

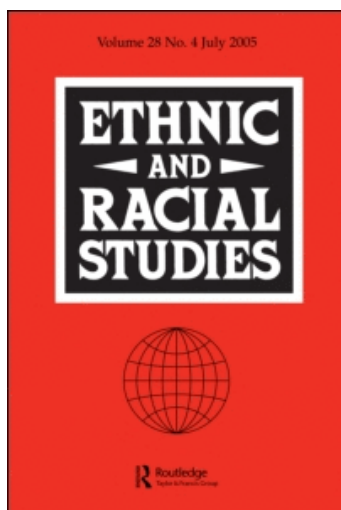
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Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



Ethnic and Racial Studies

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/title~content=t713685087>

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Costas M. Constantinou; Mete Hatay

First published on: 13 April 2010

To cite this Article Constantinou, Costas M. and Hatay, Mete(2010) 'Cyprus, ethnic conflict and conflicted heritage', Ethnic and Racial Studies, 33: 9, 1600 – 1619, First published on: 13 April 2010 (iFirst)

To link to this Article: DOI: 10.1080/01419871003671937

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01419871003671937>

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Cyprus, ethnic conflict and conflicted heritage

Costas M. Constantinou and Mete Hatay

(First submission September 2009; First published April 2010)

Abstract

This article examines the dominant heritage discourse in Cyprus concerning preservation and destruction, and its implications for ethno-cultural identity construction and promotion. By exploring two heritage sites (one north and one south of the Buffer Zone) it suggests that heritage practice is more complex than commonly presented. Specifically, it shows how ethnic conflict has not only been responsible for heritage destruction but also for the preservation of it as an unintended consequence of ‘freezing’ development. It also examines how ethnic groups and individuals may come to evaluate their ‘own’ heritage negatively, specifically as an inconvenient cultural load, in efforts to develop ideologically specific or socially ‘progressive’ identities.

Keywords: Politics of identity; ethnic conflict; discourse; cultural heritage; Cyprus; exclusion.

I

There are many stories on heritage destruction and reconstruction in Cyprus, but one dominant discourse: ‘we’ protect, ‘others’ destroy! A plethora of reports, legal cases, photographic essays and news items daily confront those interested in cultural heritage issues and morally challenge those who wish to remain unconcerned (e.g. Committee for the Protection of the Cultural Heritage of Cyprus 1999; İsmail 2001; TRNC Presidency 2006; Chotzakoglou 2008; Law Library of Congress 2009). Most discussions on heritage destruction point to the ethnic conflict in Cyprus as the reason for deliberate targeting or neglect of the heritage of the ‘other side’, linking these to the explicit or implicit attempts of ethno-cultural denial and cleansing (Knapp and

Antoniadou 1998; Jansen 2005; Copeaux and Mauss-Copeaux 2005). They also highlight celebrated instances of reconstruction on both sides of the Buffer Zone, including internationally mediated restorations and exceptional interethnic cooperation across the divide;¹ stories that in public discourse can still indulge in the revised binary of the civilized and tolerant Self *vis-à-vis* the rarely enlightened Other. These discussions certainly have the advantage of publicizing the endangered status of heritage sites in Cyprus and the presence of problematic policies and practices that require reversing. They also underscore the value of bicommunal technical committees, like the Nicosia Master Plan, in identifying and negotiating the reconstruction of 'sensitive' heritage sites that lie on or across the Buffer Zone (Hadjisavva-Adam 2002; Petropoulou and Hadjisavva-Adam 2008). What tends to be less discussed, if at all, however, is the impact of the dominant heritage discourse on heritage practices on the ground and on the formation of identities in Cyprus.

Specifically all kinds of practices, predicaments, paradoxes and internal conflicts are missed or simplified to support the banal, yet powerful, discourse that essentializes and rigidly divides Cypriot heritage and responses to it. We suggest in this article that things are much complex than accounted for in the Cyprus literature on the subject. For a start, the ethnicization of heritage is prevalent and allows ethnic communities to monopolize heritage discourse at the expense of other heritage communities that may have associations with the claimed 'ethnic' site (e.g. churches found within Turkish-Cypriot villages, or the site of Kirkklar/Ayioi Saranta commonly defined as Islamic heritage but historically syncretistic). This is exacerbated by the 'Cyprus problem' which in similar pattern to other protracted ethnic conflicts intensifies competition around cultural issues (Ross 2007). Selective preservation is thus commonplace, and the occasional instances of 'enemy' heritage reconstruction are rhetorically employed to morally elevate one side over the other (İsmail 2001, pp. 47–60; Public Information Office of Republic of Cyprus 2008; Chotzakoglou 2008, pp. 138–41). Non-ethnic or cross-ethnic heritage, including natural heritage, is underestimated, with the exception of peace activists concerned with the construction of a common Cypriot national identity, as it is not a readily available resource for ethno-cultural identity construction and promotion, and so deferred to a post-settlement objective.

Thus, at a general level, claims about heritage protection and destruction are typically used to support the public information campaigns of one side rather than the other, missing how heritage discourse is itself conflicted. When contextualized we find that heritage is more diverse than commonly presented and that it can be revaluated positively as well as negatively because of or despite conflict,

surprisingly protected by those supposed to destroy it, or destroyed by those that were meant to preserve it. Two paradoxical effects, contrary to conventional views and political rhetoric, can be highlighted. First, how ethnic conflict has not only been responsible for heritage destruction but also for the preservation of it as an unintended consequence of ‘freezing’ development. Second, how ethnic groups and individuals may also come to evaluate their ‘own’ heritage negatively, viewing it as an inconvenient cultural load, in efforts to develop ideologically specific or socially ‘progressive’ identities.

We approach heritage not as an accumulation of values and meanings about sites and artefacts but as a cultural practice which involves, as Laurajane Smith (2006, p. 11) puts it, ‘the construction and regulation of a range of values and understandings’. In this sense, individuals and societies are not passive recipients of heritage but active producers of it, heritage makers as much as consumers. Heritage also extends beyond the physical or tangible site and includes the intangible practices, traditions and stories that surround it, the multiple ways individuals and communities relate and give meaning to it. In fact, the latter is often more important to people than the materiality of a heritage site or the signifier of an oral tradition. For example, it is not so much the church or the mosque that matters to the faithful, but going there, the cultures and spiritual insights associated with such visitations; not so much the lexicon of a majority or minority language but the value and meaning one gives in specific uses or denials of it. How far does this intangible, less ‘visible’ heritage get acknowledgement, representation and protection in parallel to the tangible one? That is the real challenge, and though this is not a unique Cypriot predicament, it is complicated in countries like Cyprus where protracted ethnic conflict has been present, where not just heritage sites but heritage practices can be seen as laying or denying specific ethnic claims, providing thus a stage for ethnic competition.

Intangible heritage has been belatedly and reluctantly recognized in Cyprus. In line with global trends, the concern of successive Cypriot governments and of the dominant ethno-cultural groups on the island has been the identification and protection of tangible, often monumental, sites and places, which are associated with the historical presence of their ethnic communities on the island. Churches, mosques, castles, mosaics, *hamams*, traditional buildings and archaeological ruins have been commonly listed as ancient monuments or cultural heritage and brought under the jurisdiction of the department of antiquities in the north and south, occasionally gaining a Europa Nostra award, or acquiring an ‘enviable’ UNESCO World Heritage Site status (Knapp and Antoniadou 1998; Scott 2002). Clearly marked and celebrated, framed as part of the modern ‘tourist gaze’, these are the heritages that are officially promoted and most Cypriots come to

identify with and struggle over, be it in the context of the Cyprus conflict or beyond.

Tangible heritage privileges particular manifestations of cultural wealth. It tends to promote the cultural achievements of Western, metropolitan or economically developed societies and groups, not those whose heritage is more 'ephemeral', 'mutable' and linked to practices of everyday living (Smith and Akagawa 2009). With respect to Cyprus, this creates an ideological bias in favour of the heritage of the two dominant communities, and is primarily used as a means to construct and enhance the ethno-cultural identity of 'each side' and account for 'bicomunalism' as officially enshrined since independence. For the Greek community of Cyprus, it is said to have 'inherited' the tangible edifices of Christianity and of the Hellenic and Byzantine Empires; for the Turkish community of Cyprus, it is said to have 'inherited' the tangible edifices of Islamic faith and of the Ottoman Empire. Such exclusivist understanding presents as anomalous the presence of hybridity in Cyprus (Constantinou 2007), including the right of hybrid communities to legitimately identify with and represent such heritage. It also marginalizes the cultural heritage of smaller, subaltern or provincial communities, heritage that is less grand, 'material' or 'visible', like the linguistic heritage of the Cypriot Maronites or the Roma travelling traditions in Cyprus, which when not viewed with hostility at best figure as folkloric memory or exotic practice that lacks ethnic significance (Constantinou 2009).

We begin with two personal stories that narrate the bias and complexity of heritage practice in Cyprus. The first relates to a recently declared heritage site in the northern part of Cyprus. The second to a Turkish-Cypriot village in the south, now abandoned. We then reflect on their implications for discussing cultural heritage issues in Cyprus.

II

'I'm certain, these are our olive trees,' said my father, pointing to number sixteen and seventeen. He stood in the middle of two ancient trees with enormous trunks, which, if the signpost was right, were more than 500 years old. He recalled climbing up as a child, 'dropping the olives' and collecting them with his mother and sisters. He pointed out the nearby cave where they would all seek cover at the outbreak of torrential rain. He breathed the air, sighed and exclaimed with no hint of exaggeration that this was 'paradise on earth'. He then paused, ruminated and commented on the vision of 'the Turks' to designate this ancient olive grove, northwest of his ancestral village of Kapouti, as a protected environmental zone. Finally, when he got over his excitement of finding the trees, he noticed and protested a certain lack of care for them; he is particular about pruning, though, truth be told,

there are more Cypriot schools of thought on how to properly prune an olive tree than plans to solve the Cyprus problem.

These were not actually 'our' olive trees. My father had title deeds to four olive trees in the Kapouti valley, or Dematona, given to him by his parents following marriage. This was in line with the old tradition of owning trees separately from the land that could belong to a different owner and was quite typical in Dematona, with its monumental trees that were inherited across many generations. In a valley of 2000 olive trees, at seventy-nine years of age and more than sixty years after he visited this area as a teenage cultivator, my father could not locate the four olive trees over which he had legal ownership. But childhood memories drew a map for him to other trees of his family, trees that stayed in his mind and in his heart, and constituted a special inheritance. These were trees of memory. Or was it nostalgia, idealizing a heritage he did not actually miss? In any case, what was remembered through them were the fragments of personal and communal life in the village. Their value was not economic but affective and emotional.

What were we doing there? Why come now, six years after the opening of the checkpoints in April 2003? We had been to Kapouti before and done the tour that dispossessed returnees usually do. We visited the house where my father was born and found an empty plot. We looked for the two-room house where my grandparents lived after retirement and found a van parked in it. We visited the church of St George and found it empty of icons and converted into a mosque. We went to the desecrated cemetery and were relieved to find my grandmother's grave, but as for my grandfather, who was tragically killed in 1974, we didn't know where he was buried and didn't ask. We had looked at land that my father inherited from his parents. But we were never taken to Dematona by my father, and though he sometimes talked about it to us, I had no memory of visiting the valley before 1974 and only saw it from afar. If this was 'paradise on earth', why was it hidden from us? Why did it require a prompting from me and a pretext – a bit of a male challenge after I came across title deeds he did not recall having – to find the four olive trees he owned and point them out to his son?

I always suspected that Dematona was an inconvenient heritage for my father, but it was not until I visited the valley with him that I realized that an inconvenient heritage can still be precious. My father fled this agricultural heritage out of his own volition long before 1974. As someone who succeeded in escaping village life and socially upgraded by moving to and making it in the city, he partly and typically defined himself in opposition to this heritage. But it is agricultural work that relaxed and still relaxes him, and I always remember him planting for pastime odd tomatoes or beans in our house in Nicosia, or nowadays tending to the trees in a village house

Figure 1. Ancient olive trees in Dematona
Photograph by Costas Constantinou



that I own –the purchase of which he originally viewed with great distaste! From this perspective, Dematona has been a heritage of ambivalent value for him; not much concerned with its status or eager to visit it, but once there completely overwhelmed with emotions and recollections of village customs, traditions and ways of living prevalent in his early life and now only symbolically experienced. This was a heritage that my father disowned; the olive trees as separated from land had no real economic value in an era of mass, mechanized agriculture and the heritage value of these ancient trees did not occur to him until he visited the place. This is in line with the otherwise rich official website of the village run by the Greek-Cypriot refugees,² which shows panoramic pictures of Dematona but does not identify the ancient olive grove as a heritage or important site. Though there is no doubt that it still has a place in people's hearts and imagination as the anonymous poem 'Desire' posted on the website indicates: 'the desire to be embraced by the village, to dance in Dematona and celebrate in the olive grove'.

So there in Dematona, father and son were stepping into a newly discovered yet emotionally charged heritage site. What has been received from the past as unique physical landscape, as tangible heritage, appeared to encompass an important intangible dimension, which itself included a conflation of (social, cultural and political) conflicts. Some of these conflicts were more pronounced and part of what became known as the 'Cyprus problem'; others more subdued, personal, ephemeral. And though the ancient olive grove as natural heritage apparently traversed ethnic borders it remained deeply afflicted by them and could not avoid being drawn into the Cyprus conflict.

Consider the issue of ownership versus possession. My father was holding title deeds to an inheritance not recognized by the Turkish-Cypriot authorities that are in *de facto* control of Kapouti since the late summer of 1974. According to the laws of the internationally unrecognised Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), we could not pick the olives or tend the trees, for these no longer belonged to us but were given to Turkish Cypriots who fled to the north from the south. Trees, land and buildings belonging to the Greeks were 'legally' appropriated by the authorities and 'legally' handed over to new owners. To many Turkish Cypriots, my father's title deeds would constitute historically specific ownership whose status changed after the 1974 war. To some Turkish Cypriots my father's family inheritance would even be spoils or casualties of war, land and life-world that was justly won and inherited after heroic struggle and sacrifice. A situation invariably experienced by other Cypriots, and though there are definite differences in terms of the legal regimes used to justify the presence of post-war possession (for example, in the south Turkish-Cypriot property came under the law of the custodian, so the Greek occupants do not actually have ownership of the land and houses they occupy), living in the house or using or developing the land of someone else is something of a Cyprus conflict heritage, a *common heritage of Cypriotkind*.

However, from a heritage angle, the conflicts in place were not just interethnic or legal. The loss of cultural practice for my father, as outlined above, preceded the interethnic conflict, which accelerated urbanization and the undermining of provincial heritage by modern lifestyle. Even today, among the Greek Cypriots the term *chorkatis* (villager) is still used to describe a person of unrefined background, someone lacking education and civility. Provincial identity is not something people generally feel proud about, though the majority of Cypriots living in cities directly descend or are first generation migrants from villages. A parallel process to the movement of people to the big cities has been in the last couple of decades the urbanization of villages and the countryside, and this under the rationale of development or rural survival. Urban and suburban architecture has infiltrated the countryside and destroyed many a village-scape. Furthermore, rather than olive picking, villagers would move to more profitable professions: land development, especially if close to the sea, restaurants, kiosks, betting shops, stockmarket, etc. In short, the heritage that my father has valued in his own ambivalent way is rapidly disappearing in Cyprus, becoming a lost heritage even in the countryside and irrespective of the ethnic conflict. For the vast majority of modern Cypriots, agricultural heritage is a means of tentatively forging links with a past, remembering 'how our ancestors were living', not much of a knowledge resource for their present way of living.

There was a tragic irony that soon became apparent to my father. It was because of the Cyprus conflict – an unintended consequence of it – that Dematona was kept virgin and free of development. The ethnic conflict, in this instance, delayed the normal growth of the village and retained the integrity of the tangible site of heritage. Had the village developed ‘normally’ within the Cyprus context, the local pressures and temptations for urban and tourist development would be such that it would have been difficult, if not impossible, to resist. An asphalt road across Dematona and the Kapouti valley would have followed the pattern of most villages in Cyprus: a combination of legal and illegal buildings of dubious character, swimming pools next to ancient trees, concrete piazzas and exotic gardens. The landscape was ironically protected because the place was cleansed of its original inhabitants and re-inhabited by Turkish-Cypriot refugees, themselves dispossessed and with limited resources to ‘develop’ the place. Also beneficial to the valley was the fact that this is an area that the Turkish-Cypriot authorities decided not to invest in until recently. Though the conflict has been responsible for a lot of heritage destruction, and Kapouti is itself a microcosm of such destruction in the north, this was a clear example of preservation. Indeed, the olive grove might not have been identified as heritage if the legal owners had a say in the matter.

Nonetheless, it is also far from certain that the continuation of the status quo would continue to work for the benefit of the valley. Looking at the top of the cliff above the valley and west of the village, an ominous threat was visible. A state of the art university campus was built and expanding: a branch of the Middle East Technical University (METU) in Ankara which was opened in 2005. Next to it a hotel was recently completed to cater for academic visitors and tourists. Such rapid development now questions the extent to which benign negligence alone may be sufficient to protect this site. Thus the involvement of the EU through the NATURA 2000 scheme and its cooperation with the Turkish-Cypriot authorities appears to be crucial, if development in the valley would be avoided, through some kind of Europeanization–internationalization of heritage.

In sum, paradoxically, the protection and integrity of my father’s heritage depended on the strict enforcement of the laws of an unrecognized state that in turn did not recognize his property rights over the heritage it was protecting; perhaps a price worth paying for the overall benefit, especially with regard to four heritage trees in a unique national and possibly global heritage site. (If the signpost at the entrance of the valley is right, the ancient olive grove is unique in the world.) However, this *de facto* state that at the outset appeared determined to protect this precious site did so by interpreting the heritage in ways that are insensitive and exclusionary to Greek Cypriots. The name of the village and the area was Turkified and

Figure 2. *Dematona olive grove*
Photograph by Costas Constantinou



militarized: it is now called Kalkanli, meaning ‘shielded’, though official toponyms from the land registry have been retained. The olive grove was designated as national heritage of ‘our country’, referring to the TRNC, which formally excludes Greek Cypriots and defines them as aliens. No mention of the people living in the heritage site thirty-five years ago was made.

The protection of this site thus occurs at the expense of a certain obliteration of memory, an erasure of other heritage communities that lived there before and were forcefully removed. The reconstruction of local identity, the hegemonic importation of Turkish over Greek, politically charges the heritage site, even though this heritage is essentially cross-ethnic. Given the trajectory that these things take in Cyprus, it won’t be surprising if this policy results in counter-ethnicization by the Greek side by underscoring instead legal ownership of the site. All kinds of possibilities are up for grabs in utilizing heritage for identity formation. Though the persistence of the conflict can easily ethnicize it into Greek or Turkish, a pro-settlement approach may designate it as Cypriot, and a less insular one as Mediterranean, Middle Eastern, European or global.

III

‘If the Turks had stayed here, we would not have had this problem,’ we were told by the priest of Kato Moni, who was in charge of the festival of Ayioi Iliofotoi. He was the caretaker of the church of Ayioi Iliofotoi in the abandoned Turkish-Cypriot village of Alihodes, a church that at the time of our research had endured structural damage as a result of

quarry work just a few hundred yards away. So bad was its condition that in July 2009 the venue of the religious festival had to be changed for safety reasons and celebrated instead at a different church in the nearby village of Kato Moni. The priest was making a transgressive statement, linking the protection of the church to the presence of Alihodes Turks and Muslims, and its endangered status to their absence. He was specifically referring to how the abandoned village provided the legal loophole that allowed the quarry to move so close to the village, scarring the hilly landscape and endangering religious heritage.

The priest certainly paid me and the absent Turks a compliment. But it was an ambivalent one. The Turks did not just leave by choice but had been forced to do so following the eruption of intercommunal violence in 1963–64. According to accounts by the villagers of Alihodes, some of the men from the neighbouring village of Kato Moni had intimidated them, though some also protected them (including the priest at the time, who happened to be the current priest's father). Though there were no killings and disappearances as elsewhere in Cyprus, the Alihodes Turks did not feel safe and so abandoned the village in early 1964. But even more than being forced to flee, what the Alihodes Turks found offensive was their discovery after the 2003 opening of the checkpoints that their village had entirely disappeared. While the priest was lamenting the condition of the church, he said nothing about the demolition of the mosque, houses and shops around it. He was vocal about a particular kind of heritage destruction but chose to remain silent about another.

Indeed, this total annihilation is what struck me when I first visited Alihodes. My visit to my grandmother's village took place only a couple of months after the April 2003 opening of the checkpoints, and it was more curiosity than nostalgia that led me there, since I had never visited Alihodes before. I was given directions to what older relatives described as an enchanting place on a hill. But, though I was on the right road, I kept missing the place, entering a huge quarry sending up clouds of dust, until I stopped at a fountain and phoned a cousin to try to get better directions. I was indeed at the right place, but there was no village. Through the church that stood alone in this purely Turkish-Cypriot village, I was re-oriented and realized that I kept driving through the mosque and that the few low stone structures that I saw from the road were not for securing agricultural fields but all that remained from the village.

Apart from the functioning old church and newly restored fountain, there was nothing left that was reminiscent of the village that had once been the home of a hundred or so *Alihodesli*. According to the notes of one journalist who toured the Turkish villages of the island in 1962, the village in the period before its abandonment had a functioning

Figure 3. *Alihodes mosque*
Photograph by Costas Constantinou



mosque, a school, a village cooperative, a coffee shop, thirty-two houses, 500 animals, 2,000 *donums* of arable land and many fig, almond and olive trees (Adalı 2000, pp.130–7). But now in front of me stood only a bare hill with some stones. Everything my Alihodes relatives remembered had disappeared, and even the landscape was being rapidly carved by the approaching quarry.

The existence of the church was news to me. Why was it there? I knew Alihodes Turks as deeply religious Muslims, and in fact a village where the *Nakşibendi*, or orthodox Sufi, order had serious influence. The name of the village was known by the Turks as Alihodes and popularly linked to the legend of a certain holy Ali the Shepherd, who in other versions was Ali the Soldier. According to the local Turkish-Cypriot legend, the so-called shepherd/soldier had hundreds of animals and was so rich that some of the goats wore golden bells on their necks. The link to an existing Christian site and shepherd saints of similar denotation (Iliofotoi) was a revelation complicating the picture that this village was of exclusive heritage significance only to Turks and Muslims.

With some research I discovered that the inhabitants of Alihodes had once lived in a large *çiftlik* several miles below the village. According to one account, their resettlement in the area of Alihodes took place around 300 years ago, when the owner of the farm was unable to repay his debts to a monastery and was persuaded to exchange land. As a result, the Muslims then living and working on the

farm moved up the mountain to Alihodes, where a monastery/church (or its remains) was in place (Adalı 2000). Of course, in their own legends of the village's establishment, the Muslims construct a genealogy that relates its name to a Muslim holy man, perhaps indicating their desire to explain their own presence in a predominantly Christian area. Apparently the church was either initially constructed or reconstructed from an earlier structure in the 1880s, and the older residents of the village claim that their grandparents had helped in the construction of the church in exchange for assistance in building the mosque in Alihodes. This intertwining of efforts enhanced the view that the church in this totally Muslim village was not just the inheritance of Christians but also of the Muslims, who built it, then built their houses around it, and tended it for Christian pilgrims.

The church was built on top of a cave where bones attributed to the Iliofotoi saints had been discovered. The bones were rumoured to have healing powers, and pilgrims would bring their sick relatives to be touched by the bones (Ohnefalsch-Richter 2006, pp. 80–1). Once a year, the church became the site of a festival, which for the Muslim inhabitants of the village was a good source of income, as they hosted the pilgrims and sold their goods. I subsequently found out that when the Muslim people of Alihodes talk about their village, the annual Christian festival holds an important place in their memories of the happier period before the Cyprus problem reached the village. Some of the villagers who had migrated to Nicosia say that they were certain to take their yearly holidays in order to be in the village during the Ayioi Iliofotoi festival; women recalled preparing sweetmeats and *böreks* (savouries) and men *kleftiko* (thieves' meat) for the event.

However, the Muslim villagers were themselves known for their Islamic religiosity, and so their cooperation with the church was less a sign of syncretism and more of religious co-existence. Their participation in church events and care for the buildings and grounds of the church were not acts performed on religious grounds but for social and economic reasons. They were trustees of a particular cultural heritage, and Greek Cypriots in Kato Moni still credit them for that, suggesting a possible reason why they were not harmed in 1963–64. But despite their care for the site, they did not spiritually identify with it in any formal sense.

This was not a village that my family easily associated with, and though my grandmother occasionally took her children there to visit relatives, my grandfather never visited the place. He refused to visit his wife's village because of the religiosity of its inhabitants, and I remember him ridiculing the villagers for their religious conviction and *Nakşibendi* beliefs. Growing up in the 1930s, during a period when many of the educated Turkish youth were moulding themselves as Turkish nationalists armed with the fundamental secularism of

Kemalism, he saw the Alihodes people as *gerici* (reactionaries), a source of embarrassment which also spoiled the modernization efforts of the Turks of Cyprus. So, at least in my family, Alihodes was defined by my grandfather (and patriarch of the family) as a negative or unwanted heritage – a phenomenon not uncommon in the relatively secularized Turkish-Cypriot society.

But it appears that after 1974 the abandoned village had also become an inconvenient heritage for the Greeks. There are different stories of why the village, with the exception of the church, was totally demolished in the 1980s. Some villagers in Kato Moni referred to the Greek-Cypriot army conducting military exercises there, something that progressively damaged and loosened the village edifices. Others mentioned how the houses began to collapse because of their abandonment and looting in 1964, creating both a danger and an eyesore for pilgrims to the church. Thus, it was decided that the heritage of an entire village was to be sacrificed for the church properly to function, including opening up spaces for the festival and car parking. In short, there has been no effort to remember the Turkish Cypriots who lived in the village; on the contrary, their former presence was intentionally forgotten by demolishing the entire village site. As such, there is currently no village entrance sign as is common elsewhere (including most abandoned Turkish-Cypriot villages).

Today, the Ayioi Iliofotoi church itself is part of the Greek-Orthodox heritage of Cyprus and often listed in some web sites and cultural magazines.³ At the same time, there is hardly a mention of the

Figure 4. *Ayioi Iliofotoi church and cleansed spaces*
Photograph by Costas Constantinou



former Alihodes village, or the Turkish Cypriots who were the actual caretakers of the church or their cultural and religious heritage there. To that extent, 'having to "have already forgotten" tragedies of which one needs unceasingly to be "reminded"' helps the unreflective construction of a specific ethno-national identity (Anderson 1991, p. 201). The Alihodes case illustrates how in ethno-nationalist conflicts, the Other's material heritage may be treated as 'unwanted' or inconvenient heritage as the Greek-Cypriot authorities seem to have treated the village.

But, ironically, the Alihodes heritage has not been a 'positive heritage' for the Turkish-Cypriot authorities either. Turkish-Cypriot nationalism encouraged its ethnic constituencies to forget their former villages and homes and everything that was not monumental heritage (like statues of Ataturk) in order to cement partition. The destruction or neglect of this and many other villages in the south was used to remind Turkish Cypriots of the intolerance, loss of community, and the 'barbarity' of the antagonistic Other. With the opening of the checkpoints, the bad condition of such villages began to be used for a brand new rhetoric of 'remembering', using photographs of neglected or destroyed cultural heritage to emphasize the impossibility of return to a past that had once been shared. In contrast to Greek-Cypriot emphasis on their own neglected or destroyed heritage in the north as a call to remember and struggle for return, the Turkish-Cypriot official position regarding their own heritage in the south has primarily emphasized remembering it in order to ultimately forget it.

IV

The loss of heritage can be diversely experienced by individuals and communities as the cases above illustrate. The ancient olive grove in Dematona has been preserved, though for the Greek-Cypriot owners it can only be enjoyed as a tourist site, not as a family and village inheritance. In practice, however, this agricultural heritage had already been devalued by a number of them before they were dispossessed of it, though not by all of them. The post-peasant culture of the modern, urbanized society can intensify this sense of loss to the extent that it either devalues the tangible site as one lacking development, or, if not, approaches it as ecological fetish, a consumable that is exoticized and visited outside its agrarian temporality. But the loss of this heritage is also intensified due to the state of the village and its other cultural sites because, for the dispossessed inhabitants, Dematona is not viewed in isolation to the life in Kapouti, which is currently inaccessible to them while the division of the island persists.

With respect to the Turkish-Cypriots from Alihodes both the tangible and the intangible heritage of their village has been lost.

The only edifices that remain are the church and the renovated fountain, the latter used by Muslims to wash their feet before entering the mosque but now re-branded as holy Christian water. Yet the loss of that heritage was not always experienced negatively by the Turkish-Cypriot community, as it usefully fed the case for partition that required a forgetting of life and sites in the south. The sense of loss was, however, intensified in unexpected ways after the opening of the checkpoints, when the returnees encountered the total annihilation of the Alihodes village and landscape, making the recovery of their place and heritage a practical impossibility, or a surreal kind of return in the midst of an expanding quarry.

To that extent, lost heritage can be used to (re)produce ethnic identity in similar and often more intense ways than the actual possession, access and enjoyment of heritage. As Lowenthal (1994, p. 52) perceptively put it: 'Identity is more zealously husbanded by the quest for a lost heritage than by its nurture when regained.' Indeed both sides invariably exploit the lost heritage of the ethnic conflict. The official discourse of the Greek-Cypriot authorities is directed towards the lost heritage of Greek Cypriots in the north (plundered, destroyed and made inaccessible by the Turkish Other) that will be recovered and fully reconstructed following reunification. The official discourse of the Turkish-Cypriot authorities is based on the notion that the lost heritage of Turkish Cypriots in the south (destroyed by the Greek Other, though also symbolically reconstructed and nominally accessible) is best redeemed not through return but through its reconstruction in the abandoned villages of Greek Cypriots in the north, which in turn legitimates their Turkification.

This has meant that Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots have politicized heritage preservation in significantly different ways. In each side, one's own preservation of select heritage is opposed to the 'other side's' destruction of heritage. Since 1974, the Greek-Cypriot side (despite the destruction in Alihodes and many other cases) has been comparatively more careful than the Turkish-Cypriot side in seeking to symbolically protect and reconstruct the 'Turkish' ethno-religious heritage. In order to emphasize the destruction of 'Greek' ethno-religious heritage in the north, Greek Cypriots have made some efforts to preserve Turkish-Cypriot mosques in the south, and have also highlighted that preservation in their own official propaganda. In more recent years, and especially with Greek-Cypriot entry into the EU, Greek-Cypriot identity has been progressively redefined as a national Cypriot one, in which the essential identity of the island is Greek, but in which the majority identity can also show tolerance for other cultures, including the internal Turkish Other, by patronizing its cultural heritage in areas under its control (e.g. the reconstruction of Ottoman *hamams*, mosques, *tekkes*, etc.). This kind of attitude is

visible in many official publications and websites (Hamilakis 1998). For example, the Republic of Cyprus's official web portal states that, 'Despite the fact that in its history of many centuries, it faced many conquerors, Cyprus developed and for thousands of years maintained its culture, assimilating any type of influence. Cyprus remained the center of the Hellenic culture with a few distinctive characteristics.'⁴

The Turkish-Cypriot political use of heritage has been equally selective, but in different ways. Turkish Cypriots have tended to emphasize the multicultural character of the island, downplaying the island's Greek heritage or presenting the Greek and Byzantine periods as part of a series of foreign conquests. This has meant that while ancient Greek sites and a few historically valuable Byzantine churches have been preserved, the latter as museums (e.g. St Barnabas and St Mamas), more recent churches and less 'valuable' monasteries that were in use at the time of the island's division have been either neglected or vandalized. The symbolic reconstruction of such sites has tended to occur only in the wake of negative international publicity and pressure. Note that while ancient Greek/Roman heritage sites such as Salamis or Soli belong to the 'archaeological past', more recent churches and cemeteries constitute a 'living heritage'. Turkish Cypriots appear to fear that their restoration will open the gates for Greek Cypriots' return. It should be noted that in both sides of the island tourism is also an important feature of heritage preservation, as each side now emphasizes a multiculturalism that they believe is more amenable to European sensibilities and representative of Cypriot 'modernity' (Argyrou 1996). But the politics of heritage preservation in the island also opens the door to certain ironies, as when a newly painted mosque in the southern part is found in the middle of a destroyed village, or when a preserved Byzantine church in the northern part is found on the same street as a destroyed Christian cemetery.

Both sides continue to instrumentalize heritage to legitimate their claims and support their policies concerning the Cyprus problem. Beyond elevating and commemorating what they identify as their 'ethnic' heritage, they also exploit, if possible, and if not erase, the Cypriot 'negative heritage', that is, any 'conflictual site that becomes the repository of negative memory in the collective imaginary' (Meskell 2002, p. 558). This is especially the case with regard to the conflict heritage as a 'site of memory', which, wherever possible, has been mobilized for ethno-didactic purposes (e.g. mass graves and sites of violence against 'us'), but where it could not be socially rehabilitated and would in fact offend the ethno-national imaginary it has been erased (e.g. the sites of 'our' violence against the other, including the sites of the recently discovered Cypriot missing whose disinterred and inconspicuous graves on both sides have been covered again without

trace). This conflict heritage which represents the dark and barbaric side of the ethnic Self is systematically erased, though pro-reconciliation NGOs and movements have found it important to expose such erasures.

The cases of the Alihodes village and the Dematona olive grove display more subtle forms of 'spatial cleansing' (Herzfeld 2006) by which culturally significant heritage is supposed to be enhanced and protected by clearing the space within which it is located from negative association or threatening practices. In Alihodes, ideologically and aesthetically specific rationales (and not nationalist revenge) seem to be behind the eventual decision to demolish the village, given the bad structural condition of the buildings. In Dematona, beyond the cleansing of the original inhabitants, cultural practices such as grazing are now forbidden, perhaps for good reasons in order to protect the ancient trees, but at the expense of long agricultural traditions associated with the site. In both cases, tangible and intangible heritages are sacrificed for specific tangible sites to be 'secured' and 'enhanced'.

What follows from these cases is the need for more reflection on the processes and effects of heritage identification and representation in Cyprus, and their link to heritage destruction and reconstruction. First, the process through which something is identified as heritage and something else not needs to be scrutinized and assessed with regard to its assumptions and implications. In the case of Dematona, the valley has been identified and declared as heritage site, itself an important and constructive development. But what heritage is exactly being protected? Beyond the natural site, shouldn't the social and cultural heritage associated with it be protected? Shouldn't there be recognition of the interaction of people and place? Shouldn't there be encouragement and incentives for the current as well as the displaced inhabitants of the village to continue to do tree tending and olive picking, if they so wish and where appropriate to do so, as a social and family occasion and remembrance? In the case of Alihodes, the non-identification of the village as heritage has had a tremendous impact, first in making morally and legally feasible the demolishing rather than the securing of buildings, and second in making morally and legally possible the conversion of the surrounding landscape into a quarry and wasteland. In short, the identification or non-identification of heritage, including the kind of heritage identified, have ethical and juridical implications which in ethnic conflict situations can be publicly exploited for conflict communication purposes, and potentially for peace communication purposes in instances of reconstruction.

The second issue for reflection concerns the interpretation of heritage. In this area there have been interesting developments in the Council of Europe and specifically in the Faro Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society (2005), which refers to the right

of heritage communities not only to access heritage – independently of ownership – but also to interpret heritage and ‘to contribute towards its enrichment’ (articles, 2, 4 and 7). The diversity of interpretation can no doubt be an issue of contention, but the point is that reflecting on it and registering it in situ is an evolving new norm in heritage practice. In the Dematona case, different heritage communities could and should be allowed to register their communal and private life stories on the heritage site, alongside the authorized official and scientific narratives about the site. And in the Alihodes case, the Turkish Cypriots should be allowed to do the same, including the church, for whom it has a cultural value. One of the problems is the exclusion that the ethnicization of heritage has brought about, specifically with respect to non-ethnic Others from sharing in ‘ethnic’ heritage and having a stake in its interpretation (e.g. churches in Turkish-Cypriot villages viewed also as cultural sites and not merely as ethno-religious ones). The current ethnicization of the Dematona heritage by the Turkish-Cypriot authorities is also problematic and at odds with the Turkish-Cypriot surveyor who rightly underscored that the ancient olive trees are ‘an age-old component of traditional Mediterranean landscape, and are an integral part of the natural and cultural heritage of the Mediterranean’ (Gündüz 2004). Notwithstanding the fact that the respect of natural heritage can be used to indicate ‘modern’ or refined Greek- or Turkish-Cypriotness, the surveyor’s approach to heritage expresses values and knowledge and promotes identities which traverse national frontiers, and can thus loosen the grab of Cypriot heritages that are symbolically or exclusively ethnic or religious, or urban and ‘refined’. This is not to deny the value of ethnic or religious or metropolitan heritage, but rather to underscore the existence of other heritages that people can and do identify with, heritages that establish cross-ethnic commonalities and allegiances.

Conflicts over heritage interpretation cannot always and do not necessarily need to be resolved, but can coexist on the heritage site. Indeed, this would follow not just the letter but also the spirit of the Faro Convention. Giving opposing interpretations space to appear and making them visible is a sign of intercommunal and intercultural tolerance. Thus, the interpretation of heritage can live up to the practical promise of hermeneutics (Gadamer 1981): a means through which one engages in being habitually understanding towards others.

Acknowledgements

This article is part of a European project on ‘Identity and Conflict: Cultural Heritage and the Reconstruction of Identities after Conflict’ (2008–2012), funded under the 7th Framework Programme. For their comments, thanks to Rebecca Bryant, Frank Moller, two anonymous

reviewers and participants at presentations of the paper in the 2009 ECPR Conference, Potsdam, and the PRIO 'Shared Spaces' workshop in Nicosia in November 2009.

Notes

1. See <http://www.undp-act.org>.
2. <http://www.kapouti.com.cy>.
3. See, for example, http://www.katomoni.org/english/church_iliofotoi.shtm.
4. <http://www.cyprus.gov.cy/portal/portal.nsf/All/595281B5458CAD9FC2256EBD004F3BDC?OpenDocument>.

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COSTAS M. CONSTANTINOU is Professor of International Relations at the University of Nicosia.
ADDRESS: Department of European Studies and International Relations, University of Nicosia, PO Box 24005, Nicosia, Cyprus.
Email: constantinou.cm@unic.ac.cy

METE HATAY is Project Leader at PRIO Cyprus Centre.
ADDRESS: 3 Sophouli Street, 1096 Nicosia, Cyprus.
Email: prio.mete@cytanet.com.cy