

## RESEARCH PAPER

# Maintained in Very Good Condition or Virtually Rebuilt? Destruction of Cultural Property and Narration of Violent Histories

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This paper explores the use of cultural heritage in shaping public understandings of history, identity and justice; it focuses on misinterpretations and misrepresentations of damage to and destruction of archaeological sites and historic buildings in Cyprus. It examines: restoration and its impact on public understandings of history; scholarly conduct in the collection and presentation of data; denial of violence as a tactic to establish peace and recognition of violence as a strategy for building trust; and denial of violence as a strategy for fostering nationalist sentiment and inciting ethnic hatred.

First, it addresses the role of monuments and their destruction in memory and amnesia. Then, it identifies inappropriate restoration, which has misdirected professional and public understanding of history. It also demonstrates either wilful ignorance of events or conscious exclusion of inconvenient facts from archaeological and official texts; either way, this is unprofessional practice, which has led to the implicit denial of real violence that was intended to cause ethnic cleansing.

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## Introduction

In the course of the Cyprus Conflict, there has been a mixture of personal and organised, intra-communal, inter-communal and international violence against historic sites and community places; and there has been a mass of official and/or professional documentation and interpretation of that violence. This paper asks:

1. How can restoration influence professional and public understanding of the past?
2. Have archaeologists behaved responsibly in their research into and public narration of violence?

3. What roles can the biographies of cultural heritage sites play in building trust and inciting hatred?

It explores some misinterpretations and misrepresentations of the histories of Cypriot cultural heritage sites, including: disguised and unrecognised destruction of cultural heritage; documented but ignored or excluded violence against community places; officially-claimed but locally-denied damage, and misplaced blame for damage; and it identifies unprofessional research practice. This paper argues that even falsely peaceful narratives can contribute to conflict by provoking victims' anger and distrust, and it appeals for an accurate and consensual history through which divided communities can work towards a genuinely peaceful society.

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### Monuments, Memory and Amnesia

The built environment can embody the communities that construct and inhabit it; and, thus, the violent destruction of the built environment can constitute an attack on those communities. Whether it is defined as the destruction of a people (genocide, e.g. Shaw 2004), the destruction of home (domicide, e.g. Porteous and Smith 2001) or the destruction of shared space (urbicide, e.g. Coward 2009), the logic of nationalist war *requires* such attacks (Chapman 1994: 122). The violent destruction of cultural property and community property ('public places... centre[s] of public life' (Ó Tuathail and Dahlgren 2006: 244)) constitutes an attempt to change the nature of a community, to erase its existence and/or to prevent the possibility of its existence.

For instance, as a highly mixed settlement grew around a bridge over the River Neretva – first a wooden bridge, then the stone-built Great Bridge (Veliki Most), which became known as the Old Bridge (Stari Most) – they identified themselves as Bridge-Keepers (Mostari) and their settlement as a single Bridge-Keeper/Bridge-Keeping community (Mostar). During the Bosnian War, the Bosnian Croat Army first ghettoised the Bosnian Muslim locals on the east bank (and gathered the Bosnian Croat locals on the west bank), and then destroyed the cultural symbol of the locals' historic unity. As well as physically denying the possibility of shared community life, the destruction of the material evidence of heterogeneous existence enabled the fabrication of a historical narrative of homogenous communities that lived separate lives (Coward 2009: 2–6).

There are historically informed 'national styles' of violence (Halpern 1993: 5). The Turkish nationalist style has focused on destruction and desecration of Greek Orthodox Christian buildings. The Greek nationalist style has targeted Turkish Cypriot domestic as well as Islamic buildings. The styles have their own histories, too, visible in the Turkish nationalist style's increasing targeting of Greek Cypriot residential environments,

which is suggestive of a change in strategy from the erasure of the Greek Cypriot communal presence from a shared place to the prevention of the possibility of renewed bi-communal life.

There are also treatments that may be performed or perceived as aggressive acts, such as conversion or other reuse of religious buildings, and that may be performed or perceived as neglectful acts, such as non-intervention in abandoned buildings. There are historical precedents for the conversion of churches into mosques and mosques into churches (cf. Harris 1997; Lowry 2009), including in the 'Greek' Christian and 'Turkish' Muslim Eastern Mediterranean, from the mosque-church in the Agios Nikolaos (Saint Nicholas) neighbourhood of Kavala in Greece to the church-mosque in the Ondokuz Mayıs (19th of May) district of Samsun in Turkey.

Making matters worse, there is a prevalent, monopolising 'ethnicization of heritage', which does not recognise, or which denies, the syncretistic elements in the histories and uses of sites (Constantinou and Hatay 2010: 2). Places can become more vulnerable to violence when they become prominent symbols of only one community after the elision (or erasure) of the role of other communities in their production and value. When their value is denied to other communities, or if other communities are denied meaningful access to them, extremist elements of these communities will face less 'intra-communal' resistance. Denial of syncretic value also weakens opportunities for reconciliation and reconstruction of communities' formerly shared lives.

Moreover, there are situationally informed styles of cultural heritage preservation. For instance, Greek Cypriot professionals remove the whitewash from church-mosques to reveal their earliest features, even if the whitewash is itself a historic feature of an Ottoman conversion, and the exposure of iconic art makes the building unsuitable for use as a mosque (Cormack 1989: 33; van der Werff 1989: 13). Turkish Cypriot officials

approve the adaptation and continued use of Greek Cypriot churches, even if the displaced owners disapprove, which does not preserve the functional identity of the building, but does preserve both the evidence of the other community's existence and the possibility of their return and reintegration (Saifi and Yüceer 2012).

### **Coexistence without Confidence**

Cultural heritage conservation, restoration and education can support 'rapprochement' (Radwan 2008: 5). However, neither restoration that hides evidence of violence nor education that omits or denies damage and destruction helps to rebuild communities; instead, they undermine inter-communal trust and prevent reconciliation. The following examples show cultural heritage officials' and local representatives' misinterpretations and misrepresentations of destroyed ethnic/religious cultural heritage, by which communities' suffering was implicitly or explicitly denied.

In order to showcase Cypriot communities' 'peaceful coexistence', and to publicise the Republic of Cyprus's 'continuous... protect[ion]' of Islamic or Turkish Cypriot cultural heritage (Radwan 2008: 5), the Association of Cypriot Archaeologists (ACA) published *Muslim Places of Worship in Cyprus* (later through the Republic of Cyprus Press and Information Office (ROC PIO); cf. ACA 2008: back cover). The foreword for the book recommended Islamic Cypriot cultural heritage as evidence of the 'intermarriage of cultures, [and] civilizations' and, thereby, as a tool for building peace (Radwan 2008: 5).

The Association explicitly stated that the Turkish occupation of northern Cyprus had prevented protection *there*, where monuments had been 'plundered, damaged or destroyed' (ACA 2008: 8). This implies that before the Turkish occupation throughout the island, and since the occupation in the southern areas under Greek Cypriot administration, monuments had not been looted or attacked. Indeed, *Muslim Places of Worship in Cyprus* included a double-page spread on 'Desecration and Destruction of the

[Christian] Religious Monuments in Occupied Cyprus' (ACA 2008: 22; cf. ACA 2008: 22–23), but not a single example of destruction of Islamic monuments anywhere on the island. By contrast, the first edition of the book spoke of the Greek Cypriot administration's 'maintenance' of mosques (ACA 1990: 10), without any acknowledgement of deliberate damage or destruction; the third edition admitted both 'natural damage due to the passage of time', and deliberate damage due to 'random acts of vandalism' (ACA 2008: 21), but nothing more.

A good example of the problem with this narrative is Evdimou/Evdim Mosque. Both the first and the third edition presented three photographs of that mosque (ACA 1990: 32, figs. 55–57; ACA 2008: 57, figs. 91–93), which implicitly suggested that it had been maintained or, at worst, vandalised. Evdimou Mosque, however, did not survive the conflict unscathed. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) was so concerned with the condition of cultural heritage in Cyprus that it launched a fact-finding mission under its Sub-Committee on the Cultural and Artistic Heritage of Europe. According to that mission, by General Rapporteur Ymenus van der Werff and Consultant Expert Robin Cormack, Evdimou Mosque had been wrecked then 'virtually... rebuilt' (van der Werff 1989: 13). Furthermore, when it was restored, it was rebuilt in a way that contradicted long-established professional standards, which explicitly stated that '[r]eplacements... must be distinguishable from the original so that restoration does not falsify the artistic or historic evidence' (SICATHM 1964: Art. 12; see also FICATHM 1931: Ch. 6, Para. 2).

After they gained the freedom to cross the Green Line, and thus the ability to fulfil their professional responsibilities, the southern Cyprus Civil Engineers' and Architects' Association and the northern Chamber of Cyprus Turkish Architects resolved to survey the structural condition of Christian sites under Turkish Cypriot administration and Muslim sites under Greek Cypriot administra-

tion (CCEAA and CCTA 2005). They worked as a bi-communal team, supported by the United Nations Development Programme, independent of all civilian and military authorities. In their Cyprus Temples survey, they recorded that Evdimou Mosque's mass had been '[p]reserved' and that its structure, façade, roof, interior and decoration were in '[v]ery [g]ood' condition (CCEAA and CCTA 2007). Thus, it appears that the restored material was not distinguishable from the original remains. The restoration's literal fabrication of the historical record, and its consequent disruption of the survey's architectural record, made it easier for certain sources to misrepresent the overall history of the conflict, and to misuse the bi-communal team's work in order to do so (e.g. Jansen 2006; cf. Hardy 2009).

Greek Cypriot cultural heritage workers conducted restoration in a way that prevented later generations from seeing damage to and destruction of mosques. Nonetheless, there was documentary evidence of the site's history and, either from official records or from public documents like the PACE report, the ACA and the ROC PIO should have known and acknowledged the true history of Evdimou Mosque.

On the precautionary principle, I had assumed that archaeologists, who had not been publicly acknowledged by the Cyprus Temples project and whose work had not acknowledged or otherwise reflected the findings of the project, had not been involved in it. Yet, when I presented the original version of this paper in Cyprus (Hardy 2010) at an international conference on peace research concerning cultural heritage, a project worker publicly corrected me that archaeologists *had* helped the architects and civil engineers in their work. Thus, in order to produce their own contradictory publications on the treatment of cultural heritage on the island, archaeologists must have at best *expected and avoided seeing* or at worst *known and excluded* the findings of the Cyprus Temples project. It is not an

isolated example. At best, while researching and revising multiple editions of a book specifically and solely regarding Islamic historic sites, they avoided finding out about other violence against Turkish Cypriot cultural property, such as the internationally-reported destruction of the minaret of the Great Mosque in Ktima Paphos (Blair 1964: 3), the UNESCO-recorded demolition of the minaret of Bayraktar Mosque in Nicosia (Dalibard 1976: 3) and the PACE-recorded razing of the New Mosque in Ktima Paphos (van der Werff 1989: 11); at worst, they knowingly hid that information from the public. Either way, they misled the academic community and the public.

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.

### **Well-Meaning Myths for Peace, Dangerous Myths for History**

These myths of peace can also be seen at the local level. During the inter-communal conflict of the summer of 1958, the village's Turkish Cypriot mukhtar said that 'nobody ever threatened us Turks in Morphou' (quoted in *Cyprus Mail* (16 June 1958), cited in Asmusen 2001: 250); yet recently, a Greek Cypriot villager, author Nearchos Georgiades (2008), said that he had taken part in an attack on Morphou/Güzelyurt's mosque and Turkish Cypriot school at that time, and that Turkish Cypriot villagers had recognised the attack precisely as 'a threatening warning [μια απειλητική προειδοποίηση]'. Lending credibility to Georgiades' claims that they had been intimidated, Canadian UN peacekeeper and political geographer Richard Pat-

rick (1976: 98n65) recorded that the Turkish Cypriots partially 'evacuated' Morphou that summer.

Fourteen years old in 1958, Georgiades (2008) revealed that 'we... took stones and smashed one-by-one all of the windows both of the [Turkish Cypriot] school and of the mosque [πήραμε πέτρες και σπάσαμε ένα ένα όλα τα τζάμια και του σχολείου και του τζαμιού]'. That damage might seem insignificant, but Georgiades assured that, if they had not been interrupted by local Turkish Cypriots, they 'would have done other bigger destructions [θα κάναμε κι άλλες μεγαλύτερες καταστροφές]'.

This is a particularly interesting case because the attack upon the mosque 'was an order of EOKA, of the illegal armed organization of Greek nationalists [ήταν διαταγή της ΕΟΚΑ, της παράνομης ένοπλης οργάνωσης των ελλήνων εθνικιστών]', but Georgiades did not know this at the time. EOKA gave the order to one youth, who gave the order to his younger brother, who took his freely-participating, then Turk-hating friend, Georgiades. This story displays the command responsibility of EOKA, and the complicity of others with a shared ideology (although, as indoctrinated teenagers, they did not share an equal responsibility). In addition, the teenagers' participation shows how violence offered opportunities for bonding, transgression and fun, and Georgiades' (2008) insistence that 'I showed... that I was not afraid [απέδειξα... ότι δεν φοβόμουν]' shows how violence helped to establish masculinity and status (as Verkaaik (2003) observed in Pakistani extremist communities). Nonetheless, at least for Georgiades, it seems there was no joy in transgression, because despite nationalist indoctrination, the transgressed values were his own and he felt 'guilt [ενοχή]'.

The mukhtar's claim of local peace amid island-wide conflict may have been an attempt to ease local tension, to bring peace into existence by the very act of saying it existed already; and, as such, it may have been a justifiable tactic at the time. However, as a

tool for historical understanding, the claim of peace makes the villagers' evacuation look like further evidence of Turkish Cypriot nationalist paramilitary TMT's plan to partition the island, and makes the Turkish Cypriot community look like it was a guilty party to that ultranationalist paramilitary plot, rather than an innocent victim of EOKA's plan to control the country. Again, this demonstrates how false narratives of peace ultimately damage the cause of peace.

### III-Meaning Myths of Peace

Myths of peace can even be told to perpetuate conflict. Some official Turkish Cypriot cultural heritage publications completely exclude the intra-communal and inter-communal conflicts of 1955–1959 from their historical narratives (e.g. TRNCMFADSCS and TRNCMNECDAM 1986: 3), and present the first year of conflict as '1963..., [which] culminated in a bloody onslaught on the unarmed Turkish Cypriot People' (ibid.: 4). It makes immediate sense that Turkish nationalist histories would forget that, for example, 'bands of Turkish [Cypriot] youths... burned down' the Church of Agios Loukas and Greek Cypriot shops in Nicosia in June 1958 (Keesing's Worldwide 1958: 16219), and Turkish Cypriot extremists 'destroyed' a Greek Cypriot Orthodox church in Louroujina in August 1958 (Reuter and British United Press 1958b: 1).

However, Greek Cypriot extremists 'burned' many Turkish Cypriot villages that summer (Kyle 1984: 7), and 'destroyed' Kırklar Tekke in Tymbou/Ercan that August (Reuter and British United Press 1958b: 1; cf. Yüksel 1958: 1). Theoretically, the 'Social and Cultural Section' of the TRNC Ministry of Defence (and the second author, the TRNC's Department of Antiquities and Museums) could have presented a one-sided history of Turkish Cypriot suffering between 1955 and 1959, as it did for the conflict between 1963 and 1974 (cf. TRNCMFADSCS and TRNCMNECDAM 1986: 4). Tellingly, despite it being a book about cultural heritage, the TRNC's



Department of Antiquities and Museums was a secondary author, probably only included to acknowledge a source of photographs and documents, or simply to make a Social and Cultural Section-authored book look more respectable.

Nonetheless, TMT was responsible for the outbreak of violence: on 7 June 1958, a Turkish Cypriot '*agent provocateur*' bombed the Turkish Consulate Press Office in Nicosia so that EOKA could be blamed and violence would be triggered (cf. O'Malley and Craig 1999: 61). The plan was uncovered immediately, but the violence continued anyway (cf. Reuter and British United Press 1958a: 1). Thus, rather than acknowledge TMT's responsibility for wrongdoing against the Greek Cypriot community (even indirectly, by referring to inter-communal violence for which TMT were known to be ultimately responsible), these official publications apparently chose also to exclude any reference to the Turkish Cypriot community's suffering during the same period of conflict. Here, a myth of peace was created to enable a narrative of solely Greek Cypriot aggression and Turkish Cypriot victimhood, thereby to perpetuate inter-communal distrust and division, and to justify the continued existence of the TRNC.

## Conclusion

It has been shown that inappropriate restoration is not merely an aesthetic or historical issue; it can misdirect professionals and aggrieved communities and thereby underpin nationalist resentment. It has been similarly shown that, even if falsely peaceful narratives are told in order to foster coexistence, they can foster distrust and division in practice. Divided communities need to establish accurate and consensual histories in order to be able to re-establish peaceful society.

Some of the problems are so fundamental that they render advanced or detailed recommendations difficult or impossible. It is unacceptable for archaeologists not to conduct the most basic literature review or, worse, to exclude relevant, reliable data from their

records, analyses and public education. It is unacceptable for them to use programmes of public education about the island's religious heritage as opportunities to advance communal causes. And it is particularly disappointing since such educational programmes hold possibly the greatest potential for building inter-communal understanding.

It is also notable that those working with cultural property from other disciplines, such as architects and civil engineers, can initiate and conduct massive bi-communal projects. This feature of archaeological (non-) practice on Cyprus is so prominent that it is noted by (at least some of the) professionals in those other disciplines. Unless the archaeologists argue that other organs of their own states are circumventing or violating international law (and that the archaeologists themselves do so in their limited bi-communal activities), they must accept that the impediments to their work are political, not legal. Even if the impediments are accretions of idealistic but counter-productive policies, now that the negative effects are so clear, the archaeologists have a responsibility to reconsider their policies. Certainly, they ought to revise their public educational materials to genuinely reflect the intertwined lives of the island's communities and accurately narrate Cypriots' shared suffering.

Still, some of the divergences in practice create room for refined work. If the island's archaeologists (and other cultural heritage workers) could negotiate common guidelines for cultural heritage preservation, from conservation and restoration to sustainable and socially acceptable use, they could not only establish far stronger and far more functional management of the island's heterogeneous heritage, but also significantly contribute to inter-communal trust.

Furthermore, the profession's human resources and the island's archaeological assets offer great promise. The very conduct of their negotiation and implementation of their agreement would constitute a demonstration of the possibility of, and stand as a

model for, a united Cypriot society. Beyond the basic reassurance that archaeologists give to communities by protecting the symbols of those communities, by protecting those key centres of shared public life, archaeologists also help to consolidate the infrastructure for reconciliation.

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