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Of pilgrimages and restorations: religion, heritage and politics in divided Cyprus

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Abstract

This paper explores the intersections of religion, heritage, and politics in divided societies by focusing on two events that occurred in Cyprus before the crossing points opened (2003). These are the Greek and Turkish Cypriot reciprocal pilgrimages to a Christian and Muslim site, respectively, and the two sites' restoration. I argue that in these events the Cyprus Issue effected the transformation of pilgrimage practices and sites into matters of political agreement, implicating them in processes of conflict management and resolution. In this context, pilgrimage facilitated inter-communal exchanges and intra-communal frictions and antagonisms that question binary oppositions through which questions of conflict and amity have been debated in pilgrimage studies.

Keywords: conflict; Cyprus; Pilgrimage; religion and politics; religious heritage

Introduction

In pilgrimage studies, questions of conflict and amity have long been debated through notions of “communitas” (Turner and Turner, 1978), “contestation” (Eade and Sallnow, 1991), “sharing” (Albera and Couroucli, 2012; Bowman, 2012a; Barkan and Barkey, 2015a), and “antagonism”¹ or “competitive sharing” (see Hayden, 2002; Hayden et al., 2016)². Such modes of interaction have been studied ethnographically at the level of pilgrims, site managers, and locals, but also, diachronically at the level of ethnoreligious communities, which remains, at times, essentialized (Henig, 2015, 135).

Despite the different scales of analysis, scholarly exploration is often focused on pilgrimage centers; “the play of power and resistance at the shrines themselves rather than in relation to secular political institutions” (Eade and Katic, 2014, 3; Coleman and Eade, 2018, 2, Coleman, 2021, 97)³, or the transformations of the shrines' spatial and material structures as a result of changes in relations of domination.⁴ This is so, even when sites are emplaced within larger *religioscapes* (Hayden et al., 2016, 10, 28) and “structures of social interactions” (p. 27). Discussions of “sharing” and “antagonism” have furthermore mainly revolved around the nature of identities (e.g., Bowman, 2012b; Eade and Katic, 2014; Hayden et al., 2016), the meanings (Barkan

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and Barkey, 2015b, 8) and religious and/or political causes of conflict (pp. 1–2), with the role of political agents such as the state in the unfolding of intercommunal interactions in “shared sacred sites” also being examined⁵ (see Hayden, 2002, 212; Barkan and Barkey, 2015b, 2).

By contrast, looking beyond what happens at and to pilgrimage sites but also beyond religious scapes and issues of identity, this paper seeks to make an intervention by adopting a widened approach to pilgrimage. It follows more recent scholarship that explores pilgrimage as part of the wider environment in which it operates and not as a distinct analytical object (see Coleman and Eade, 2018). Such an approach allows us to perceive pilgrimage “at different and overlapping scales” (p. 16; Coleman, 2021, 15, 108, 13. 7), as it articulates different religious and non-religious activities⁶ (Coleman, 2021, 5). At the same time, it allows pilgrimage to function both as an object of study in itself and as a lens through which to explore wider questions (pp. 13, 35, 52, 53; 2002, 363).

This paper explores two questions. The first is a question particularly relevant to pilgrimage studies and it concerns the ways in which pilgrimage can be manifested beyond its sacred centers, in different fields of activity and on different scales, such as local and international politics. The examination of this question sheds light on the second and more general question that the paper raises regarding the relationship of religion, heritage, and politics. Pilgrimage is a particularly useful lens through which to explore this owing to its interconnections to other activities (Coleman, 2021, 6, 9). These interconnections are partly at least related to its flexibility and openness as a practice (9) and they highlight the complex and often ambivalent relationships that exist between “religion” and the “secular”—relationships that go beyond the mere reflection or reversal of broader social, political, or economic structures and relations by religious practices (p. 7).

My interest lies in particular in how religion, politics, and heritage intersect in societies divided by conflict. In such societies, religious, and heritage sites are not only deliberately targeted for political reasons but are also entangled in processes of peace, trust-building, reconciliation, and resolution; “appeal[s] to non-political, religious symbols and processes” may make otherwise impossible political acts possible (Stewart, 1994, 225) while the preservation of heritage sites, religious, or otherwise, can be framed as “a focus for political cooperation” by various multilateral actors such as the United Nations (Gowan, 2022, 525).

In conflict societies, pilgrimage in particular can be used politically by rival sides to promote their own narrative of the conflict (see Higgins-Desbiolles, 2013, 61, 62; Kassis, 2013, 229, 230 on Israel/Palestine), fostering solidarity and/or promoting justice (see pp. 63, 61, 64; Kassis and Solomon, 2013, 247). In the framework of the conflict between Israel and Palestine, for example, pilgrimages can influence the opinion of the international community by either concealing the devastating consequences of Israeli occupation on the Palestinians (Kassis and Solomon, 2013, 244) or by exposing them. Glenn Bowman (1992) illustrates how, by excluding Palestinian areas from their routes, state-trained Israeli guides promote sympathy for Israel while creating or reinforcing distrust toward “Arabs” (Bowman, 1992, 125), who are rendered invisible and classified as dangerous (130; Kassis, 2013, 230–231). As of 2005, the Palestinian NGO *Alternative Tourism Group* (ATG) tries to bring Palestinians and

foreign tourists in contact with one another through the organization of tours and pilgrimages that critically examine “the history, culture, and politics of the Holy Land” [Alternative Tourism Group (ATG)—Study Center, <http://atg.ps/about-us>; Higgins-Desbiolles, 2013, 64]. Together with “the Ecumenical Coalition on Tourism (ECOT) and Golan for development”, it launched *Pilgrimages for Transformation*, a program (Kassis and Solomon, 2013, 245) aimed at balancing asymmetries of religious tourism, changing the socio-political and religious spheres through the transformation of pilgrims and travelers that ATG brings to the Holy Land, and with the ultimate idealistic goal of helping end the conflict in the Middle East (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2013, 65).

As a practice that does not “simply reflect or resist wider political conflicts” (Eade and Katic, 2014, 8), it is important to note that pilgrimage can potentially “play a role in the reconfiguration as well as the hardening of political, religious and ethnic boundaries in ways that often pertain to peace as well as war” (Coleman, 2016, 266). As I will show in the analysis below, however, in conditions of unresolved conflict, its impact on reconciliation attempts can be severely limited by the wider context in which it occurs. While pilgrimage may indeed open up a space for “sharing” between conflicting sites, it may also become a point of contention within them because of its real and/or perceived political implications. Unresolved conflicts, even if frozen, also render pilgrimage vulnerable to wider conflict-related processes which although seemingly unrelated to it come to bear on its operation. This is especially so in cases where pilgrimage is rendered part of the political negotiations which aim at the conflict’s management and/or resolution. Such negotiations may allow pilgrimage to occur as much as inter- and intra-communal problems relating to them can instrumentalize or restrict it.

In this respect, the case of Cyprus is especially pertinent to the debates outlined above. My focus in this paper is specifically on two events that occurred in Cyprus before the opening of the checkpoints in 2003 exploring the ways they were managed and debated within the Greek-Cypriot community. These are: (a) the reciprocal pilgrimages of Greek Cypriots to the Monastery of Apostolos Andreas in Turkish-occupied Karpasia, and of the Turkish Cypriots to the Hala Sultan Tekke in the government-controlled area of Larnaca, which the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) helped arrange and (b) the planning and negotiations for the restoration of the two sites.⁷

The reciprocal pilgrimages and restorations symbolically link two sites that belong to different religious scapes (Hayden et al., 2016), yet to the same landscape of conflict. They therefore index wider issues regarding access, ownership, and neglect, which need to be negotiated both between the political authorities that control them and between the religious and non-religious actors that are involved in their operation. Being a product of such negotiations, the events illustrate forms of inter-communal “sharing” as mutual engagement and mediated exchange between political authorities. At the same time, the reactions they provoked among the Greek Cypriots, whom I mainly focus on⁸, show that while there might be “sharing” on the inter-communal, institutional level of political authorities, there may also be “antagonism” and “contestation” both on the inter-communal level of politics and on the intra-communal level of society. The intra-communal “antagonism” is not directed

toward the “sharing” itself but is produced by the same (conflict) conditions and discourses that make this “sharing” necessary; both the events and the reactions they provoked were framed by the Cyprus conflict which they help illuminate.

Conducted from an “ethnographic stance” (Ortner, 1995, 173), the analysis of the two events therefore highlights the ways in which “contestation,” “antagonism,” and “sharing” can simultaneously exist on different scales and between different actors within and across communities. At the same time, it shows how conflict may raise the stakes that are involved in the performance of pilgrimage and the preservation of its sites. This is especially so when pilgrimage cannot “naturally” occur because its center has been rendered inaccessible to its primary user community as is the case in Cyprus. In such cases, unpredictable “articulations” that go beyond the simple dichotomy of “religion” and the “secular” may be necessitated, as the practicing and sites of religion, may inevitably become the object of political negotiation and/or contestation on the inter- as well as the intra-communal levels.

The paper draws on archival material through which it reconstructs the events; news reports collected through the archives of the Press and Information Office (PIO), the HR-Net (<http://www.hri.org>) and the Internet, PIO Informative Bulletins, press releases of the PIO, the United Nations (UN) and the U.S. Agency for International Development, minutes of parliamentary plenaries, as well as reports produced by parliamentary committees, the UN, the U.S. Department of State and the Cyprus Bi-Communal Development Program.⁹ Such materials illustrate how pilgrimage is manifested and constituted in different ways, on different levels and through different media by various agents that although not directly related to it bear on its operation (cf. Coleman, 2021, 3, 8). They also illuminate the role of international organizations, local political, and ecclesiastical authorities, state administrators, and Greek-Cypriot society stakeholders in the organization of religious practices and sites.

Exchange pilgrimages

Cyprus has been divided ever since the 1974 Turkish military invasion, and the subsequent occupation of the island’s northern part. Its two main communities, the Greek and the Turkish Cypriots, have almost exclusively resided in the island’s south and north, respectively,¹⁰ unable until 2003 to cross the dividing line, apart from exceptional occasions. Among such occasions were the reciprocal pilgrimages of Greek Cypriots to the Christian Orthodox Monastery of Apostolos Andreas and of the Turkish Cypriots to the Islamic site of Hala Sultan Tekke.¹¹

The pilgrimages were organized between 1997 and 2000 after an agreement was reached between “the Government and the Turkish Cypriot authorities [...] to allow reciprocal visits [...] on certain religious holidays” (U.S. Department of State Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2003—Cyprus, February 25, 2004). In the framework of these exchange visits, the Turkish Cypriots were also allowed to cross by bus to Kokkina, so as to commemorate members of their community who died during the intercommunal strife in 1964 [*Cyprus News Agency (CNA)*, August 08, 1997a].

The timing of the pilgrimages is important; the exchanges took place after a period of “small but steadily growing” (Broome, 2005, 6, 14) bi-communal activity, which

was slowed down by the Turkish Cypriot authorities' decision to stop permitting the crossings of Turkish Cypriots for meetings "with their Greek-Cypriot counterparts,"¹² in December 1997 (p. 12; see also Bose, 2007, 90). The first pilgrimages (April 1997) also occurred a year after the incidents in Deryneia, during which the Greek Cypriot Anastasios (Tassos) Isaak, was brutally killed.¹³ As I will show, the memory of these events was invoked when a small group of Greek Cypriot protesters threatened to forcibly cross along with the pilgrims, in defiance of the agreed process which they contested.

This contestation from within the Greek Cypriot community was not a challenge to the "sharing" itself; the protesters did not protest against the Turkish Cypriot crossers, whom they in fact welcomed not so much as pilgrims but as fellow Cypriots (*Logos News from Cyprus*, April 19, 1997). What they contested were the Greek Cypriot pilgrimage-crossings under the particular conditions which made the "sharing" that the exchange pilgrimages facilitated, necessary. These were conflict-related conditions that obstructed the free movement of pilgrims, therefore making the crossings problematic. Indirectly at least, the protesters critiqued the political agreement that enabled the crossings and therefore the way in which the government was managing the conflict. In response, political authorities projected the religious character of the pilgrimages, warning against their use as a pretext for making tension.

The exchanges were suspended in 2000 after Turkish forces violated the status quo by establishing a checkpoint which the UNFICYP protested, also restricting UNFICYP's movement. This move initiated a chain of reactions; Turkish Cypriots were denied passage to Kokkina by land by Greek Cypriot officials, to which Turkish Cypriot officials responded by denying Greek Cypriot visits to Apostolos Andreas from the south. As a response, "Turkish Cypriot visits to Hala Sultan Tekke under the 1997 reciprocal agreement were also suspended" (U.S. Department of State Cyprus International Religious Freedom Report, 2003 and 2001). An event that was unrelated to both to 1997 agreement (*ibid.*) and to contestation—one that was however related to the conflict in the framework of which the agreement was made—therefore led to the suspension of the pilgrimages, thus illustrating the impact of the wider context on how pilgrimage is managed (not "on the ground") but on the level of high politics.

Framing the pilgrimages: religion as a "Humanitarian function"

Both the agreement for the exchanges and the protestations against the Greek Cypriot crossings politicized the pilgrimages. The first by transforming them into a diplomatic means of intercommunal collaboration and an opportunity for crossing the otherwise closed dividing line and the latter by transforming them into means of oppositional critique. Despite this, the Christian and Muslim pilgrimages alike, were framed as humanitarian actions; they were for example, reported on in the "Report[s] of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Operation in Cyprus" under section "B. Restoration of normal conditions and humanitarian functions."¹⁴ Furthermore, in the organization of the Apostolos Andreas pilgrimages, the service involved was that of the Presidential Commissioner for Humanitarian Affairs

(henceforth Commissioner), an application to the office of whom interested parties had to file to be considered as possible participants.

The Commissioner's selection criteria also reflected the humanitarian aspect of the initiative; priority was given to the elderly and ill, those who originated from Karpasia (CNA, October 29, 1997b) and had enclaved relatives in the area, and expatriates (PIO Information Bulletin, 194/99, July 02, 1999). Indicative of the importance of the pilgrimages was that, according to news reports, political actors tried to get people included on the participant lists. Some also stated false information about themselves for the same reason (Christou, 1997; Drousiotis, 1997).

To side-pass the risk of recognizing the "Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus" ("TRNC")¹⁵, selected participants would be given a pass and cross, "without [...] any formalities" (Press and Information Office, Information Bulletin, 194/99, July 02, 1999). Greek Cypriots however traveled in Turkish Cypriot buses in the presence of Turkish Cypriot "policemen" (Plenary minutes of the House of Representatives of Cyprus 13.06.02, 76).

The organization of the pilgrimages was said to be "a nightmare" by the Commissioner who (Christou, 1997) stated that he was being attacked both by those Greek Cypriots who did not get to go and by those who opposed the pilgrimages. According to Greek Cypriot news reports, the latter protested at the crossing points, demanding to freely cross "in order to perform their religious duties" (CNA September 13, 1998b). To the humanitarian framing of the pilgrimages, the protesters therefore projected the right to free movement. Contesting the pilgrimages on political and not-religious grounds, the main issue they raised was that the pilgrimages constituted an indirect recognition of the "TRNC" which would use them abroad as an indication of the Greek Cypriots' acknowledgment of its legitimacy (*Logos News from Cyprus*, September 09, 1998).

Contestation from within: reactions to the Greek Cypriot pilgrimage-crossings

The first Turkish Cypriot pilgrimage to the Hala Sultan took place on April 19, 1997.¹⁶ A reciprocal Greek Cypriot visit to Apostolos Andreas scheduled for April 27, 1997 was canceled, "by the Greek Cypriot side because the authorities in the north insisted" to delete three persons from the participants' list (*Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations operation in Cyprus*, S/1997/437, 4). The pilgrimage eventually occurred on August 15, 1997. After the second Greek Cypriot pilgrimage (30.11.97), protesters announced that they would join those who were permitted to cross by force, (Christou, 1998b) so as to realize a "free pilgrimage" (*Logos News from Cyprus*, September 09, 1998).¹⁷

According to the *Cyprus Mail*, the Pancyprian Anti-occupation Movement (PAK), an opponent of the pilgrimages, "said that since the 1,100 pilgrims would be allowed to cross freely, there was no reason why others [...] could not do so as well [...]"¹⁸ (Christou, 1998b). PAK must have known that not anyone who wanted to cross could do so freely but it was being deliberately provocative to make its point; since Greek Cypriots could not cross freely they should not cross at all. On his part, the Commissioner reminded everyone of the conditions under which the pilgrimage-crossings were taking place, saying that "we are going into an area which we do

not control.” He also expressed the hope that what had happened in Dherynia would not be repeated if PAK tried to forcibly cross (Christou, 1998b).

Both the Commissioner and the government’s spokesman reassured the public that the pilgrimages to Apostolos Andreas did not in any way mean that the “TRNC” was recognized (CNA, September 11, 1998a, 1998d), with the spokesman also noting that, according to the government, the pilgrimages should simply be seen as “the fulfillment of religious duty and desire” (CNA, September 11, 1998d, commenting upon the pilgrimage that was scheduled for 13.09.98). By characterizing pilgrimages that could only be made possible by an intercommunal agreement made on the level of high politics as simply religious performances, the spokesman tried to neutralize them, implicitly pointing to “correct” and “wrong” ways of “using” or politicizing them; the politicization of pilgrimage in potentially beneficial v/s potentially problematic and harmful ways to the cause of peaceful co-existence and conflict resolution. Outlining the critical times and fragility of the situation in which the pilgrimages were being conducted, the spokesman advised people to peacefully express themselves and not cause any incidents along the dividing line. He also reminded everyone that the handling is “subtle, diplomatic” and that the issue needs to be the government’s and no one else’s responsibility (CNA, September 11, 1998d). Jeopardizing the pilgrimages would constitute an indirect interfering with the government’s handling of the Cyprus Issue owing to the political implications that such a move could have.

Although in his own comments regarding the reactions against the pilgrimages, the parliament’s president at the time, said that “the issue is ‘not a cause for incidents of any form,’” he nevertheless noted that there were things that needed consideration, such as the reasons that pilgrimages to Morphou’s Church of St. Mama were not allowed. “The issue is very delicate [...] and [...] ‘we should consider it in a party leaders’ meeting, with the responsible ministers, if not with the President of the Republic’”¹⁹ (CNA, September 12, 1998h). By referring to the country’s political leadership, the parliament’s president pointed to the fact that although religious, pilgrimages to the occupied areas raised political issues that needed to be dealt with on the level of governmental authorities and political institutions.

The re-assurances and warnings of the political authorities did not deter the protesters. Using “the slogans ‘Free Pilgrims’ and ‘We do not want to become tourists in our country’” (CNA, September 13, 1998c), they asked the UN to cross. The UN gave them a negative reply, saying that both the government and the Turkish Cypriot authorities denied the request. As a response, the protesters accused the government of free movement obstruction and of collaborating with the occupying force (CNA, September 13, 1998b). Marios Matsakis, at the time Zaharias Koulias, an MP for *DHKO*, is quoted by CNA as saying that, “[w]e are not going to fall into the trap of Denktash [the Turkish Cypriot leader at the time] like the government.” The trap that the government had fallen into according to Matsakis was to indirectly recognize the “TRNC,” therefore becoming “Denktash’s tourist agent” (quoted in CNA, September 13, 1998b).

The fact that the pilgrimages were not free transformed them according to Matsakis into tourism since permission to enter, or move within an area is only needed if one is traveling as a tourist to another country and not if he/she is moving

within one's own country. By not being allowed to freely go on their pilgrimage, Greek Cypriots were effectively transformed into tourists in their own country. Although the numbers of protesters were low, with Matsakis attributing this "to the 'passive treatment of the Cyprus problem, the feeling of frustration, the terrorism and the completely negative attitude of the government and the big parties,'" "the message ha[d] been sent that we will go as pilgrims and not as lackeys"²⁰ (CNA, September 13, 1998b).

Matsakis's statements came as a response to the warnings of the Cyprus Police that Deryneia incidents might be repeated if "people who [we]re not included in the list [...] attempt[ed] to go to the occupied areas [...]" (CNA, September 11, 1998a).²¹ According to the CNA, in a TV show aired on the state channel, the chief of Police at the time said that the government's official policy must be followed and that, "events that could possibly damage the country" should be avoided (CNA, September 11, 1998a). On its part, the government said that the pilgrimages were "a humanitarian issue" and would therefore not be canceled (Christou, 1998a), stating through its spokesman that their obstruction by the government "would [...] send the message abroad that we are obstructing human rights for political reasons and we would be placed in the same position as Mr. Denktash" (CNA, September 11, 1998d).

Almost two months after the first crossing attempt made by the protesters, the latter clashed with the Cyprus police and were stopped by the UN when trying to forcibly cross in order to repair the Monastery (Christou, 1998d; Hatzivasilis, 1998a; CNA, November 30, 1998f). The protesters' intention had been announced the previous day, with PAK sending a letter to "the Deputy Special Representative of the UN Secretary General in Cyprus," informing her of its intention. According to CNA, in the letter, PAK emphasized "that they will exercise their human right to free movement" (CNA, November 29, 1998e).²²

Although contestation mainly came from within the Greek Cypriot community, the pilgrimages also reveal intercommunal antagonism. Apart from the canceled pilgrimage mentioned above, another Greek Cypriot pilgrimage was canceled in April 1998 when the Turkish Cypriots imposed "new regulations and fees for entry to and exit from the north" (*Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations operation in Cyprus, S/1997/437*, 4).

Despite intra- and inter- communal reactions and antagonisms, the reports by the Secretary-General on the United Nations operation in Cyprus indicate that around 6000 Greek Cypriots traveled to Apostolos Andreas. According to news reports, locals greeted the buses upon entering Rizokarpaso (Christofi, 1998; Evdokiou, 1999) and also met their relatives at the Monastery (Evdokiou, 1999). Greek Cypriot pilgrims also met with old friends at Bogazi, where the buses stopped *en route* (*The Blue Beret*, April 15, 1999, 6). This was also the case with Turkish Cypriot pilgrims to Tekke who met with Turkish Cypriots residing in the government-controlled areas (Cyprus Mail, April 10, 1998). According to Broome (2005, 21) however, "[i]n none of these visits was there much, if any, contact of the pilgrims with the local population [...]". While the "sharing" on the level of political authorities enabled the crossings, it did and could not facilitate a "sharing" on the "ground" owing to the transitory and provisional character of the pilgrimages (p. 22) and the context in which they were taking place. As Charles Stewart (1994, 225) notes for rituals

more generally, the pilgrimages therefore only offered “the opportunity for a brief intervention” to the stalemate and not “the possibility of a long-term political control.”

In 2003, six years after the first pilgrimage, the crossing points were finally opened. Less than a month after the opening, on May 1st, 2003, approximately 24,000 out of the 25,800 Greek Cypriots who crossed to the occupied areas stated that their destination was Apostolos Andreas (*Politis* 28.11.2004 cited in Kokkinoftas, 2009, 183) while according to an intercommunal survey that was conducted four years after the opening (UNFICYP, 2007) most of the Greek Cypriots who crossed restricted their visits to their lost homes, which they often combined “with a religious pilgrimage” (UNFICYP, 2007, 9). While this illustrates the importance of religion and its spaces for the displaced and therefore religion’s potential role in peacebuilding and reconciliation, interaction with Turkish Cypriots who live in the occupied areas is minimal, at least during Greek Cypriot visits to the Monastery of Apostolos Andreas. Rather than becoming opportunities for rapprochement, pilgrimages for Greek Cypriots become opportunities for seeing, knowing, and remembering the areas that had been inaccessible to them for twenty-nine years (...). Nevertheless, at the time when they occurred, the UN-facilitated pilgrimages offered the possibility of crossing an otherwise almost impenetrable dividing line.

Restoring a Christian and a Muslim site

The pilgrimages also made known the Monastery’s ruinous state. This led two Greek Cypriot MPs to register issues regarding the maintenance and “rescue” of the Monastery and of “our entire religious and cultural heritage in the occupied territories” for discussion at the parliamentary Committee on Refugees-Enclaved-Missing-Adversely Affected Persons [The Committee’s Report is included in the [Plenary Minutes of the House of Representatives of Cyprus, Z’ Parliamentary Period-Synod C’ Meeting of 28th January 1999 \(No.17\)](#), 97–105]. As one of the MP’s explained, he did this after “realiz[ing] the danger of the Monastery’s collapse in August 1997, during the first organized pilgrimage to Apostolos Andreas—in which [...]” he was a participant ([Plenary minutes of the House of Representatives of Cyprus 13.06.02](#), 75).²³

The Committee discussed the issues in three sessions that took place in 1997–1998 ([Plenary minutes of the House of Representatives of Cyprus 28.01.99](#), 97). In its Report, it notes that the MPs who registered the issues for discussion stressed that the Monastery “constitutes a moral, ecclesiastical head rest for all of our enclaved and a beacon of Orthodoxy in the occupied land of our ancestors,” therefore making it necessary for the Church, State, and Parliament to take action and approach “international organizations, so that they can push the occupation regime to allow our side to start the restoration and maintenance” (p. 98).

The Report notes that, according to the representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs,

steps were made on behalf of the ministry to the United Nations. [...] it was suggested that [...] scientists and technicians be sent to the occupied areas, to

record the damage and prepare a study for the maintenance of the monastery, as well as to give the enclaved or people living in the free areas the necessary money to go to the monastery for its repair (p. 101).

The Turkish Cypriots denied the government's suggestion, asking to be given the money so as to repair the Monastery themselves, a suggestion that the ministry did not accept. The suggestions illustrate the challenges posed by the restoration of sites in the occupied areas; the Cyprus Government could not give the money for the Monastery's repair to the Turkish Cypriots because that could constitute a recognition of the "TRNC." The Turkish Cypriots probably wanted the Cyprus Government to give them the money, partly at least, for the same reason.

The opportunity for the Monastery's restoration finally presented itself a bit later with one of the MPs who registered the issue for discussion attributing it to "the efforts of our side" ([Plenary minutes of the House of Representatives of Cyprus 13.06.02](#), 75–76). According to a response letter penned by the Scientific Technical Chamber of Cyprus (ETEK)²⁴ to the President of the Republic in regard to its positions on the Monastery's conservation and restoration, the latter was initiated by the UN as a way of promoting bi-communal "cooperation and rapprochement."

Together with the Cyprus government, the UN gave the United Nations Office for Project Services²⁵ (UNOPS) the responsibility to coordinate the works on two monuments which were chosen in consultation with the Holy Archdiocese and the EVKAF.²⁶ These were respectively the Apostolos Andreas Monastery and the Hala Sultan Tekke ([ETEK Information Bulletin, 01.2004](#), 5).²⁷ According to the U.S. *Department of State Cyprus International Religious Freedom Report* (2003), the U.S. Embassy worked with the U.N. to obtain the two sides' agreement for the initiation of the restoration of what it characterized as two of the island's "most significant religious sites."²⁸

The restoration of the two "important cultural sites" was funded by the USAID ([U.S. Agency for International Development Press Release 5.06.2002](#)) and was supported by the Bi-communal Development Program (BDP).²⁹ By being emplaced within the BDP's actions, it became part of the peace process, creating a space for bi-communal collaboration and for "sharing" as mutual engagement and reciprocity.

In 2000, a statement issued by the Office of the Spokesman for the then Secretary-General Kofi Annan (17.01.2000) announced the undertaking of the first phase of the restoration projects by a partnership of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United States. The press release characterized the sites as "highly significant cultural sites" and the project, as "a very constructive step forward" (UN Press Release SG/SM/7278, January 17, 2000). Although it is not clarified toward what this constructive "step forward" was made, since the restorations were supported the BDP, it is safe to assume that it is towards a peaceful settlement of the Cyprus Issue.

Restoration works began in 2001 and in 2002, a press release by the [U.S. Agency for International Development \(5.06.2002\)](#), "announced" that the projects' "initial phase" was completed. The announcement confirmed the projects' aim of bi-communal collaboration, noting that they "promote mutual understanding and tolerance between the geographically separated Greek and Turkish Cypriot" (U.S.

Agency for International Development Press Release, July 05, 2002). Statements were included by USAID Assistant Administrator, who characterized the restoration as “a sign of mutual respect for the island’s multi-ethnic past and a symbol of peaceful coexistence” and by U.S. Ambassador to Cyprus, who talked about it as “an inspiring example of two sides with unresolved differences cooperating to preserve their shared cultural heritage.”

The incorporation of the restorations into the peace process points to a type of “heritage diplomacy” (Winter, 2015)³⁰ between the Greek and the Turkish Cypriots whose past becomes “subject to exchanges, collaborations and forms of cooperative governance” (Winter, 2015, 1007). Through its spatio-material expressions, pilgrimage thus opened up a space for modes of interaction that are different than the ones scholars usually focus on when dealing with adherents of different religions attending the same sacred sites (e.g. microlevel interactions that can be observed at the shrines). At the same time, the choice to restore a Christian and a Muslim site may also be thought to reinforce the “ethno-national/ethno-religious identities” (Walasek, 2016b, 224–225) of the Greek mainly Christian and the Turkish mainly Muslim Cypriot communities (see Makaš, 2007, 324–9 on the “three buildings, three nations” World Bank project in Bosnia, cited in Walasek, 2016b, 225).

Contesting the plans for Apostolos Andreas

While some of the works scheduled for the Monastery were completed (see “Cyprus Bi-Communal Development Program Evaluation,” Final Report, 25.05.04), the church itself failed to be restored owing to a controversy caused by the proposed restoration designs. The designs suggested that parts of the structure (e.g. the rooms/“cells” on top of the temple) be demolished. It was argued that the rooms on top of the temple burdened the structure and needed to be removed so that the structure would be supported and conserved. The rooms were also seen as having no archaeological value (see Kokkinoftas, 2009, 223).

Those who objected to the plans projected arguments regarding preserving memory (cf. Kokkinoftas, 2009, 223; Hendrich, 2013) and respecting the site. A Metropolitan for example is quoted by a newspaper as saying that what would be demolished was important “architecturally, but particularly [important] for the memory of our occupied territories [...] we have to respect the monument and the memory and the enclaved.” The same newspaper noted the insistence of the president of the Monastery’s management committee (*διαχειριστική επιτροπή*) “that the monastery [...] be preserved in its current form, as Cypriots knew it before 1974” (Vasileiou, 2003a). What was therefore important for many, especially for the Monastery’s management and the Karpasia’s coordinating committees, was the preservation of the Monastery’s “last known state” (Hadžimuhamedović, 2016, 271) and with it the hope for return³¹.

The preservation of the Monastery’s pre-war state was also however related to concerns regarding the possible effects of changes to the Monastery on other monuments in the occupied areas. Transformations allowed in this case would set a precedent that could legitimize transformations of occupied sites by the Turkish Cypriot authorities in the future (Report of the parliamentary Committee on Refugees-Enclaved-Missing-Adversely Affected Persons 008.05.336, 09/04/2002).

Disagreements over the restoration plans ensued both within the Holy Synod of the Church (*Fileleftheros*, 07 July, 2003a) and between the Holy Synod and the Monastery's management committee. This disagreement was highly problematic since both needed to consent for the restoration to proceed. The Church and the management committee were not however the only ones discussing the restoration. This was also discussed in two meetings of the Committee on Refugees-Enclaved-Missing-Adversely Affected Persons (30/01/02 and 03/04/02). Indicative of the complexity and institutional challenges posed by the endeavor is the number and variety of actors invited to the meetings. Apart from MPs, represented were among others, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, of Education and Culture and of Transport and Works (Department of Antiquities), ETEK, the Famagusta Municipality, the Association of Cypriot Archaeologists, the Holy Archdiocese of Cyprus and the Monastery of Apostolos Andreas's management committee ([Report of the parliamentary Committee on Refugees-Enclaved-Missing-Adversely Affected Persons, 008.05.336, 09/04/2002](#))³².

The Committee submitted its report to the parliament for discussion ([Plenary minutes of the House of Representatives of Cyprus 13.06.02, 14.11.02 and 21.11.02](#)). In the discussion of November 14, 2002, a *DHKO* MP said that the third phase of the plans entailed the demolition of several build parts that would leave the church naked and unrecognizable even to "Apostolos Andreas himself." Citing The Antiquities (Amendment) Law of 1996³³ and the 1964 Venice Charter³⁴, he connected the preservation of the past (and future) with the Monastery's conservation in its present form.

Every [...] stone has its history [...] The people loved Apostolos Andreas as it is today [...] The removal of all these, progressively removes the historical past and leads to the gradual destruction of the monastery's future. The removal of the monastery's historical core amounts to the actual removal of a fundamental part of the memory of the Church of Cyprus's history, with the constant aim of fading the memory of little elementary school children who recognize without inhibiting thought, on the covers of their exercise books, the image of the Monastery [...] with the reminder: "I Do not Forget." ([Plenary minutes of the House of Representatives of Cyprus 14.11.02, 108–109](#)).

Alluding to the educational policy of "I Do not Forget," the MP pointed to the need for the post war generations to be able to recognize the occupied sites, the visual representations of which they grew up with, when they actually see them in person.

A year after the Parliament's discussion, MPs proposed a law aiming to "designat[e] the monastery [...] as an ancient monument."³⁵ Although the Monastery's declaration as an "antiquity" would "affect the property rights which w[ould] be subject to restrictions arising from the need to protect the monument as an ancient [monument]" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs quoted in [Report of the parliamentary Committee on Refugees-Enclaved-Missing-Adversely Affected Persons, 008.05.336, 09/04/2002](#)), all agreed to it apart from ETEK, which expressed its concerns regarding the possible consequences of such a change in status.³⁶ According to a newspaper article, in ETEK's view, the aim was to obstruct the restoration as this was decided

by the Minstrel Council, with the potential of causing diplomatic problems (Vasileiou, 2003b).

The Minstrel Council's decision referred to here had been made a month before, and it entailed the commencement of the restoration (CNA, October 15, 2003). According to what seems as an official release, the Council decided to proceed with UNOPS's proposal because there was no alternative to it other than the Monastery's collapse. The release concluded by reminding everyone of the Monastery's occupied status and the limited options available for its preservation (*Fileleftheros*, October 17, 2003b). The reasons for the Council's decision therefore seem to have been pragmatic; for the Monastery to be restored and for the opportunity not to be lost.

Upon the Ministerial Council's decision to proceed with the restoration, the Monastery's management committee sent a letter to the president of the Republic asking for its reversal on the grounds that both he and the Minister of Foreign Affairs were absent from the meeting where the decision was made (Vasileiou, 2003c). The journalist reporting this cites one of the management committee's members as saying that, the enclaved Greek Cypriots would intervene if plans proceeded.

In the end, UNOPS informed Cyprus that the money would not be given for the Monastery's restoration because the necessary consents were not provided. This was confirmed by the government's spokesman, who explained that the government was not the one to make the final decision and that the rightful owners had to consent on property issues. Clarifying that the government's role was auxiliary, he further noted that, owing to the occupation the Monastery is not under the Republic's control (CNA, February 04, 2004), limiting the possibilities of intervention.

Why the restoration designs could not be adjusted is worth considering, especially since the current restoration preserved the Monastery's structure.³⁷ What is also important however is that the restoration accentuated concerns about memory, complicated ownership issues, and brought religion into the sphere of politics.

Almost fifteen years after the announcement of UNOPS's attempt, the Monastery was restored³⁸ as part of the work of the bi-communal Technical Committee on Cultural Heritage (TCCH). The project commenced in 2014 and it is linked by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to the processes of reconciliation and peacebuilding in Cyprus (<https://open.undp.org/projects/00076127>; cf. Walasek, 2016b, 213 on the Mostar Bridge). Funded by the Church of Cyprus and the EVKAF³⁹ Administration with a small, symbolic contribution by USAID⁴⁰, it became "the first heritage conservation project in Cyprus to be fully funded by both communities" and "one of UNDP's key confidence-building projects in Cyprus."⁴¹ This is not uncommon in Cyprus where, as Constantinou et al. (2012, 177) note, "the restoration of particular sites of cultural heritage has become the showcase of reconciliation efforts at local authority and civil society levels."⁴²

By being inserted within a framework of heritage preservation and conflict resolution, the restoration of the Monastery of Apostolos Andreas, becomes emblematic of intercommunal collaboration, and according to the UNDP Cyprus Senior Programme Manager at the time, of "perseverance, unity and peace."⁴³ This is visible in former President Anastasiades' tweet on the day the Monastery's deliverance after the completion of its restoration's first phase; "The completion of the work of

restoration of the Holy Monastery of Apostolos Andreas, gives a message of hope and shows the road of collaboration.”⁴⁴ On a similar tone, in the speeches they gave upon the Completion of Phase 1 of the Restoration of the Monastery of Apostolos Andreas (07/11/16), Takis Hadjidemetriou and Ali Tuncay, the Greek and Turkish Cypriot Presidents of the Committee at the time, characterized the restoration of the Monastery as a miracle of cooperation.⁴⁵

Despite being able to act as “important confidence-building measures, and indicators of progress having been achieved towards that reconciliation” (Stanley-Price, 2007, 11), restorations such as that of the Apostolos Andreas Monastery do not “mean that reconciliation has been achieved [...]” (ibid.). In the Cyprus case, this might be expectable since the conflict is still unresolved. However, restorations do not necessarily indicate or lead to reconciliation even in post-conflict contexts where settlements have been reached. Bosnia is an indicative example in this regard. With the signing of the Dayton Peace Agreement (DPA) only months after the declaration of ceasefire (Walasek, 2016a, 6), the international community pushed for the “reconciliation” of the ethno-national groups that were until recently in conflict with one another. “[T]his drive towards reconciliation” was associated with heritage restoration as something that could showcase it (14). Nevertheless, as Walasek notes, it is questionable whether heritage reconstruction “led the way towards reconciliation,” especially since the restoration of heritage was not linked by the international community to the process whereby the expelled would return as per the DPA’s terms, while the discourses relating to it had “little mention of justice or human rights for the victims of ethnic cleansing” (2016b, 255; 2016a, 13). What restorations did was rather to create an image of peaceability (cf. International Crisis Group, 2003, 5 cited in Walasek, 2016b, 254–255).

In the case of Cyprus, the point becomes particularly poignant when one considers the fact that despite the successful work of the Technical Committee on Cultural Heritage (TCCH), work for which it has been given several awards—including a European Heritage/Europa Nostra Award in the category of Dedicated Service to Heritage by Organisations & Individuals, 2021⁴⁶—use of restored religious sites is still restricted⁴⁷, a reminder that the political stalemate remains. As Gowan (2022, 525) therefore notes, in divided societies “the protection of heritage is one potential bargaining point in a wider political process” but “in isolation [it] is unlikely to offer a pathway to political settlements.”

What might be worth noting is that restoration projects in Cyprus such as the one analyzed in this paper and many of the ones undertaken by the TCCH involve religious sites. The association of such sites to ethnonational identities does not seem to render them contentious contrary to other cases of non-religious conflicts such as the one in Bosnia, where international donors were reluctant to engage in the restoration of religious sites (see Walasek, 2016b, 210)⁴⁸. Happening within the context of Cyprus’s unresolved conflict, the restoration(s) were and could not be related to the permanent return of those who fled, only made available for periodic use, something that may have made them less threatening and thus more easily agreed upon on the inter-communal level. As the reactions to the proposed restoration plan show, the restoration of the Monastery became problematic on the intracommunal level. Setting aside the disagreement between the Church of Cyprus and the Monastery’s

administrative committee, the framework in which the particular restoration took place raised issues of memory preservation and of setting a precedent for future interventions that would transform occupied sites. The latter is in its turn related to the issue of ownership but also, even if indirectly, of recognition.

The importance of ownership and recognition issues has not changed since the time of the events analyzed in this paper and this is reflected in the way that heritage works are implemented. Noting “the political sensitivities regarding the context and the aspects related to legal matters,” an evaluation report produced for the UNDP on the 6th phase of the project “Support to Cultural Heritage Monuments of great importance for Cyprus” notes that in order “to avoid becoming tangled up in issues” beyond its own control (de Moreta, 2020, 8, 23) the project “needs to work outside the traditional institutional lines,” an unusual mode of working for the UNDP (p. 20). According to the report, the TCCH can work bi-communally because it is not a legal entity (p. 8). Working as pressure groups, its members push for the implementation of works in line with the strategy of the committee, something that allows for the latter’s engagement “with higher level actors from a technical perspective” (p. 21). The way that the committee (has to) work points to the continuing salience of the wider politics of the conflict in the restoration of religious and other cultural heritage sites.

The ways in which the politics of the Cyprus conflict continue to affect religious sites even if these are restored, are also illustrated by recent claims that the Monastery of Apostolos Andreas had been built over an Islamic tomb as well as their resulting demands to build a mosque near it (see Harmanşah, 2016, 481–482). As Harmanşah notes, such claims “attempt to prove the ‘original’ Islamic character of the site” (p. 481) and are linked to assertions over precedence that are important “in a nation’s linear conception of historical time” (p. 482).

Conclusions

The Cyprus conflict transformed pilgrimages to and restorations of sacred sites into objects of negotiation inter- and intra-communally. In both the reciprocal pilgrimages and the twin restoration project, “sharing” emerges as a mutual “giving [of] ground” (Bowman 2016) on the level of political authorities.⁴⁹ “Antagonism” took the form of disagreement with political decisions in the case of the reciprocal pilgrimages, and with architectural plans in the case of the restoration project.

In both cases, “sharing” unfolded on the intercommunal level of authorities the interaction of which is mediated by the United Nations and “antagonism” (mainly) on the intra-communal level of Greek Cypriot society. This illustrates how different modalities of interaction can co-exist among different stakeholders, on different levels, for different reasons, and in various forms. These forms are, as Henig (2015, 135; 2012, 753) and others (e.g., Bowman, 1993, 2012b) have noted contingent upon “concrete historical and political processes” (Henig, 2012, 753; cf. Eade and Katic, 2014, 12); in this case, the specificities of the Cyprus conflict, its related issues of ownership, access, and recognition, and the different positions that various groups within society hold in relation to its “correct” management and resolution. In such a context, stakeholders in the Cyprus conflict, also became stakeholders in the pilgrimage, which they tried to control either by obstructing or, by enabling it.⁵⁰

The Cyprus conflict both necessitated the “sharing” that the reciprocal pilgrimages and restorations effected and also shaped the reactions to these events. In the case of the reciprocal pilgrimages, contestation essentially stemmed from the protesters’ disagreement with how the government and political leadership were handling the conflict and from the perceived implications of Greek Cypriot pilgrimage-crossings on the Cyprus Issue. The implications of the reactions to the crossings for the Cyprus Issue also shaped the government’s response to the protests. As with the crossings, so with the restorations, disagreements were produced owing to the protracted conflict which diachronically hindered the Monastery’s conservation, also making the preservation of memory important.

As the pilgrimages and restorations show, the conflict required the involvement of heritage experts, social, governmental, and other political actors, and international institutions, in the management of “religious” practices and sites (see Coleman and Eade, 2018, 11). The inter- and intra-communal politicization of the latter (see Henig, 2015, 131) in conflict situations require researchers to move through different “institutional locations” and scales of analysis (Coleman and Eade, 2018, 16; Coleman, 2021, 3).

The exploration of the complex ways in which religion, heritage, and politics intersect on different scales highlights not only the contingent nature of the relationship but also the (non-religious) issues, dilemmas, and complexities that arise from the management of pilgrimage practices and sites in areas of conflict, the institutional challenges of their maintenance, and the careful, intracommunal labor and negotiation that is needed for intercommunal relations to exist. It illustrates how pilgrimage may facilitate both inter-communal exchanges and intra-communal frictions and antagonisms, in ways that complicate simple dichotomies between “*communitas*” and “*contestation*” and “*sharing*” and “*antagonism*.” It also shows how different actors may discursively construct pilgrimage in ways that enable or obstruct certain things from happening such as, the organization of pilgrimages and the restoration of sites.

The government, for example, insisted on the religious and humanitarian character of the pilgrimages therefore facilitating them. Those who contested them highlighted their political character and implications—implications because of which the government insisted on their religious character in the first place—in an attempt to obstruct them. In the end, the pilgrimages were suspended for an unrelated reason, thus becoming “*emblematic of a wider but always vulnerable concord*” (Simon Coleman, personal communication). As with the pilgrimages, the insertion of the restorations into the peace process, together with the pairing of a Christian and a Muslim site, allowed for their preservation. The government (via its Council of Ministers) attempted to facilitate the works by adopting a pragmatic attitude over the restoration plans which others contested. A law that would declare the Monastery an ancient monument was proposed, with some suggesting that this aimed at obstructing the restoration and the changes that it foresaw.

At another level, the events that I have explored illustrate how, against arguments regarding the “*clash of civilizations*” (Huntington, 1993, 1996), religion, because it can appear to be non-political, can provide fertile ground for intercommunal negotiation and collaboration. The intracommunal reactions to them however also point to

the fact that conflicts, when unresolved, can remain “hot” in the social and political fields long after they become “frozen” in the fields of battle. The nature of the Cyprus conflict—protracted yet non-violent—may more easily allow for the undertaking of trust-building and “multidirectional diplomacy” initiatives whereby “more or less acceptable modalities of living together *in conflict*” are negotiated (Constantinou, 2012, 456). One can think for example of the stated purpose of the Technical Committees that were created in 2008; their aim is “to seek immediate solutions to everyday problems arising from the division of the island [...]” (UN Security Council Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Operation in Cyprus, S/2008/353, 1) through confidence-building measures that will also encourage intercommunal interactions⁵¹ (UN Security Council Report of the Secretary-General on his mission of good offices in Cyprus S/2009/610, 1).

Such confidence-building measures are hard to imagine in cases of conflict where eruptions of violence frequently occur and they can be taken in preparation or as a result of or/and anticipation of negotiations that take place on the level of high politics in regard to the resolution of the conflict. They can lead to the establishment of a *modus vivendi*—explained by Constantinou in the context of Cyprus as agreements that are “limited or temporary” in scope but which nevertheless allow the continuation of life despite the persistence of serious differences (2013, 157). Such agreements might not alter ultimate or preferred ends and do not necessarily suspend “questions of sovereignty” (Bryant and Hatay, 2021, 48). The question of sovereignty and its related issue of recognition were in fact very much present in the ways in which the pilgrimages and the restorations were organized and mediated. Nevertheless, as shown by the multi-institutional and multi-scalar approach to the events that are analyzed in the paper (see Coleman and Eade, 2018, 16; Coleman, 2021, 3), such “diplomatic” initiatives do not go uncontested even within communities (c.f. Constantinou, 2012: 457). This can partly at least be explained in relation to the danger that Constantinou rightly points out regarding the perpetuation of an “unjust status quo” through the establishment of a *modus vivendi* in conditions of unresolved conflict (2013: 157; 2012: 455, 456).

The reactions to the pilgrimages and the restoration highlight how fragile such a *modus vivendi* can be in the context of an unresolved conflict and how carefully it needs to be negotiated by all actors involved, including political authorities, in order for it to be able to accomplish pragmatic goals as well as create communication channels between conflicting sides.

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Notes

1. For Hayden what is manifested at shrines frequented by members of different religions is “antagonistic tolerance” (2002; Hayden *et al.*, 2016); “a mode of competitive sharing of space [...]” whereby communities are tolerant in that they peacefully live in close proximity, but antagonistic in that they “define themselves as

separate communities with different and often competing interests” (Hayden *et al.*, 2016, 1). Hayden holds that coexistence may be a pragmatic attitude (2002, 205) of competing groups that cannot overcome one another (Hayden, 2002, 206). Such “toleration” may also be manifested in occasions of clear dominance of one group over others (Hayden *et al.*, 2016) which results in violence and material “transformation of sites” when threatened (p. 10).

2. The latter two have been discussed by scholars studying sacred sites frequented by adherents of different religions. “Mixing” is sometimes preferred over “sharing” as it does not presuppose amity or, antagonism (see Bowman, 2010, 199; Bowman, 2012b, 8, note 5). I would like to thank [...] for pointing out the continuities between the debates regarding “comunitas” and “contestation” and “sharing” and “antagonism”.

3. See also Coleman and Eade (2004, 2) on the Turners’ (1978) “place-centred approach to [...] sacred travel.”

4. While examining “the interactions of secular authorities and religious communities” (Hayden *et al.*, 2016, 22) Hayden *et al.* (2016) for example, follow “sequence[s] of multiple stages of transformations” (161) of sacred sites.

5. Barkan and Barkey (2015b) for example, “introduc[e] politics and state policies into” the analysis of “shared” sacred sites (p. 20), arguing that the choreographies of such spaces and whether they will be “conflictual or collaborative,” are the combined product “of daily life of sacred sites and high politics” (p. 27).

6. Simon Coleman uses the notion of “articulation” to denote “interrelations of varying degrees of flexibility, explicitness and force” (2021, 5, 7–9).

7. For this see also Hendrich (2013).

8. In looking at the intracommunal aspect of the events, I build on David Henig (2015). In his examination of “Bosnian Muslim sacred sites” (p. 135), Henig performs an intracommunal instead of an intercommunal analysis (pp. 154, 131) to trace “the agency of social actors” (p. 135). This, he notes, “enables researchers to move through various scales” of analysis (pp. 134, 135). While Henig uses intracommunal as intraconfessional (p. 135), I use “community” to denote Cyprus’s Greek (mainly Orthodox) and Turkish (mainly Muslim) ethnic communities.

9. These materials are mainly used for information and are not analyzed in relation to how they construct the events. Acknowledging the limitations of the approach, I complement and check them against each other whenever possible.

10. A population that resided in the northern part of the island after 1974 was allowed to remain under the Third Vienna Agreement (1975) ([https://www.pio.gov.cy/en/agreements-the-third-vienna-agreement-\(2-august-1975\).html](https://www.pio.gov.cy/en/agreements-the-third-vienna-agreement-(2-august-1975).html)). In 1974 this was a population of 20,000 Greek Cypriots and Maronites. The current number is 300 (<https://mfa.gov.cy/turkish-military-invasion-and-occupation.html>). In 1997 there were approximately 340 Turkish Cypriots in the island’s south (Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Operation in Cyprus, S/1997/962, 8 December 1997, paragraph 22). Greek-Cypriots residing in the occupied areas are referred to as “enclaved” (Hadjiyanni, 2002, 62, note 2), “*englovismenoi*.”

11. The Monastery was and is still visited by Muslim Turkish Cypriots as well (Hatay, 2015, 83–84; Harmanşah, 2016, 479).

12. This followed the European Union’s “decision [...] to delay a decision granting Turkey candidate status” (Broome, 2005, 35) while “agreeing to start direct accession negotiations with the [...] Republic of Cyprus. The Turkish-Cypriot leadership decided that all contact with Greek Cypriots [...] would stop until they were accepted as an equal and recognized partner in these negotiations and until Turkey was placed on the list of candidates for European Union membership” (p. 41).

13. Isaak was killed in the “United Nations Buffer Zone” by “Turkish Cypriot and Turkish extremists called Grey Wolves.” (Psaltis *et al.*, 2014, 72) The incidents were a culmination of an anti-occupation protest which was organized by the Cypriot Motorcycle Federation. The intention was to cross the line of ceasefire up to Kyrenia (Fomina, 2019, 69). On Isaak’s funeral, a “spontaneous demonstration” (p. 71) ended in the killing of Solomos Solomou, Isaak’s cousin, “by Turkish soldiers and officers” (Psaltis *et al.*, 2014, 72).

14. See for example S/1997/437.

15. “TRNC” was unilaterally declared by the Turkish side in 1983 in occupied Cyprus and was declared “legally invalid” in the Security Council Resolutions 541 (1983) and 550 (1984).

16. According to news reports, along with Turkish Cypriot pilgrims, Turkish settlers (see CNA 31 January 1998g) and members of the Turkish National Intelligence Organization also crossed (Makrides, 1997).

17. PAK's intentions had been announced for the September 13, 1998 pilgrimage. PAK also sent letters to the president and the leaders of the Greek Cypriot political parties, asking for the pilgrimages to stop (Christou, 1998c).
18. "PAK is a marginal organization with ties to the Greek Orthodox Church [...] which is against a federal solution of the Cyprus issue" (Psaltis *et al.*, 2014, 73, note 14).
19. Requests made for visits to other occupied religious sites were also forwarded to the UN, but the Turkish Cypriot response was negative. The Commissioner attributed "[t]he fact that the Turks only allow visits to [...] Apostolos Andreas [...] to the presence of an enclaved [Greek Cypriot] population in the area" (Hatzivasilis, 1998b, 24).
20. The equivalent words in Greek ["*ως προσκυνητές και όχι ως προσκυνημένοι*"] create a word play that cannot be rendered as such in English. I want to thank Georgios Floros for the translation.
21. According to Turkish Cypriot newspaper reports "the "authorities" in the north had issued a warning to Greek Cypriot police through UNFICYP to keep demonstrators in line and away from the buffer zone" (Christou, 1998a).
22. PAK's actions were the culmination of a campaign it had been conducting, "[...] with the stated purpose of dissuading foreign tourists from crossing to the northern part of the island" [*Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations operation in Cyprus (S/1996/1016)*].
23. Concerns in regard to the Monastery's state were also raised in the past (see *PIO Press Release, No. 2, 11/04/93*).
24. This acts as "the statutory Technical Adviser of the State" (http://www.cea.org.cy/en/we_qualify/επιστημονικό-τεχνικό-επιμελητήριο-κ).
25. On the aims and work of UNOPS see <https://www.unops.org/about>.
26. "Muslim Pious Foundations" (Harmaşah, 2016, 481).
27. According to a newsletter of the Cyprus embassy in Washington, the Cyprus Antiquity Department "regularly maintained" the Hala Sultan but work was "needed on the surrounding grounds and gardens" (*Cyprus, February 2000*).
28. Suad Amiry and Khaldun Bshara (2007, 69) mention similar examples of restoration, protection, and rehabilitation in the context of Israel-Palestine; a Synagogue in Jericho which is under the jurisdiction of Palestinians and an Arab House under the jurisdiction of the Israelis in Acre. The authors note however how rare such projects are.
29. The BDP encourages collaborative work between the Greek and the Turkish Cypriots on projects of common interest with the aim of promoting the peace process (Cyprus Bi-Communal Development Program Evaluation, Final Report, 25 May 2004, 65).
30. Winter (2015, 1007) defines heritage diplomacy "as a set of processes whereby cultural and natural pasts shared between and across nations become subject to exchanges, collaborations and forms of cooperative governance" (Winter, 2015, 1007). I use it not for nations but for communities.
31. For the arguments of both sides see Kokkinofas (2009, 223).
32. Multiple actors were also present at the discussion of the parliamentary Committee on Refugees-Enclaved-Missing-Adversely Affected Persons on issues regarding the maintenance and "rescue" of the Monastery and of "our entire religious and cultural heritage in the occupied territories" (see *Plenary minutes of the House of Representatives of Cyprus 28.01.99, 97-98*).
33. This defines "antiquity" as "any object [...] constructed [...] before 1850 AD." The Law clarifies that "for works of ecclesiastical or folk art of great archaeological or artistic or historical importance, the year 1940 AD will be considered [...]" [*The Antiquities (Amendment) Law of 1996, N. 4(1)/96* (in Greek), http://www.cylaw.org/nomoi/arith/1996_1_004.pdf]. According to the MP, the "cells" were dated 1920 (*Plenary minutes of the House of Representatives of Cyprus 14.11.02, 106*). According to Kokkinofas (2009, 39), they were probably built in the 1930s.
34. *International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites (The Venice Charter 1964)*. The MP cited article 11 according to which "[t]he valid contributions of all periods to the building [...] must be respected" (https://www.icomos.org/charters/venice_e.pdf).
35. The Antiquities (Amendment) Law of 2003 (File No. 23.02.053.2003). Deposited 10.07.2003. See also: *Plenary minutes of the House of Representatives of Cyprus, H' Parliamentary Period- Synod B' Meeting of 10th July 2003 (No 36)*. http://www2.parliament.cy/parliamentgr/008_01/praktiko2003-07-10.doc.
36. ETEK suggested proceeding with the proposed designs and later restoring the Monastery's current form (Shiza, 2003).

37. This is the work of the Technical Committee on Cultural Heritage (TCCH) and its undertaking was announced in February 2012 it [Ανακοίνωση της Τεχνικής Επιτροπής για την Πολιτιστική Κληρονομιά 22/02/12, <http://www.moi.gov.cy/moi/pio/pio.nsf/0/5367B1906C0D4915C22579AC004DAEB5?Opendocument> (accessed 10/9/16)]. The TCCH was created in 2008 along with other technical committees, when the Greek and Turkish Cypriot “leaders agreed on a path towards a comprehensive settlement” of the Cyprus Issue [See UNFICYP, ABOUT THE GOOD OFFICES, <https://unficyp.unmissions.org/about-good-offices> and UN Security Council, *Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations operation in Cyprus, S/2008/353*]. The Committee sees the protection of cultural heritage as “broadening [...] cooperation between the” Greek and the Turkish Cypriots, and “provide[s] a [...] mechanism for” preserving, protecting and restoring Cyprus’s “immovable cultural heritage” (The Technical Committee on Cultural Heritage in Cyprus 2015: 3). Most of its funding comes from the European Union (The Technical Committee on Cultural Heritage in Cyprus, 2018. *2008–2018: Ten years working together for our common heritage*, p. 12). According to Richard Gowan the Committee was partly modelled “on the Reconstruction Implementation Commission in Kosovo” (2022, 525; cf. Jaramillo, 2018, 166). For work on the TCCH see Goryunova and Wei, 2021 and Tuncay, 2016. For a comparison of the TCCH in Cyprus and the structures and experiences of the Balkans see Jaramillo, 2018, 166–171 and for a comparison of Cyprus, Kosovo, and Mali see Gowan (2022).

38. Hadjisavvas notes that a first “shared effort [...] for a single monument situated on both sides” was made in the 1990s and it involved Nicosia’s medieval walls, the conservation of which was funded by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (2015, 133). “In the late 1970s the mayors of the two sides of Nicosia [...] decided to cooperate on [...] a joint sewerage system [...] The success [...] encouraged the duo to bring together a bicomunal team [...] who in the late 1980s formulated a “Nicosia Master Plan,” a scheme for cooperative regeneration of the city” (Bose, 2007, 41). For the Nicosia Master Plan see Stanley-Price, 2007, 11; Chechi, 2017, 196; Balderstone, 2010, 234, 237; Hocknell, 2001, 165–170, 181, Demetriou, 2001, 237.

39. The “Muslim Pious Foundations” (Harmanşah, 2016, 481).

40. UNDP-PFF 222/13 PRESS RELEASE (17.09.13); UNDP CY TCCH Publication (October 2018): 2008–2018: *10 years working together for our common heritage*, 15, 46.

41. UNDP CY TCCH Publication (October 2018): 2008–2018: *10 years working together for our common heritage*, 46.

42. Another example of a complicated restoration project of a religious site that in the end was linked to reconciliation even if an interreligious one is that of the Holy Sepulchre or Church of the Anastasis in Jerusalem. The Greek and Armenian Orthodox and the Roman Catholic communities agreed to collaborate so as to restore the shrine after a protracted period of discussions and negotiation (Cohen, 2008, 95). When Pope Paul VI’s intended visit to the Holy Land was announced in the 1960s, the restoration was linked to interchurch reconciliation (Cohen, 2008, 146). According to Cohen (2008, 239), the restoration of the Holy Sepulchre “is [...] a paradigm of conflict management, not of conflict resolution”. For more on the restoration of the Holy Sepulchre see Cohen, 2008.

43. Speech by Tiziana Zennaro, UNDP Cyprus Senior Programme Manager, Restoration of the Monastery of Apostolos Andreas Phase 1—Completion Ceremony, 7 November 2016.

44. 07.11.16, <https://twitter.com/AnastasiadesCY/status/795617613611143169/photo/1>

45. Restoration of the Monastery of Apostolos Andreas, Phase 1 Completion Media Site Visit, November 7, 2016 (Speeches).

46. <https://www.europanostra.org/europe-top-heritage-awards-honour-24-exemplary-achievements-from-18-countries/>

47. In May 2016 Turkish Cypriot authorities restricted religious services in churches in the north to once a year with the exception of Apostolos Andreas (Karpasia), St. Barnabas (Famagusta), St. Mamas (Morphou) and St George Exorinos (Famagusta). Apostolos Andreas, St. Barnabas and St. Mamas would be “open for religious services throughout the year” whereas St George Exorinos “would be the site of monthly religious services” (2016 International Religious Freedom Report; Report of the Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights on her mission to Cyprus, A/HRC/34/56/Add.1, 24 February 2017, 17). In general, Greek Orthodox and Maronite populations that reside in the occupied areas can hold liturgies or masses with designated priests/clergy in designated functional churches. If religious services are to be held at churches or monasteries other than the designated ones or/and by priests other than the ones “officially pre-designated to conduct services” permission needs to be sought from the authorities. For services in which

Cypriots not residing in the occupied areas but traveling from the south participate, specific permission is required (2016 International Religious Freedom Report). The requests are facilitated by the United Nations (UN Security Council Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations operation in Cyprus, 9 January 2017, S/2017/20).

48. The Cyprus conflict is not seen as a religious conflict (Report of the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief 2012, 8, 9).

49. Bowman develops the idea of “giving ground” in the context of shared holy places in the post-Ottoman Mediterranean” (2016, 259) from Sorokin (1999).

50. Although pilgrimages in general cannot be fully controlled by religious and/or state authorities (Eade and Katic, 2014, 6; Coleman, 2021, 9), the pilgrimages analyzed in this paper were very tightly controlled in terms of both time and movement owing to the context in which they were taking place.

51. According to Novosseloff (2021, 112), the technical committees fall under “the Track I process” since their establishment took place “in the context of the talks” for the resolution of the Cyprus Problem. McGarry and Loizides (2021, 150) see technical committees such as the Technical Committee on Cultural Heritage as means through which “proto-federal structures” are developed by the United Nations.

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