

DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

THE RELIGIOUS HERITAGE OF CYPRUS

a survey in the city of Nicosia and its suburbs

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Report 2021



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INTRODUCTION

The long-standing Cyprus conflict, with its bloody intercommunal controversies between the Greek and Turkish Cypriots in the late 1950s and in 1963-64, as well as the momentous partition of the island with all its consequences, has been intensively investigated in the fields of historical and political sciences. One topic, however, continues to represent a scientific gap: the socio-political treatment of the religious heritage of the so-called others (Christian/Muslim), which has been left behind after the division of the island, and its impacts on the different ethnic groups on the island. Dealing with this topic is not an easy undertaking, as the basis for a neutral assessment is lacking in many cases.

A first gap has already been filled by the author with the comprehensive documentation 'The religious heritage of Cyprus: a survey in the districts of Kyrenia and Larnaca' from 2019.¹ The present documentation, 'The religious heritage of Cyprus – a survey in the city of Nicosia and its suburbs', is meant to fill a further gap.

It results from a project, which started in September 2020 and was made possible by funding from the German-based Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Cyprus Office. The survey is part of the ongoing large-scale project 'Religion and politics – dealing with cemeteries, places of worship and religious memorial places in Cyprus', initiated by the author in 2015, and based at the Institute for Interdisciplinary Cypriot Studies of the University of Münster, in Germany.²

As the title suggests, the current research is dedicated to the religious heritage of Nicosia and its suburbs, more specifically the abandoned or converted religious sites in the north and south of the capital of Cyprus, which the faithful had to leave behind, due to the intercommunal strife in the 1950s and 1960s and the tragic partition of the island in 1974. In addition to Christian and Muslim places of worship, the study also includes the cemeteries of the two faith communities, as well as other faith-related places, such as places for votive offerings.

¹ Th. Kruse, *The religious heritage of Cyprus: a survey in the districts of Kyrenia and Larnaca* (Münster, Nicosia, 2019), available at https://www.uni-muenster.de/ZypernInstitut/en/projekte/religioeserbe/her_KYR_LCA.html

² Further information can be found at <https://www.uni-muenster.de/ZypernInstitut/en/projekte/religioeserbe/index.html>

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The unsettled times in Cyprus in the 1960s and 1970s, which resulted in a first wave of displacement on the island, had their tragic climax in 1974, when many Cypriots lost their lives and when the island was divided. The events also caused a persistent spatial separation of Greek and Turkish Cypriots on the island.

In most cases, the internal refugees not only left most of their properties and belongings behind but also their religious and sacred spaces (churches/mosques, cemeteries). As a consequence, many of these places were abandoned for decades and exposed to deterioration or destruction by natural or other forces.

Until today, only a few of these places have been restored (e.g., through the work of the Technical Committee on Cultural Heritage). Furthermore, there are no scientific publications which have dealt with the present status of the sites of religious heritage on *both sides* of the divide. There are some very comprehensive publications on the fate of the religious heritage in Cyprus, but they have two shortcomings: the first is that they were published between 2004 and 2009, which means that they are not reflecting the present situation; the second is that these publications generally focus on presenting the fate of the religious heritage of just one side.

SHORT HISTORY OF NICOSIA AND ITS RELIGIOUS LANDSCAPE

The city of Nicosia (Greek: Λευκωσία, Turkish: Lefkoşa) is located in the so-called Mesaoria plain, which stretches from Morphou Bay, in the west, to Famagusta Bay, in the east. As excavations have shown, the origins of the city date back to around 4,000 BCE. In the course of time, the name of the city changed several times. In the 7th century BCE, it was known as *Ledra* or *Ledroi* and had the status of a small city-kingdom.³ In the 4th century CE, the name *Leukotheon* also appears.⁴

evidence of Christianity on the island before the 4th century, and for Nicosia itself no Christian remains could be found that are dated before the 5th or 6th century.⁶

After the division of the Roman Empire (395 CE), Cyprus became a province of the Byzantine Empire more or less until the end of the 12th century, at least from 965 onwards, with Nicosia as its administrative capital.⁷ Among the capitals of the islands in the Mediterranean during this period, Nicosia was an exception – it was the only landlocked city, while all

Fig. NIC-N1

Topographical map of Cyprus (Pol added; Copernicus Sentinel data, 2015 / ESA, CC BY-SA 3.0 IGO)



Although traditions show that Cyprus was visited by the Christian Saints Paul and Barnabas (45 CE),⁵ there is nearly no

status was repeatedly called into question in the early years. In 478, however, Zeno, Emperor of Byzantium, finally confirmed this status by giving the Archbishop of Cyprus the three imperial privileges (cf. Church of Cyprus 2020).

³ Mirbagheri 2010, 119; Michaelides – Pilides 2012, 4.

⁴ Michaelides – Pilides 2012, 54.

⁵ In some publications the year 45 CE is mentioned as the founding year of the Church of Cyprus. Historically, the Church of Cyprus is one of the oldest autocephalous Greek Orthodox Churches. This

⁶ Michaelides – Pilides 2012, 53.

⁷ After the Arab raids in the mid-7th century, Cyprus was under Arab rule for a short time. In 688, the Caliphate and the Empire agreed to administer the island as a condominium. In 965, the Byzantine Empire restored the old order and took over the island completely again. Papacostas 2012, 79.

others were located near the coast. One reason for choosing Nicosia as the main city could have been the already mentioned location: there was a certain protection from sea-borne attacks from the east and the west due to city's distance from the coast, while, in the north, the Kyrenia Mountains⁸, and in the south, the Troodos Mountains formed a natural barrier – this particular location was obviously one of the main reasons why the town did not have any major fortifications and defences at that time.⁹ In addition, the Mesaoria was already considered the breadbasket of the island in early times because of its fertile soil and availability of water.

Nicosia was not only the administrative capital from the 10th to the 12th century, but most probably was also the seat of the Greek Orthodox Church of Cyprus. As indicated by Tasos Papacostas, there were several churches and monasteries in Nicosia during the Byzantine period. However, the vast majority of these sites are only known from written records from later times. Until today, only a few remains of church buildings from this period could be identified in the centre of Nicosia and the surrounding areas. Papacostas also suggests the existence of a Byzantine cathedral dating back to the 5th century and consecrated to Saint Sophia – which was replaced during the Gothic reconstruction of the Bedestan – but the fate of this early church has not yet been fully clarified.¹⁰

One reason why hardly any remains of church buildings from the Byzantine period can be found in the city is the change of rule in Cyprus in 1191 and in the subsequent Frankish and Venetian periods in Cyprus, which lasted until 1570/71. During this time, the townscape underwent numerous changes.

After the takeover of Cyprus by the Lusignans, the Frankish period began in Cyprus, which at the same time meant major changes in the religious sphere. The Lusignans were.

Latin-rite Christians and brought this faith to the island as the new ruling religion. The construction of St Sophia Cathedral, which also served as the coronation cathedral, was an impressive monument to the change of rule.

The new religious rulers made the leaders of the Greek Orthodox Church clearly feel the changed balance of power: the faithful of the, until then, leading religion on the island were suppressed in many cases, and in the following centuries there were again and again partly bloody conflicts, which had their origin in questions of faith. The parallel existence of two large religious communities had the effect of an increasing building activity with regard to churches, monasteries and other religious institutions in the city.

Fig. NIC-N2

The former St Sophia Cathedral, built in the 13th century, was converted into a mosque in 1570 and renamed Selimiye Mosque (2017, view from southwest, by A. Savin, FAL 1.3)



- 8 The Kyrenia Mountains are also known as Pentadaktylos Range.
- 9 There is a mountain pass through the Kyrenia Mountains that connects Nicosia with Kyrenia, the closest port on Cyprus' northern coast. This strategically important pass was secured under Byzantine rule, in the 11th century, with the construction of the fortress of St Hilarion.
- 10 Papacostas 2012, 88ff, Papacostas 2005, 11-37, cf. also Willis 1986, 185-192. Further details can be found in the presentation on the Bedestan below.

The immense scale of religious buildings in the city can be shown very well by the impact of the construction of new fortifications, carried out in the years 1567-1568, and still characterizing Nicosia's appearance. With the Venetians assuming power (1489), there were repeated threats to the island, especially from the expanding Ottoman Empire. Nicosia should then be secured by the construction of a modern style fortification. To build the new circular defence structure,

Fig. NIC-N3:

Map of Nicosia, created in 1597 by the Venetian Giacomo Franco (CC BY 2.0)



with its eleven bastions and St Sophia Cathedral in the centre, and to get a clearer field of vision outside the walls, about 80(!) churches, four large monasteries, the Armenian Cathedral of the Holy Cross and a cemetery had to be destroyed.¹¹

However, the so-called Venetian Walls could not prevent the conquest of Nicosia by the Ottomans. After about one and a half months of siege, the city fell into Ottoman hands in September 1570. After the conquest, the city was completely looted by the conquerors, and many church treasures also fell victim to the plundering.¹²

The takeover of power by the Muslim Ottomans brought again major changes in the ecclesiastical sphere. While the Greek Orthodox community was granted the status of a millet,¹³ the Latin Church was officially dissolved.¹⁴ Another visible change was the conversion of the Latin churches into mosques. Formerly the coronation church, St Sophia Cathedral was converted into the island's new main mosque and named Selimiye Mosque in honour of Sultan Selim II, under

whom the conquest of Cyprus took place.¹⁵ After the capture, only a few mosques or mescits were completely newly built in Nicosia.

Under Ottoman rule, not much changed in Nicosia in terms of the construction of religious buildings. With regard to the Christian religious communities, it has to be stated that the conquest of Nicosia demanded great sacrifices on the Christian side. While in 1540 more than 21,000 inhabitants were counted, only 1,100 Christian inhabitants were still living in Nicosia in 1572. By the time of the British acquisition of Cyprus in 1878, the number of Christians in the city had risen to only about 5,800 inhabitants.¹⁶

The British takeover of Cyprus did not change much in terms of the religious sphere.¹⁷ Although another Christian denomination, the Anglican Church, came to the island with the

11 Furthermore, 1,800 houses and innumerable gardens were destroyed in this context, too; cf. Grivaud et al. 2012, 204-211.

12 Cf. Theocharides – Stavrides 2012, 233-238.

13 An Ottoman millet provided that a non-Muslim religious community could govern itself to a certain extent according to its own religious laws. In Cyprus, the effect was, among other things, that the archbishop of the Greek Orthodox Church of Cyprus, apart from being the religious leader of the island's Greek Orthodox community, also became its secular head; he was the person to represent his religious community to the Ottoman Porte.

14 Although the Latin Church in Cyprus had been officially dissolved, small groups of Latin Catholics quickly returned to the island and founded small monasteries, for example.

15 Other examples of the conversion of Latin churches into mosques in Nicosia are the former St Catherine's Church, which became the Haydar Pasha Mosque, and the Augustinian Church of Saint Mary, which became the Ömeriye Mosque. For detailed information cf. Rizopoulou-Egoumenidou 2012, 274-279.

16 In the absence of reliable figures, it is difficult to trace the development of the Muslim population in Nicosia after the Ottoman conquest. However, it can be assumed that the initially clear majority of Muslim citizens gradually eroded over time. The British census of 1881 showed that the Muslim and Christian populations in Nicosia were practically equal in number. For more details cf. Theocharides – Stavrides 2012, 237-238.

17 To a certain extent, the British granted freedom in the field of religious education to both denominations (Muslims and Christians). Nevertheless, it must also be mentioned that the colonial rulers tried to reduce the influence of the Greek Orthodox Church of Cyprus on politics by means of appropriate legislation and orders, but this must be regarded as a failure in view of the history. Cf. e.g. Dietzel – Makrides 2009, 69-83.

British, it made no claims to power and integrated itself into the religious landscape of Cyprus. However, the establishment of the Department of Antiquities in 1935 helped to better protect and preserve the important historical religious buildings, both Islamic and Christian.

The late 1950s in Cyprus were marked by violence and armed conflict. The attempt of the Greek Cypriots to achieve the unification of Cyprus with Greece (enosis), with the help of an underground organisation acting against the British rulers, was opposed by a Turkish Cypriot underground organisation, who fought for the division of the island into a Greek and a Turkish part. These violent clashes, which over time became intercommunal strife between the Greek and Turkish Cypriot sides, also had an impact on the civilian population and led to the first displacements in Nicosia, respectively in the suburbs. Already here, some religious places of worship and sites were left behind.

The founding of the Republic of Cyprus in 1960 initially calmed the situation on the island, but political disputes, which also worked their way through the complicated constitution, led to unrest breaking out again between Greek and Turkish Cypriots. This led to even civil war-like conditions in 1964. During this phase, large-scale refugee movements and displacements in and around Nicosia happened, and many of the formerly mixed urban areas turned into ethnically cleansed neighbourhoods. Another negative aspect was the fact that many religious sites that the refugees had to leave behind became victims of vandalism and deliberate destruction.

The tragic partition of the island in 1974 caused the internal displacement of ten thousands of Cypriots, and the persistent spatial separation of Greek and Turkish Cypriots on the island.

After the major population movements in Nicosia that had taken place in the 1960s, the events of 1974 mainly affected the Greek Cypriots in the suburbs of Trachonas, Omorfita and Mia Milia. From here, about 6,500 people fled the advancing Turkish army.

Until today, a return is almost impossible for the refugees. Many of the religious sites in Nicosia and the surrounding area have therefore not been used by their rightful owners in the originally intended way.

POPULATION DEVELOPMENT OF NICOSIA

Through the centuries the population of the city of Nicosia was a mixed one. The earliest available census from 1831 – only males were counted – shows that 3,028 Turkish Cypriots and 2,264 Greek Cypriots lived in the city. From 1891 onwards, the Greek Cypriot population formed the majority in the city. In 1946, 20,768 Greek Cypriots and 10,330 Turkish Cypriots were counted, while the figures for 1960 show a ratio of 27,645 Greek Cypriots to 14,686 Turkish Cypriots. Nicosia was strongly affected by the intercommunal strife of the 1950s as well as the 1960s. The intercommunal fighting of 1963 resulted in the creation of the so-called Green Line, which was installed in Nicosia after a ceasefire. The Green Line officially separated the Greek Cypriot quarters of Nicosia from the Turkish Cypriot ones and led to the first larger displacements in the area. The northern part was now more or less inhabited by Turkish Cypriots, while the southern part was occupied by Greek Cypriots. The events of the summer of 1974 led to the complete division of the city.¹⁸

Additional information on the use of names:

Since 1974, there are diverging views on the issue of topographical names in Cyprus. The law on the Procedure for the Standardization of Geographical Names of the Republic of Cyprus provides the legal framework. In daily life, however, many towns and villages in the northern part are now commonly known under other names, introduced after 1974. Problems related to this issue were critically discussed and assessed by experts and special rapporteurs of the relevant UN bodies – but without a comprehensive solution until today. However, especially with a view to the present scientific documentation, it is nearly impossible to find one of the villages or suburbs mentioned for the northern part of Nicosia if one is not familiar with the area and is therefore reliant on following the road signs. The disputed names appear in quotation marks to point out their special character. This is without prejudice to the legal status of the topographical names. In order to help readers to easily locate the places, GPS codes have been added, too.

18 PRIO 2011a.

THE WALLED CITY OF NICOSIA AND ITS SURROUNDINGS

Fig. NIC-N4:

Map section of Kitchener's Survey of Cyprus from 1882 (CC BY 4.0, reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland)



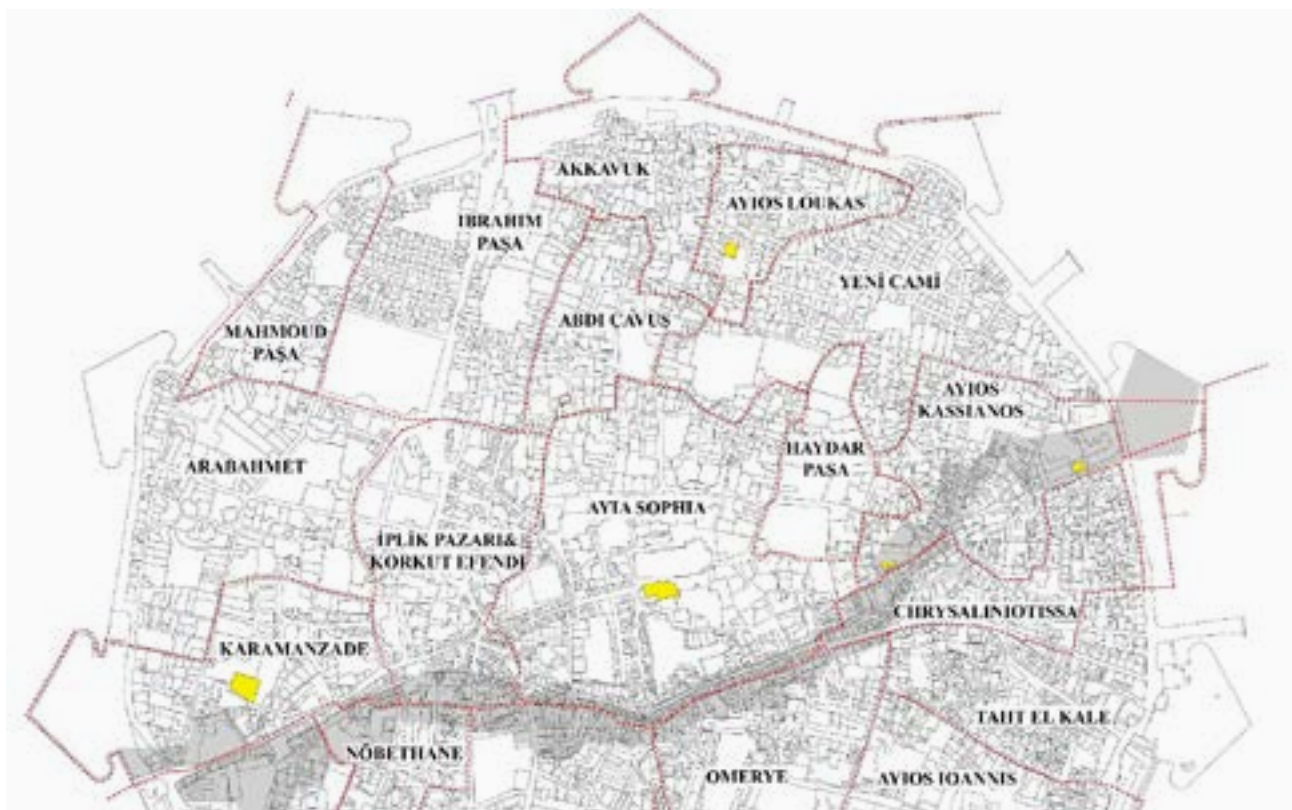
CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS HERITAGE IN THE NORTHERN PART OF THE CITY

In the northern part of the walled city, there are a total of five Christian churches, namely Agios Georgios Church, Agios Iakovos Church, Agios Loukas Church, the Armenian Church of Sourp Azdvadzadzin and the Bedestan. The first four churches were abandoned after the intercommunal disputes in the 1960s and in 1974, respectively, while one of them, the Bedestan, has a special status due to its history.

Until 1974, the Department of Antiquities of the Republic of Cyprus took care of some of the churches already mentioned as they were declared ancient monuments. After the division, the Department no longer had access to these buildings. Administratively, all the buildings now fell under the custody of Evkaf, which has been handling almost all Christian properties since 1974.

Fig. NIC-N5:

Christian religious heritage in the northern part of the walled city of Nicosia; the dark grey area represents the buffer zone (=Green Line) dividing the city into a northern and a southern part (Th. Kruse, based on the work of E. Iliopoulou)



.Already under Ottoman rule (1869), a law was passed that determined the relocation of the cemeteries outside the city. Obviously, this law was not implemented. Only after the British seizure of power the relocation of cemeteries out of the towns and villages was actually enforced by means of strict laws.¹⁹ On the basis of the Burials Law, all of the inner city cemeteries in Nicosia were closed until 1938. Any violation of the law was punished with heavy fines. This not only affected the Greek Orthodox but also the Maronite and Armenian cemeteries, as well as the Muslim cemeteries. It is therefore very likely that the last burials in these cemeteries took place around 1938.

AGIOS GEORGIOS CHURCH (ST GEORGE)

History

The early history of Agios Georgios Church (Άγιος Γεώργιος), which is situated in the Agios Kassianos quarter, is not completely clear. Some publications mention that the barrel-vaulted church was built in the 15th or 16th century or later,²⁰ while in another report, it is assumed that the original church was

built in the 14th or 15th century and that the building was successively extended.²¹ For a long time, the church housed very valuable icons – among others the icon of the Martyrdom of St George from 1719, which was restored in 1851. The church was also decorated with wall paintings, which were later whitewashed. The iconostasis was carved in 1812 during the term of office of Archbishop Kyprianos. In the course of the events of summer 1974, the building found itself located in the combat zone and was reportedly set on fire by the Turkish side; the fire destroyed *inter alia* the wooden iconostasis.²² Nevertheless, many icons were saved from destruction; today some of them can be found in the Byzantine Museum of the Archbishop Makarios III Foundation in Nicosia, and others were transferred to the Monastery of Machairas.

Today's condition

Since 1974, the church lies in a disputed area of the buffer zone and is inaccessible. As far as can be seen from the outside, the building is in ruins.

Fig. NIC-N6a:

Church of Agios Georgios (r., behind the tree) with the façade of the Agios Kassianos school (l.) (Sept. 2018, view from southwest; by Roman Robroek)



19 From 1889 until 1940, around 600 cemeteries were closed island-wide. Most of them were considered to be dangerous to health due to their location in the villages or towns. Cf. Cyprus Gazette 1931, No. 756; Cyprus Gazette 1937, SP3 No. 1, SP3 No. 58, SP3 No. 59, SP3 No. 164.

20 Cf. Rizopoulou-Egoumenidou 2012, 284; Kassinis 2011, 213.

21 Cf. Papageorgiou 2010, 297.

22 Rizopoulou-Egoumenidou 2012, 284; Papageorgiou 2010, 297.

Fig. NIC-N6b:

Church of Agios Georgios (Sept. 2018, view from southwest; by Roman Robroek)



Cadastral elements

Block/Reg. No.	1/372
Sheet/Plan:	21/460312
Parcel Number	43
GPS-Position	35.177628, 33.370248

AGIOS IAKOVOS CHURCH (ST JAMES)

History

Not much is known about the early history of Agios Iakovos Church (Άγιος Ιάκωβος), which like the Agios Georgios Church is also situated in the Agios Kassianos quarter. It is believed that it was originally built in the 13th or 14th century.²³ However, it is certain that it functioned as a Latin church at the beginning of the Ottoman rule in Cyprus: Capuchin monks from France took possession of the church shortly after their arrival in Cyprus in 1630.²⁴ In combination with other surrounding buildings, the church obviously formed a religious complex, as a report to the *Propaganda Fide*²⁵ from

1648 shows. A further report to Rome from 1660 shows that the church and the complex were in a bad condition.²⁶ However, this state of affairs was not due to a lack of willingness to invest in conservation – money was available – but rather to the lack of renovation permits from the Ottoman rulers.²⁷ In 1662, a Capuchin Father reported after his return from duty in Cyprus that the Greeks and the Turks as well had a great devotion to the church. The main reason for this is a fresco showing St James, which is said to have healing powers. Greeks and Turks would bring their children suffering from earaches there in the belief that they would be cured.²⁸ In 1793, the Capuchin monks left Cyprus. In the course of these developments, the convent in Nicosia – and thus including Agios Iakovos Church – was sold to the Greek Orthodox Dragoman Hadjigeorgakis Kornessios. After the acquisition, the complex was renovated, and the church served as a family chapel for a long time. In 1917, the family of the dragoman's grandson donated the church and the adjacent buildings to the Greek Orthodox community. The complex now served as an orphanage and foundling home and was under the administration of the archbishopric. During the intercommunal strife in 1963-1964, the church suffered damage from a fire, which, according to different international media re-

²³ Papageorgiou 2010, 298.

²⁴ The Ottoman rulers prohibited the Catholics from building new churches, so they had to take over an already existing one. At that time the church was also known as San Giacomo (Italian version of Agios Iakovos / St James).

²⁵ Also known as *Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples*; it is a congregation of the Roman Curia of the Catholic Church in Rome.

²⁶ Pieraccini 2013, 44-46.

²⁷ According to some sources, this permission was finally granted in 1665. Cf. Rizopoulou-Egoumenidou 2012, 291.

²⁸ Pieraccini 2013, 48; Rizopoulou-Egoumenidou 2012, 291.

ports, had been set by Turkish Cypriots during the fighting. The iconostasis and all its icons were destroyed.²⁹ Since that time the church lies abandoned in the restricted area of the buffer zone.

Today's condition

In February 2019, large parts of the building collapsed after heavy rainfall (e.g. the attached bell tower and the domed hall).

Cadastral elements

Block/Reg. No.	1/102
Sheet/Plan:	21/460311
Parcel Number	183
GPS-Position	35.176514, 33.367558

Fig. NIC-N7a:

Church of Agios Iakovos before its collapse (Sept. 2018, view from south; by Roman Robroek)



²⁹ Pieraccini 2013, 74; Rizopoulou-Egoumenidou 2012, 291f; Papa-georgiou 2010, 298. For a detailed presentation of the intercommunal fighting in the 1950s and 1960s cf. for example Crawshaw 1978, Holland 1998, Patrick 1976.

Fig. NIC-N7b:

Church of Agios Iakovos before its collapse (Sept. 2018, view from south; by Roman Robroek)



AGIOS LOUKAS CHURCH (ST LUKE)

History

According to an inscription above its entrance, Agios Loukas Church (Άγιος Λουκάς), which is located in the eponymous quarter of Nicosia, was built in 1758 under Archbishop Philotheos. The wooden iconostasis of Agios Loukas originates from the year 1780. This church, like Agios Georgios and other churches in the closer vicinity, also housed numerous valuable icons, some of which date from the 16th century and earlier.³⁰ During the 1950s, some of these icons were transferred to the offices of Panagia Phaneromeni Church and formed part of the Phaneromeni collection of icons later on.³¹ The building itself was affected by the intercommunal fighting in Nicosia in the 1950s and 1960s.³² During the dis-

turbances in the late 1950s, many icons and the iconostasis fell victim to a fire, which according to international media reports was set by young Turkish Cypriots during clashes in the Agios Loukas quarter.³³ After 1964, further interventions resulted in damage to the construction, and the building felt into ruin. In 1986 the church was restored and used as a cultural centre.³⁴

Today's condition

The church is not in use. Since it lay in ruins for decades and was used as a cultural centre after 1986, all furnishings of a Greek Orthodox church have been removed. Also the bell and all crosses have disappeared. The building itself is in a good condition. At the moment it is used as an after-school homework and study place for children.

30 Athanasios Papageorgiou suggests that these icons came from churches that were demolished by the Venetians during the construction of the fortress walls (from 1565 onwards) and from churches that were converted into mosques after the Ottomans came to power, while Euphrosyne Rizopoulou-Egoumenidou assumes that these icons originate from an earlier church. Cf. Papageorgiou 2010, 300; Rizopoulou-Egoumenidou 2012, 284.

31 Papageorgiou 2010, 300.

32 A first wave of displacement took place during the intercommunal fighting in 1958, when many Greek Cypriots left the Agios Loukas sector of Nicosia and sought refuge in the southern part of the city (after a first demarcation line had been drawn by a Nicosia District Commissioner in 1956, the Agios Loukas quarter became part of the 'Turkish' area of Nicosia). The census of 1946 counted 536 Turkish

Cypriots and 263 Greek Cypriots in the Agios Loukas quarter, Census 1946, 15. For a detailed presentation of the intercommunal fighting in the 1950s and 1960s cf. *inter alia* Crawshaw 1978, Holland 1998, Patrick 1976.

33 Cf. Hardy 2013, 5.

34 Rizopoulou-Egoumenidou 2012, 284; Kibris 1992, 22. The Folk Arts Association (HASDER) used it for workshops and to present working methods in arts and crafts. The funds for the restoration were provided by the 'Department of Antiquities and Museums' of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC). *Note: The TRNC is only recognised by the Republic of Turkey.*

Cadastral elements

Block/Reg. No.	./.
Sheet/Plan:	21/460302
Parcel Number	132
GPS-Position	35.180194, 33.365245

Fig. NIC-N8a:

Church of Agios Loukas (Feb. 2020, view from south)

**Fig. NIC-N8b:**

Church of Agios Loukas (Oct. 2020, view from west)

AGIOS PHOTIOS

History:

Over the centuries, Nicosia has also had numerous sacred places worshipped by different religions or denominations. One example is the above-mentioned fresco of St James in Agios Iakovos Church. Another example is the Greek Orthodox shrine of Agios Photios (Άγιος Φώτιος). This private shrine was located close to the Armenian church in the Karamanzade quarter. According to Christodoulos Hadjichristodoulou, little is known about the history of the rather small (50 x 35 cm) icon from which the shrine received its name. Only that it was painted in oil by the deacon Panaretos Kousoulides in 1924. Since the icon was said to have miraculous qualities, Greek Orthodox and Armenians went on pilgrimage to the shrine to light a candle and ask for enlightenment. Over time, the condition of the icon deteriorated as the faithful kept scraping paint off the surface to use it as a healing remedy. In connection with the 1963-1964 intercommunal disturbances, which also affected the Karamanzade quarter, the icon was brought to the Phaneromeni church. Further measures were then taken to protect the icon from continued deterioration, e.g. a silver cover was placed over the icon.³⁵ With the relocation of the icon, the shrine, however, also lost its importance.

Today's condition

Nothing is known about the further fate of the shrine itself. Today it is difficult to trace back its exact place. The icon was restored in 2018 and was placed in a separate shrine in the Phaneromeni church.

Cadastral elements

Block/Reg. No.	0/259
Sheet/Plan:	21/460215
Parcel Number	91/92
GPS-Position	35.175384, 33.358869

Fig. NIC-N9:

The plot close to the Armenians Church where the Agios Photios Shrine was located (Aug. 2021, view from northeast)



³⁵ Hadjichristodoulou 2020, 11-13. here you will also find more details on the icon as well as other examples regarding miraculous icons or spaces in Cyprus.

APOSTOLOS ANDREAS CHURCH

History

There is not much information about the history of this church. Apostolos Andreas Church (Απόστολος Ανδρέας) is located in the Neapolis quarter of Nicosia, approximately one kilometre northwest of Kyrenia Gate. It is a fairly new church compared to the other churches in the area. It was built only in 1950.³⁶ The two bell towers and the large dome are its characteristic features. This architectural style was quite typical of the Greek Orthodox churches newly built in the 1950s.³⁷

After the division of the island, the church was converted. Since August 1977, it is used as a mosque named Şehitler Camii. The quarter of Neapolis was renamed 'Yenişehir'.

Today's condition

The building is in good condition – both externally and internally. Since it is used as a mosque, all furnishings of a Greek Orthodox church have been removed; also, all crosses on top of the building have been removed. The entrance on the southern side of the building was walled up and an elaborately designed mihrab (prayer niche) was added in the same place inside.

Cadastral elements

Block/Reg. No.	1/342
Sheet/Plan:	21/380204
Parcel Number	260
GPS-Position	35.189796, 33.358169

Fig. NIC-N10a:

Apostolos Andreas Church (Dec. 2020, view from southwest)



³⁶ Kassinis 2011, 74.

³⁷ Other churches with a similar architectural style are, for example, Apostolos Loukas Church in Eptakomi (renamed Yedikonuk), built in 1951, or Agios Anastasios Church in Peristerona-Pigi (renamed Alaniçi), built in 1953. Kassinis, 36, 69.

Fig. NIC-N10b:

Apostolos Andreas Church (Dec. 2020, view from east)



ARMENIAN CHURCH OF SOURP AZDVADZADZIN (VIRGIN MARY)

History

The history of the Armenian church and its surrounding buildings, in the Karamanzade quarter of the walled city, dates back to the 14th century. At the beginning of the 14th century, the complex was a Benedictine nunnery, initially called 'Convent of the Cross of Antioch'. A few years later the name was changed to 'Convent of Our Lady of Tortosa', probably due to a miraculous icon of the Virgin from Tortosa, which was held there.³⁸ The nunnery very likely ceased functioning some time after 1482. In 1491, the church was seriously damaged by an earthquake. It is not exactly known when the Armenians took over the church. Paolo Vitti assumes, on the basis of architectural and documentary evidence, that it was transferred around 1500 immediately after the earthquake damage was repaired. Chris Schabel, on the other hand, suspects that this was only done in 1567, after the Armenian cathedral had been destroyed.³⁹ What is certain, however, is that the church also belonged to the Armenians under Ottoman rule. After the church was used by the

new rulers for a short time to store salt, the church officially became property of the Armenians again by a firman (decree) in May 1571. Not much is known about the further development and use of this building complex up to the end of the 19th century – among other things, only that another restoration took place in 1688. In 1884, minor repairs were undertaken, and in 1903-1904, the church was heavily remodelled. Until the 1960s, the church and its annexes were used by the Armenians for religious and cultural purposes.⁴⁰ At the beginning of 1964, the site, now in the Turkish Cypriot part of the city, was affected by the intercommunal strife. According to Alexander-Michael Hadjilyra, in the course of the tragic confrontations, the Armenians were pressured to abandon the area around their religious complex, and the church was raided.⁴¹ After these events and the division of the island in 1974, large parts of the complex were left to its own devices for decades. Between 2008 and 2013, the whole complex was renovated within the Action for Cooperation and Trust programme of the UNDP, with funding from the USAID programme. In 2014, the church was reconsecrated by the Armenian Archbishop Varoujan Hergelian during a church service, which was the first service after more than 50 years.⁴²

38 In literature and also in the British cadastral plans of 1927, it is often stated that the complex or church is called 'Our Lady of Tyre'. But researchers are sure that this is very obviously a confusion with another Benedictine monastery that also existed in Nicosia, but not in this part of the city. Cf. Schabel 2012, 179f, Olympios 2012, 26.

39 Vitti 2014, 7,9; Schabel 2012, 181.

40 Vitti 2014, 11.

41 Hadjilyra 2009, 16.

42 Cyprus Mail 2014b.

Today's condition

The complex is in a good condition. The church itself is not in regular use. During the last visits, the entrance doors were locked, so no inspection of the interior was possible. There is also no info-board on site informing visitors about the history of this building and no information is given as to enable them to obtain the key for a visit.

Cadastral elements

Block/Reg. No.	0/12268
Sheet/Plan:	21/460215
Parcel Number	266
GPS-Position	35.175064, 33.358164

Fig. NIC-N11a:

Virgin Mary Armenian church (Aug. 2021, view from northwest)



Fig. NIC-N11b:

Virgin Mary Armenian church (Aug. 2021, view from north)



BEDESTAN (PANAGIA ODIGITRIA / AGIOS NIKOLAOS⁴³)

History

The Bedestan⁴⁴ in the Agia Sophia quarter is a former church building whose origins date back to the 5th or 6th century. At the same time, it is one of the few buildings in Nicosia where many of the different construction phases can still be traced in its architecture. Or as Michalis Olympios aptly describes it, 'a "mongrel" building consisting of several different parts stitched together in a rather ungainly manner'.⁴⁵ It is located right next to the Gothic cathedral today known as Selimiye Mosque. Excavations in the 1930s revealed that part of the present building stands on the remains of a small Early Christian basilica.⁴⁶ Athanasios Papageorgiou assumes that the small basilica was destroyed and replaced by a new building until the 10th century.⁴⁷ Whether and in which form this

building was modified from the 10th to the 14th century could not be clarified, which also applies to its historical importance at that time.⁴⁸ In the 14th century the construction of a new church was started on the same site. According to documents from 1507 and 1518, the newly built church was consecrated to Panagia Odigitria (Παναγία Οδηγήτρια) and served as Nicosia's Orthodox cathedral. With the conquest of Nicosia by the Ottomans, the church was seized by the new rulers and transformed to meet Islamic needs. At the end of the 16th century, small shops were built into the church and the building then served as a covered bazaar (bedestan). Another structural change was probably made at the beginning of the 19th century. The shops were removed and the whole building was used as a storehouse for grain until the beginning of the 20th century when it lost its function. From 1935 to the 1960s, the Department of Antiquities undertook efforts to reverse the many structural changes that had taken

Fig. NIC-N12:

Bedestan (Feb. 2020, view from west)



43 Many sources mention that the Bedestan had originally been dedicated to Agios Nikolaos (Άγιος Νικόλαος). This adoption was also supported by official sources, for example in the cadastral plans dating from 1927. Here the building is officially named Saint Nikolaos. Nevertheless, this interpretation is doubted by numerous experts. Papacostas, for example, argues that this assumption 'is based on very thin evidence'; Papacostas 2005, 16. Willis also doubts that the church was dedicated to Agios Nikolaos (Willis 1986, 189). So most experts refer to the Panagia Odigitria instead of Agios Nikolaos. Cf. Papacostas 2005, 16; Papageorgiou 2010, 302f.

44 From Turkish 'bedesten' for covered bazaar.

45 Olympios 2015, 328.

46 The floor of the original apse was covered with 6th century opus sectile. Cf. Papageorgiou 2010, 302.

47 Papageorgiou 2010, 302.

48 Among experts, there are various interpretations of the history of this church for that period: Papacostas, for example, supposes that this building was the Greek cathedral of Nicosia, which was taken over by the Latin clergy at the end of the 12th century with the beginning of the Lusignans' rule. It was only when the Latin clergy moved into the Gothic St Sophia Cathedral around the 1340s that the Greek cathedral became again part of the Greek Orthodox Church of Cyprus. Cf. Papacostas 2005, *passim*; Papacostas 2012, 92-94. Other interpretations can, for example, be found in Papageorgiou 2010, 302f.

place during Ottoman rule. Due to the intercommunal conflict and the subsequent division of the island in 1974, the building was largely left to its own devices. By the early 2000s, the substance of the building had deteriorated to such an extent that structural failure could no longer be ruled out. Between 2003 and 2009, the whole structure was surveyed and restored under the Partnership for the Future programme (UNDP-PFF), which was funded by the European Union.⁴⁹

Today's condition

The building is in a good condition. After the completion of renovation works under the UNDP-PFF programme in 2009, the building was inaugurated as a multipurpose cultural centre. The renovation and utilization for various cultural purposes was welcomed by many different stakeholders; however, there were also critical voices that saw the renovation concept as a further and severe intervention in the original building structure resulting in its profound alteration. It was also pointed out that the plans would not allow the further use of the building as a church – a function which it originally had.

Cadastral elements

Block/Reg. No.	./.
Sheet/Plan:	21/460313 / 21/460314
Parcel Number	3
GPS-Position	35.176212, 33.364134

⁴⁹ UNDP 2020.

MUSLIM RELIGIOUS HERITAGE IN THE SOUTHERN PART OF THE CITY

In the area of Nicosia within the old city walls there are four mosques and three mescits (small mosques), which were abandoned after the intercommunal disputes in the 1960s. Some of these mosques have been reactivated in recent decades. The four mosques, Arablar, Bayraktar, Ömeriye and the Taht el-Kale have been declared monuments and are therefore under the administration of the Department of Antiquities of the Republic of Cyprus.⁵⁰ The three mescits (Nöbethane, Tabakhane and Tophane) as well as all other properties and premises of Turkish Cypriots are under the administration of the Turkish Cypriot Property Management Service, which is based at the Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Cyprus.

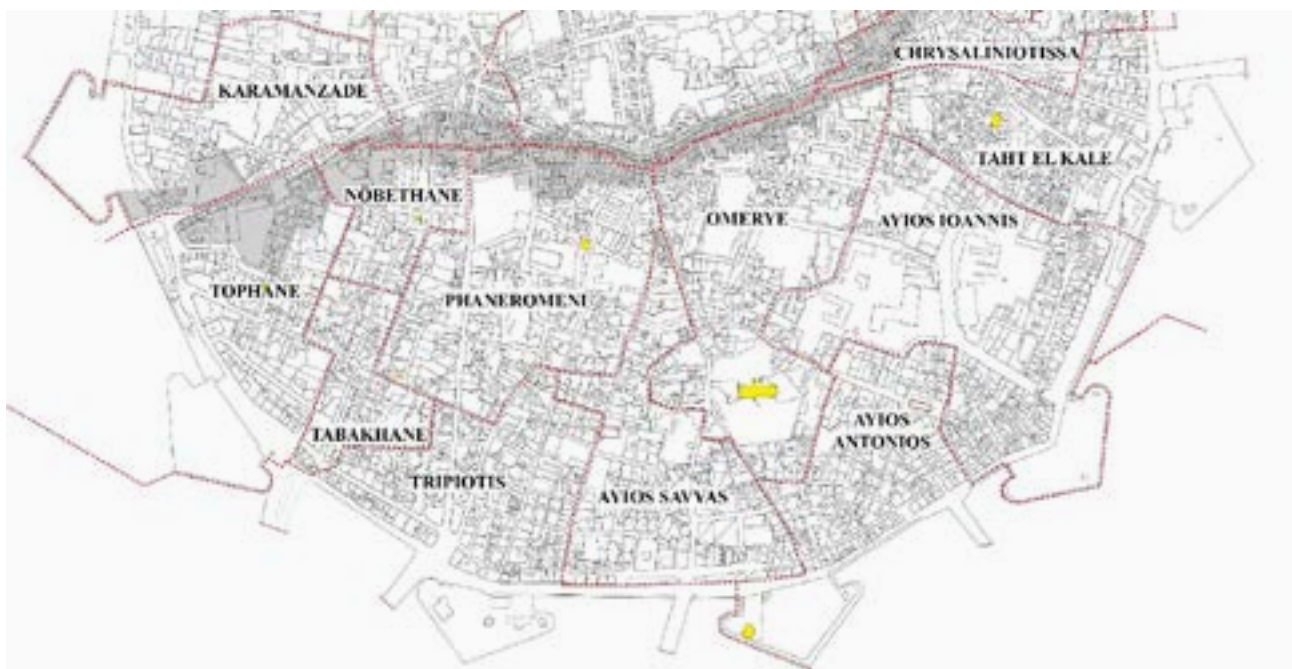
There are also plots of land inside and outside the city walls that were used as Muslim cemeteries in the past, but which have disappeared over time. There are various reasons for the

disappearance: In Ottoman times it was a common practice to bury religious dignitaries, officials and respected and wealthy citizens in the walled courtyard of a mosque or near the mosque. This led to the fact that, during the Ottoman reign, 14 cemeteries were created inside the walls of Nicosia, occupying large parts of land in this area.⁵¹ This practice had become a growing problem due to the constant population growth and the influx of people into the larger cities – a problem not only for reasons of space but also for reasons of hygiene.

Already under Ottoman rule, a law was passed that decided to move cemeteries outside the city (1869). Obviously, this law was not implemented. Only after the British seizure of power was the relocation of cemeteries out of the towns and villages actually enforced by means of strict laws.⁵² On the

Fig. NIC-N13:

Muslim religious heritage in the southern part of the walled city of Nicosia (Th. Kruse, based on the work of E. Iliopoulou)



⁵¹ Bağışkan 2009, 403.

⁵² From 1889 until 1940, around 600 cemeteries were closed island-wide. Most of them were considered to be dangerous to health due to their location in the villages or towns.

basis of the Burials Law, all of the inner-city cemeteries in Nicosia were closed – the last ones in 1938. Any violation of the law was punished with heavy fines. This not only affected the Muslim cemeteries, but also the Greek Orthodox, Maronite and Armenian cemeteries. It is therefore very likely that the last burials in these cemeteries took place around 1938.⁵³

According to Islamic Law a cemetery that is fully occupied or cannot be used anymore for some other reason can also be used for the benefit of the people. The prerequisite for such a conversion is that the last burial in the cemetery must have taken place at least 20 years ago; furthermore, the mufti must have given his consent.⁵⁴

ARABLAR MOSQUE

History

The early history of Arablar Mosque, located in close proximity to the Greek Orthodox Phaneromeni Church (in the eponymous quarter), is still obscure. This building was originally erected as a church. Most experts assume that this church was built in the 16th century. It is still not possible to determine exactly which church it was originally.⁵⁵ The conversion work resulted in the walling up of the church's western and southern entrances. Bağışkan pointed out that the minaret was not added right after the conversion. First, only steps led to the roof, and in a later period, a small minaret was added. Today's minaret was very likely built after 1910.⁵⁶ Inside, a mihrab was inserted into the southern wall. Major conservation measures were carried out in 1910, 1963 and 1985.⁵⁷ There was also a garden around the mosque, which was enclosed by a wall; both disappeared sometime after 1930.⁵⁸ According to Jefferey, the mosque was used little in the mid-1935s.⁵⁹

Today's condition

The mosque, which misses the necessary fountain for ablution and sanitary installation, is not in use. The exterior of the building is in a good shape. There are only little traces of natural decay. Since the doors and windows were closed at the time of visit, no inspection of the interior was possible.

There is no info-board on site informing visitors about the history of this building and no information is given as to enable them to obtain the key for a visit.

Cadastral elements

Block/Reg. No.	1/413
Sheet/Plan:	21/460601
Parcel Number	201
GPS-Position	35.173650, 33.363053

53 Cf. Cyprus Gazette 1931, No. 756; Cyprus Gazette 1937, SP3 No. 1, SP3 No. 58, SP3 No. 59, SP3 No. 164.

54 Bağışkan 2009, 434.

55 Some scholars link it with the name *Stavros tou Missericou* (cf. Schabel 2012, 164; Rizopoulou-Egoumenidou 2012, 277), but there are also many other proposals (cf. Jefferey 1935, 23; Bağışkan 2009, 98f; Trélat 2015, 140f). Chris Schabel clearly expresses this uncertainty when writing: '... some have asserted that Venetian-era Arablar Mosque is the former *Stavros tou Missericou*, but the latter could equally be any of a dozen other churches and chapels' (Schabel 2012, 164).

56 In 1970, the minaret was in danger of collapsing. Repairs began in March of the same year. The costs were shared equally between the government and Evkaf. ARDAC 1970, 9.

57 In 1963, e.g. the cross-vault of the north aisle was demolished and rebuilt. ARDAC 1963, 8, Fig.1; ARDAC 1985, 18.

58 Bağışkan 2009, 99f.

59 Jefferey 1935, 24.

Fig. NIC-N14a:
Arablar Mosque (Sept. 2020, view from southeast)



Fig. NIC-N14b:
Arablar Mosque (Sept. 2020, view from northwest)



BAYRAKTAR MOSQUE

History

The Bayraktar Mosque, or ‘Alemdar Gazi’ Mosque,⁶⁰ stands in a place steeped in history. Here at the Constanza Bastion, an Ottoman flag bearer (Turkish: Bayraktar) overcame the fortress walls for the first time during the siege of Nicosia in 1570, but he was killed in the course of this undertaking.⁶¹ At the place where the flag bearer died, first a grave was built, then a *türbe* (mausoleum). Later a mosque, without a minaret, and service rooms were built here. The building got its final form in 1820-1821, when a minaret, mihrab and minbar were added. Over time, there were several major repairs and renovations. A well-known major repair was undertaken at the beginning of 1909.⁶² Bayraktar Mosque was affected by the intercommunal fighting in Nicosia in the 1960s and also

suffered from the events of 1974. Between 1962 and 1964 there were three bombings, which caused damage to the minaret. The perpetrators of these attacks could not be clearly identified.⁶³ After the events of 1974, the mosque was vandalized by Greek Cypriots and the minaret was totally destroyed, according to international media reports. A partial rebuilding of the mosque took place from February to September 1975.⁶⁴ Further repairs have taken place after that period; only after the last major renovation in 2003 was the mosque again re-opened for prayer.

Today's condition

The mosque is open for worship on a regular basis. The condition of the building is good to fair. Various areas of the building, however, need renovation to prevent dilapidation in the future. Furthermore, the sanitary facilities need an upgrade to meet today's requirements, e.g. for ablution.

Fig. NIC-N15a:

Bayraktar Mosque with the *türbe* (domed part), (Sept. 2020, view from north)



60 For further known names (e.g., ‘Bayrakdar Gazi’, ‘Şehit Alemdar’ and ‘Bayrakli’), cf. Atay 2010, 42.

61 After the conquest of Nicosia, the Ottomans named the bastion ‘Bayraktar Burcu’ (Tower of the Flagbearer), Bağışkan 2009, 101.

62 Bağışkan mentioned that the repair works were carried out by a Greek Cypriot mason who was specialised in the maintenance and repair of mosques, Bağışkan 2009, 101.

63 The attacks were initially attributed to G/C underground fighters. However, there is also a probability that the attacks were carried out as false flag attacks by the Turkish side. Cf. Akyol 2010.

64 In 1975, the Canadian archaeologist Jacques Dalibard was sent to Cyprus by UNESCO to prepare a report on the condition of the cultural property on both sides of the divide. In January 1976, he wrote on the condition of the Bayraktar Mosque: ‘*The Bairakdar and Omereih Mosques in the intra muros city of Nicosia were inspected in February. The Bairakdar Mosque was totally vandalized, the minaret pulled down, the windows blocked, the roof in a state of collapse. By September, the whole structure had been restored both inside and outside except for the minaret which was being rebuilt*’, Dalibard 1976, 3. The full reconstruction of the minaret was only completed in 1990. Cf. ARDAC 1990, 19.

According to some sources⁶⁵ there was also a Muslim cemetery at the Constanza Bastion close to the mosque. Today the area in question is used as a parking place where weekly markets are held regularly. When and how exactly this conversion took place cannot be clarified at this stage.

Cadastral elements

Block/Reg. No.	2/124
Sheet/Plan:	21/460614
Parcel Number	212
GPS-Position	35.169087, 33.365437

Fig. NIC-N15b:
Bayraktar Mosque, interior view (Sept. 2020, view from north)



⁶⁵ Cf. e.g. Başışkan 2009, 435.

ÖMERIYE MOSQUE AND CEMETERY

History

Today's Ömeriye Mosque⁶⁶ was built on the remains of a church. Scholars agree that this church was the Augustinian Church of Nicosia with the ekklesionym *'Sainte Marie des Augustins'*, built in the 14th century.⁶⁷ During the Ottoman siege of 1570, the church was severely damaged and parts of the construction collapsed. Immediately after the capture of the city, the former Latin church was repaired and converted into a mosque; a minaret was added at the northern part of the building. The building also includes a mausoleum, which was originally dedicated to a Christian saint thus making the church a place of pilgrimage for Christian believers. After the conversion, this mausoleum was known as the *türbe* of Omer.⁶⁸ Until June 1958, when the Turkish Cypriots left the Ömeriye quarter⁶⁹ due to the intercommunal strife, the Ömeriye Mosque was the second biggest place of Muslim worship in Nicosia, and the site was famous for holding a precious Quran and a sword; according to tradition, both

were given by Lala Mustafa Pasha.⁷⁰ Although numerous repair measures have certainly been carried out over the centuries, only the repairs since the 19th century are known. Between 1882 and 1912, some major repairs were made. Among others, the portico – an original part of the church – was repaired and the minaret was rebuilt.⁷¹ Major repairs were also undertaken in recent times, e.g. in 1982 before it was re-opened for worship,⁷² or in 1990 when the minaret was repaired and a new conical cover was placed on its top.⁷³ During the 2000s, further repairs took place.

There was also a large cemetery adjoining the mosque to the north, and several martyrs' graves in the mosque's entrance area. The old cemetery, which according to aerial photographs was still intact in 1963, is now a gravelled car park. According to Bağışkan, this conversion appears to have taken place with the consent of the owners.⁷⁴ The graves of the martyrs were also removed. However, some of the grave stelae can still be found today on a wall in the entrance area.

Fig. NIC-N16a:

Ömeriye Mosque, the area in front of the mosque was the former Muslim cemetery (Sept. 2020, view from northwest)



66 There are various legends about the name of the mosque. One legend says that it was named after the caliph Ömer (Umar). Cf. Jefferey 1935, 15; Bağışkan 2009, 100f; Rizopoulou-Egoumenidou 2012, 275.

67 This is proven with relative certainty by the gravestones found in the later mosque. These gravestones were re-used as material for the floor during the construction of the mosque. Cf. Jefferey 1935, 14, 120; Schabel 2012, 193.

68 Cf. Bağışkan 2009, 123; Jefferey 1935, 15f.

69 The census of 1946 counted 917 Greek Cypriots and 249 Turkish Cypriots in the Ömeriye quarter. This means that in 1958 the Turkish Cypriot population in the quarter was probably slightly less than one third.

70 Lala Mustafa Pasha commanded the Ottoman land forces during the conquest of Nicosia. As Bağışkan states, the sword and the Quran were transferred to the Selimiye Mosque (St Sofia). The sword was stolen in 1988, while the Quran came under the supervision of the Evkaf administration as of 1963. Bağışkan 2009, 12.

71 The repair works were done for the sum of almost 585 pounds. Bağışkan 2009, 123.

72 The re-opening took place under the auspices of the Embassy of Libya. The World Islamic Call Society took over the maintenance. Strohmeier 2015, 61, 65.

73 ARDAC 1990, 19.

74 Bağışkan writes that the 'site of the graveyard was eventually rented out for use as a car park'. Bağışkan 2009, 124.

Today's condition

The mosque is in use, while most of the faithful visiting the site for worship are from different, mostly Arab countries. The building itself is in a good condition and the necessary facilities, e.g. for ablution, are available.

Cadastral elements

Mosque		Cemetery	
Block/Reg. No.	2/308	Block/Reg. No.	2/309
Sheet/Plan:	21/460606	Sheet/Plan:	21/460606
Parcel Number	122	Parcel Number	117
GPS-Position	35.171911, 33.365390	GPS-Position	35.172204, 33.365418

Fig. NIC-N16b:

Ömeriye Mosque, interior view (Sept. 2020, view from northeast)



TAHT EL-KALE MOSQUE AND SURROUNDING CEMETERIES

History

Compared to other mosques in the central area of Nicosia, Taht el-Kale Mosque is a relatively new one, as it was only built in the years 1826-1827 together with an adjacent Quran school (madrasa). The new building replaced a dilapidated mosque on the same site, which had been built just after the Ottoman capture of the city.⁷⁵ It is located in a quarter bearing the same name.⁷⁶ This quarter, which was heavily affected by the intercommunal strife, was one of the biggest mixed neighbourhoods of Nicosia.⁷⁷ As Ahmet An stated, the Turkish Cypriot inhabitants had to leave the quarter twice: For the first time in 1958 and for the second time in 1963. After this second displacement, they never returned and the mosque was closed.⁷⁸ Various repairs have been undertaken in the past: two major repairs were made at the end of the 19th century under the British administration. In 1936, the minaret was demolished, as it had been in danger of collapsing for years. It was not until 1948 that a call for tenders was issued for the new minaret, which was completed in 1949. In 1975, a partial restoration was carried out and, between 2003 and 2004, both the small madrasa and the mosque were re-

stored.⁷⁹ There were also two cemeteries around this mosque: a tiny one around the minaret and a small one diagonally opposite the mosque's entrance. The tiny one very likely disappeared during the construction of the new minaret in 1948-1949, while the bigger one was levelled on the initiative of Evkaf administration in the 1950s and replaced by shops.⁸⁰

Today's condition

The mosque is not in active use; the necessary fountain for ablution and a sanitary installation are not in place. The exterior of the mosque is in good shape. There are only little traces of natural decay. Since the fenced entrance area was locked with a padlock at the time of visit, no inspection of the interior was possible.

There is also no info-board on site informing visitors about the history of this building and no information is given as to enable them to obtain the key for a visit.

In June 2014 the Turkish Cypriot Mufti Talip Atalay recited a prayer in the Taht el-Kale Mosque. It was the first prayer in 51 years.⁸¹ So far, however, this has been a unique event.

Fig. NIC-N17a:

Taht el-Kale Mosque (Sept. 2020, view from west)



75 Bağışkan 2009, 137.

76 Taht el-Kale means 'lower part of the fortress' in Turkish. For a long time, however, it has been common practice to use the variation 'Tahtakale' ('wooden fortress'). This variation is also officially recognised in the Gazetteer. Cf. Gazetteer 1987, 1168.

77 The census of 1946 counted 902 Greek Cypriots and 518 Turkish Cypriots in the quarter. Census 1946, 15.

78 An 2011, 5.

79 In 1975, the costs for the restoration amounted to nearly 2,000 CYP taken over by the Rep. of Cyprus, while the funds for the 2003-2004 restoration were paid by funds from USAID and the Rep. of Cyprus. Bağışkan 2009, 137.

80 An 2011, 5.

81 Cyprus Mail 2014a.

Cadastral elements

Mosque		Cemetery	
Block/Reg. No.	2/159	Block/Reg. No.	2/128
Sheet/Plan:	21/460316	Sheet/Plan:	21/460316
Parcel Number	195	Parcel Number	202
GPS-Position	35.175127, 33.368978	GPS-Position	35.175165, 33.369271

Fig. NIC-N17b:

Taht el-Kale Mosque (Sept. 2020, view from northeast)



NÖBETHANE MESCIT

History

The exact construction date of Nöbethane⁸² Mescit, located in the quarter with the same name, is not known, but can be dated to around 1867, based on records. The name of the mescit derives from the fact that, in Ottoman times, the changing of the guard was celebrated in front of the building (nöbet = guard; hane = house). The one-room building was initially surrounded by a spacious courtyard-like area, which was gradually built over. In 1937, the eastern part of the plot was developed. The new building had a distance less than 2 m to the mescit.⁸³ Some time after this development, the

Evkaf administration decided to build further shops around the mescit. When these additional shops were completed, the building was therefore entirely enclosed by buildings. There is no written evidence of repairs to the mescit, but it is said that a certain Hodja Salih Efendi was the caretaker of the mescit. After his death in 1956, the mescit was closed. One reason for the closure may have been the beginning of the intercommunal tensions, but also the fact that for many years hardly any Muslims had lived in the neighbourhood, may have played an important role.⁸⁴

Today's condition

The mescit is not in use. Useless waste material is stored in the narrow entrance. On the day of visit, the door was prop-

82 There are different writings of the name. In English, it is also known as Nubethkane or Nebethane. In the official cadastral plan, created by the British in 1927, it is referred to as 'Nebet Khane Mesjidi', while the Official Gazetteer refers to the quarter as 'Nöbethane'. Cf. Gazetteer 1987, 895.

83 Bağışkan stated that the administration of Evkaf agreed to the development in cooperation with a Greek Cypriot who owned the adjacent plot of land, because the common border of the property could

not have allowed any other beneficial use. After completion of the new building, the Evkaf received one of the new shops, as agreed. Cf. Bağışkan 2009, 378.

84 The 1946 census counted just 19 Turkish Cypriots living there while the number of Greek Cypriots and people of other faith communities amounted to 501 persons. An 2011, 4; Census 1946, 15.

erly closed but not locked. The condition of the building is fair. The walls show signs of decay caused by dampness. Some lumber was lying on the floor.

Cadastral elements

Block/Reg. No.	1/360
Sheet/Plan:	21/460504
Parcel Number	150
GPS-Position	35.173952, 33.360646

Remarks

There is also no info-board on site informing visitors about the history of this building. This is particularly important here, as the entrance to the building is not visible from the outside.

Fig. NIC-N18a:

Nöbethane Mescit, interior view (Sept. 2020, view from west)



Fig. NIC-N18b:

Nöbethane Mescit (Sept. 2020, view from west)

TABAKHANE MESCIT

History

The history as well as the name of Tabakhane Mescit are not entirely clear. It is likely that the mescit got its name because of the tanneries that used to be in the area (tabakhane = tannery). Bağışkan states that the present mescit replaced an earlier one, which must have been built before the year 1746. That mescit also had a small school beside it. In the official Evkaf documents, the names 'Debağhane Mescit' and 'Çektirioğlu Mescit' are also used for this building.⁸⁵ In 1909, the mescit was in a poor condition and was in need of repair. As there are no documents referring to the new mescit building, Bağışkan suspects that the new construction was carried out after 1935. He bases his assumption on a description in a 1935 report by G. Jefferey, in which the mescits of the Tabakhane and Nöbethane quarters are mentioned like this: *'poor little mosques – mere chambers without architectural character or minarets'*.⁸⁶ Further major repairs are not known. On the basis of existing photos, however, it can be proven that there must have been a major renovation of the mescit and its surrounding area between 2008 and 2020. Among other things, the gutters were renewed and an enclosing wall was built. Bağışkan also mentions that, according to locals,

the mescit was only in use for morning and evening prayers in recent times. There was also the annual tradition after which the apprentice tanners, who were about to become master tanners, prayed here as part of a traditional rite.⁸⁷

Today's condition

The mescit is not in use. The condition of the building and the surrounding wall with an attached metal fence is good. Since the entrance gate to the property was locked by a padlock at the time of visit an inspection of the interior was not possible.

There is also no info-board on site informing visitors about the history of this building and no information is given as to enable them to obtain the key for a visit.

Cadastral elements

Block/Reg. No.	3/729
Sheet/Plan:	21/460508
Parcel Number	79
GPS-Position	35.172103, 33.360367

Fig. NIC-N19a:

Tabakhane Mescit (Sept. 2020, view from east)



⁸⁵ Bağışkan 2009, 381. While the name Debağhane refers to tanning (debağ = tanning stain), the name Çektirioğlu is most likely a personal name. Kemal Atay mentioned that in the vernacular the names 'Tabane' or 'Tabhane' were also widely spread. Atay 2010, 26.

⁸⁶ Jefferey 1935, 28.

⁸⁷ Bağışkan 2009, 381.

Fig. NIC-N19b:

Tabakhane Mescit (Sept. 2020, view from west)



TOPHANE MESCIT

History

As early as 1642, a small mosque was built in the quarter with the same name⁸⁸ – on the site where today's mescit can be found. Despite the fact that it was later repeatedly repaired, the building became more and more dilapidated and could not be saved. Therefore the old mescit was demolished in the summer of 1926. The new construction was started immediately, and, in November 1926, the new mescit was inaugurated. Over the years, some changes have been made to the building, such as more windows were installed. Originally, there were neither the two windows next to the entrance door nor the two windows facing the side street. Water conduits running along the building caused heavy dampness, which affected the walls, among other things. These pipes were later relocated.⁸⁹ It is very likely that the mescit was closed around 1960, because from that year on no Turkish Cypriot lived in the Tophane/Agios Andreas area.⁹⁰

Today's condition

The exterior condition of the building is good. According to photographs there had been some renovation activities between 2005 and 2018. Among other things, the entire façade was replastered and painted. Stairs to the entrance were newly created. The windows and doors were repainted. Since the entrance door, which is secured with a padlock, has a gap, it was possible to take some pictures of the interior with a mobile phone camera. The interior condition is fair. The walls as well as the simple mihrab, which is integrated into the southern wall, show impact of dampness.

Remarks

There is also no info-board on site informing visitors about the history of this building and no information is given as to enable them to obtain the key for a visit.

Cadastral elements

Block/Reg. No.	5/19
Sheet/Plan:	21/460503
Parcel Number	163
GPS-Position	35.173155, 33.358441

⁸⁸ The Turkish word 'tophane' means 'arsenal'. The term thus refers to an old ammunition depot in this neighbourhood. In 1945, under the British administration, the Ottoman name of the Tophane quarter was changed into Agios Andreas. An 2011, 3.

⁸⁹ Bağışkan 2009, 382.

⁹⁰ Cf. An 2011, 4.

Fig. NIC-N20a:
Tophane Mescit (Sept. 2020, view from northeast)



Fig. NIC-N20b:
Tophane Mescit with a plain whitewashed mihrab (prayer niche)
(Sept. 2020, view from northeast)



MUSLIM CEMETERY OF THE TAHT EL-KALE QUARTER

Not much is known about the history of this former large Muslim cemetery just outside the walled city. It is located between the Podocattaro and Caraffa Bastions, outside Famagusta Gate just within the boundaries of the Taht el-Kale quarter. The area covers roughly 31,500 square metres. An aerial photograph from 1963 (Fig. NIC-N21a) shows that the plot boundaries drawn in the original cadastral plan corresponded to those in the photograph. In the areas marked as burial grounds, however, no large grave monuments or constructions can be identified. This could lead to the assumption that this cemetery or parts of it were used as *Garipier Mezarlığı* (Strangers Cemetery), which explains the ab-

sence of larger sepulchres (cf. Trypiotis cemetery presented below). It is reasonable to assume that this cemetery was also closed in connection with the British Burials Laws in the 1930s. Black and white orthophotos, taken in 1993 by the Department of Lands and Survey (DLS), show that the property was no longer used as a cemetery at that time, but rather converted into an industrial area (Fig. NIC-N21b).

It has not yet been possible to clarify under which circumstances the complete conversion of the area took place. It is not known whether it was a conversion planned by the Evkaf, as it obviously was in the case of the cemetery of Ömeriye Mosque. However, in contrast to the Trypiotis cemetery, the apparently well engineered and structured development suggests that it was a planned land conversion.

Fig. NIC-N21a:

Taht el-Kale quarter Muslim Cemetery in 1963 (DLS Portal)



Fig. NIC-N21b:

Area of the Taht el-Kale quarter Muslim Cemetery in 1993 (DLS Portal)



Today's condition

At present, the entire area is still used as an industrial zone. There are no traces left that could remind of its earlier use as a cemetery.

Cadastral elements

Block/Reg. No.	23/661
Sheet/Plan:	21/470401
Parcel Number	11
GPS-Position	35.173072, 33.372970

Fig. NIC-N21c:

Area of the Taht el-Kale quarter Muslim Cemetery in 2014 (DLS Portal)



MUSLIM CEMETERY OF THE TRYPIOTIS QUARTER

History

The history of this former Muslim cemetery in Nicosia's Trypiotis quarter is largely unknown. Located between the Cyprus Museum and St Paul's Anglican Cathedral on Lordou Vyronos Street the cemetery covers roughly 10,000 square metres.

An aerial photograph from 1963 (Fig. NIC-N22a) shows that the cemetery with a surrounding wall still existed. Larger sepulchres or sepulchral complexes on the cemetery are not visible. One explanation could be that this Muslim cemetery or a part of it was a so-called *Garipler Mezarlığı* (Strangers Cemetery). Such cemeteries were usually set up outside the city and were used for the burial of poor, destitute or homeless people.⁹¹ Economic reasons usually forced people to abstain from elaborately constructed graves. In most cases, a plain earth grave was built, which was marked with a simple and partly unhewn head and a foot stone; sometimes ordinary wooden sticks were also used to mark the grave site. This in turn leads to the fact that these graves weathered very quick-

ly, and after decades hardly any traces of them remained. It should also be taken into account that this cemetery was very probably closed at the end of the 1930s. The 1963 air photograph shows the condition of a closed cemetery in large areas.

Black and white orthophotos, taken in 1993 by the Department of Lands and Survey (DLS Portal), show that the property was no longer used as a cemetery but rather as a mixture of car park and commercial area (Fig. NIC-N22b).

Some questions with regard to this conversion still need to be answered: When and how exactly did it take place? Was the

conversion planned and accepted by Evkaf, as in the case of the cemetery at the Ömeriye Mosque? Did the increasing decay of the site lead to the perception that it was no longer a cemetery, and did this cause the gradual conversion? When and how exactly this conversion took place cannot be clarified at this stage.

Today's condition

At present, the entire area is used as a car park. While in the northern part, an approx. 6 x 35 m wide piece was concreted to create parking spaces for handicapped people, the rest of the area is only gravelled (Fig. NIC-N22d).

Cadastral elements

Block/Reg. No.	25/406
Sheet/Plan:	21/460503
Parcel Number	3
GPS-Position	35.170552, 33.355101

⁹¹ Bağışkan 2009, 434.

Fig. NIC-N22a:
Trypiotis Muslim cemetery in 1963 (DLS Portal)

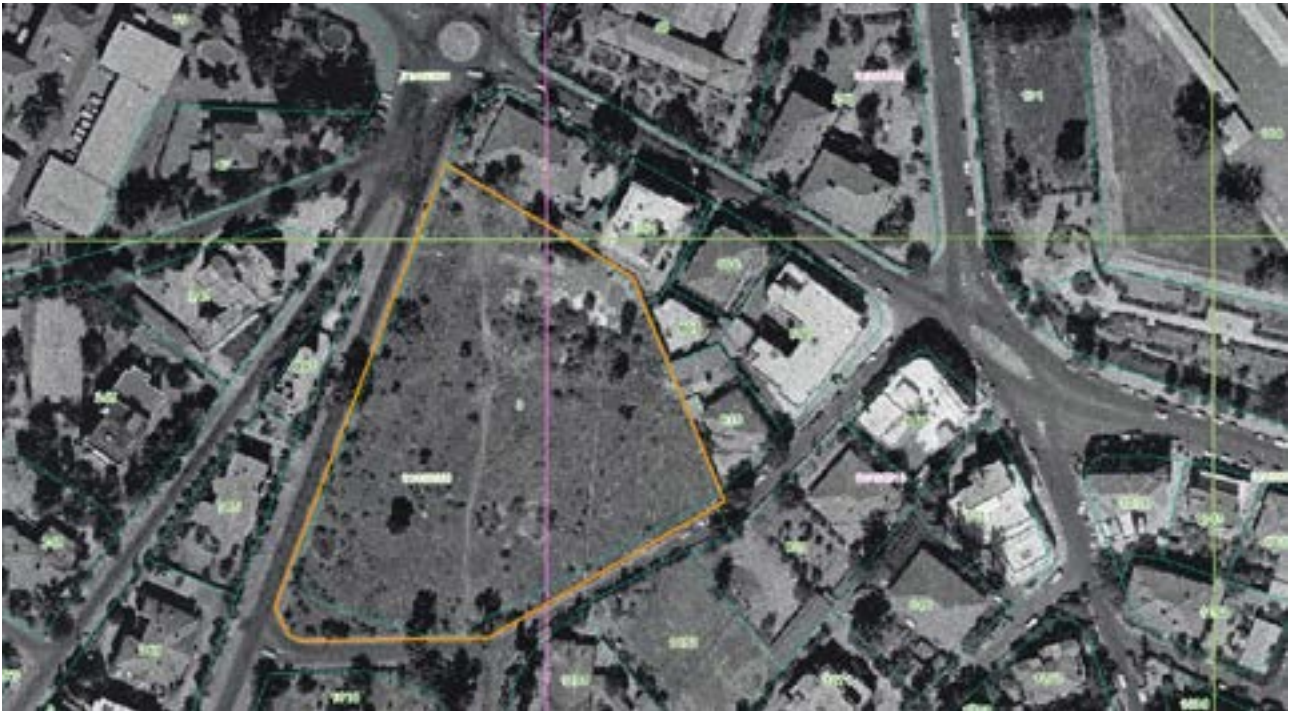


Fig. NIC-N22b:
Area of the Trypiotis Muslim cemetery in 1993 (DLS Portal)



Fig. NIC-N22c:

Area of the Trypiotis Muslim cemetery in 2014 (DLS Portal)

**Fig. NIC-N22d:**

Area of the Trypiotis Muslim cemetery now converted into a car park (Sept. 2020, view from northwest)



COMMEMORATIVE SITES

The habit of visiting votive sites was common and still is among Cypriots, albeit to a lesser extent among the Turkish ones. The commemorative sites of Agios Andronikos Church, in the village of Agios Andronikos (Famagusta District), or Agios Georgios Church, in Pegeia (Paphos District) are just two of many examples of sites venerated by both Greek and Turkish Cypriots.⁹² Some commemorative sites are also located in Nicosia, most of which have their origins in the city's history: The conquest of Nicosia by the Ottomans claimed a large number of victims on both sides. Especially the battle within the walls led to numerous casualties. At that time

there was the custom that Ottoman soldiers who had fallen in the battle of conquest were buried on the spot with their combat equipment and weapons. In several areas of Nicosia, such martyr's graves can be found – e.g. near St Sophia Cathedral, where the Venetian defenders had gathered for the final battle. In the course of time, many of these graves became important and much visited sites – especially when the rumour was spread that they had healing properties.⁹³

Over centuries (2x In the course of), many of these places disappeared due to construction work, etc. A specific example of such a site is a grave near Phaneromeni Church, more precisely at the corner of Nikokleous and Phaneromeni Street.

⁹² Bağışkan 2009, 406-08.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 403f.

As Bağışkan informs us, it is thanks to the governing committee of Phaneromeni Church that this grave has been preserved at this location. Actually, in 1933, the municipality had planned to widen the road at this spot and wanted to acquire the building – owned by Evkaf – through compulsory purchase. However, the church committee decided to buy the building and could thus successfully prevent a forced sale.⁹⁴ The grave would otherwise have fallen victim to the new road construction. Unfortunately, nothing is known about the historical background of this Muslim grave.

Today's condition

The condition of the grave is good. It is embedded in the northern outer wall of the corner building at Nikokleous / Phaneromeni Street and is protected by an iron grille. But it

seems that the site is no longer used for commemoration. In the northern part of the walled city, one can still see sites that are visited for commemorative reasons.⁹⁵

There is no sign or info-board on site providing passers-by with some information about this grave.

Cadastral elements

Block/Reg. No.	2/936
Sheet/Plan:	21/460601
Parcel Number	9
GPS-Position	35.173737, 33.362200

Fig. NIC-N23:

Grave of unknown Muslim near Phaneromeni Church (Sept. 2020, view from northwest)



Fig. NIC-N23:

Grave of unknown Muslim near Phaneromeni Church (Sept. 2020, view from north)



⁹⁴ The place was sold by Evkaf to the committee for the price of 120 pounds in July 1933.

⁹⁵ For example, the commemorative site on İzzet Efendi Street and the Mahmut Paşa commemorative site on Polis Street.

THE SUBURBS OF NICOSIA

Fig. NIC-N24:

Map section of Kitchener's Survey of Cyprus from 1882 (CC BY 4.0, Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland)



CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS HERITAGE IN THE NORTHERN SUBURBS OF NICOSIA

MIA MILIA

History

The village of Mia Milia (Greek: Μιά Μηλιά; Turkish: Myami-ly / 'Haspolat')⁹⁶ is located approximately 6 km northeast of the walled city of Nicosia. Throughout history the village was solely inhabited by Greek Cypriots. Since the beginning of the 20th century the village experienced constant growth. While 325 people lived there in 1901, this number had risen to 771 by 1946. When the Republic of Cyprus was founded in 1960, 1,072 people were counted and, in 1973, 1,381 people were living here.

The village was not affected by the intercommunal unrest in the 1960s. However, in 1974 all the inhabitants of the village fled the advancing Turkish army. The number of displaced inhabitants amounts to about 1,400. After 1974, the Turkish Cypriots renamed the village 'Haspolat'.⁹⁷

The parish church of the village with the ekklesionym *Agios Ioannis* (Άγιος Ιωάννης) is located almost in the centre of the old village. It was built in 1894 as a single aisled basilica, but it nevertheless shows some Gothic style elements. The northern portal seems to be influenced by the architecture of the Bedestan in the walled city of Nicosia. According to an inscription, the bell tower was only added in 1956.⁹⁸

Fig. NIC-N25b:

Agios Ioannis Church of Mia Milia, converted into a mosque (Dec. 2020, view from west)



⁹⁶ Gazetteer 1987, 837, 883.

⁹⁷ PRIO 2011b.

⁹⁸ Kassinis 2011, 106; Cyprus Temples 2007.

After 1974, the church was converted into a mosque. Therefore, all furnishings of a Greek Orthodox church have been removed. This also included all crosses, e.g. the one on the top of the bell tower was replaced by an iron crescent. The southern entrance was bricked up and a mihrab was created in the niche.

The cemetery is located near the church, only 100 m south of it.

Today's condition

The condition of the building which is still used as a mosque is good.

The cemetery is very difficult to find today, as it now resembles a garden with numerous trees. The original surrounding wall has fallen into disrepair, and individual graves can no longer be located. Only a fragment of a former grave cross could be identified.

Cadastral elements

Agios Ioannis Church	
Block/Reg. No.	1/132
Sheet/Plan:	21/1131V01
Parcel Number	128
GPS-Position	35.204036, 33.419587
Cemetery	
Block/Reg. No.	1/156
Sheet/Plan:	21/1131V01
Parcel Number	150
GPS-Position	35.202769, 33.419488

Fig. NIC-N25a:

Agios Ioannis Church of Mia Milia, converted into a mosque (Dec. 2020, view from south)



Fig. NIC-N26a:

Greek Orthodox cemetery of Mia Milia (Dec. 2020, view from west)



Fig. NIC-N26b:

Greek Orthodox cemetery of Mia Milia with remains of the cemetery wall in the foreground (Dec. 2020, view from south)



OMORFITA

History

Omorfita (Greek: Ομορφίτα; Turkish: Küçük Kaimaklı)⁹⁹ was once a rather small village, approximately 1.6 km northeast of Kyrenia Gate. It had close connections with a nearby village called Kaimakli by the Greek Cypriots and Büyük Kaimaklı by the Turkish Cypriots.¹⁰⁰ Since Ottoman times, Omorfita was a mixed village; its respective population majority (Turkish or Greek Cypriots) has, however, fluctuated over the decades. In 1901, there was a slight majority on the Greek side with 216 to 197 inhabitants. In 1931, the Turkish Cypriots had the majority with 446 to 405 inhabitants. Fifteen years later, after a sharp increase, the Greek side represented the majority of the population once again with 1,236 compared to 995. The intercommunal strife in the late 1950s finally led to a drastic change in the population structure: the Greek Cypriot population fled the Omorfita area, while Turkish Cypriots (e.g. from Büyük Kaimaklı¹⁰¹) sought refuge in that area. This development was clearly reflected in the population figures of 1960: the Turkish Cypriots had a strong majority of 5,126 to 1,123 inhabitants. The fights in 1963-1964 caused strong migratory movements and created a completely different ratio once again. The census of 1973

revealed that 2,160 Greek Cypriots were living in Omorfita, while all Turkish Cypriots had left the village. The last change for the time being was brought by the events of 1974. The Greek Cypriots fled the advancing Turkish army to areas further south. After the partition, almost the entire area of Omorfita was in the northern part or in the buffer zone and was then solely inhabited by Turkish Cypriots.¹⁰²

Not much is known about the history of the Greek Orthodox Church with the ekklesionym *Agios Dimitrianos* (Άγιος Δημητριάνας), which is located right in the centre of the old village. It had been built in 1902, and with the division of the island it became part of a restricted military area.

The Greek-Orthodox cemetery is located approximately 500 m away from the church, in the northwestern direction.

Today's condition

Since the church is still in a restricted military area a visit was not possible, and photographs are therefore not allowed. As far as one can assess from a distance the building itself is in a fair condition.

The cemetery although the surrounding wall is still intact in most parts lies in ruins. The entire area is overgrown by weeds and shrubs, while individual graves could not be located. Only a few foundations belonging to grave crosses and sepulchres could be found.

⁹⁹ Gazetteer 1987, 910; cf also the cadastral plan 21/1000V02, where both names were used. Küçük means 'small' in Turkish.

¹⁰⁰ Büyük means 'big or large' in Turkish.

¹⁰¹ Over the centuries the number of Turkish Cypriots living in Büyük Kaimakli never exceeded 60. Around 50 Turkish Cypriots left the village during the unrest at the end of the 1950s. No Muslim religious heritage could be located in this village.

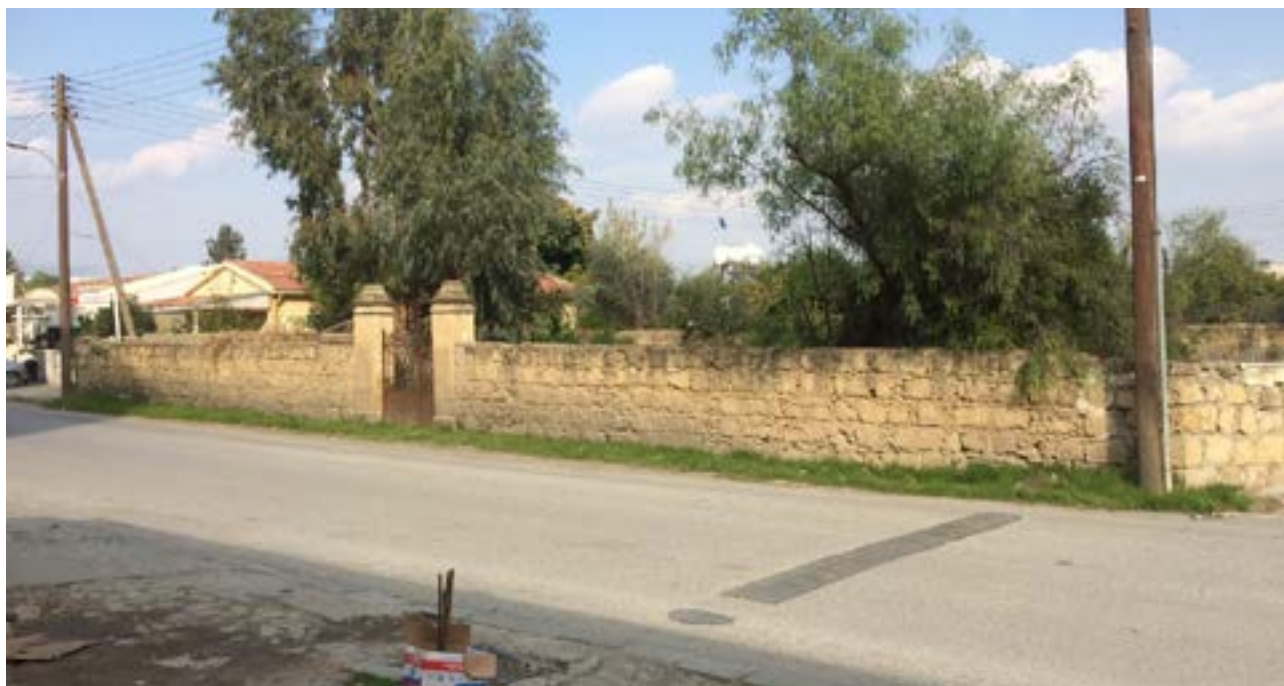
¹⁰² PRIO 2011c.

Cadastral elements

Agios Dimitrianos Church		Cemetery	
Block/Reg. No.	1/178	Block/Reg. No.	3/224
Sheet/Plan:	21/1000V02	Sheet/Plan:	21/38E
Parcel Number	182	Parcel Number	236
GPS-Position	35.188138, 33.371985	GPS-Position	35.192056, 33.370250

Fig. NIC-N27a:

Greek Orthodox cemetery of Omorfita (Dec. 2020, view from west)

**Fig. NIC-N27b:**

Greek Orthodox cemetery of Omorfita (Dec. 2020, view from southeast)



TRACHONAS

History

Trachonas (Greek: Τράχωνας; Turkish: Trahona or Kızılbaş)¹⁰³ – once a rather small village – has become part of Nicosia, lying approximately 2 km northwest of Kyrenia Gate.

From Ottoman times onwards, the village was a small suburb of Nicosia, which has been predominantly inhabited by Greek Cypriots. Only in the 1920s did the first Turkish Cypriots settle in the vicinity of the village and formed a very small minority. In 1921, 291 Greek Cypriots and only 12 Turkish Cypriots lived in the area. The figures for 1946 were 655 Greek Cypriots and 35 Turkish Cypriots. Sometime after 1946, Turkish Cypriots started to settle in the village itself. The figures for 1960 show a significant growth in the Turkish Cypriot population compared to their Greek Cypriot compatriots; 2,361 Greek Cypriots and 921 Turkish Cypriots were counted during the 1960 census. This suburb was also affected by the intercommunal strife during the early 1960s. In January 1964, all Turkish Cypriots fled from the village to seek refuge in the Turkish controlled areas of Nicosia. Some of them returned to their houses in 1968 when the tensions eased a little. In 1974 the Greek Cypriot inhabitants of Trachonas fled from the advancing Turkish army and sought refuge in the areas further south of Nicosia. Since the village became part of the Nicosia municipality in 1968, the number of Greek refugees is difficult to assess. Estimates put the number of displaced persons at around 2,500.¹⁰⁴

Trachonas' *Panagia* (Παναγία) church is located at the northern edge of the old village centre and was built in 1916 on the site of an old mediaeval church. According to Kassinis, the building is an outstanding example for a Greek Orthodox church built in Cyprus in the early 20th century.¹⁰⁵

The cemetery originally adjoined the church at its northern part.

Today's condition

Between 2008 and 2011, the area around the church was completely redesigned. Since then, the church itself is located in the middle of a roundabout. The church itself and an adjacent house to the east function today as a youth centre. All furnishings of a Greek Orthodox church have been removed as well as all crosses, e.g. the one at the top of the bell tower (the bell itself is still in the tower). The church building is obviously used as a venue for different events in connection with its present use as a youth centre.

The cemetery was originally located to the north of the church. In the course of the extensive road construction measures, the site has been completely levelled. Today, the northern part of the roundabout's traffic lane passes over this area.

Remarks

The strong bond between the Greek Cypriots once living in Trachonas and their parish church can be seen in the fact that they had taken the initiative to have a replica of the Trachonas church built in the south of Nicosia. Today, the *Panagia Trachonas* church stands in the Strovolos municipality.

Fig. NIC-N28a:

The Panagia Church of Trachonas in the centre of the picture with the adjoining cemetery to its north, in 1963 (DLS Portal)



¹⁰³ Gazetteer 187, 1190; cf also the cadastral plan 21/1015V01, where the English transcription 'Kizilbash' is used.

¹⁰⁴ PRIO 2011d.

¹⁰⁵ Kassinis 2011, 74.

Cadastral elements

Church		Cemetery	
Block/Reg. No.	2/11	Block/Reg. No.	2/12
Sheet/Plan:	21/1015V01	Sheet/Plan:	21/1015V01
Parcel Number	12	Parcel Number	13
GPS-Position	35.198023, 33.354185	GPS-Position	35.198350, 33.354137

Fig. NIC-N28b:

The Panagia Church after the redesign of the area – now located in the middle of a roundabout, in 2020 (DLS Portal)

**Fig. NIC-N28c:**

Panagia Church of Trachonas (Dec. 2020, view from south)



Fig. NIC-N28d:
Panagia Church of Trachonas (Dec. 2020, view from west)



MUSLIM RELIGIOUS HERITAGE IN THE SOUTHERN SUBURBS OF NICOSIA

AGLANTZIA

History

The original village centre of Aglantzia (Greek: Αγλαντζιά or Αγλαγγιά; Turkish: Eğlence or Eylence)¹⁰⁶ is located approximately 3 km southeast of Famagusta Gate, the former eastern entrance to Nicosia's old city.¹⁰⁷ Since Ottoman times, the village was a mixed one. While the Greek share of the population has grown steadily over the decades, the share of the Turkish population has fluctuated considerably. In the 1901 census, 488 Greek Cypriots and 31 Turkish Cypriots were counted, in 1931, 805 Greek Cypriots and 21 Turkish Cypriots lived in the village, and in 1946, 1,877 Greek Cypriots and 131 Turkish Cypriots were there. The census of 1960 resulted in a total population of 4,175. This number was subdivided into 3,593 Greek Cypriots and only 316 Turkish Cypriots. The so-called other inhabitants, mostly Cypriots of Armenian origin, amounted to 266.¹⁰⁸ The village was affected by the intercommunal strife in the early 1960s. Nearly all Turkish Cypriots fled the village in 1964 and moved to the Turkish controlled areas of northern Nicosia and to the, at that time, small hamlet of Hamid Mandres located north of the capital.

The permanent settlement of Turkish Cypriots in the village and the fact that more than 300 Turkish inhabitants were counted in Aglantzia in 1960 would suggest that a mosque or a Muslim cemetery must have existed there. But research on the spot revealed that only around 15 Turkish Cypriot families were living in a small neighbourhood north of the original village centre, which means that the Turkish share of the village population in 1960 was probably less than 100 people. There was a small Turkish school in the village but no mosque or cemetery. The remaining 200-plus Turkish Cypriots counted for in Aglantzia were living outside in the Athalassa area.¹⁰⁹

However, sources show that there was once a mosque and a Muslim cemetery outside Aglantzia. These were part of a leper farm established at the beginning of the 19th century under Ottoman rule and re-instated in 1878, after the British takeover. The farm was located approximately 1.5 km south-east of Famagusta Gate. After the farm's closure in 1953, the mosque and the cemetery also seem to have lost their function. There are no traces of them left today. The mosque itself cannot be found on any contemporary map, so it is not possible to securely determine its former location. At the place where the Muslim cemetery of the leper farm was marked, there is now a grove of woodland which is part of the Alsos Forest in Aglantzia.¹¹⁰ The Muslim cemetery was built right next to the Greek Orthodox one.

KATO LAKATAMEIA

History

Originally, there were two villages Pano (Upper) and Kato (Lower) Lakatameia, but over time both villages merged and are today known only as Lakatameia. While Pano Lakatameia was only inhabited by Greek Cypriots, Kato Lakatameia was a mixed village since Ottoman times. The old village centre of Kato Lakatameia (Greek: Κάτω Λακατάμεια; Turkish: Kato Lakatameia)¹¹¹ is located approximately 7.5 km southwest of Paphos Gate, the former western entrance to Nicosia's old city.¹¹² While the number of Greek Cypriots grew steadily from 1831 to 1946 (from 80 to 852 inhabitants), the popula-

¹¹⁰ The leper farm was a multi-religious institution with both a church and a mosque. The mosque with a minaret was built in 1902, and an imam was appointed. Later there was a regular service held by an imam at the farm (cf. Dinç 2015, 304-305; Chatzikyriakidis 2015, 1-4; Cyprus Gazette 1901, 4574.). The mosque as well as the cemetery were most probably not very large. Since leprosy did not spread widely in Cyprus, there were never more than 30 Muslims living on the farm at the same time. For the location of the cemetery cf. Nicosia and Environs 1958.

¹¹¹ Gazetteer 1987, 485. Today the spelling 'Lakatamia' is widespread.

¹¹² Located between Nicosia and Kato Lakatameia, there is another suburb called Strovolos, which was permanently inhabited by Greek Cypriots only. As shown in aerial photographs, wide strips of undeveloped land were separating Nicosia from Strovolos and from Kato Lakatameia as well. Both suburbs became important reception centres for displaced Greek Cypriots after the events of 1974; as a consequence the formerly separate residential areas had already merged in the 1990s.

¹⁰⁶ Gazetteer 1987, 62, 363.

¹⁰⁷ While aerial photographs from 1963 show that a wide strip of undeveloped land was separating Nicosia from Aglantzia, the two parts have been entirely merged since the 1990s. Aglantzia became an important reception centre for displaced Greek Cypriots after 1974.

¹⁰⁸ PRIO 2011e.

¹⁰⁹ Information provided by A. Hadjiandreou and G. Terzian, residents of Aglantzia and contemporary witnesses.

tion growth on the Turkish Cypriot side remained quite low during the same period (from 29 to 88 inhabitants). The village was affected by the intercommunal strife in the late 1950s. In the course of the disturbances, all Turkish Cypriots left the village and sought refuge in the Turkish Cypriot controlled areas in the northern part of Nicosia. The former inhabitants never returned, as shown by the censuses of 1960 and 1973, in which only Greek Cypriots were counted (1,128 and 1,815 inhabitants, respectively).¹¹³

Documents reveal that around 1900 there was a building in the village which was used as both mosque and school. But the condition of the building at that time was so bad that repairs were needed. It was obviously not possible for the Muslim community to pay the full repair costs. As a consequence, the old building was put down in 1902 and an application to the British administration was made for a new mosque.¹¹⁴ According to current residents there was a small mosque in the village in the 1950s. But when exactly it was built and whether the British agreed to build that new mosque is not clear. Furthermore, there is no evidence of the subsequent fate of the building. Today the plot on which the mosque is said to have stood is undeveloped and is used as a car park.

There was also a Muslim cemetery in the village. The site with roughly 1300 m² was located at the Archiepiskopou Makariou III. / Panteli Katelari junction at the northern edge of the old village centre. Aerial photographs of 1963 show that larger sepulchres did not exist in the cemetery. This leads to the assumption that only plain earth graves were built, marked solely with larger head and foot stones. Little information is available on the further fate of the cemetery. On a satellite photo from 2005, it can be seen that the cemetery is surrounded by a new wall. Between 2005 and 2008, extensive construction work took place at the crossing. In the course of these measures a good third of the northern cemetery area was built over. In the remaining part, the vegetation was removed and replaced by a lawn.

Fig. NIC-N29a:

Presumed site of the mosque of Kato Lakatameia in 2020 (view from east)



¹¹³ PRIO 2011f.

¹¹⁴ Başıkan 2009, 392.

Today's condition

The mosque no longer exists today. Almost nothing is known about its fate. Also the Muslim cemetery no longer exists today.

Cadastral elements of the former mosque and Muslim cemetery of Kato Lakatameia:

Mosque (presumably)		Muslim Cemetery	
Block/Reg. No.	1/78	Block/Reg. No.	2/397
Sheet/Plan:	30/1021V03	Sheet/Plan:	30/12E1
Parcel Number	63	Parcel Number	310
GPS-Position	35.116025, 33.310360	GPS-Position	35.118369, 33.314162

Fig. NIC-N29b:

Site of the Muslim cemetery of Kato Lakatameia in 2020 (view from north)



Fig. NIC-N29c:
Muslim cemetery of Kato Lakatameia in 1963 (DLS Portal)



Fig. NIC-N29d:
Site of the Muslim cemetery of Kato Lakatameia in 2005 (Th. Kruse with Google Earth Pro)



Fig. NIC-N29e:
Site of the Muslim cemetery of Kato Lakatameia in 2008 (Th. Kruse with Google Earth Pro)



CONCLUSION

Investigations on both sides of the divided capital of Cyprus have shown that some of the religious sites left behind by the corresponding segment of the population have disappeared over time, but many places of worship and other religious sites have been preserved. Their state of preservation, however, varies considerably.

The sites that are no longer visible are mainly the formerly large Muslim cemeteries built around the old town of Nicosia. Similar to Judaism, Islam used to have a kind of eternity clause saying that a grave could not be reoccupied or used in any different way. This view, however, has been adapted to modern times, and today it is possible to reuse such areas under certain conditions. Concerning Nicosia, there are only two pieces of evidence informing that a change of use of a Muslim cemetery was approved by the relevant authorities. For the other cemeteries, it is not known whether consent was given. The same applies to the Greek Orthodox cemetery in Trachonas and the Muslim cemetery in Lakatameia, both of which disappeared in connection with infrastructure projects.

The condition of the partly old and important mosques and mescits in the southern part of Nicosia is generally good to acceptable; most of them are not in use nowadays. On a positive note, two mosques – Bayraktar and Ömeriye – have been in regular use again for some time as Muslim houses of prayer. For the other mosques, in particular, those classified as historical monuments, and for the smaller mescits as well, a close integration into the historical places of interest of the city would be desirable. This means that accessibility of these buildings and information about them should be improved.

The condition of the churches in the northern part of Nicosia can also be classified as good to acceptable in most of the cases. This usually stems from the fact that these buildings have been converted either to mosques or to places for cultural or educational use. On the one hand, the continued use shows that this has a positive effect on the condition of the buildings, on the other hand, however no other use than that

as a consecrated church complies with the beliefs and statutes of the Greek Orthodox Church. Here, solutions that simultaneously promote the preservation of the buildings but also preserve the Greek Orthodox spirituality of the building are highly desirable, but very difficult to find due to the division of the island since 1974.

Tragic examples are the churches of Agios Iakovos and Agios Georgios. Due to their location within the buffer zone and unclear responsibilities, the preservation of these centuries-old churches is almost impossible. Here, cultural assets are literally caught between the fronts of a conflict. An agreement to save these churches would be imperative. Furthermore, Agios Iakovos Church is an outstanding example of shared cultural heritage: Greek and Turkish Cypriots alike venerated the fresco of St James (Iakovos).

In summary, for a variety of reasons most of the sacred buildings listed in the report cannot be used as originally intended. Although the current situation in Cyprus gives little hope that the religious places will be used again in their original form in the foreseeable future, measures and concepts should be developed on how this endangered common heritage can be preserved sustainably and made tangible for further generations. This would require a broad alliance of representatives from the fields of politics, religion and from civil society as well – however, the Cyprus conflict has already shown for decades how difficult it is to follow such a path.

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THE RELIGIOUS HERITAGE OF CYPRUS

a survey in the city of Nicosia and its suburbs

The unsettled times in Cyprus in the 1960s and 1970s, which resulted in waves of displacement on the island, had their tragic climax in 1974, when many Cypriots lost their lives and when the island was divided. The events also caused a persistent spatial separation of Greek and Turkish Cypriots on the island.

In most cases, the internal refugees not only left most of their properties and belongings behind but also their religious and sacred spaces (churches/mosques, cemeteries). As a consequence, many of these places were abandoned for decades and exposed to deterioration or destruction by natural or other forces.

This report focuses on the history and current state of these religious heritage sites in Nicosia and its suburbs, some of which are historically very important. More specifically, the Christian heritage in the north and the Muslim heritage in the south of the city.

