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Lefkoşa as Caravanserais' City

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Abstract

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The island of Cyprus exemplifies the transcultural nature of urban caravanserais typologies in the Mediterranean Levant. Its unique territorial distribution necessitates an urban analysis based on the typological evolution of these caravanserais. Nicosia, the historic city, is the central commercial hub between the surrounding settlements (Famagusta, Girne, Larnaca, Limassol, and Paphos). This implies a strong commercial characterisation of its urban architecture. This paper presents a portion of the typological study of Nicosia's urban caravanserais through three periods: the Ottoman establishment, the functional transformation during the British period, and the typological adaptations throughout the second half of the 20th century. The paper focuses on the establishment of urban caravanserais during the Ottoman era, when they acquired distinctive characteristics. The walled character of the city, the gradual occupation of the route of the Pedieos waterline that crossed the city, and the changes in scale generated by the insertion of the caravanserais themselves into the urban fabric define these particularities.

Keywords: Urban transformations; Urban Caravanserais; Adaptive reuses; Urban studies; Cyprus.

Introduction

Nicosia presents a special situation within the panorama of urban caravanserais' developments and evolutions, reflecting the cultural crossroads that converge on the island of Cyprus. This characteristic is precisely what gives this paper its title. The authors are aware of the limitations of this work and have excluded from it the latest derivations of the architectural concept of the urban caravanserai that occurred within the walled city of Nicosia up to the last quarter of the 20th century. This paper is limited to the consideration of the social and urban factors promoted by the urban caravanserais of Nicosia up to the 20th century, always prior to the First World War.

Trading in Cyprus during the Middle Ages

Trading has always been one of the genetic codes for the founding of cities. In the worst cases, it has defined extensive areas, activities, and public spaces. The urban environment, as a complex network of human interactions, also includes trading. This activity is not separate from the political and social developments in a territory. A historical perspective on this phenomenon helps us understand how the Silk Roads helped structure territories on a large scale, in parallel with continental migration routes. However, it cannot be forgotten that the conditions inherent to the concept of "place" prevail over all other aspects. They are at the origin of the "natural" location of public spaces linked to trading as an activity.

Another factor is the Mediterranean island of Cyprus's geostrategic location. It has been the key element that underpins its importance as a transshipment hub among Africa, Asia, and Europe. Already in the Middle Ages, with the fall of the city of Acre in 1291 (in ancient Palestine), the island became the primary bastion of Christianity in the east and a central trade emporium. Its economy was driven by high-quality agricultural exports, luxury manufacturing, and extensive shipping networks, largely managed by Italian merchant families. Port cities were the first points of contact with the island and became important for the movement of goods (Perdiki, 2021).

These key points in understanding the island's commercial structure are reflected in the first maps produced throughout the 14th century. Commercial flows ran parallel to the slave trade, as noted by (Usta, 2019). The location of some port cities naturally contributed to their being considered gateways for different goods, and even determined a certain specialisation in certain types of trade. The city of Famagusta played this role at the time due to its proximity to the Syrian coast, where certain routes from the Arabian Peninsula and the Silk Road passed through cities such as Latakia and, further north, Aleppo. Famagusta was not only known for the marketing of Cyprus's agricultural and luxury products, but also for the transportation of eastern goods to the west and vice versa. Slavery and slave trading were also components of the economy of the city, and

in creating networked links to other geographical locations. Slaves were used in the residences and workplaces of Famagusta, but were also traded and transported by merchants. The commercial and distribution structure developed in parallel with the internal factors of agricultural production and consumption, as well as their marketing. The central Cypriot Mesarya region served as the breadbasket for the island's inhabitants, as did some fertile lands on both coasts (north and south) located between the coastline and the foothills of the plateau. Examples include Güzelyurt, the Lapta region, and areas between Limassol and Larnaca, where tropical species such as sugarcane were successfully cultivated. Alaminos agricultural lands are a clear example of it.

Nicosia, as the island's capital and given its central location, played a significant role in the island's trade flows. The design of the city's walled structure ultimately created security conditions that were among the key factors in the proper development of commercial activity (Badr, 2016). Levant and Anatolia have been important references for structural socio-cultural changes driven by rule changes. They started during the Seljuk period (10th-11th centuries), especially after the Battle of Myriokephalon (1176). The consequence was a reduction of Byzantine power over these territories. Seljuk culture experienced a resurgence, with Güçlüay for leading to a revival of international trade in the region. These factors were reproduced during the Ottomanization of the conquered territories. Cyprus experienced these effects, which generated power and trade structures, especially in its urban centres.

The role of İzzettin Keykavus, who conquered Sinop, an important port city on the Black Sea coast, cannot be overlooked. This sultan signed trade agreements with the Kingdom of Cyprus and granted Venetian merchants certain commercial and legal privileges. The most important attempts to develop international trade in Anatolia occurred during the reign of Sultan Alaadin Keykubad, considered the greatest ruler of the Anatolian Seljuks. He seized Kolonaros (Alanya), a port city close to Antalya (Önge, 2007, p. 52): 52; (Güçlüay, 2002, pp. 569-574).

Venetian and Genoese merchants, aware of the value of these goods, developed colonising activities as bridgeheads throughout the Levant region after the first Crusades.¹ These were not merely economic contacts with specific merchant families, but rather state objectives within the framework of colonising the eastern Mediterranean. The effects of this objective were reflected in the concepts of defence and territorial control. There was a clear shift in territorial strategy, abandoning the vertical systems of defence and visual control of the island from its highest points (Kantara Castle, St. Hilarion, and Buffavento) in favour of establishing horizontal defence systems. It involved implementing a central stronghold on the island of Nicosia and redefining the defensive structures of Famagusta and Girne.

Additionally, defensive towers were constructed along the castle lines, especially on the island's southern flank, to prevent pirate attacks of the time, as seen in the cases of Pyla, Prvoilia, and Alaminos. (Pages Madrigal, 2016). The result of this territorial palimpsest was the superimposition of defensive levels and, through subsequent Ottomanization, the conceptualisation of Cyprus as a relatively small-scale bridgehead among three continents.

Water as an urban factor for the creation of public spaces

The relationships between land and water usually define clear boundaries that are generally difficult to overcome in territorial organisation. A deep understanding of these relationships and how different societies have managed this problem is vital to achieving the proper balance in territorial management. In the case of Nicosia, there are two determining elements of the urban form and its process of change: the presence of water flows and, subsequently, their disappearance. The urban development of Nicosia is inextricably linked to water. Its existence is necessary for the survival of any inhabited settlement. The topography of the land, with gentle slopes for water drainage and the irregular flow regimes throughout history, resulted in several riverbeds crossing the territory and the uncertainty of a clear route that would define the boundaries between water and land: the natural domains of the Pedieos River basin.

During Frankish and Venetian rule² lasted from 1489 to 1571, and the cities of Cyprus were fortified and faced water scarcity. To limit potential losses during transportation, they used clay pipes, built underground channels and successive wells, the burrows. In those of these where the water did not reach the surface, they used the "alakati" which was turned by an animal.³ In this way, they pumped water to the surface and irrigated their private farms, the "timaria"⁴ (Καμπανέλλας X., 2003, p. 7) This groundwater pumping method was deemed the best way to ensure a reliable water supply for the city. After urban saturation, the wells and cisterns built during the Venetian and Ottoman periods in Nicosia were insufficient to serve the population at the time. In parallel, these wells could be exhausted due to the changes in groundwater flows around the city or by the construction of the walled city.⁵

The Pedieos River ultimately became the protagonist, profoundly shaping the urban layout that has survived to this day and the way intramural public spaces are used. Various written and graphic references illustrate this phenomenon, which led to the creation of a large buffer zone to prevent flooding and a river easement to prevent construction in these areas.

Duke Otto von der Pfalz visited Nicosia in 1460 and reported that the walls had collapsed to the point of being useless for the city's defence. These walls were those of the old medieval wall, which, according to the topography and the hypotheses

¹ Venice secured crucial trading privileges in the Byzantine Empire with the Golden Bull of 1082, while both city-states gained settlements in Syria around 1098.

² Frankish rule lasted from 1192 to 1489; Venetian rule

³ Vernacular waterwheel

⁴ The term Timaria (τιμάρια) is the plural form of Timarion. During the Byzantine Empire, the term referred to a land grant or fief bestowed upon an individual in exchange for military service.

⁵ William Bevan, Director of Agriculture in Cyprus in 1919, writes that the most widespread method of pumping water on the island is the use of ancient watermills, the so-called alakatia [manganopigada], which are often described as "Persian watermills" and resemble the "sakia" found in Egypt. The alakatia is a mechanism with a wooden wheel to which clay pots are attached to transport the water. The wheel is attached to the mouth of a well and is turned with the help of a mule or donkey. The remains of Venetian wells and cisterns that are no longer in use indicate that during the Venetian period, groundwater levels were much higher than they are today. (Bevan 1919, pag 9)

advanced by various historians, could have been limited by one of the branches of the Pedieos River. (Jeffery, 1918, p. 22) The fall of the walls could be due to water infiltration caused by capillary action.

Among the historical references, we can mention the account of the Dominican monk Felix Faber from Ulm, who visited the island of Cyprus twice on his way to pilgrimages to the Holy Land. He described in 1483, the Pedieos river as a large torrent flowing through the middle of the city and at certain times of the year, it is rapid, although it did not have a single drop of water when he himself visited Nicosia, as he adds (Cobham, 1908, p. 41) Ascanio Savorgnan stated in his 1562 study of the fortification of the cities of Cyprus that neither the nearby nor the far mountains posed a threat to the city, which has a perimeter of four miles and an almost circular shape with small round towers of the old type.⁶ (Grivaud 2016, p. 211)

The island's cartographic production reflects this fact. A map attributed to Giovanni Francesco Camocio (1574?)⁷ shows the city of Nicosia crossed by the Pedieos River. It is a graphical representation of the Nicosia settlement, but an accurate depiction of the locations of four fords across the river as it passes through the city, three of them within the city walls. These bridges, in turn, facilitated the daily movement of people and goods across the city. These crossing points, along with the three gates in the Nicosia city wall, allow us to articulate an initial primary structure that serves as the basis for the current urban layout. Historically, the existence of up to six fords or bridges that crossed the city during these years is considered certain.⁸ (Cobham, 1908)

The depiction of Nicosia traversed by a river can already be seen on Claudio Duchetti's Map of Cyprus, published by Giovanni Orlandi in Rome in 1602. This review examines key graphic and documentary sources. It begins with the map of Nicosia by Giovanni Francesco Camocio (Venice, c. 1575), published in 1575. On this map, Selim II's forces are shown besieging the city. Two bridges cross the Pedieos River outside the city walls, where the river's waters are diverted into moats that encircle the city.

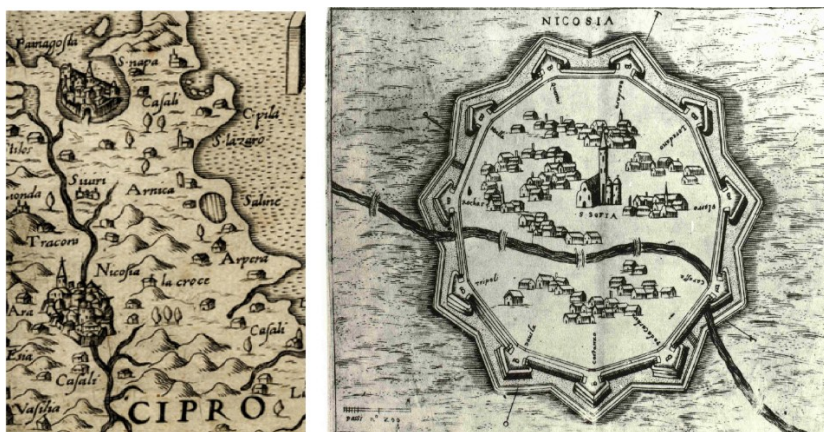


Figure 1. Left: Map of Cyprus by Claudio Duchetti, published by Giovanni Orlandi, Rome 1602. Source: Collection of the Sylvia Ioannou Public Benefit Foundation (M.0006). Right: Giovanni F. Camocio map (Venice, 1575).

Floods caused by the river have been referenced throughout history as a defining factor in shaping the region of Mesarya. The river's irregular flow created large open spaces on either side of the walled city, limiting further damage and creating open areas within the city.

These three gates are the only points of entry for goods and raw materials into the city and, therefore, denote fixed points of access and circulation in the urban topography. Consequently, merchants, along with their goods, enter the city of Nicosia through the same gates as their predecessors, following a route to the urban centre of activity and commerce. Although the city's perimeter and its access points remained unchanged, the internal urban fabric did change. Internal mobility led to spontaneous urban zoning, with commercial activity developing in a series of triangles on the urban grid, with vertices at the three gates of the walled enclosure. Because of this wall, greater attention was given to the crossing of the Pedieos River. In fact, as is often the case, the same gates that served as a connection between the interior and exterior also channelled the river's flow as it crossed the city, from the Paphos Gate towards the Famagusta Gate, following the natural topography of the land.

The precedents for the Ottomanization process of the city of Nicosia

No stage of a city's development can be understood without considering its preceding phases. The various situations that shaped the city's design and development up to the beginning of Ottoman rule (1571) have been analysed by Danilo Demi (Demi, 1997). This author highlights significant gaps among the various settlements that comprised Nicosia's vision during the Byzantine period. The presence of water, direct or indirect, and its relationship to the settlement have always played a role in the formation of Nicosia and have clearly influenced its origin, development, and subsequent decision-making, including the emergence of urban voids that have persisted to the present day.

⁶ The term "old type" refers to the medieval-style towers that preceded the arrival of bastions and horizontal defensive systems in Europe.

⁷ Indeed, the dates attributed to the three maps used to establish this chronological view do not coincide with the various data provided. Logically, there may have been a delay in publishing maps that contained information from previous years.

⁸ See Cobham 1908: These bridges were: The bridge of the Holy Apostles or Peter and Paul; The bridge of Saint Dominic; The bridge of Senesialos or Sineskardos; The bridge of Synalgia or Argyramoivon; The bridge of the Jews, and The Berlina bridge which is presented by many names: bridge of the prison, of the square, of the Lower Middle, of the yarn mills, of the Pilliri. (Cobham, 1908)

The city's formation can be explained by the interplay between land and water, in which internal mobility is channelled through territorial flows via river crossings and the subsequent construction of bridges. These bridges reinforced the condition of the roads, which took on the urban form of streets, becoming the primary structures upon which the city developed its urban fabric. The cartography of Nicosia includes these fords or bridges on its maps. Thanks to them, certain configurations of some of the city's primary roads can be understood. In fact, the existence of a river bridge-ford behind the present-day Bandabuliya of the city of Lefkosa generated a north-south flow towards the city's north gate, precisely in the current space between the Büyük Han and the main mosque. This space persisted for years as an open area, commonly used for daily markets, but especially on Fridays. Both flows, always based on previous bridges, ran north from the city's east and west gates. They formed a triangle encompassing most of the urban activity, where empty spaces assumed an important role, converging naturally near the northern bank of the Pedieos River.

One of the city's landscape characteristics is the persistence of its original layout. Everything that happens during a long period of time (1571-1900) occurs within the city walls. The city presents an urban fabric that remains unaltered along its outer perimeter from the Venetian to the Ottoman period, undergoing only internal reorganisation. (Demi, 1997, p. 46)

The change in governance on the island and in the city also brought about a qualitative shift in how urban management issues are resolved. One of Nicosia's morphological characteristics is its apparent lack of urban evolution. While the external form of Nicosia remained unchanged for centuries, once the city walls were defined, the internal reality was quite different. A simple observation of city plans reveals a progressive decrease in intramural urban gardens in favour of greater urban compactness.

The Venetian wall, and more specifically the presence of gates within this stone-walled perimeter, plays a crucial role in the persistence of key factors for the study of artisanal and commercial activity in the city during the periods covered by this study. This characteristic feature of the Latin urban topography, absent at that time, allowed commercial and artisanal activity to take hold of the urban core without the linear disruption posed by the river.⁹

This importance lies in the fact that the gates are the only points of entry for products and raw materials into the city and, therefore, denote fixed points of access and circulation within the urban topography. Inevitably, merchants, along with their goods, entered the city of Nicosia through the same gates as their predecessors during the Venetian period, following a route to the urban centre of activity and commerce. Although the city's perimeter and its corresponding access points remained unchanged, the inner urban fabric did change. The river and its bridges, so prominent in the medieval city (Demi, 1997, p. 47), no longer appear during the Ottoman period.

Thus, confined within the Venetian walls, the Ottoman city sought to reinvent itself after the 1571 war of conquest. Ronald Jennings (Jennings, 1993) e, in his work, reminds us that "the meaning of town and urban life in Ottoman Cyprus is little different from what it meant in Venetian Cyprus. These places are towns or cities in the administrative terminology of the governments." This comment fits perfectly with the insularity defined by Christophilopoulou (2020) and Jennings (1993, p. 249), since the city retained its status as capital throughout the Ottoman period. The actual picture of the city, as portrayed after the Ottoman conquest, was bleak,¹⁰ as reflected in its population and economic decline. Demographic data¹¹ (Papadopoulos, 1965), from after the Ottoman conquest indicate a population of 235 adult males living in a city where trade and industry were naturally of little importance.

Records exist of income from land and property rentals and taxes on various commercial activities, whether carried out individually or through guilds. Philippe Trélat and Hersperia Iliadou (Trélat Philippe, 2011) documented the economic activity surrounding trade in the city of Nicosia, particularly during the period 1192–1878, encompassing the Lusignan and Ottoman eras, up to the British occupation of the island. One of the achievements of the Ottomanization of Cyprus was the development of a more organised governance structure, leading to more efficient tax collection.

The income records for the first two decades after the Ottoman conquest provide evidence of the limited commercial activity at that time. Aside from the income generated by productive activities such as tanneries and a dye factory, it is worth noting the commercial activity outside the city walls, which accounted for 24% of Nicosia's total income (35,000 akce) at that time. The authors' documentation and analysis show that urban gardens within the city walls paid lower taxes on their produce than those located outside the walls.

Within this rigid control of local economies with a tax-based character, one can find information about the functioning of the city's urban spaces, especially those related to commercial activity. The records consulted by Trélat Philippe (2011) provide data on the functioning of the guilds and the importance assigned to certain activities within each mahalle (district). Thus, it is known that at a certain point, the inhabitants seem to have demanded the creation of a bakery in their area from the authorities.

A later example is the women's market, which operated only on Fridays in the 19th century and served as an important means of integrating women into Ottoman urban society. (Faroqi, 2005, p. 148)

The Ottomanization¹² processes of cities

Ottomanization is the term used in sociohistorical studies to describe the process of transformation of societies and territories under Ottoman rule throughout history. The Ottoman Empire undertook a rigorous process of acculturation in the newly

⁹ The river appears on the ground in a stretch within the boundaries of the Taht el Kale district, at the end of the Ottoman era, according to information included in the property titles of the area. (Iliadou, 2011)

¹⁰ Travellers' accounts from the period may vary in their scope on the subject. However, the population census conducted in the early years of the Ottoman conquest may provide a firmer basis for any hypothesis in this regard. (Zachariadou (E.), 1997)

¹¹ For more information on the population and demographic conditions of the first decades of the Ottoman conquest, see (Papadopoulos, 1965, pp. 19-36)

¹² A full overview of the concept of Ottomanization is not the purpose of this study. This fact, due to its dimensions and multipole variables, has been addressed by many authors in the Levant region, such as Koumaridis (2006), Karatas (2011), and Uğur (2018), among others.

conquered lands and regions. The main objective was to achieve internal cohesion through a rigid administrative system. This system sometimes disregarded vernacular cultures. In the case of Cyprus, authors such as Colin Breen (Breen, 2019) and Antonis Hadjikyriacou (Hadjikyriacou, 2016) have addressed this topic in a cross-cutting manner. The latter author defined an important phase of Ottomanization that lasted for a century after its conquest. During this time, Cyprus benefited from an intermediate position between its insularity—as a means of distancing itself from the Ottoman Empire—and its relative proximity to Istanbul. This process of Ottomanization went through several stages of intensity. During the Tanzimat period (1839-1876), greater openness to ideas and exchange with the West counterbalanced the acculturating attitudes of the first century following the Ottoman arrival on the island in 1751.

Still, signs of this partial acculturation,¹³ were evident in certain urban environments. Ottomanization entailed a clear territorial Islamization. This explains the desecration of critical churches and their transformation into mosques, since there were not mosques in the conquered territories. Some critical changes are to be highlighted during this period:

- The most direct consequence of these major changes is visible across all the islands in shifts in land ownership. In many cases, this new scenario was implemented through the creation of waqfs. These entities were closely linked to the distinct religious practice (Islam) and brought about changes in property structures. Waqfs consisted of donations to various religious institutions. They were considered pious acts to support the respective economic needs of these institutions, mainly through leasing various properties.
- The second change, more specific to Nicosia, was the establishment and development of fixed commercial structures such as the Han and the Bedesten. These two elements led to a significant transformation of the city's commercial areas, shifting from an informal layout to more formal, rigid spaces. The implementation of tax systems entailed strict control over the Empire's subjects. This contributed to the maintenance of administrative and defensive structures.
- A third key factor was the development of local territorial management structures. These were based on the mahalle, or neighbourhood, each coordinated by its local mosque.

The various Waqfs required internal coordination through the Evkaf¹⁴. These properties generated income for the foundations, which were established mainly for religious and social purposes ((Yıldız, 2009), 2009; Bakshi, 2012) (Sabri, 2013).¹⁵ The Evkaf's actions in Cyprus are well documented. Cypriot foundations earned income from agriculture, urban commercial rents, and loan interest. Agricultural properties—from small fields, orchards, gardens, and vineyards to large estates—represented the largest share of Evkaf's income. The Ottoman regime made major administrative changes, including an overhaul of the tax system, the introduction of Ottoman administrative systems, and the gradual completion of the city's walls. New urban infrastructure was built, such as hammams, hans, industries, and mosques. Ottomanization of the city also involved strategies of functional reuse.

Anachronic map of the commercial structures in the central area of Lefkoşa urban *caravanserais* (H–h), *Be-bedesten*, and *A-Arastas*, as well as *B-B* Hammams* and *M-Mosques*

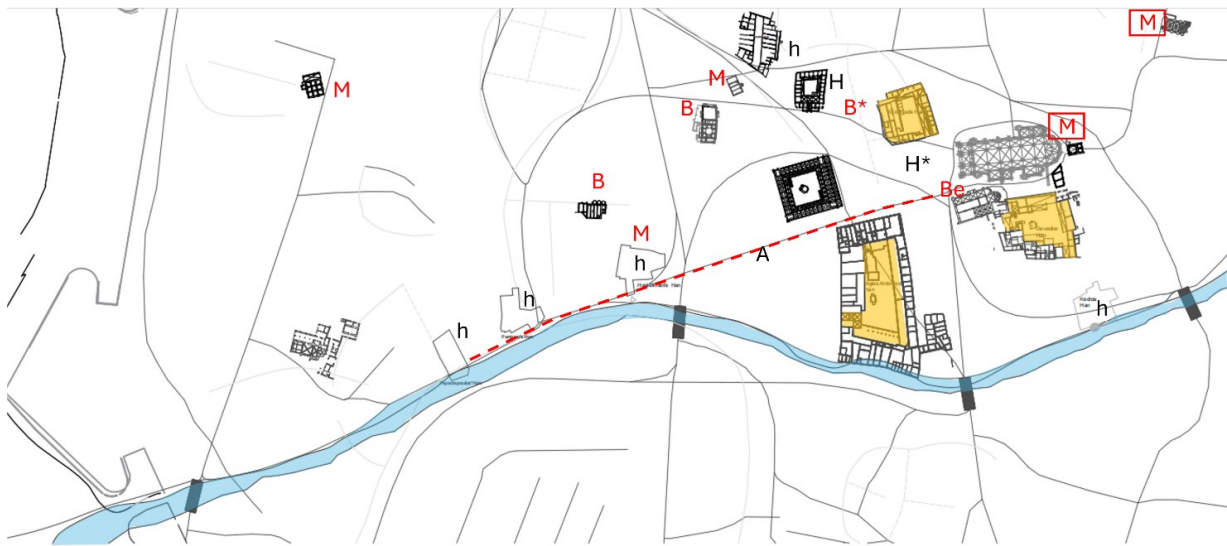


Figure 2. Commercial structures within the central area of Lefkoşa: anachronic vision.

The image of the Ottoman market: urban spatial morphology.

Nicosia followed the aforementioned parameters for implementing the Ottoman urban model. The distinguishing elements in this formal transposition are the presence of a fortified plaza structure and the crossing of a river with seasonal flow. Its final Venetian design, with its defensive structure, allowed it to maintain its territorial hegemony over the Mesarya region

¹³ It is important to consider the role of the various bishoprics of the Greek Orthodox Church and the secular control exercised over the Church's land and properties, spread throughout the entire island.

¹⁴ Evkaf is the plural mode of the word "Waqf". This term refers to an official institution recognised by the respective governments in the Islamic regions to manage movable or immovable property accumulated over centuries through donations and their respective incomes.

¹⁵ Accessible on <https://research.manchester.ac.uk/en/studentTheses/the-ottoman-waqf-built-heritage-in-cyprus-transitions-in-upkeep-a/>

well into the 20th century. This model perpetuated the decision made earlier during the Lusignan period to establish an urban centre in a central location on the island; in fact, the city had previously served as the capital or principal city of Cyprus. The Ottomanization of Nicosia followed the model of the larger Anatolian cities, adapting it to the island's scale. Thus, the aforementioned elements of the commercial areas were installed in the city centre, using the Selimiye Mosque as a spatial reference point. This reuse of Byzantine city elements included the construction of bedestens. This enclosed market was the result of the reconversion of the Church of St. Nicholas, an Orthodox Christian church. This building had been the cathedral of the Greek Orthodox Church during the Latin period. Ludwig Salvator's description (Salvator, 1983, pp. 50-55) appears to be the most detailed and reliable. In his description, the author states that the Bedesten was located opposite the Latin Cathedral of Holy Wisdom, the Ottoman-era Selimiye Mosque. Of course, there was a reason for the existence of an enclosed market within the solid walls of an imposing stone building, and that reason was security. In fact, the Bedesten was where the city's luxury goods and merchandise were bought and sold. The enclosed building, aptly named the fortress of commerce (Michell, 1978, p. 107), offered a safe environment for traders of these valuable goods, as it had a single entrance that was always guarded.

Commercial spaces play a key role in the origins and evolution of cities. Markets¹⁶ arise by occupying strategic urban areas in various ways, depending on their characteristics. This occupation happens gradually. It evolves from spontaneous actions to the formalisation of spaces tied to the development of commercial functions.

These actions, designed for large populations, needed spacious, open, and accessible areas. The origins of markets were informal and spontaneous. Merchants and customers created their own internal operating codes for spatial organisation. Markets were so vital to daily life that kings mentioned them in royal charters ("forais" in Portuguese). These charters granted city status and authorised free markets a set number of days each year, always at the king's discretion. Open market spaces are essential to any city. They persist as public or private spaces on certain days, often in areas of high symbolic and economic value. These may be near city gates or by main mosques and churches. The Ottoman Empire saw shifts in its urban model. The market moved towards built elements within the urban fabric, giving commercial activity dignity and regulation. In Ottoman cities, people envisioned commercial centres as complexes of spaces in which the Bedesten (main square), Arastas, and Hans converged. (fig.3)

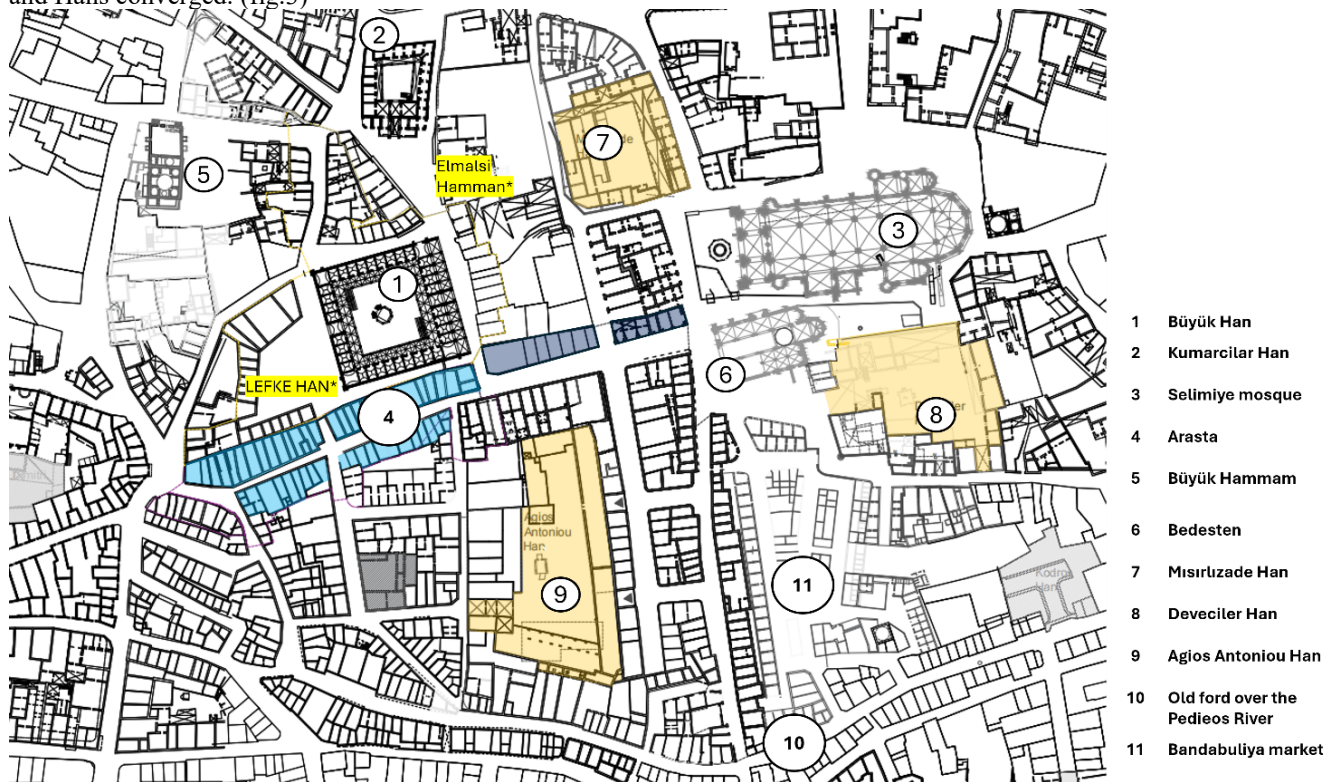


Figure 3. Commercial structure of Lefkoşa central area.

The Bedestens

Many researchers emphasise that the commercial area in the Ottoman city developed between the central (grand) mosque and the bedesten, and that a functional network radiated from the bedesten. (Cerasi, 2001, pp. 119-120) Eyice stated that there was generally one bedesten structure in every city except the capital, Istanbul; cities with great (Salvator L., 1881) commercial potential could have more than one bedesten. (Eyice, 1992, pp. 302-311) However, other authors, such as Halil İnalçık focuses on the social dimension of the bedesten and its role in trade in the city, which stands out in his paper. (İnalçık, 1980).

Inside the bedestens were lockable compartments called chests, cupboards, cellars, or safes. Both bazaar merchants and the wealthy public would bring their valuable goods, such as money, jewellery, gold, and silver, to the bedesten and store them

¹⁶ Markets were historically places where things were bought and sold. It is an old spatial concept (physical or virtual today) used in the 19th century by Marshall (1890)

in the compartments they rented there. Various technical, formal, and even semiotic elements converged in this type of building. The bedestens should be located in very central areas with high levels of security and be well defended.

All the factors that define a typical bedesten, already mentioned above, led the rulers of the early Ottoman period on the island to designate the Old Church of St. Nicholas as the city's bedesten. Its proximity to the main mosque provided a building of great strength, resistance, and security. At the same time, the message sent to the citizenry was the deconsecration of the Orthodox and Latin churches in the city centre and their integration into an Ottoman city model with a mosque and bedesten, surrounded by a complex of shops and commercial areas. In this case, the location would be in accordance with the idea defended by Cerasi (2001)

Through this reuse, the message of the new Ottoman regime's control and dominance was also clear to the citizenry. In fact, the idea of adaptive reuse was clearly applied not only to churches converted into mosques, but also, in some cases, to church ruins, as with the Büyük Hammam.

The Arastas

Arastas are axial shops configurations alongside a path directly linked to urban landmarks. (Rizopoulou-Igoumenidou, 2009). They represent the simplest forms of Architecture within the urban complexes, as detailed here. These elements come from the consolidated urban flows in cities, which their inhabitants use daily. Over time, these spaces transform into linear structures to support commercial activity, and in this way, the Arastas emerge. Arastas sometimes included the unity of different groups of tradesmen, as it happened in Ali Pasha in Edirne.

Arastas noted the importance of such axes to the different urban structures. Its linear character obliged it to look for a strong destination at the end of the path. This arrangement, created by the unity of tradespeople, makes the arastas appear as the face of the guild system, reflected in its structure (Kuban, 2007, p. 602). The Arastas could be in the form of streets within the bazaar, or they could be independent, like the Ali Pasha Arasta in Edirne.

The Arastas should be understood within the broader context of the *çarşı*, a more general concept. In this case, it refers to an arrangement of shops (McCarthy (J.), 1997, p. 242), usually developed around religious complexes, common in the formation of markets in the cities of the eastern Ottoman Mediterranean during this period. From an urban planning perspective, the *çarşı* serve to organise a basic fabric, formalising a complex patchwork in which other buildings act as urban landmarks, similar to the urban hamlet or residential fabric of non-commercial sectors of cities.

Despite being an evolved Arasta typology, conceived as covered spaces in other cities, Nicosia's Arasta expresses the simplest linear form of this typology: the Arasta parallel to Ermou Street, starting at the point where the old cathedral serves as an urban landscape landmark.

The Arasta reinterpreted the final section of the road axis that connected the Paphos Gate with the Selimiye Mosque.¹⁷ This axis would have been the road parallel to the Pedieos Riverbed on the north side, connecting with one of the bridges that have left their mark on the urban form, right at the intersection of streets that distribute traffic in all directions, near the current Lokmaci-Ledra checkpoint. The axis connecting the two main gates of the walls of Nicosia, the Famagusta Gate and the Paphos Gate, represents the main commercial and artistic arterial city layout during the Ottoman period. (Demi, 1997, p. 46) This axis naturally attracted most of the city's social activity, as it was the most direct route between the existing gates. Upon approaching the centre, a greater density of shops and workshops was observed, side by side on the facades of facing buildings. Another typical form is the coexistence of workshops within shops and, in other cases, of residences and businesses.¹⁸

This commercial axis is directly linked to the city's internal workings. In fact, Ermou Street, in its initial section coming from the Paphos Gate, corrects its course to head towards the Famagusta Gate. This alteration retraces the riverbed and follows a topography that seeks the outlet of water through that gate. Indeed, if we follow the perspective defined by the presence of Hagia Sophia, we find ourselves on the Arasta of Nicosia, which is essentially the commercial axis that, from Lokmaci, leads directly to the space between the two churches of the Byzantine city (Hagia Sophia and Saint Nicholas), that is, the main mosque (Selimiye) and the Bedesten.¹⁹

It is here, in the central Ottoman quarters of Bazar and Selimiye and their surroundings, that the city's commercial and artisanal activity is intensely concentrated. Merchants and people from all over the island gather here, flocking through the city gates to buy and sell goods. The only instance in the Ottoman city where open urban public space acquires the significance of a public meeting place, rather than simply a transit space between locations within the urban fabric, is in the market, the bazaars. (Faroqi, 2005, p. 241)

Similarly, Ludwig Salvator, during his 1873 visit to Nicosia (Salvator L. , 1881), wrote about the functional specialisation of the city's various urban areas, mentioning up to 23 different bazaars within the city walls.²⁰ He emphasised the bazaars' role as social centres of the city's market life. The book reflects the situation in Nicosia at the time when the island's administration

¹⁷ According to the dimensions of the plots alongside the axis, we can differentiate two steps in the Arasta, on first step basically deploying shops between the lowest part of the city, close the old river bed and the corners with the Buyuk Han. A second step has another typologies, either urban or architectural steps and arrive till the cross road in front of the Bedesten. Note that this part, in the northern façade, hosted the extension of the Eski Polis street

¹⁸ This typology is implicit in Iliadou's works (Iliadou, 2011); this is the case of the shopkeeper Onbashi in Taht el Kale, whose family lived on the upper floor of his shop in the late 19th century.

¹⁹ This orientation would be slightly corrected by the implementation of new mixed-use buildings (residential/commercial) to fill the space of the Arasta, occupying the space on the south side of the Buyuk Han. This process would be completed during the last third of the 19th century, remaining unchanged to this day.

²⁰ The following businesses, whose names are derived from their specialised product, are detailed below: manufacturers, clothing makers, leather and carpet/rug artisans, European shoemakers, shoemakers, Turkish shoemakers, thread and fabric manufacturers, furniture makers, coachmen, bronze, silver, and iron artisans, potters, tobacconists, tavern keepers, vegetable and meat vendors, fishmongers, confectioners, a women's market, and vendors of cotton, flour, barley, and mules. The Tanzimat reform facilitated the importation of Western products, such as shoes.

passed into British hands, presenting the bazaar city as the defining urban typology in Nicosia's case. Iliadou uses this description to describe the final stretch of the trade route up to the Famagusta Gate. In this work, he proceeds to a detailed definition of the activities and architecture where the inhabitants of Taht-el-Khale lived their lives. His study helps us understand the urban landscapes.²¹

Another important piece of information we can glean from the archives is that commercial premises were valued higher as real estate than dwellings, despite being much smaller. Even a vacant lot near the area of concentrated commercial activity appears in the archival documents as a commercial plot. Thus, this plot is valued more highly than an empty plot in another part of the mahalla, classified as a building plot, which has a much lower value. In most cases, the shops in Taht el Kale are not privately owned but are rented by their managers. They appear to belong to pious Ottoman foundations (Vakf) or to Ottoman officials or landowners, as property granted to officials by imperial order in exchange for their services.

This process, which continues to this day, also affected the definition and progressive delimitation of urban public spaces. The axis connecting the two main gates in Nicosia's city walls, the Famagusta Gate and the Paphos Gate, represents the city's principal commercial and artisanal artery during the Ottoman period. As one approached the centre, a greater density of shops and workshops was observed, lined up side by side along the facades of facing buildings. This arrangement of shops is called *çarşı*, and the concentration of similar shops in a row is called *Arasta*, a common feature of the market layout of Ottoman eastern Mediterranean cities at the time. Another typical feature is the coexistence of workshops within shops and, in other cases, of residences and businesses, as in the case of the shopkeeper Onbashi in Taht el Kale, whose family lived on the upper floor of his shop in the late 19th century.

These spaces were used for the most basic development of the conditions for establishing a market. The market's role as an integrator for diverse people within the Ottoman urban fabric can be confirmed. The Ottoman city was, in most other cases, an agglomeration with limited mobility.

Hans

The typology is defined by the adaptation of the original caravanserais to the urban shape. We can illustrate this typology by tracing the urbanisation of Anatolia's caravanserais, as a first step in the evolution of the original ones along the Silk Route. The Caravanserais, in general and more specifically, those built during the Anatolian Seljuk period, have been extensively studied and have generated a rich literature within the disciplines of art history and architecture. In contrast, the inns of the Ottoman period have not been studied as thoroughly as the caravanserais. The introductory work by Ayşıl Yavuz (2000, pp. 239-260) defines the main elements and addresses some of the gaps at this point.

The Han assumes the classical morphological study, including functional aspects. In the case of the Han, the added value lies in analysing the significance of the building in the urban context, how caravanserais assume their respective urban roles, and how the urban fabric shapes the forced existence within it.

The Hans in the Central Area of Lefkosa

This study includes a description of the "hidden" Hans in the central area of Ottoman Lefkosa and some results from the recent first analysis.

The qualitative leap in these commercial spaces occurred with the Ottomanization of Nicosia and the island, through the implementation of supporting structures. The Hans emerged as an urban manifestation of the caravanserai, replicating structures that had been tested at the final destinations along the various routes of the Silk Road. Such are the cases of Antalya and Alanya, the closest examples from Anatolia. Thus, the urban variant of the caravanserai arose as an expression of the need to offer services related to these activities, as occurred, to a greater or lesser extent, in all the port cities of the Levant during that period.

The Hans became service providers to their users and certainly defined high standards of living for them, as well as a space for the exchange of goods and cultures. As a fortified city, the gates closed at dusk, leaving few options for completing business other than finding lodging and waiting until the next day to continue the journey.

Transitioning to the specific study area, this section outlines the research's geographical and contextual focus. This work presents a sample of the work to be carried out in the walled city of Lefkosa-Nicosia.

The methodology is divided into three parts:

- State of Arts
- Work Area
- Detailed Analysis

1. State of the Arts

The state of Arts is a review of the Hans and their integration into Nicosia revealed data that clarifies their urban impact and evolution. This process involved gathering written accounts and, at times, visual documents. Existing surveys have been

²¹ Following the street from Famagusta Gate to the city centre neighbourhoods and the main market area, the late 19th-century land registry provides a clear picture of the buildings' uses as we move toward the centre and of their spatial organisation.... The shops occupy only the street-facing facades, and their density increases as we approach the city centre. At the point where the Taht el Kale neighbourhood reaches its western boundary, and the Haidar Pasha neighbourhood begins, we find shop after shop along the uninterrupted street. Along the way, all the relevant index information in the registry documents characterises all the buildings as shops without specifying their function.

The most relevant uses for commercial activity in the mahalla were inns, and we find two in Taht el Kale: one on the section of the commercial street bordering the mahalla of Haidar Pasha, in the furthest part of the area, and another on the left-hand side of the buildings coming from the Famagusta Gate. These are small, simple two-story guesthouses that bear little resemblance to the grand khans found in the city centre.

updated to improve analysis. To develop an appropriate State of the Arts report, data were compiled to reflect the study's complexity from social, economic, urban, and territorial perspectives. Cross-referencing this data allowed a better understanding of the Ottomanization process in Cyprus, particularly in Nicosia, a walled city.

From a cross-reading of these data, some provisional conclusions can be drawn:

1. The city of Nicosia originated from a network of closely spaced, fenced neighbourhoods, each with its own distinct formal identity, still visible in some persistent traces of the urban form of some traditional mahalles within the city walls. These characteristics are more pronounced in the eastern part of the walled city. Some authors propose an interpretation based on a typical Roman castrum grid, although this remains unproven (Demi, 1997)
2. This urban development held some significance during the Lusignan period, when Cyprus was a meeting point for diverse communities and religions.
3. The Pedieos River flowed through areas near these consolidated zones, which would have been enclosed and whose walls exhibited low resistance to dampness problems, either due to their construction methods or the materials used in their construction.
4. During the Venetian period (1489-1771), the previous walled structures were demolished, and the design and (unfinished) construction of the new walled enclosure took place.
5. The fenced neighbourhoods created interstitial spaces. Urban voids that, in many cases, became the main thoroughfares of the city, following the "natural" directions towards Girne-Kyrenia, Famagusta, Gazimaguisa, Paphos, and Limassol.
6. The crossing of the Pedieos River through the city shaped the growth of the walls. Its drainage was completed in 1882, when Christodoulos Severis became the first mayor.
7. The factors discussed above led to the use of these spaces for commerce. This pattern began with the Büyük Han and urban filling near the Pedieos River.
8. The decline of the Hans stems from a combination of factors.
 - Functional factors. Hans's obsolescence is due to changes in commercial dynamics and in the transport and logistics of goods.
 - The limited accessibility to the city centre (even to the Hans themselves, the subject of this study). Deveciler Han's case illustrates the effect of transit limitations, along with the disappearance of goods transportation by animals.
 - The Hans' adobe construction and humid river-side locations caused structural decline.
 - The Hans' large size meant high maintenance costs, which led to subletting or secondary uses, such as the Büyük Han's stint as a prison.
 - The socio-political events on the island, especially those of 1963 and 1974, which severed the traditional Ermou Street axis as the city's commercial main thoroughfare.
 - The closure of the border between the two parts of Cyprus and the uneven growth of the North-South axes in both halves of the walled city. To compensate for the loss of the common axis, it was transformed into a buffer zone
9. Alternative uses for the various Hans are currently facing diverse challenges, which implies the redesign of some of them as residential uses for sectors of the population in need of decent housing. This strategy would help address problems arising from under-housing in the historic centre of Nicosia and attract younger segments of the population to regenerate the area, thereby interrupting the gentrification process initiated by the excessive commercialisation of the walled city
10. When handling urban voids, consider their value in a city with many undeveloped areas. This shortage results from a few public facilities within the walls
11. Coordinating tasks between both sectors of Nicosia is necessary, where actions on urban voids would play a relevant role. While the urban regeneration operation to the south (Zaha Hadid's Project in the Elefteria district has been a catalyst for change in the reorganisation of this sector and its connection to contemporary Nicosia outside the city walls. The Atartuk cultural centre, north of the Girne Gate, has not provided a real impetus for this part of the city, lacking a formal connection to the city's expansion and failing to address pedestrian flow since the reopening of the checkpoint in Lokmaci-Ledra.

2. Work Zone

A work area has been defined and delimited, centred on the space between the Büyük Han and the main mosque of Nicosia. The existing cadastral maps, with information spanning over one hundred years and at a scale of 1/500, were used as a reference. This work area is defined from east to west by the respective boundaries of the old Lycée (now the Ministry of Tourism) and the Korkud Hamam; from north to south, the boundaries are the Tahsin Han and the rear of the Agios Antoniou Han, now part of Buffer One, under Turkish rule.

The work zone can be considered a good example of a palimpsest city. The city has been rewriting itself through the disappearance of infrastructure and the reuse of its footprints (as in the case of the Pedieos River) or through the reuse of public buildings that are referenced but now non-existent or on the verge of disappearing (Agios Antonious Han, El Mazli Hammam, Cavus Han). (Kodros hani) in the backyard of the Bandabuliya. The lands of the former Lymbourides Han, located to the south of the area, can be added to this list. The work focuses on a combined analysis of the documentation analysed by Danilo Demi, the contributions of other doctoral theses in this area, and the field data collected.

3. Detailed analysis

The various hans, or their remains, in the previously delimited area have been analysed, especially from the following perspectives:

- Hypotheses regarding the formation of the city in each case, and how the process of assimilation and accommodation has developed to date, as far as possible. This hypothesis includes morphological analyses of the various access routes to the city center, and how the consolidation process of the Pedieos River channel has been formalised up to its final stages: the

genesis of Ermou Street, the rise of the commercial axis until 1963, the decline and closure of the commercial axis, and its final use as a buffer zone, up to the present day.

- Identify the diverse characteristics of Hans and conduct a comparative analysis, which will be helpful to appreciate the value of urban voids in a historic, gentrifying city.

Mısırlızade Han

According to (Badahir, 2015), this han was built in the 19th century and belonged to Osman Mısırlızade. This information coincides with (Bağışkan, 2009), which includes a survey of the hans of Nicosia dated between 1870 and 1880, to which this han refers. This han, probably built during the transition between Ottoman and British rule, was constructed in several phases, as evidenced by various surveys and maps from that period. In its various versions, the existence of a non-central water tank and a water line running internally through the central courtyard of the Han is specified. Apparently, the Han had two entrances: one directly from the public space in front of the mosque, although its design was constrained by the narrowness of Eski Polis Street at the corner with this public space. A second entrance was located on the eastern facade of the property (present-day M. Asim Efendi Street). (fig.4)

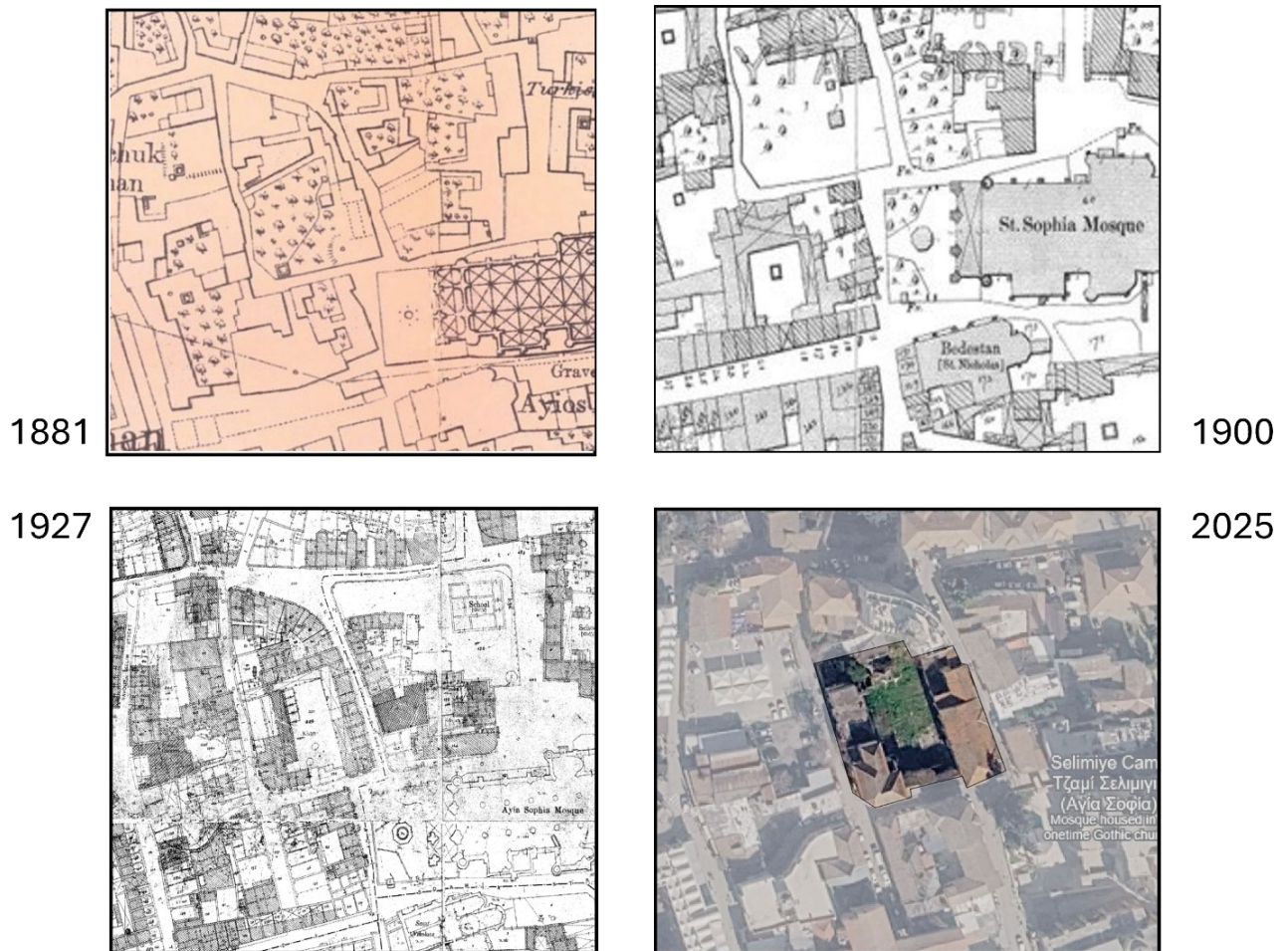


Figure 4. Mısırlızade Han.



Figure 5. Current state of Mısırlızade han.

For a long time, it served as temporary lodging for people from villages and towns, and later as a bus stop. With the decline of the former splendor of the walled city, the inn was left to its fate. The 17-room inn was rented by Şaban Kalkan until three years ago. After Kalkan withdrew from the rental, the inn fell into disrepair. This han was mentioned by some authors and is referred to in documents during the last third of the 19th century (Bağışkan, 2009, p. 451). In fact, Bağışkan includes this Han in a list of a survey of the Hans in Nicosia, where at least 19 hans would exist. All the information is dated between 1870's-1880's (Bağışkan, 2014).

Deveciler Han

This Han, believed to belong to the Mehmet Bey Foundation, is located south of the Selimiye Mosque in Nicosia. It was once one of the largest inns in Nicosia. The Deveciler Han represents one of the transitional Hans, between the traditional model of central symmetry and the Hans that adapt to the circumstances. functional and irregularity of the land where they sit. In both the previous Mısırlızade Han and the present one, the value of the central location prevails over the canonical architectural design. It is important to understand that we are dealing with a construction carried out after the arrival of British rule on the island, still under the social and cultural influence of Ottoman culture. This Han follows only the functional scheme of Ottoman urban caravanserais, characterized by an inward-oriented layout organized around a central open courtyard. Maps from the period already refer to the creation of the Han in 1882, and in greater detail, in the cadastral map of 1927. This Han, like the previous one, withstood the transition from an architectural enclosure designed for animals (mainly camels) to an enclosure that became a transportation hub for the first motorized transport services on the island.

This Han, as well as the previous, withstood the transition from an architectural enclosure designed for animals (mainly camels) to an enclosure that became a transportation hub for the first motorized transport services on the island. This process began with the demolition of sections of the lateral walls of the Girne fort, which facilitated the entry of buses into the historic city center. With this, the transport of goods and food to the city changed, with a gradual abandonment of pack animals in favor of buses. The Deveciler han continued to house animals until the 1950s, when the dilapidated state of the facilities led to its conversion into a large bus parking area. The facilities gradually deteriorated and became obsolete, while heavy traffic was banned from the city, citing vibrations that affected the condition of the Selemye Mosque, which at that time was in a state of preservation that was certainly, but worrying. The final disappearance of the central elements (water tank and Ethem Dede's tomb) occurred in 1965-66, during the last conversion into a car park. Despite this, some elements of the Han's structure are still recognizable, especially on the eastern flank of the site, with semi-hidden arcades, as well as the reuse of the Han's south gate as a cafeteria, right next to the former gate, which is currently out of use.



Figure 6. Deveciler han evolution.



Figure 7. Current state of Deveciler han.

Han Agios Antoniou

The Agios Antoniou Han is the fourth caravanserai joined to the old structure composed of the Buyuk Han and Gamblers' Han in the central area of the Market area in Lefkoşa. The Agios Antoniou Han was more locally integrated into the dense marketplace fabric rather than functioning as an isolated monumental structure. The han was privately owned and not part of the Evkaf (waqf) system.

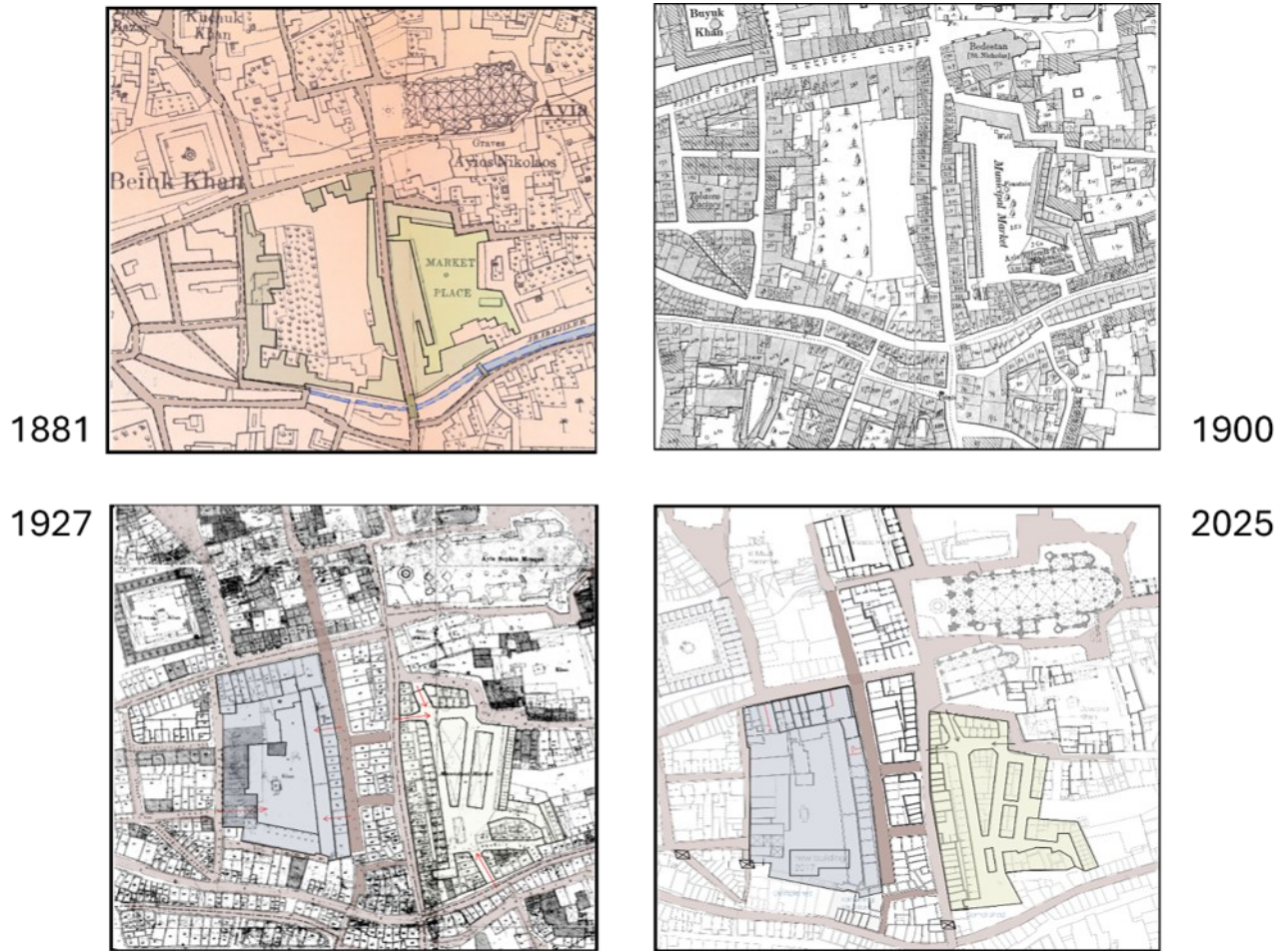


Figure 8. Agios Antoniou Han.



Figure 8. Current state of the Agios Antoniou Han.

The southern edge of this plot was defined by the Arabacılar Street. It is traditionally dated to the late 18th to early 19th century Ottoman period, when such caravanserais were constructed as part of the urban commercial infrastructure of the old city (Bakshi, 2012). This has housed many carpenters and woodworkers who constructed the coaches, amaxa (horse - drawn coaches), that lined this street waiting to pick up passengers. This large han had its own cafe and restaurant, for which it was famous

This Han had different peculiarities:
Its dimension.

- The dimensions of the original plot were the largest of the spaces surrounding the iconic Hans of Lefkosa. In fact, its initial eastern boundary was precisely Market Street (today Kuyuncular Street), which ran alongside the old bridge that crossed the Pedieos Riverbed. Representations of this plot suggest an agricultural use, or perhaps a market garden, consistent with many intramural plots of the time (last third of the 19th century).

Its resilience.

- These generous dimensions allowed for a series of urban interventions that facilitated accessibility and the proliferation of activities in the surrounding area. The demolition of the fourth Han in the parav sector facilitated the connection between Eski Polis Street and the newly created street in the artisan workshop area, named Mithat Pasa sokak, opened during the first third of the 20th century, parallel to Kuyuncular Street, the old river crossing path.

The result was the organization of a han of reasonable dimensions, with direct cross-access via newly created streets, linked to the traditional market area and to some local industries located in the central area of the walled city. Such is the case of the old tobacco factory.

Its potential

Its strategic location was fundamental, as were other Hans located along Ermou Street, for the development of the armed conflict between the Orthodox and Muslim communities. This resilience was tested once again, especially after the events of 1963 and the establishment of the Green Line; the function of the have changed dramatically. Located within the emerging Turkish Cypriot enclave, the building lost its commercial role. The restaurant and café were closed, and the courtyard was repurposed as a parade ground for Turkish Cypriot fighters. The upper floors were later used to house fighters and refugees, while a canteen replaced earlier food-related functions, marking a shift from everyday civic life to militarized occupation (Bakshi, 2012).

4. Conclusions

- The **establishment of urban caravanserais** in Cyprus coincided with the Ottoman Empire's arrival on the island (1571), thus beginning the period of Ottomanization.
- This **Ottomanization** was based on the development of **five vectors**, where the commercial component was a significant factor in the Nicosia - Lefkoşa process: Hans + Bedesten + Arasta.
- The **Hans evolved typologically from mere mimicry** of the last urban caravanserais of Anatolia and Mediterranean port cities **to a progressive specialisation** in which the classic central courtyard typology became less pronounced.
- The **Tanzimat period spurred private initiatives** to build new caravanserais, some of which had been approved during Ottoman rule but were completed under British rule on the island (1878-1960). All of this contributed to the formation of urban landscapes that justify the view of Lefkoşa as a city of urban caravanserais.
- **The period from 1914 to 1963** fostered the gradual emergence of urban caravanserais, where reinforced concrete construction and interaction with other building types (contemporary stoas) distorted the dual role of accommodation and commercial areas. This phenomenon should be the subject of analysis as a future line of research.
- The **still-perceptible traces** of these urban caravanserais in Lefkoşa offer an **excellent opportunity** to recover **memories and intangible** aspects of heritage, as well as to develop **appropriate reuse strategies** for these urban voids and their **contemporary reinterpretation**.

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The author(s) report no conflicts of interest

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