co-existence of the Greek and Turkish community, which lasted for centuries, a characteristic trait of the Cypriot culture, is remarkably exemplified in this monument.



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