

**PERFORMING SOCIAL FORGETTING IN A POST-CONFLICT LANDSCAPE:  
THE CASE OF CYPRUS**

by

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anneme ve babama,  
daima.



# **PERFORMING SOCIAL FORGETTING IN A POST-CONFLICT LANDSCAPE: THE CASE OF CYPRUS**

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University of Pittsburgh, 2014

This dissertation examines social practices of memory-making and forgetting in Cyprus after the partition of 1974, based on analysis of Orthodox Christian and Muslim religious sites in the Greek/Southern and the Turkish/Northern parts of the island. The central contribution of the dissertation is the development of the concept of social forgetting as a corollary of social memory. I consider forgetting to include selective remembering, mis/disremembering, and omitting, distorting, or silencing past events and experiences, in order to shape collective memory. In the literature, remembering is usually privileged over forgetting, which is taken as negation, neglect, failure to remember, or unintended social amnesia in which people are considered passive actors. This study, however, shows that forgetting can be a desirable goal and positive process for some social actors, accomplished by obscuring material evidence of what another community wishes remembered.

The first chapter looks at official and individual narratives regarding the ethnic conflict. The second chapter analyzes topographies of memory, specifically the treatment of religious landscapes during the ethnic conflict and afterwards, by discussing three cases

of shared religious spaces. The third chapter examines temporalities of memories and collectivities, through the discussion of museumification of sacred sites that are converted to museums, and how the owners of the sites react to this process. This part also discusses the secularization of the Turkish Cypriot community and their relatively invisible conflict with the 'fraternal other,' Turkish settlers.

I argue that Greek and Turkish Cypriots are haunted by memories of ethnic conflict, but their perceptions of and approaches to the past are different. Greek Cypriots, at least officially and publicly, center their identities on the trauma of partition and are waiting for the liberation of the occupied land, seeing the future through what was supposedly left behind. For Turkish Cypriots, the past life alongside Greek Cypriots is a closed chapter. Both also develop alternative narratives through which they undermine official discourses in their everyday lives and practices. Yet they mostly seem to turn their faces towards opposite directions: Turkish Cypriots long for a lost future, and Greek Cypriots long for a lost past.

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“Living backwards!” Alice repeated in great astonishment. “I never heard of such a thing!”

“–but there’s one great advantage in it, that one’s memory works both ways.”

“I’m sure *mine* only works one way,” Alice remarked. “I can’t remember things before they happen.”

“It’s a poor sort of memory that only works backwards,” the Queen remarked.

*Lewis Carroll, Alice in Wonderland  
(1932:167-168)*

–For my brother, Ömür, who always amazes and inspires with his wisdom.

## **PREFACE**

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

This ethnographic study deploys the art of forgetting as its central device to investigate the selective construction of the past and collective memory, through human interactions with the commemorative religious landscape. It examines the practices of memory-making and forgetting at religious and historical sites in the Greek and Turkish parts of Cyprus after the partition of 1974.

The research addresses theoretical and analytical issues of understanding social forgetting not only as a negation, neglect, failure of remembering, or unintended social amnesia; but as a potentially desirable social goal and *positive* process for some social actors. That is to say, a certain body of knowledge of the past regarding the former shared life and subsequent ethnic conflict might be produced deliberately and actively by people. I use 'positive process' in the sense that it fosters positive outcomes according to its agents. Individually and collectively, people may engage in processes of selective editing of the past, discarding and keeping particular events and knowledge to deal with traumas, painful memories and current dilemmas. In this sense, forgetting is different from remembering, both in the ways it is practiced and in the outcomes it produces.

I have asked two research questions:

1. Is social forgetting a systematic and deliberate strategy of communities to determine how the past should be remembered? Can we detect patterns in the forms of

collective forgetting?

2. In what ways are religious landscapes invoked to contribute to the process of social forgetting?

While there is a vast literature on social memory and remembering, less has been written on social forgetting. Psychologists, sociologists and anthropologists study individual and collective forgetting, mostly as an integral part of memory studies and as the opposite of remembering, motivated by the idea that memory is central to group and individual identity formation (e.g. Assche et al. 2009, Battaglia 1993, Carsten 1995, Conway 2003, Forty&Kuchler 1999, Papadakis 1993), including in the creation of nation (Renan 1990:11) and in depriving a country of national consciousness (Connerton 2003:14).

This research's central contribution lies in its development of the concept of social forgetting, as a corollary of social memory, in cases of contested landscape. In terms of its manifestation, forgetting in this dissertation is not to be perceived only as disremembering, but connotes misremembering, including alienation, appropriation or control of the past through its material remains, to shape and legitimize the present. Rather than just explaining the ways in which a new political power removes evidence of the formerly dominant group, I also analyze the purposeful preservation of certain memories and material culture to demonstrate dominance of the current political power over the enemy or competitor. I am interested in the ways that "the memory of the figure condemned (even the memory of his forgetting) is preserved" (Elsner 2003:226). Thus, the research investigates strategies of communities to construct history by considering that which is obscured.

Since the late 1980s there have been many studies dealing with memory, by

anthropologists, sociologists, historians, psychologists, cognitive scientists, and neuroscientists. The pioneering figures (Durkheim 1961 [1915], and Halbwachs 1992 in sociology; Assman 1995 and Nora 1992 in history; Evans-Pritchard 1940 in anthropology; Bartlett 1932 in psychology) bring to attention the social dimension of memory, addressed with diverse terminology in the literature (collective memory, social memory, public memory etc.). This research is concerned primarily with the overlapping relationship between collective memory and identity, history, and landscape.

The memory-history issue is not only limited to historians' discussions and contrasting claims over this relationship (Halbwachs 1992, Goff 1992, Nora 1989, Jordanova 2000), which have produced "a devastating critique of the totalizing aspects of historical discourse" (Klein 2000:128), including the tension between living history/written authoritative history. It also extends to studies of oral history (Perks & Thomson (eds.) 1998, Thompson 1988), trauma and war memory (Antze & Lambek (eds.) 1996, Ashplant et. al (eds.) 2000, Caruth 1996, LaCapra 1994, Winter 1995), nostalgia (Coontz 1992, Smith 1986, Vromen 1993), and heritage (Barthel 1996, Herzfeld 1991, Lowenthal 1985, Moore & Whelan (eds.) 2007).

There is a vast literature on the role of memory in the construction of identity and the past, which is related to "making histories" (Allan 1986, Lewis 1975, Lukacs 1985, Johnson et.al 1982) and "invention of tradition" (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983), in order to develop a sense of common identity and continuity in nation states. These studies on the mobilization of memory/history in the service of nationalist ideology are recently complemented with the studies on contesting, alternative, local versions of the past that give voice to the silenced and oppressed (subaltern, women, minorities etc.), by

anthropologists and historians (Sider & Smith 1997, Wolf 1982).

In contrast, this dissertation specifically aims to upload the question of ‘who’ rather than ‘what’ to the study of collective memory. It demonstrates that the local perceptions of the past have been shaped not simply by the official discourses, but by various complex cultural processes, personal experiences, political developments, and active engagement of ordinary people with landscape in the process of memory and history. When including subjectivities in the process of knowledge, history and memory production, I do not treat obscured and underrepresented vernacular and personal interpretations as impotent invisible accounts, but rather as powerful narratives of actors who create “a ‘hidden transcript’ that represents a critique of power spoken behind the back of the dominant” (Scott 1990:xii). Scott suggests “how we might interpret the rumors, gossip, folktales, songs, gestures, jokes, and theater of the powerless as vehicles by which, among other things, they insinuate a critique of power while hiding behind anonymity or behind innocuous understandings of their conduct” (1990:xiii). People possess personal counter-memories, and a careful reading of these actors’ memories, actions, and perceptions indeed reveals various forms of resistance and negation of what Scott calls “public transcript... the open interaction between subordinates and those who dominate” (1990:2). I witnessed and studied the social dialogue, negotiation, and contestation going on in religious landscape, as exemplary cases.

Landscape studies provide another field to discuss spatial, monumental and performative dimensions of memory (Alcock 2002, Schama 1995, Stewart & Strathern (eds.) 2003). The literature on the relationship between memory and landscape mostly emphasizes the mnemonic function of landscape and its power over the



individual/collective memory (e.g. Bender 1993, Darby 2000, Hirsch and O'Hanlon (eds.) 1995, Kockel 1995, Morphy 1995, Santos-Granero 1998). However, in this project, I consider whether landscape is used for obscuring or concealing certain parts of history, to hinder remembrance of them, in addition to its function for remembering and leaving traces to posterity. The meaning and use of landscape has become especially critical in post-conflict times, when violence, tragedy and power struggle have been inscribed on built and historical landscapes in various ways (e.g. Bender & Winer 2001, Clouser 2009, Tuan 1979, Wolschke-Bulmahn 2001).

How can a cultural anthropologist study what is forgotten, which is usually mainly studied by archeologists? The distinction has to be made between forgetting as what Tota calls cultural amnesia or homeless memories, which "are not articulated in any cultural form" (2001:6); and forgetting which refers to accounts that are sedimented or blurred in collective memories, that are inclined to be erased through suppression, or that are reshaped with new meanings. This study has targeted the second type. These memories can only be uncovered through comparisons of competing narratives of the past as in Ong's studies on genealogy of the Gonja, which identified "structural amnesia" by comparing British colonizer and Gonja representations of the founder of the Gonja state (Ong 2002:48).

The research provides a study of a region that in the last century experienced a set of social traumas, dramatic political and religious transformations, and geographical separation. Cyprus presents an exceptional opportunity with its displaced people, whose former lives are kept in memories and in contested representations of the past. Independence from British colonial rule and the creation of an independent state in 1960

was followed by two waves of inter-communal conflict between the majority Greek and minority Turkish Cypriot populations. These conflicts resulted in the partition of the island with Turkey's military intervention in 1974. Since then, unresolved issues such as property and land ownership, the right to return for displaced people, and the recovery of missing persons have been obstacles to any reconciliation and termination of the division between the *de facto* Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus and EU-member Republic of Cyprus. The ongoing political impasse and traces of ethnic conflict render the traumatic experiences unforgettable. [Figure 1 and 2]

I compare and contrast the narratives of present-day local people, former inhabitants, visitors, official history, and those embedded in landscape, with the support of archival material. I specifically focus on patterns of transformation of religious sites and the perceptions and memories related to them, to create "forgetful landscapes" (Harrison, 2004). The transformations include both physical and symbolic changes in the religious sites, and usually stem from political iconoclasm and destruction of material culture in the context of a violent ethnic conflict. Such changes include desecration, conversion, appropriation, certain forms of conservation-restoration, museumification, reshaping of their interior and exterior parts, and other kinds of architectural changes, as well as transmutations in their symbolic meanings (Hayden et al. 2011).

Changes, transformation and obliterations in landscape that forget, disregard, discard or reinterpret physical indicators of the presence of "other" groups have been determined by visits to research sites, observation, and interviews with local people. I already know that some sites have been so transformed that signs of earlier presences have been hidden, destroyed or removed. Historical stratification in the sites has been detected

with the help of archival study, including travel, scholarly and scientific reports. Fortunately, there has been work on sites in Cyprus by scholars operating independently of nationalist paradigms (e.g. Hasluck 2000 [1929], Papalexandrou 2008).

## **2.0 METHODOLOGY**

I spent two years in the field, from 2010 to 2012, as well as two summers of preliminary fieldwork, and carried out participant observation, semi-structured and unstructured interviews with Greek Cypriots, Turkish Cypriots and immigrants from Turkey who have become citizens of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. The interviewees responded to a set of questions that focused primarily on the following three issues:

1. Personal experiences and memories regarding the ethnic conflict, earlier relations with the other community, visits to the other side after the opening of the checkpoints, and the desire to return home
2. Thoughts and memories about religious places, past and present practices, and sharing the religious places with the Other
3. The destruction of cultural heritage, specifically churches, mosques and cemeteries, and the conversion of religious places

I specifically talked to people who live or used to live in the vicinity of specific religious sites. This gave me the opportunity to compare the current and former condition of the places, the changes in the landscape and also how Greek and Turkish Cypriots view these places, in similar or different ways. I also consulted with religious leaders, local academicians, officials who are responsible for the security and maintenance of the sites, historic preservation specialists, and people working for NGOs. I visited the religious sites

regularly and observed peoples' rituals, particularly the holiest sites for Orthodox Christians and Muslims.

Some prominent sites that were physically shared before the division in 1974, which will be analyzed in this dissertation are Apostolos Andreas Monastery (Karpas Peninsula), Tekke of Hz. Ömer/Ayii Phanontes (east of Kyrenia), and Kırklar/Holy Forty (east of Nicosia). These sites are all located in the North. The reason why I didn't choose a common sacred site in the South is that Turkish Cypriots usually don't cross the border for the sake of visiting a religious site. The only place that is specifically frequented by Turkish Cypriots is Hala Sultan Tekke, and it is not a religiously, but an archeologically important site for Greek Cypriots. Along with Hala Sultan Tekke, I will discuss two prominent Orthodox Christian sites in terms of museumification: Saint Barnabas Monastery (Famagusta), Saint Mamas Monastery (Morphou). [Figure 3]

I have carried out research in the state archives of both sides, which helped me by providing data on cultural processes that have created the current configuration in the island, as well as on the transformations in the religious sites that cannot be observed from the present physical features of buildings. I have also collected data on the ethnic conflict and the relations between the two communities. Media research has complemented the archival research.

The research is multi-sited, conducted in various locations in Southern and Northern Cyprus. The study of memory in this research relies on the comparison/contrast of the narratives mainly of displaced or spatially dispersed people, including present-day local people, former inhabitants, and also visitors. The research not only followed the movements of people and ideas, but also spaces and their reproduction. "Spatial de-

centredness” (Falzon 2009:2) enabled tracing the trajectories within the sites, and the narratives embedded in the landscape itself. However, the choice of the locations is to some extent arbitrary, determined by the limited knowledge of the researcher. The theoretically connected yet different sites address diverse issues within the overall frame.

Of course, the ethnographic field in my mind did not necessarily make sense to my informants. It is necessary to distinguish between space, place and field, as Joanna Cook, James Laidlaw and Jonathan Mair argue: “Just as places are clusters of elements imagined as spaces, so the ethnographer’s field is a set of points that may be imagined as a space –as a site” (2009:60). What determined the boundaries of my field was basically a network of practices, memories and beliefs that are shared/thought to be shared by two communities in the island. This network revealed the hidden part of the story.

As the reflexive turn in anthropology shows (Nazaruk 2011, e.g.), the ethnographer’s identities, positions, emotions, reactions, experiences that are evoked, negotiated and problematized in the field influence the data s/he acquires. A critical approach to our subjective existence in the field is necessary to show how the invisible emotional aspects present opportunities to understand the research and to humanize the methodological framework we use. My reflexive story appears to be especially pivotal, due to my presumed problematic ethnographic presence as a “Turk” more than anything else. Being an Other was an intrinsic part of my fieldwork, even in the Turkish side; nevertheless, it sometimes turned out to be an advantage, rather than a drawback, as I will explain below.

## 2.1 ANTHROPOLOGIST AS POTENTIAL FOE

“Suyundan içtin, artık burallı oldun”  
[You drink the water of this island;  
you have become native hereafter]  
The words of an old Turkish  
Cypriot woman to me.

All anthropologists experience different kinds of difficulties, challenges, risks, even dangers during their field researches that are worth tracing: Access to research subjects, hostile settings, sensitive/forbidden topics, ethical problems, security issues, objectivity and reliability of the data collected etc. My two-year field research in Cyprus was not exceptional, but distinguishably an intense experience. I was a citizen of Turkey, whose presence in the island has been defined as an occupying force. To make matters worse, I was doing research on religious cultural heritage and sites which were/have been shared by Orthodox Christian and Muslim communities, which has been a highly sensitive and controversial topic in the island. My presence in the island, especially in the Southern, Greek part (Republic of Cyprus), was not very welcomed. In order to be able to keep my status long enough to complete my research, I taught at a university in the Northern part, and worked for a UNDP project in the Southern Part. Getting research permits, accessing archives, establishing rapport with my interviewees, even travelling between the two parts of the island and explaining myself at security checkpoints on a weekly basis, while at the same time dealing with the psychological difficulty of hearing people's traumatic stories, was overwhelming.

To start with, my connection with Cyprus is a professional one, not through kinship – the very first question that all my informants asked to me. The reasons for my choice of this field were practical, or maybe not. The field chose me, not vice versa, as my informants would like to think, since I lived on Kıbrıs Caddesi (Cyprus street) in Ankara for ten years, and my meeting with a Greek Cypriot historian at Ottoman Turkish Summer School in 2005, when the first seeds of the project was growing in my mind, may not be considered coincidental by them. My informants enjoyed making these connections, and I did not resist. The fact that I shared a house in the south with Makarios'<sup>1</sup> granddaughter, and later with a Greek Cypriot woman named Ellada (meaning Greece – ironically referring to the everlasting hostile relations between Greece and Turkey), nicely completed my spiritual connection with the land. Perhaps it was true that Cyprus was my destiny, though might not be forever, as Alma Gottlieb asserts for cultural anthropologists, that they “chose their fieldsites for life” (2012:1).

Despite the attempts of my informants at making sense of my presence, recognition and acceptance by the community as an anthropologist was not an easy one. My ‘unrelatedness’ could be taken as an advantage in terms of subjectivity, but in fact, it was a hindrance for doing research, especially on touchy subjects (such as destruction of cemeteries), which are still open wounds in Cyprus, and required extra confidence and sympathy from the informants. Besides, obviously, there was the pain of remembering and talking about the memories of war.

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<sup>1</sup> Makarios was the archbishop of the autocephalous Church of Cyprus and the first President of the Republic of Cyprus.



In truth, I was more than an “ambiguous stranger” (Manyoni 1983:222). My liminal presence as a researcher who was Turkish but not exactly fitting the category of “enemy” by virtue of being a student in the United States and doing research on both sides, raised a number of methodological issues. The need for building trust, establishing rapport, and ensuring confidentiality was crucial, but difficult. Specifically, the interviews with Greek Cypriots were often on a razor’s edge at the beginning, because of my ‘essential’ ethnic identity, at least in my perception. One bad experience taught me to make sure that my informants knew who I was and what I was working on:

I agreed to meet with a ‘right-wing’ Greek Cypriot man, who was working for a local association. I could contact him with the help of a friend. He rejected crossing the border, since he interpreted it as recognizing the Turkish administration in the North, so we decided to meet at the Ledra checkpoint in Nicosia. He did not even want to set his foot on the buffer zone; we walked towards the Greek side. The police stopped me to see my passport. That was the moment I realized that he was thinking that I was a Turkish Cypriot. When he saw my passport, his face turned red, literally. He had a small conversation with the police and started walking with me, but totally silent for a couple of minutes, which felt an hour. I was fortunate that he finally decided to teach this petite Turkish woman the “reality” about Cyprus, and the following three hours were an amazingly informative entrance to the world of a right-wing Greek person’s viewpoint about my topics, and also on a local organization’s activities that were centered on reminding people of the life before 1970s in Kyrenia. But the lesson was learned; I would not be lucky always. [December 19, 2011]

Whatever the reasons for their willingness to talk to me –perhaps to save me from the indoctrination of the Turkish discourse, or simply due to a sincere endeavor to help me –Greek Cypriots invalidated my concerns. This most likely happened through a

combination of factors. I mostly used the snowball technique to contact my informants, since the power of referrals in a small island is tremendous. Namely, I looked for those who met the needs of the project and asked people to name others who might be willing to help me in the research. This was especially useful in the Southern part, where I could not visit the small villages by myself and try talking to people spontaneously. I should note that this resulted in somewhat of an imbalance in the number of men and women I formally interviewed, since people usually did not consider women as sources of knowledge and they directed me to male informants. But I found the opportunity to have casual conversation more with women at the religious sites, since they are practicing religion more than men in such places –with an exception of some prayer times at mosques, which are attended only by men.

My connections in Cyprus gradually and immensely increased with the help of a researcher position in a historical project funded by UNDP, for which I started to work in order to financially support myself in the field before I received a grant from the Wenner-Gren Foundation. Although it doubled my workload throughout my fieldwork, this bi-communal job not only gave me the credentials for convincing my informants of my ‘scientific’ objectives, rather than malicious/spying ones, but it also helped me to establish relations with many people from both sides. As a practical matter, this job also enabled me to stay in the Greek part longer and easier, with a work permit, than would otherwise have been impossible. Thirdly, although it was exhausting emotionally, I became an agent for many Cypriots to voice their resentment at Turkey. I openly responded to their questions about my own life, my country, and most importantly, my thoughts about the Cyprus problem and the occupation of Cyprus by Turkey, though in a cautious and vague way. This

generally established for me a kind of intimacy that opened the venue for expressing thoughts and emotions that were more vigorous than I had expected.

The final factor, I believe, was that Cypriots are relatively used to researchers and their unending curiosity about experiences of ethnic conflict. This was helpful, in terms of Cypriots' familiarity and approaches to me as a researcher, but only to some extent, because it also meant that they were experienced in manipulating and orienting the conversation to suit their own interests. Difficulty in interviews came mostly from going beyond the predetermined/stereotyped narratives that were in accordance with the official discourses. Some interviews even made me think that the interviewee had a specific script in her/his mind that s/he wanted to repeat: They would tell me a few sentences that were relevant to my question, then pull the conversation to the stories that they preferred be recorded. I sometimes had to ask the same question in several different ways to get an answer, and in some of them, I just accepted the fact that s/he was unreceptive to my interests. The conversation could even turn sour when I started asking questions on sensitive issues, but I slowly learned to pose personal and potentially threatening questions only after I would develop a healthy rapport with the interviewees. However, usually their confusion with my relatively unusual questions, which were about small details of everyday life that only indirectly touched upon the conflict, or on big political issues and the relations with the other community, quickly transformed into curiosity regarding what I was going to do with this material. This let them be eager to speak and uncover these hidden details and stories.

Although it was somewhat risky, I used a tape-recorder when possible, considering the potent power of the oral medium, although it was carrying the risk of a limited and

sheltered conversation. Note taking was not only slowing down the process, but also objectifying the ethnographic encounter/interaction, italicizing the distinction between the researcher and the researched. Not only words, but also reticence and hesitance in talking about the past or certain subjects were revealing. The depth of their loss and the extent of their difficulties during and after the war were more than an excuse for keeping the stories inside, but mostly they were generous in sharing.

As Crapanzano puts it, “fieldwork is at some level always a violation. We are rather uninvited guests who hopefully, once welcomed, behave with consideration and perhaps even offer our hosts something they value” (2010:57). I was an uninvited guest, whose questions sometimes evoked disturbance, and sadness. Many interviews were interrupted with tears, moments of commemoration and nostalgia, and I shared them. Though it is considered somewhat controversial in anthropology, I sometimes did respond to their help requests, by taking pictures of a valued place that they could not visit, by looking for a neighbor whom they could not contact after the division, or by mediating for the repair of a ruined church. I felt in each moment of my research that Cyprus is a land of longing, pain, and wounds for almost half a century now. This research will, I hope, contribute to healing, something that Cypriots would value.

Finally, I would like to highlight the fact that this research is very much time-bounded. This is probably the case for all ethnographic studies, but since Cyprus is a small island with a big political turmoil, things change fast. Moreover, I have studied a slippery phenomenon, memory, which is influenced easily by both personal experiences and social developments. Therefore, the results of this study would be completely different if it was conducted at a different time period in Cyprus. But I didn’t consider this as a flaw, rather as

a strength that has the power to provide insight into the impact of both structural and immediate factors that impact memory.

## **2.2 NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY**

Language in Cyprus is highly politicized, as expected, and all term choices carry the risk of implying one or the other official view of history and politics. I paid careful attention to use neutral expressions, as much as I could, and to the extent which the literatures on Cyprus allow me to do so. As an explanatory example, Turkey's military operation is "invasion, occupation" for Greek Cypriots, and "peaceful operation" for Turkish Cypriots. One can easily reveal her/his position by preferring one or the other.

I always used the terms "Greek Cypriots" and "Turkish Cypriots" to distinguish them from "Greeks from Greece" and "Turks from Turkey." I also would like to note here that sometimes I preferred Southern Cyprus and Northern Cyprus for convenience of writing, instead of the Republic of Cyprus and the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. In everyday language, however, these terms usually doesn't make much sense to local people. For example, when I said "I moved to the South," Greek Cypriots couldn't understand that I was referring to the Greek part. They mostly prefer the terms "the free area" and "the occupied area." Turkish Cypriots, on the other hand, call the other part "Rum tarafi" [Greek part] in everyday conversations.

Indeed, my utilization of Southern and Northern Part as neutral geographic terms

caused serious trouble in a visa application. Briefly, I was invited to a conference at the University of Cyprus in 2012. I applied to the Embassy of the Republic of Cyprus in Washington for a short-term visa. The process took pretty long, more than a month, as I expected, but I thought there was no problem. Only much later, at the dinner after the conference, the German scholar who invited me to the conference, told that there was a long correspondence between the Embassy and the University, since the Embassy didn't like the wording of my abstract and refused to give me visa on the grounds that I was not recognizing the Republic of Cyprus, because I was saying "Southern Cyprus." I still don't know the details about how the problem was solved at the end, but I have added one more story to my legendary, always scandalous, visa applications to the Republic of Cyprus.

### **2.3 NOTE FOR THE READER: FROM NICOSIA TO NICOSIA VIA BUCHAREST**

Cyprus is an island of dilemmas and perplexity in many respects. For a researcher, the complicated and somewhat difficult process of obtaining the work permit and moving to the Republic of Cyprus would be worth examining by itself. My case shows clearly how individuals are being trapped within the 'artificial' borders of nation states, and how these borders create 'genuine' boundaries in the same individuals' minds. The controversy and tragic quality of the situation basically stems from the fact that Turkey and the Republic of Cyprus do not have diplomatic relations. Therefore, the government institutions of both

countries neither recognize nor trust each other's documents, which incredibly slowed down the processing of my application for a work permit. When I received my permit, which required my residence in the Republic of Cyprus (not including the occupied area), I had to fly to Bucharest from Ankara in order to enter Cyprus from the South. Despite the work permit, troubled-border crossings never ceased during my whole stay in Cyprus, since I was constantly moving to go to my office in the UN buffer zone, to do research and teach at a university in Northern Cyprus. The high point of my daily confrontation with officers at the checkpoint was an argument I had with a police officer at the Ledra palace checkpoint. As happened always, the police stopped me at the border and started examining my passport and work permit, in a slow manner, for minutes. Finally losing my temper, I said "I cross this checkpoint two times everyday, you know me and my car, and you still stop me each time to check my passport." He replied in a nervous voice: "Of course, we will check. This is a border." I paused for a minute and asked him "Is this really a border? So you recognize that the other part is another country." He was perplexed; I walked away. He didn't stop me again.

### **3.0 MNEMONIC AGENCIES**

#### **3.1 SUBJECTIFYING MEMORY, QUESTIONING FORGETTING: THEORETICAL APPROACHES**

Whatever might be said about forgetting also says something about remembering. Selective remembrance requires forgetting fragments of the past. Flower says “(c)hoosing what to remember must entail also the choice of what to forget, what to pass over in silence, and what to obscure” (2006:1). I analyze the patterns of social forgetting through both official and individual narratives regarding the ethnic conflict in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century in Cyprus. I focus on the imprint of the ethnic clash on collective consciousness, addressing and comparing the Greek and Turkish sides. However, the study is not limited to the national ways of remembering and forgetting, but also pays attention to individual and local memories that differ from so-called public memories and the official memories that are imposed by the political powers. How do Greek and Turkish Cypriots frame their own personal memories, and how do these narratives connect at some point with collective ones? The research mainly focuses on tracing the memories from personal accounts, and giving personality to the members of collective remembering and forgetting.



### **3.1.1. KEY ISSUES ON MEMORY AND THIS STUDY'S APPROACH**

#### **3.1.1.1. Individual vs. collective**

Studies on memory in anthropology and sociology mostly pay attention to the collectivity of memories, and individual memory is trivialized in its impact on the politics of memory. Even those works, which conflate collective and individual memory, tend to analyze individual recollections within the frame of cultural scripts (Conway 1998) or mental templates (Ashplant et al. 2000), focusing on wider social and cultural contexts that shape the memories of the past. These studies draw upon the pioneering figure of Halbwachs' functionalist approach to memory. Halbwachs argues that "(w)hile the collective memory endures and draws strength from its base in a coherent body of people, it is individuals as group members who remember" (1992:22). Frederic Bartlett, in social psychology, similarly explains the persistent framework determined by the social organization that "acts as a schematic basis for constructive memory" (1932:255); however, he also notes the conflicting tendencies in social life, though discussing within the framework of psychology and 'primitive' cultures (1923: 105).

Schudson (1995) and Kansteiner (2002) refer to cultural construction of language and narrative patterns to explain the social nature of individual remembering and forgetting. As Green argues, in these studies, individual memory is "either subsumed under 'collective memory' or assigned to the realm of the passive unconscious" (2004:36). My research aims to reconcile individual and collective memories, similar to some recent

memory studies (Cole 2001, Shaw 2002, Ricoeur 2004), without degrading individual memories as impotent, or lacking in active agency. Contrary to Halbwachs, I will talk about conflicting memories, which are NOT fading away from memory, just because they do not accord with the group (see Green 2004:38). Peter Burke calls our attention to “both memories of conflict and conflicts of the memory” with the classic example of Northern Ireland, emphasizing that “(i)t would be unwise to follow Durkheim and his pupil Halbwachs too closely in this respect, and to discuss the social function of the social memory as if conflict and dissent did not exist” (1997:55). I discuss stories that transcend the traditional historical narratives about the past. Talking about everyday issues related to the past allows people the space to tell their own stories, which helps us to have a better understanding of both sides’ perspectives, as a more nuanced history of Cyprus. These fine details will be used to address and advance the literatures I cite.

I am aware of the difficulty of differentiating collective and individual memories. Collective memories are not simply the collection of individual memories, and memory is a highly complex and slippery phenomenon. I argue that, in the example of Cyprus, we may speak about at least four layers that are effective on people’s memories: individual, familial, local and national memories. During my fieldwork, it became clear that people’s ways of remembering and forgetting the past very much depended on their own personal and familial experiences (e.g. whether traumatic or not, whether people had losses both familial and material, whether they were displaced or not, the quality of their lives after the division of the island), local experiences (e.g. what happened in their own villages during the conflict, whether their villages had been mixed or ethnically homogenous, relations with neighbors) and national memories, meaning those developed by the political

authorities and disseminated through education. The political, social and economic circumstances during my field research also definitely affected what people remembered and preferred to tell. This research would definitely have different results if it had been done, for instance, before the opening of the checkpoints in 2003. Despite this complexity, I will briefly explain some general tendencies and patterns of Greek and Turkish memories. These observations depend on the interviews done with the local people.

#### *Commonalities:*

1. Memory is *selective*, biased, maintaining a positive image of the self and a negative of the other, presenting one's self as victim in order to explain her/his own version of the conflict and justify her/his own deeds.

2. The *suffering* of the other community and their displacement is not mentioned and recognized as important consequential outcomes of the conflict. Blame is laid on the shoulders of the Other or the outsiders (British Empire, Turkey, Greece etc.)

3. *Longed-for places* are imagined and remembered as having been bigger and better than they actually are, or were. Therefore, visits to the other side of the island after 2003 caused astonishment and often disappointment among people. Moreover, many people were faced with the fact that their homes were entirely or partially destroyed, and most of them refused to visit their villages again after this visit.

#### *Differences:*

1. Greek Cypriots tend to remember the past more positively, which complies with the state-supported narrative of peaceful coexistence before 1974. Although Turkish

Cypriots do not always have negative images about Greek Cypriots and the common life with them, as it is often assumed, most of the Turkish Cypriots definitely emphasize that they wouldn't trust Greek Cypriots again. Accordingly, Greek and Turkish Cypriots remember the same events, places and stories in opposite ways, sometimes.

2. As I mentioned earlier, personal experiences largely determine the perception of the Other, and of the past. I realized in the interviews, for example, that two significant facts from the period of war affected Greek Cypriots very deeply. Firstly, the majority of the displaced Greek-Cypriots moved to the South in 1974 with the expectation of returning.

Thus, most of them could only save whatever they could take with them when they were displaced. People are especially sad at losing their family photographs. The second is the settlement policy for the displaced people by the Greek Cypriot administration. Greek Cypriots were mostly scattered throughout the South, whereas Turkish Cypriots moved more collectively, with the displaced residents of villages or neighborhoods from the South sometimes settling together in the North. This enabled the Turkish displaced to keep their former relationships and neighborliness, and to miss their former lives less.

3. The research indicated that different kinds of spaces are significant for Greek and Turkish Cypriots in terms of their connection with the land and longing for the past. Orthodox churches and monasteries are strong indicators of identities for Greek Cypriots, whereas the churches' counterparts, mosques and *tekkes*, are not essential and definitive for Turkish Cypriots. Turkish Cypriots long more for their lost houses. The former President of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, Mehmet Ali Talat, told me in our conversation that Turkish Cypriots even don't miss their houses; their only concern is the value of their lost properties –whether their former house cost more or less than their

current houses in the North. This argument might be valid for some Turkish Cypriots, but definitely not for all of them.

4. Greek Cypriots more frequently express the desire to go back than Turkish Cypriots. Many Greeks call for the re-unification of the island, and still have emotional connections with the lost land, whereas Turkish Cypriots do not seem to have any longing for the South. Although Turkish Cypriots also miss their former houses and lives, they appear more ready to forget the past. Greek Cypriots still express their nostalgic feelings, although they know (or rather have come to realize recently) that going back to their former life is practically impossible. The last two points can be taken complementarily, since churches and monasteries mark lands that Greek Cypriots still claim, while the Turkish Cypriots have given up the claims on the territory, which makes the religious buildings irrelevant for them.

#### **3.1.1.2. Forgetting as a complex/active/positive process**

Another critique of memory studies can be directed against the negativity and passivism generally associated with forgetting. Following Mary Douglas (1995: 13), I consider forgetting in a comprehensive way, including practices of selective remembering, misremembering, disremembering, and also omitting, distorting, or silencing past events/experiences and their traces, in order to shape a collective memory. Moreover, as Douglas emphasizes, forgetting is not necessarily a negative process: "It is not wrong to

forget, it is not necessarily sad to forget, and we should not, cannot, strive strenuously to remember everything we ever knew” (1995:15). From a psychological point of view, we need to forget and it is necessary to forget in order to remember things. At present, remembering is usually privileged over forgetting, which is taken simply as negation, neglect, failure, absence of remembering, or unintended social amnesia (Boyers 1985, Brockmeier 2002, Jacoby 1975, Nora 1989, Rappaport 1990). Forgetting is also considered a process in which people are passive actors, since it is taken as the “default option” (Assche et.al 2009), that which occurs unless steps are taken to assist memory. In this research, however, I consider forgetting as a potentially “desirable social goal” (Battaglia 1992:14) and a *positive* process for some social actors. That is to say, a certain body of knowledge of the past regarding the former shared life and subsequent ethnic conflict might be produced deliberately and actively by obscuring material evidence of what the other community wishes remember. Thus, I do not attribute automatically positive or negative values to either remembering or forgetting, as remembering can also be negative, “critical, contestatory and at times subversive” (Fabian 2007:78) and “inquiry into memory is unsettling in principle” (Fabian 2007:93).

I see forgetting as being the “dialectical counterpart” of memory (Papadakis, 1993) or of remembering (according to Assche et al. 2009), and “as integral to memory as death is to life” (Auge 2004), and thus as an indispensable part of memory studies. Yet I also underline forgetting’s substantive nature, referring to Heidegger’s statement in *Being and Time* that “(j)ust as expecting is possible only on the basis of awaiting, remembering is possible only on that of forgetting, and *not vice versa*” (1978:389, emphasis added). Forgetting can be different from remembering both in the ways it is practiced and the

outcomes it creates, and is not regarded in this research as only “part and parcel of a larger project of remembering” (Lowenthal 1999:xii), or as a “necessary and logical counterpart to remembering” (Assche et al. 2009:212).

Individually and collectively, people may engage in processes of selective editing of the past, discarding and keeping particular events and knowledge to deal with traumas, painful memories and current dilemmas. Forgetting, in this sense, is a complex phenomenon, and surely more difficult to detect and trace than remembering. It is different from remembering both in the ways it is practiced and in the outcomes it produces. The important point is that it is hard, but necessary, to “identify the principles of selection and to note how they vary from place to place or from one group to another and how they change over time” (Burke 1997:46).

Forgetting is not only imposed from above, but it is sometimes exercised voluntarily from below. It is also important to note that sometimes, traumatic experiences are not forgotten, but just not expressed. Ethnographic study of memory has a methodological advantage to deal with this kind of difficulty by allowing the researcher to have access to people’s stories through intimate relations established through time. One experience in the field taught me this radically. I interviewed a close friend’s parents in the Greek part, and after the interview, when she was giving me a ride to my home, my friend told me, silently crying, that these memories were never spoken in that house before. This brought a mixture of feelings to me: astonishment at my tendency to think that the memories (good or bad) are passed to the new generations by the parents; being disturbed and embarrassed for interfering in their lives and making them verbalize their sorrow, and finally feeling gratitude for their being so kind and hospitable to me by sharing very

personal memories that were clearly kept deep inside for years. Moreover, verbalizing memories is not the only way to transmit memories. Focusing on the everyday experience of the Holocaust survivors and their descendants in Israel, Carol Kidron shows the nonpathological presence of the traumatic past within silent, embodied practices, person-object interaction, and person-person interaction. She explains how tacit knowledge of the past is transmitted within the everyday private social milieu (2009:5).

In Cyprus, the personal stories and narrations of experiences started to be expressed more frequently in the form of diaries, autobiographies, village histories, memorial books in the last decade, in both parts of the island. People are writing their memories and publishing with the local publishers that distribute only inside the island. This dissertation research does not include the systematic analysis of these publications, but I refer to them at times.

### **3.1.1.3. Strategies of forgetting**

Forgetting in Cyprus has been exercised through both narratives (official policies, history education etc.) and contexts, specifically spatial ones such as destroying the Other's physical structures, nationalizing the landscape, changing place names. Forgetting thus involves processes and mechanisms such as:

1. Removing selected events, places, and stories from social memory;
2. Negation and disconfirmation of selected events, places, stories;



3. Revising selected events, places, and stories;

Strategies of forgetting include:

1. Formation of new narratives or revising old ones in order to emphasize certain periods or certain events, as in the case of Kırklar Tekke, which is re-imagined as a thoroughly Sunni Muslims site, although it used to be a mixed site used by both Muslims and Christians.

2. Destruction/obliteration/demolition/ignorance of physical remains (objects and sites) belonging to the Other or to the unwanted past, or appropriating these remains into the newly reconceptualized landscape through musemification, nationalization, Islamization, Christianization, or secularization, as happened in the cases of Saint Barnabas Monastery and Saint Mamas Monastery, which are converted into museums; and in the case of Apostolos Andreas Monastery, which became the focus of allegations regarding the supposed burial of a Muslim saint at the spot.

3. Creation of a new symbolic geography that legitimizes the current policies, through such actions as changing village names, or building memorials that remind the ethnic war.

4. Employing other mnemonic devices for selective remembering and forgetting: history education, memorials, rituals, commemoration ceremonies, museums. However, discussion of such devices is mostly excluded from the scope of this dissertation, due to the preferred focus on the religious sites as mnemonic devices.

5. Preserving the Other's heritage in subordinated positions, without protecting restoring, them or by using their sites, in order to claim dominance and sovereignty over the landscape, and to emphasize that culture belongs to past.

Having briefly mentioned the mechanisms and strategies in which forgetting is exercised; the case studies in the following chapters will explain specific examples. These strategies are mostly employed by the authorities; however, individuals also have their own strategies of dealing with the memories of the past, which confirm, support, negotiate, contest or resist these mechanisms and strategies through their actions and practices. It should be also noted that state agencies do not always follow the official discourses, having their own tricky escaping ways, such as restoring sites in a slapdash manner only to get rid of international critiques.

### **3.2. POLITICS OF MEMORY IN CYPRUS: OFFICIAL DISCOURSES AND (UN)SILENT OTHERS**

“Had both sides have similar feelings towards each other, the Cyprus problem would have been at a different point now.”

Mehmet Ali Talat, former President of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. [Personal communication, 2011]

“If I were to become a president, I would bring back the old times, when people used to live in peace and were innocent.”

An 80-year old Greek Cypriot woman from Komi Kebir/Büyükkonuk. [2011]

#### **3.2.1. Remembering the shared life**

It has been argued by many scholars in reference to various contexts, that history and memory are selectively constructed and instrumental in legitimizing nationalist projects. Cyprus is a typical case with its competing nationalist discourses and controversial histories, and a unique case as an island with two governments, only one of which and governing effectively only one part being recognized by the international community. This subsection is about how Greek and Turkish Cypriots remember the ethnic conflict and the

previously shared life with 'the Other.' These communities construct and articulate the modern history of Cyprus in different, even opposite ways, with different ways of remembering, commemorating and forgetting the past. As happens in almost all similar cases, both sides basically remember their own suffering, and the historical trauma they experienced, rather than empathizing with the Other. They blame the other community for what happened; the Other is the enemy and aggressor, and they themselves are victims and martyrs. School textbooks, political rituals, narratives and symbols are all employed to dehumanize the unfamiliar Other and ingrain hatred for the enemy. However, I should note that from Greek Cypriot perspectives, Turkey and Turkish settlers are the main enemies and responsible for what happened. As I explain in the following subsections, many Greek Cypriots see Turkish Cypriots as native to the island and recognize that they went through similar traumatic experiences. A 58-year old Greek Cypriot man from the village Rizokarpaso (Dipkarpaz in Turkish) in the North emphasized the common suffering:

I can recall that Turkish Cypriots were forced to leave. But I can also recall that they were eager to leave and start a new life. Most Turkish Cypriots were enclaved in British bases. They used to live in tent camps or enclaved in their villages. It was a sad era, because everybody used to leave their houses. [2011]

However, in their recalling of the events, both sides deliberately emphasize certain events and periods more than others, and suppress the rest. As Bryant and Papadakis claims, history has become an arena for the struggle: "our truth/facts/objective history and their lies/propaganda/politically-motivated accounts" (2012:13). Memory plays its own active role in this story, and not surprisingly, each community appears to reflect its Other, like a mirror.

### 3.2.2. A history of controversy

The recent history of the island and the chronic 'Cyprus problem' have been shaped through various stages since the Ottoman and British periods. The British de facto annexed the island in 1878, after three centuries of Ottoman rule (1571-1878). Before that, the Ottoman Empire, "applying the well-known *sürgün* (deportation) method, transferred peasants and town dwellers from Anatolia and settled them on the island" (Kızılyürek 2006:315). During this period, Orthodox Christian/Greek and Muslim/Turkish communities shared everyday living space with each other; but their administrative and educational systems were separate. Souter argues that "(t)hey coexisted peacefully but remained socially distinct, participating in each others' ceremonies and cooperating in a variety of economic arrangements, but rarely inter-marrying or taking joint political initiatives" (1984:658). The Ottomans governed the island through the millet system, the population being divided into different communities on the basis of religious affiliation. Thus, the Porte acknowledged the Orthodox as separate millet, and the Orthodox Archbishop as the Ethnarch (political leader) of this community; however, the Muslims were the ruling religious group, and the non-Muslim population could not participate in the administration unless they were converted (Kızılyürek 2006:316). Still, joint uprisings by the Christian and Muslim populations against the ruling elite of Cyprus have been noted by historians: "there was on more than one occasion observable political collaboration between the Orthodox and Moslem masses, illustrated by several joint efforts, often in the

form of insurrections, to resist the injustices of the administrators from which they too shared a common interest of being relieved” (Nevzat 2005: 66).

Governmental actions during the British “system of administration based on indirect rule and proportional participation of the population” (Kızılyürek 2006:316) undermined the privileged position of the Muslim community. This period witnessed the exploitation of ethnic and religious differences between the two communities, and the rise of Greek and Turkish nationalism (Kitromilides 1979, Bryant 2006). Greek-Cypriot nationalism, in the form of the demand for union with Greece (*enosis*), transformed into a mass movement after the Second World War. Turkish-Cypriot nationalism and mobilization developed mainly in reaction to this Greek national desire, which the Turkish Cypriots perceived as a threat to their existence. Their perception of this threat was a rational one, considering the fate of the Cretan Muslim community who were forced to flee into Anatolia after the annexation of Crete to Greece in 1908 and the withdrawal of Ottoman troops from Crete (see Şenışık 2013). Turkish Cypriots initially expressed their desire for the continuation of the British rule, but later demanded the division of the island (*taksim*). Turkish Cypriots turned their faces toward Turkey, both for protection and as a ‘role model’ country. The crystallization of ethnic identities and self-identification with reference to the mainland led to the transformation of religious Orthodox Christians and Muslims into ethnic Greeks and Turks.

Independence from British colonial rule and the creation of a new, independent state in 1960, after the five-year guerilla struggle by Greek Cypriots for *enosis*, did not satisfy either groups, and brought increasing political tensions and interethnic fighting between the majority Greek and minority Turkish populations. EOKA (the National

Organization of Cypriot Fighters) was formed to bring about the aim of *enosis* in 1955. In 1957, Turkish Cypriots, who formed 18% of the population, established their own paramilitary organization, TMT (Turkish Resistance Organization), against EOKA and in favor of *taksim*. In conjunction with the Greek and Turkish nationalisms, foreign intervention fuelled the conflict in various ways, such as the employment of Turkish Cypriots as auxiliary policemen by the British authority to fight against the EOKA (Papadakis et.al 2006:2) This resulted in further estrangement and deterioration of the relations. During the fighting in 1963-64 and 1967, Turkish Cypriots abandoned their homes and withdrew into separate enclaves under their own control. According to Byrant's report on Turkish Cypriot displacement, "(b)etween late 1963 and July 1974, then, displaced Turkish Cypriots invariably lived in enclaves, and until 1968 had no access to their homes and lands" (2012:9)

The interethnic fighting was followed by a period of intra-communal conflict among Greek Cypriots following the military junta's seizure of power in Greece in 1967. The Greek Cypriot leadership gradually abandoned the desire for *enosis*. In response, the junta-backed EOKA B was formed to oust President Makarios, and to bring about *enosis*. During the early 1970s, EOKA B launched a campaign of killings, violence and intimidation against the government and the Communist Party AKEL that culminated in a coup in 1974. This led to violent clashes between the communities, and ultimately to Turkey's military intervention on 20 July 1974, which resulted in the division of the island. The UN established the 'Green Line' dividing Turkish-controlled areas from the rest of the island, which is now the *de facto* border between the TRNC (Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus) and the territory controlled by the Government of Cyprus. This time, Greek Cypriots were the ones who

suffered more (Loizos 1981). Around 165,000 Greek Cypriots and 45,000 Turkish Cypriots were displaced from one side of the Green Line to the other. The relocation of Greek and Turkish Cypriots that accompanied the division made the two parts largely ethnically homogeneous. The TRNC remains internationally unrecognized, except by Turkey. Greek Cypriots gained the right to represent the entire island, as the Republic of Cyprus, in the United Nations, and then in the European Union. Turkish Cypriots initially welcomed the arrival of the Turkish army, but gradually felt uncomfortable with the influx of Turkish settlers from the Turkey, and the political control of their side (Navaro-Yashin 2006). The conflict and division has been continuing between the Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities since then, though in various ways and on different levels, and complicated on the Turkish side by resentments of mainland Turks by Turkish Cypriots.

### **3.2.3. Whose memory?**

In fact, Greek and Turkish authorities resemble each other very much in their attempts to shape the collective memories of their own communities, but their objectives and underlying messages are disparate. As powerful media to transmit memory, slogans are widely used by the governments that appear to be the best examples to explain my point. An example of outwardly similar/intrinsically different slogans is the Greek ‘*δεν ξεχνω*’ (*then xehno*, I don’t forget) and Turkish ‘*unutmayacağız!*’ (we won’t forget). Though seemingly alike, they have different meanings, and turn their faces to opposite directions in



terms of time. What is not forgotten is left vague and open to interpretation; however it is not difficult to understand their connotations when analyzed within the general discourses on the ethnic conflict.

For Greek Cypriots, '*then xehno*' (I don't forget) means always to remember that one-third of their country is under occupation and that they were forced to leave their houses and properties in the North.<sup>2</sup> The saying refers to the presumed temporary nature of the current situation and to the belief that they will return one day. '*Unutmayacağız*' (we won't forget), on the other hand, means that Turkish Cypriots won't forget their sufferings, the 'brutality' of Greek Cypriots, their martyrs and sacrifices, and probably includes the help of Turkey to protect them from their enemies. The Turkish slogan looks backwards to a past that won't be forgotten in order to construct today and tomorrow, but only to reinforce the break with that past. The Greek slogan is nostalgic and sees the future through what it was left behind.

The pronominal choices are also expressive. The Turkish plural pronoun clearly polarizes the categories of 'them' and 'us.' It strategically invokes the shared ethnic identity, and the 'common experience' in the past that targeted and threatened their existence. 'We' might also cover Turks from the motherland, with whom they fought against the Greek enemy. For the Greek version, the creator of the slogan, Nikos Dimou, a Greek writer and philosopher, explains why he chose the first person singular pronoun: "I wanted this to become a personal issue for every single individual. Not a vague collective matter for an abstract body. To add to that, this WAS a personal matter for me. I had visited Northern

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<sup>2</sup> For an image of a primary school notebook with this slogan on the front cover, see figure 4.

Cyprus three years before the invasion, had lived in the invaded places and loved them.”<sup>3</sup> This most likely reflects many Greek Cypriots’ perspectives on the issue. Also, the use of the plural pronoun (*then xehname*) is not only grammatically less convenient and direct than the singular one, but also it could have had the risk of referencing mainland Greeks, which might seem to recall *enosis*, a policy that Greek Cypriots abandoned long ago.

Papadakis also mentions a ‘blind dialogue’ of slogans between the two sides in the Dead Zone in Nicosia: ‘I don’t forget’ in Greek, and as a response ‘We won’t forget the slaughter either’ in Turkish, which “were meant to be read by those on the other side, but since each was written in a language which the other side no longer understood, the effect was largely lost. Two desperate screams that remained unheard. A wall reflected them back” (2005:126)

Broadly speaking, the government of the Greek part stresses the idea that the ‘occupation’ of the Northern part will terminate and the island will eventually unite, promoting a strong discourse of ‘nostalgia’, the desire to return to the past, and a discourse of ‘peaceful coexistence’ of Greek and Turkish Cypriots in the island. For this reason, Greek Cypriots do not want to remember, and thus do not commemorate, the period of inter-communal conflict, and as Loizos rightly points out, “Greek Cypriot authorities keep silent about the atrocities committed against the Turkish Cypriots” (1981:111). As documented well by Papadakis, Greek Cypriots mostly remember and commemorate the 1955-60 period and the events of 1974 (1993:141). They celebrate the start of the EOKA struggle (April 1<sup>st</sup>, 1955) and Independence Day (October 1<sup>st</sup>, 1960) (1993:142) –at least officially.

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<sup>3</sup> Personal communication. January 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2013.

However, the Turkish administration, under the influence of Turkey, imposes a policy of erasing the shared past and creating a new homeland for its citizens. Thereby, the process of forgetting common life with the Greeks is crucial for Turkish Cypriots, since they need to “legitimate their creation of a state in northern Cyprus”(Killoran 1998a:161). Turkish Cypriots prefer remembering and commemorating the events between 1963 and 1967, the period during which they suffered most, and lament for their martyrs. They celebrate the Turkish army’s intervention, which they call the ‘Peace Operation’ as opposed to the Greek Cypriots’ term ‘Invasion,’ and the declaration of the independent TRNC state in July 1983 (Papadakis 1992:143).

The selective remembrances of both communities make it clear that they stress very different configurations of state and nation in Cyprus, and the consequences of these differences. Turkish Cypriots are unwilling to consider accepting a state structure that does not guarantee their protection. The Turkish side argues “for a federation in which the communities share equally in all institutions of central government, while the two geographically and ethnically distinct ‘federated states’ function as independent economic units and even maintain semi-autonomous foreign relations” (Souter 1984:670). Greek Cypriots consider this formula unworkable, but they know that a unitary state under majority Greek Cypriot control is not possible anymore. “The search for a federal settlement based on the twin principles of bi-zonality and bi-communality has formed the basis of the Cyprus solution since then [the Turkish invasion]” (Ker-Lindsay 2009:21).

Obviously, the slogans and messages related to collective memories target the young generations, who didn’t experience and thus couldn’t remember the events directly. It is already known that people who are old enough to have first-hand experience can/will

never forget the past. Their lives have been haunted by the memories of the ethnic clash, whereas younger generations' perceptions and memories are essentially repercussions of the official discourses, which have been transmitted via mostly both 'biased' education (see Christou 2006 and 2007, Papadakis 2008a and 2008b, Syrou 2011, Zembylas & Bekerman 2008) and families. Creating specific knowledge and memory about the past in younger generations can be a powerful tool to legitimate the present circumstances.

Although my research depends largely on interviews with people who experienced or still remember the ethnic clashes, daily conversations with members of younger generations reflected their relatively less interest in the Cyprus problem. A 25-year old performance artist said to me:

They [young people] don't care at all. They just mind their own lives. They are used to the status quo, why would they ask for any change? They don't have any motivations for any kind of change. But the Cyprus problem has to be resolved. Who would want to live in a divided country? [October 9, 2011]

I should note that specific recent changes in the island (the rejection of Annan Plan by the Greek Cypriots, the opening of checkpoints in 2003 and the EU membership of the Republic of Cyprus, Turkish Cypriots' increasing disappointment with Turkey's continuing presence on the island, which resulted in economic stagnation, isolation from the rest of the world, and outnumbering of immigrant Turks) have influenced not only the memories in the societies, specifically with the growing contact with the other side, but also the official discourses that aim to mold these memories. Bryant claims this process is a "fracturing of imaginings of the 'other side'" (2012: 333). People could cross the borders, visit their former villages and make new friends from the other side that prove that the

Other is actually 'human.' This has been expressed openly by some of my interviewees. Though published just before the opening of the checkpoints, a Turkish book, consisting of interviews conducted with young Turkish Cypriots about their perceptions of the Cyprus problem, also mentions similar changes in the images of the Other with some kinds of encounters (Young Turkish Cypriots are Speaking, Güngör , 2002). Two interesting titles in the book are: 'I saw that they are also people like us (*Gördüm ki, onlar da bizim gibi insanmış*)' and 'I would never have thought of a Greek Cypriot as a woman or a child (*Bir Rumu kadın veya çocuk olarak düşünemezdim*).' The latter apparently depends on the assumption of the 'innocence' of women and children, which does not fit to the image of the 'brutal' Greek Cypriot. Unexpected exposure to different narratives following the opening of the borders has most likely radically challenged and changed mutual perceptions.

Another important point to note is that the official narratives are not static, but have constantly changed according to different circumstances. For instance, the historical narrative in the Greek side, which claimed the 'Greekness' of the island and represented the Turks as the archenemies, was replaced after 1974 with the narrative of harmonious coexistence of Greek and Turkish Cypriots as the natives of the island (Bryant&Papadakis 2012:11). This narrative of pan-Cypriotism has been specifically adopted by the Greek Cypriot Left, which has been representing the anti-nationalist and marginalized account of history. It has been argued by Chatzipanagiotidou that pan-Cypriotism "fails to contest the dominant nationalist approach to history; on the contrary, leftist 'unofficial' history may strengthen the official discourse by appearing as co-opted and confined within the same rhetoric" (2012:96). However, despite the recent changes in the island, bi-communal projects, and attempts to revise the hostile language – especially in history textbooks - the

deeply rooted and institutionalized conceptual frameworks have remained mostly intact. The history of Cyprus has remained highly controversial, and diverse, and the war continues through narratives and history in the island (Bryant & Papadakis 2012:2).

It is a fact that the personal experiences and stories are to some extent structured by, or contextualized within, the frame of official narrative. Individual memories definitely have their own dynamics, which make them different from collective memories. Individuals who experienced traumatic events may or may not contribute to the formation of collective memories, depending on how and to what extent they are related to/have access to political arena, interests, or opportunities, and also depending on whether they want to dwell on pathologies or, as Kidron's brilliant work (2010) on Holocaust descendants exemplifies, to partake in innovative provocative practices alternative to hegemonic commemorative practices that juxtapose lived memory with dead memory. Individual agency and memory are involved in the process of public remembering, if it fits within the framework of the current political and social objectives of the collectivity. It may also be the case that "secret or hidden histories" (Hayden, 1994) that challenge the officially approved ones are suppressed and not expressed openly, but still exist. Even during a personal conversation, personal stories do not come up easily. When speaking with an outsider, especially if that individual is a researcher from the 'occupier' or 'motherland' country (both included certain risks for my interviewees) that controls the politics of the island, people tend to stay in 'safe waters' and sometimes simply repeat the official discourse. I do not think that this reticence is always deliberately and actively preferred. However, I do claim that official discourses are powerful and penetrating in Cyprus to the extent that they determine the separate ethnic-centered outlines of the plot, bad and good

characters, and the ending of the whole story. Other stories could manifest themselves, when talking about small, everyday details of life that used to be shared, such as exchanging food during a feast, or attending the same ceremony. And lastly, hidden memories can be discovered on various different scales, through discursive, spatial, visual elements;<sup>4</sup> but they specifically reside in the material, which is waiting to be heard. This is where my research begins.

### **3.3. PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE OR WE-IZATION OF THE OTHER: ARE TURKISH CYPRIOTS CRYPTO-CHRISTIANS?**

#### **3.3.1. The Greek Cypriot discourses of peaceful coexistence**

The 1974 events and the division of the island generated ambivalence about the *enosis* ideal among Greek Cypriots, and “forged the feeling that Cyprus should emphasize its own character, which is different from that of Greece and Turkey, and which all of the Cypriots on the island should honor” (Christou 2006:289). This resulted in the shift in official Greek Cypriot discourse from a Hellenism-based antagonistic one into a rapprochement-based less-hostile one. Greek Cypriots demanded the reunification of the island. This new

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<sup>4</sup> For an analysis of Greek and Turkish commemorative ceremonies as representations of memory, see Papadakis 1993 and 2003.

approach emphasizes the peaceful and harmonious coexistence and cooperation of Greek and Turkish Cypriots, and that foreign interventions, specifically the occupation by Turkey, were responsible for the so-called Cyprus problem. This shift required the redefinition/re-imagination of Turkish Cypriots, who needed to be distinguished from the 'eternal enemy,' mainland Turks. Indeed, during my interviews, I encountered very few Greek Cypriots who accused Turkish Cypriots for what happened in the 1950-70s. The following words of an 80-year old Greek Cypriot woman who used to live in Komi Kebir (in the North, Büyükkonuk in Turkish), regarding the relations with Turkish Cypriots before the ethnic clash, is pretty typical to hear among Greek Cypriots:

Before [19]55, people were innocent, they were just villagers looking after their families. They feel that they were part of their villages, attending marriage ceremonies, burial ceremonies etc. People used to help each other. It wasn't important whether Turkish or Greek Cypriot... They felt that they belong to a community. That was the whole world. They were pretty closed communities.

Rabia: Then what happened? How did the events start?

I got married in 1954 and got away from the village. But we visited again. There were not clashes inside the village but a cold wind started bellowing, because instead of having common coffee-shops, everyone from every part of the community went to their own coffee-shops. People started not helping each other with the crops. People, Turkish and Greek Cypriots, were suspicious of each other. There was a cold wind blowing. There were no actual clashes inside the villages. People started withdrawing from the community. [2011]

And another account by a Greek Cypriot, Marios, who used to live in a mixed village in Larnaca before 1974:

They [Greek and Turkish Cypriots] had excellent relations up until 1964. They lived together as a normal community. They used to have certain festivals together... Most



of the time, we used to go to the beach, where it was Turkish neighborhood. Slowly after 1964... but before, there were no problems... slowly, they were moved away, pushed away and vice versa, slowly. [2012]

His emphasis on the “slowness” of the process was striking. Most Greek Cypriots I interviewed with emphasized how the relations gradually deteriorated, whereas their displacement was such a sudden, shocking experience. I had the sensation in the interviews that Turkish Cypriots were more ready and expecting for the changing political climate relatively.

The permanence of good relations is another discourse I have encountered among Greek Cypriots. The following is an account of a 43-year old Greek Cypriot whose parents were displaced from the village Vrysoulles, close to Famagusta in TRNC:

My parents are really good friends with Turkish Cypriot people, to the extent that they go to holiday with them abroad. It is not just they come to each other's house. They travel abroad together. They went to Bulgaria, Istanbul together, and Greece together. So they used to be best friends before the war and once the borders opened and people could meet each other, people retrieved what they lost these years. For them, it doesn't matter if they are branded Turkish Cypriots or Greek Cypriots. For them, it is, my friend Arif and his wife Şerife, it doesn't matter the name, the religion. They only look at the humans. [2012]

This idea of peaceful coexistence has been officially backed and promoted by the Greek Cypriot authorities. Scholars have also supported it by arguing that historically the two communities have been living together peacefully, and can live together in the future (Trimikliniotis and Bozkurt 2012: 8, Kyrris 1977, Dietzel & Makrides 2009). Peaceful coexistence and cooperation among Muslims and Orthodox Christians is considered an “old

and noble tradition” (Demosthenous 2001:8) and is even romanticized: “this kind of cooperation presupposes friendship, trust, shared feelings of justice and social order as well as acceptance of the religious beliefs of the collaborator, elements which... seemed to exist in Cyprus” (2001:9). However, Papadakis claims this shift has not been translated into educational practice, since the mention of coexistence is highly exceptional in the Greek history schoolbooks. He adds that primary level schoolchildren express similar negative stereotypes about Turks and Turkish Cypriots, and have difficulty in distinguishing them (2008: 12).

It became evident in my interviews with Greek Cypriots that they emphasize the commonality with Turkish Cypriots basically in two ways, which I explain below. These thoughts and feelings about the Turkish community specifically came up during the conversations about shared sites, not in response to my direct questions about the ethnic conflict and the former shared life. Regarding the sharing of religious sites, many Greek Cypriots believe that such places (especially Apostolos Andreas Monastery) are extremely important symbolic holy sites with powerful healing features, so it is not altogether surprising that Muslims also frequent them. None of the Greek Cypriots I have interviewed expressed any kind of discomfort regarding the sharing of such a holy place. Quite the opposite, they were enthusiastic to voice approval of it, which supports the discourse of “peaceful coexistence” and “the shared culture with Turkish Cypriots.” Interestingly, they were not equally willing to talk about sharing sites that have a dominantly Turkish or Islamic character. Therefore, it seems that what is shared is imagined as Greek and Orthodox Christian. Coexistence and shared culture does not necessarily connote to the

acknowledgement of Turkish Cypriots' existence in Cyprus as a separate, ethnic/religious group, and to sharing the territory with a group that is culturally different.

The first tendency among Greek Cypriots was referring to a 'common culture' defined as Greek and assumed to be shared by Turkish Cypriots. Some elements of formerly shared life were seen as indicators of how Turkish Cypriots are close to Greek Cypriots in terms of their culture and everyday life, including common practices at religious sites, intermarriage, and language. Although mentioned relatively few times, the second tendency was openly or covertly identifying Turkish Cypriots as the descendants of converted Greek Cypriots. Therefore, with reference to these people' perceptions, the phrasing of the situation in the shared places should probably be revised, since the process can no longer be labeled as sharing or coexistence, which seems not refer to two distinct groups, at least in some Greek Cypriots' minds.

### **3.3.2. Common culture through marriage, language, and religion**

First of all, Cyprus is almost always imagined by Greeks as a Greek land, as an extension of ancient Greek history. The history of the island is represented as an unbroken continuity, interrupted with occasional foreign invasions. Papadakis explains the narrative in the National Struggle Museum in the South: "The island became Greek during the 14<sup>th</sup> century BC when the Myceneans settled there. Since then the monuments, language, customs and traditions of the Cypriot people have all been Greek. None of the foreign rulers managed to

change the national character of the Cypriot people” (1994:401-402). The same narrative is employed in the history schoolbooks in the South (Papadakis, 2008a and 2008b). Thus, Turkish Cypriots have to be included in this picture.

One of the main indicators of commonality is seen in mixed marriages that happened before the division. It appears that there is no reliable data on the proportion of intermarriages during the Ottoman Empire and British rule, and the literature on this issue is highly controversial. While some authors claim that mixed marriages were common (Pollis 1973:583, Jennings 1993:159, Beckingham 1957a:173), others talk about the scarcity or absence of this practice and point at the religious differences as the cause of social segregation and prohibition of intermarriage (Panagides 1968:134, Fisher 2001:309, Joseph 1997:29). Intermarriage mostly happened between Muslim men and Christian women, and as Constantinou notes, “Cypriots who married across the Muslim-Christian divide before the advent of the civil marriage, had to change their religion (almost always the women) and in addition [were] required by the state to change their ethnicity” (2006:3). Thus, it seems that the practice did occur, though not frequently. However, many people writing on Cyprus mentioned this phenomenon, probably because, as Nevzat argues, “the novelty of practice, particularly in an age when such unions were commonly frowned upon, may well be the reason why it was frequently drawn attention to” (2005:67).

What I would like to emphasize here is that the very same phenomenon has been employed to demonstrate two opposite kinds of relations between Greek and Turkish Cypriots. Nevzat argues that “there are some grounds to believe that even when intermarriage did occur, it could, at times, contribute to religious tensions rather than to a

harmonious relations” (2005:67) and he provides various historical evidences for such cases (2005:67-68). Bryant talks about the Turkish Cypriots’ fears in the middle part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century that “Greek Cypriots would seduce Turkish girls,” which “would dilute the strength of the community” (2004:201). She remarks on the discussions over the retention of the religious aspects of marriage in the 1950 Turkish Cypriot family law in order to outlaw intermarriage (2004:201). Finally, Farr refers to intermarriage as a potential source of conflict, and he says “The absence of intermarriage helps to explain both the lack of a common national consciousness among the two groups and the development of an autonomous but compatible Turkish Cypriot culture” (Farr 1997:41).

Bilingualism is another practice that is considered as a confirmation of the close relations between Greek and Turkish Cypriots. A variety of Modern Greek is spoken in Cyprus, which has a different phonology and grammar than standard modern Greek. It is a spoken language, and doesn’t have an established orthography. Similarly, the Turkish spoken in Cyprus is different from that spoken in Asia Minor. However, these varieties are mutually intelligible with the varieties in the mainland, Turkey and Greece. Since the Greek population has been the majority in the island, the Greek Cypriot dialect was the main language for communication between the two groups though in the mixed rural villages there was some degree of bilingualism, especially among Turkish Cypriots (Karyolemou 2001). The common language is still seen as a factor that combines the two communities.

However, it is a fact that, separate educational and administrative systems and isolation of the two communities after the division, and ethnically oriented language policies, restricted the development of large-scale bilingualism (Karyolemou 2001:27). Özerk shows generational differences in terms of Greek language competence among the

current Turkish Cypriot population and how the number of people who can speak Greek has diminished over time. He says that Greek Cypriots “have never bothered to acquire the language of their neighbors” and the end result is that the two folk groups “have lost the opportunity to communicate with each other in their own languages” (2001:262). However, elderly Turkish Cypriots still speak Greek. It is sometimes even the case that Turkish Cypriots learned Turkish later than Greek. A translator working in the Kyrenia archives told me that she speaks much better Greek than Turkish. She said, “My mother tongue is Greek [*Rumca*]. Sometimes I pause when speaking Turkish, I have to pay attention not to make mistakes.”

The common language of elderly people seems to enable them to keep the connection, and it is a way to emphasize the close relations between the two communities. Marios from Larnaca, whom I mentioned earlier, told me about his best Turkish Cypriot friend, Rasit, who was the person who had put me in touch with Marios:

Cypriots are brothers. My best friend is Raşit, he is like my brother. I know him since I was 15 years old. He comes here, I go there. I don't have any problem when I go there, because I am with my friend, Raşit...Raşit speaks so good Greek. Sometimes when I speak to him in Greek, I say 'you are not Turkish Cypriot, you are Cypriot... you are Greek Cypriot, but you know Turkish Cypriot as well... When we went to casino together, we were speaking Greek to each other. And Rasit said something in Turkish and the people said to him, 'you pretend that you are Turkish Cypriot.' He is speaking excellent Greek. [2012]

Here, I noticed Marios' correction of the word 'Cypriot' with 'Greek Cypriot' during the conversation. I realized that he started to make the distinction between “Turkish and Greek Cypriots,” only because I was asking questions depending on these ethnic (and

religious) categories. 'Cypriot' refers to both communities, and is a significant signifier for distinguishing Turkish settlers from Turkish Cypriots.

The common language, though, appears to remain only among elderly people. Although both Greek and Turkish are recognized as official languages of the island, it is rare to see a Turkish sign in the South and a Greek sign in the North today. It is easy to observe that some Turkish Cypriots over the age 40 can still speak Greek, although they told me that they forgot many words, since they no longer speak it in their everyday lives. I have met very few Greek Cypriots who could speak Turkish, but some of them were intentionally avoiding doing so, as a way of expressing their protest for their losses, both material and moral. However, according to my own observations in the island, now there are some mutual cooperation attempts in both parts that aim to provide opportunities for people who would like to learn the language of the Other. This is more of a policy in the South. During my stay in the island, I attended free Greek courses in the South, offered by the Ministry of Education, and in the Buffer zone, offered by the AHDR (Association for Historical Dialogue and Research). According to my observations, however, the courses by the Ministry of Education were mostly attended by the immigrants in the South from various countries –I was in fact the only Turk among them- whereas the courses in the Buffer Zone were attended by Turkish Cypriots. There were other NGOs offering similar courses.

A small anecdote from my field notes regarding the language issue is worth citing here. A close friend of mine, who is a Turkish Cypriot working at a university in the Republic of Cyprus and speaks Greek perfectly, was annoyed at the traffic ticket left on the window of her car. We understood that she parked her car in the wrong spot. We checked

the ticket together, and it was written only in Greek with very small letters. She said, "I am not going to pay this. I will wait for them to take this to the court. And at the court, I will tell them that I don't have to understand this. Where is Turkish? It is not even in English. I am going to ask them what the official languages of this Republic are."

There are other explanations utilized to prove the commonality with Turkish Cypriots. Kyrris explains the similarities and coexistence of the two communities by their similar experiences in the face of the corrupt and rapacious Ottoman Empire (1976:253). Demosthenous also argues that there were joint rebellions against the Turkish rulers, which was a "witness of their common feelings and goals" (2001:9). She quotes Niebuhr's argument regarding the status of the Turkish population when he visited the island in 1766: "Among the Mohammedans, there are many, who dress like Greek Cypriots and who are as afraid as Greeks when facing Turks, although they are Muslim themselves and know Turkish and Arabic as badly as German farmers know Latin. Unlike born Muslims, these are people of strong personality and determinedness and they object to being treated as Christians. These people opposed tyranny with all their might. They had several supporters amid the native islanders" (Demosthenous 2001:11). The other example is the dress of Turkish Cypriots during the Ottoman Empire period. Demosthenous says "the manner of dressing also hints at the good relations between Muslims and Christians on the island, and at their Greek Christian heritage: It was commonplace for the Turks of Cyprus to dress like the Greek subordinates" (2001:11).

Finally, the shared religious practices of Turkish and Greek communities are taken as evidences of common life and culture. However, assumptions regarding shared sites are



not limited to the beliefs in common religious beliefs and practices, but are also sometimes connected to the arguments related to *Linobambakoi*,<sup>5</sup> the Crypto-Christians in Cyprus.

### 3.3.3. Linobambakoi

The word *Linobambakoi* is a combination of two Greek words, linen and cotton, referring to the dual character of the religious identity of the group. Skendi also offers other names in Greek, which have basically pejorative meanings: *mesokertedes*, *mesoi*, *paramesoi*, *patsaloi*, *apostolikoi* (1967:230). The main characteristic of the group is that they are practicing a mixture of Muslim and Christian Orthodox rituals. Constantinou defines them as an “exotic anomaly” (2006:4) and “genuinely syncretistic sect” (2006:7), and offers the term, *Apostokolia*, which refers to *Linobambakoi* as religious missionaries (2006:7). Skendi explains how they combine the rituals belong to different religious traditions:

They baptized and confirmed their children before the Moslem circumcision. In addition to the Moslem name, they gave them a secret Christian name. They fasted, and communion was administered to them. They were married according to both the Moslem and the Christian rite... They visited the mosque and the church. On the deathbed they received the consolations of the Christian religion and then rested in a Moslem cemetery. (1967:230)

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<sup>5</sup> The spelling of the term is changing in different sources. I will prefer “*Linobambakoi*” in my own text, but stick to the original texts in quotations.

There is no consensus in the literature regarding the historical reasons of the emergence and distinctive features of the *Linobambakoi* in Cyprus. This is partly due to scarce data concerning this inherently secret group, and partly to disagreements about how to identify them. However, *Linobambakoi* are usually seen as a local version of the syncretistic practices that were prevalent in many parts of the Ottoman Empire. Beckingham notes:

To many people of the eastern Mediterranean where Christianity and Islam were practiced in the same or in adjacent villages, these religions did not present themselves as two mutually exclusive systems of belief, but rather as two ways of conciliating supernatural forces. The Orthodox Cypriot did not become a Muslim when he prayed at the shrine of the forty (Kirkklar, Ayii Saranda) at Tymbou..., nor did the Cypriot Muslim become a Christian when he sought the aid of the Holy Cross at Stravrovouni, or of St Andrew at his monastery on the extreme promontory of the island. They were simply testing the efficacy of another means of getting a good harvest or curing an illness... It is evident that even in religion the barrier between the two communities has not been rigid nor their antagonism complete. (1957a:173)

Travellers frequently cite the practices of local people to show the fluid boundaries between Islam and Christianity. Pollis claims that British travellers in the nineteenth century were struck by intermixing of Muslims and Christians with their common places of worship and same religious holidays (1973:585-586). But, in fact, this claim actually appears to me as the persistence of Muslim and Christian identities, which remain separate.

The pragmatic aspect of the syncretistic practices has already been noted by many scholars. Michell argues that these people could not decide which religion is the best (quoted in Constantinou 2006:7). Michell also explains why they needed to escape from the

policies of the Ottoman Empire and hide their identities: “being a Linobambakos was a means through which individuals tried to avoid acts of religious persecution, or the payment of tax, or faith-based inheritance laws, or military conscription, during the Ottoman Empire” (quoted in Constantinou 2006:7).

It is claimed by some authors that *Linobambakoi* were not Orthodox Christians, but Latin Catholics (Skendi 1967, Luke 1957, Beckingham 1957a). Beckingham argues that “It was due, not only a desire to escape the attentions of ecclesiastical tax-gatherers and recruiting officers alike, but to the fundamental religious beliefs of the peasantry, who share the theological hospitality of the ancient Greeks and Romans to the gods of other nations” (1957a: 173). *Linobambakoi* is sometimes presented as a broad subaltern category, rather than a strictly defined religious group. For example, Constantinou sees these people as “cross-religious and cross-ethnic Cypriots,” subverting the ethnic homogeneity in the island. He emphasizes their tactical mobilization across different identities, according to changing circumstances and policies of the political power (2006:26).

Many scholars acknowledge that *Linobambakoi* were extinct in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, due to ethnic/nationalist feelings emerged during the British colonial period (Beckingham, 1957a:173) and the weakening of coercion over Catholics, specifically after the Tanzimat period in the Ottoman Empire (Skendi 1967:230-231). However, the crucial point is that the forced Islamization of the local people during the Ottoman Empire period has been frequently argued, despite the fact that this was not a policy of the Porte in Cyprus (Farr 1997:40, İnalçık 1978), and that the converted people are believed to have intermingled with Turkish Cypriots later: “During British rule, most of them, encouraged by the British,

were assimilated by the Turkish community. Only few of the ‘Cryptochristians’ returned to Christianity” (Demosthenous 2001:6). Demosthenous adds to her point that “it is a matter of fact that among those who converted to Islam in Cyprus were not only Greek Orthodox Christians but also Maronites and other groups of smaller numbers. In 1845, the French Consul Goep mentions in a letter that many Cypriot Turkish families were descended from Maronites, who had converted to Islam to save their lives. Hence, the majority of Turkish Cypriots are of either Greek or Christian ancestry” (2001:7).

The assertion that Turkish Cypriots are the descendants of converted Greeks has been made since the time of independence from British colonial rule. Not surprisingly, there were similar claims about the supposedly Greek origins of Anatolian Turks, and also the Serb and Croat origins of Bosnian Muslims (see e.g, Bieber 2000). Papadakis says “the interest in the descent of Turkish Cypriots emerged among Greek Cypriot historians during the tumultuous period of the 1960s” (2008a:11). For him, this “essentialist argument that relies on the principles of racial descent as determining identity” was used then to legitimize the objective of enosis (union with Greece) by incorporating Turkish Cypriots back into the Greek community (2008:10-11).<sup>6</sup> However, it seems that the assertions regarding the identity of Turkish Cypriots continued to be made by some historians and some Greek Cypriots within the new framework of ‘peaceful coexistence.’ This time the emphasis is not necessarily on “race” but rather on how culturally, socially and historically Greek and Turkish Cypriots are related and interconnected. Some of my interviewees

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<sup>6</sup> Questions regarding the ‘Greek’ identity of Greek Cypriots were obviously not raised as an issue to discuss. For a critique of this approach in education, see Natasha Leriou, “Constructing an Archaeological Narrative: The Hellenisation of Cyprus,” *Stanford Journal of Archaeology*, 1 (2002): 1-32.

expressed similar ideas in a loose and covert way. *Linobambakoi* was mentioned only by a few Greek Cypriots, who were familiar with historiography; but obviously when it comes to sacred spaces, sharing is seen as normal, even expected, due to the “syncretistic” background of Turkish Cypriots.

The significant point is that, even if the term ‘converted Greeks’ was not articulated during the interviews, some Greek Cypriots denied the existence of Turkish Cypriots as a real group with its own separate identity, regardless of whether it is constructed as a religious, ethnic or a racial one. This would not only presuppose the re-unification of the island as an imperative, but also prove the Greek identity of the island that could impede political claims of Turkish Cypriots. But it could be equally argued that this is an accommodation strategy of Greek Cypriots in order to plan a future with Turkish Cypriots together. Namely, Greek Cypriots might not see this emphasis on common culture as a denial of Turkish Cypriot identity, but rather a strategy to include them in the culture of the island, which might not be considered as a negative and contesting approach.

The following are the words of a Greek Cypriot (aged 54), who is a faculty member at a university in the Republic of Cyprus, specialized on political economy. This person was one of the few Greek Cypriots who openly expressed his belief in the converted identity of Turkish Cypriots. I was, in fact, warned by him not to use the word *Linobambakoi* when speaking to Cypriots:

Turkish Cypriots join the Greek festivities. I am trying to find the roots of Turkish Cypriots. During the Ottoman period, because of the tax system, some Greeks became Muslims, converted Cypriots, just for economic reasons. This is established fact. For example, you may find some names, which are supposed to be Hellenic, but they are Turkish.... Turkish Cypriots, in their social norms, in their value systems,

they are similar to Greek Cypriots. Deep down, they know this fact... Who your grandfather is, that's relevant. [April 30, 2012]

For him, the common culture refers to Greek values and norms, which are shared by the Turkish Cypriots. He was, in fact, one of the few Greek Cypriots who emphasized that the relations between Greek and Turkish Cypriots were not 'unproblematic' as they are assumed; but ended up telling me good memories:

Greek Cypriots will tell you we were brothers and sisters, that's not true. There were good times and bad times. I am from a generation who is a victim, and not the older generation who may also be guilty. I am honest, my conscious is clean.... I remember a guy, a Turkish Cypriot friend, who played soccer together. We promised each other, if there is a fight, we don't touch each other. We had this.

He also added that if there will be unification in the future, Greek and Turkish Cypriots can live together. He said: "It is difficult, but yes. I think we all need each other."

Some Turkish Cypriots are cognizant of this perspective. A middle-aged bureaucrat working in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, whose father was killed in 1964 by Greek Cypriots, said to me:

They [Greek Cypriots] want to make strange ethnic distinctions. Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots are good people, and Turkish settlers are bad. They have such a template in their minds. They say "karasakali" [black bearded], dirty, non-modern for people from Turkey. Who is Turkish Cypriot for them? For them, the Ottoman Empire invaded the island in 1571, and some Greek Cypriots were converted. They [Turkish Cypriots] are the remnants of the converted... I know them [Greek Cypriots] very well; I know their souls very well... [2012]

However, there are also many Turkish Cypriots who see themselves closer to Greek Cypriots in terms of culture, compared to Turkish settlers. The following are the words of a

Turkish Cypriot woman who became a refugee three times:

Turks [referring to Turkish Cypriots] and Greeks were born in Cyprus. They are same despite all the war between them. Their customs and traditions are same. If you think, even brothers fight... The customs of people from Turkey are different. At least, the ones who were settled here... We don't have blood feud here, for example. We don't have vindictiveness. Those who came here have different cultures. They brought this ignorance here... But all nations have their bad and good people. [2011]

Another point is that almost all literature on the Cyprus issue talks about ethnic estrangement and the impact of growing antagonistic nationalisms in both parts of the island that resulted in the conflict and division of the island (Bryant 2004, Kızılyürek 2002). The influence of religion is rarely discussed, and it is even emphasized that religious differences do not play a major role in the conflict between Greek and Turkish Cypriots (Feron, 2007, Dietzel and Makrides 2009). Although it is a fact that the ethnic conflict started with the impact of the growing nationalisms in the island and ethnic identities are the main reason for the Otherization, religion had its own role in this process, especially in the South, with the huge impact of the well-organized Orthodox Church of Cyprus. It can be said that religion is 'conspicuously inconspicuous' in the tension between the two communities, and it is more than just an element that is instrumentalized by various actors during the conflict. Religion is culturally significant as a marker of identity, specifically for Greek Cypriots, since their religious and ethnic identities are very much integrated and involved with each other. As a symbolic and cultural framework, religion helps building the image of the Other. As a structuring factor, religion, embodied in the Orthodox Church of Cyprus in the South, is an influential actor in the political sphere in the island. For Turkish Cypriots, although not a dominating factor, religion is a dimension that informs their

identities, structure their daily lives, provide values and customs. It even shapes not only their relations with the Greek Cypriots, but also with the mainland Turks.<sup>7</sup> All these points can be understood from the relations going on in the shared sacred sites, which appear as peaceful and harmonious from outside; but, as expected, the dynamics and quality of the interaction between the two communities<sup>8</sup> is more complicated on the ground. Some Greek Cypriots' perception of Turkish Cypriots as 'converted Greeks' denotes to an assumption of Turkish Cypriots as a religious community, a subverted one, rather than a different ethnic one.

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<sup>7</sup> This issue is extensively discussed in the fifth chapter, in the section titled "Fraternal other: New alignments, new challengesç"

<sup>8</sup> Even three communities. I would like to include the relations between Turkish Cypriots and mainland Turks here. I identify mainland Turks as 'fraternal other' due to the differences in the religious identities and practices of Turkish Cypriots and mainland Turks. Religion is clearly one of the main factors that distinguish these two groups.



#### **4.0 TOPOGRAPHIES OF MEMORY: LOUD SILENCE OF LAND**

“When I first went to Istanbul, I said to myself ‘Oh Jesus, this is not my first time here. I am, in fact, back to this place.”

Bishop of Morphou [personal communication, 2012]

#### **4.1. SPATIAL EXPERIENCES AND DE-MATERIALIZATION OF MEMORY**

##### **4.1.1. Landscape as an analytical concept**

There is no precise common definition of landscape, even within the field of anthropology, let alone interdisciplinarily (Tress & Tress 2001). Moreover, confusion about the term is not limited to its meaning, substance and character in academic disciplines, but between different languages as well. In her review article on Hirsch and O’Hanlon’s *The Anthropology of Landscape*, Mari-Jose Amerlinck mentions her difficulty with the term due to the fact that the English word “landscape,” with its origins in Western ways of seeing does not have an equivalent in Romance languages (1995:739). The meaning of landscape

in Turkish is discussed by Enise Burcu Çizmeli in her master's thesis written in an architecture program in Turkey (2009). She demonstrates that the Turkish term usually covers three concepts: environment, agriculture and art (2009:4). Archeology should be added as an additional realm. This conceptual and etymological limitation requires defining one's own concept when discussing landscape-focused research.

The origin of the English term 'landscape' goes back to the early Middle Ages. Bärbel Tress & Gunther Tress state "In the medieval period, the term was synonymous with 'region' and 'territory', one of the meanings still in use today... At the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, however, when Dutch landscape paintings came to England, a 'landscape' referred to a piece of art, a painted scene" (2001:144). Later, the term was reformulated to include subjective and imaginative qualities: "A landscape is a cultural image, a pictorial way of representing, structuring or symbolizing surroundings. This is not to say that landscapes are immaterial. They may be represented in a variety of materials on many surfaces –in paint on canvas, in writing on paper, in earth, stone, water and vegetation on the ground. A landscape park is more palpable but no more real, nor less imaginary, than a landscape painting or poem" (Cosgrove & Daniels 1988:1). This tension between "the meaning of landscape as material reality versus mental perception" (Tress & Tress 2001:145) is still one of the fundamental challenges with regard to the complexity of this field study.

The dimensions and characteristics of landscape as a theoretical concept in this research draw on definitions used by other anthropologists. Anthropology, and more generally social sciences and humanities, deal with landscape mainly as a cultural invention and social product, which reflects the structure of human societies. However, the physical dimension always matters. Anthropological studies of landscape show the many-faceted

and complex nature of the theme by bringing together materialist and symbolist perspectives (Stewart & Strathern 2003:10). To start with Hirsch's understanding (1995: 1):

'Landscape' has been deployed, first, as a framing convention which informs the way the anthropologist brings his or her study into 'view' (i.e. from an 'objective' standpoint –the landscape of a particular people). Secondly, it has been used to refer to the meaning imputed by local people to their cultural and physical surroundings (i.e. how a particular landscape 'looks' to its inhabitants).

In addition to physical reality, the mental and perceptual dimensions of landscapes are the main focus of interest in this research. I add various other interval layers to this categorization: landscape produced by local people - current inhabitants, former inhabitants, settlers, all of whom form different categories. As Pamela J. Stewart and Andrew Strathern suggest, "since belonging is essentially an idea and ideas are plastic, we can also suggest that persons travel with their own inner landscapes. They remember particular places through images of how they looked and what it felt like to be there; or they develop such images through photographs, films or narratives from others" (2003:4-5). My research narrates the stories of and within inner landscapes of Cypriot people, of both the refugees who continued living with the images of their homelands, and reflected them to their current environments, and the rest who also had their own kinds of mental/physical journeys by changes in their lives due to the transformation of the circumstances in the island.

Another layer is comprised of the landscapes –both mental constructs and what the Israelis call 'facts on the ground' (see, e.g. Abu El-Haj 2001) - produced by political powers

and official narratives. These landscapes are usually seen as relatively more dominant and powerful due to their visibility as projected through various means, such as museums, flags, and monuments; but sometimes such official constructions are challenged, countered or neutralized by local discourses and landscapes, which are often diffuse and polysemic.

These various levels of landscapes and the encounter and dialogue between them are all within the scope this research. An additional layer has to be added: the ethnographer's description and interpretation of the landscape that inevitably manifests the imperfection of our seeing and grasping, reflecting Geertz's famous statement that "(t)he culture of people is an ensemble of texts, themselves ensembles, which the anthropologist strains to read over the shoulders of those whom they properly belong" (1973:452). But, at the same time, the advantage for observation in being dispassionate, in NOT accepting without question the local narratives, cannot be underestimated. This layer is not the main focus of any chapter, but the reader will be reminded of the potential shortcomings of the ethnographic research throughout the text.

I concentrate on landscapes' impacts on constructing, mediating, shifting and expressing memories, thereby identities. Stewart and Strathern claim that landscape "often serves as a crucial marker of continuity with the past as well as a reassurance of identity in the present and a promise for the future" (2003:4). The model of landscape in this dissertation is built upon the idea of landscape as a cultural process (Hirsch 1995 etc.), an open concept, depending on contingent historical and geographical contexts. Elaboration of these contexts and the symbolic dimension of landscape can indicate local and national identities and memories. Landscape does not have an absolute, fixed existence/body; it is rather contextual and transformative. It is always changing, thus temporal, closely

connected to time. Bender says, “landscape may be defined in many different ways, but all incorporate the notion of ‘time passing’” (2002:103). The temporal dimension is discussed in the fifth chapter.

#### **4.1.2. Landscape-memory studies**

Recent landscape studies provide a vast field to discuss spatial, monumental and performative dimensions of memory (Alcock 2002, Schama 1995, Stewart & Strathern (eds.) 2003). It can be argued that the classic works of Maurice Halbwachs and Frances Yates prefigured studies on space and memory. The dominance of spatial concepts in Halbwach’s work on social memory is explicit: “The memory of groups contains many truths, notions, ideas, and general propositions... But if a truth is to be settled in the memory of a group it needs to be presented in the concrete form of an event, of a personality, or of a locality” (1992:200). Or as many monuments exhibit, all of these occur at once. Similarly, Yates’ book traces the memory systems of antiquity and the art of memory, which “seeks to memorise through a technique of impressing 'places' and 'images' on memory” (1984: xi). She explains the significance of *loci* and *imagines* as reminiscent of memorabilia in the ages before printing. Pierre Nora’s multi-volume study of *Les Liex de Mémoire* [*Realms of Memory: The Construction of the French Past*] (1996, 1998) has initiated the stimulus of these primary ideas on spatial expressions of memory.

The literature on the relationship between memory and landscape mostly emphasizes the mnemonic function of landscape and its power over individual/collective memory (e.g. Bender 1993, Darby 2000, Hirsch and O'Hanlon (eds.) 1995, Kockel 1995, Morphy 1995, Santos-Granero 1998). This dissertation, however, focuses instead on the (tending-to-be) forgotten, erased, silenced, neglected, lost, transformed or appropriated parts of landscapes and their histories. Similar to its functions for remembering and leaving traces to posterity, a landscape may also be used for obscuring or concealing certain parts of history and memory, to hinder remembrance of them. I am asking how the landscape is employed to create a rupture from the past, and what is lost or intended to be lost from such a landscape. However, the remaining commemorative landscape and the material culture in which memories are embedded may provide evidence concerning the silent parts of history. I mostly draw on literatures discussing contestation over the meaning and use of landscape, especially in post-conflict times (e.g. Bender & Winer 2001, Clouser 2009, Tuan 1979, Wolschke-Bulmahn 2001) which demonstrate how violence, tragedy and power struggles have been inscribed on landscapes in various ways. I am also concerned with counter-memories and their sites, which run against the official/mainstream/dominant histories and narratives.

Conceptually, following Halbwachs and Alcock's arguments, I believe that "memory is localized in objects and places, not least in the material framework of the past in the present" (Alcock 2002:25), so both the forgotten and remembered aspects of the past in Cyprus can be traced by looking at the shifting topography of the landscape following the political, social and economic changes in the island, and the invocation (or lack of it) of memories and discourses regarding specific places. Methodologically, archival research

helps me determine what events happened or at the research sites during and after ethnic conflict. I combine these sets of data with the stories of informants or with the lack of them. Who has forgotten (namely does not acknowledge/has misremembered/distorted) what?

In his pioneering work, *How Societies Remember*, Paul Connerton distinguishes between 'inscribed' and 'embodied' (incorporated) memory. He gives an account of embodied practices, which tend to involve habitus and body praxis through ritual structure and practice as enacted by participants, and how these practices are transmitted in and as a tradition. He argues that, "If there is such a thing as social memory ... we are likely to find it in commemorative ceremonies; but commemorative ceremonies prove to be commemorative only in so far as they are performative; performativity cannot be thought without a concept of habit; and habit cannot be thought without a notion of bodily automatisms" (2003:4-5). Inscribed memory practices, however, refer to the physical evidence and representations of memory production and enduring mnemonic devices (such as texts or monuments).

Stoller approaches embodied memory as the site of "memories –and histories- 'from below,' histories of the dispossessed that historians never recorded." He notes that, "the elicitation and presentation of embodied cultural memories fleshes out the story of a people. In this way scholars are able to explore the multifaceted textures of memory, which can profoundly humanize our reconstructions of the past" (1997:48). In this work, I combine inscribed and embodied memories by discussing both materiality and the commemorative activities that surround the material culture, and by focusing mostly on critical, subordinate collective memories.

#### **4.1.3. Religious sites as mnemonic devices**

The geopolitical division of the island and displacement of thousands of Greek and Turkish Cypriots was undoubtedly the most important impact of the ethnic clashes of the 1960s and early 1970s on the landscape. This partition was followed by the repopulation of the Northern part with the Turkish settlers after Turkey's military intervention in 1974. The political transformation of the landscape in the Northern part of the island, specifically its symbolic and material Turkification and Islamization, has been crucial in order to legitimize, express and maintain the ideology of the prevailing social and political system operating in that area. This process includes renaming of villages and streets in ways reflecting national meanings and "making tangible specific narratives of nationhood and reducing otherwise fluid histories into sanitized, concretized myths that anchor the projection of national identity onto physical territory" (Whelan 2005:62). All these policies and practices are linked to the remaking of collective memory in the wake of a political rupture, reminding us of Connerton's assertion that "memory is dependent on topography" (2011:85).

The scope of the process of nationalizing the landscape is not limited to mnemonic and/or symbolic spaces of monuments, statues, and museums. Following Denis Cosgrove argument, I believe that "All landscapes are symbolic... reproducing cultural norms and establishing the values of dominant groups across all of a society" (1989:125). In this dissertation, I investigate religious sites and cemeteries, rather than focusing on the obvious monuments and memorials. I argue that religious sites are more central to the



everyday lives of people than national struggle museums or monuments, which are often “conspicuously inconspicuous,” in the words of Musil: “there is nothing in this world as invisible as a monument” (1987:61). Secondly, religious sites (and public monuments) are often primary physical embodiments of the culture, identity and belief systems of ethno-national groups, and thus may become the target of violent attacks during ethnic/religious conflicts (see Halbwachs 1992:202-3, Hayden 2002). This is especially the case in societies where religion is a primary criterion for dividing people, as happened in Cyprus and indeed elsewhere where “Greeks” were distinguished from “Turks” primarily on the basis of religion, from newly independent Greece in the 1830s through Crete after 1897 and Anatolia in 1923.

By concentrating on religious sites, I analyze the active engagement of ordinary people, rather than just of the state, with landscape in the process of memory and history. I mainly focus on patterns of transformation of such sites as potential means of contestation over history through the medium of the religious sites, to create “forgetful landscapes” (Harrison 2004). Based on the case of tropical swamp lowlands of the middle Sepik River in Papua New Guinea, Harrison explores “some ways in which landscape becomes drawn not only into processes of social memory, but also (...) into those other, often less visible, processes of social forgetting to which remembering is bound” (2004:136). Landscapes might be used for counter-mnemonic processes in order to erase, conceal, transform, and disguise evidences of the past.

#### **4.1.4. Treatment of religious landscape**

The destruction, transformation, appropriation of religious sites has been acknowledged as a significant component of political violence and contestation between co-habited groups that distinguish each other as self and the Other. The process of the establishment of political domination can be observed in the ways the religious sites are treated in the post-conflict landscape. A dominant group may attack, demolish, and remove the evidence of another group, in order to claim its dominance and sovereignty over the landscape. It is sometimes also the case that the dominant group preserves the structures of the dominated in subordinated positions for the same purpose. The transformation of religious sites might include physical and symbolic changes in the religious buildings and cemeteries, such as their desecration, conversion, certain forms of “conservation-restoration,” reshaping of their interior and exterior parts, and other kinds of architectural changes, as well as transmutations in their symbolic meanings (Hayden et al. 2011). In this section, I discuss different practices and patterns of transformation of such sites.

One of the perplexing questions I had after my preliminary research in the island was that it seemed that although both communities destroyed religious sites belonging to the other group during the ethnic tension in 1960-70s, the authorities in the Greek and Turkish parts apparently followed different distinct approaches to the remnants after the division. These post-conflict practices appeared contrary to the official representations of the past and the discourses of the governments of each part. While in the Northern part Turkish Cypriots continue living alongside ruined Christian religious sites, most of the

destroyed Muslim sites have been completely obscured in the Southern part. This is specifically the case for cemeteries. I asked the question if the Greek Cypriot government anticipates the reunification of the island and has a rapprochement policy of peaceful coexistence, why were the remnants of the Muslim community totally erased from surface? Further, although they have not preserved the Turkish/ Muslim sites and blame the Turkish community for not preserving the Greek historical and religious sites, Greek Cypriots have taken legal action against Turkey concerning these Greek sites by using the discourse of “the protection of the world cultural heritage,” thus raising complex questions about the meaning of “heritage” in a context of contestation. A further question is raised as to why the Turkish Cypriots continue to live with the material culture and memorialized dead of the other community, even though the Turkish community is usually seen as wanting a total break from the past. Were there contradictions between the aims/policies of the governments and the practices of people? This section is an attempt to answer these questions.

#### **4.1.4.1. Destruction of religious sites and cemeteries**

In many historical and geographical contexts, one of the expected consequences of the ethnic and religious conflicts is the destruction and appropriation of material culture. Violence towards architecture belonging to both Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities happened during the 1950s and 1960s and after the 1974 division of Cyprus. Images of destroyed architecture have been widely distributed, and tell visual stories about the

conflict. Varosha (Maraş) in Famagusta, once an exclusive tourist destination in Northern Cyprus, is referred to as a 'ghost city' due to its abandonment since the 1974 Turkish military operation, and can be representative in this sense. The resort, hotels, restaurants remained structurally intact after being looted, thus projecting the impact of the war over the land and architecture probably better than anywhere else in the island. The quarter is under military control since then, and visitors are not permitted to enter some parts and take photographs of the ruined buildings.<sup>9</sup> However, the destruction of holy places (religious sites and cemeteries) and cultural heritage has created the strongest reactions and indignation among both local and international community, due to their symbolic meanings.

The nature of violence towards built environments has recently started to receive attention as a phenomenon per se. The assault on built environment in conflicts is more than just "collateral damage, incidental to the general mayhem of warfare" (Riedlmayer 1995: 3). Slavenka Drakulic's article *Falling Down: A Moster Bridge Elegy* provocatively points out the essence of material culture for the continuity of our collective existence:

Why do I feel more pain looking at the image of the destroyed bridge than the image of the [murdered] woman? Perhaps it is because I see my own mortality in the collapse of the bridge, not in the death of the woman. We expect people to die. We count on own our lives to end. The destruction of a monument to civilization is something else. The bridge, in all its beauty and grace, was built to outlive us; it was an attempt to grasp eternity. Because it was the product of both individual creativity and collective experience, it transcended our individual destiny. A dead woman is

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<sup>9</sup> My two unsuccessful attempts resulted in blurry pictures. One of the few successful exceptions: <http://www.urbanghostsmedia.com/2013/03/varosha-famagusta-rare-photos-inside-northern-cyprus-ghost-city-abandoned-resort/>

one of us –but the bridge is all of us, forever. (1993:15)

Thus, material culture is often a target of attacks during conflicts, and its destruction is neither coincidental nor trivial. Contesting the anthropocentric understanding of political violence, Coward argues that understanding the core of conflicts rests upon understanding the destruction of buildings, which is, in fact, the destruction of durable communities (2009:13). After doing research on such sites for two years, I think that solving the problem of destroyed religious/cultural heritage is one of the keys to the resolution of Cyprus problem.

In an article on “warchitectural” theory, Andrew Herscher (2008) critiques the dominant accounts of wartime architectural destruction. In the case of Cyprus, while the implications of the violence have been widely discussed, analyzed, and in some cases manipulated, the context and process are usually taken for granted or rather left ambiguous. This is strongly related to the ‘defective’ histories of Cyprus conflict, which exclude the conflicts of 1955-59 from the historical narratives in the North, and 1963-67 in the South:

- **Who?** The Turkish army is considered the main perpetrator by Greek Cypriots. ‘Uneducated’ Turkish settlers are usually the second most-blamed group. The local people (namely, Turkish Cypriots) are blamed relatively less. Turkish Cypriots remained relatively silent on this question, and refrained from criticizing a specific group.

- **Why?** Destruction of architecture is unquestioningly connected to the ethnic/religious conflict. Etienne and Claire Mauss-Copeaux (2005) claim that the churches and cemeteries of the Maronites have not been destroyed in the north, which shows that

the identities of sites as belonging to Greek Orthodox or Muslim Turkish community was determinative in the process of damage.

- **What?** The destruction of material culture is read as barbarity, banality, irrationality, and part of a policy of cultural genocide –the attempt to erase the identity of a group from the territory. But sometimes it is regarded only as the irresponsible behavior of some civilians and soldiers during war, or “random acts of vandalism” (PIO 2008b:21). The following quotes published in the North and the South demonstrates the perceptions in both sides:

The ethnic cleansing initiated in 1963 by the Greek Cypriots not only targeted Turkish Cypriots but their properties in these cities, villages and other settlements as well. The 34 Turkish Cypriot villages which were abandoned between the years 1963-1975 by the Turkish Cypriots were intentionally destroyed or left to ruin. (2009: n.p.) [quote from *Destroyed Turkish Villages in South Cyprus*, prepared by the Evaluation Committee for the Cultural Assets in North and South Cyprus of the TRNC Presidency Office]

It is these churches and their contents that have been the focus of the destruction of the cultural heritage in the northern part of Cyprus, occupied since 1974. The Turkish invasion in that year achieved perhaps the most thorough instance on record of what has since become known as ethnic cleansing. (2000:145) [quote from *Cyprus: A Civilization Plundered*, published by the Committee for the Protection of the Cultural Heritage of Cyprus]

The violence towards the built environment, in this case towards religious and cultural heritage, is a complicated process in Cyprus as elsewhere. It is known that there were both personal, organized and spontaneous attacks on the sites during the war. Testimonies regarding intra-communal, false-flag attacks –namely acts of sabotage by

people on their own side's symbolic sites- were made public recently, argued to have been designed and carried out to blame the other community, provoke people and increase their resistance. The testimony of a retired Turkish general, who said that Turkish authorities burned a mosque on Cyprus to increase civil resistance against Greeks, spurred debate over the violence towards religious sites.<sup>10</sup> I personally heard similar stories from Cypriots regarding such false attacks. Only recently have people started to openly express that Turks and Cypriots themselves were responsible for many attacks.

Moreover, the story does not end with the attacks directly or indirectly related to ethnic/religious conflict. For example, some Turkish Cypriots told me that sometimes the churches were burned to force the government to build a mosque in a village, because they simply did not want to continue to use a converted church. Some mosques shared the same fate, they were burned down or demolished by the local people in order to have a newly built mosque in their villages, and the time of conflict was manipulated for this purpose. Otherwise, such an enterprise would have penalizing implications for its perpetrators.

Though pointing out the need for a subtler reading of the destruction of built environment, my research is more devoted to an understanding of the transformations in the meanings of landscape with the impact of destruction and how they affect the perceptions and memories of people. Herscher argues that, "Violence against architecture transforms, often fundamentally, the values, meanings, and identities of architecture. Moreover, this transformation is connected to but not determined by the explicit architectural interpretations made by destruction's perpetrators; this transformation is

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<sup>10</sup> <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/default.aspx?pageid=438&n=turkey-burned-mosque-during-cyprus-war-gen-says-2010-09-24>

conditioned not only by these interpretations but also by the experience of destruction by its victims, witnesses, and audiences” (2008:42). More often than not, neither perpetrators’ objectives and the messages they would like to transmit through violence, nor the targeted group/s’ reactions and receptions to these messages are unambiguous. Probably this very ambiguity makes such violent actions powerful, in the sense that they could be easily manipulated for creating/distorting/hiding facts, and for supporting various political discourses.

Herscher discusses how “destruction is approached in contradistinction to construction” (2008:38) and criticizes an a priori and problematic understanding of violence:

Before it is targeted by violence, architecture is located within the domain of culture, whether that domain is understood in the traditional Enlightenment form of “civilization,” the historical materialist form of an economic superstructure, the anthropological form of meaning-making, or the postmodern form of a constructed discursive artifact. Violence, by contrast, tends to be located outside of the domain of culture and defined as a phenomenon that lacks, is inimical to, or destroys that culture. (2008:39)

However, “architecture-as-destruction” also produces its own objects, subjects, and narratives, and does not drop out of cultural domain. To the contrary, I argue that violence towards architecture locates such architecture at the very center of that culture. Pictures of destroyed places, which I mentioned at the beginning, tell a lot more than the story of a specific event or building. Herscher mentions the same point with reference to the Sarajevo case: “After the siege finally ended, postcards produced in and of Sarajevo documented not only the thoroughness of the city’s destruction but also the ruin’s status as a metonym for



the city itself” (2008:36). In the case of Cyprus, attacks on religious and cultural heritage sites are perceived as attacks on the identity, culture and even very existence of the owner/user community. As Samuel Hardy argues that whether it is destruction of people (genocide), the destruction of home (domicide) or the destruction of shared space (urbicide), “the logic of nationalist war *requires* such attacks” (2013:2, my emphasis), or at least it is inferred usually this way. Most Greek Cypriots feel, and Turkish Cypriots are aware, that churches represent the Greek Cypriot collective identity more than anything else in the island. They are the most visible and distinctive imprints of Greek culture on the land. A Turkish-Cypriot member of the Bi-communal Technical Committee on Cultural Heritage explained to me why the protection of the Christian heritage in the North was an extremely complicated and difficult issue:

Although it is a humanitarian issue, the protection of churches and mosques is completely a matter of propaganda. It is very open to propaganda. And of course, we [Turkish administration] didn’t do anything. The question of why is very complicated. Namely, what does the church symbolize? I have studied the history of the Turkish Cypriot community; the Church [Greek Orthodox Church] represents enosis, attack, Turkish hostility, and Greek Cypriotism. Therefore, the buildings of the Church were its symbols for us [Turkish Cypriots]... the representative of the Greek fanaticism. You know, the enosis movement started with the leadership of the Church, and continued with it. And interestingly, this is psychological... [it is necessary] to delete that image from the mind, from the subconscious. [June 15, 2012]

It can be argued that the symbolic significance of the churches is crystallized by the attacks on them. This process seems to work in a kind of closed circuit with a feedback mechanism: ethnic or religious-based identity is fed by components of such connections

and feelings, and any attempts on breaking the chain make them stronger and more meaningful. Discourses regarding violence towards material culture are widely used in nationalist rhetoric to show the victimization of the self and prove the misdeeds of the Other. This strategy is implemented pretty blatantly in Cyprus. The destroyed built environment is a satisfying and convincing subject in the language of victim.

As for shared religious sites, targeting them during conflicts denotes the end of (or the desire to end) the historical peaceful coexistence, however that may have been defined and lived. Destroying a site renders a narrative of an intermingled and heterogeneous life with the other unfeasible and unimaginable, destroying the existing culture of living together, regardless of the extent to which the communities were really intermingled.

It is sometimes the case that forgetting the Other's presence through 'cleaning' the landscape is not the strategy taken by the new political powers. As Connerton argues, paradoxically "the requirement to forget ends in reinforcing memory" (2011:41); thus preserving the damaged, broken, mutilated remnants of the Other and their condemnation (*damnatio memoriae*) as evidence of the new regime's glorious triumph is employed. Here it would be also useful to refer to Jas Elsner's argument concerning object-based semiotics and "how particular classes of objects...function and create meaning by virtue of their specific material differences from and yet resemblances to other classes of objects" (2003:210). He focuses "on the ways objects have been deliberately deformed, and on how such iconoclasm may relate to memory." He argues that:

The act of deformation and the presentation of deliberately altered works of art are specifically formal gestures within a material semiotics. The preserved damaged object, in its own material being, signals both its predamaged state –a different past, with potentially different cultural, political and social meaning- and its new or

altered state. In part, the meaning of the 'new' monument is defined by its difference from (that is, by the changes made to) the 'old' monument. (2003:210)

Thus, Elsner claims that, "the memory of the figure condemned (even the memory of his forgetting) is preserved" (2003:226). This policy speaks both to the Turkish and Greek communities, as a warning and a reminder against the yoke of oppression from which the nation has been liberated. This is put into practice towards the neglect of the Other's material culture, desecration of the sacred sites through their utilization as barns, toilets, or their secularization and appropriation through conversion into museums, barracks, recruiting centers. The absence of the Other is not forgotten, but stressed and celebrated.

If a site or building was exposed to violence, specifically during conflict times, stories of the violent incidents usually dominate people's memories regarding the spot -- flashbulb memories with detailed and vivid descriptions of events. In my case studies this was quite striking, since people immediately started talking about the violent events, which seem to determine the ways in which people visualize the places. However, the process of remembering and forgetting is also dependent on what people prefer to remember, and on the identity of the site. For example, if one wants to emphasize good relations between the communities, violent events are dismissed or if the site in question belongs to the Other group and the perpetrators of the violence are from one's own community, incidents could be easily forgotten, omitted, disregarded or silenced. Those who feel victimized stress the negative incidents that happened at the sites. In any case, I argue that the destruction of heritage sites transforms the memories of people, not only memories of the sites, but also of the ways in which common life and the Other is remembered.

Up to this point, I have mostly discussed how violence towards one's own heritage is considered, used and responded to. What about the other side of the picture? How do people feel about the Other's destroyed places, especially if the communities have lived closely together? Understandably, almost everybody was politically correct in his/her answers to my questions, saying that it ISN'T acceptable and appropriate to attack the religious and cultural heritage. Such acts were conducted by those "out there," who are unable to represent their community. At most, some people find it normal that such acts could happen in exceptional conditions, i.e. conflict times.

The book *Muslim Places of Worship in Cyprus*, which is published by the Press and Information Office in the Republic of Cyprus in cooperation with the Association of Cypriot Archaeologists, disregards the systematic destruction of Muslim sites in the South. The explanation provided as the reasons of sites' conditions today is as follows:

In the aftermath of the inter-communal strife in December 1963, extraordinary conditions prevailed on the island for several years. Many Turkish Cypriots *abandoned* their villages to join larger communities or *moved* to the cities. Consequently, a number of mosques were left unattended and the Cyprus government assumed responsibility for their maintenance. The task was not an easy one because of natural damage due to the passage of time but also due to *random* acts of vandalism. (Press and Information Office, 2008b:21, emphasis mine)

It is also striking how the displacement of Turkish Cypriots and their suffering is simplified and pictured as "their own choice". Comparatively, the following passage from the same volume shows how the destruction of Christian sites in the North and the displacement of Greek Cypriots is presented:

The *forced expulsion* of the indigenous Greek Cypriot population from the occupied north left many cultural and religious treasures unattended and unprotected. Some date back to thousands of years and have a unique place in the cultural heritage of the world. Unfortunately, no serious effort was made by Turkey for their protection in the aftermath of the invasion. On the contrary, a *large-scale systematic desecration and destruction* of churches started with the acquiescence of the occupation authorities. Christian symbols and religious ornaments were destroyed while a number of churches were turned into mosques. (Press and Information Office, 2008b:22, emphasis mine).

Another book in the South, *Religious Monuments in Turkish-Occupied Cyprus*, published by the Museum of the Holy Monastery of Kykkos, has a separate chapter on *the Muslim mosques in free parts of the Republic of Cyprus*, but does not mention the destruction of these places at all. Interestingly, the writer Charalampos G. Chotzakoglou refers to the British period: “During the British rule of Cyprus (1878-1960) a project aiming at massive erection of mosques in Cyprus took place, in order to create Islamic identity for the Turkish Cypriots, who actually were not religious. This measure, in combination with other actions undertaken by the British, were targeting the formation of two solid communities in Cyprus, one Greek and the other Turkish Cypriot, in order to cause deep division” (2008:139). The writer also mentions the other Muslim communities in the island by saying that “In every major city of the free part of Cyprus, and wherever there are religious needs of Islamic communities, mosques with every religious freedom exist not only for the Turkish-Cypriots, but also for the foreign inhabitants of the island” (2008:139).

As far as I know, a similar publication on Christian places of worship has not been published in the TRNC. However, I may cite the preface of a book prepared by the Political

and Cultural Researches of the TRNC Presidency in 2006, which is about the Muslim sites in the South. It is said that research had been conducted by the TRNC President's Office on 139 settlements under the administrative districts of Southern Nicosia, Paphos, Limassol and Larnaca, during August 2005- March 2006. The phrasing of the book's name is remarkable (*Erasing the past: Turkish Cypriot Culture and Religious Heritage under the Control of the Greek Cypriot Administration*) in two senses: First, the destruction of the cultural and religious heritage is regarded as "erasure" of both Turkish Cypriots and their historical presence from the land. Second, instead of preferring the word Muslim, the Turkish Cypriot identity is used and emphasized, which might be due to the desire for distinguishing them from the mainland Turkish population, who arrived in the island only lately. The preface written by former President of TRNC Mehmet Ali Talat is relatively cautious in wording:

Both in the North and South Cyprus, there are places of worship which need to be protected and perpetuated. This work only constitutes a minor portion of the Turkish monuments including the mosques, small mosques, Turkish bathes, tombs, fountains, cemeteries and ancient monuments that have all been left behind in the Greek Cypriot side. The purpose of this work is to draw attention to the rough handling, neglect [sic], and even the destruction of these Turkish Cultural Assets, either by leaving idle or *destroying them consciously* which has been the case in the Greek Cypriot side. (2006: n.p., emphasis mine)

The book does not mention the condition of Christian sites in the North, but this paragraph, I argue, which started with talking about places of worship both in the north and the south and ending with an emphasis on conscious destroy in the South, implicitly follows the same pattern as that in the publication from the Greek authorities of the

Republic of Cyprus, of blaming the Other and victimizing themselves, though in a less blatant way.

Whether politically intended or not, I saw many instances in which destroyed sites of the Other have become invisible to local people. This is specifically the case for those who didn't experience common life with the Other, namely the generations who were born after the 1960s, and recently-settled inhabitants. I had many similar experiences like the one below:

When I visited the Turkish Yedikonuk village in the Karpas Peninsula in 2011, there was a group of women sitting in front of their houses very close to the church. The church was used for a long time as a mosque; but later a new mosque was built just across the street, and the church began to be used by the school. I started to talk with the women, and asked what they think about the church. Three women looked at each other puzzled, and asked "what church?" [2010]

This experience exemplifies the importance of 'place making' rather than history and architecture, to which I refer as the process of investing meaning and value in places. This draws attention to what Myers calls "culturalization of space" and "how different peoples might 'see' different places in the same 'place'" (2002:103). I discuss similar examples of constructing diverse meanings for the same place in the following sections on shared spaces.

Even if people are aware of the existence of traces of the Other, Cypriots have only recently started to face each other's suffering and their own mistakes. This is surely much more difficult than talking about their own victimization, particularly when there is an ongoing political ambiguity. Vamik Volkan (1979:xv) remarks on the psychological aspect of the issue, which still seems to be the case: "the continuing existence of conflicting

interests, such as disputes over land and boundaries, or the perpetuation of actual threats to national security which each side represents to the Other fosters psychological regression and the emergence of splitting, externalization, and other primitive collective psychological mechanisms.”

I agree with archeologist Samuel Hardy (2013:4) on the negative impact of the one-sided national histories and the misrepresentation and misinterpretations of the destruction of built environments on the peace-building process:

While some Greek Cypriots may not know that any mosques were destroyed, all Turkish Cypriots know. So, misled by false histories, Greek Cypriots who do not know that mosques were destroyed will continue to be offended by claims that they were; and Turkish Cypriots who do know that mosques were destroyed will continue to be offended by denial. Rather than encouraging rapprochement, a narrative of coexistence that omits violence and suffering actually fuels anger and distrust.

However, violence towards material culture is not perceived only as physical destruction. Violence might take different forms. Examples include the conversion of the sites, their appropriation and utilization for different purposes, which are usually considered by their owners to be just as aggressive as physical destruction.



#### 4.1.4.2 Appropriation of religious landscape and cultural heritage

The transformation of the landscape may include both physical and symbolic changes, including desecration, conversion, certain forms of conservation-restoration, reshaping of their interior and exterior parts, and other kinds of architectural changes, as well as transmutations in their symbolic meanings. Also, especially for religious places, there are many examples of their utilization as military camps and military hospitals, cultural centers, galleries, sport clubs, and barns, stables, wheat-chambers, storerooms, even toilets. Recent publications in both parts of the island have provided lists of such religious buildings explaining their conditions in detail.<sup>11</sup> Also, the project titled *List and Evaluation of Greek and Turkish Cyprus Religious Buildings Before 1974*, organized by Cyprus Civil Engineers and Architects Association (CCEAA) and Chamber of Cyprus Turkish Architects, has listed the geographical position, historical description, topographical plan, photographic description, information about existing architectural plans and preliminary structure evaluation for 620 religious buildings (505 Greek Cypriot, 115 Turkish Cypriot) in Cyprus.<sup>12</sup>

Such changes, transformations, and obliterations in landscape might result in forgetting, disregarding, discarding or reinterpreting physical indicators of the presence of the other group. Such a process can defamiliarize the architecture to its former inhabitants, thus being not only an intervention today and for the future of the land, but also of its past.

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<sup>11</sup> Examples: Southern Cyprus: (Chotzakoglou, 2008), (Marangou, 2008), (Kaklamanis et al. 2000); Northern Cyprus: (Atay 2010), (Sarica et al. 2009) (Okan et al., 2006)].

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.cyprustemples.com/default.asp>. I have tried contacting the project coordinators, but could not obtain any information.

What I mean by defamiliarizing the familiar architecture is the act of architecturally altering and remodeling sites or symbolically attributing new meanings to them in order to switch their accustomed faces, such as treating Hala Sultan Tekke and Saint Barnabas Monastery as museums. Museumification will be discussed extensively on the fifth chapter.

Managing the issue of Other community's cultural and religious heritage is challenging. UNESCO has recently started initiatives on the protection of religious heritage. The advisory bodies (ICCRROM, ICOMOS and IUCN) have carried out research studies and analyses of religious heritage and sacred sites to define the appropriate measures to preserve the value of religious properties. Most importantly, it is emphasized that stakeholders need to work together to preserve the sacred heritage. The stakeholders are identified as religious communities, made up of believers, traditional and indigenous people, as well as State Party authorities, professionals and experts.<sup>13</sup> Usually both taking and not-taking action towards such sites is troublesome for governments. Since it is not possible to restore all religious sites or keep them in good conditions without using them, the conversion of sites into 'acceptable forms' –acceptable for those who practice these policies, but usually would not be acceptable to the group that originally built the sites- such as museums, schools etc., may be offered as a solution, especially if the preservation of the material culture is the main target: "Rather than just neglecting the religious heritage sites therefore, following a prolonged conflict, which resulted in the displacement of communities, their sensitive re-use can offer a temporary solution for their maintenance and safeguarding" (Yüceer 2012: 285).

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<sup>13</sup> See <http://whc.unesco.org/en/religious-sacred-heritage/> [accessed July 31<sup>st</sup>, 2014]

In regard to Cyprus architect and conservation specialist Hülya Yüceer and Yara Saifi highlight the preservation of the cultural heritage of the island, correctly claiming that “especially in Northern Cyprus, churches that are not assigned new uses are left empty, subject to decay and ruin” (2013: 759). However, the issue is not as straightforward and simple as it is thus presented. If the concern and objective is only the preservation of the material culture, probably using these sites for other purposes is a good solution, since it is not possible to restore all religious sites or keep them in good conditions without using them. However, the viewpoints of the two communities complicate the issue and, must be considered in any policies to be implemented. Especially in the cases of churches have been converted to mosques, the conversion might not be the best choice for some Turkish people. I have heard from Turkish Cypriots that some churches were destroyed by the local Muslims just to prevent their utilization as mosques. Thus, the conversion of churches and their utilization as mosques is potentially a more risky strategy for preserving them. The owner of the sites, Orthodox Christians, might not also be totally satisfied with this solution, since they would like to see their own places as only Christian sites, and usually their utilization for other purposes are seen as desecration. The Bishop of Morphou expressed the sensitivity of Christians on this issue as follows:

Now, when there is no solution for Cyprus problem, even making churches museums are enough. Because this way, they *continue to be* churches. They are not used for religious purposes, but at least the walls will remain churches. I prefer that it [Turkish administration] does not restore them. [June 6, 2012]

Some Greek Cypriots thus prefer to see that their sites are protected, despite in an undesired way. For them, it is better to protect the churches as something else rather than

watching them ruined. But even the supposedly most “appropriate” and “neutral” way to use the sites as museums gets reactions from the absent owners of the sites. I heard a lot of complaints from Greek Cypriots regarding the museumization of their sites, specifically Saint Barnabas and Saint Mamas, since they are forced to pay money and are not allowed to pray freely whenever they desire. The permission for praying is granted only two times a year for both sites.<sup>14</sup>

Going back to Yüceer’s argument, although she suggests a different approach in terms of the human aspect of the issue, in a co-authored article published a year later (Saifi & Yüceer 2013), the social context, and the concerns and viewpoints of both the former and current users of the sites are still largely ignored. She claims that “(w)ith the mandate of the [Turkish local] community, a maintenance process with minor alterations has been undertaken, thus showing her [sic] sensitivity towards the churches, although the community is well aware that these churches will be returned to their rightful owners, should there be a unification in future, and that they are acting as the safe-keepers of those churches until that time” (Yüceer 2012:285).

The possibility of the necessity to return some houses and churches to Greek Cypriots, as proposed in the Annan Plan, is in the minds of many Turkish Cypriots, and is why many of them still don not see these places as “true homeland” (Boğaç 2009) and can’t develop strong attachments to them. These feelings are especially common among those who live in Morphou and Famagusta, which include more territory proposed for return. Even if many years have passed after the ethnic conflict, and people are aware of the

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<sup>14</sup> For two very similar cases in Turkey, Hacı Bektas and Mevlana Museums, see Harmanşah et al. 2014.

possibility of unification, this is still an uneasy subject due to the strong fear of having another traumatic experience. Thus, neither waiting for the day to return these places back, nor being safe-keepers of them until that day is a pleasant and decent process for many people, as I understood in my research.

#### **4.1.4.3. Restoration and the technical committee on cultural heritage in Cyprus**

Especially recently, there have been and are bi-communal attempts at restoration and renovation of cultural and religious heritages in the island. Before going into details about the committee on cultural heritage, I should note that such attempts have been partly impeded by economic and bureaucratic obstacles. The Turkish-Cypriot expert on the Technical Committee whom I interviewed told me that there is nothing deliberate about not restoring Christian heritage in the North. He noted,

The embargo on the Turks... this also includes the ancient monuments. For example now, we can't apply to UNESCO or another organization for funding as the Church does; because we are not recognized. They [Organizations] can't support us; even if they do, these attempts are stopped by the Greek side. There are examples of this, we experienced it. For example, there is an excavation site. A fund was created with Germany, Eastern Mediterranean University and other universities in the world for a rescue excavation. A Bronze age site. It [Greek side] implied such political pressure that –they threatened the excavators that they would never find job in Greece or Cyprus again—the program was cancelled. [2012]

According to the website of United Nations, “following the agreement of 21 March 2008 to resume talks, the representatives of the two leaders agreed to set up a number of working groups and technical committees on a host of issues tasked with paving the way to full-fledged negotiations.”<sup>15</sup> The Technical Committee on Cultural Heritage is one of seven committees established by the Greek Cypriot and the Turkish Cypriot sides in 2008. The responsibilities of the committee include compilation of the entire list of immovable cultural heritage, decision on two restoration pilot projects, agreement on educational programs in connection with cultural heritage, and guidelines to the ad-hoc working group for the development of an interactive educational computer program. According to the 2012 brochure of the Committee:

The Cultural Heritage Technical Committee believes that it is the primary responsibility of the Greek Cypriots and the Turkish Cypriots to protect the endangered cultural heritage of the island, and that it is important for these monuments to be preserved not only because they are important symbols for the Turkish Cypriots and the Greek Cypriots, and for humanity, but also because they have intrinsic values in themselves... The call of the Technical Committee to those interested in our work is to give support to our efforts for preserving past heritage so that we can build our future on a culture of peace, tolerance, cooperation, dialogue and respect for differences.

In 2009, the Committee compiled a list of immovable cultural heritage. This study was accomplished with the financial support of European Union and the United Nations Development Program –Partnership for the Future (UNDP-PFF). The brochure says that “The study resulted in the compilation of a list of more than 2300 cultural heritage sites,

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<sup>15</sup> [http://www.uncyprustalks.org/nqcontent.cfm?a\\_id=2484#Cultural\\_Heritage](http://www.uncyprustalks.org/nqcontent.cfm?a_id=2484#Cultural_Heritage)

the preparation of around 700 inventory charts including historical background, pictures, topographical details and architectural sketches of each monument, and the carrying out of 121 technical assessments, analyzing the current conditions of the monuments, and restoration costing needs.” A Greek Cypriot expert on the Committee told me that the Committee takes into consideration two major elements in the selection process of the monuments: the importance and urgency. He also added that the important point of the Committee is not the list, but the procedure: “The procedure –how to proceed. The technical committee has the character of political decisions on the issues. Through the executive branch of the Committee, we proceed for the materialization of the decisions.”

In 2010, the Committee decided a list of 10 sites throughout the island, which required emergency attention:

Denia / Denya Mosque

Philia / Serhatk.y Proitis Elias Church

Komi Kebir / Büyükkonuk Agios Afksentios Church

Kalograia / Esentepe Melandrina Church

Syrianochori / Yayla Agios Nicolaos Church

Mustafa Pasha Mosque – Famagusta

Çerkez Mosque – Phasouri / Çerkez .iftliği

Kato Paphos / Aşağı Baf Bath

Trachoni / Demirhan Panagia Church

Evretu / Dereboyu Mosque

Regarding the process of deciding which sites to restore, the Turkish Cypriot expert in the Technical Committee noted these details in our interview:

The first concern was to restore churches in the North and mosques in the South. But not the ancient monuments. We discussed a lot at the beginning what we should do first. There are movable, immovable heritage, archeological sites, cemeteries,

tombs. Then we decided to focus on immovable heritage. Namely, it is not icon, prayer rug or whatever for us. Then we started our works within this frame. First church and mosque, as expected. The biggest expectation of the Greek side was the [restoration of] churches. Our [Turkish side'] strategy is different. Because our mosques in the South are like small masjids, they don't have much architectural value. In fact, they are just rooms. The restoration of them was easy. And most of them are really not ancient monuments. We chose some sites, not all of them are in good condition. Especially in the mountains of Paphos, we have heritage. They are in a poor, neglected condition. What did we do? We started going around the island first, in the South and North, we started locating the churches and mosques. What do we have in the South, what do they have in the North? What do these sites need? The specialists decided a list of emergent sites, which need urgent strengthening or restoration. We decided 15-20 of them in the North, either mosque or Turkish bath, Greeks decided 26 in the North. 40 sites in total. The Greek ones are all churches and monasteries, ours also include bath. The list was confirmed. Now European Union has money for strengthening 10-11 sites, because there are cracks on the walls of them, to prevent their collapse.

Rabia: Which characteristics of the sites did you consider?

This was a very important discussion, in fact. Some said whether we should consider the ancient monuments... some said the social values, that site has a meaning in that village. We actually didn't exclude this. Among them [chosen sites], there are both ancient monuments and sites that are not ancient monuments but, like for example, the villagers had a funeral there... We didn't say this has a historical value, so we should prioritize this. We didn't say that.

R: Did you consider the claims and applications?

There are applications, but when we do this job, we think of excluding the communities from it, in fact. Namely, it is a very sensitive issue, a political issue. Turks left many villages in the South and fled away, similarly Greeks emptied many villages in the North. New people arrived in these villages, some people from Turkey, some from the South. Some of them have sorrow If you go and clean the tombs etc., this would get reaction. We want that, too, we want that communities do



these things, but you know, you could encounter with objection in some places. We felt that. We felt it in the South and the North. In some places, people showed great attention, but you can't calculate their reactions. For example, 2-3 people could come and help you in cleaning the church, then 3-5 of them would ask "why are you here? What are you doing?" That's why we decided to keep it only on the professional level. For example, our specialists went to Denia/Denya, there is a ruined mosque there. The Greeks surrounded them and asked who they were. I went there two weeks ago, somebody wrote "ELAM"<sup>16</sup> on the wall. Fanaticism. We are at this stage. [2012]

The objections coming from the local communities were not the only problems effecting the restoration process. For example, disappointment is reported regarding how the mosques in the South were restored. The imam of Hala Sultan Tekke, Şakir Alemdar, who is a Turkish Cypriot, told me that mostly the mosques which were converted from churches were restored (not the ones which were originally built as mosques), and the restoration basically aimed to highlight the "Christian" character of the sites, such as removing the whitewash and revealing the paintings, which make them unsuitable for Muslims to pray. This is acknowledged by archeologist Samuel Hardy in his dissertation about the restoration of some mosques in the South (2010: 174-175). The Turkish Cypriot specialist on the Committee also confirmed this. He argued,

The Ottomans didn't build mosques on the island; they converted the existing churches. There is a restoration process going on now. 15-16 Ottoman sites were declared as ancient monuments and they were restored. But did you observe how the restoration was implemented? It is interesting; they tended to put forward the characteristics of church at these sites. You know, for example, in Turkey Agia

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<sup>16</sup> The National Popular Front, a far-right, nationalist movement and party in the Republic of Cyprus.

Sophia, the frescos came out, the site was closed to prayer and then they plastered the frescos, and reopened the site. You can't pray under frescos, there is such a belief. Although people prayed in Agia Sophia for a long time, but in Orthodox Islam, you can't pray under images in the end. Now these old church-mosques which were restored... you can't worship inside them anymore, because the underground frescoes are on the surface.

Rabia: But they [Greek Cypriots] do not use them as churches, right?

Yes, but they are not used as mosques, either. You can't find any sign that they are mosques. For example, the mosque in Paphos. Where are these discussions going? If Turkish Cypriots go back, would they pray there? Would they pay attention to that? [2012]

The Greek Cypriot specialist working in the Technical Committee also provided similar information regarding the ongoing process, and some documents reporting the activities of the Committee, but interestingly he also mentioned the heritage belong to other communities in the island, such as Armenians and Maronites, about which I didn't hear from the Turkish Cypriot expert. He implicitly criticized the Turkish Cypriot members for rejecting the restoration of such sites. He said, "all of them are cultural heritage, they all have to be protected." Regarding my question about the nature of their collaboration with the Turkish authority, he said:

Look, there is a lot of hypocrisy. We meet as individuals, as experts, interested as persons. What they are doing with their administration is their job. So I am not interested to know that. What we are interested in is the decisions taken with our facilitator from the United Nations... The committee has surveillance of the projects, finally. It has the character of bi-communal activity. And we took an important decision that we shall keep the cultural heritage apart from the political confrontation and exploitation and propaganda. We are considering the cultural heritage as heritage of all Cypriots. We are working without lies. We consider

Cyprus as a unity, not divided north and south, discussing the monuments all over the island. Of course, we are careful to have a new approach of understanding each other.

It appears that, like many other well-intentioned bi-communal activities in the island, the collaboration attempts regarding the cultural heritage is an ongoing, but an extremely slow process, due to the permanence of sensitivity and defensive/offensive approaches among people regarding the destruction of cultural and heritage sites in the both parts.

#### **4.1.5. Homes, sacred spaces, and cemeteries: The sense of belonging**

“Some people could only bring [with] them their memories and nothing else.”

A 58-year old Greek Cypriot man from Rizokarpaso. [2012]

Another disastrous affect of the conflict was the displacement of thousands of people in Cyprus. Roughly more than 215,000 Cypriots<sup>17</sup> have experienced several waves of displacement and resettlement (Bryant 2012:vii). Turkish Cypriots were displaced from 1963 onwards, whereas the majority of Greek Cypriots were displaced in 1974 (Demetriou

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<sup>17</sup> According to the 1973 census, the total population was 631,778 (498,511 Greek Cypriot and 116,000 Turkish Cypriot)

2012:1). As Demetriou argues, “the experience of leaving one’s home and property has defined to a large extent the ways in which people have made sense of their lives afterwards” (2012:3). The time of displacement, the location of resettlement, the policies of governments towards various groups of refugees, type and quality of property left behind etc. influence how people experienced and recall the uprooting, and later how they recount the stories of conflict and their relations with the other ethnic community. These factors also determine how people approach the Cyprus problem, get involved in the politics, and how they see the future, especially for their families and children. For example, Turkish Cypriots frequently express their fear of being uprooted again, thus resisting to the solutions that would require territorial readjustment and further displacement, since almost all displaced Turkish Cypriots became refugees three times in 1958, 1963 and in 1974 (Bryant 2012:7 and 62-63). Most of them prefer a loose bi-zonal, bi-communal federation in which two separate ethnically defined states live side-by-side.

The opening of the checkpoints in 2003 was a turning point for many people.<sup>18</sup> Immediately, thousands of Cypriots flocked to the checkpoints to cross the border and see the other side. Refugees visited the villages they had left, looked for their houses and other properties, met with friends and neighbors, made new connections, and shopped. Abandoned houses and properties were not only in the imaginations and memories anymore; they now became accessible. According to Jacobson et al. (2009), more than 97,000 crossings were registered in the first month (2009:10).

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<sup>18</sup> Current checkpoints: Ledra Palace (Nicosia), Ledra street/Lokmaci (Nicosia), Agios Dometios/Metehan (Nicosia), Strovilia/Akyar (British Sovereign Base Area), Limnitis/Yesilirmak (Nicosia/Morphou), Pergamos/Pyla (Larnaca), Astromeritis/Zodhia (Nicosia/Morphou)

It is known from the records of checkpoint police that Turkish Cypriots are more willing to cross the border. This is partly due to the practical fact that some Turkish Cypriots are working in the South. Webster and Timothy argues that 57 percent of Greek Cypriots would not cross to the north, specifically due to the requirement of showing their identification card at the crossing (2006). This constitutes an ethical problem for them, because showing the ID card would mean “recognition” of the other side, which is considered illegal and under occupation by the Greek government. It seems that the motivations for crossing border are different for Greek and Turkish Cypriots.

Anthropologist Lisa Dikomititis explains in her ethnographic study on cultures of displacement among Greek and Turkish Cypriot refugees that the differences between Greek and Turkish Cypriot attitudes towards their places of origin. According to her, Greek Cypriot refugees mostly cross to the north to re-visit their villages, while Turkish Cypriots cross the Green Line for a range of activities (2012:96). The second difference is that Turkish Cypriots like to visit new places and they do not hesitate to spend money, whereas Greek Cypriots are reluctant to spend money in the North (2012:96-97). Dikomititis claims that:

Greek Cypriot crossings are more of the ‘pilgrimage’ type: they go to see what has been lost, whereas Turkish Cypriot crossings, if they are not related to work, medical emergencies or obtaining government documents are more of the tourist type, as if they are visiting another country. Turkish Cypriot border crossers seem to be more interested in meeting people, for instance old and new friends, while Greek Cypriots cross more often to visit their former villages or specific religious sites they used to frequent in their pre-displacement lives. (2012:97)

The emotional reasons are also affective in people's decision to cross the border and visit their villages. It seems that Turkish Cypriots have been less interested in visiting their villages more than once. They were disappointed to see that their houses were entirely or partially destroyed. Later, many of them refused to visit their villages again. Bryant reports that, "Even in cases where homes were intact, they said that 'nothing was the same' and 'it wasn't the place I remembered.' Most experienced the pain of finding their homes dilapidated, in ruins, or covered with public works or other buildings. One response to this was not to cross south again; another response was to continue to cross but not go to one's home or former village" (2012:61).

Greek Cypriots' houses have been mostly inhabited by the displaced Turkish Cypriots and settlers from Turkey. Greek Cypriots were more disappointed to see the conditions of the churches, chapels and cemeteries of their villages. Since currently people live in their former houses, Greek Cypriots instead reclaim their local churches by attempts to renovate them. Their return visits mostly include religious rituals, such as venerating the icons, lighting candles, bringing offerings and blessing the places.

My research demonstrated that Turkish Cypriots are not attached to their local mosques as much as Greek Cypriots are attached to their churches. If the Turkish Cypriots visited the Southern part to see their villages, this was mostly done to see their former houses and cemeteries of their dead, which are mostly razed by the Greek administration. It is somewhat odd to see abandoned former Turkish villages in the South, with totally destroyed houses and newly restored, disused mosques in the middle of landscape. The restoration projects were implemented under the control of the Department of Antiquities (Republic of Cyprus), and some of them were promoted in the book *Muslim Places of*

*Worship in Cyprus* in 2008. The book was published by the Press and Information Office in cooperation with the Association of Cypriot Archeologists. It claims to “shed(s) light on the persistent and continuous efforts of the government of Cyprus to protect these monuments through restoration and maintenance in order to keep them ready for the performance of religious services and prayers” (2008:5). The book does not acknowledge the deliberate destruction of religious sites, cultural heritage and villages of the Turkish community in the South, but talks about “the desecration and destruction of the religious monuments in occupied Cyprus” and cultural plundering.

The presence of a restored church in the middle of a ruined, abandoned village is sadly an “absurd” picture for some Turkish Cypriots, which shows how “fake” Greek Cypriots good intentions are. Turkish Cypriots miss their former houses and grieve for the cemeteries; most of them didn’t seem to be concerned about the situation of the mosques as much as they are for their homes and villages. However, this lack of interest for mosques definitely excludes the symbolically significant sites, such as Hala Sultan Tekke.

Nostalgia for the lost home is a common theme among both communities, but especially Greek Cypriots, most of whom had to leave their houses in one night. A Greek Cypriot man working in the Ministry of Interior tells the story of his former villages’ evacuations, Komi Kebir and Rizokarpaso, in 1974.

My father was working in Athalassa, not far from Nicosia. So, they were not at the village at that time. The villagers of Komi Kebir, a few days after the invasion, were captured. It was the Turkish army... they knocked the door at midnight and said you are leaving tomorrow morning; you can take whatever you can carry. The village was evacuated in 2 days. My mother’s auntie could only bring clothes and some cooking utensils. Whatever she could carry with herself. Of course, some photos...

My mother can recall an agreement between Clerides and Denktash to exchange populations, but it was after 1975...

Rizokarpaso was a big village; it couldn't be easily evacuated. There was another method followed. Soldiers draw away all the doctors and all the teachers. So that people would feel uncomfortable without teachers and doctors, living by themselves. At the same time, they used to distribute petitions for leaving to the south. Children could not go to the school.

In Komi Kebir, it was more brutal... I can recall seeing buses of Turkish Cypriots accompanied by police heading to the north. It was a two way of evacuation. Turkish Cypriots leaving their villages, Greek Cypriots coming to the South. [2011]

The Turkish Cypriot administration was careful to resettle Turkish Cypriot refugees from the south in villages which resemble their former ones, whereas Greek Cypriots refugees were scattered, which resulted in their longing for the past (Bryant 2010:13). However, though relatively less intensely than the Greek Cypriots, Turkish Cypriots also express their longing for their former houses and environments (Boğaç 2009), which might be due to the fact that Turkish administration's attempt was only partially successful (Bryant 2012:11).

The imagination of the former houses as bigger and more beautiful than they are is a tendency that can be found among both communities. The following quote from a journalist, Engin Köklüçınar, from Turkey demonstrates how people exaggerate the value of their properties:

The administration conducted a survey with Turkish Cypriots now living in the Omorfo (Güzelyurt) district in order to determine how much land they had left in the south. When they began to add up the total square meters based on the answers, the officials' eyes popped out of their heads, because the total added up to 1.5 times the total square meters of Cyprus as a whole. (quoted in Bryant 2012:12)



Citing Roger Bastide's study on the Afro-American rituals of *candomblé*, practiced in Brazil, Peter Burke talks about the symbolic reconstruction of African space, which, for him, is "a kind of psychological compensation for the loss of a homeland" (1997:49). As a similar example, mostly Greek Cypriots have survived the memories of their lost homeland through various ways of reconstruction. For example, they have built the replicas of the churches they had back in the North, and gathered for rituals and religious services at specific times during a year. These constructions have been mostly implemented by the refugee organizations in the South with the financial support of their members. For example, the Chrysosotiros church in Oroklini (Larnaca) was built on the prototype of the church with the same name in Akanthou (Famagusta),<sup>19</sup> and Ayios Euphemianos church in Kornos (Larnaca) was built on the prototype of the church in Lysi (Famagusta).

A different practice is to give the name of the former church to a current local sacred place, and to practice rituals and memorial services in commemoration of the dead, missing people and also the lost village. According to a report on September 29, 2013, the Church committee and the Communal Assembly of Tymbou in collaboration with all refugees of the village celebrated the patron saint of their village, Saint Thekla in the sacred convent that bears the same name close to the village of Mosfiloti. It is also reported that there was going to be a prayer and a memorial service in commemoration of all residents of the village of Tymbou who live in exile, who fell during the Turkish invasion in 1974, and also after 1974, and for finding the missing persons and for the return of all refugees to their cities and villages.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> For the image of the old church: <http://goo.gl/vtjeKN>, and the replica: <http://goo.gl/pW7svk>

<sup>20</sup> <http://freetime-news.blogspot.gr/2013/09/29-2013.html>

Some Greek Cypriots still keep the hope for returning back to their homes, if unification can be accomplished one day. However, especially with the recent disappointing developments regarding the negotiations between the two communities, Greek Cypriots have come to realize that going back to past is practically impossible.

If unification happens, my parents wouldn't go back,; because they have their house somewhere else, they lived somewhere else, their life is here. Even there is unification on any of those plans, Annan plan or any other, because of its location; my father's village will never be given to Greek Cypriot jurisdiction. It is another reason why they wouldn't like to live under Turkish Cypriot jurisdiction. Not because they don't like Turkish Cypriots, but because of the situation. I would like to stress that my parents are really good friends with Turkish Cypriot people. [43-year old Greek Cypriot whose family was displaced from the village Vrysoulles, Famagusta, 2012]

There are other Greek Cypriots who desire going back to their former villages in the North, but are unwilling to live under Turkish authority:

Turkish Cypriots are OK. I would be scared to death to live under Turkish, but Turkish Cypriots in my community... I had no problem with them, but I am scared of settlers. Everybody was scared from settlers. [An 80-year old Greek Cypriot woman from Komi Kebir, Karpas Peninsula, 2011]

None of the Turkish Cypriots I interviewed expressed their desire or hope for going back to the South. They even find Greek Cypriots' dreams for returning strange. A Turkish Cypriot man around his 75-80s from the village Şahinler (Massari in Greek) in Morphou said to me: "They [Greek Cypriots] were all lied to about this. They were deceived that they

would return one day. That's why they always kept that hope for returning. That's a lie." And he added: "We [Turkish Cypriots] are guests on the other side, and they [Greek Cypriots] are guests on this side."

#### **4.2. (NON-)SHARED RELIGIOUS SITES**

"Saints do not have nationalities"

Bishop of Morphou

[Personal communication, 2012]

Cyprus presents a complex landscape of sacredness with its historical places of syncretism and hybridity. In search of miraculous healing, Christians and Muslims share the blessings of holy places and practices. After the division of the island in 1974, Greek Orthodox religious sites that remained in the North, and, likewise, Muslim religious sites that remained in the South have become subjects of controversy and conflict regarding their preservation, restoration and conversion. More specifically, the multivocality of some holy sites provokes discussion over the identity and politics of these places (see Hatay 2014).

In this section, I discuss sacred spaces where both Orthodox Christians and Muslims in Cyprus visit and assert claims, analyzing the essence of sharing and the context in which sharing occurred in the past and today. The first subsection explains my observations and reflections in Cyprus by referring to various competing theoretical models advanced by

scholars who have written on other cases in the world to deal with interaction between members of different religious communities and their relations with sacred spaces (e.g. Albera 2008; Bakker 1991; Bigelow 2012; Bowman 1993, 2010, 2012; Couroucli 2012; Golden 2004; Hasluck 2000 [1929]; Hayden 2002, 2012; Hayden & Walker 2013). The case of Cyprus may advance our understanding of the dynamics of sharing sacred spaces, and the circumstances in which syncretic practices appear (Bowman 2010, Stewart & Shaw 1994). I refer to various example cases where I have conducted research in my analysis, including my observations in many local churches and mosque. In the second subsection, I provide analysis of two sites, Hz. Ömer Tekke and Kırklar Tekke, currently located in TRNC. Another case, the sharing of Apostolos Andreas Monastery, is explained in the next section with regard to the claims over land via religious sites.

Although I draw on the existing literature on shared spaces, it is necessary to start with a clarification of the peculiarities of the Cyprus case and the limitations of this research. Orthodox Christian and Muslim communities in the island were living together since the Ottoman Empire invasion of the island in 1517, and until the *de facto* division of the island in 1974. The physical sharing of sacred sites has been restricted since then, but the sites have started to be visited again by both communities with the opening of the dividing Green Line in 2003. This has enabled Cypriot people to visit their former sacred sites, and recall the experiences of both former coexistence and the ethnic conflict. Some sites, such as Apostolos Andreas Monastery, are still frequented by both communities, though there is relatively limited interaction between the two, due to currently separate daily lives. This is specifically the case for the two sites I analyze in this section.

My main point is that these two sites and many other shared/used-to-be shared sites are not visited by both communities regularly and on a daily basis anymore, even if they have become accessible after the opening of the checkpoints, with the exception of Kırklar Tekke. Visiting a site on the other side is not a daily occasion, it is a special time, people have to spend half day at least for visiting the sites due to the requirements of traveling to the other side.

Even when the two communities come together on special occasions or circumstances in the sites, their interaction is very much determined by the ongoing political ambiguity. I explain in detail the different dynamics of the mentioned sites in the following subsection, but there is almost always some kind of contestation going on in these sites, which are more or less related to the political conflict –e.g. over the preservation of the site, or restrictions on practices. Therefore, it is most likely that the dynamics of interaction between Christian and Muslim communities have transformed substantially, particularly after the division of the island. Some narratives of site-users depend completely on their memories of the sites, since either they no longer have access to the them, or have only visited the site only a couple of times after the border openings in 2003.

Here, it is useful to draw on the distinction Glenn Bowman (2010) makes between “sharing” and “mixing.” He says that he abandoned the term ‘shared’, because it “seemed too strongly to connote an amity that [one] would be wrong to presuppose” and replaced it with ‘mixed’, which is “a term capable of embracing interaction ranging from antagonistic mobilization to amicable mutuality” (Bowman 2010:199). This makes room for a variety of possible configurations at sacred sites, and eliminates potentially misleading presumptions

about the quality of relations between different religious communities. Sharing does not necessarily mean harmonious and peaceful utilization of a common site.

My contention is that shared spaces reveal the patterns of power relations between different communities within a society. Although I believe in the importance of looking at the historical trajectories at the sites in order to understand the reflection of hegemonic relations onto sacred sites, and have tried to integrate both micro and macro level analysis to some extent, I do not provide a processual analysis of the sites that “follow transformations in patterns of political dominance over long periods of time” as Robert Hayden proposes in his Antagonistic Tolerance model (2002). Though explaining history of the sites to some extent, the ethnographic data I present here mostly provides a snapshot in the long history of Cyprus and Cyprus conflict. Thus, I use my case study, which focused primarily on social forgetting, as an ethnographic base from which to reflect critically on identity and memory constructions, and on ideological mechanisms of exclusion and inclusion in and via sacred sites.

#### **4.2.1. Observations from the case studies in Cyprus**

Drawing on research conducted at Kırklar Tekke (Agiol Saranda), Hz. Ömer Tekke (Agiol Phanontes), Apostolos Andreas Monastery and various other local churches and mosques, the following patterns have been observed:

##### **4.2.1.1. One-way crossing**

Similar to other cases in Eastern Mediterranean, crossings are usually one-way (Couroucli 2012:8) in Cyprus: Muslims visit Christian sites, rather than vice versa. This is, I argue, related to how Muslims and Christians perceive religious space, the meanings/sacredness they attribute to the places, and how they perceive members of other monotheistic religions.

Schimmel explains Muslims' approaches to sacred space: "Whithersoever you turn, there is the Face of God' (Sura 2/115). Thus says the Qur'an, and the conviction that God is not restricted to a single place but is *hâdir nâzir*, 'present and watching' everywhere, and that mankind feels his presence wherever it may be, has permeated the Muslims' attitude to sacred space" (1991:163). There are definitely places of religious significance for Muslims, two of which are Kaaba in Mecca and Hala Sultan Tekke in Larnaca. However, Muslims tend to believe in the omnipresence of God, thus neither are mosques seen necessarily as only places of worship in Islam, nor is regularly attending a mosque

considered essential. Muslims appear to have a more flexible understanding of sanctuaries than Christians. The Bishop of Morphou explained Muslims' visits to Christian sites with the energy people feel at the sites:

The sainthood comes from God. Why these places [refers to the sites of Apostolos Andreas, Saint Barnabas and Saint Mamas] are sacred? They are like energy factories. God's energy is coming from these places. And the people could understand, and feel this energy. That could be Muslim, Christian, Judaic. [2012]

Frederick W. Hasluck discussed Christians' approaches to Islam and Mohammedan sanctuaries frequented by them, in his work on the mixed shrines in Anatolia and the Balkans at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century:

May we then, in default of other evidence, regard the frequentation of a Mohammedan sanctuary by Christians as proof that the sanctuary in question was originally Christian? It is true that the orthodox Christian peasant theoretically regards the Mohammedan religion as unclean, whereas the Turk has no such prejudice against Christianity: even if Sunni and learned, he considers it less as bad in itself than as imperfect, as being based on an earlier revelation than Islam, and degenerate as regards the worship of 'idols.' An outward expression of this point of view is the fact that in the reconquered countries a mosque, unless it has been (or is thought to have been) a church is rarely, if ever, taken over as a church by the Orthodox. (1929: 75-76).

However, there are examples of conversions from mosque to church. Julie A. Harris explains mosque to church conversions during the Spanish Reconquest, and she argues, "the act of converting a mosque to a church is a common rather than uncommon occurrence... Dicomfiture over using an Islamic structure as a church was relatively rare" (1997:172). There are also examples from the Balkans, such as the *Sveti Sedmochislenitsi*



church in Sofia, which was originally built as a mosque (*Kara Camii*, Black Mosque) in 1528 by the Ottoman Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent, and was converted and inaugurated in 1903. Such transactions reflect power relations: “While economic factors and issues of expediency may have contributed to the decision to convert a standing structure, the routine conversion of congregational mosques in the thirteenth century also satisfied triumphalist desires which were informed by an acceptance of the congregational mosque’s dual role [religious and political] in Islamic society” (Harris 1997:172).

The picture on the Muslim side is also not as bright and positive as Ayoub’s claim that “the Qur’an clearly advocates mutual acceptance and cooperation among the people of the Book: Jews, Christians and Muslims” (1991: 171), since the affirmation of the legitimacy of former revelations (Christianity and Judaism) does not imply that *dhimmis* were considered equal to Muslims in Islamic tradition (Benthall 2005, Siddiqui 2004). Religious exclusivity usually does exist on both practical and theological grounds, despite the fact that Christians, Muslims and Jews are called confessional cousins (Benthall 2005). Siddique explains the differing perceptions of Jesus’ status “upon which both faiths ultimately reject each other’s message” (2004:162).

In the matter of images of Jesus Christ in Islam, Oddbjørn Leirvik explains diversified approaches:

On the Muslim side, the view that the messages of all prophets are essentially the same, and the perceived ‘self-sufficiency’ of the Islamic canon (Qur’an and Hadith), has implied a reluctance to recognize an image of Christ different from that of the Islamic sources. The positions vary, however. On the one hand, we will find self-sufficient statements like ‘a Muslim is quite at ease as far as the attitude of Islam towards Jesus is concerned; his mind is settled, his conscience is clear and his belief is sound.’ On the other hand, there are also genuine attempts at a dialogue with

Christian images of Christ that might challenge, or add to, the inherited Muslim images of Christ. (2010:1)

However, the exclusivist approaches do not stop people from visiting each other's sites for pragmatic purposes. Hasluck notes that, "despite the strong theoretical prejudices of Christians, the popular religious thought, and still more the ritual practice, of Oriental Christendom have much in common with those of Islam. In the case of saints the attraction of healing miracles goes far to overcome all scruples, and Greek no less than Turk admits the idea that, if his own saints fail him, an alien may be invoked" (1929:76-77). There are, though relatively less, examples of Muslim places visited by Christians reported by researchers (Bowman 2010, Georgieva 1998 [on Demir Baba Tekke in Razgrad]).

To my questions regarding visiting Islamic holy places now, Greek Cypriots told about their hesitation about visiting Muslim sites due to their fear of conducting inappropriate actions. Islamic holy places might not be explicitly exclusive, but it appears that the requirement of removing one's shoes or head-covering for women does not look as simple and objective to Christian eyes, although some Orthodox monasteries in Cyprus required women to cover their heads and also prohibited women from wearing pants in the churches in the past decade. But Greek Cypriots were clear that they wouldn't visit a mosque for praying, but only for touristic purposes and out of curiosity. I should note, though, that my research was conducted at a time after the strict separation of the two communities for 29 years, then 10 years of an accessible, but still divided period. Thus, compared to the Ottoman and British periods in which there were mixed villages, fewer Greek Cypriots are probably familiar with the Muslim customs, and this has certainly been affective in their current perceptions.

Another point to emphasize is that except for some sites, which are explicitly Christian and Muslim, people might not consider the sites as belonging to the Other. This is the case in Kırklar Tekke and Hz. Ömer Tekke, which have relatively ambiguous characters. These sites have tombs of revered saints or martyrs, and their architectural features do not openly denote a church or a mosque, and although both were given a more Islamic character since the Ottoman times, this did not stop Christians from venerating the saints at these places. As former local Greek Cypriot inhabitants of the village Tymbou, and current Turkish Cypriot inhabitants of the neighboring villages told me, Greek Orthodox continued to attend these sites until they moved. The practices of Greek Orthodox in these sites will be explained in the next section

Although these two sites are not openly mosques, the main buildings have been used as *tekkes* and inhabited by the *hodjas* and their families. The Turkish term *tekke* is used for the local headquarters of Sufi orders (*khangah* in Persian, *zawiya* in Arabic). *Tekkes* serve as complexes for social, ritual, educational activities as well as living spaces for the members of the *tarikats* (*tariqa* in Arabic, literally meaning “way, path,” referring to religious orders). The complexes usually have residence cells, a large kitchen and a tomb-shrine (*türbe*) of one or more deceased spiritual masters. They might include a mosque, especially in the case of Sunni Sufi orders. The existence of a mosque within a non-Sunni complex can be a controversial issue and an arena for confrontation and power clash, as happened in the case of Hacı Bektash Veli Museum in Turkey. The complex was the main dervish lodge of the Bektashi order for centuries; however, after the suppression of the order by Mahmud II in 1826, the order’s possessions were handed over to Sunni

Naqshbandi order and a mosque was built inside the complex same year. The placement of the mosque was basically an attempt to Sunnify the site (see Harmanşah et al. 2014).

*Tekkes* didn't function only as religious centers in the Ottoman lands, and didn't attract only a specific community. As Scott Alexander points out,

Partly because the money used to endow *tekkes* and *khangahs* was often invested in local business and agriculture, a number of them throughout the late medieval and early modern Muslim world (c.1200-1900) functioned as important economic, cultural, and political centers. In fact in some regions –particularly southern Asia, western North Africa, and the Balkans- *tekkes* and *khangahs* played a role in the Islamization of local peoples and cultures. (2004: 2171)

Various studies have drawn attention to the missionary and colonizing role of dervishes in the early Ottoman Empire period (Barkan 1942, Lowry 2008). Also, speaking of the importance of *zaviyye* (dervish convents) and *imarets* (soup-kitchens), Lowry claims that, “(f)requently established in conjunction with a second type of public building, the dervish lodge (*tekke*, *hanegah* or *zaviyye*), both facilities were initially designed to meet the physical needs (food and lodging) of the wandering mendicants who played a key role, both militarily and as colonizers of newly conquered regions, in the formative period of the state” (2008:67).

Speaking about such sites as meeting points, Cypriots (both Greek and Turkish) referred to the basically economic, social and cultural aspects of these sites. *Panayır* (fairs) regularly occurred at such locations and were the main reason for many people to frequent the sites. Further, the ambiguity of their architectural characters, which were inclusive and less repellant most likely facilitated the practice of attending a *tekke* site.

Another interesting point to consider in the case of Cyprus with regard to one-way crossing is the identities of the multiply revered sites. One reason why Muslims visit Christian sites much more than the reverse might be that the majority of the population has always been Greek in the island, even during the Ottoman period. It could be argued that the Turkish population was integrated into the majority's life style. Another different dynamic is that the island was under British rule for a long period of time, from 1878 to 1960.

However, my research also demonstrated that in some cases, such as Apostolos Andreas Monastery, which is a clearly Christian site with its church and monastic architecture of the complex, some Muslims do have stories that justify their attendance to the place.<sup>21</sup> Architecture's imposition of its own substance to people seems to be limited by the extent of human imagination.

#### **4.2.1.2. Localness and marginality**

Localness and marginality can be said the characteristics of the mixed sanctuaries in the case of Cyprus. Such places mostly flourish in the rural areas and on the frontiers, where there is less institutional control over the religious practices (Couroucli 2002:6-7, Albera 2002). But I argue that this phenomena itself does not necessarily imply that 'local populations managed to live peacefully side by side,' far from cities and central authority. Such a position resembles the premise that people lived together peacefully until

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<sup>21</sup> For discussions of these stories, see the subsection on Apostolos Andreas Monastery.

nationalism disrupted this tradition, which is, as Hayden argues, “a curious reincarnation of basic premises of structural functionalism –that local relations are self-regulating unless disrupted by external forces- and similarly denies the legitimacy of processes of historical change. But it also ignores the configurations of power in which these peaceful interactions took place” (2013a: 331). However, the centrality or peripheralism of the site indeed affects the practices of local people in the site, and the fate of the building with the changing domination (see Hayden & Walker 2013b: 414-415). Cyprus has a relatively small territory; however, still the sanctuaries in the center of Nicosia and those in the remote villages of Paphos are definitely not treated in the same manner, since religious sites usually do reflect the power relations in the society, and centrality and perceptibility are critical criteria in transformation periods. Hayden & Walker argue that “(i)n zones of actively contested politico-religious dominance, vying groups will build structures that competitively challenge the height, visibility, audibility, and/or massiveness of the rival group’s religious structures” (2013:413).

Cyprus is a small place in the eyes of those from relatively larger countries, but it is big enough for its indigenous people. Cypriots usually attend and give importance to the sacred sites in the neighborhood. Certainly some sites are island-wide considered to be holy (e.g. Apostolos Andreas Monastery and Hala Sultan Tekke), but other than that people are not very aware of other local sites. For example, when I asked about Kırklar Tekke to Turkish Cypriots, they did not know or had not even heard about the space, if they didn’t live in the neighborhood, despite the recent attempts to revitalize the site as a thoroughly Islamic, important site, serving to prove the long historical presence of Turkish community in the island.

In Cyprus, local places and practices are significant factors for expressing identities. Even the young generations sometimes denote their parents' former villages as their homelands. My interviews showed that this is valid for both Turkish and Greek Cypriots. The spatial scope of local self-perceptions usually points to the sacred places. Greek Cypriots have especially strong attachments to their local churches. One's home village/town is a distinct social category, which, it can be argued, may not even recognize the national borders and contexts. The refugees almost always refer to the villages from which they were displaced as their homeland. Local identity is a very crystallized social category among others.

#### **4.2.1.3. Official/local discourses and the particularities of the sanctuaries**

In the analysis of mixed shrines, one needs to distinguish and pay attention to both the religious authorities' approaches and the attitudes of local users. I am not able to explain the historical and social complexity of religion and its relation to nationalisms in Cyprus, but will address a set of related issues on religion and religious heritage as marker of group/national identity as well as the interaction and competition between institutional and local religion.

In Cyprus, religion has been a determining factor that influences and informs the relations between Orthodox and Muslim communities, somewhat similar to the examples of religious inter-communal relations in the Yugoslav successor states (Ivekovic 2002) and in Northern Ireland (Mitchell 2005). The Greek Orthodox Church has been a predominant

actor in Cypriot political life for centuries. Religious and ethnic identities are not mutually exclusive, but to the contrary mostly reinforcing each other, and overlapping with each other, specifically in Southern Cyprus, where religion has been politicized and has become part of the history of nation building.

Depending on my own observations and data in the field, I argue that Turkish Cypriots are relatively more secular than both Greek Cypriots and Turkish settlers, and their Muslim identity is cultural more than religious. The secular character of Cypriot Islam was observed in 1950s by Beckingham as well: "Cypriot Islam is in general latitudinarian in character. It is very rare indeed for the foreign visitor to encounter any trace of fanaticism" (1957b:80). It appears to me that religious traditions provide a cultural reservoir that determines lifestyles, values, and practices of people as well as contributes to the categorizations of self and the Other as a signifier of communal membership. It seems that, especially after Turkey's intervention and presence in the politics of the island, and with the impact of the AKP government in Turkey in the last decade, Islam has been represented more vigorously, and even more aggressively, in an exclusivist manner in the Northern part. What Mitchell argues for Northern Ireland appears valid for Cyprus: "religion is not just a boundary marker, but... it often gives meaning to the boundary as well" (2005:4).

The difficulty of understanding the relations between religion and nationalism/ethnicity is partly due to the complexity of representation of religion in the political arena. My contention is that the politics and everyday practice of religion are connected and folk religion cannot necessarily be considered powerless in political processes. Religious traditions have been used for the construction of the idea of nation,



despite the general assumption that nation-state is a secular entity (see Van Der Veer, 1994). And *the* religion dealt by the state is not simply an ideological version of religion

Ashis Nandy, in his article, "The Politics of Secularism and the Recovery of Religious Tolerance," makes a distinction between religion-as-faith and religion-as-ideology. By religion-as-faith, he means "religion as a way of life, a tradition which is definitionally non-monolithic and operationally plural." By religion-as-ideology, he means "religion as a sub-national identifier of populations contesting for or protecting non-religious, usually political or socio-economic interests" (1988:178). Nandy seems to make a too clear-cut distinction between these two versions. Using the example of Cyprus, I argue that "religion-as-faith" and 'religion-as-ideology' are neither monolithic nor concrete, nor disconnected nor can be easily differentiated. Both have the potential to influence, permeate and transform each other. And states do deal with faiths, rather than only with religious ideologies, contrary to what Nandy argues. It seems to me that a simple, daily practice in a religious site (such as lighting a candle) could be classified as "faith", not "ideology," and religious institutions are keen in regulating them. And in fact, such practices and the regulation/treatment of religious sites are not trivial issues for people, the controversies over them lie at the very heart of identity constructions. Nandy's romantic simplification is criticized by Viswanathan: "(h)is undiluted faith in the continuing vitality of religion as a 'living reality' in the lives of people, independent of the state's secular character, reasserts the split between private and public spheres and treats people's beliefs and state ideology as essentially noninteractive and mutually exclusive. Nandy's idea of religion revives a romanticized image of 'the people' as the true repository of belief, unknown and unrecognized by the state" (Viswanathan 1998:173)

Peter Van Der Veer rightly remarks that, “it is the control over religious centers as material embodiments of beliefs and practices that is so crucial in religious nationalism” (1994:10-11). My argument is that we can’t ignore the sites’ local everyday users, whom I consider as the owners of the place, whose body language, emotions, physical engagement with the place, sense of belonging, sense of hope and beliefs constitute the meaning and sustainability of these holy spaces; without forgetting the fact that all these factors, and as Hayden et.al (2011) argue, the identity of religious sites are subjected to change. At the same time, the dynamics of shared spaces can’t be understood without grasping the social and political contexts and processes in which they are shared: “we see it as necessary to analyze the characteristics of religious shrines not only in single locations, but rather to consider such sites in the contexts of shrines of differing communities in wider geographical spaces, on scales ranging from single streets or neighborhoods to towns to regions” (Hayden & Walker 2013b: 402).

However, the ethnographic moment and understanding the local level perspectives and processes are important. The everyday dynamics of these spaces are not configured only or mostly by politics or ideologies. My research in Cyprus draws on local and national levels and categories, as both are equally significant in the production of contexts. Appadurai points out the “context-generative” dimension of locality; but reminds us that this capability “is profoundly affected by the locality-producing capabilities of larger-scale social formations (nation-states, kingdoms, missionary empires and trading cartels) to determine the general shape of all the neighborhoods within the reach of their powers” (1995:211). “Through apparatuses as diverse as museums and village dispensaries, post-offices and police-stations, toll-booths and telephone booths, the nation-state creates a vast

network of formal and informal techniques for the nationalization of all space considered to be under its sovereign authority” (1995:214). Yet people do resist, subvert, evade, contest, negotiate, reject, appropriate, and transform some of the projects of the state via various techniques (Scott 1985, 1990). My ethnographic data on religious sites showed Cypriots’ resistance, active and passive, to certain practices and limitations on them in their sites. In the case of TRNC, religious sites have been transforming with the impact of the government policies and the demographic imbalance in favor of Turkish settlers. Greek Cypriots protest and resist TRNC policies towards Christian heritage. I explain these case studies in detail in the following sections.

Though relatively fragile, the potential of locality for expanding local knowledge in order to cope with the challenges to the autochthonous identities and practices cannot be disregarded, and is accessible to ethnographic investigation. The interactions of and relations between local, national and also global contexts, and the influence of locality on the overall contextual frame might remain ambiguous to some extent, and definitely requires a longer term analysis than my project could cover. Still, ethnographic data illuminates the power of locality and its centrality on individual and communal level. Appadurai sums up the point thoroughly:

The work of producing neighborhoods –life worlds constituted by relatively stable associations, by relatively known and shared histories, and by collectively traversed and legible spaces and places –is often at odds with the projects of the nation-state. This is partly because the commitments and attachments (sometimes mislabeled ‘primordial’) that characterize local subjectivities are more pressing, more continuous, and sometimes more distracting than the nation-state can afford. It is also because the memories and attachments that local subjects have of and to their shop-signs and street-names, their favorite walkways, and streetscapes, their times

and places for congregating and escaping, are often at odds with the needs of the nation-state for regulated public life. Further, it is the nature of local life to develop partly in contrast to other neighborhoods, by producing its own contexts of alterity (spatial, social and technical), contexts which may not meet the needs for spatial and social standardization prerequisite for the disciplined national citizen. (2003:63)

Redefining the landscape also redefines the neighborhood, which disrupts one 'relative stability' while trying to create another. Such 'stability' was seriously contested and even destroyed between the 1950s to 1970s, and now it is the current stability which is contested by the Greek Cypriots. In the case of shared spaces, the factor of 'time' remains very critical. The focus of this section is on shared sacred spaces which have not been shared –at least in the same way as they were 40 years ago- anymore in the case of Cyprus. Thus, the relevant local knowledge is slowly fading away with the death of older generations. Also, it has to be noted that the understanding of 'sharing a space' has probably changed a lot over time, and the form that was idealized a half century ago cannot be privileged. Moreover, young people in Cyprus neither have first-hand experiences with the other community, nor have much interest in sacred places.

Ethnographic studies have shown that sharing (or mixing) would not necessarily mean only "tolerance" -which might take active or passive forms, according to Hayden (2002)- syncretism or only open antagonism/contestation, at least at the local level, but it may serve as a domain in which various 'other' kinds of interactions (relations, alliances, disagreements, hostilities) are displayed. I think that these interactions do not necessarily correspond with only ethnic and religious affiliations, either. The critical question is, in what domains are the religious, ethnic or other affiliations central. There are usually

multiple layers of factors that influence people's approaches to the Other –and even the definition of the Other- and to the sites belonging to or associated with them.<sup>22</sup> The power balance between these factors might easily change. The practice and enactment of identities are usually more complex than the exclusivist definition of these identities.

Cyprus is not exceptional, but affords revealing examples with its ongoing, unresolved political situation since the 1950-60s. As my study on cultural memory demonstrates, official and local discourses on various issues can be strikingly different and diverse. One good example for explaining this point is the case of Kırklar Tekke. Since the restoration of the site in 2007-8, there have been attempts at obvious Islamizing that exclude any Christian elements from the site, and which are prompted and supported by the Turkish administration. However, there are Turkish Cypriots who regard the past mixed practices as part of local culture (both of Cypriotness and of village identity) and embrace and praise them in the face of the conservative Islam of settlers from Turkey. Clinging to their past memories, these Turkish Cypriots told me stories regarding how they were sharing the site with their Christian neighbors, although perhaps they did so in reaction to the presence of Turkish settlers and their more conservative version of Islam. However, it has to be noted that the official discourses and policies do transform and control the utilization of the site. My interviews with local people and the imam of the site

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<sup>22</sup> As a 'normative' category, UNESCO defines stakeholders, who has to be consulted in regarding policies on religious heritage sites, as religious communities, made up of believers, traditional and indigenous peoples, as well as State Party authorities, professionals and experts in relevant fields, property owners, funding bodies and other interested partners. See <http://whc.unesco.org/en/religious-sacred-heritage/> [accessed on July 31, 2014]

as well as the website of the shrine established by the Imam<sup>23</sup> show that the current Sunni practices at the site are mostly attended by the Turkish population who arrived from Turkey. Turkish Cypriots seem no longer to be attending the site, as I understand from my visits to the site and the interviews with local people.

The choice of the wording in the website on Kırklar Tekke appears purposeful. The site is mostly called by the local people as “Kırklar Tekke” which refers to the former dervish lodge at the site. Considering the tension between Orthodox Islam and heterodox Sufi Islam, *türbe* (tomb) probably sounds more traditional and “proper” for an Islamic site to Muslim conservatives. These voluntary visits to the graves and shrines of saints, and martyrs (which is called *ziyaret/ziarat* to differentiate from *hajj*, pilgrimage to Mecca) are mostly practiced by women, who usually do not go to mosques. However, I should note that some practices at the tombs are disapproved by the institutional Islam in Cyprus and Turkey, where you can see warnings on the walls stating that it is not proper to light candles or pray to saints for help.<sup>24</sup>

There is a similar contestation going on between Turkish Cypriots and Turkish settlers in Hz. Ömer Tekke. Turkish Cypriots criticize and feel deprived of their relatively less strict sacred place, where currently new rules have been imposed on the site by the Turkish imams, such as the obligation of women to cover their heads when entering the site. Since Turkish Cypriots and Turkish settlers currently share their everyday living space, their interactions at the sites are more visible and explicit than the interactions with

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<sup>23</sup> <http://www.kirklarturbesi.com/>

<sup>24</sup> For a comprehensive analysis of non-hajj pilgrimage in Islamic world, see Bhardwaj (1998).

rare visitors of Greek Cypriots. The contestation between Turkish Cypriots and Turkish settlers in Hz. Ömer Tekke will be explained in the subsection 'Fraternal Other.'

A rather different example can be found in the contestation over Apostolos Andreas Monastery. There was a recent discussion triggered by a Turkish scholar, who claimed that there was an Islamic character of the site preceding its Christian past, and asked for the construction of a mosque at the spot. However, the claim was not widely supported by the Turkish Cypriot community, who acknowledge the site as thoroughly Christian. The details will be explained in the subsection on Apostolos Andreas Monastery

I argue that analyzing the political climate, the relations between ethnic/religious groups and the politics of identity is not sufficient for understanding the dynamics of a shared site. The "echo" produced at the local level as a reply to political, economic and social circumstances might have unexpected repercussions that could be only observed at the site. The local compliance or resistance might be subtle, and it might have impact on the site only on the long term or might not be affective at all, but we can't underestimate the local readings of the sanctuaries and the practices at them.

Thus, both the particularities of the sites (Bowman 2012:13) and the micro-scale (Couroucli 2012:5) have to be considered. In Cyprus, the configurations in different religious sites are diverse and complex, and there are various kinds of "the Other" in the island. In that sense, it is difficult to talk about a monochromic picture at the sites. Peaceful coexistence and antagonism might be the dominant texture of relations between different groups occasionally at the same spot (Hayden 2002).

As a last note, fieldwork is essential for understanding the particularities of sites, and especially for detecting contestation. An apparently peaceful site might contain a lot of

antagonistic interactions, which become visible only through a careful reading of the relations between the communities, the practices and discourses of people regarding the sites. I realized in my fieldwork that contestation and hostility are often subtle, cryptic and ambiguous, thus difficult to detect.

#### **4.2.1.4. Non-identitarian aspects of the sites**

There are various other aspects of the sites which are sometimes omitted by identity-based models that only explain the dynamics of the sites within the framework of religious/ethnic identities of the site-users. These include the pragmatic and material considerations of people when attending the sites, the social interaction happening at the sites, and the economic importance of such places.

In his article on ritual polytropy in China, Adam Yuet Chau talks about efficacy-based religiosity: “A person with a particularly difficult problem will go to a Daoist temple, then a Buddhist temple, then a spirit medium, and then even a Catholic church or a Muslim mosque if the problem is resistant to other interventions. To him or her what matters is not which religious tradition the particular temple or specialist is affiliated with –which often is not clear anyway- but how efficacious (ling, lingying, lingyan) the deity or specialist is in responding to his or her requests” (2012: 80).

This argument specifically fits to the case of Cyprus. Muslims, who are the ones mostly attending the Other’s sanctuaries, explained their attendance with two basic points:



1. Whenever Muslims have particular problems or troubles, they visit the Christian saints famous with their expertise on the issue.

2. As I mentioned earlier, festivals/fairs (*panayır*) are the second main reason why Muslims and Christians gather in such mixed places, which is related to economy more than spirituality. Festivals were the basic domains for exchanging products, selling and buying products, communicating with neighbors and relatives.

One of my Turkish Cypriot interviewee, in his 40s, cited what his grandparents told him regarding their visits to Apostolos Andreas Monastery, which seems to be a good example for the points explained above:

There is sequence of religions at Apostolos Andreas. The chapel is Catholic, and then there is the rumor that we [Muslims] have a *sahabe* there. There used to be places commonly used. I am from Karpasia, I asked my family, they are not alive now... What was that site? Was it a Rum [Greek Cypriot] site? My grandfather said 'It was also our sacred place. We didn't see it as a Rum site. We saw it as a place where our wishes could come true.' The Greekification of that site started after these events [referring to the ethnic clash]. Turks started to go less and less. It used to be a site where Turks were praying comfortably without any obsession or hesitation. [2011]

#### **4.2.1.5. Quality of shared spaces**

Another important point to be emphasized is the necessity of identifying the quality of shared spaces. What I mean by this is that we need to distinguish religious/sacred sites, and built/natural sites. Hasluck (1929) is one of the scholars who first discussed these various kinds of sacred sites (urban/rural sanctuaries; natural sanctuaries such as

mountains, springs; natural cults such as tree cults, stone cults). In analysis of such sites, Park argues that the differences between religious sites and sacred sites must not be overlooked: "Places can be of historical significance in a religion without being imbued with the quality of sanctity, and places used for worship can be sacred space but not necessarily so" (1994:252). This might affect both the interaction between the communities in the site as well as the claims over the place. I think that this is also the case for built sites and natural sites. The nature of sharing and contestation are inherently different in the natural sites (such as caves, fountains, sacred trees) and built sites such as churches and mosques. However, it should be noted that the built sites are often associated with, or incorporate, natural ones. Many Orthodox churches and *tekkes* in the Balkans are near springs, such as Demir Baba Tekke in Razgrad, Bulgaria.

I also argue that the meanings of churches and mosques are different from those of tombs and *tekkes*, not only because the former are more directly controlled by the religious authorities, but also because tombs are mostly more "ambiguous" places, in the sense of uncertainty about the 'real' owner and history of the site. This ambiguity is seen in terms of architecture and the (hi)stories of sites. As I mentioned before, *tekkes* and tombs are more flexible, therefore inclusive, and people seem to be more comfortable in visiting them. Saints are more flexible than are the standard images and ideologies of Christ on the one hand, Muhammad on the other, especially when the saint is from the Old Testament, not the New Testament. Sharing the mosque or a church is more complex and requires some additional adjustments, such as the practical benefits of visiting the site, or thinking that a Muslim/Christian is originally buried at or around the spot. One of the reasons why Greek Cypriots hesitate to visit a mosque is definitely its architecture and the rules for entering

the site. They told me that the idea of removing shoes when entering the site is not attractive.

#### **4.2.1.6. Concluding remarks**

It is already noted by scholars who work on shared sanctuaries that there are both moments of peaceful coexistence and animosity at the mixed sites, but the main dissidence of scholars seems to stem from determining general patterns of sharing that are attributed to such sites. The complexity of such shrines and practices in them should be ethnographically studied, as the appearance from outside would be misleading. However, I also agree with Hayden's insistence on looking at long-term historical trajectories in order to see the bigger picture that might not be detectable at the micro-level. We need to consider the specific contexts in which sharing and contestation take place. The nature of relations in the religious sites can't be understood without taking into account and identifying the wider political, economic, social and cultural picture of the society. And the patterns of conflict and cooperation can be only be understood by bringing time into the analysis, as Hayden's processual approach suggests.

It seems that identifying the relations at the religious sites and interpreting the general picture mostly depends on what is understood with the terms 'sharing,' 'coexistence,' 'contestation' and 'mixed,' and also considering which circumstances and periods of the sites people are highlighting. One peaceful moment at a time would not necessarily mean peaceful coexistence of the groups, but it can be definitely read in this

way, if desired. The destruction of a religious site during war does not indicate necessarily antagonistic relations between the groups, either. One might see the respect and acknowledgement of the other's identity as indispensable for peaceful coexistence; but then how are we to identify the relations between two groups, in which the majority rejects the main religious identity of the minority group and see them as 'converted'? How should we approach the diversity in the readings of the religious sites by different communities? Can we exclude the potential of imposing communities' own reading onto the site when circumstances are convenient? Religious and ethnic identities are considered as intrinsically exclusivist, but when do the enactment and practices of these identities become hostile? These are only a few questions to be considered in analysis of shared spaces.

Overall, in Cyprus, in the case of symbolically important sites, the contestations between Christian and Muslim communities have become crystallized and nationalized, and mostly discussed with reference to not-yet-solved Cyprus conflict. Such important sites and their dynamics can't be understood without reference to nationalist frameworks, in which these sites currently function. The sites are susceptible to contestation over domination, which does not necessarily reveal itself only through the ownership of the sites, but also through the protection, restoration policies and management of the sites. I emphasize, though, the diversified perceptions among Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots, who variously agree or disagree with the policies of the governments. The reflection of such policies by the local communities might not happen in the way it is desired by the governments. For example, being critical of Turkey's policies in TRNC and the settlers from Turkey, some Turkish Cypriots are resisting the approaches and practices

to the sites of the government. With regard to local sites, these sites are specifically reserving both forms of coexistence and contestation, which are more emblematic of local relations, village identities, and personal connections. However, such sites are also open to manipulations of political power and discourse.

The following case studies demonstrate that Muslims' visits to Christian sites and their submission to the Christian identity of the sites are welcomed by Greek Cypriots, who believe that this proves Turkish Cypriots' "local identity" is different from mainland Turks and even shows their supposedly Christian origins, and aim to make the Turks part of the Greek community (referring to the Crypto-Christians that emerged during Ottoman times), which was discussed in the third chapter in detail. As for Turkish Cypriots, they mostly either use the Christian sites for benefits with considering the fact that a site is originally Christian, or believe in their own version of the story of the site, which makes the sites closer to their own cultures.

#### 4.2.2. Case Studies: Kırklar Tekke and Hz. Ömer Tekke<sup>25</sup>

“Well no, not sharing, Greek Cypriots were visiting the cave, we were visiting the mosque.”

A Turkish Cypriot from Ozanköy (Kazaphani), regarding the sharing of Hz. Ömer Tekke (Agiol Phanontes) [2011]

“The Christian place is the cave. It was a common place of worship, but the Christian place is under the earth, and on top of it, there is the mosque.”

A Greek Cypriot from Tymbou (Kırklar), regarding the sharing of Agiol Saranda (Kırklar Tekke) [2011]

My Turkish and Greek Cypriot interviewees shared an opinion, if not the places they mentioned. The above quotes have a common point that shared places are not always mentally or even physically shared. Is a shared space an interface area that brings people together or is it a realm to determine and reinforce differences, or perhaps both? I focus on two sacred sites, which used to be shared by Orthodox Christians and Muslims before 1974, and the memories of which endure in people's minds and bodies. The analysis of these two sites will show how they resemble each other in various ways. Both sites are located in the Northern part of Cyprus.

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<sup>25</sup> Without any intention of emphasizing one identity of the sites, and only for practical reasons, I will mainly use the Turkish names of the sites in this section. The simple reason for this is that these sites are located in Northern Cyprus and mostly used by Muslim community today.

#### 4.2.2.1. Same place, different stories: The Shrine of Holy Forty

Kırklar Tekke (Convent of the Holy Forty) lies between the former Greek Cypriot village of Tymbou/Kırklar and the Turkish Cypriot village of Dilekkaya/Ayia Kebir in the district of Nicosia, near the Ercan Airport. It used to be a site frequented by local Christians and Muslims in the pre-1974 period. Dilekkaya/Ayia Kebir has been inhabited by Turkish Cypriots since the Ottoman period. Tymbou (means “tomb” in Greek) was an exclusively Greek Cypriot village until 1975, after when the name of the village was changed to Kırklar (means “forty” in Turkish). All Greek Cypriots of the village fled in August 1974, due to the Turkish military intervention, and scattered throughout the island’s south. Akıncılar (Lourijina), which is known with its *Linobambaki* (Crypto-Christian) population discussed earlier, is also a nearby village whose inhabitants were paying visits to Kırklar Tekke in the past. My informants from this second village do not visit the site anymore; their stories belong to the past experiences. Tymbou, the village itself, has been turned into a military settlement, and visitors need to pass through this settlement in order to reach the site, which is possible only for Turkish Cypriots and Turks now. [Figure 5]

I have encountered many different mental images of this sacred site, some of which are based only on memories from pre-divided Cyprus, since the site is now inaccessible to Greek Cypriots. Thus, Greek Cypriots’ Agioi Saranda has been longed for, dreamed of, and reproduced over and over for almost 40 years. Meanwhile, it has been restructured in new ways, to be incorporated into the ethnically-homogenized landscape in Northern Cyprus. Nevertheless, elder Turkish Cypriots kept their own version of the site as well. My aim here is not to determine ‘correct’ stories of the site, but to show the disruption of officially

articulated narratives by local and personal memories, which disable any single, coherent narrative on the memoryscapes. As Cole argues, “the memoryscape includes the array of schemas through which people remember and the social-historical forces that draw these schemas into action and sometimes enable them to be formulated in narrative (2001:290).

For Greek Cypriot accounts, I depend on the mixture of stories of the eight Greek Cypriots’ who used to live in Tymbou, and the narrative in a book written by the former inhabitants of the village in memory of their ex-homeland. Although they never saw the site again after 1974, they carried it with them in their memories. I also talked to elderly Turkish Cypriots from neighboring villages (especially Akıncılar/Lurijina), and those who visited the site before 1974.

The site is called Agioi Saranda by Greek Cypriots, which literally means Holy Forty. But Greek Cypriots sometimes call the site “*tekke*,” like their Turkish neighbors, which means dervish lodge in Turkish. In the words of one of my Greek informants:

It was a rich, luxurious place, you know, just like the other monasteries in the island. It was beautiful and it had everything, many rooms. Hodja and his family were living in Agioi Saranda, when I was a child. He had 9 children. I was going there everyday and playing with them, we were good friends. There were fairs (*panayir*) frequently. [2011]

As often happens in the nostalgic and romantic remembrance of what was lost, Greek Cypriots imagine their village and the site as paradise-like, and probably bigger and better than they actually were. Turkish Cypriots mostly remember the site as an ordinary sacred space, where fairs were organized and which was visited on certain days throughout the year. While Greek Cypriots were remembering the area as known for its deep religiousness with many churches around, Turkish Cypriots didn’t seem to attach a



special meaning to it. However, it is claimed in the official discourse that Kırklar is one of the most prominent sites that prove Muslims' long-standing connection with the land.

#### **4.2.2.2. Transference from Christianity to Islam?**

Regarding the story of the site, for Greek Cypriots, although the site bears the common name of the sites in the Levant attributed to the Forty Martyrs of Sebastia, who were martyred in 320 BC, and the feast day of the site similarly falls on March 9<sup>th</sup>, Greek Cypriots have their Cypriot version. This is the account told in the memory book:

The forty martyrs, forty young Christians had been imprisoned in that area by the Turks during Turkish rule and later they were murdered and buried in the same place. Tradition has it that one of the forty escaped the slaughter. They went after him; they arrested him and buried him together with the rest.

Theologian-Byzantinologist Foulis says that, "The time of consecration of the building in Tymbou to the Agioi Saranta is unknown" (2011:381). But it is clear that the site was transferred from Christianity to Islam during the Ottoman Empire period, which played a role in Islamization of the neighboring villages. This is reported by Hasluck early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century (2000:88). The site is an example of Hasluck's category of "suburban or rural sanctuaries, where the characteristic outward change is from monastery to *tekke* or dervish convent, or from Christian chapel to Moslem oratory" (1929:4). However, Hasluck

claims that there is no dervish establishment on the spot (1929:50-51), in spite of the fact that some travellers argue the opposite (e.g. Luke 1957:143).

Archeological findings, historical documents and travelers' records suggest that graves and a church had already existed in the location when the Ottomans added a masjid<sup>26</sup> and some other buildings for its utilization as a dervish lodge. The Tekke was constructed by Es-Seyh el-Hac Abdulfafur Efendi on November 18<sup>th</sup>, 1742; later the Mevlevi sheikhs of Nicosia undertook the administration of the *vakıf*<sup>27</sup> (Bağışkan 2009:31). Some sources also mention the administration of the Tekke by the Naqshibendi order (Turkish monuments 1987:18, Luke, Çağdaş 1965:41, Foulías 2011:383), and the masjid is dated to 1816 (Gunnis 1936:453, Turkish monuments 1987:18). Bağışkan notes that, "the Evkaf documents even record the uncovering, in an excavation in 1889, of a sarcophagus and a marble column here, and their subsequent carriage to the neighboring village of Athienou" (2009:28). An Early Christian basilica, which was dated to 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> century A.D., was coincidentally found in the west yard of the masjid during the restoration of the site in 2007-8. The church floor is decorated with mosaics of geometric and animal figures, usually found in the Mediterranean region (Bağışkan 2009:30, Foulías 2011:381). However, the mosaics are invisible now, since the floor was covered again. Theologian-Byzantinologist Foulías also noted that a proper excavation was not conducted at the site and the workers destroyed some mosaics. He said, "the bulldozer... I mean, they are

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<sup>26</sup> Masjid is a word used interchangeably with mosque (cami). However, it is mostly preferred for small mosques or a place for prayer, which does not have a specific architecture.

<sup>27</sup> Muslim endowments, from the Arabic word waqf. For a general explanation of the term, see Kozłowski 2004: 730-32.

working like that. After they clean all this debris, which were treasure for an archeologist, they throw it away.”

Originally the complex consisted of a masjid, a subterranean shrine with the tombs and the lodging rooms of dervishes on the north and northwest, which has been demolished. There is a *mihrap*<sup>28</sup> on the south wall of the masjid, and the steps on the western side lead down into the cave through a flattened arch. The shrine was built in stone, and has a rectangular shape with three aisles, orienting east-west. The central aisle is the highest. Opposite arches in the central aisle lead to the side aisles, where the tombs covered with green cloth are laid in parallel to the outside walls. At the far western end of the central aisle, there is an oval space, and the southern aisle also has an oval space at the end. A sword and a spear are said to be kept in these parts. The overall plan of the site shows that the site used to be a church, though it is reversed from normal practice, since the building is oriented East-West with door to the East. [Figure 6 and 7]

Legends regarding the origins of the site among Turkish Cypriots are rather blurry. They sometimes refer to the Ottoman times or to the first Muslim presence in Cyprus; some openly said they didn’t know and didn’t seem to care, either. One version of the story even includes graves of two Christians, in addition to 38 graves that belong to Muslims (Bağışkan 2009:31). Syncretic and anachronistic accounts are common among Turkish Cypriots.

However, the story told to me by the current Imam of the site was very clear and reflects the desire to establish a direct connection between the land and the Muslim

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<sup>28</sup> *Mihrap* (*mihrab* in Arabic) is a niche in a mosque indicating the *qibla*, the direction of Mecca.

community. According to him, many *sahabes* (Companions of Prophet Muhammad) came to Cyprus on boats to spread Islam in 650 BC. Forty of them were massacred by Byzantine soldiers and buried at the spot of Kırklar Tekke. The Ottomans discovered the tombs and built a dervish lodge. There is now a website dedicated to the Tekke, which promotes this story.<sup>29</sup> It can be found in many books as well. Not only the Christian basilica, but also any trace of Greek heritage is absent in the site and the narratives now.

The graves are open to interpretation; their headstones do not have inscriptions on them. Muslims believe that they belong to the people who were martyred during the Arab raids on Cyprus and even to *sahabes*. It is claimed by some researchers that it is a *Makam Türbesi*, namely it is a *türbe* (tomb) established for spreading Islam and has nothing to do with real people (Bağışkan 2009:31, Çağdaş 1965:41). For this reason, it has the name 'Forty.' Bağışkan also remarks, some Muslims believe that 38 graves belong to Muslims, and 2 graves to Christians (2009:31). Luke notes in 1950s that he counted the tombs and there were only 23, but the old dervish living in the site told him that a large grave contained the bones of 17 people (1957:143). The number of graves apparently does not preclude the "pious credulity" of Cypriots in the number forty, similar to the case in Rhodes, where Church of the Forty Martyrs has twenty sarcophagi and two saints are assigned to each of them (Hasluck 2000:226-227). [Figure 8]

Although Christians attribute the tombs to the Forty Martyrs of Sebastia, who were martyred in 320 BC, Theologian-Byzantinologist Foulías says that "(d)espite the fact that relics of the Forty Martyrs (Agioi Saranta) of Sebastia (Sivas) are reported by the medieval

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<sup>29</sup> <http://www.kirklarturbesi.com>

chronicler Leontis Machairas as existing in Cyprus ever since the 14<sup>th</sup> century and most probably earlier, the Cypriot shrine is not their burial place, since their Martyrium was in Sebastia (Sivas) in the eastern Pontus. The time of consecration of the building in Tymbou to the Agioi Saranta is unknown” (2011:381). Foulías also argues that the changeover from Christianity to Islam “probably played a significant role in the islamization of the adjacent villages of Louroutzina, Arsos and Athienou whose inhabitants included significant numbers of cryptochristians” (2011:388).

There are many sites denominated Forty in the Levant (Kırklar in Turkish, and Saranda in Greek). As Hasluck notes, “(c)ertain legends of various 'forties' were in the air, and became attached for accidental or arbitrary reasons to certain localities” (1912:225). Hasluck explains in his article the mystical associations with forty in both profane and sacred realms in Islam and Christianity.

Cesnola mentions another site in Cyprus, in Cape Pyla (Larnaca district,) that was attributed to forty saints by local people from Ormidia, Afgoro, and other neighboring villages; however the Greek Archbishop of Cyprus ordered them to discontinue pilgrimages to the cave (1878:183). The Forty in Kırklar seems to be accommodated by the local Muslim population, while Christians continued visiting the site.

Another striking point is that Greek Cypriots provided me with exact dates for the events happened in the area during the ethnic conflict. Unlike Turkish Cypriots, they remembered many details about the site, probably because they continue living with the hope that they will return to their homes one day, and they constantly talk about the memories of the past. Three successive important events from the period of intercommunal strife were as follows, as told by the Greek Cypriots:

On 6<sup>th</sup> of July, 1958, during the EOKA struggle, Greek Cypriots killed the hodja. Because they thought he was bringing guns to the Turkish Cypriots. Then in response, on 8<sup>th</sup> of July, Turkish Cypriots killed Greek Cypriot shepherds. Then, Greek Cypriots put the mosque in fire. [2011]

Interestingly, Greek Cypriots were eager to equally mention the “mistakes” of both communities, to say that there were good and bad people in both sides, but the main groups responsible and guilty for what happened were the British and Turkey. Some Turkish Cypriots didn’t even remember the murder of the Hodja, it was quoted only by those who are more prone to underline Greek Cypriots’ atrocities.

#### **4.2.2.3. Practices at the Site**

In terms of practices at the site, Greek and Turkish Cypriots mentioned similar examples. As happening in many other common cult-places in Cyprus, Shrine of Holy Forty had been frequented by both Orthodox Christians and Muslims. Both communities likewise lit prayer candles, brought offerings to the shrine, and made wishes; they apparently shared the blessings of the holy places and practices. Although they disagree about the identities of people buried at the site, there is striking connection in their stories, such as the number of people buried, or the story of a spear shaft driven into the wall in the south corridor of the tomb. It is believed that whoever grasps it with belief and “repeat[s] the name of Allah three times” (Gunnis 1936: 453) or says “to you the burden, to me health” (Paraskeopoulou 1982: 114), their desire shall be granted. Also, a cautionary story tells that an Orthodox

priest, who mocked the shaykhs in the Tekke, was beheaded with a sword by an unseen hand.

Both confirmed that on the special day of March 9<sup>th</sup>, a festival was set up and attended by neighboring Greek and Turkish villagers (from Mora, Palekythro, Ayia Kebir, Louroujina/Akıncılar, Athienou/Kiracıköy, Tymbou/Kırklar and Pyroi) before 1974. This is, in fact, the feast day of the Forty Martyrs for the Greek Orthodox Church. Interestingly, it is also the day for Turkish Cypriots for celebrating the arrival of spring and the counterpart of *Hıdırellez* (the meeting day of the Prophets Hızir/Khidr and Ilyas on the earth), which is celebrated on May 5-6<sup>th</sup> in Anatolia. On this festival day, people were selling their products, and cooking a special dish. Also, both Greek and Turkish Cypriots told me that the neighboring villagers were mostly occupied with farming and animal breeding in the past, and the amount of rainfall was vital. One of the main reasons why they frequented the site together was to pray for rain. This was another shared practice.

On this festival day, people were selling their products, cooking a special dish, which was “a sort of rissole made with semolina, stuffed onions, meat and parsley (a Turkish dish) for this protects them against sickness” (Paraskeopolou 1982:114), and also *lokma* (λουκουμάδες in Greek), a sweet which was fried-dough soaked in sugar syrup (Bağışkan 2009:32).

Although there were already visits to the site on special Islamic days, such as *Regaip Kandili*, which marks the beginning of three holy months and the commemoration of the conception of the Prophet Muhammad, Turkish Cypriots didn’t seem to treat the site as an exclusively religious place –this is also the case for many other Muslim sites for Turkish Cypriots, who have a relatively secular approach to Islam. They see such sites more as

places of recreation and socialization as well as opportunity for economic exchange with Greek Cypriots. However, since the opening of the site after the restoration, many activities were organized at the site officially in 2012 and 2013, which underline the Islamic and Sunni character of the site and exclude any other interpretation. Examples include Day of Ashura (tenth day of Muharram), *Kadir Gecesi* (Night of Destiny, the anniversary of the night Muslims believe the first verses of the Quran were revealed to the Prophet Muhammad), *Berat Kandili* (Night of Salvation), *Regaip Kandili* (Night of Muhammad's conception). Other Islamic practices such as sacrificing animals, and breaking fast at the site during Ramadan also seemed to happen at the site.

*Kutlu Doğum Haftası* (Week of the Holy Birth) is a specifically interesting celebration, because it is not only an Islamic, but also a Turkish practice. Although *Mevlid Kandili* (anniversary of the Prophet's birth) was celebrated before, as in the whole Islamic world, this one-day event was transformed into a week-long festival in Turkey by the Presidency of Religious Affairs in 1989, and apparently imported to Northern Cyprus. In 2013, the week was celebrated with the presence of government officials and high public attendance in Kırklar Tekke. One comment of an attendant to this celebration is striking: "The history of Cyprus has been rewritten. The Priest ran away. The Imam has arrived." In fact, this statement is symbolically correct, but practically not so. There was a hodja in the site even before the 1950s, and he and his family seemed to have good relations with the local Greek Cypriots. A priest never inhabited in this site, to the best of my knowledge.



#### 4.2.2.4. Concluding Remarks

Kırklar Tekke/Agioi Saranda is a telling case to observe various layers of contestation and coexistence. Since the proclamation of the Republic in 1983, Northern Cyprus has been witnessing Turkification, and Islamization (the latter happening more intensely in the last 10 years) through the rewriting of history and reconfiguration of the topography. But the reflection of these policies on the local population is not straightforward, and the legends of the sites are not rewritten easily in people's minds. Elder Cypriots, especially, keep their individual and local memories strong, specifically in face of a challenge to their local identities. Some recent political changes in the island, such as the opening of the green line in 2003, which gave Turkish Cypriots the opportunity to physically interact with Greek Cypriots; Cyprus accession to European Union in 2004; and Turkish Cypriots' discontent with the cultural, political and economic hegemony of Turkey over Northern Cyprus, have stimulated demands for change and to push for a political solution. Recently, Turkish Cypriots have stressed their local identities in order to distinguish themselves from mainland Turks. For example, they continue using the old names of their villages, since as Yashin argues, they "aroused a sense of familiarity as opposed to the new ones, which they associated with formality, sterility, the administration and the political presence of the Turkish army" (2010:140). Local knowledge is specifically useful to demonstrate the separating line between local people and Turkish settlers. Since "memory is central to the constitution of subjectivity and identity" (Cole 2001:2), individuals, as what Sorabji calls "active managers of their own memories" (2006:1), strategically deploy remembering and forgetting to express and emphasize specific identities at specific contexts.

#### **4.2.2.5. Dual(ity) of identities: Hz. Ömer Tekke/Agioi Phanontes**

Located next to the shore, in the village of Ayios Epiktitos/Çatalköy east of Kyrenia, Hz. Ömer Tekke is supposed to contain the tombs of seven Muslim warriors. There is a cave under the current building, which is the part venerated by Christians. The site has been used mostly by the neighboring two villages, Ayios Epiktitos/Çatalköy and Kazaphani/Ozanköy today, and mostly likely in the past as well. Now it is possible to see visitors from all over Northern Cyprus and Turkey. Ayios Epiktitos was always a Greek Cypriot dominated settlement. By 1960, there were only 9 Turkish Cypriots living in the village; I interviewed one of them. Greek Cypriots fled from the village after the Turkish military intervention in 1974. Turkish Cypriots of the village remained in enclaves until the end of 1974, when some went back to Ayios Epiktitos. There are also displaced Turkish Cypriots from the island's south, primarily from the Limassol area. Kazaphani was a mixed village until 1974. Turkish Cypriots constituted a slight majority in the village during the 1960s. Forty percent of the Turkish Cypriots left the village after the attack of Greek Cypriot National Guard set up by Makarios in 1964, but the rest of the villagers remained. The displacement of all the Greek Cypriots from this village took place in 1974. Currently the village is inhabited by its original villagers and their descendants and by some displaced Turkish Cypriots from villages in the Limassol and Paphos districts (e.g., Kurtaka/Kurtağa). In both villages, there are Turkish immigrants from Turkey. Hz Ömer Tekke is located in a beautiful landscape and is used not only as a place of worship, but also as a recreation spot to relax and rest. [Figure 9 and 10]

Hz Ömer Tekke has seven tombs, which are sacred to Muslims, like forty. The tombs are located just on the right side of the entrance of the masjid. There is a simple *mihrap* on the north wall. The room located next to the tomb is used by the Imam and the keeper, and they sell religious books, Quran, ornaments etc. The cave under the masjid is still intact, but currently blocked with an iron fence. [Figure 11]

The mysterious nature of the sites enables them to be associated with different legends equally. Hz Ömer Tekke is called by Greek Cypriots as Agioi Saranda, in addition to Agioi Fanontes (which means 'Saints who appeared'). A report from the Greek newspaper *Simerini* on November 24, 2007 (p. 14) asserts that in many places in Cyprus, the bones of dead animals are attributed to saints, rural churches were built over them and they were usually called Agioi Saranta (Ἅγιοι Σαράντα) Agios Fanourios (ο Ἅγιος Φανούριος), Agioi Fanendes (οἱ Ἅγιοι Φάνεντες) and Fanendes (οἱ Φανώντες). Therefore, it could be said that these two sites are not necessarily originally associated with real saints or other holy figures, but rather Christianized and Islamized with changing conditions. Both Kırklar and Hz. Ömer Tekke seem to have been transferred from Christianity to Islam; however, Christians continued visiting the sites until they were no longer available for visits. It should also be added that both sites are sometimes called by Greek Cypriots as *ziyaret* ('visit' in Turkish), which might mean their recognition as holy sites for Turkish Cypriots as well. [Figure 12]

The widely accepted Turkish version of the history of Hz Ömer Tekke says that a small masjid was built after the Ottoman conquest of Cyprus in 16<sup>th</sup> century (1570/71) on the spot where an official of the general Muawiyah, named Ömer, and six of his soldiers had died in the 7<sup>th</sup> century (648/9) during the first Arab raid against the island. This is also the

version written at the entrance of the Tekke and I heard slightly different versions of it from people. Another narrative is the victory of Hz. Ömer and his friends against a pirate ship that was attempting to attack Ayios Epiktitos from the sea, and suddenly seven cavalry soldiers appeared and rode their horses on the sea, and sank the ship. People believe that traces of horseshoes remained on the rocks in the sea. Muslims add an important detail to this story: Some Greek Cypriots converted to Islam when they saw the traces on the rocks (Bağışkan 2009: 44).

As for the Greek viewpoint about the site, Maheras claims that the bones in the cave belong to three hundred recluses who came from Syria (Anastasiadou 2002:99). It is also claimed that there used to be a small church devoted to Ayii Fanontes or Saint Tesserakonta Martyrs (namely Forty Saints) at this spot. One Greek author argues that the bones in the cave belonged to German exiles who were secluded in this hermitage, and their names are Ay Konstantinos, Alamanos, Ormida, Ay Vissarion, Ay Anastasios ve Peristerovopigi (Peristianis 1995:125-126).

Both Greek Cypriots and Greek publications mentioning this site recognize that the site has been venerated by both Christians and Muslims. It is pointed out that the cave under the building is sacred to the Christians, not the building itself. But the Islamic part of the story has been left ambiguous in Greek sources. Hadjichristodoulou says that seven Muslim saints are buried in the Tekke, but there is no explanation about who they are or where they come from.

Legends regarding the origins of the sites reflect the desire to establish a direct connection between the land and the community in popular discourse. Turkish Cypriots' stories mostly refer to the Ottoman times or the first Muslim presence in Cyprus. Greek

Cypriots have less concern with this issue, with the presumption of their ancient existence in the island, and Aphrodite probably being the most frequently used figure to prove the island's "primordial Greekness" (Papadakis 2006:239). Mostly, the discourses have an aspect of heroism of the entombed (or said to be entombed) warriors, who protect the land from incursions or were martyred for the sake of creed or nation. Anachronism exists and does not matter; it is the supernatural people talk about, anyway. An old woman from Kazaphani could confidently tell me that her uncle witnessed the arrival of cavalry soldiers from sea at the spot of Hz Ömer Tekke, which she believes to have happened in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Such sites with ambiguous stories are convenient for accommodating various legends, and for being inclusive.

#### **4.2.2.6. Practices at the Site**

I didn't hear a specific feast day for Hz Ömer Tekke, but it is most likely that Greek Cypriots were visiting the site on the feast day of Forty Martyrs. Turkish Cypriots mentioned a special dish cooked with lentil and bulgur, *abudardar pilavi*, brought to the site and distributed to everybody, if wishes are granted. Anıl explains how the dish is cooked and served during *mawlid* gatherings at homes (1986:30). Turkish Cypriots are still lighting candles and incense, but only outside of the Tekke because of the rules there, either on the windows of the building or on the cave under the Tekke; and sometimes on the two anonymous graves outside of the building. Since some Muslims are aware of the existence of the cave and believe that the saints were formerly buried there, they still light candles at

this spot. I didn't come observe the practice during my visits, but Greek visitors were doing it in the past, and most likely today as well, if they have visited the site.

#### **4.2.3. (Non)Sharing the sites and practices**

It is typical to hear cliché statements about shared spaces in Cyprus. Some Muslims and many Christians consider the visitation of the same sites and common practices as evidence of interreligious harmony and coexistence of the two groups. This observation is derived from my interviews with Muslims and Christians in general, not only the viewpoints of those who visit such sites. This discourse is likely to be instrumentalized in a land like Cyprus, where ethnic partition has not been resolved for almost a half century. Interreligious coexistence is justified and affirmed through similar reasoning at the very beginning of most conversations: "There is no difference between Muslims and Christians. We both believe in God. Why would it be a problem? It is God's place, and holy for everybody." This romantic reading of the situation does not necessarily reflect the whole story, though.

The sense of being close to the holy in such places through touching the tombs or icons that, in a sense, are believed to have concentration of power for protecting people from harm and diseases explains the act of pilgrimage and certain practices of many people (Bowman 2012, Albera & Couroucli 2012). Even those who identify themselves as nonreligious, resort to holy places in times of health or other problems in their lives. Often

certain saints and places are renowned for specific problems. Saint Andreas is specialized for healing eye and mental sicknesses; Saint Mamas for ear, nose and throat infections. The divine power of blessing accessible in such places is practical and connective. Not only the persons believed to be buried at the spots, but also the places themselves are considered keeping the sacred power as points of intersection between the material and spiritual world (see Carmichael et al. 1994). The saint is the mediator for healing illness and protecting from harm. Through votives, and oaths, people communicate with the sacred and expect for gaining benefits. As Beckingham argues, “(t)he Orthodox Cypriot did not become a Muslim when he prayed at the shrine of the forty (Kırklar, Ayii Saranda) at Tymbou (N 5), nor did the Cypriot Muslim become a Christian when he sought the aid of the Holy Cross at Stravrovouni, or of St Andrew at his monastery on the extreme eastern promontory of the island. They were simply testing the efficacy of another means of getting a good harvest or curing an illness” (1957a:173).

Another pragmatic aspect of the act of pilgrimage is the opportunity to interact with neighbors, relatives, and friends. Pilgrimage is not only a religious activity, but also a powerful social and economic one in Cyprus, and definitely in other places (Swatos & Tomasi 2002, Evans & Ratliff 2012). Fairs are particularly important for both socialization and for selling and exchanging products. It is not surprising that many Turkish Cypriots speak of Hz. Ömer Tekke and Hala Sultan Tekke as places of recreation rather than places of sanctity.

Moreover, as became evident in my interactions with Cypriots, many people venerate various holy places without questioning the ‘integrity’ of their everyday acts. The visits are usually taken for granted; a justification is needed only when an outsider raises

the issue. The beliefs and practices are sometimes interwoven with each other and normalized so much so that it is difficult for some people to explain why they have been visiting the sites that appear to outsiders as belonging to the other community; though it should be noted that sites are mostly not imagined as belonging to the other group, and even if that is acknowledged to be the case, other justifications are cited, generally pragmatic ones. In the Turkish Cypriot case, during my fieldwork, some people became defensive on this issue, since they have been subjected to criticisms by Turkish immigrants, who criticize Cypriots' religious identities and practices. One of my informants from Kazaphani/Ozanköy said: "All these shared site narratives are conspiracies made up by Turks who want to insult our beliefs by claiming that we were degenerated by the common life with Greek Cypriots. No, we are true Muslims." This tension between Turkish Cypriots and Turks in Muslim sites is discussed in the next section. There are also accounts of Greek Cypriots, who didn't seem to believe that two communities are really sharing the sites. The theologian-Byzantologist's words exemplify this point of view. He considers sharing as only a tradition remained from the past:

Sharing, I think, is not exactly sharing. It was places which either belongs to Muslims, or belongs to Christians. That's legally. But, the place was venerated by both Christian and Muslims. We have many places in Cyprus in that character... It is like Kırklar [Kırklar Tekke]. It belonged to Muslim religion. OK, that's clear. Nobody knew five years ago that before that, there was a Christian basilica there. This is a recent discovery. The Christian knew that it was a Muslim place, but they went... We don't have in Cyprus a place that belonged to all Christians and Muslims.

If you see the sources in Cyprus in 18th, 19th century, things are more flexible. Even priests were going to Muslim places. We have such instances. And the people freely went to any place they want, any place they thought that it helped. We have a source that, saying that, in Nicosia, they first went to an Armenian church, because it was



known for miracles and things, they first went to the Armenian church, after to a Roman church, and after to a mosque. It was a mixture. But the people were ignorant... They had low belief. They didn't, actually they didn't know what to believe, they didn't know what they believe. They just know that, I am Christian or I am Muslim. [May 12, 2012]

While some practices, such as baptism in Christianity, are considered normative to one religion, others such as lighting candles or tying fabrics near or onto shrines, are attributed a more syncretic nature, which makes it easier for sharing. Obviously the syncretic practices are not taken by people as violation of the limits of their own traditions, but rather perceived by those doing them as “their” own customs. Here, I am not using ‘syncretic’ as a local term used by the visitors. Though problematic, I am using it only as a concept referring to practices incorporated into more than one religious tradition.

Shared local customs bother mostly Muslim ecclesiastics who reject the folk practices, considering them to be the result of ignorance, lack of education, and irrationality. For instance, lighting candles is a practice that Muslims have adopted probably through imitating Christians and they have practiced even in their own places. Notices are put at the entrance of the Muslim sites by the Religious Affairs Department explaining that lighting candle is not an “acceptable” practice in Islam. Similar cases can be found in sites in Turkey as well, such as Hacı Bektash Veli Museum (see Harmanşah et al. 2014). Similar to Bowman’s case of Mar Elyas, the group that appears to openly oppose the “shared sense of communal identity”(1993:438) are nationalists of both Greek and Turkish sides, those who are labeled ‘fanatics’ and ‘intolerant’ by those who have more positive, or at least neutral, stance towards such practices. The striking point here is that their ‘intolerance’ is attributed to their ethnic identity, rather than their religious identity.

However, I argue that this tension also exists among those people who are perceived by some local people in both communities as transcending the boundaries and creating a sense of community in shared spaces, but in a more subtle and diluted way. Even the stories of the sites told to me by the local people, which seem to embrace different religious groups, draw those different elements into the historical context only through labeling them as “the other.” For example, one narrative regarding Kırklar Tekke/Agioi Saranda among Turkish Cypriots includes two Christians buried in the site. Yet the site belongs to Muslims, therefore the dominance is clear according to Hayden’s approach (2002), and everyone is aware of the boundaries that exist, even in syncretic places. Boundaries between divine and profane, insider and outsider, ourselves and others are somewhat blurred, but do not fade away. The sacred part of the place for each community is carefully differentiated from the part venerated by the Other, as my informants’ words showed. The names of the sites, holy figures who are venerated, and narratives are unlike, varied, sometimes mutually exclusive. Although apparently common sites and practices have the tendency to reduce insider/outsider distinctions, their flexibility is available only to some extent. People certainly play with the boundaries in such places and circumstances, identities might be becoming relatively flexible towards covering and normalizing the Other’s practices. However, since sacred sites provide one of the grounds for making sense of the broader issues of identity and politics; structural, most importantly mental boundaries are kept, and reinforced by the state institutions.

### **4.3. WHOSE LAND IS IT ANYWAY? APPROPRIATING APOSTOLOS ANDREAS MONASTERY**

The Monastery of Apostolos Andreas, located on the Karpas Peninsula at the northeastern tip of the island, has been one of the most contested sites, because of its religious and cultural significance for both communities and its control by the Turkish authorities. This section presents a somewhat contentious picture of the Monastery, both as a sacred site for syncretic practices, and as a historical heritage site, which both sides claim ownership over.

#### **4.3.1. About the Monastery**

The Apostolos Andreas Monastery (Απόστολος Ανδρέας), dedicated to Saint Andrew the Apostle, also called *Protokletos* (First-called), is one of the most famous pilgrimage sanctuaries for Orthodox Christians in the Eastern Mediterranean. It is situated in the Karpas Peninsula at the northeastern tip of the island of Cyprus, and about 20 km away from the village of Rizokarpaso (*Ριζοκάρπασο, Dipkarpaz*), which is the biggest village on the peninsula with some of the Greek-Cypriot local population still remaining. [Figure 13 and 14]. It is also one of the few locations in Northern Cyprus still inhabited by a small Greek Cypriot population, who are provided with a monthly allowance and provisions from the South. The rest of the village is populated by mainland Turks (See Loizides 2011, Gürel & Özersay 2006, Hoffmeister 2002).

The stories behind the foundation of the monastery are very vague, incoherent and anachronistic. However, there is complete consensus of opinion that Apostle Andreas was a saint who had great powers and performed miracles. According to the most common legend, he visited the area on his way to Palestine, and miraculously created a sacred spring (αγιασμός, ayazma) in the dry rock. Later, the captain of the ship, whose son was cured of blindness by the spring, is said to have built a temple at the site. The particular belief in the power of this water for healing diseases of the eye depends on this narrative. However, the British architect George Jeffrey claims that, this legend is not mentioned by the ancient chroniclers (1918:257). [Figure 15]

Rupert Gunnis argued in the 1930s that, “the whole cult of St. Andrew is of recent origin in Cyprus” (1936:168). Harry Luke tells of a miracle, which is said to have happened in 1912 and aroused deep interest in the site throughout the island (1914:149-170). The legend is about a Greek peasant woman, Maria Georgiou, living on the borders of Adana and Konya, who lost her 13-year-old son, Panteli. Seventeen years later, Saint Andrew appeared to her as she slept, and told her to make a pilgrimage to his shrine in Cyprus, if she wanted to hear news of her son. On her way to Cyprus, she fell into conversation with a Muslim dervish, who turned out to be the son she had lost many years earlier. They completed their journey to the island together, and “almost as soon as they had landed, news of the miracle spread like wildfire through Larnaca” (1914:158). According to Luke, the Monastery owes its popularity to this miraculous, widely known story with a happy ending.

At the site, there is a small fifteenth-century chapel surrounded by monastery buildings and accommodation for pilgrims. Jeffrey claims, “The monastic buildings have

unfortunately been completely rebuilt in the modern fashion, but a tiny Gothic chapel built against the sea cliff and partly buried beneath debris from later buildings is of a special interest" (1918:256). Travelers who visited the area at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century mention the monastery, but it appears that either it was completely abandoned (Pococke 1908:258, Smith 1887:131) or only one monk was living there, unaware of and isolated from the rest of the world (Baker 1879 [2003]: 135; Hogarth 1889: 81-82). Others mention the cape which already had the name "St. Andrea(s) or St Andrew" at the time (Hutchinson & Cobham 1907; Mariti 1909:71; Ohnefalsh-Richter 1891: 27). Nevertheless, it appears that the monastery was functioning during the British period, since my interviewees still remember that fairs were taking place and big crowds were attending baptism ceremonies in the Monastery.

People visit the monastery for various purposes, particularly to benefit from the miracles of the saint. The holy water in the site is believed to have healing properties, especially for blindness and madness. When doctors were rare in the past, villagers often had recourse to the saints in order to recover their health. Old people speak about long and tiresome journeys to the monastery with donkeys, oxen or mules when cars were rare. Since the monastery is located at the tip of the island, it could be estimated that it took at least 2-3 days to arrive at the Monastery in the past. Those who could not visit the site would put their requests in a bottle and throw it into the sea, believing that the sea would carry it to the Monastery. It is said that the bell of the chapel would start ringing with the arrival of the bottle.

Pilgrims light prayer candles, bring offerings to the monastery, and make wishes. Many offerings are made out of molded wax or precious material, mainly silver, in the form

of bodies, ears, eyes, arms and legs. They are exhibited inside the church. I have been told of many miracles performed by the Saint, how the sick were cured and how those who failed to fulfill their promises to the Saint fell sick again. Gunnis shares similar stories showing how relentless and jealous the Saint could become in such cases (1936: 169).<sup>30</sup> Greek Cypriots also bring their children to the church to be baptized, and this tradition consequently resulted in the popularity of the name Andreas on the island. The monastery has been an island-wide well-known site, but it was especially the main church for the residents of Karpasia peninsula. A former resident of the Rizokarpaso (Dipkarpaz) explains the significance of the church for them:

Ήταν εκκλησία μου! [It was my church!] It was the church where I attended the masses almost every Sunday. And all of my boys were christened in that monastery. It was not only monastery; it was also the church of the villagers. I lived 6 years in Rizokarpaso. There were two big fairs on the 15<sup>th</sup> of August, which is the death day of Saint, and 30<sup>th</sup> of November, Saint Andreas day.

Rabia: Did you visit the Monastery after you left the village?

I went twice, once before the borders were opened, with special permission. If you can recall, people were allowed to go on buses, a lot of buses... I think there were 15 buses... It was through the UN, you had to apply, and our side had to hand to the UN the catalogue of the names. That was before the opening of the border. I went another time with my son. (Greek Cypriot woman aged over 75) [2011]

Visitors of the Monastery especially drink water from the holy spring, and fill up the water cans that they bring or buy at the site. There is always an open market with a couple of vendors selling souvenirs opposite the church. My interviewees expressed their longing

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<sup>30</sup> For more examples of the miracles, see Paraskevopoulou 1982:82-83; Luke 1914:147-170.

for the crowded, rich, busy fairs (*πανηγύρι, panayır*) at the site, where people exchanged their own products as well as meeting neighbors and friends. The fair in the Apostolos Andreas Monastery probably used to be one of the biggest fairs on the whole island. [Figure 16]

The site becomes quite crowded with pilgrims on two special days, on Saint Andrew's saint's day (November 30<sup>th</sup>) and on Assumption day (August 15<sup>th</sup>). Greek Cypriots are allowed to conduct ceremonies inside the church, according to the reciprocal agreement between the Greek and Turkish authorities for the annual religious and commemorative visits by Turkish Cypriots to Hala Sultan Tekke in the South, and of Greek Cypriots to the Apostolos Andreas Monastery in the North. I attended the ceremony on August 15<sup>th</sup>, 2011. There were around 200 people, a number that was far less than the usual crowd, which gathers on such a special day. [Figure 17]

The Greek Cypriot visitors told me that the reason for the decrease in the number of people was a reaction against the fee the municipality was asking for entering the "natural park" as defined by the Turkish authorities, which includes the area where the Monastery is located. Although it was announced just before the fair that the fee would not be charged on the Saint's day, some Greek Cypriots still did not go to the Monastery to protest the policy. The reasons given for the fee (to protect the natural park and to feed the wild donkeys living in the area) and the exception on the Saint's day were not convincing for many Greek Cypriots; probably because they were already critical of the Turkish authorities for asking a fee for the museums which were converted from churches, such as the Saint Barnabas Monastery in Famagusta, the Icon Museum in Kyrenia, and the Saint Mamas Monastery in Morphou. These impositions have been deemed "unacceptable" by the

Cyprus Government and the Church (PIO 2008). In fact, the criticisms are not limited to the conversion of the sites, but directed at how the Turkish administration in general treats the religious sites and cultural heritage, which, for Greek Cypriots, is aimed at “Islamization-Turkification” (Ioannides 1991:177). In particular, the Apostolos Andreas Monastery, more than any other place, has been an emotionally charged, symbolic key religious site for Greek Cypriots that links them to a lost land they miss deeply and no longer have access to: “It symbolizes more than anything else our desire to return” (Tzortzis 2010:28). It is, in a sense, a spatial representation of everyday struggles over national identity and its connection to the land.

The following quote is from the account a Greek Cypriot who used to live in Genegra (Nergisli in Turkish) in Famagusta, and had to leave the village when he was 12 years old with his family. Here, he was telling me his observations on the changes happened at the site after he left the village:

Everything is changed now. For the places not inhabited from the people who built these or who love these places is not the same... It's not the same thing. Apostolos Andreas is a place respected from both the Christian and Muslims, but it does not belong to Muslims, officially. I mean, they love Apostolos Andreas and they respect him, but it's not the place, who raised them. I mean I feel Apostolos Andreas like a place of my family. It's like that. When I go there I don't understand any psychological change. Of course, I feel bad because I will see things I remember as a child. I remember, let's say, the kitchen, where we went there and they make some small breads, and we, as child, we went there and took one bread and go outside to eat. And now you cannot see these. You see the policeman with uniform, let's say. And they are watching you, what to do, or what you are doing. It's not the same; you feel the change. And you feel the change in the building. You can see the building; it's ready to collapse. [2011]



#### **4.3.2. Sharing the place with “the Other”**

The Apostolos Andreas Monastery is one of the many common cult places, both historically and contemporary, that are visited by Orthodox Christians and Muslims. Like Greek Cypriots, Turkish Cypriots also light prayer candles as an offering to the saint, make requests, and take holy water with them. Although there are many different legends about the site, the Christian and Muslim accounts have many common points. I have heard similar stories from members of both communities.

To start with the Christian point of view, the Monastery is an extremely important, symbolic holy site with powerful healing properties, so that it is not altogether surprising that Muslims also visit the site. None of the Greek Cypriots I interviewed expressed any kind of discomfort regarding the sharing of the holy place. Quite the opposite, they were enthusiastic to approve of it, which supports the official discourse of “peaceful coexistence” and “the shared culture with Turkish Cypriots,” although, for some of them, that common culture has been mostly imagined as Greek, based on the idea of the long Greek Orthodox heritage on the island. Greek Cypriots were not usually willing to talk about sharing a site that has a dominantly Turkish or Islamic character.

As for the Muslims, there is a great diversity in the perception of the Monastery. Those who respect and visit the Monastery either recognize the site as a Greek Orthodox one –more broadly as a non-Muslim one—or have an underlying belief in the existence of a Muslim figure buried at the site. For some Muslims, visiting an Orthodox Christian site is not seen as a problem, since these sites are also “houses of God,” no matter which religion

they belong to or represent. While some explain this view as the result of long-term co-existence with their Greek Cypriot neighbors, others were puzzled by my questions, since this practice of visiting is already an ordinary part of their everyday lives. Obviously, there are also those who visit the site only for touristic purposes or those who consider that the site belongs completely to the “Other,” and thus are not interested in visiting. A high-ranking officer in religious affairs department in TRNC approached my questions regarding the “shared” character of the site as follows:

Apostolos Andreas is not a shared place, both communities try to impose their own stories. They conflict with each other and make up stories to offend the other side.  
[September 5, 2011]

This is a pretty representative view among some Cypriots about sharing religious sites, which I exemplified in the case of Hz. Ömer Tekke. However, the healing properties of the site is definitely an agreed point regarding Apostolos Andreas Monastery. One of my informants told me a personal story about the healing property of the water at the site:

The water is really curative. My son’s hand was burned. I took him to Apostolos Andreas to soak his hand in water. There is a water gate inside the church, and the water flows very strongly. That woman [the old woman who spent her entire life working at the church] opened the door for me. My son put his hand inside the water, and his hand already recovered as we left the Monastery. Nobody is allowed in that part, but I have conversation with that woman whenever I visit the Monastery. I speak Greek, she doesn’t understand that I am a Turk. And when I say so, she laughs at me. I speak perfect Greek. There were two women there, one of them died. I never talked to the priests. [2011]

She also mentioned the belief among some Turkish Cypriots that the site has a connection with Turkey:

When I went back, I didn't enter that spot again, probably the water is coming less now. We used to hear the sound of water before. It is said that the water comes from Turkey. Somebody from Turkey dropped his/her bowl and comb and it was found here... Everyone takes water from here, it has healing power. The Greek Cypriot women from Paphos were going there with busses. My sister brought her child to the Monastery, because she saw Apostolos Andreas on her dream and he said her to bring her child. My sister cried and said 'I don't believe in such things,' but then my mother took them to the Monastery and the sick child was cured. [Turkish Cypriot, woman, age around 50s]

I heard similar stories from many Turkish Cypriots, especially that they saw Apostolos Andreas in their dreams and he called them to the Monastery. This woman seems to recognize the Christian character of the site; whereas some Turkish Cypriot believe that it is originally an Islamic site. However, interestingly, although some Turkish Cypriots had already expressed their belief that the site was actually an Islamic one, no significant claim for appropriation of the site was made until a serious discussion was provoked by the debate over the restoration of the Monastery, which I will explain in the following subsection.

#### **4.3.3. Controversy over restoration**

As I discussed before, religious sites and cultural heritage are often considered to be the primary physical embodiments of the culture, identity and belief-systems of ethno-national groups, and thus may become the target of attacks during ethnic/religious conflicts

(Hayden 2002, Halbwachs 1992:202-3). The destruction, desecration and transformation of religious sites, looting and illicit trade, and the protection of the cultural heritage have become primary areas of contestation and dispute between Greek and Turkish Cypriots. Both sides have published detailed lists of destroyed, neglected, converted sites, the poor and good condition of mosques, churches, monasteries, cemeteries, in general of Turkish and Greek heritage.<sup>31</sup> In the wide range of publications, including books, pamphlets, reports, newspaper articles, periodicals, such actions against “the Other’s heritage” have been labeled as part of a policy aiming at ethnic cleansing (Sarica et.al 2009:n.p.; Kaklamanis et.al 2000:n.p.), cultural cleansing (Jansen 2008:n.p.) erasing the Other from the land (İslamoğlu 1995:268), demonstration of power (Chotzakoglou 2008:36; Ioannides 1991:177), Islamization and Turkification (Ioannides 1991:177), Christianization and Greekification (Atay 2010:1) or complicating a future solution for the island (Chotzakoglou 2008:40).

The Apostolos Andreas Monastery is the most prominent example of such contestation. During the ethnic clashes between the Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities from the 1950s through the 1970s, the site of the Monastery was exposed to destruction and looting, which is what happened to hundreds of religious cultural heritage sites on the island. Athanasios Papageorgiou claims that “after the occupation of the Karpas Peninsula by Turkish troops in 1974, the monastery was looted and the valuable offerings of the faithful, such as the gold rizas of icons, were confiscated by Turkish police” (2010: 364). Since then, the Greek Cypriots have criticized the Turkish government for not

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<sup>31</sup> Examples of such publications, from Southern Cyprus: Chotzakoglou 2008, Marangou 2008, Kaklamanis et al. 2000. From Northern Cyprus: Atay 2010, Sarica et al. 2009, Okan et al., 2006.

taking care of the site and for leaving it on the verge of collapse, and not allowing the Greek Cypriots to carry out urgent repairs and restoration.

Before the opening of the borders in 2003, which allowed Turkish and Greek Cypriots to cross the border and see the other side, the Turkish and Greek authorities agreed to allow reciprocal visits on certain religious holidays to the Apostolos Andreas Monastery in the North and Hala Sultan Tekke in the South. A project of bi-communal restoration of the Apostolos Andreas Monastery along with the Hala Sultan Tekke in the South was encouraged by the United Nations to bring the people of Cyprus together. The mosque and shrine underwent extensive conservation and renovation between 2003 and 2005. The restoration project was funded by the UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) and was partially accomplished in 2002; both sites were cleaned, fenced and re-landscaped, however the work in the Monastery was suspended, because of the objections of some Greek Cypriots to the conservation/restoration project for the chapel. According to the International Religious Freedom Report published on the US Department of State website, “Despite agreement between the Government of Cyprus and the Greek Orthodox Church of Cyprus on the particulars of the Apostolos Andreas restoration project, some Greek Cypriots oppose the plan to remove some relatively recent construction on top of the monastery in order to enable experts to best preserve the historic structure underneath. Pressure from those opposing the official restoration plan has resulted in suspension of work at the monastery” (US, 2004).

Later, both Greek and Turkish sides have continued to express their willingness to save the Monastery many times; however, the attempts were in vain, since the Greek and Turkish politicians couldn't manage to agree on the administration of the project.

Archbishop Chrysostomos' commentary on the UN proposal for the administration of the project by the Evkaf (the Islamic Pious Foundations) administration exacerbated the situation: "I would rather see Apostolos Andreas collapse than accept that this monument belongs to Evkaf" (Cyprus Mail 2010). He furthered his argument by asking Greek Cypriots not to visit the Monastery until it was renovated. Both sides put the blame on the other side for blocking the efforts to renovate the Monastery. The Turkish Cypriot expert in the Technical Committee on Cultural Heritage commented on the Archbishop's approach in the following way:

The Orthodox Church is asking for is the control of the site. This can't be possible. There are two countries, two separate structures and sovereignties here. Can we do the same in the South? No. Our committee on monuments confirmed the project of Petras University. The problem is this, the Church itself wanted to be involved in this. [2012]

Finally, in February 2013, the Bi-communal Technical Committee on Cultural Heritage announced that the project, prepared by the University of Patras, had been approved and that the restoration would commence shortly (UNFICYP 2013). In the meantime, another kind of contestation was going on over the "identity" of the site.

#### 4.3.4. Appropriating the Monastery?

As I mentioned earlier, some Turkish Cypriots told me during my research that the site originally belonged to an historical Islamic figure. Some writers have also noted that the Apostolos Andreas Monastery has been attributed to or associated with various different holy figures in Islam, such as Solomon (Nesim & Öznur 2009: 39), Ahmet Bedevi (Bağışkan 2009: 39; İslamoğlu 1995: 270), Ali, Ilyas, Mustafa, Haji Aziz (Bağışkan 1999). However, recently a right-wing attempt to prove the “original” Islamic character of the site initiated debate over the “ownership” of the Monastery. Two scholars from Girne American University, Zeki Akçam and Gökçe Yükselen Peler, claimed that historical documents and oral testimonies have proved that the Apostolos Andreas Monastery was built over the tomb of a martyr of Islam or a *sahabe*,<sup>32</sup> Urve bin Sabit. According to them, despite the fact that the stones of the grave had vanished, the tomb still exists at the site (Akçam 2010). They argued that Muslims had been visiting the tomb until the 1960s, when Greek priests destroyed it. They referred to the writings of a 12th century traveler, al-Harawi, which mentions a small chapel located at the most easterly part of the island, which had a stone on one of its walls with inscriptions about Urve bin Sabit. They also recalled the Greek sources, which mention Muslims’ visits to the site. The argument was supported and expanded with the legendary story of its foundation: The myth regarding the holy spring in the site which was seen as the miracle of Apostolos Andreas who hit the ground with his staff has now been attributed to Urve bin Sabit, in exactly the same way.

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<sup>32</sup> The companions of the Prophet Muhammad

There were mixed reactions from the public regarding this claim. *Genç Mücahitler Derneği* (The Young Fighters Association) called for the “opening of the tomb of Urve bin Sabit to the Muslims of the island” and even the construction of a mosque, which might be called *Sahabe Camisi* (Mosque of Sahabe) next to the Monastery. The claim was taken up and supported by some Turkish newspapers in Turkey as well. The title of a report in *Hürriyet* newspaper on November 7th is striking: “*Havarinin değil, sahabenin*” (not an apostle’s, a sahabe’s):

Bad news for Greek Cypriots who *started* a campaign to appropriate the monastery, which is located in the north of the TRNC, at the closest point of the island to Turkey, and is assumed to have been founded by an apostle of Jesus: It is *documented* by research continuing since 2001 that the tomb inside the Apostolos Andreas Monastery belongs to a sahabe. (Hürriyet 2010, my emphasis)

There were newspapers that approached the debate critically. Archeologist Tuncer Bağışkan, who has published extensively on the issues of religious cultural heritage as well as the traditions of Turkish Cypriots, criticized the claims as “meddling,” and “distortions of the past” (Bağışkan 2010). He claimed that al-Harawi mentioned an inscription on the wall of “the Church of the East” (*Şark Kilisesi*), but it was not necessarily referring to the Apostolos Andreas Monastery. Giving examples from other traveler’s writings, Bağışkan added that none of the travelers from the 19<sup>th</sup> century had ever mentioned such a tomb in the Apostolos Andreas Monastery. He explained these claims as part of a discussion over the Girne American University’s application to open a new campus in the Karpas Peninsula at the time, which was opposed by the European Commission, some Greek and Turkish associations, academics and the Council on Ancient Monuments. The claim was met with



concern by the Greek Cypriots. The Press and Information Office cited Bağışkan's counter argument while addressing the issue (PIO 2010).

The validity of the arguments aside, it seems that the controversy over the ownership of Monastery as a site of cultural heritage took place amidst other debates over the restoration of the Monastery. Given the timing of the argument, it is possible to consider it as a desire to resist the pressure from both Greek Cypriot society and the international community regarding the protection and restoration of religious cultural heritage in general, and the Apostolos Andreas Monastery in particular. For instance, researcher-writer Mehmet Bahadır Kurumanastırlı attributed the reluctance of the Orthodox Church of Cyprus regarding the renovation of the monastery by Evkaf to the fear that "realities regarding the real owners of the site" would come to light if restoration were to be implemented by the Turkish authorities (Açık Gazete 2010). On the other hand, Greek Cypriots' claims over the land have been frequently emphasized in such contestations. A Northern Cyprus news website argued that Greek Cypriot insistence concerning the Apostolos Andreas Monastery occurred because the Greek Cypriots would request the peninsula at the negotiating table on the grounds of cultural heritage by declaring it to be an ecclesiastical province. In response, Northern Cyprus brought up the issue of the tomb of Urve bin Said said to be buried in the site (Haber Havadis 2010).

#### 4.3.5. Conclusion

Tombs appear to be extremely important elements of negotiation of the historical and cultural 'validity' of sites, and practices of memory making at the sites. The argument at the Monastery, rather than being just about appropriating a Christian heritage site and opening it to the benefit of the Muslim community, is reflected in more substantial terms at the political and ideological level. The claim has been selecting a layer (or an imagined layer) in the chronological history of the place that should be remembered, and that would prove the "original" owners of the land. This would not only reduce, if not stop, the Greek Cypriot claims over the site, but also prove the antiquity of the Islamic presence on the island. Linking the place with Islamic tradition would also contribute to the legitimization of Turkish control over the land, which is still unrecognized by the international community. The image of the "eternal" nation with a linear history is a challenge for Turkish Cypriots, who are fighting for their identities between competing exclusivist nationalisms, and an endless "Cyprus problem" which keeps them in the liminal status of being citizens of the Republic of Cyprus and of Northern Cyprus. The re-editing and reinterpretation of the land with links to a selective, national distant past requires the denial, subordination or ignorance of the other stories inscribed on the land. These attempts usually make one interpretation of the place hegemonic. However, it should be noted that the mode of cultural appropriation here is not totally exclusionary. Rather than seeking expropriation, namely an exclusive ownership of the site (Scarre & Coningham 2013: 3) and a complete absence of the other, it is more of a claim for the acknowledgement of precedence: Who

came first matters in a nation's linear conception of historical time.

As a cultural heritage, the Apostolos Andreas Monastery is overburdened with the collective memories of ethnic clashes. Therefore, its protection and renovation has been inevitably constrained by nationalistic perspectives. It is a fact that both Greek and Turkish communities destroy, convert or appropriate each other's cultural and religious heritage, especially during and after conflict situations. These practices have been acknowledged as a significant component of political violence and dispute between co-habiting groups that distinguish each other as self and the Other. Both Greek and Turkish Cypriot politicians have used the category of cultural heritage not only to attract the attention of the international community to the Cyprus problem and to the destruction of historical and religious sites, but also to prove the "barbarism" of the other side and legitimize their own policies. Correspondingly, both sides claim that they care for the heritage that is not their own. This issue has provided a legitimate arena for blaming the other community in recent years, without awareness of the fact that each community is in many other ways actually a reflection of the Other. Thus, a "polyphonic history" or the discourse of "common cultural heritage" still has its limits in Cyprus, at least on the official level.

On a final note, the tension created by this place has triggered polarization between the two communities, specifically when the subject has been moved to the public sphere. This polarization has eventually affected its local everyday users, namely the real owners of the place. This impact can be characterized as a hyper-politicization of space in everyday discourse. Still, Cypriots, whose cosmologies about this polysemic holy place are embedded in a land of many cultures, have been going beyond the political and ethnic boundaries with their shared cultic practices.

## **5.0 (MULTI-)TEMPORALITIES OF MEMORIES AND COLLECTIVITIES**

### **5.1. RE-CREATING MEMORY: MUSEMIFICATION OF RELIGIOUS PLACES**

“When you go to Apostolos Barnabas and they ask you  
for a ticket... This is a slap in your face.”

A 50-year old Greek Cypriot man from Famagusta  
[2012]

The manipulation of religious sites and cultural heritage in the conflicts between competing faiths to gain ascendancy over each other may take different forms. As Herb Stovel remarks in the ICCROM (International Center for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property) newsletter regarding living religious heritage, “(m)ore subtle [than demolition] is the selective preservation and even re-construction of vanished buildings to reflect favored versions of history” (2004:2), a point also made by Herzfeld (1991). The conversion of religious spaces into museums and of religious objects into museum artifacts usually aims at their desacralization and even at their secularization, and neutralization, which might meet with resistance, opposition and strategies of accommodation (see Harmanşah et al. 2014).

I focus on three case studies in this section, two Christian monasteries in Northern Cyprus, which were converted into museums after the division of the island (Saint Barnabas Icon and Archeological Museum, and Saint Mamas Church and Icon Museum) and one Muslim convent in Southern Cyprus, which has been run like a museum under the Department of Antiquities. For the analysis of my case examples, I utilize a combination of two relevant literatures: those on the conversion of religious sites, and on the exhibition of religious objects in museums. However, my cases do not exactly fit in any of the discussions covered in the literature. I argue that these three sites function neither completely as museums nor as religious sites. They are analytically liminal and metaphorically in a transitional 'Purgatory' (or limbo) stage, in two senses: 1) The sites stand in medial conditions, each being both a museum and a living religious site, 2) For Christians, the two sites are in the condition of a temporary suffering at the hands of non-Christians, and will eventually go back to their freedom and holy essence.

#### **5.1.1. The process of museumification**

Neysela da Silva argues that museums are fundamentally about understanding culture; however, they could both help foster cross-cultural understanding and cement prejudices (2010:167-168). Silva's examples are quite different, but the latter point is more of the case in Cyprus. Museums in Greek and Turkish parts of Cyprus appear to be aimed at providing and inculcating the inhabitants of the island to the separate official standpoints regarding

the Cyprus problem and the relevant histories of their respective nation-states. Yiannis Papadakis (1994) has written an excellent comparison of two national struggle museums situated in either side of Nicosia. Barbarlık Müzesi (the Museum of Barbarism) in Northern Nicosia is an excellent example to show my point, since it serves no more than the purpose of demonizing the other by showing the atrocities committed by the Greek Cypriots. The museum was the house of a Turkish major, Nihat İlhan, who was serving with the Turkish Contingent in 1960s. The house was converted into a museum in 1966, three years after İlhan's wife and two children were murdered by EOKA on December 24, 1963 in the bathroom of the house where they were hiding. The bloodstained bath was retained, as it is, to 'prove' Greek barbarism. Photographs of murdered Turkish Cypriots, particularly in the villages of Agios Sozomenos and Agios Vasilios, are also displayed in the rooms of the house.<sup>33</sup>

The museums I examine in this section spread rather indirect, vague messages. Their 'indoctrination' applies not only to the narratives created inside the museums, but to the ways in which the sites themselves are treated. Moreover, the policies towards the cultural and religious heritage of the Other speaks not only to the local people, but also, and even probably specifically, to the Other or the enemy. Museumification, conversion of the Other's symbolic site into a museum, presents a political statement of the demonstration of power, since it prevents the Other from using their own space for its original purposes (see Harmanşah et al. 2014). At least this is how the picture looks when one pays attention to

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<sup>33</sup> Turkish website of the museum: <http://www.barbarlikmuzesi.org>

the Greek and Turkish Cypriot visitors' perspectives and feelings on the conversion of their religious sites into museums by the authorities.

I approach museums as political institutions, namely agents serving more than educational and cultural purposes, which mirror the power relations and cultural dominance in a given society. They have powerful roles in controlling and shaping the collective memories through deciding what to preserve, store, and how to represent and interpret them. Davison argues that, "museums anchor official memory" (2004:204), and official memory is selective: "The ordering and reordering of objects and representations in national museums can serve to legitimize or 'naturalize' any given configuration of political authority" (Steiner 1995:4). In my cases, museumified religious places, and the lack of proper displays, which disregard the needs of the community that had earlier held the site, is a nationalist-flavored political narrative.

### **5.1.2. Displaying belief: Museums and religious spaces/objects**

The literature on the relation between museums and religious sites/objects provides insights about alternative ways of displaying religion in a museum setting. Many of them point out the problem of museums decontextualizing and alienating objects, making them displays, devoid of their original meaning and functions (Shelton 2000, Silva 2010, O'Neill 2005). Museum curators attempt to explore different forms of display in order to transmit the meaning and significance of the religious objects within a museum setting. It is argued

that in museums, religious objects tend to “lose their traditional values” (Silva 2010:168) and “religious emotions tend to be neutralised within their walls” (Hall 2008). This is partly due to curators’ concerns for presenting the objects in a ‘rational’ and ‘scientific’ manner. O’Neill argues that “(m)useums of religion by definition are politically and socially engaged because they present a challenge to fundamentalisms of all faiths” (2005: 196).

Another critique is related to the nature of museums. As Mark O’Neill claims, in museums, religious objects are aestheticized in such a way that veneration of the sacred is forcibly transformed into veneration of art, or portrayed solely as historic or local objects (1996:189). The emphasis on the ‘historic’ aspect is critical in my discussion of the two cases. I contend that museumification renders the objects and the sites as static markers of a past that has passed into the realm of history. They are, in a sense, taken as fixed in those past times. Reflecting on the challenges living religious heritage poses to contemporary museum ethics with his study of the monastic community of Mount Athos in Greece, Georgios Alexopoulos points out the reluctance of the Athonite community to place artifacts and collections behind a glass-case, “that would turn them from liturgical and ecclesiastical objects to ‘dead’ museum exhibits” (2013:9). Museumification takes the site and the objects out of their living environments, and confines them to a world of the past. Alexopoulos also rightly mentions the negative connotation of museums for some:

The problem lies first of all in a misconception or, rather, a negative connotation attributed to the term ‘museum’ itself. In discussions with members of the monastic community it became evident that the latter disliked any association of their treasury exhibitions with either the term ‘museum’ or with contemporary museum principles. On the contrary, most of the discussants and interviewees attempted to distinguish the concept of the museum from what their collections strived to represent. (2013:9)



In a museum environment, objects and buildings indeed turn into historical testimonies. Alex Stock argues that “(t)he museum appears as the agnostic shrine of a cosmopolitanism that sends all the monuments of the individual religions into the retirement of times past so that they can serve humans as documents of humanity on this earth” (2011:65). However, it appears to me that while museums send this delusionary inclusive message of cosmopolitanism and universality, they very much underline ownership, not only the possession of material culture, but also the control of values, meanings, and memories attached to them. As Duncan point outs:

To control a museum means precisely to control the representation of a community and its highest values and truths. It is also the power to define the relative standing of individuals within the community. It is precisely for this reason that museums and museum practices can become objects of fierce struggle and debate. (1995:79)

However, tensions between different interest groups’ interpretations and expectations related to such places and the artifacts displayed in them always exist, particularly if a religious matter is in question. Labeling sacred artifacts ‘cultural heritage’ or religious sites ‘museums’ does not easily remove them from religious and emotional meaning for people, who may contest and resist the secularizing practice of museums, and continue to claim the right to practice religion inside the place. As I observed in different sites and contexts, such modernist transformations guarantee neither the “neutralization” of sacred sites, nor the “disciplining” of citizens according to the state’s principles. As we discussed in another context, “members of the communities of the original users of the sites, who still consider the museums to be the sacred shrines of religious figures, feel deprived of their heritage and, consequently, challenge the regulations by trying to impose

their own interpretations of these places in various creative ways” (Harmanşah et al. 2014).

Museumification sometimes can be seen as a preferable option, especially in case of the necessity for managing the heritage of the departed community, when compared to other alternatives of seeing the religious sites destroyed, neglected, or converted into less appropriate forms, such as barracks, animal barns or toilets. In a sense, deconsecration is less bad than desecration of the site, though Orthodox Christians believe in the inherent sacrality of the sites, which would not be easily extorted from them by the non-believers.

### **5.1.3. The sites: The Saint Barnabas Icon and Archeological Museum, and The Saint Mamas Church and Icon Museum**

The Saint Barnabas Monastery is one of the few Greek Orthodox sites that were not exposed to destruction during the ethnic conflict. It is located very close to the Salamis necropolis near Famagusta. Saint Barnabas was one of the founders of the independent Greek Orthodox Church, and is the patron saint of Cyprus. Thus, the site has been a prominent place of pilgrimage for the Christian population of the island. The monastery was established on the site of the saint’s tomb in the fifth century. It was destroyed by Arab raiders in the seventh century, but was rebuilt later. The present church dates from mid-18th century (1756). Paraskevopoulou states that, “(a)fter four centuries had passed since the Christianisation of Cyprus many unusual happenings occurred at the place where the

Saint was buried; paralytics, deaf people, the mad and all kinds of sick people found cures at this place so that it became called τοπος ιασεως –*the place of healing*” (1982:103).

[Figure 18 and 19]

The church was operating until 1976, when three old brother monks of the church moved to the Southern Part. The site started to function as a museum in 1991. The museum complex consists of a church, now serving as an icon museum, the monastery, now housing an archaeological collection, and a tomb housing the remains of the saint. The icons exhibited in the museum were collected from various local Greek Orthodox churches, most of which were looted after 1974. With special permission, Greek Cypriots are allowed to use the church and perform a ceremony on the day of Saint Barnabas every year. Except for that, any kind of religious ritual/performance is strictly prohibited inside the complex –at least ideally. The tomb, which is outside of the museum complex, is more accessible for religious practices, such as lighting candles. [Figure 20 and 21]

Saint Mamas is also one of the most popular saints in Cyprus. Specifically, he is known as the patron saint of sailors, shepherds and tax evaders. The church and the episcopal residence (bishop’s palace) have been used as archeology and natural history museums, displaying icons, archeological findings (especially from Vuno and Soli), antiquities and a collection of stuffed animals since 2004. George Jeffrey states that the monastery “was evidently a monument of importance during the Latin period of Cyprus history, and probably was one of the most celebrated of the Byzantine shrines of a remote origin. But the present church appears not to be older than about 1725” (1918:221). The Gothic elements survived on the north and south doorways, the marble columns in the west window and the shrine of the saint. [Figure 22 and 23]

#### **5.1.4. Museums or churches?**

The two museum complexes have been used by the Turkish part to demonstrate that they care about the Greek heritage in the North. It is said by the museum officials that all visitors are thankful to the Ministry of Culture for restoring and protecting the sites as museums. However, Greek Cypriots complain about the ways in which the sites are functioning, and especially about the entrance fees. It is a fact that Orthodox Christians treat these two sites as churches, instead of museums. The sites are 'living religious sites' for the Orthodox community.

I witnessed many examples of Greek Cypriots visiting the sites, but preferring not to enter as a protest against the entrance fee, and rather just visiting the free parts of the complexes. The tomb of Saint Barnabas is located across the museum complex and a fee is not asked for visiting it. In Saint Mamas Church there is a spot (a small niche) on the church wall where people stop by to light candles. When the church is closed (the closing time was around 3:30 pm when I was in Cyprus) or if they don't want to pay, they just light candles and pray at this small niche and leave. Greek Cypriots find it unacceptable to pay or get permission from the Turkish administration to use their own religious site. For them, these are churches, not museums, and they should be free to Greek Cypriots who are the "real" owners of the sites. For some, paying the entrance fee is problematic also because it could be seen as recognizing the illegal state in the North.

Inside the museums, visitors are expected to act in accordance with the rules of museums, in addition to paying entrance fees and being limited to the restrictive opening

hours of the museums. Alex Stock highlights the quintessential characteristic of museums: “Everything here has to do with the eyes – ‘Do not touch!’; it is a matter of seeing, reflecting, discussing” (2011:65), which is in fact different from spiritual experiencing of religious space and objects that gives priority to touching, passively contemplating and praying instead.

Regular religious services are not allowed in the museums. Communal worship is allowed only two times a year in both complexes. The museums are turned into religious spaces during these ceremonies. [Figure 24 and 25] On the saints’ name days (June 11<sup>th</sup> for St Barnabas and September 2<sup>nd</sup> for St Mamas), Turkish authorities agreed to permit Greek Cypriots to hold liturgical services at the sites. Also, hundreds of Orthodox Christians attend services held in April at both sites. Bus services are arranged from main cities to Famagusta and to Morphou to bring people who would like to attend the ceremonies, and it is possible to see the influx of many Christians on these days to the North. However, there are reports accusing the Turkish of obstructing, sabotaging and preventing these ceremonies. The following quotes are from the website of the Public Information Office and from the US department of state website:

No mass would be held after all at the Orthodox church of Saint Mamas in occupied Morphou, following the occupation regime’s refusal to permit Greek Cypriots to cross to the occupied areas through the Limnitis crossing point to attend an organised pilgrimage to celebrate the Saint’s day on 2 September, the President of the Republic Mr Demetris Christofias told reporters. (PIO website, 01.09.2008a)

The Government Spokesman Mr Kypros Chrysostomides, referring on Friday to the Greek Cypriot pilgrims’ visit to Saint Mamas Church in occupied Morphou, stated the following: “During yesterday’s visit by Greek Cypriot pilgrims to Saint Mamas

Church in Morphou, the occupation regime of Mr Talat showed once more its real face. This proves once again that the occupation regime does not respect the commitments it undertakes. There was an individual check on every pilgrim who visited Saint Mamas Church yesterday, while no such action had taken place on the part of the Republic of Cyprus regarding the visit by the Turkish Cypriots to Kokkina.” (PIO website, 05.09.2005)

There were reports that "police" disturbed religious services performed by a Greek Orthodox bishop whose authority is not accepted by Turkish Cypriot officials. In April 2010 Turkish Cypriot authorities did not allow the bishop to conduct services, which were instead conducted by a Greek Orthodox priest resident in the north. In May 2010 Turkish Cypriot authorities interrupted a religious service being conducted by the same bishop, who later continued and completed the ceremony. (US, 2010)<sup>34</sup>

These are only few examples of many criticisms directed at the Turkish part. Turkish authorities are asked for the protection of the Greek heritage as well as for the respect for religious freedom. I could not attend the annual ceremony on Saint Mamas' name day service when I was doing the fieldwork in Cyprus; however, I was told that Turks have not been allowed inside the church during the ceremony, since the bomb attack in 2004. According to Associated Press' report on August 27<sup>th</sup>, 2004, a bomb exploded outside the Saint Mamas Church, causing damage to the main church door and the ceiling and shattering the windows of both the church and nearby buildings, but no injuries happened. It is reported that Turkish Cypriot extremist groups had vowed to try to prevent services

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<sup>34</sup> US Department of State, international religious freedom report.

<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/2010/148926.htm> [accessed on July 31st, 2014]

planned the following week at the Saint Mamas church to celebrate its namesake's saint's day.<sup>35</sup> These events clearly show the political and cultural conflict over the ownership and functioning of the places.

As mentioned before, Greek Cypriot visitors mostly treat the sites as sacred places. The churches still provide the link between the Greek community and the lost land. Greek Cypriots practice rituals inside the sites, which would normally not be allowed in museums. Icons are not then viewed as paintings or pieces of art; they are venerated, and used in religious services and feasts. Christian visitors kiss the icons, cross themselves and pray in front of the icons, meditate, and touch the walls of the churches. There seems to be a silent agreement between the visitors and the museum officials that as long as the visitors do not harm the artifacts or the building, nobody stops them from praying or veneration. It is interesting that there is no specific officer responsible for keeping an eye on artifacts and protecting them inside the churches, which normally exist in museums. Interesting enough, the museum officer woman who kindly gave me a tour in the Saint Mamas Church told me that both Greek and Turkish Cypriots pray at this place, since it is a “house of God.” Even the museum officer is aware of and seemed to be accepting the fact that local people see this place as a worship space, and there is nothing inappropriate with this approach. [Figure 26 and 27]

The Saint Mamas Church is relatively flexible in terms of the rituals allowed in it. Christians get married or have their children baptized in this church. I once had the chance to watch a baptism ceremony in the Saint Mamas Church. In my interview with an old man

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<sup>35</sup> <http://wwrn.org/articles/7376/?&place=turkey&section=christianity>

from Turkey, Artvin, who migrated to the island 32 years ago and has been working in the coffee shop next to the Saint Mamas Church, I asked how the museum officers allowed these rituals inside the museum. He said, “of course, they have to give permission. This is their church!” Some Turkish Cypriots adopted similar attitudes regarding the utilization of churches in the North by Greek Cypriots. However, it should be noted that marriage and baptism are family rituals, and are considerably different from the celebration of the liturgy, which is the embodiment of the community. Therefore, it is the liturgy that is most controlled.

Both museums are somewhat strange combinations of museum and religious site. Museumification has changed the spatial compositions of the sites. In Saint Barnabas Museum, on the one hand, the icons are organized thematically, in a way that could not be found in an Orthodox Christian church, which gives the feeling that the place is a museum. On the other hand, there is no special lighting or much information about the icons or about which church the icons come from, except for short labels in Turkish and English. Thus, the site fits neither into a proper museum form nor into a proper Orthodox Church form. Balderstone claims, that“(a)s a tourist site it is well done. But for Greek Cypriot pilgrims there is no sense of the venerability of the place” (2010:235).

The Saint Mamas Church looks like a functioning, active church, rather than a museum. The icons in the iconostasis are organized in the way normally expected from an Orthodox Church. There were no labels under the icons, as found in the Saint Barnabas Church. Saint Mamas’ marble sarcophagus on the north wall was surrounded with many wax and silver offerings in the shape of eye, ear, body, and also baby dolls, which are not removed by the museum officers. There is also a small hole on the sarcophagus, which



“permits the faithful to pour in oil which they then touch with their fingers or collect on cottonwool” (Hadjichristodoulou 2010:38), and is believed to treat a variety of sicknesses.

Although some Greek Cypriots think that it is relatively better to see their churches as museums, which at least provide some kind of protection from damage and attacks, most of them complain about the restrictions over the use of their churches. Touristification of their churches bothers Orthodox Christians, not only because they perceive this as commodification of their religious and spiritual values, but also because they seem to hate the idea that Turkish administration is benefiting and making money out of the Christians’ cultural heritage, and then not letting the owners of the sites use them freely. This is very similar to the case of Hacı Bektash Museum in Turkey. Alevi and Bektashi are disturbed by the fact that the predominantly Sunni-Muslim Turkish government does not properly take care of the museum, while asking for money from its mostly non-Sunni visitors (Harmanşah et al. 2014).

Greek Cypriots usually use the example of Hala Sultan Tekke to demonstrate the imbalance between North and South regarding their treatment of religious sites and respect for religious freedom. They say, “we do not ask for money at Hala Sultan Tekke. Why do we have to pay for visiting our churches?” However, these cases are not seen as comparable by some Turkish Cypriots. One of my interviewees from Morphou told me that Hala Sultan Tekke is different, since there is a Turkish Cypriot Imam working there. However, for him, no Greek Cypriot priests are working in the churches on the North, so there has to be a price for the maintenance of the churches. However, there are also Turkish Cypriots who sympathize with Christians’ concerns and sensitivities:

I can understand their [Christians’] reactions. The administration in the North can’t

perceive their sensitivities. I am personally bothered with this policy. My father was martyred in 1964, Greek Cypriots killed him, but my point of view is different. I would like to see that sensitivities and freedom of people are respected. Saint Barnabas is the founder of their Church, it is a sacred site. Similarly, they [Turkish authorities] ask for money also from Apostolos Andreas sometime, at least they removed that. Sacred sites are not places to ask for money. We even have to encourage that [Christians' visits to the sites] but we are very conservative. [Turkish Cypriot man, around his 50s, 2012]

The sites seem to be trapped between being semi-churches and semi-museums. As museums, they lack the minimum requirements of proper displays expected from museums (security, lighting, providing information on artifacts etc.), as well as lack sensitivity and empathy to expectations and concerns of the Orthodox Christian community. Despite their perception of the museums as violation of their religious rights and disrespect to their religious sites, Greek Cypriots do not think that this temporary situation is undermining or playing down the holy character of the icons and the sites. Instead, according to my understanding, this 'captivity' of the sites makes them more sacred, since they suffer at the hands of non-believers, and wait for the day of freedom, which symbolizes and will coincide with the freedom of the occupied area as well. As a parallel example to these two cases in the South, I will discuss the Muslim site Hala Sultan Tekke in Larnaca in the following subsection.

### 5.1.5. The Case of Hala Sultan Tekke in Southern Cyprus

Another liminal space is Hala Sultan Tekke, being neither completely a mosque nor a museum. The complex combines the features of both kinds of buildings. It is located on the shore of Salt Lake in Larnaca, in the Republic of Cyprus, and is the most important worship site for Muslims in Cyprus. It is also held to be the third most sacred place in the Islamic world after the Kaaba and Prophet Muhammad's shrine in Medina. The site is considered as representing "the beginning of the Muslim history in Cyprus" (Hendrich 2013:24), in addition to another early site, Hz. Ömer Tekke, which is relatively less famous. [Figure 28]

The complex is consisted of a mosque with minaret, a mausoleum, cemetery,<sup>36</sup> living quarters and an octagonal fountain. Entrance to the courtyard of the complex is through an arched stone doorway, and on either side of the gate, there are imperial inscriptions (TRNC Department of Antiquities and Museums, 1987). The mosque was built in the classical Ottoman style; it has as a central dome and four small half-domes at the corners linked by pointed arches. Living quarters are currently utilized as offices, one of which was recently assigned to the Turkish Cypriot Imam Şakir Alemdar, who was appointed to the position in 2011. [Figure 29 and 30]

The mausoleum is adjacent to the south wall of the mosque, and consists of two upright stones and a third stone resting on them, which have become a subject of many

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<sup>36</sup> In the cemetery, one can find the tomb of the wife of the Sharif Al Hussein, Grandfather of King Hussein of Jordan. (<http://www.cyprustemples.com/templedetails.asp?id=71>) [accessed July 26<sup>th</sup>, 2014]

miraculous accounts. [Figure 31] The most famous one is that the stones were carried from Mount Sinai by storks after the death of Umm Haram to mark her grave, and it is claimed in some accounts that a Christian monk offered the stones to Umm Haram as a present and they moved from their place with her burial (Argyris 2006:73). Beatrice Hendrich states that “(t)his trilithon is interpreted as an Phoenician sanctuary, but its embedding in a Muslim site does not allow an archeological excavation work” (2013:23). However, there is another archeological excavation site inside the complex, and it is clearly indicated with signs at the entrance. Since 2010, excavations have been carried out by Peter M. Fischer from the University of Gothenburg, Sweden, with a group of international archeologists. The site is considered one of the largest Late Bronze Age cities.<sup>37</sup> The excavations by the Department of Antiquities also revealed archaeological sites dated to the Archaic, Classical, Hellenistic, and Ottoman periods under the mosque and in the immediate environments in 2002 (Bağışkan 2009:51). [Figure 32]

The tomb is widely recognized as belonging to an Islamic figure, Umm Haram, who came to Cyprus with the first Arab raids in 648-649, fell from her mule at the spot of the grave and was buried there. The tomb was discovered in 18<sup>th</sup> century, according to one legend, by a Naqshbandi sheikh Hasan (TRNC Department of Antiquities and Museums, 1987) who had a dream about the site in 1760, and according to another legend, by a dervish who “thought it might be profitable business to inspire the shepherds who fed their flocks thereabouts with a veneration for the place” (Mariti 1909:151).<sup>38</sup> The fame of the

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<sup>37</sup> See <http://www.fischerarchaeology.se/> [accessed on August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2014]

<sup>38</sup> Mariti approaches this ‘made-up sacredness’ ironically: “A Moslem creates an object of veneration and worship out of a humble unknown tomb, built up of four stones without inscription or any particular marks of

sanctuary spread throughout the island, then the Ottoman Empire; and the site has become a regular place of worship. The mosque, along with dwellings and water-cisterns, were built in a series of stages in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, and the complex was completed around 1816-17.

The site has been extensively restored in 2001-2005 with the support from the Bi-communal development program funded by USAID (United States Agency for International Development) and UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) along with the restoration project of Apostolos Andreas Monastery. According to 2004 annual report on the US Department of State website, "(b)oth sites were cleaned, fenced, and re-landscaped. The ancillary buildings at both sites were also renovated, and work on the church and mosque buildings was scheduled to begin in the fall of 2002. An unexpected Neolithic archeological find at Hala Sultan Tekke mosque has delayed work on the mosque while the find is being documented. Once this process is complete, the restoration project will be tendered."<sup>39</sup>

There is considerable confusion in sources and among people regarding the identity of Umm Haram (Hala Sultan in Turkish) though. Among them, the terms I heard most were: wet-nurse, foster-aunt or aunt (the word Hala means aunt in Turkish) of Prophet Muhammad among Cypriots. This argument is supported in various publications (Hendrich 2013:23, Çağdaş 1965:48, Aslanapa 1975:30, and Press and Information Office 2008b:20,

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distinction. He has been deceived, but is satisfied, for what are all the mysteries of his faith but so many deceptions" (1909:153).

<sup>39</sup> <http://www.refworld.org/docid/416ce9d5b.html>. U.S. Department of State Annual Report on International Religious Freedom for 2004. [accessed July 26<sup>th</sup>, 2014]

and the website on Tekke published by Naqshibendis<sup>40</sup>). To be on the safe side, it is also said vaguely that she was a close relative of Muhammad (Historical dictionary of Cyprus 98, Jeffrey 1918:184). George Argyris rejects the argument that she had kinship relationship with Prophet Muhammad, and claims that “she was the aunt of Anas Ibn Malik, who was the private secretary and faithful servant of the Prophet” (2006:70), namely a close follower of the Prophet.

The site functions as a museum currently. It has strict hours of operation for winter and summer announced at the entrance: 8.30 to 17.00 during winter and 8.30 to 19.30 during summer. At the same time, people pray inside the mosque, despite the fact that the mosque is not open for all five prayers during the day. The operating times do not cover the morning (dawn), evening (after sunset) and night (dusk until dawn) prayers. Moreover, *ezan* (call for prayer) is not allowed. However, Imam Şakir Alemdar claims that the site is run relatively more like a religious site compared to its past situation. He told me the stories of his arduous efforts and struggle with the Department of Antiquities for having a sign hang on the entrance wall, saying that this is worship site and visit to mosque is not allowed during Friday prayer times (from 1pm to 3pm on Fridays). This sign didn't exist when I first visited the site in 2010. As I was informed, the mosque is close to visitors also during prayer times on special days, such as religious feasts, *bayram*. Namely, the site stops being a museum during prayer times, the tourists are not allowed to enter the site when people perform *namaz* inside, and it goes back to its touristic character in the rest of the times. It should be noted, though, that any religious activity beyond these times and beyond

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<sup>40</sup> <http://www.halasultan.com>

individual scale are subjected to permission from the Department of Antiquities of the Republic of Cyprus, which is the legal authority responsible for the control of the site. The complex is still under the possession of Pious Foundations (Evkaf) of Northern Cyprus.

[Figure 33]

Hala Sultan Tekke is different from the Christian cases I explained before in terms of admission to the site, in that it is free of charge. This provides a legitimate excuse for propaganda for Greek Cypriots to be able to claim that they respect religious freedom and rights of Muslims. Still, the Muslim community does have other reasons to complain regarding access to and utilization of the site. One of these problems was, as mentioned above, that daily prayer is restricted with the operating hours of the museum. In the website on Hala Sultan Tekke (published by the Imam and Naqshibendis), it is said on the main page that, “unfortunately daily prayers are not allowed due to the restrictions applied by local government.”<sup>41</sup>

I have found out two specific spots inside and outside the complex that have been used for making wishes through tying fabrics. One of the two was a carob tree behind the tomb. It was remarkable that the museum staff has been ‘cleaning’ the tree regularly. I saw the tree sometimes completely free of these fabrics. The second wishing spot is the bushes along a small path outside the wire fence of the complex. Apparently, people visited the site out of its functioning hours, prayed and made wishes outside. Benefiting from the perceived holy aura around the site usually happens in religious sites under such

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<sup>41</sup> <http://halasultan.com> [accessed July 26<sup>th</sup>, 2014]

regulatory control. Imam Şakir Alemdar also told me that people were performing *namaz* outside of the complex before it became accessible after 1974. [Figure 34]

Muslim Turks in the North, who do not have passport of the Republic of Cyprus, are not allowed to cross the border and visit the site. They are stopped at the border when they wish to attend the services on particular religious holidays. This was even the case for the current head of the Presidency of Religious Affairs, Talip Atalay, who was not born in Cyprus. For example, in 2011, Turks were not allowed to visit the site on the holiest night of the month of Ramadan, on *Kadir gecesi*, the anniversary of the night Muslims believe the first verses of the Quran were revealed to Prophet Muhammad. According to the report in *Zaman* newspaper, people sent the list of the names beforehand to the Greek authorities, and they didn't receive any negative response, but still were not allowed at the border. Some Turkish Cypriots refused visiting the site due to the policy of the South.<sup>42</sup>

Newspapers were reporting on May 22, 2014 that Talip Atalay was expressing their claims for opening Hala Sultan Tekke to five time prayer on daily basis, and for facilitation of the visits to the site, in his meeting with the vice president of the USA, Joe Biden on May 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2014.<sup>43</sup> And then it was reported on July 29<sup>th</sup>, 2014 that, for the first time Muslim Turks could cross the border and visit the site during the Ramadan feast. This is identified as a “big step towards peace” by the Turkish Cypriot media.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>42</sup>[http://www.zaman.com.tr/dunya\\_rum-yonetimi-hala-sultan-tekkesine-gecis-izni-vermedi\\_1173719.html](http://www.zaman.com.tr/dunya_rum-yonetimi-hala-sultan-tekkesine-gecis-izni-vermedi_1173719.html) [accessed on August 1st, 2014]

<sup>43</sup><http://www.kibrismanet.com/guncel/hala-sultan-tekkesinin-5-vakit-ibadete-acilmasini-ve-ziyaretin-kolaylastirilmasini-talep-ettik-h65561.html> [accessed on July 26<sup>th</sup>, 2014]

<sup>44</sup> <http://www.kibrisgazetesi.com/?p=506029> [accessed on August 1<sup>st</sup>, 2014]



Another significant crisis that broke out in 2009 was due to the plans for a tavern to be opened near the mosque. Two Greek Cypriots got permission from the Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Cyprus to open a tavern called Al Halili at a distance of 15 meters from the mosque. Annoyed by the idea of a place with music and alcoholic drinks close to the Tekke, the Imam blocked the initiative by threatening to carry the issue to OIC (Organization of the Islamic Conference) and the ECHR (European Court of Human Rights).<sup>45</sup> However, the unusual point in this story was that, when telling me about this incident, Imam Şakir Alemdar was more critical of Turkish Cypriots who didn't show any serious reaction to this attempt. He furthered his point by saying that Turkish Cypriots themselves have been treating the site as a recreation spot more than a holy place. In terms of the practices of Turkish Cypriots at these sites, the Imam's argument does not seem to be groundless. The holy sites are not exclusively religious places that could/should be used only for praying for many Turkish Cypriots. I observed and explained this for the case of Hz. Ömer Tekke. Beckingham confirms this point with his observations in 1950s: "The Muslims shrines in the island are tending to become sites for picnics more than anything else. Only at the convent (*tekke*) of Hala Sultan near Larnaca, which is supposed to be the tomb of Umm Haram bint Milhan, is there any serious restriction on the Christian visitor. Even there it has now become possible, as it used not to be, for women who are not

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<sup>45</sup> Report at the website of the Public and Information Office of the Republic of Cyprus: <http://www.pio.gov.cy/moi/pio/pio.nsf/All/B9FE0AB5C7944916C225763B00372AE4?OpenDocument>. [accessed August 1<sup>st</sup>, 2014]

A Turkish Cypriot website: <http://www.haberkktc.com/haber/hala-sultan-tekkesi-imaminin-al-halili-restorantin-calismasina-izin-vermedigi-iddiasi-5425.html>. [accessed August 1<sup>st</sup>, 2014]

Muslims to be admitted to the alleged tomb chamber, that is, to the immediate vicinity of the heavily curtained trilithon” (1957b:81).

Although Bağışkan mentions a narrative arguing that the Greek Cypriots believed that the Tekke was a place sacred to Agia Marina, and that they came to pray to her before Turks managed to get the site (2009:54), I didn’t hear from any Greek Cypriot that it used to be a Christian site. For them, it is a thoroughly Muslim site and they visit only for touristic purposes. When I asked about their experiences in the site, some of them expressed their uneasy feelings for ‘uncanny’ Islamic practices, such as taking off shoes before entering. The conflict over this site, and also over the two Christian cases in Northern Cyprus, is more of a political one, and aimed at controlling the practices at the site, rather than controlling the meaning and historical connection of the site with the communities.

On another level, there is contestation going on between different religious communities in Hala Sultan Tekke. This is out of my research scope, but it is worth mentioning to understand the dynamics within the site. The site is currently under the control of Turkish Naqshibendis, the disciples of Şeyh Nazım Kıbrısı in Cyprus. I have witnessed Imam Şakir Alemdar’s discussion with the non-Turkish Muslims in the South (mostly from Arabic countries) about the control of the mosques in the Republic of Cyprus. I will note here a couple of interesting points to consider to understand the actors and the dynamics between different Muslim communities in Cyprus.

Ömeriye (or Ömerge) mosque is one of the most prominent functioning mosques in the Southern part, and is known as controlled by Arabs. [Figure 35] I visited this mosque a few times during my research, and was quite surprised that the information regarding

Islam, practices etc. was mostly in English and Arabic. There were books in Greek, Russian, and many other languages, but nothing in Turkish. It was clear that the mosque was not addressing the Turkish Muslim community. Imam Alemdar told me about the Department of Antiquities' plans for restoring Ömeriye mosque to its former architecture, turning into a cathedral and using it as a museum. It was suggested that the community of the Ömeriye mosque would use Bayraktar mosque in Nicosia. Imam of the Hala Sultan Tekke is also the imam of Bayraktar Mosque and he gives sermons in Bayraktar on Thursdays. When this subject was discussed at Hala Sultan Tekke in the presence of Arab Muslim visitors, the Imam said:

I didn't allow that. Bayraktar Mosque is too small anyway –it is only for a couple of hundred people, whereas Ömeriye mosque is for two thousand people. They even suggested us using an awning of Bayraktar mosque's yard in order to provide space for all people, and I said 'are you kidding us?' If they would like to restore it, that's fine, but they shall do it part by part, without closing the mosque to the believers. *I won't accept the community of Ömeriye in my mosque Bayraktar, anyway.* [2011, emphasis mine]

In response to Imam Alemdar's words, the Arabs in the room expressed their wish for the restoration of the mosque, especially the roof, but they were also against the conversion into a museum.

### **5.1.6. Observations during a Friday prayer at Hala Sultan Tekke**

The following narrative aims to provide an insight into ambience of the complex during Friday prayers.

April 6<sup>th</sup>, 2012

I was waiting for my work permit to be extended, and wasn't allowed to cross the border to go to the North. I was normally teaching at the University in the North on Fridays. I have decided to turn this 'being trapped situation' into an opportunity to attend the Friday prayer at the Hala Sultan Tekke. I was there around 1 pm. I have stopped at the main entrance door to read once more the sign telling the opening and close times. The sign was also warning the visitors that it was a worship site. There were already a couple of men praying inside the mosque – they were not Turkish. I went through the mosque part and entered the tomb. A Persian speaking family was taking pictures of the tomb. I could get the smell of the incense inside; there was a table with incense on the right hand side of the entrance. I turned around the tomb, it was almost impossible to see the stones, which were covered heavily with fabrics.

I returned to the mosque part, and checked the circular huge stone on the right side of the prayer area. There was a hole under a big stone, which used to be a water well, as I learned. People throw their wishing-papers into this hole. There was a belief among Cypriots that it was connected to the Saint Lazarus Church, a 9<sup>th</sup> century church in Larnaca. Interestingly, tradition makes a connection between these two important figures. There is a

legend believed by the local people that St. Lazarus came to the Tekke after his resurrection. [Figure 36]

While waiting, I read some pages of the guestbook; there were notes and prayers in many different languages. Then I sat at the back of the mosque, opposite the mihrab looking towards Kaaba. There was a women's part upstairs, but a chair was left in front of the stairs, and I decided to stay on the ground floor. An official closed the door of the mosque, and he said to the tourists at the door that they should come back at 3 pm, after the prayer. He later stepped up on the *minbar* (pulpit) and read the call for prayer. He was clearly a native speaker of Arabic. After him, Imam Şakir Alemdar gave a sermon in English with Arabic verses from Quran. There were more people now inside the mosque, listening to the Imam, practicing *namaz* etc. In half an hour, it was the time for Friday prayer. All men stood up, standing side by side, started praying collectively. I left the mosque at that point. The Greek custodian was outside, looked at me with astonishment, probably because he didn't see many women inside the mosque during prayers. I removed the headscarf, put on my shoes, and started waiting for the Imam to talk.

## 5.2. FRATERNAL OTHER: NEW ALIGNMENTS, NEW CHALLENGES

Turkish Cypriots have been in a kind of suspension between different conceptions of collective consciousness since the division of the island. The construction and negotiation of identities within the Turkish Cypriot community is closely related to their position (or perceived position) vis-à-vis Greek Cypriots, Turkey, and immigrants from Turkey. They have competing notions of identities, located between an ethnic nationalism closely bound up with Turkish nationalism in motherland, Turkey, and Cypriot nationalism or Cypriotism, which is perceived differently from Greek Cypriotism.

In the face of intensified Greek nationalist propaganda for *enosis*, Turkish Cypriots adapted Turkish nationalist ideas from the 1920s onwards. Turkish Cypriots welcomed Turkish military intervention in 1974 and the establishment of a separate Turkish Cypriot entity in 1983. This was in fact standing for the liberation of the Turkish minority from the 'cruelty' of Greek majority at the time, and Turkey was the liberator motherland protecting its babyland (*yavru vatan*). The presence of the Turkish army was providing the feeling of security to Turkish Cypriots.

However, as the unresolved Cyprus problem, economic and political isolation, dependent and volatile economy continued after 1974, feelings of discontent and dissatisfaction among the Turkish Cypriot community grew substantially. Moreover, the large numbers of immigrants who arrived from Turkey and were granted Greek Cypriot properties, changed the human landscape of the Northern part. As Ramm claims, "(b)eing increasingly critical of their nationalist leadership and Turkey's Cyprus policy, some

Turkish Cypriot groups and individuals began to dissociate themselves from the Turkish 'motherland' as well as from Turkish nationalism" (2006:528).

The Turkish version of Cypriotism gained popularity among the Turkish Cypriot community, starting first among intellectual circles and the political left parties. However, as Hatay and Bryant argue, "Kıbrıslılık [Cypriotism] did not necessarily imply a common identity for the entire island. Rather, Kıbrıslılık implied the resurgence of Turkish-Cypriot demands for self-determination, this time posed in opposition to the domination of Turkey" (2008: 431). Turkish Cypriot politics and culture were perceived to be under siege of Turkey and Cypriotism was basically a resistance to this (perceived) colonization. As expected, this increasing tendency among Cypriots and the politicization of the identity issue in the North in the 1990s "met the fierce resistance of Turkish nationalists who fought against the 'traitors' rhetorically and sometimes even by means of violence" (Ramm 2006:530).

Related to all these factors and circumstances, Turkish Cypriots have had problematic relations with the Turkish settlers, which affect their self-perceptions and memories tremendously. Scholarship on the Cyprus question mostly focuses on the conflict between two ethnic groups, Greek and Turkish Cypriots, and disregards the relatively invisible political and social conflict internal to Northern Cyprus, between Turkish Cypriots and the settlers from Turkey. In the Turkish nationalist discourse, these two communities are considered to be sharing a nationality and ethnicity. However, especially recently, Turkish Cypriots have expressed their discontent with the presence of Turkish settlers in the island. One of the main areas that Turkish Cypriots see as differentiating themselves from the settlers is the greater religiosity of the latter, which is associated with the culture

of Turkey. Interestingly, Turkish Cypriots sometimes use religious criteria to criticize the life style of Turkish settlers, such as women's veiling, and to express their frustration with the policies of Turkey, whereas Turkish settlers refer to the same criteria to denigrate Turkish Cypriots' religious beliefs and practices. Although not openly expressed by either group, the tension can be observed in practice in some Muslim places, such as Hz. Ömer Tekke.

I should note that my research originally was neither about the relations between Turkish settlers and Turkish Cypriots, nor about the Islamic identity of these groups; however I realized that this inconspicuous tension between these two groups has become relevant to understand the Turkish Cypriot community. Hz. Ömer Tekke provides insight about the dynamics of interaction between Turkish Cypriots and immigrants from Turkey that have been clearly reflected to this single religious site in the North. We need to consider at least three intertwined processes in order to understand these dynamics:

1. Turkish settlers and their relations with Turkish Cypriots
2. Turkish Cypriots' approach to Islam and their secularization history
3. Impact of Turkey and its policies concerning the TRNC

I will briefly elaborate on these points, and then explain the situation at Hz. Ömer Tekke.



### **5.2.1. Relations between Turkish Cypriots and Turkish settlers**

Turkish Cypriots welcomed Turkey's military intervention in 1974 after the Greek military junta overthrew Archbishop Makarios, and called it a "Peace Operation" as it was seen as standing for the liberation of Turkish Cypriots from Greek oppression. The migration of several thousand people from Turkey, especially from rural areas, was encouraged and facilitated until the late 1970s. These people received abandoned Greek Cypriot properties as well as citizenship upon arrival. However, the positive atmosphere disappeared quickly, due to the perception among Turkish Cypriots that Turkish immigrants were not able to comply with the modern and secular culture of Cyprus. Thus, the Cypriot Turks started to have conflicting feelings towards the Turkish settlers, and "(t)he rural background and lack of education of these immigrants provided Turkish Cypriots with grounds for prejudice and discrimination" (Hatay 2008:151). Sarah Ladbury notes an irony in this relationship:

On the one hand the Turkish Cypriot will tell [of] the bravery and hardiness of the Turkish soldiers who intervened on his behalf in 1974, whose success was due to their tough training in Turkey, living in the mountains, 'eating frogs and snakes.' On the other hand he makes it quite clear that this is not at all the sort of person he wants living next door. (1977:320)

Turkish Cypriots talk about how they used to confidently leave their doors open at nights and that nothing ever happened to their houses, cars, and offices, and how things changed after Turkish settlers arrived in the island. Many Turkish Cypriots claim that the crime rate and the forms of crimes have changed with the Turkish settlers. As Altan notes,

“If they come to trust you [Turkish Cypriots], they will tell you the following: ‘Robbing and killing people was unknown to us. We have learned it since the Turks arrived.’” (2003: 113). Some Turkish Cypriots told me that the pejorative term *karasakal* (“black-bearded,” or uneducated, criminal people) refers to Turkish settlers, although I never heard it in my daily conversations with Turkish Cypriots. In their everyday conversations, Turkish Cypriots talk more about their experiences with Turkish immigrants than they do about the so-called Cyprus problem and relations with Greek Cypriots, since they interact with Turks on a more daily basis. And the dichotomy is always emphasized: “The civilized/Western category he uses for himself is constantly contrasted to the uncivilized/Oriental category that is the lot of the *Turkiyeli*” (Ladbury 1977:321). This reminds of Milica Bakić-Hayden’s concept (1995) of ‘nesting orientalism,’ which talks about constructed hierarchies premised upon Orientalism in the Balkan lands of Ottoman-ruled Europe.

Turkish Cypriots also resented the government’s distribution of the Greek Cypriot land and property to the settlers, specifically at the time of the initial migration (Hatay 2003:152). Ladbury claims that “Here the cultural differences between Cypriot Turk and mainland Turk, non-existent to the uninitiated observer, are emphasized and exaggerated by Turkish Cypriots in order to justify their exclusive claim to certain resources which seem to be both scarce and, at present, unjustly distributed” (1977:318). Over time, Turkish settlers have gradually become representative of Turkey’s policies in the island. Altan argues,

Many of the Turkish Cypriots want to get rid of Turkey. On the other hand, we are trying to ‘liberate’ them by force. As it was clearly put by former Turkish Foreign Minister Mumtaz Sosyal: ‘Even if the Turkish Cypriots do not want it, we want to

liberate them'. Exactly what the British said about India, Soysal is saying of the Cypriots.... However this liberation has no benefit for us either. (2003:113)

Since the 1980s, Turkish Cypriots increasingly criticize Turkey's policies and identify themselves as Cypriots (*Kıbrıslılar*), in order to differentiate themselves from the settler community (*Türkiyeliler*). While this category of Cypriotness excludes Turks, the Turkish nationalist discourse has been emphasizing the Turkishness of Cypriots and seeing them "first as Turks." The 1995 words of Rauf Denktaş, a member of the Turkish Cypriot nationalist leadership until 1974 and former President of the TRNC until April 2005, created resentment and anger among many Turkish Cypriots:

I am a child of Anatolia.... I am a Turk, and my roots are in Central Asia. With my culture, my language, my history and my whole personality I am a Turk.... There are neither Turkish Cypriots, nor Greek Cypriots, nor Cypriots ... the only Cypriot living in Cyprus is the Cyprus donkey. (quoted in Ramm 2006: 527)

Turkish Cypriots mostly assume that Turkish settlers are a homogeneous group and fail to differentiate diversity within it. First, Turkish Cypriots sometimes confuse soldiers from Turkey with Turkish settlers, and they are highly critical of the soldiers' hegemony over the landscape. As Yael Navaro-Yashin rightly points out, "Soldiers are everywhere, either in person or through their symbols: khaki-colored military cars; red-and-white barrels marking off access zones; guns, rifles, and uniforms; cleanly shaven heads; and the occasional sound of shooting practice in the barracks" (2006:89). Hatay explains in his report on the political integration of the Turkish settlers that there are several subcategories within the settler community. There are Turks who are already citizens of the TRNC and have the right to vote. Hatay points out that not all of them came to the island

as part of a deliberate settlement policy pursued by both Turkey and Turkish-Cypriot authorities following the partition of the island in 1974. Other Turkish nationals have migrated to the island on their own initiative, acquiring citizenship through either naturalization or assisted naturalization (e.g. through marriage to Turkish Cypriots) (2005:vii). In addition, there are temporary residents of Turkish origin, such as registered workers, non-registered workers, tourists, university students, lecturers and Turkish army personnel (2005:vii).

Hatay also talks about another confusion that stems from the perception of “demographic danger” among Turkish Cypriots, that the “Turkish-Cypriot population is shrinking or being overwhelmed” and that the Anatolian Turks will impede the political will of Cypriots (2008:160). It is believed that Turkey is attempting to change the demographic balance in the island through Turkish immigrants and to establish cultural hegemony over Northern Cyprus, in spite of the fact that “facilitated migration ended in 1979...The latter group comes to the island of its own volition, seeking a better life (Bryant & Yakinthou 2012:27). However, at the same time, Turkish Cypriots are aware that Northern Cyprus is still economically dependent on Turkey’s cheap labor force and military.

It should also be noted that some Turkish immigrants have been living in the island for a long time and tend to identify themselves as Turkish Cypriots. The younger generations, especially those that were born in Cyprus, have weak connections with Turkey and consider themselves as belonging to Cyprus. Another point to be emphasized is that those who migrate from Turkey came from different parts of Turkey, and they have different political, social and economic backgrounds. Hatay states,

The majority came to Cyprus between 1975 and 1977 from the regions around Trabzon (East Black Sea), Antalya, Mersin, Adana (Southern Turkey), Carsamba, Samsun (West Black Sea), Konya (Central Anatolia) and southeastern Turkey. (2005:12)

However, during my fieldwork in Cyprus, I realize that Turkish Cypriots are careful about expressing these feelings openly, since criticizing the Turkish settlers could mean questioning the nationalist discourse and Turkey's policies, thus be seen as betrayal to the nation. Turkish Cypriots even sometimes complain about the prevalent image that 'Turkish Cypriots dislike Turks.'

Turkish settlers often express their resentment at this humiliation, and sometimes respond to critiques by reversing the dominant/subordinate actors of the discourse: "who rescued you from the Greek Cypriots' atrocities?" reminding Turkey's military intervention in 1974. Some Turks recognize Turkish Cypriots' concerns, but reflect the responsibility to the other group within the settlers, such as to those from southeastern Turkey, or to the Kurdish origin settlers. Navaro-Yashin remarks,

Turkish Cypriots express their fear of political subordination under Turkey's sovereignty through their symbolically charged comments about people from Turkey. Settlers, on the other hand, often attempt to overcome their sociocultural humiliation under the Turkish Cypriots by declaring their alliance with Turkey, as its citizens, and assuming a Turkey-centered nationalist discourse. (2006:93)

I argue that religiosity and differing levels of religious practice has become a crucial domain through which these thoughts and feelings are expressed and where 'otherizing the fraternal' is coming into play.

### 5.2.2. Islam and Turkish Cypriots

Turkish Cypriots usually characterize themselves as Western, secular, and progressive. Killoran (1998b), in her article about the cultural controls over women's gender identity in Northern Cyprus, talks about 'bad Muslims' as a normative Muslim identity in Cyprus, which is referring to a non-practicing, secular Muslim. Therefore, a 'good Muslim' is, in a sense, a bad Cypriot. She says that for most Turkish Cypriots, the term good Muslims "usually referred to the stereotypical image of what they would label the 'backward, very religious, uneducated, dirty' Anatolian Turkish settlers or sometimes the Turkish soldiers" (1998:196).

Thus, Islamic practices and religiosity is associated with the culture of Turkey by many Turkish Cypriots, and religion is used for the process of demarcation between the two groups. When Turkish Cypriots consider themselves as non-religious or 'bad' Muslims, the settlers' religiosity is a reference point to evaluate their own beliefs. It is a fact that Cypriots sometimes make jokes and even seem to be proud that they are far from being religious, and that they don't practice religion in their daily conversations. But, at the same time, many Turkish Cypriots do consider themselves as true believers, although they do not perform the formal religious practices (such as attending mosques, five-time prayers, fasting) in their daily lives. According to the World Values Survey 2006, "two-thirds of the Turkish Cypriot identify themselves as religious individuals, and the overwhelming majority view religion and God as important in their lives" (Yeşilada 2009:54). Turkish Cypriots do not see the practices as essential to the Muslim identity; rather they believe

that their belief in God is strong enough that makes them good Muslims. It should also be added that Islam is deeply embedded in their customs, cultural and linguistic practices, that it is hard to escape from it even for the openly non-religious Cypriots. Moreover, the context of a sacred space creates a different dynamic in which these religious identities and practices are expressed, negotiated, questioned, and challenged. But, before explaining the situation at the Hz. Ömer Tekke, I would like to provide a brief overview about the secularization history of Turkish Cypriots.

### **5.2.3. Secularization of Turkish Cypriots**

“I do have religious belief, but my worship is my belief. The greatest worship is to believe.”

A Turkish Cypriot man in his 50s [2012]

Islam's historical decline in Cyprus is a consequence of many factors. Bryant discusses the whole process of how Muslims and Christians in the island were transformed into Turks and Greeks during the British rule (2004). The religious estrangement was furthered by the gradual disintegration and impoverishment of Islamic institutions that were previously connecting the Muslim community. The milestones were the abolishment of the Mufti's office in 1928 and the appointment of a *Fetva Emini* subordinate to the *Evkaf* (Pious Foundations), which became a government department, directly under the power of the

governor. The office of the Kadi<sup>46</sup> was also eliminated in 1927. The British gradually took control over all traditional structures of authority, and Muslims lost their basic communal organization. This combines with the secularization and nationalization of education, and the impact of Kemalism and Turkish nationalism in the island.

Cypriots embraced the ideology of Turkish nationalism, secularism, modernization and westernization that took place in Turkey during the early years of the Republic, as they confronted with intensifying Greek nationalist propaganda for *Enosis*. It is pointed out in the literature many times that Turkish Cypriots voluntarily and enthusiastically adopted the revolutionary reforms which were compulsory in Turkey, such as the introduction of the Latin alphabet, ban on religious dress in public places, and changes in family law (Beckingham 1957b, Nevzat & Hatay 2009, Killoran 1998b, Kızılyürek 1989, Volkan 1979:74). Serious decline in religious education and religious services has emerged irreversibly.

According to a report by a Turkish commission in 1949, there were around 300 mosques (Atalay 2003:150) in Cyprus and only very few imams were working in these mosques. Talip Atalay, the current head of the Religious Affairs Department of TRNC, told me in our conversation that there are currently 264 mosques. Imams and preachers are requested from Turkey, and in fact the only Turkish Cypriot imam I met was Şakir Alemdar, the Imam of the Hala Sultan Tekke and the representative of the Grand Mufti of Cyprus. Alemdar blamed the early Turkish Cypriot leadership for following the Kemalist ideology and for rejecting their own cultural values that were inherited from the Ottoman Empire.

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<sup>46</sup> Judge. This Ottoman official also had local administrative duties.



He states that “there were 11 madrasa in this small island, we came down to begging Imams and religious wisdom from Turkey” (personal communication, 2012).

When nationalist movement came into prominence, Islam lost its power for connecting the Turkish population of the island. I would like to emphasize two points here. First one is that although it is true that Islam and religious identity never regained its prominence in Cyprus, Killoran has made a remarkable point regarding the “religionalization” of nationalism. She says

Turkey and things Turkish became a kind of religion of Turkish Cypriots. In summary, the period from the British annexation of Cyprus (1914) until the war in 1974, and the subsequent separation of Greek and Turkish Cypriots into two separate populations, can be characterized as pro-Western, anti-Islamic, secular, and ‘religiously Turkish.’ (1998b:187)

She basically refers to Carol Delaney’s argument regarding nationalism in Turkey:

The symbols and structures of Islam persisted, but with a this-worldly orientation... there has been a symbolic transfer from the realm of God, not only to earth but specifically to the nation of Turkey; not because secularism has been empowered, but because nationalism has become the secular religion of the sacred state. (1991: 284-285)

Obviously, the construction of the nationalist identity has gone through a different historical process in Cyprus and it can’t be discussed freely from the relations with the Greek Cypriot community, this is outside of my concern here. But it can be credibly said that one kind of affiliation and self-identification replaced the other without completely excluding the former, and Turkish nationalism has become the major point of reference to hold the Turkish community together against Greek Cypriots since the British period. As

Nevzat and Hatay claim, “Indeed, religious references, symbols and buildings have been used more as a means of sanctifying the ‘national’ struggle” (2009:925).

Some Turkish Cypriots openly told me that they don’t go to mosques very frequently and that they are relatively secular. The quote exemplifies this point with some references to historical aspect of it:

I am asking my grandfather, my aunt; how were religious practices of people in the past? They said going to mosque was not very often, but it was regular. They were going to mosque for eid prayers; then they were eating fried liver; that was the custom. But now neither of these customs exists. There was a structure in the past, and the British destroyed it in 1940s-50s. They took the control of Evkaf, and closed down the religious institutions. Then comes the period of CHP (Republican People’s Party), when nationalism prevailed. Everything was copied from Turkey... Religion declined in this society. But it actually keeps the societies together. [A Turkish Cypriot officer working at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in his late 40s, 2012]

My second point is that there are many discussions about Turkey’s attempts to Islamize Northern Cyprus, such as through education (i.e. through theological schools [imam hatips], Quran classes), or changes in landscape (constructing new mosques). Although as Bryant and Yakinthou claim, it is a fact that “AKP has supported the building of mosques and religious education in ways that previous Turkish governments had not. Until 2002, there had been nine new mosques constructed in north Cyprus, while since 2002 twenty-nine new mosques have been constructed” (2012:25), it is still questionable whether Islamization or Sunnification of Northern Cyprus has really been happening or not. But, it can be said that Turkish settlers didn’t pioneer a significant change in terms of religion in Cyprus. Talip Atalay argues that Turkish settlers, who had strong religious beliefs before migrating to Cyprus, have become less religious over time. He gives the

example of immigrants from Trabzon-Çaykara who settled in Kaplıca village, who had more than 20 Quran reciters before they arrived in Cyprus (2003:131). Some Turkish settlers are assimilated into the local culture, and young generations are less inclined to practice religion and to have strong religious attachments.

However, in any case, transformation of the landscape and familiar spaces creates reaction among Turkish Cypriots. Navaro Yashin states that, “When speaking about the settlers, Turkish Cypriots most often mention space. They associate the arrival of the settlers, as well as their presence, with the radical spatial transformation of the places most familiar to them, with being entrapped and enclosed in a slice of territory, especially after the partition of the island between north and south” (2006:87). Turkey’s intervention on the landscape, through the change of village names, building new mosques or making mosques more visible by adding minarets, imposition of barricades and wires that are heavily guarded by the soldiers is part of the process, is regarded as “Turkification” or “Islamization” of the landscape.

Another striking point is noted by the theologian and Byzantinologist Andreas Foulis regarding the newly built mosques in the North:

Before 1974, the architecture type of the mosques, it was pure Cypriot. And you couldn't find... It was Cypriot. It was based in Cyprus architecture. After 1974, when the mosques in the North are built from this Arab organization, from Saudi Arabia I think... You see these white mosques with many domes... This is important. It's not Cypriot. I mean these new mosques, the white ones, the big ones are not Cypriot. They are architecturally belonging to Saudi Arabia or to Turkey, I don't know. [June 3, 2012]

Hz. Ömer Tekke is one of the places, in which this tension stands out. Turkish Cypriots express their concerns about this issue through their critiques of the ways in which this sacred place is organized and run. I will provide two examples specifically on this issue.

#### 5.2.4. Hz Ömer Tekke

As I explained in the previous parts, Hz. Ömer Tekke is located next to the sea-shore, in the village of Ayios Epiktitos/Çatalköy, east of Kyrenia.<sup>47</sup> The site is supposed to contain the tombs of seven Muslim warriors. During my fieldwork, the Tekke was functioning from 9 am to 4 pm daily, and there were mainly two people working in it, a Turkish Imam and a Turkish Cypriot keeper/official. This is rather interesting, since normally *tekkes* do not have imams. The imam and the keeper apparently worked rotating shifts, as I never saw them at the same time at the Tekke.

In order to explain my point regarding Turkish Cypriots' complaints, I would like to analyze a newspaper article written by a Turkish Cypriot. The writer, İpek Halim, published the article in the *Kıbrıs Star* newspaper in 2007, with the title 'Hz. Ömer Tekke and the list

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<sup>47</sup> I dedicate this part to Doğan Harman, owner of the Kıbrıslı newspaper, who passed away in 2011, shortly after I met him in the Tekke, when he generously shared his own version of the place and explained me the significance of its deep spirituality for Cypriots. He promised me an interview, which we could never accomplish. This part is for his love of and dedication to this place.

of impossibles' (*Hz. Ömer Tekkesi ve olmazlar listesi*). I also conducted a two-hour interview with her. In the article, İpek criticizes the functioning and organization of the Tekke. She mentions her own childhood memories about the place, and how people were free to do whatever they wanted. For her, there weren't any prohibitions or obligations in the past, unlike the present. She complains basically about five issues:

1. How people dress (covering head, removing shoes etc.)
2. How people act, such as lighting candles, incense, offering food to other people etc.
3. How the place is run, like a museum with strict opening and closure times, but at the same time like a mosque, since there is the call for prayer, which did not exist before.
4. How the place is now organized differently: that people were bringing green fabrics before,<sup>48</sup> which is not allowed anymore; that there is a new practice of selling religious books and Quran next to the Tekke; and she does not herself remember, but has heard that the graves were transferred from their former places in the cave to the inside of the building.
5. How the surrounding landscape has been changed over time through increasing settlement in the area, which destroys the natural environment.

These are more or less the common points made by other Turkish Cypriots. Most strikingly, İpek told me that she and other Turkish Cypriots feel that their understanding of

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<sup>48</sup> This is mostly the practice of Alevi/Bektashi communities, but does not necessarily connote to the Turkish Cypriots' Alevi identities. Nazim Beratlı's work on the background of Turkish Cypriots argues that the post-1571 settlers arrived in the island from Anatolia had mixed religious affiliations, including Alevi, Bektashi, Mevlevi, and Naqshbandi (2008). However, the Alevi identity of Turkish Cypriots is still a controversial topic. I didn't meet a Turkish Cypriot who called her/himself an Alevi.

religion has been rejected there. She resists the current ‘oppressive’ practices in the Tekke and sarcastically asks, “Then, what happened to the candles we lit? So, they were all wasted? Or did I become a Christian? Or why is a religious practice that belongs to any religion bad? Isn’t it that Islam is a belief system that recognizes and embraces all religions?” (2007). I think that this sentence of her sounds very meaningful, in a sense representing the relations between Turkey and Northern Cyprus: “now it feels as if there is an eye watching us; the uneasiness of ‘will-I-do-something-wrong’ feeling prevails” (personal communication, 2011).

İpek and her family were displaced from Limassol, in Southern Cyprus. She told me how these kinds of religious sites have become places of consolation, melancholy, and peace for many Cypriots who were trying to relieve the pains of war and longing for home. Moreover, it was a place for picnics and entertainment when she was a child, around the 1980s. In fact, I did see many Turkish Cypriots who come to this place not just for praying, but also for relaxing. Some people were picnicking next to the sea, and some were fishing in front of the Tekke.

Turkish Cypriots are still lighting candles and incense, but definitely outside of the Tekke, either on the windows of the building, or in the cave under the Tekke (which is actually a sacred place for Greek Cypriots, which they call Agioi Saranda) and on the two graves outside of the Tekke, which we don’t know whom they belong to, though there are stories about these graves as well. I witnessed many instances in which women who were entering the Tekke without covering their heads or without “proper” dressing, were warned by the Imam or the keeper. Some Turkish settlers or visitors from Turkey are also critical of Turkish Cypriots’ beliefs and practices: “*Gavurla otura otura gavur olmuşlar*”

[They [Turkish Cypriots] have become infidel/non-Muslim through living with infidels [Greek Cypriots]].

The imams from Turkey also define Turkish Cypriots' religious beliefs as 'weak' and their practices as 'superstitious.' I heard this from many of them. Atalay mentions about a report of Department of Religious Affairs in 1990 claiming that Turkish Cypriots are ignorant about many religious practices (such as ablution, Quran verses and sura) and that they are not feasting and attending mosques except for during the feasts and holy days (2003:131-132).

İpek didn't say openly that all the changes that have occurred at the Tekke have been imposed directly by Turks or Turkey, but it was easy to feel the implicit, underlying reference to Turks and Turkey, which could be understood from her comparison of the two communities in terms of their religious beliefs. To my question regarding the Turkish Cypriots' approaches to Islam, she said "*WE* are *MORE* easygoing and tolerant about religion. We don't have strict rules" (personal communication, 2011). She explained this differentiation by the impact of the shared life with Greek Cypriots, ethnic conflict and the forced migration that resulted in the "decrease of their religious beliefs." However, there were other people who openly criticized Turks for their intervention in their religious places and practices. One old Cypriot woman told me that Turks laid down the graves in a wrong way, because people are normally supposed to pray next to the feet of the dead, not next to their heads. She said "look, this is obviously the work of Turks."

In conclusion, Turkish Cypriots and Turkish settlers not only compare, negotiate, and challenge each others' and their own religious identities and practices at the Tekke, but also in effect question their compulsory coexistence and their constructed "brotherhood" in

this small island. Many Turkish Cypriots are critical of Turkey's assimilative policies implemented through various media (education, army, language, demography), but usually make political remarks in subtle ways that are embedded in everyday conversations about ordinary issues –apparently irrelevant and small as 'how the dead are positioned in a tomb.' Hz. Ömer Tekke appears to be a small reflection of the political controversy between Turkey and Northern Cyprus.

### 5.3. TIME AND THE DEAD

The dead are more than silent members of the communities in Cyprus; rather they are rendered active participants of the negotiation and tension over the island (cf. Verdery 1999, Cassia 2005). Robert Pogue Harrison, in his brilliant book *the Dominion of the Dead* remarks, "places are not only founded but also appropriated by burial of the dead... The surest way to take possession of a place and secure it as one's own is to bury one's dead in it" (2003: 24).

With the opening of the partition line in 2003, Cypriots –especially Greek Cypriots– rushed to the other side to visit their villages. Lisa Dikomitis talks about "strange pilgrims," namely Greek Cypriots who make regular journeys to the lost paradise: "Their return visits follow the same pattern, stopping at the same places time and again: the village fountain, their own house, their fields, the local religious sites. Fixity and repetition are the course characteristics of ritual" (2005:11). These journeys usually included, especially at the



beginning of the crossings, the efforts to restore the sacredness of the places, both physically and spiritually. They cleaned their destroyed churches and cemeteries, venerated the icons, blessed the places, and lit candles. In the North, Christian cemeteries were mostly vandalized and left to the mercy of nature and time. The graves are usually invisible, because of the dense layer of grass. They are broken and scattered around. In the South, it is not possible to see many Muslim cemeteries; the vandalized ones were razed to the ground. The rest are usually in a neglected situation, but not broken as in the case in the North.

Both Greek and Turkish Cypriots expressed the sorrow they have for the vandalization of their relatives' graves. Their pain is not only for being deprived of the chance to visit their cemeteries, but also for the loss of the connection with land. Going back to Harrison's quote, cemeteries and buried deads are the most significant markers of the presence of a community in a land. I agree with Dikomitis' point that "the local cemetery can be perceived as an extension of the house" (2012:107). It is most likely that the inability to recognize the graves of their ancestors put even more emphasis on the role of defined places of worship, such as churches with tombs. Memorialization of one's family and ancestors is a major component of individual and kin forms of memory.

In a previous section on the contestation over the ownership of the Apostolos Andreas Monastery, I have discussed the selection of a layer in the chronological history of a place that should be remembered, and that would prove the original owners of the land. National past desires its own inscription on the land that would prove and legitimize its existence. Benedict Anderson addresses the paradox of "the objective modernity of nations to the historian's eye vs. their subjective antiquity in the eyes of nationalists (2006:5). The

idea of infinite and omnitemporal nation is of paramount importance in nationalist ideologies. The graves of the ancestors mark the proprietary rights over the land, although there are cultures that do not consider proprietary claims and the claims of belonging equal (Harrison 2003:24-25).

I also noted that, in the case of the Monastery, the mode of cultural appropriation is not totally exclusionary. Rather than seeking expropriation, namely an exclusive ownership of the site (Scarre & Coningham 2013: 3) and a complete absence of the Other, it is more of a claim for the acknowledgement of precedence: Who came first matters in a nation's linear conception of historical time. I argue that, in the Northern Cyprus in general, there is no organized, deliberate effort to clean the Greek presence and heritage from the landscape. This was rather contradictory to me at the beginning of my research.

### **5.3.1. Ruins and Their Shadows**

During my preliminary research in Cyprus, I was perplexed by a specific question regarding the in/visibility of destructed places in both sides of the island. While in the Northern part, Turkish Cypriots continue living alongside ruined Christian religious sites, most of the destroyed Muslim sites have been completely obscured in the Southern part. If the Greek Cypriot government anticipates the reunification of the island and has a rapprochement policy of peaceful coexistence, why were the remnants of the Muslim community totally erased from surface? Why does the Turkish Cypriots continue to live with the material

culture and memorialized dead of the other community, even though the Turkish Cypriots are usually seen as wanting a total break from the past?

I argue that all traces of the erasure were removed in the Southern part to get rid of the evidences associated with the ethnic clash between the two communities, thus to forget what was done to Turkish Cypriots and to their properties at the time. The recalling is performed only for the Northern land –for the invaded part of the island. As for the Northern part, the remnants of the Other is protected, both for denoting to the expulsion of the Other from the land and for reminding the very existence of clash between the two communities.

However, I should note the crucial point that the governments might not have taken these strategic decisions openly, and contradictory examples that would not fit my argument might be found. I acknowledge the fact that sometimes these practices are simply related to economic situations. However, the policies and strategies regarding the treatment of post-conflict landscape, whether deliberately or not, reflect the official approaches to collective remembering and forgetting.

### 5.3.2. Time and nation

Rabia: How do you feel about Greek Cypriots now?

Y. M.: Our lung turned black.

[78 year old Turkish Cypriot man from the village Sahinler (Massari in Greek). In Turkish, lung is white and it could turn black with pain, sorrow. He refers to the irreversible broken relations with Greek Cypriots]

The different approaches and expectations of Greek and Turkish Cypriots to the past, memory, and time is also evident in their differing conceptualizations of missing people. Since 1981, the UN-sponsored Committee on Missing Persons, consisting of a Greek Cypriot, a Turkish Cypriot and a member appointed by UN Secretary-General, has been carrying out a project on the exhumation, identification and return of remains of missing persons, which also includes the determination of the fate of the dead people. According to Cassia,

Turkish Cypriots lost a considerable number of civilians between 1963-64 and in 1974. By contrast, the Greek Cypriots claim their Missing date from the 1974 Turkish invasion. The Turkish Cypriots therefore lost their people over an 11-year period with two intense periods, whereas the Greek Cypriots lost the majority of their missing in a single short period, a traumatic couple of months. This was bound to affect the perception of their losses. Propaganda leaflets from both sides gave the following figures for missing persons. Turkish Cypriots, 803, and Greek Cypriots, 1619 persons. (2005:22-23).

There is disagreement of Greek and Turkish Cypriots on several other issues concerning the missing people and the mission of the Committee (Cassia 2005). Most important of all, Turkish Cypriots consider missing people as dead (*kayıplar*) (Cassia 2005:22) and martyrs in the birth of a state (Bryant 2004:243), namely actors of a past that has already gone, and therefore have no interest in their fate. Greek Cypriots, however, consider the fate of the missing as still unknown (*agnooumeni*) (Cassia 2005:22), and in fact knowable (Bryant 2004:243), something which should be salvaged from the darkness of uncertainty. In some instances, the dead are preferred to be left where they were found. Monuments were built over them, since they are the martyrs of the ethnic conflict; but in others, they are taken to their native village and properly reburied, where it is assumed that they will find peace. Thus, the bones of the missing people and stories concerning them keep the memories of the war alive for Greek Cypriots.

When I compare Turkish and Greek Cypriots' relations with the past and the land remained in the other part, it is clear that the past and the life with Greek Cypriots is a closed chapter for Turkish Cypriots. Whereas Greek Cypriots have centered their identities on the trauma of partition, and have been waiting for the liberation of the occupied land, which is suffering at the hands of expansionist Turks. The North is a collectively lost ancestral homeland; this idea locates Greek Cypriots at a suspending refugee status. The reference to past is omnipresent in all narratives related to future. There is an apocalyptic sense of time and history, and a constant expectation of 'return': return to the homeland, to old times, return of the missing people. The following quote is from my interview with the Bishop of Morphou. When he was talking about the utilization of churches as museums in the North, he expressed his apocalyptic expectation for a solution:

Now, when there is no solution for Cyprus problem, even making churches museums are enough. Because this way, they continue to be churches. They are not used for religious purposes, but at least the walls will remain churches. I prefer that it [Turkish administration] does not restore them. There will be a big war starting from Syria. The politicians, world leaders treated people so badly, the God will punish them, I am sure of this. I am just waiting now, there is nothing to do. This is an identity issue, and God will give a solution. The solution for all these problems will come from God. What is going to be happened to churches? I am relieved, doesn't matter, because God will solve them. [June 6, 2012]

Turkish Cypriots seem to have a rather linear conceptualization, with relatively less reference to past, only to recall the suffering they experienced. However, their relation with future is more complicated and seems dark, due to the deeply rooted, institutionalized ambiguity for almost a half century.

One of the striking differences I observed in the interviews with Greek and Turkish Cypriots is that: Greek Cypriots feel compelled to give specific names when they talk about Turkish Cypriots, I guess, to prove how their friendships were close enough that they remember the names. Moreover, embodied persons with their specific names and personalities are proof of the existence of people who had good relations with Greek Cypriots. Whereas Turkish Cypriots, even if they talk positively about them, usually mentioned Greek Cypriots more like a blurry, disembodied crowd –people without face and without specific names. I don't claim that Turkish Cypriots forgot their Greek Cypriot neighbors and friends' names, but rather prefer not to revive and embody them, and probably prefer to place them in a more 'inefficient' position in their lives. People are

willing to only recall names of those who are significant to us or who we want them to be significant in our lives.

There is another impression I got from my interviews with the Cypriots. That is, in a similar manner, to my questions regarding their hometowns, Greek Cypriots told me about their villages that remained in the North, more than Turkish Cypriots did. Turkish Cypriots said that they were originally from the South if I kept asking questions about their family background. It seemed to be a less important detail for Turkish Cypriots, compared to the meaning Greek Cypriots attribute to their connection with the land in the North. I argue that these two points, which are not necessarily consciously practiced by Cypriots, prove their approaches to the past and to their relations with the Other community.

## **6.0 CONCLUSION: PERFORMING SOCIAL FORGETTING**

### **6.1. SOME THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

An anecdote from a conference organized in the Buffer Zone paved a way for me to think about forgetting in Cyprus. One of the panelists at the conference made a presentation on missing persons. She ended her talk with a comment on the initiatives for detection and exhumation of missing people. She said that these attempts would “reawaken” the pains of people; thus might be harmful instead of helpful. Regardless of her good intentions, it was clear that she didn’t really talk to the Cypriot people. One audience reacted her comment saying that her argument would be considered ‘an insult’ to Cypriots. It is a fact that Cypriots have been living with the pains of war everyday for more than a half-century now. This is both a social and personal issue: It is already learned from other experiences in the world that societies have to face their troubled past. On the personal level, many Cypriots who lost their relatives during the war (both in terms of their death and their disappearance) have been living with the memories of their loved ones, without even having graves of them to visit. This is obviously not a pain that has been slept through –and which ought not to be reawakened -, but a very vivid, present one.



Memory in Cyprus is carefully fabricated and cultivated, since controlling how the past is remembered means controlling the present and future. The narratives of ethnic conflict and the life before division are selectively re-constructed, either to thwart the threat of losing an essential part of an identity, to ensure rupture from an undesired past or to attach to a lost, nostalgic past. Societies in Cyprus remember and forget differently; their interests, therefore memories, conflict. However, Greek and Turkish Cypriots resemble each other in terms of challenging and undermining the official narratives and slogans in their everyday lives and practices. They resist, negotiate, and accommodate the policies of their governments in various ways that come to surface in details of daily lives. The dissertation focused and investigated how sacred sites work as sites of memory and memorialization in post-conflict landscape of the island. Specifically, it provided earlier (pre-1974) and current images of the sites by the local people, and discussed the interactions between official manipulation and local embracement of the site.

It appears that the ongoing political impasse and traces of ethnic conflict render the traumatic experiences unforgettable in Cyprus. There are explicit, implicit, direct and indirect attempts for forgetting –or making people forget- the past and the Other, performed and exercised by both people and the state authorities. For individuals, forgetting might be an imperative. Remembering everything is neither possible, nor desirable. The function of forgetting might be the desire for letting go of the past, healing wounds, dealing with the traumatic experiences and memories of the past, getting along with new circumstances, and creating a new future.

As for collectivities and societies, forgetting and creating absences is a crucial part of

reconstruction and reassessment of social meanings and relations. This is especially crucial if a society faces political rupture and transition to a new phase. Societies are motivated to remember the past glories, forget the failures, and have the best images of the past on which present and future are founded. Erasure and transformation might take place within various contexts, including archives, monuments, commemorative practices. The past, even if it is not connected completely logically to the subsequent flow of time and its circumstances, but still makes sense in its own world, is always expected to serve the present and future. Other aspects of the past are forgotten because they appear irrelevant, unfamiliar, useless, hard to grasp or too difficult to contend with. Memories, whether expressed in terms of official history or personal accounts, tend to favor the narratives beneficial to present circumstances.

In that respect, this dissertation does not consider forgetting as necessarily a negative process. Forgetting might serve objectives, and produce 'positive' outcomes –from the perspective of the agency. The positive and negative characteristics are attributed by the agencies, so it is important to consider what is positive and what is negative for who. It should not be disregarded that one positive outcome might be proportionally a negative outcome for the other group. Therefore, forgetting can create both positive and negative outcomes. Forgetting could be negative, if it does not serve any purpose, means loss to its agent, or mischaracterizes one's situation, identities or relations.

Therefore, both individually and collectively, people may engage in processes of selective editing of the past, discarding and keeping particular events and knowledge to deal with traumas, painful memories and current dilemmas. In this sense, forgetting is

different from remembering both in the ways it is practiced and in the outcomes it produces. But as much as remembering, people can forget deliberately, actively and selectively. The active practice of forgetting is directly influenced by the positive outcome that is intended to be produced. There is a dynamic and interactive relation between each other.

When forgetting is a desirable social goal and positive process for some social actors, a certain body of knowledge from the past regarding the former shared life and subsequent ethnic conflict might be produced by deliberately obscuring material evidence of what the other community wishes to remember. Example can be seen in the obliteration or constructed ignorance of physical remnants of an unwanted past, such as Muslim cemeteries in the Southern Greek region and Christian churches in the Northern Turkish area, as discussed extensively in the dissertation. Moreover, their appropriation into a reconceptualized landscape, such as museumification of a Greek church or Christianization of a Turkish mosque, create new symbolic geography used for legitimization of current state policies.

As a conceptual tool, forgetting in this dissertation does not necessarily mean lack of knowledge or inability to recall, but letting go of a memory –mostly a painful one-, de-emphasizing or silencing it. In some circumstances, it could mean giving up on memories that do not serve any interests, objectives, needs or that do not provide any hope for future. In this dissertation, the focus is mostly on the function or outcome of the memories, not the quality of the memory (namely whether it is positive or negative) or the triggering factors for the desire to forget. My understanding of the situation in Cyprus let me conclude that

letting go of a bad memory is not happening through forgiving in Cyprus, which is normally the 'expected' reason or mechanism for forgetting. As mentioned above, wounds are still there for most people, apparently, but it is preferred that they be covered, or that the pretense that they are not existing.

Connected to this argument, it could be discussed that the perspectives of the individuals and groups may produce very different memories that conflict and contradict with each other. The local and private memories that are shaped in everyday contexts produce divergence, and both confirming and contradicting the hegemonic memory making practices and narratives of the politicians. Individuals can and do create and manage their stories in their own ways, and are not simply manipulated by the top-down narratives that are mostly exclusively constructed along ethnic/religious lines. The interaction of collective memories with individual recollections is not susceptible to easy manipulation.

As for understanding the dynamics of social forgetting and remembering, this dissertation emphasized the great complexity of mnemonic performances, which are shaped and determined by a set of factors related to pasts, the present and the future. The processes of remembering and forgetting can't be separated and differentiated easily. Memory is produced under erasure; recalling involves forgetting. This dissertation specifically paid attention to the power of agency over memories, imagined constructions of the pasts and narratives.

## **6.2. FORGETTING AND REMEMBERING THE PAST THROUGH RE-IMAGINING THE LANDSCAPE**

For Greek Cypriots forgetting means letting go of good and bad memories in order to highlight a lost past. The Greek part supports a vision of peace in a unified Cyprus and promotes a strong discourse of nostalgia and attachment to past. There is an obligation to remember Turkey's invasion of Northern Cyprus and refugees' experiences of displacement. Forgetting would mean recognizing the existence of the Turkish state, giving up the rights over the land, and disrespect to those who suffered from invasion. The presence of the absent Other is imagined in the South.

However, for Turkish Cypriots forgetting means longing for a lost future. The Turkish part imposes a policy of erasing the past in order to create a new future – a future that should be constructed over the tragedies and lessons of the past, not to repeat or go back to it, and to them. Citizens are expected to recall the suffering they experienced before the division of the island. Formal and symbolic memory spaces, such as modern memorials and museums, provoke feelings of unrest and vengeance against the Other.

The reminders of the Other's presence on the land are mainly the properties and the religious sites belong to the other community. In the North, various strategies are employed (such as destruction and confiscation of properties, and the distribution of Greek Cypriot properties to Turkish settlers) to prevent the return of their former owners. In the Southern part, the properties abandoned by Turkish Cypriots prior to and in 1974 "were placed under the 'Custodianship' of the Ministry of Interior and distributed to individuals

and professionals on a rental basis, for the purpose of preserving the rights of the original Turkish-Cypriot owners to the title deeds. The prolonged application of this 'temporary' regime however has had adverse effects on the sense of stability for the users of these properties, who have claimed their right to a more permanent arrangement over time" (Demetriou 2012: 7).

I have discussed three sites (Hala Sultan Tekke in the South, Saint Barnabas and Saint Mamas Monasteries in the North), which are in the liminal status of being museums and religious sites. The conversion of religious spaces into museums and of religious objects into museum artifacts usually aims at their desacralization, secularization, and neutralization, thus abstracting them from their own functions and histories. Museumification, conversion of the Other's symbolic site into a museum, presents a political statement of the demonstration of power, and desire to control meanings and memories attached to them. It prevents the Other from using their own space for its original purposes. Yet people contest and resist the secularizing practice of museums, and continue to claim the right to practice religion inside the places by protesting the entrance fees, performing religious activities inside and outside of the sites etc.

In the North, the political transformations of the landscape, specifically its symbolic and material Turkification and Islamization, have been crucial in order to legitimize, express and maintain the ideology of the prevailing social and political system. The controversy over the ownership of Apostolos Andreas Monastery took place amidst other debates over the restoration of the Monastery. It was argued that the site originally belonged to an historical Islamic figure; however, this claim didn't find much support among Turkish Cypriots and faded away. In Kırklar Tekke, since the restoration of the site

in 2007-8 there have been obvious attempts at Islamizing that exclude any Christian elements from the site, and which are prompted and supported by the Turkish administration. The inhabitants of the neighborhood, Turkish Cypriots, regard the past mixed practices as part of local culture (both of Cypriotness and of village identity) and they embrace and praise these practices in the face of the conservative Islam of settlers from Turkey.

The past is highly fractured and strategically reassembled in Cyprus. The memories and identities of Greek and Cypriots have been transforming since the two communities fell apart in 1974. The unresolved Cyprus problem has caused frustration among both Greek and Turkish Cypriots regarding the policies of their states. The continuing presence of Turkey in the island, the opening of checkpoints in 2003, the membership of the Republic of Cyprus in the European Union in 2004, the rejection of Annan plan by the Greek community, the boom in lawsuits over property and many other factors have affected Cypriots' self-perceptions and their perceptions of the Other.

Both Greek and Turkish Cypriots are haunted by memories of ethnic conflict, but their perceptions of and approaches to the past are unique. Greek Cypriots, at least officially and publicly, center their identities on the trauma of partition and are waiting for the liberation of the occupied land. They see the future through what was supposedly left behind, whereas the past life alongside Greek Cypriots is a closed chapter for Turkish Cypriots, who prefer a (con)federal settlement.

There are still cases in which some Cypriots live IN the past, rather than WITH the past. By keeping in mind the great diversity within the communities and being aware of the trap of essentializing identities, I argue that Greek and Turkish Cypriots mostly seem to

turn their faces towards opposite directions: Turkish Cypriots long for a lost future, and Greek Cypriots long for a lost past.



## **7.0 AFTERWORD: FIELDWORK IN CONTESTED PLACES**

Arriving in Cyprus in 2010, I was already perplexed by the idea of doing research on a hypersensitive political issue in a highly contested land; let alone the fact that I was a citizen of Turkey, whose presence in the island has been defined by many as an occupying force. Nevertheless, on a theoretical and methodological level, I was determined to take a value-neutral stance, avoid getting involved in the politics of the field, and keeping a respectful distance with my informants, for the sake of objectivity. My research was focused on religious spaces shared by Orthodox Christian and Muslim communities, which have become common cultural heritage of the island. Although I was more interested in people's memories and the forgotten or altered dimension of stories of the places, and thus mostly in the "past in the present," I was an anthropologist working with people, whose expectations in exchange for their generous knowledge and insight were real, and an anthropologist working in a field where, as elsewhere, the issues of power were not absent.

In the last year of my field research, in 2012, a Greek Cypriot interviewee requested my help in communicating with the relevant institutions and individuals regarding the restoration of the almost-ruined small church in his former village. He was born in a village near Morphou (Güzelyurt) in Northern Cyprus but was displaced and moved to Southern Cyprus after Turkey's military intervention in 1974. The normative category of cultural heritage assumes the uncontested character of tangible and intangible heritages as traces

of history and symbols of culture. This notion inspired me to take well-intentioned steps towards protecting this small, apparently neutral, religious site. In an age when cultural heritage is increasingly promoted as being of universal value, and the destruction of cultural heritage is criminalized as cultural genocide by the international community, this seemed pretty straightforward and unproblematic. However, I soon realized that the issue at hand was not as simple as it appeared since both current and former local communities asserted claims over the place. Even such an apparently objective attempt to restore a historical place is a highly politically charged action in Cyprus.

I was in touch with a variety of committees, experts, bureaucrats and politicians dealing with cultural heritage issues, an extremely touchy, controversial and troublesome enterprise on the island. There have been hundreds of neglected, ruined, destroyed religious and historical sites; and only limited funds exist for restoring and protecting them. It is obvious that the choice of what to preserve and how to re-present it to the public can actively facilitate and normalize certain ways of seeing the land and the histories attached to it, while impeding and marginalizing others. Labeling material artifacts “cultural heritage” does not easily remove them from emotional and symbolic meaning for people, and these artifacts take on powerful roles for struggles over cultural identity and political power.

Embedding myself into the personal and local accounts of place memories, I recognized that as in many other places, religious sites are powerful symbolic realms around which people (re)shape their identities, memories and cultural belonging. They are also places where local communities and their cultural practices encounter political discourses, state interventions and appropriations, and are where contests over political

power manifest themselves. Also, irrespective of how politically neutral they might appear to be, the process of cultural heritization, and other ways of dealing with the material remains (such as appropriating them as museums) are dynamic and deeply political processes in which certain places are incorporated into the nationalist rhetoric and self-imagining, as normative and substantive components, and others are degraded, excluded. The periodizations of history, based on the national imaginations and implied by specific commemorations, determine the “preferred true” identity of the sites, which in turn sets out to whom the site and the surrounding territory belongs to.

My contention is not only related to preserving the cultural heritage of all communities to promote amicable relations in the current controversial political atmosphere, but also emphasizing the importance of paying attention to the needs and concerns of current local inhabitants. Also, contest over places does not necessarily mean only the claim over territory, but more essentially over the meaning of the places. Cultural heritage and the official meanings imposed on them actively influence the structuring of local identities, practices, memories, utilization and perception of the territory. Any decision on the process of cultural heritization or other place-related policies will inevitably affect or limit access to the place for some—not necessarily physically, even more likely, mentally and morally.

In this specific case, for some Greek Cypriots, restoring the local church is like retrieving their presence in the lost land; whereas current Turkish inhabitants of the village seem to perceive the repair of the church as a threat. One elderly Turkish Cypriot man said to me when I asked his thoughts: “Why would we repair it? Are they coming back?” The church is not a local heritage per se for Turkish Cypriots, in this case, but its

invisibility as a ruined place is still critical. For many other examples in Cyprus, both communities have claim over the heritage, and heritage, as we define it, may often imply negation of the claims of one group or another even if that is not openly intended. Circumstances and timeliness definitely matter. I should note that the mentioned village is located in the territory, which the Annan Plan of the United Nations (2004) had envisioned returning to the Greek side, and this has clearly affected my informant's sensitivity to the issue. Could anthropologists isolate themselves from such local political processes, and where should/might/can they stand in the face of the divergent viewpoints of two communities, which both have claims to rights over the land? Most of the time, we can hardly avoid intervening in local affairs, since we establish intimate relations with our research subjects. This specific case was far too complicated for a foreign, young researcher to have any impact on the process; nevertheless, it may serve as an avenue to think over anthropologists' roles in engaging with the local communities to address problems of place and locality, to provide ethically responsible regimes of support, and a critical assessment of knowledge production. Anthropologists' perspectives on local and wider processes would provide to policy makers and cultural heritage experts a more nuanced and critical understanding of the local needs and constraints, which are not irrelevant to the issue of cultural heritage. Anthropologists should be wary in framing their own political agenda without prioritizing any ethnographic accounts, and by being aware of the potential implications of their stance, while engaging with the local communities, especially in their place-based political struggles.

I will end this small chapter with the most impressive and dramatic words I have heard during my research, which are more expressive than anything else to explain the

power of places for people. A displaced 70-year old Greek Cypriot interviewee, who refused to visit his village after the opening of the checkpoints in 2003, despite his deep longing for it for 40 years, said to me: "What if I go to my village and see that everything in my mind turned only into a dream? Then I would die of the disappearing beauty of my memories, like a moth attracted to fire." He passed away only six months after our interview, without visiting his former village.

## **APPENDIX A**

### **ABBREVIATIONS**

AHDR	Association for Historical Dialogue and Research
AKEL	Progressive Party of Working People
CCEAA	Cyprus Civil Engineers and Architects Association
ECHR	European Court of Human Rights
ELAM	The National Popular Front
EOKA	National Organization of Cypriot Fighters
EU	European Union
ICCROM	International Center for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property
ICOMOS	The International Council on Monuments and Sites
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
NGO	Non-governmental Organizations
OIC	Organization of the Islamic Conference
PIO	Press and Information Office (Republic of Cyprus)
RoC	Republic of Cyprus

TMT	Turkish Resistance Organization
TRNC	Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDP-PFF	United Nations Development Programme, Partnership for the Future
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFICYP	United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

## APPENDIX B

### GLOSSARY

Αγιασμός ο (Ayiasmos)	Spring. Ayazma in Turkish.
Άγιος/αγία (Ayios, ayia)	Saint, sacred
Απόστολος ο (Apostolos)	Disciple of Jesus
Bayram	Religious feast
Cami	Mosque
Εκκλησία η (Ekklesia)	Church
Ένωσις (Enosis)	Union with Greece
Hoca	Religious master
Imam	Prayer leader in mosques
Imaret	Soup-kitchen as part of vakıf in the Ottoman Empire
Masjid	Small mosques or a place for prayer, which does not have a specific architecture.
Mevlid, mawlid	Observance of the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad
Mihrap	Niche in a mosque indicating the qibla, the direction of Mecca



Namaz	Prayer performed by Muslims five times daily
Minbar	Pulpit
Πανηγύρι το (Paniyiri)	Fairs, festivals. Panayır in Turkish.
Sahabe	The companions of the Prophet Muhammad
Taksim	Partition
Tarikat	Islamic religious order
Tekke	Local headquarters of Sufi orders
Vakıf (plural Evkaf)	Muslim endowments
Zaviyye	Dervish convents
Ziyaret	Visits to the graves and shrines of saints, and martyrs. It is used in Greek to refer to Muslim religious sites in Cyprus.

## **APPENDIX C**

### **FIGURES**

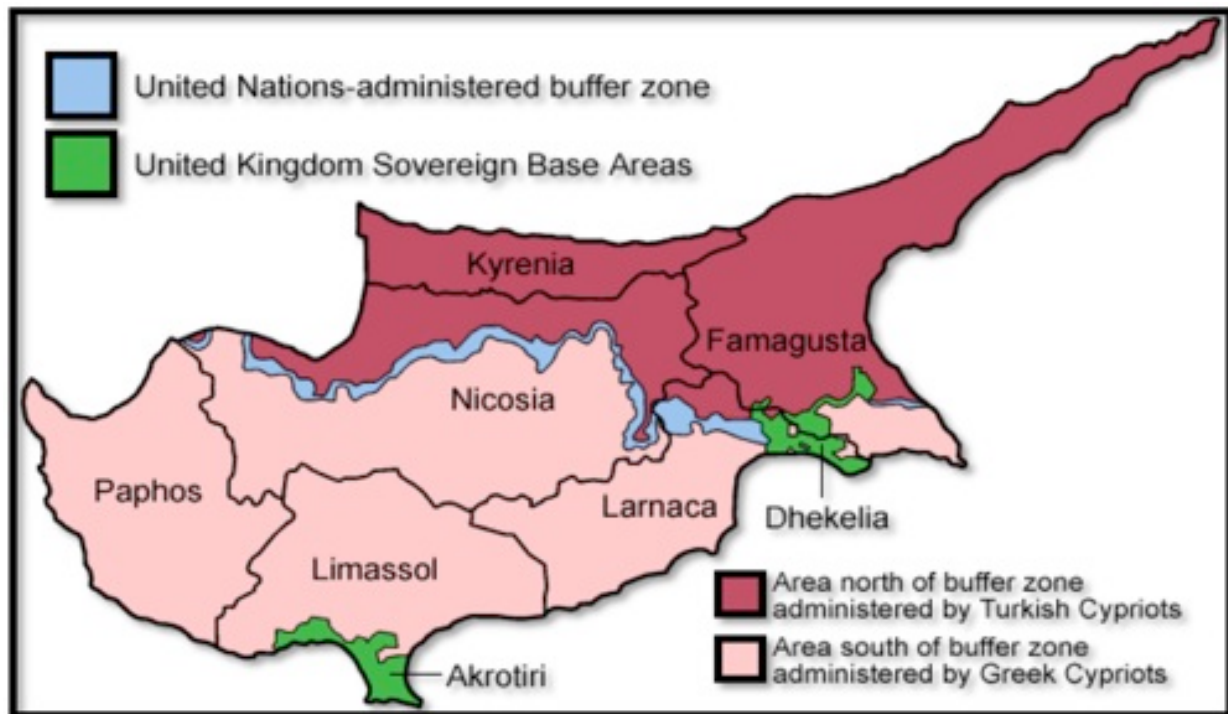


Figure 1: Map of Cyprus

Source: [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Cyprus\\_districts\\_named.png](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Cyprus_districts_named.png)

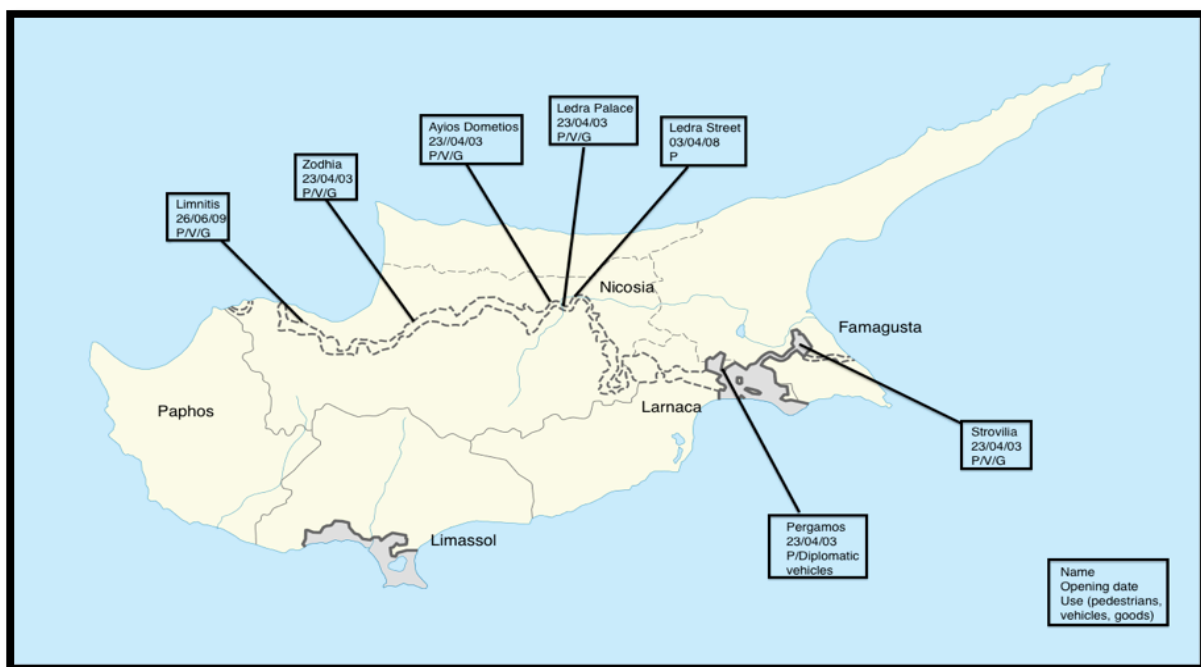


Figure 2: Checkpoints. Locations are approximate.

Base map source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Cyprus\\_location\\_map.svg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Cyprus_location_map.svg)

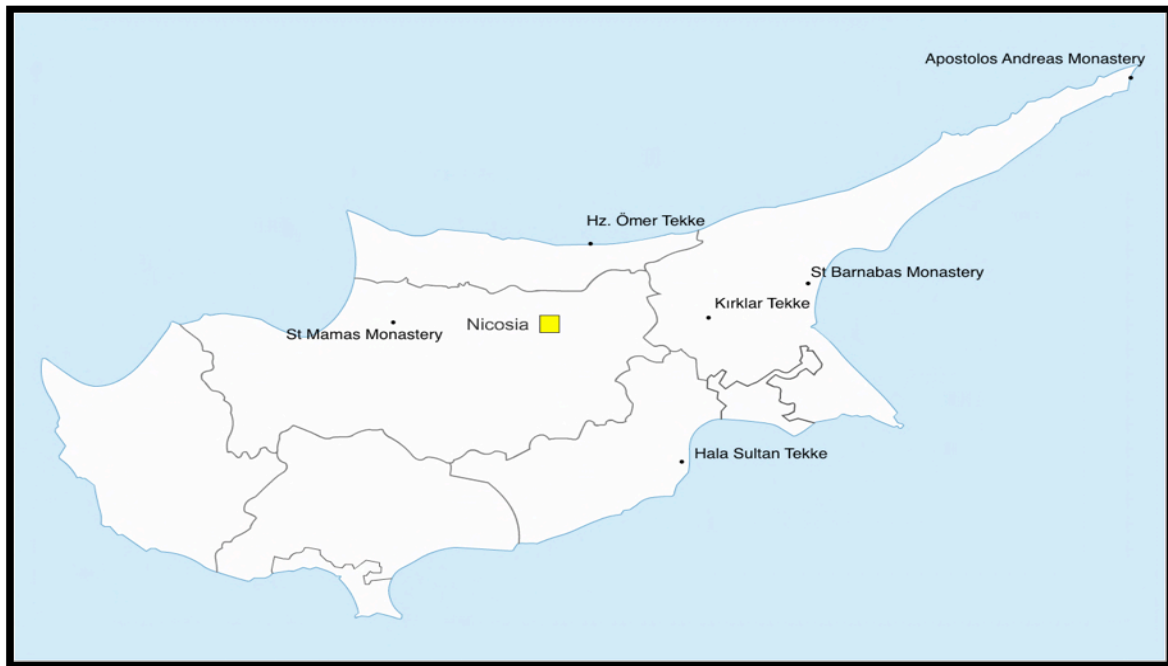


Figure 3: Main field sites (locations are approximate)  
Base-map source: <http://cmap.comersis.com/index.php>



Figure 4: The back cover of an elementary school notebook. The slogan “I don’t forget” with an image of the Apostolos Andreas Monastery.



Figure 5: The Kırklar Tekke, 2012.



Figure 6: The Kırklar Tekke, tombs



Figure 7: The Kırklar Tekke, mosque.

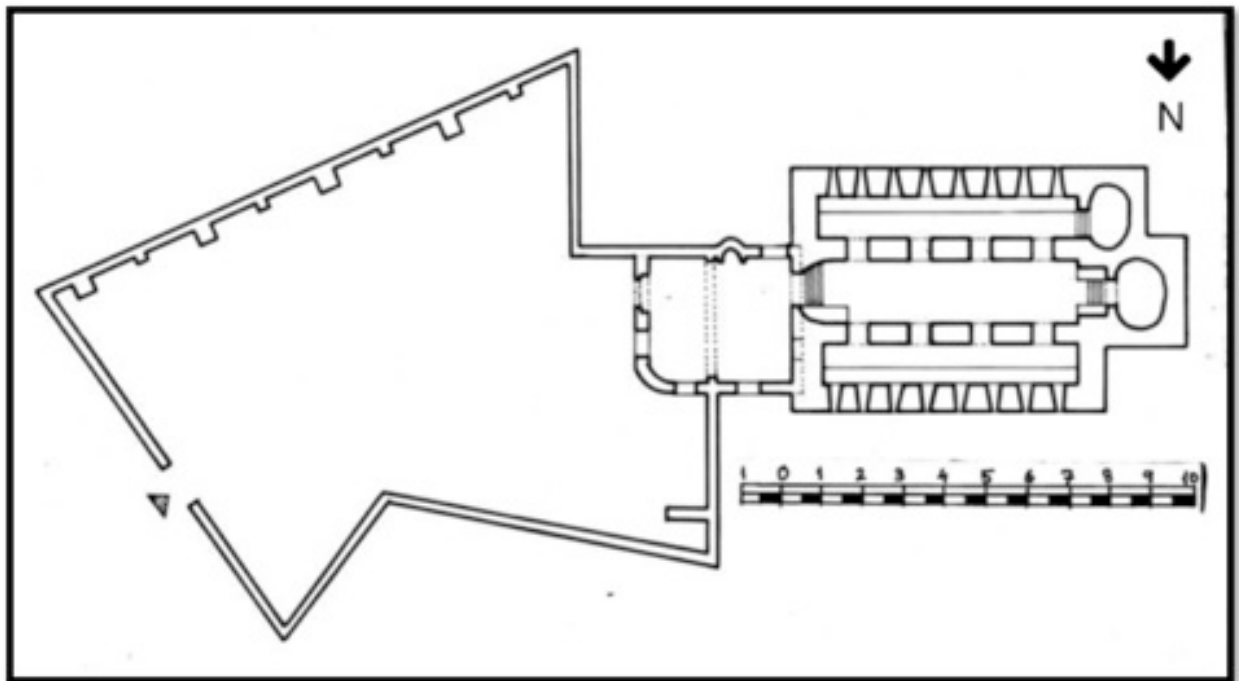


Figure 8: The site plan of the Kırklar Tekke.  
Source: National Archives, Kyrenia. Plan by Tuncer Bağışkan.





Figure 9: The Hz. Ömer Tekke, 2011.

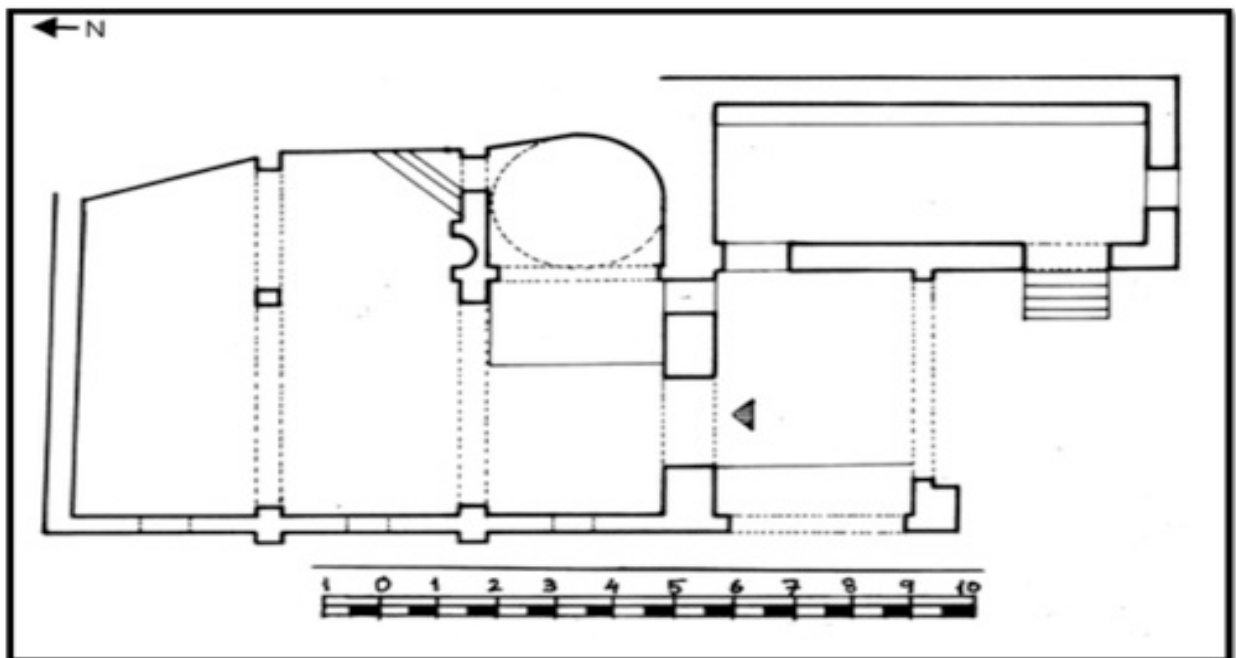


Figure 10: The site plan of the Hz. Ömer Tekke.  
Source: National Archives, Kyrenia. Plan by Tuncer Bağışkan



Figure 11: Inside the Hz. Ömer Tekke. Seven tombs on the right.



Figure 12: The sacred cave beneath Hz. Ömer Tekke venerated by Greek Cypriots.





Figure 13: The Apostolos Andreas Monastery, 2011.



Figure 14: The Apostolos Andreas Monastery, the chapel.



Figure 15: The Apostolos Andreas Monastery, the holy spring.



Figure 16: The Apostolos Andreas Monastery, votive offerings.





Figure 17: Ceremony at the Apostolos Andreas Monastery (August 15th, 2011).



Figure 18: The Saint Barnabas Icon and Archeological Museum, 2011.

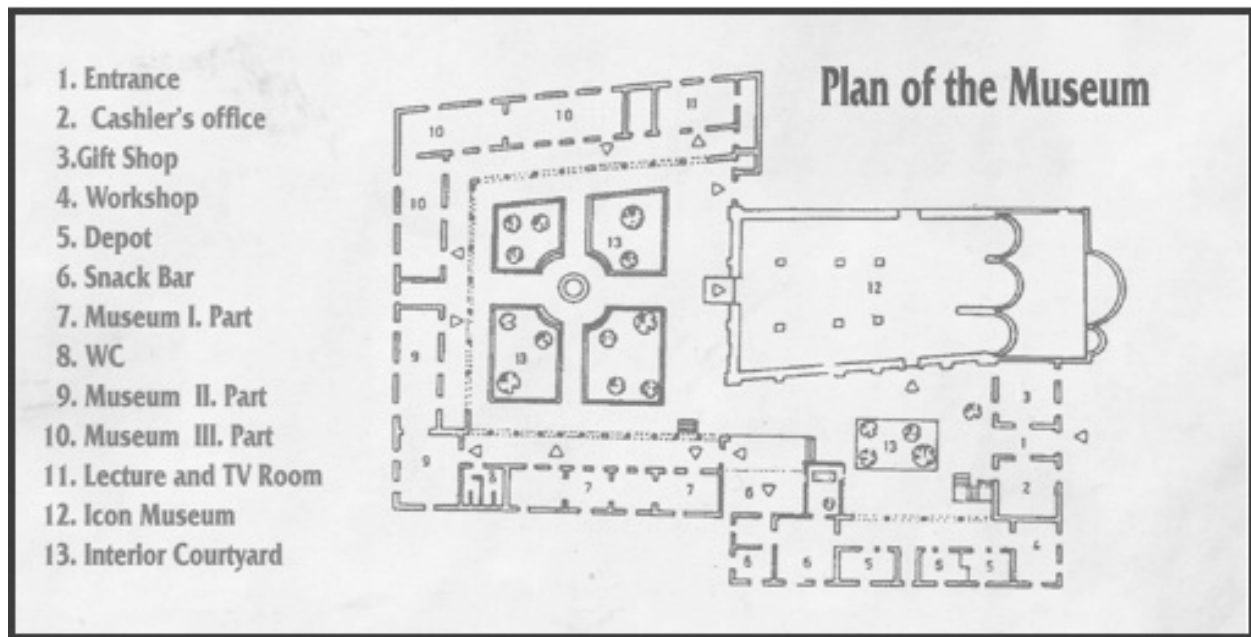


Figure 19: The plan of the Saint Barnabas Museum Complex.  
Source: The brochure of the TRCN, Department of Antiquities and Museums.



Figure 20: The Tomb of Saint Barnabas.





Figure 21: The Tomb of Saint Barnabas.



Figure 22: The Saint Mamas Church and Icon Museum, 2011.

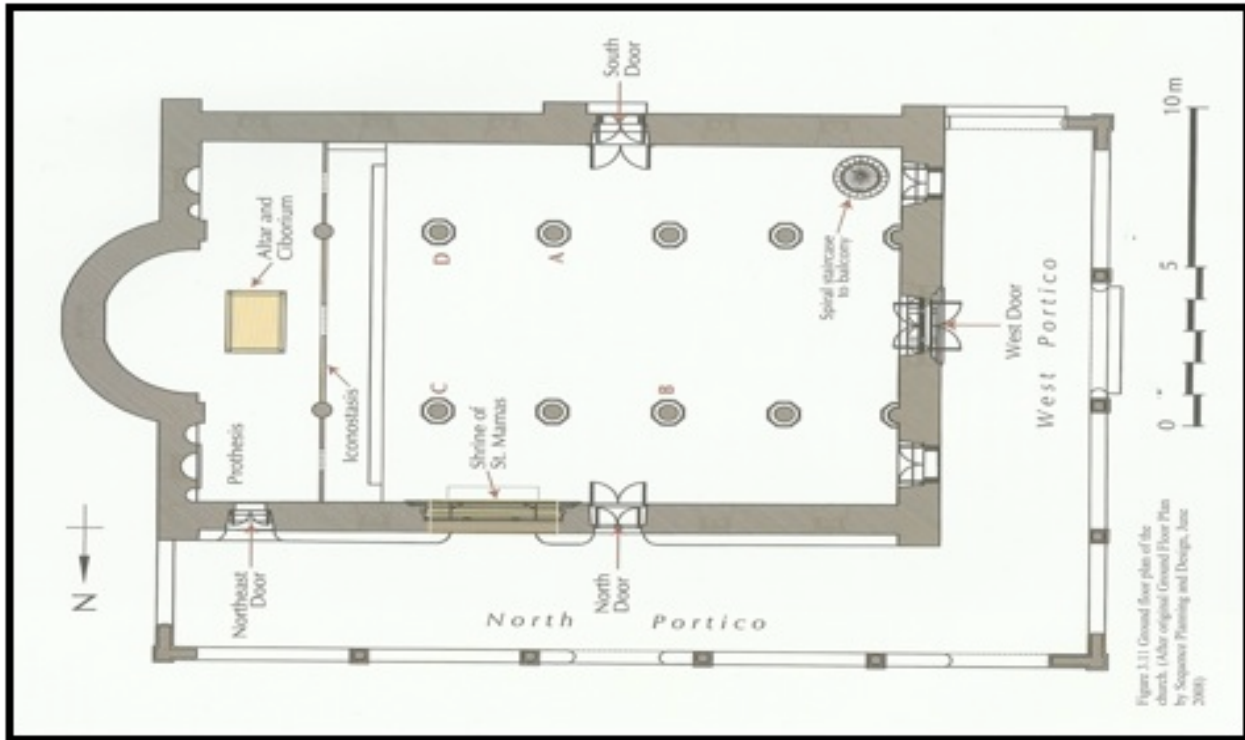


Figure 23: The grand floor plan of the Saint Mamas Church. (Remsen 2010:82)



Figure 24: Communal worship at the Saint Barnabas Museum, 2011.





Figure 25: The Icon of Saint Barnabas taken outside during the annual ceremony



Figure 26: Inside the Saint Mamas Museum, 2011.



Figure 27: The Tomb of Saint Mamas.



Figure 28: The Hala Sultan Tekke and the Salt Lake, 2011.



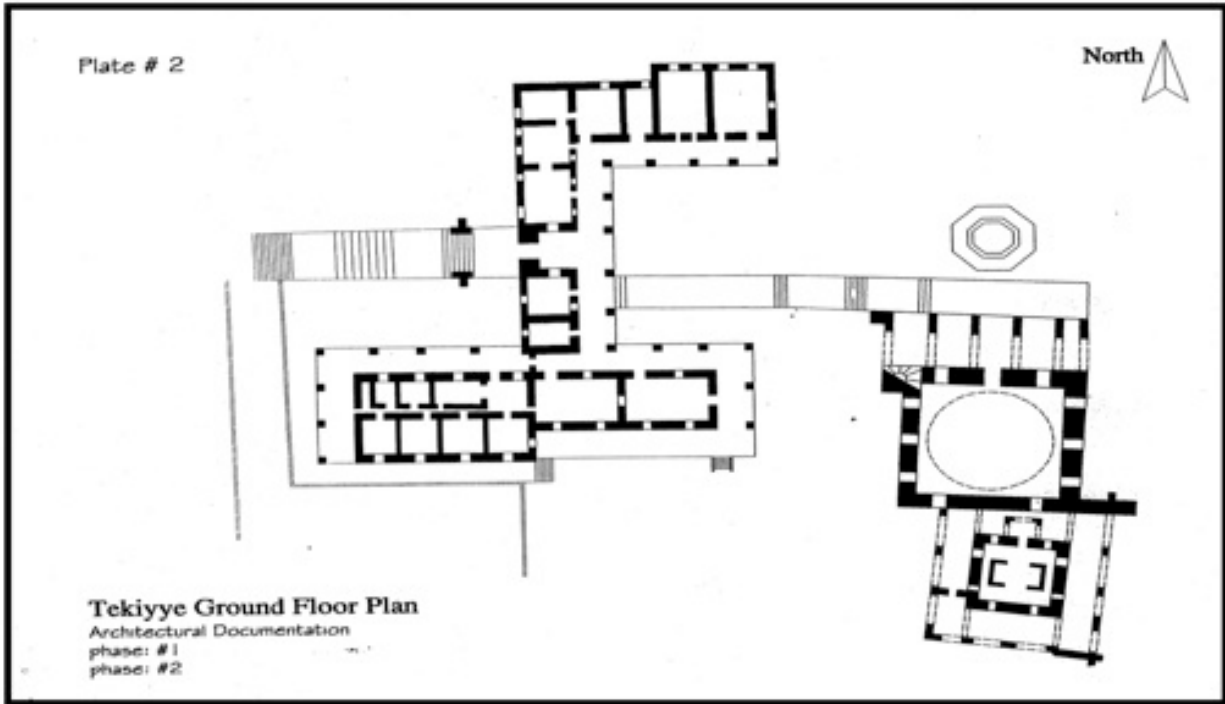


Figure 29: The site plan of Hala Sultan Tekke. Plan by Tuncer Bağışkan.



Figure 30: The main entrance of the Hala Sultan Tekke Complex, 2011.



Figure 31: The tomb of Hala Sultan.



Figure 32: The archeological site inside the Hala Sultan Tekke Complex.





Figure 33: The Hala Sultan Mosque.



Figure 34: The wishing spot outside the Hala Sultan Tekke complex.



Figure 35: The Ömeriye Mosque in Nicosia, mostly used by non-Turkish Muslims.



Figure 36: The water well inside the Hala Sultan mosque, where people make wishes.

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