

CYPRUS

Development constitutes one of the most common factors that affect the cultural heritage of Cyprus. The occurrence of ancient remains during construction projects is very common and the solution that is usually suggested is the incorporation of archaeological sites within the development projects, sometimes with detrimental results for both the ancient site and the modern buildings. The pressures of pre-fixed excavation deadlines often lead to incomplete or inaccurate documentation and to the consequent loss of information.

The archaeological site on the Hill of Agios Georgios (PA.SY.D.Y), Nicosia

The following is a progress report for the site of Agios Georgios (PA.SY.D.Y) and it intends to provide a follow-up of the report for the period 2004/5 (see *Heritage at Risk* 2004/2005, pp. 53/54).

The proposal to build the new House of Representatives on the Hill of Saint George, Nicosia, problematic because antiquities were found after the approval of the building plans (that were selected as a result of an architectural competition), is still pending. Superimposed strata have been revealed, belonging to various phases of the city's history. The site provides evidence for the early habitation of Nicosia during the Late Chalcolithic period (mid – 3rd millennium B.C.), taking back the city's history by about three centuries. The history of Cyprus' capital, although one of the longest in the Mediterranean, was little known to its population. One has to bear in mind that the modern city completely overlies its ancient forerunners and that until very recently no large-scale excavations had ever been undertaken to document its history.

Successive occupation at the site dates from the Archaic period to the end of the Hellenistic period and provides new evidence for the settlement, religion, economy and social organization during

these periods. Furthermore, important evidence has been uncovered, possibly related to the ancient kingdom of Ledra, which has not been identified so far. In addition, architectural remains assignable to the early Christian period until the 16th century A.D., when the city was shifted within the newly built fortifications of the Venetian period, constitute evidence of the city's later historical periods. The study of the remains and in general of the material unearthed (burials, moveable objects etc) will enhance our understanding of the history of Cyprus' capital city and its population.

Suggestions made by the Department of Antiquities, Cyprus, related to the re-designing of the building so that it takes into account the preservation of the excavated remains, have been forwarded and are still being examined by the bodies concerned. The Department of Antiquities, Cyprus, in collaboration with the Town Planning Bureau and the Department of Public Works, has taken on preliminary works for landscaping and making the site partly accessible to the general public. However, no final landscaping or sheltering of the vulnerable parts of the site may be possible before a final decision is made on the future of the site. The excavated remains are conserved annually, but still remain exposed to the elements with irreversible results.

Palaion Demarcheion, Nicosia

The following is a progress report for the site of Palaion Demarcheion in the walled city of Nicosia and it intends to provide a follow-up of the report for the period 2004/5 (see *Heritage at Risk* 2004/2005, pp. 53/54). Unfortunately, the procedures for the completion of the plans for the future of the site are still delayed and as a result, long-term decisions for the conservation, preservation and presentation of the site to the public cannot be made.

The archaeological site on the Hill of Agios Georgios, Nicosia



Despite the fact that the political and ecclesiastical history of the Byzantine and medieval capital of Cyprus, Nicosia, is well documented by written sources, matters such as its topography, architecture, town-planning and the everyday life of its inhabitants are little known. These matters can be clarified by combining the information from the sources with archaeological research. Rarely are archaeologists given the chance to excavate a large area in a busy urban centre, and even more rarely they are given the chance to excavate a large area with undisturbed archaeological strata.

That is why the site of Palaion Demarcheion in the centre of the walled city of Nicosia presented a unique chance for archaeological research. The site was a municipal car-park since the 1960s and this kept the large modern digging machines away. It was the first time that such a large scale systematic excavation had taken place within the walled city.

In 2002 works began for the construction of a new town hall on this site, following an earlier decision of the Municipal Council. Almost half of the site was bulldozed away. It was only in 2004, however, that the walled city of Nicosia was declared an Ancient Monument of Schedule B under the Antiquities Law, which meant that, among other things, the Department of Antiquities controls all excavation works in the walled city.¹ The excavation was carried out during the period 2002-2006. Soon after it was realized that the site was also an archaeological one, it was decided by both the Department of Antiquities and the Nicosia Municipality that the ancient remains should coexist with the new building.

A large part of the Byzantine and medieval city was uncovered during the above-mentioned excavation periods, including two churches with cemeteries, remains of at least four monumental buildings, many workshop areas, a road, a cistern, a noria, a large number of wells of a great variety and numerous other architectural remains. The excavation revealed that the site was continuously inhabited from the 11th to the 19th centuries A.D. This was the first time that the stratigraphy of the Byzantine and medieval city was established and the moveable finds give us a picture of the material culture of its inhabitants during the various periods represented by the site. The whole site is in fact a window to the city's past. There was even an archaeological layer dated to the end of the Middle Bronze Age.

Furthermore, excavations in busy urban centres, with centuries of building activity, are by definition very difficult. That was indeed the case in Palaion Demarcheion; there are many overlapping phases of the city, later walls which destroy, use or replace older ones and so on. The archaeological landscape that has resulted is a highly complex and problematic one.

Palaion Demarcheion, Nicosia



Palaion Demarcheion, Nicosia

First of all, due to the fact that the excavation was carried out under a lot of pressure, long seasons of large-scale excavation took place and as a result the site was quickly exposed, in order to allow the plans for the new town hall to proceed. Currently there is a large archaeological site in the historic centre of the city, which requires everyday care and the development of a strategic management plan, both in terms of conservation and presentation to the public.

Secondly, the site faces a serious drainage problem and during the winter rains it floods. This problem was to be solved with the construction of the new building, but as this was a controversial matter the solution was delayed. We expect that this will soon proceed since Nicosia Municipality has recently finished investigating other possibilities for the location of the new town hall.

Important long-term decisions that will affect the future of the archaeological remains and the strategy that will be followed as far as their conservation and their presentation to the public are concerned, have been pending until today as a result of the decision-making process. Now the site is exposed to the elements and it is not accessible to the public. Final decisions about the future and the conservation strategy of this highly complex site must be taken soon; otherwise this will be at the further expense of the excavated antiquities and the historic information they bear, despite the fact that the Department of Antiquities takes all possible measures for short and medium term protection of the site, such as temporary sheltering and annual first-aid conservation.

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Akanthou / Liastrika

The cultural heritage in the territories of the island that are occupied by the Turkish forces since 1974 is still inaccessible to the Government of Cyprus and the responsible Department of Antiquities. The fate of many churches, ancient monuments, archaeological sites, museums and private collections is well-known. A new threat to heritage that has recently emerged, also in the occupied part of Cyprus, is development. An indicative case was recently observed near the village of Akanthou, on the north coast. The village is surrounded by remains of ancient settlements and this has been known to the authorities at least from the beginning of the 20th century.

For this reason in 1966 a large site with rich archaeological remains was declared an Ancient Monument of Schedule B.² The name of the area today is Liastrika and it is believed by researchers that it is the site of the ancient city of Aphrodision, mentioned by the ancient geographer Strabo. Even though a systematic excavation was never undertaken in the area, there is plenty of material evidence on the surface of the ground, mainly pottery, and among the accidental finds that have been reported is a Greek inscription

and many mosaic fragments. This large site also includes the church of Archangel Michael.

It was recently observed that, at a short distance to the south of this modest church, a huge three-storied building, possibly a hotel, is being illegally constructed within the boundaries of the archaeological site. The erection of this building is detrimental to the archaeological strata and as a result valuable information is lost. Moreover, both the natural and the archaeological environments are altered as a result of the fact that this modern building is also out of scale compared to its surroundings.

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Akanthou / Liastrika, ancient church of Archangel Michael



The same site after the construction of a three-storied building





The Neolithic site of Apostolos Andreas-Kastros

The Neolithic site of Apostolos Andreas – Kastros

The Aceramic Neolithic site of Apostolos Andreas-Kastros on the Karpas peninsula in the eastern-most part of the occupied territories of Cyprus was one of the most important sites of the Neolithic period on the island of Cyprus since it demonstrated the adaptation of the Neolithic inhabitants to their coastal environment. Apostolos Andreas-Kastros was a fishing settlement dated to the 6th millennium B.C., excavated from 1970 to 1973 by Dr. Alain Le Brun with funding from the CNRS (Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique).

On the 7th of September 2005 the Director of the Department of Antiquities, Cyprus was informed that this important Neolithic site had been destroyed. The destruction was also reported in the Turkish Cypriot newspaper *Afrika* (13/9/05). The site was bulldozed and levelled by the Turkish army and where the archaeological remains used to be the flag poles of Turkey and the pseudo state now stand. Further destruction to the ruins came with the construction of a road opened in order to give access to the flags. According to the Turkish Cypriot article, the army has not been given permission to raise flag poles on the site. The so-called mayor of the occupied village of Rizokarpasso, Arif Ozbayrak, said that his 'municipality' is not responsible for the destruction and that the army had asked them for bulldozers and the community had given them the machines. The destruction of this site obliterates part of the history of Cyprus and indicates a lack of control and sensitivity in relation to the protection of cultural heritage.

The issue of the destruction of the Neolithic site of Apostolos Andreas-Kastros was put forward at the ICOMOS 15th General Assembly in Xi'an, China by the Cyprus section of ICOMOS. The Assembly resolved to "*Condemn the destruction of the site of Apostolos Andreas ... and write to Turkey and Turkish Cypriot*

Authorities calling for measures to be taken to prevent such destruction and name changes" (see: www.international.icomos.org/xian2005/resolutions15ga.htm).

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ICOMOS Cyprus

Famagusta 2007: An Appeal for International Cooperation

Scratched onto the interior of the east wall of the ruined Cathedral of Saint George of the Greeks in Famagusta is the following inscription (Fig. 1)

How sad I am
Famagusta (is) ruined
Even if centuries passed
However (I am) grateful.³ [Trans]

Though shrouded in melancholy, there is yet a hint of optimism afforded by the anonymous writer of the Greek script, capturing both the triumph and the tragedy of the great city. This is precisely the theme and the balance I wish to develop over the course of this essay and in my appeal for the return of international academia to the wealth of heritage which lies behind Famagusta's impressive walls.

Famagusta, a city of some 35,000 inhabitants on the east coast of Cyprus, has a one-thousand-year history, and is characterized by an uncommon, and virtually forgotten, cultural wealth (Fig. 2). It was founded in 964 (on the site of 3rd century BC Arsinoe), was acquired by the French in 1192, and became a crucial crusader city and port after the fall of Acre in 1291. In later centuries it saw Byzantine, Lusignan, Genoese, Venetian, Ottoman and British dynasties come and go in the ebb and flow of its own turbulent history, and was simultaneously home to Armenian, Jewish, Nestorian, Maronite and Jacobite communities. Today, however, it stands internationally isolated in an unrecognized state at the nexus of East and West.

At the zenith of its medieval wealth and influence Famagusta was described by a German traveller as "...the richest of all cities, and her citizens are the richest of men. But I dare not speak of their precious stones and golden tissues and other riches, for it was a thing unheard of and incredible. I dare not speak of their riches."

The Cathedral of St. Nicholas (Figs. 3 & 4) in the main square of Famagusta became the coronation place of the crusader kings of Jerusalem and was surrounded by perhaps hundreds of smaller, yet exquisite, churches and houses, constructed in the finest Gothic styles appropriated from the Champagne region of France and the Rhinelands. From the port radiated impressive trade connections throughout the known world, especially with: Alexandria, Beirut, Tripoli, Antioch, Damascus, Aleppo, Rhodes, Constantinople, Thessaloniki, Crete, Venice, Valletta, Naples, Pisa, Genoa, Florence, Tunis, Barcelona, Montpellier, Avignon, Bruges, and London. It was even said that the prestige and wealth of the port of Lusignan Famagusta rivalled that of Venice and Constantinople in the early 14th century. The century-long government of the Genoese (1373-1464), however, led to a decline which not even the maritime and enterprising might of the Venetians could arrest when they took over the island (1489-1571). Despite the construction of a palace (Fig. 5) opposite the cathedral, a grand network of fortifications (Fig. 6), and the strengthening of the famed Othello Tower, Venetian Famagusta fell to Ottoman forces in 1571. Four and a half centuries of neglect followed which, combined with exposure to the elements, earthquakes, plague and flooding, left the city almost ruined at the time of the British arrival in 1878. The pioneering Scottish photographer John Thomson, who visited that year, called it "a place of ruins, a city of the dead, in which the traveler is surprised to encounter a living tenant" (Fig. 7).

Today the latest chapter in Famagusta's troubled history is being played out in the larger context of an international social and economic embargo, and a refusal by the international community to recognise the country in which it now finds itself: the self-proclaimed Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (also known as 'The Occupied Territories' of the Republic of Cyprus).^{4,5} The region's magnificent heritage has been largely neglected for over three decades, since the Turkish military intervention of 1974 which divided the island into Turkish-Muslim north and Greek-Orthodox south (Fig. 8). The Greek section of the island, fully recognised internationally, has since been integrated into the European Union, while the northern Turkish section of the island remains unrecognized. Despite having voted for re-unification and EU membership under the UN Annan Plan in 2004 northern Cyprus finds itself unfunded and un-assisted, with the exception of substantial financial aid from Turkey. The already fragile legacy of Famagusta's diverse cultural heritage therefore continues to decay, and is used as a politically motivated pawn, indiscriminately played, and often sacrificed, in a propaganda war between north and south. Potential international assistance stays away for fear of being seen to 'recognise'

the break-away republic, while those individuals who risk their careers to work there, are firmly reminded by political lobbyists that there are grim consequences for those who challenge the embargo.

As early as May 2002 the Committee on Culture, Science and Education report in the Council of Europe commented on the collateral damage caused by such a sweeping state of affairs:

"One consequence of the current political situation is the isolation of the academics and professional conservation workers from international contact with colleagues other than those in Turkey.... We should therefore appeal to the wider international academic and professional community for co-operation."

The same Committee called for:

- 1) Breaking down the academic and professional isolation of the north;
- 2) Setting up a European Foundation for the Cultural Heritage of Cyprus (funding conservation of specific monuments, international contacts, inventory of losses etc);
- 3) Co-operation on illegal movement of cultural property.

The report concluded that it was time to look to the future, otherwise the losses would be "of a paneuropean dimension". Since that time, however, no substantial assistance has been forthcoming. Instead, the historic monuments of Famagusta, over 200 of them, are in a state of terminal decline and the cause of enormous concern to experts on the history, architecture and art of Medieval and Renaissance Cyprus (Fig. 9). Professor Nicola Coldstream for example wrote in 2006 that "All the medieval buildings, however, urgently need conservation. The stonework, much of which is now like a sponge, will soon be past saving, so time is on no one's side." The sandstone, which from a distance seems fine (Fig. 10), is, on closer inspection, in an extremely advanced state of decay, erosion pitting up to 15cms in places (Figs. 11 & 12). The collapse of domes, arches and ribbed vaults will in time be inevitable. In particular the exterior of Saint Nicholas Cathedral and St George of the Latins, "one of the finest Gothic buildings of medieval Christendom," are almost beyond repair (Fig. 13). Professor Michel Balard referred especially to the frescoes of the Church of St George of the Greeks (Figs 14 & 15), which, he observed, are literally disappearing through preventable natural causes such as sun and rain. He concluded "The protection is in any case very urgent." Professor Peter Edbury observed the political dilemma astutely when he wrote "It seems to me that, like the old city at Akko (Israel), Famagusta ought to be a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and I suspect that it is largely the fact that since 1974 Famagusta has been in the control of a regime that has been almost universally denied diplomatic recognition that has prevented moves in that direction." Professor Benjamin Arbel simply refers to the monuments in the old city as being in "a deplorable state" (Fig. 16).

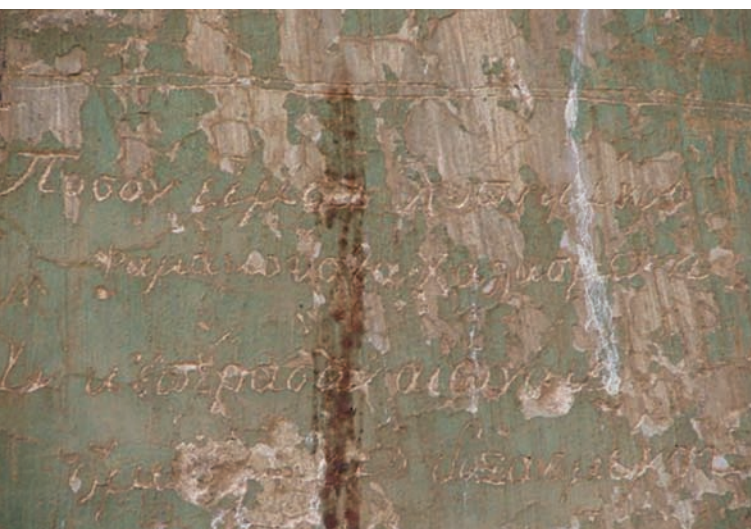
Numerous natural and man-made threats endanger the old city, including geo-technical instability, drainage problems, vegetation ingress, water ingress, inappropriate prior conservation, neglect and inadequate maintenance, rapid development and haphazard townplanning, and a lack of conservation expertise. A decade of continued neglect will see further decline and, in one or two cases, possibly catastrophic structural failure. While the cathedral (Lala Mustafa Pasha Cami), Agia Zoni, the Armenian church, and the Nestorian church require only medium-scope maintenance and conservation, many other buildings are in greater peril and already require structural reconstitution (such as the façade of Saint George of the Greeks).

From the frescoes which are bleached off the walls daily in summer or rained upon every winter (Fig. 17), to the walls of the

churches and palaces which are unstable and ready to fall (Fig. 18); from the physical condition of the sandstone which is crumbling, to the removal of cut stone for other purposes and the inappropriate usage of old buildings, there is not much room for optimism. There can be no doubt at all that the magnificent medieval walled city of Famagusta is in desperate need of international co-operation, of professional consultation and of controlled restoration and not continued isolation and embargoes that make all forms of intellectual and professional assistance virtually impossible. As any political observer will also be aware, the solution to the 'Cyprus problem' is as distant today as ever it has been in the past, and so the future of the historic monuments behind this modern political fault line is indeed bleak despite the continued efforts of the local authorities and a handful of international academics who have taken the decision to work at one of the north Cypriot universities. If the international community does not intervene, then many of the greatest crusader churches and Renaissance fortifications (to say nothing of the Ottoman, Byzantine and British legacies) in the Eastern Mediterranean, will disappear. Numerous applications for funding have already been rejected by international organisations who are unwilling to cooperate with the regime in the north despite the obvious reality that it is extremely urgent that they do so.

There is a second problem. Although Famagusta is internationally isolated, it is still experiencing un-harnessed development and a rapidly expanding population – a situation exacerbated by the post-Annan Plan climate in northern Cyprus which has encouraged a rate of foreign investment that the infrastructure simply cannot bear (Fig. 19). Famagusta boasts a university with a student population of 14,000 from over 60 different countries. In tandem has come a real estate boom, fuelled by foreign investment principally from the United Kingdom, which is putting tremendous stresses on the region's land and environmental resources. With it has come a subsequent urban sprawl that will soon encroach on Enkomi, Salamis and Saint Barnabas. It is hard to know which is the greater threat – years of international neglect and political obstruction, or rapid, careless and thoughtless property speculation. As mass housing developments are constructed, road systems built, water drainage routes dug, dams built, and all the short-term requirements for an economic boom hastily put into place, who is going to give a second glance at the heritage of the city and environs?

Fig. 1 Greek Graffiti on the wall of Saint George of the Greeks Cathedral in Famagusta



Perhaps this is why the Council of Europe report was so grave when it warned that "The invasion of mass tourism risks being far more devastating than the hostilities of 1974." The report then reminded us that "The south is a striking example of the threats posed by commercial prosperity and mass tourism to the survival of the cultural and natural heritage. The contrast with the north should be instructive." These turned out to be the warnings of Cassandra – prophetic but unheeded.

Perhaps this intentional neglect would be understandable if Famagusta lay in a dangerous war zone. It does not. Access to Famagusta is easy and permitted so long as the island is entered "legally" (ie through any port in the south). How long then must Famagusta wait for the expertise and funding that it so desperately needs? And how long can the active obstruction by lobbyists be tolerated? Who would imagine that within academia there are politically motivated professors dedicated to the prevention of external contact (even to talk and prepare preliminary status reports) from arriving in Famagusta because they believe that a solution to the Cyprus problem (and in particular the burning issue of the modern ghost city of Varosha) must be found first? After 34 years of such policies, any "victories" are surely Pyrrhic as the great city they so passionately defend decays and crumbles, as opportunity after opportunity is missed through political obstruction. I am convinced that with or without re-unification of the island the future of Famagusta's rich and turbulent past should be a matter for the international scholarly community to embrace, not neglect. Time, as Professor Coldstream put it, is on no-one's side. The traveller William Turner saw Famagusta almost two centuries ago and wrote: "It is hardly credible that a city so lately flourishing should be so completely ruined as Famagusta. Of its numerous palaces and churches not one remains entire. But the city might easily be restored, for the walls and the fortifications yet remain entire."

In 2007, and in the light of the prevailing and long-term political stalemate on the island, there are those who are beginning to wonder whether or not this chance might yet be missed. Famagusta's destiny lies in the hands of international academia and professional organisations who can, if they wish, decide to return with their expertise and funding to the city. If they do not, they must share in the responsibility of an unenviable fate.

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¹ K.Δ.Π. 596/4.6.2004, p.5754, no. 596.

² K.Δ.Π. 658/22.9.1966, p. 1008, no. 20.

³ My thanks to Yesim Dede for this translation.

⁴ See: Walsh M., Cultural Welfare and Political Stalemate: The Case of Northern Cyprus, in: Going Global: Defining CAA's Role in the International Community, 92nd College Arts Association Annual Conference.



Fig. 2 Saint Nicholas Cathedral through the north portal of Saint George of the Latins

Fig. 3 Saint Nicholas Cathedral – West Façade

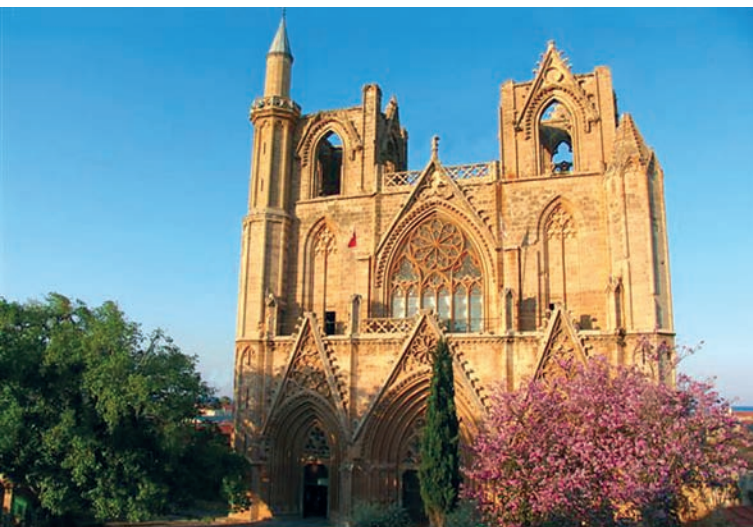


Fig. 4 Saint Nicholas Cathedral with Ottoman Medresa (and columns from Salamis) in foreground



Fig. 5 Entrance to the Venetian Palace

Fig. 6 The fortified walls and moat of Famagusta





Fig. 7 From identified church, past the church of Saint Peter and Paul, to Saint Nicholas Cathedral



Fig. 10 The apse (east) of Saint Nicholas Cathedral



Fig. 8 The Ruins of the Orthodox church of Agios Nikolaus

Fig. 9 The Ruins of Saint Mary of Carmel

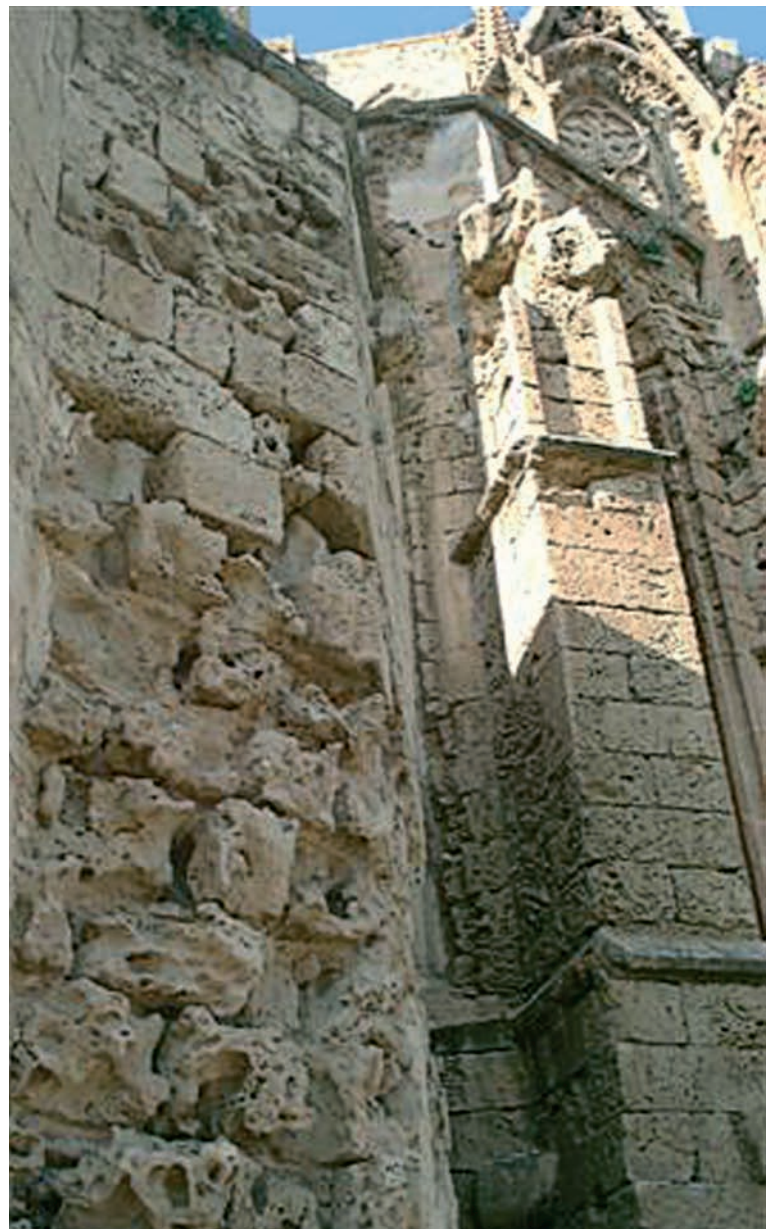




Fig. 12 Stone decay in the decorations of Saint Nicholas Cathedral

◀ Fig. 11 Stone decay in the chapels at the east of Saint Nicholas Cathedral



Fig. 14 Saint George of the Greeks – with Saint Nicholas in background, and Saint Symeon attached to south wall



Fig. 15 Saint George of the Greeks – interior

Fig. 13 The Ruins of Saint George of the Latins



Fig. 16 Sculptural detail on Saint George of the Latins





Fig. 17 Damaged frescoes in Saint George of the Greeks



Fig. 18 An unstable wall – Saint Peter and Paul

Fig. 19 Modern Famagusta encroaches on Saint Nicholas Cathedral

