

## CYPRUS

The cultural heritage in the territories occupied by the Turkish forces since 1974 are still inaccessible to the Department of Antiquities. Reports reaching the Department of Antiquities reveal the continued destruction of monasteries, churches and cemeteries in an effort to obliterate aspects of Cyprus's cultural heritage. Churches are demolished or used as bars or hotels in contradiction to their original purpose or function. Recently, the Church of Prophet Avvacum at Rizokarpaso was completely demolished.

The Venetian Walls of Nicosia, constructed in 1567, encircle the old city – which is itself divided in the Greek and Turkish sectors. As a result, part of the Venetian Walls is within the Turkish sector and in the so-called neutral zone. There have been serious problems with the preservation of the walls in this particular area. Since 1997, the Department of Antiquities has been pressing for measures to avert the danger of collapse, by writing to the relevant authorities who have jurisdiction over the area i.e. the United Nations. The complexity of the political situation prevented the implementation of measures for the restoration of the Wall in the neutral zones, until part of the Wall close to the Roccas Bastion actually collapsed after the heavy rains of winter 2001. Fortunately, much pressure on the part of the Department of Antiquities to the authorities responsible for the area resulted in an agreement for the restoration of the collapsing part of the Wall.

In Nicosia, there is an ongoing struggle to preserve the antiquities on St. George's Hill (PA.SY.D.Y. Hill), an area inhabited for the largest part of antiquity, where ongoing excavations held since 1996 are revealing successive phases of occupation from the prehistoric period to the present day.

The site will be used for the construction of the new House of Representatives. Excavations have revealed workshops and domestic remains which date from the Cypro-Achaic to the Hellenistic period, (7th–1st centuries BC) associated with a large cemetery previously excavated to the south of the present site and an olive press which forms part of the site. It seems that the architectural remains and road system found belong to the ancient predecessor of the city of Nicosia. On the north part of the Hill the remains of a church with successive phases from the Early Christian to Byzantine and Mediaeval periods have been excavated. Although the remains on the hill have been seriously disturbed by modern constructions, a large part of the site has been excavated and is yielding significant information on the history of Nicosia, which was hitherto little known and depended on small scale rescue excavations of the early and middle part of the 20th century. In addition there may not be another opportunity to excavate on this scale again within the city. Excavations have been conducted with labourers and students since February and are likely to continue without break throughout the year, as much pressure is exerted on the Department of Antiquities to complete excavations as soon as possible. UNESCO has already been warned by concerned individuals. Archaeologists and many inhabitants of Nicosia are in favour of the preservation of the site as an archaeological park.

Another development project, a two-storey underground car-park is planned to be constructed within the Moat of the Venetian Wall in Nicosia, destroying the authenticity of the monument, in spite of the fact that the monument is State-owned and protected by the Antiquities Law. There is an ongoing disagreement on the subject (already referred to in the 2001/2002 issue of *Heritage at Risk*), between the Department of Antiquities and the authorities involved (Town Planning Bureau and Municipality of Nicosia), which is still unresolved.

ICOMOS CYPRUS

## Preserving the Mediaeval Walls of Nicosia

Nicosia is perhaps the oldest capital city in the Mediterranean. It has been inhabited without break since at least the Chalcolithic period (4000 BC). The town became the capital of the island during the 11th century, after the abandonment of the coastal towns due to the Arab raids. Only a few monuments survive from the Byzantine period as most of them were remodelled by the Frankish Kings of the Lusignan dynasty; others were demolished later by the Venetians in order to build another smaller fortification around the city. Examples of the French gothic architecture are the cathedral of St. Sophia (in the heart of the historic city), the church of St. George known as Bedestan, and some smaller churches. Of the famous Lusignan Palace only one vaulted hall has survived, known today as Kasteliotissa. The most distinctive feature of the town is a massive Venetian Wall dating to the year 1567. This circular stone monument, 5 kilometres in circumference, has around its perimeter 11 projecting heart-shaped bastions that form a many-pointed star. It is in fact the prototype of the fortified town of Palmanova in Italy that was built by the Venetians in 1593. This bastion and stellar city model was later adopted in Spain and in the rest of Europe.

### The Venetian Walls of Nicosia

The consolidation and restoration of the Venetian Walls of Nicosia was one of the priorities of the Department of Antiquities during the first years of the 1990s. Although a systematic restoration plan was launched starting from the Paphos Gate – one of the three original entrances to the mediaeval town – this work could not be completed unless substantial financing was secured for at least the following 5 years. For this reason we applied to UNHCR for funding.

Before securing any funding, we had decided that any serious programme of restoration would be incomplete without a detailed architectural survey of the state of preservation of the wall in areas populated by the Greek and by the Turks. Photogrammetry was considered the most accurate method to achieve this, and quick at the same time. A well-equipped and experienced group of the Institute for the Restoration of Monuments of Sofia was commissioned by UNDP to undertake this task. The recording took place in November 1994 and a year later all plans were handed to UNDP.

Large-scale conservation and restoration work commenced in 1996, after the approval of our application by UNHCR. This ambitious 5-year project of conservation undertaken by the Department of Antiquities is at the final stage of implementation. A similar project has been undertaken in the northern part of the town under the auspices of UNOPS (United Nations Office for Project Services) which replaced UNHCR. The town of Nicosia, however, is the only divided capital city in Europe. For 28 years, since the 1974 Turkish invasion, no consolidation work has been carried out in the buffer zone between the dividing line of the Greek-Cypriot and the Turkish-Cypriot sectors of the town.

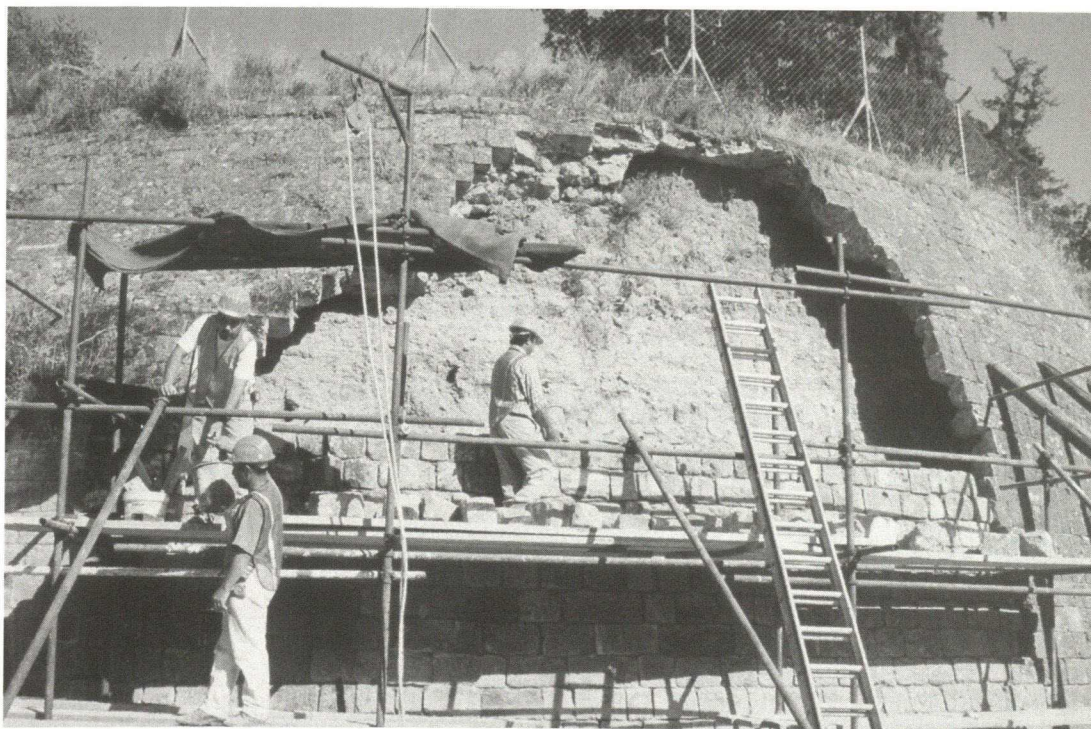
### The Roccas Bastion

The Roccas bastion, the object of this discussion, is situated within the buffer zone. As a result of a lengthy period of neglect and the





The Roccas bastion after the destruction caused by rainfall



The Roccas bastion during conservation work



construction of military works at the top of the bastion, this particular section of the fortifications was in a bad state of preservation. Since October 1997 we have appealed many times to the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary General of the United Nations in Cyprus to allow us access for the restoration of this part of the wall. The Turkish army, however, refused repeatedly to give its consent to the UN. Following the heavy rains of the first weeks of December 2001, a part of the Roccas bastion collapsed. The Department of Antiquities, facing the eventual threat of the complete destruction of the bastion, took some measures for the bastion's protection by supporting the stone revetment covering the earthen core of the walls. One must have in mind that the actual configuration of the Venetian Walls is not the original one. They were originally constructed of earth with a mudbrick revetment. This would have made them less vulnerable to cannon bombardments. During times of peace they would be covered with a thin stone or brick revetment to protect them from rain and frost. During war time, this thin protective layer would be taken away. The actual thick stone revetment of the Walls dates to the Ottoman period.

The Turkish army asked UN forces in Cyprus to stop our intervention. At this time I was in Helsinki attending the World Heritage Committee meeting and had the chance to discuss the problem with Mounir Bouchenaki, Assistant Director General for Culture at UNESCO. Following his suggestion we wrote to the Director General of UNESCO, while our Ministry of Foreign Affairs contacted the UN Secretary General, emphasising his responsibility because the buffer zone falls within UN jurisdiction. The timing was perfect because of the long discussion both in the UN and the 31st session of the UNESCO General Assembly about the destruction of the Bamiyan Buddhas in Afghanistan.

After long discussions between the Programme Manager of UNOPS and myself, we found a formula of intervention acceptable to all sides. We reached this compromise for the benefit of the

monument. The restoration is carried out by specialised craftsmen of the Department of Antiquities and labourers from the Turkish Cypriot sector of Nicosia. Although the technical and scientific responsibility lies with the Department of Antiquities, the implementing agency is UNOPS, which financed the whole project. It is the first time since the Turkish invasion and the division of Cyprus that Greek-Cypriots and Turkish-Cypriots work together for the restoration of a monument. This successful undertaking, which gives optimistic messages for a future settlement of the Cyprus problem, encouraged all of us to continue the conservation work of the walls in the remaining part of the buffer zone.

The actual restoration work of the 40-square-metre collapsed section of the Roccas bastion and 55 square metres of the part of the curtain wall between the Roccas and the Tripoli bastions overlooking the Paphos road consisted of the following activities: cleaning all plant growth; fixing and consolidating the rubble stone-faced section; removing the badly eroded stones or the architectural blocks belonging to older Gothic buildings that were used for the construction of certain parts of the bastion, and replacing new stones where needed; grouting and consolidating the remaining revetment stones; cleaning the existing revetment stones with mechanical means; filling the hollow parts (between the rubble stones and the revetment stones) where needed with a mixture of water, lime and a small amount of cement; and, lastly, constructing a stone pavement measuring between 50 and 85 centimetres running along the top on the bastion, in order to prevent the water infiltration – one of the main causes of deterioration of the Walls.

All the work is based on the photogrammetric survey undertaken in 1994. The restoration project of the Roccas bastion is a Bi-Communal Development Programme that aims at promoting the peace-building process in Cyprus by encouraging Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities to work together in the preparation and implementation of projects in areas of common concern.

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The Roccas bastion after conservation