Approaches toward the *Evkaf* built heritage on British-ruled Cyprus

Reyhan Sabri (University of Sharjah)

Abstract: *The Ottoman* waqf *institution played a key role over the centuries in the formation and upkeep of the built environment in Cyprus. Operating as an autonomous system, it ensured the longevity of built properties by providing the necessary resources and recruiting local communities to monitor their status. However, the successive 'modernization' drives, which started during the late Ottoman era and were continued by the British administration, resulted in the dissolution of its sustainable elements. British rule (1878–1960) on the island also coincided with the modern conservation movement emergence in the West. The uneven and sometimes conflicted adoption of modern Western conservation practices on* waqf *built heritage selectively prioritized the protection of the medieval/Latin origin* waqf *properties and disregarded those of Ottoman origin. This article derives from my archival research and publications on the changing role of the Ottoman* waqf *institution and approaches towards its built legacy in Cyprus. It illustrates Orientalism's role in how the Ottoman* waqf *heritage was viewed and administered.*

Introduction

In its aftermath, the Ottoman Empire left a rich architectural legacy throughout its former territories, in what were newly independent nation-states in its European lands and the North African and Middle Eastern territories, recently or newly colonized by the British and French empires. Throughout the Ottoman era, most urban facilities like mosques, schools, commercial structures, and residential buildings were constructed and maintained through the *waqf*[1] system. *Waqf*s were independently formed and autonomously run pi-

1 The word 'waqf' has been transliterated in numerous forms in different languages, such as, *wakf*, *vakf* and *vakıf* (plural *awqaf*, *aukaf* and *evkaf* – Islahi [2003]). The

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ous Islamic endowments. *Waqf* founders built these facilities, stipulated the management mechanism and endowed resources for their upkeep and maintenance to ensure their longevity. However, the *waqf* institution was troubled by mismanagement practices during the Ottoman Empire's decline. This provided the pretext for centralizing this autonomous institution under the regional *Evkaf* offices working under the auspices of the Imperial *Evkaf* Ministry in Istanbul, established in 1826. Foreign powers' colonization of Ottoman lands caused further complications within the already troubled system during the first half of the twentieth century. *Waqf* laws were enacted in almost all Muslim countries and several communities to establish a Ministry of *Evkaf* or General Directorate of *Evkaf*.[2] From then on, the institution turned into a branch of government, managed in the same way that other branches of the public sector were managed.

Cyprus, an Ottoman land since 1571, became the first of the Middle Eastern territories of the Ottoman Empire to become part of the British Empire. Therefore, British Cyprus offers insights into the changing dynamics of the island's Ottoman *waqf* institution and the broader British colonial context. This article draws from my research in British colonial era archives belonging to the Cyprus *Evkaf* Administration[3] and publications.[4] It offers insights into the Eurocentric paradigms of Orientalism and ethno-nationalist political agendas which underpinned the colonial treatment of *waqf* heritage. In my previous research, I documented how the Ottoman *waqf*s in Cyprus had a well-established building upkeep tradition pre-dating the British colonial era, which actively involved community participation.[5] According to the existing archival records,[6] the colonial rulers immediately asserted that Cyprus's *Evkaf* were a dated Ottoman institution that needed to be administratively reorganized under the 'exemplary' British administration. The present article seeks to illustrate how

official departments which have been established to control the administration of *waqf*s are often named with the plural. For ease of understanding, this article uses the word 'waqf' as it has commonly been used and turned into a global term in English literature. On the other hand, staying true to its officially used name since the late Ottoman era, 'Evkaf' is used referring to the Waqf Department in Cyprus.

2 Assi (2008).

3 Sabri (2013). British era files are coded with BEF pretext throughout this paper. The copyright of the BEF coded documents belongs to the Cyprus Evkaf Administration.

4 Sabri (2015, 2016, 2017, 2019).

5 Sabri (2013), pp. 75–83; 98–103; (2019), pp. 32–58.

6 Seager (1883); Sabri (2013).

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the British colonial authorities substantially altered the Ottoman *waqf* institution's traditional building upkeep procedures and how this led to a subjective handling of *waqf* heritage. In the following section, I will briefly explain the traditional maintenance system of *waqf*-built properties as a basis for understanding the changes during British rule. This will be followed by a detailed explanation of the colonial approaches to the *waqf* institution and practices relating to *waqf* properties with Ottoman origins.

The Ottoman *waqf's* traditional building upkeep and maintenance system

A *waqf* is a charitable trust created per Islamic law. To establish a *waqf*, a person proclaims a portion of their property as henceforth inalienable and designates persons and public utilities as beneficiaries of its yields.[7] In the original Ottoman system, each *waqf* was an autonomous unit, administered by the *mutawalli* (trustee) according to the principles put forward by the donor in the original *waqfiyya* (endowment deed) and supervised by the *qadi* (the local judge).[8] Traditionally, most endowments comprised built properties such as mosques, *tekke* complexes, schools, libraries, soup kitchens, and fountains. These structures were either newly constructed or renovated from the existing buildings.[9] The revenue from specifically endowed assets was used to pay for the services provided at these facilities. Amongst the income-bearing assets were commercial facilities such as *khan*s (inns), souks (bazaars), *hammam*s (public baths), aqueducts, and residential properties. Because the continuity of the *waqf*s depended on the survival of their assets, *waqf* founders prioritized regular maintenance and repair of the endowed buildings.[10] As a result of this self-sustaining system, not only was a wide variety of buildings erected, maintained, and revitalized, but their functions were also sustained throughout the centuries, thanks to the protective legal measures written into the endowment deeds.

7 Kozlowski, et al. (2010).
8 Akgündüz (1996); Yediyıldız (2003).
9 Behrens-Abouseif (1994); Singer (2002); Madran (2004).
10 Bakırer (1973); Madran (2004); Akar (2010).

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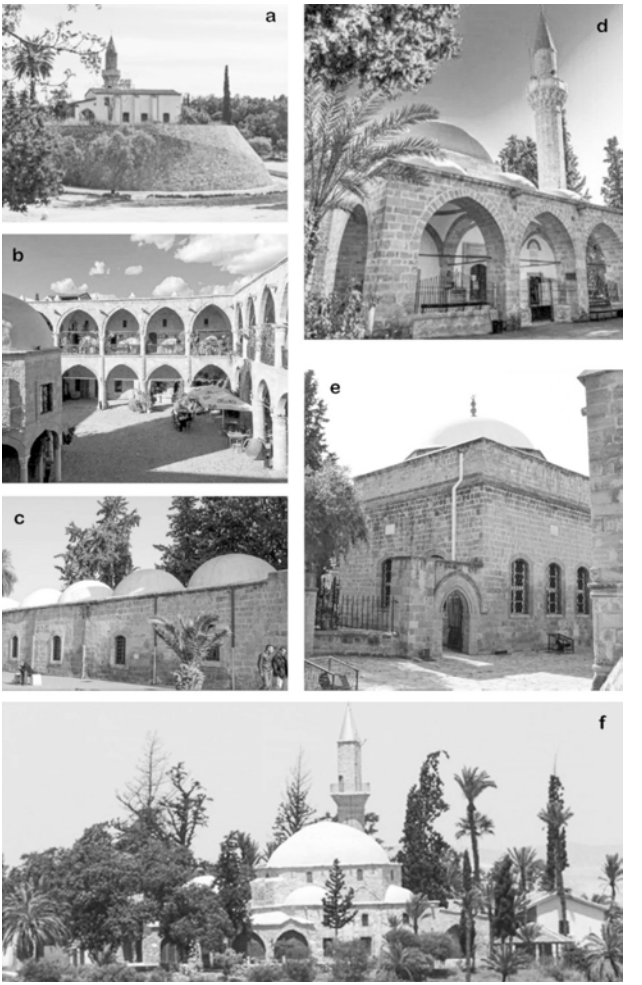

Fig. 1.a-f: Views of various waqf *buildings with Ottoman origins: a) Bayraktar Mosque in Nicosia/Lefkoşa, b) Büyük Han in Nicosia, c) Mevlevi Tekke in Nicosia/Lefkoşa, d) Arabahmet Mosque in Nicosia/Lefkoşa, e) Sultan Mahmut II Library in Nicosia/Lefkoşa, f) Hala Sultan Tekke in Larnaka/Larnaca. Photographs by author, 2013.*

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Throughout the Ottoman era, the establishment of *waqf*s in newly conquered regions was a standard practice.[11] Thus, several *waqf*s were established in Cyprus during the Ottoman era between 1571 and 1878.[12] Not only were new buildings erected during this period (Fig. 1), but many buildings with Latin origins that had been abandoned due to war were re-adapted for *waqf* purposes (Fig. 2).[13] *Waqf*s in Cyprus established practices for maintaining their endowed buildings so that they continued operating as urban public facilities while generating income that was wholly or partially re-invested in upkeep.[14]

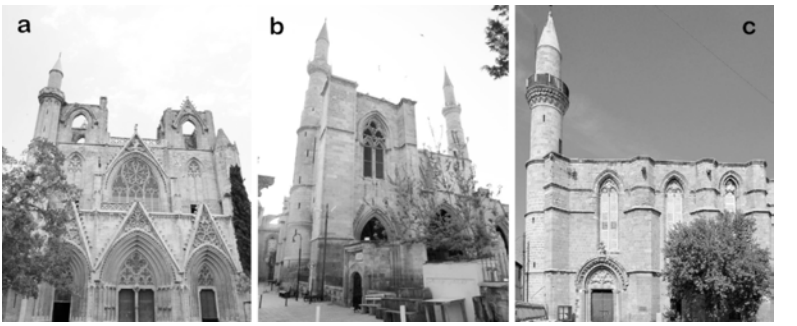

Fig. 2.a-c: Views of various waqf *built properties with pre-Ottoman origins a) Lala Mustafa Paşa Mosque (former Latin cathedral of St Nicholas) in Famagusta/Gazimağusa, b) Selimiye Mosque (former Latin cathedral of St. Sophia) in Nicosia/Lefkoşa, and c) Haydar Paşa Mosque (former Latin cathedral of St. Catherine) in Nicosia/Lefkoşa. Photographs by author, 2013.*

However, as part of the Ottoman *waqf* system, the *waqf* institution in Cyprus witnessed a first transition during the Tanzimat Era, with the centralization of the Cypriot *waqf* administration under the Imperial *Evkaf* Ministry in Istanbul. Established as a regional office in the 1830s, Cyprus's *Evkaf* Department started to control the *waqf*s on behalf of the Ministry. Authorization of upkeep and maintenance works, both in the Empire's center

11 Barnes (1987).
12 Yıldız (2009).
13 Altan (1986); Bağışkan (2009); Jennings (1993).
14 Sabri (2013), pp. 77–81.

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and the provinces, was connected to the Ministry.[15] While this introduced long-distance bureaucracy to the authorization process of projects, technical planning continued to be undertaken with locally sourced materials on the island, and upkeep works continued to benefit from local knowledge of construction techniques.[16]

'Modernizing' *Evkaf*: British colonial transformations in the traditional *waqf* building upkeep systems

The convention signed between the Ottoman and British imperial authorities in 1878 provided a dual-delegate system for managing the island's *Evkaf* department. However, the power and duties of these delegates, consisting of one British and one Cypriot Muslim representative, were not defined. Convinced that this three-centuries-old unique Muslim institution had not been appropriately administered, and aiming to grant *Evkaf* the exemplary government it deserved, the British High Commissioner ordered a more comprehensive inquiry into the state of the *waqf*s. M. B. Seager, a British official, was appointed to carry out the inquiry, which took place from 1880 to 1882. In his final report, Seager provided details about the maladministration of some *waqf*s and the corrupt practices of their trustees, and used these instances to disregard the institution's communal benefits.[17] He believed that devising a sustainable supervision method for the *waqf*s was a complicated task and recommended the immediate expropriation of the institution or, alternatively, its gradual dissolution after collecting all *waqf*s under one category.

The opinions expressed in Seager's report are essential to understanding the prejudiced approach towards the Ottoman *waqf* institution at the outset of the British colonial period. The colonial ideas concerning the future of this historically rooted and uniquely Muslim religious endowment institution indicate a lack of understanding of the institution, its communal benefits, and the particulars of the original system that had ensured its survival on the island for more than three hundred years. Seager's criticisms were partly based on the recent ineffective attempts to centralize the institution and the subsequent maladministration on the part of some of the trustees. This negative out-

15 Akar (2009), pp. 55–9.

16 Sabri (2013), pp. 98–103.

17 Seager (1883), p. 90.

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look was also influenced by Western perceptions of Ottoman institutions and ideas as corrupt and backwards.[18]

Seager's report provides us with an understanding of early colonial ideas about the *waqf* as a backward and burdensome Ottoman institution in need of modernization. It also revealed the reasons behind this interest in this 'modernization': its financial resources and critical socio-religious role within the Muslim community. Colonial authorities understood that *Evkaf* needed to be brought under the control of the colonial government immediately. A letter dated December 23, 1882, informs us that Sir Robert Biddulph (the High Commissioner from 1879 to 1886) was so pleased with Seager's report on the inquiry into the island's *waqf*s that he forwarded it to the Colonial Office in London with a request that it be printed. He thought it included information on the subject that had hitherto been inaccessible to British officials. As such, it could be of great use to other British embassies and colonial officials like those in Egypt and Istanbul.[19] Apparently, when their imperial power over Islamic societies was at its peak, the British had yet to acquire adequate knowledge about this widespread institution. Seager's report was printed in 1883 and remained in use for many years, as references were made to it in documents in subsequent years.[20] However, presumably due to its political implications, the British rulers abstained from putting into practice the radical decision recommended at the report's conclusion regarding the expropriation of *waqf* assets in Cyprus. Instead, the alternative recommendation mentioned in the report was put into practice: the gradual dissolution of the institution over time.

According to Seager,[21] the *Evkaf* needed reform, and its current head, the official holding the post of *mouhasebedji* (Turkish *muhasebici*, accountant), was unable to do so without the government's help. He emphasized that only British officials should supervise the *Evkaf*.[22] From the beginning, British colonial officials had expressed their opinion that natives were unfit to take on jobs with responsibilities.[23] This was consistent with the patronizing, Orientalist prejudices, common since the Middle Ages, that had gained currency with

18 Ansari (2011).

19 Document in BEF-1882-8-240.

20 Document no: 661, dated 21 January 1885, in BEF-1885-3-57.

21 Seager (1883), pp. 6–7.

22 Ibid., p. 9.

23 Schaar et al. (1995), p. 22.

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European imperialism.[24] Convinced that 'Western' people were progressive and civilized, and that 'Eastern' societies were backward and primitive, British colonial administrators sustained a well-developed sense of a rational Western self and an irrational, superstitious Eastern 'other'. These attitudes and biased perceptions, as also argued by Burke and Prochaska,[25] underlaid the forms of governance of the colonial territories.

Unsurprisingly, the colonial reforms of the Cypriot *waqf* system started with administrative restructuring. The British High Commissioner replaced the Ottoman Imperial *Evkaf* Minister, and the expenditures now required the final approval of the British High Commissioner. On paper, the institution was managed by a British and a Muslim delegate, but the latter's absence in the correspondence throughout this period suggests an inactive or silent partnership. The Cypriot Muslim delegate seems to have been given a symbolic responsibility, overseeing the processing of the low-budget upkeep works in all *waqf* categories. The processing of the high-profile and costly upkeep works was the responsibility of the British delegate.[26]

Among the early procedural changes were new arrangements regarding the upkeep of *waqf* built properties. Similar to the late Ottoman period, the users of the assets remained as the key stakeholders, initiating upkeep projects from the bottom upwards for the relevant built properties.[27] The users' engagement in preventive maintenance assisted in extending the lifecycle of the buildings with minimal physical interventions or financial expenditures. It prevented their further dilapidation by exerting pressure on the officials concerned. While, in general, the initiation process enjoyed continuity from the late Ottoman era, there were also indications of change: the colonial authorities gradually got involved in the process of forwarding petitions and sometimes mediating between the petitioners and the *Evkaf* administra-

24 Ansari (2011); Said (1993).

25 Burke & Prochaska (2008), pp. 23–8.

26 Sabri (2019), p. 163.

27 See for instance the petitions from the imam of the Mosque at Dali (Aziziye) requestingvarious maintenance works in 1882 (BEF 1882-4-72), in 1888 (BEF 1888–26-656), in 1891 (BEF 1891–48-1212) and in 1893 (BEF 1891–48-1212). Also see requests for repairs to the roofs of the Tahtakale Mosque in Nicosia (BEF 1895–86-2059) and the Zuhuri School in Larnaca (BEF 1896–80-1898).

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tion.[28] In other words, the colonial Government started to configure itself as the authorized and effective agent in *Evkaf* affairs early on. As a result of these actions, the community started to recognize the government as the higher authority. This is evident because the petitions began to be sent from the rural areas to the commissioners of the towns or the high commissioner himself, instead of being sent to the *Evkaf* administration.[29] The government's involvement in the initiation stage of upkeep projects was an indication of a key transition in customary practice, transferring the initiation process from the responsibility of the built properties' users to the realm of the colonial bureaucracies.

The government referred to the Ottoman *Waqf* Ordinance of 1863 as the main guidance in financial matters, but implemented it in part only. For instance, the categories for financing the upkeep works were implemented, but the regulations that established the control of the authorities in Istanbul's Imperial *Evkaf* Ministry were bypassed. The authority for sanctioning expenditure, which included the upkeep works for the *waqf* built properties on the island, were taken over by the British High Commissioner.[30]

Another change in the traditional system was delegating to the government's engineer a central role relating to the upkeep works for *waqf* properties. This involved the authorization of work, preparation of cost estimates and arranging for tenders, as well as supervising the execution of the upkeep works. The British administration preferred the Government Engineer's services no matter what the cost estimates were. However, there were concerns over the applicability of the new arrangements. Seager noted that this speedy settlement between the government and the *Evkaf* was disputed by Muslim dignitaries, including the mufti, who expressed their reservations about the new arrangement.[31] Trusting the decisions concerning expenditure to the government's engineer, who was not connected with the *Evkaf*, caused some discontent among them.

28 See BEF 1886–10-286 for the involvement of the Commissioner of Famagusta as a mediator between the local community and the *Evkaf* regarding the required repairs at Ayasofya Mosque.

29 See for instance the petitions regarding the case of the mosque at Kalipornou (BEF 1887–19-502) and the case of the Saghir Mosque at Ktima (BEF 1891–55-1352).

30 Seager (1883), p. 6, 89, 91.

31 Ibid., p. 79.

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In all likelihood, the native Muslims, being used to having the *waqf* properties regularly maintained at a low cost, were skeptical of the new arrangements. These events were an early sign of tension between the colonial rulers and the Muslim community. As understood from Seager's following comments, the colonial administration's understanding of the traditional system was rather superficial: "We knew that the native mind could not grasp the idea of spending hundreds of pounds on buildings that for ages had only had hundreds of piasters spent on them."[32] Presumably, Seager knew nothing about the *waqf*'s traditional building upkeep system and was more concerned with the political implications of the new arrangements. The language of his analysis, as typical for the period, Orientalized the Muslim natives and rendered their concerns infantile.

The colonial government used this Orientalist paradigm as justification to take over the management of the *Evkaf*'s immense array of resources, which indirectly exerted control over the local Muslim community. However, in order to not upset the Muslim community, they decided to limit the involvement of the government's engineer and the Public Works Department (PWD). There was no further opposition to this arrangement in the subsequent decades, perhaps because the government adopted a more conciliatory approach in dealing with *waqf* properties – or because the Muslim community came to see the changes as a necessary 'modernization'.[33]

While the long-distance bureaucracy was lessened by bypassing the *Evkaf* Ministry in Istanbul, increasing government control weakened the traditional system that originally relied on local administration and know-how. The replacement of the local masons and their construction skills with Western engineers and expertise instigated a shift that turned the upkeep process into a specialized profession. Alienating the local community from the management and technical planning processes was another interruption to the traditional *waqf* system, which relied on community monitoring of the *waqf* buildings and regular maintenance. This system was gradually dissolved in the following decades.[34] Following the island's annexation as a British crown colony in 1925 and an Order in Council in 1928, the *Evkaf* became a government department, fully incorporated into the colonial bureaucracy. Its resources were channeled

32 Seager (1883), p. 79.

33 Sabri (2019), pp. 137–40.

34 Sabri (2013), pp. 203–39; (2015), pp. 518–20; (2019), pp. 81–101.

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to the Turkish community's newly emerging needs rather than the old *waqf* buildings' protection.[35]

British colonial approaches to Ottoman *waqf* built legacy: An Orientalist mindset in the age of the modern conservation movement

The Orientalist mindset, which considered 'Ottoman' a synonym for stagnation, was at its height when Cyprus came under British control in 1878. The relative decline of the Ottoman Empire during the 19th century coincided with the evolution of heritage discourses in the West, where architectural inheritances were regarded as evidence of national grandeur, required for consolidating nascent national identities and for absorbing or neutralizing the potentially competing heritages of others.[36] In line with this, the 19th century witnessed the rise of the modern architectural conservation movement in Western Europe, which prioritized protecting the medieval era's built legacies as national heritages.[37] At the same time, Eurocentric politics fostered a sense of ethnic identities in former Ottoman territories and paved the way for idealizing pre-Ottoman medieval architectural inheritances, aiming to promote antagonism towards the Ottomans.[38] Consequently, 'Ottoman' came to be identified with oppression in many of the empire's former territories. The emerging nations in Southeast Europe disassociated themselves from the former hegemon by denying its built inheritance a legitimate place in national heritage discourses.[39]

When Cyprus came under British control in 1878, the Gothic architectural legacy was popular in the national heritage discourses in Britain.[40] The colonial rulers in Cyprus considered the medieval-Latin monuments (many of which were allocated for *waqf* purposes after the Ottoman conquest) their inheritance and appointed themselves as their guardians.[41] The British Government in Cyprus lacked the financial or technical resources to undertake a

35 Sabri (2015), p. 523; (2019), p. 140.
36 Graham et al., (2000).
37 Glendinning (2013).
38 Reid (1992); Sanders (2003), (2008); Watenpaugh (2007).
39 Todorova (1996).
40 Glendinning (2013); Emerick (2014).
41 Given (1998), p. 7

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wholesale conservation programme for the medieval monuments. However, the *Evkaf* had upkeep resources for those adopted for *waqf* purposes. As I detailed elsewhere,[42] the converted Gothic cathedral mosques received immediate attention from the beginning of the British period. Necessary repairs were undertaken under the supervision of British engineers employed in the PWD.[43] With the establishment of the Curator of Antiquities (CAM) office in 1903, this role passed to the CAM. George Jeffery, a British conservation architect who held the post of CAM between 1903 and 1934, became the consultant for restoration works on ancient monuments belonging to *waqf*s. It must be noted here that in 1905 the first colonial antiquities law was enacted, having a cutoff date of 1571 (the beginning of Ottoman rule on the island). Therefore, while the *waqf* properties with medieval-Latin origins were brought under statutory protection, those with Ottoman origins were excluded.

Jeffery was in touch with the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB), which valued medieval buildings in Britain as the primary components of British national heritage and prioritized their preservation.[44] According to Pilides,[45] Jeffery was a faithful follower of early SPAB principles. He continuously reported the existing condition of medieval buildings in Cyprus to the conservation elites in London, and his efforts to find solutions for their preservation in line with SPAB's conservative principles were tireless.[46] However, Jeffery's actions were reflective of British Orientalist bias: Cyprus' medieval era, according to him, ended with the beginning of the Ottoman period, and the buildings erected during the Ottoman period were ordinary modern buildings with incongruous architectural features.[47] This was very much in tune with the approach adopted during this period in the former Arab territories of the Ottoman Empire, where in accordance with imperialist politics, Ottoman architecture was dismissed as devoid of originality or evidence of progress.[48] Thus, the maintenance of the Ottoman public buildings on the island, the majority of which were owned by the *Evkaf*, continued to be undertaken via traditional sys-

42 Sabri (2016).
43 Ibid., pp. 234–40.
44 Miele (2005).
45 Pilides (2009), pp. 19–62.
46 Emerick (2014), pp. 115–48.
47 Jeffery (1918), p. 83, 98.
48 Sanders (2003), pp. 191–4.

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tems, which allowed for extensive physical interventions on the fabric without paying attention to their architectonic values.[49]

Even so, the *Evkaf* authorities, from time to time, sought solutions by turning to Jeffrey's expertise before physical interventions to those properties built during the 16th and the 17th centuries and considered examples of classical Ottoman architecture. As an example, in 1927, when upkeep works were required at the Büyük Han (Great Khan, an urban inn, built the 1570s) in Nicosia, *Evkaf* authorities consulted Jeffery. He inspected the building alongside the mason Kolumbries, one of the experienced builders often commissioned by the *Evkaf* Administration to undertake repair work. His letter addressed to the *Evkaf*'s delegates reveals that, following the inspection, Jeffery recommended substantial reconstruction work based on a new design and materials.[50] Accordingly, there were structural defects in the arcade on the upper floor of the west side. He advised the *Evkaf* to remove all of the vaulting in that arcade and construct a light roof instead of the vaulting after repairing the arches and columns. He also recommended rebuilding the vault over the back entrance differently. Overall, Jeffery suggested physical alterations involving reconstruction and remodeling in order to ensure its continuity as building stock. In a way, his proposals echoed his earlier comments: the Büyük Han, apart from "conferring a certain oriental air upon the centre of Nicosia," Jeffery had written in 1918, "was not in any sense an architectural monument."[51] It must be noted that later, in 1921, he described the Ottoman-era fabric in Jerusalem and elsewhere throughout (formerly) Ottoman territories as similarly lacking architectonic values and, as such, found them not worthy of consideration in terms of architectural or artistic styles.[52] His suggestions for improvements to the Büyük Han in Nicosia were no more ambitious than keeping its overall Oriental ambiance.

Having been labeled as ordinary structures that did not warrant any statutory protection, Ottoman-era buildings were repeatedly subjected to demolition until the 1930s as part of urbanization schemes, as was the case in the colonized Arab territories,[53] the former Balkan territories of the Empire and in

49 Sabri (2015), pp. 518–20.

50 George Jeffery's letter-report to the Delegates of *Evkaf*, document dated 3 August 1927 in BEF 1927–180-4057.

51 Jeffery (1918), p. 98.

52 Almog (1996), p. 186.

53 Sanders (2003), p. 191.

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Turkey.[54] The enactment of the Municipality Law in 1885 gave municipalities in Cyprus the authority to order the demolition of any built property within the municipal limits for the sake of urban improvement or if they were threatening public health.[55] The demolition of the Büyük Medrese (Grand Madrasa) in Nicosia during the early 1930s to open space for a roundabout is one of many examples.[56]

Albeit in a limited manner, the 1930s also witnessed a shift in interest towards the Ottoman built legacy. A new Antiquities Law in 1935 identified buildings erected up to 1700 as ancient monuments warranting statutory provisions. Their conservation was centralized under the Department of Antiquities (DoA), established in 1935. It is worth emphasizing that Cyprus lagged behind many European countries in this respect. Most of which had by then revised legislation to cover architectural properties up to the second half of the 19th century.[57] The Director of the DoA replaced the CAM as the key professional bureaucrat in initiating conservation projects relating to the Ottoman built properties that were declared ancient monuments. A. H. S. Megaw, the DoA Director between 1936 and 1960, became the highest authority regarding the listing, planning, and execution of physical interventions to the scheduled Ottoman monuments until the end of the colonial era in 1960. However, as indicated by the low number of listed Ottoman properties belonging to *Evkaf* between 1935 and 1959,[58] this was given a low priority. Although a highly reputed scholar, Megaw looked at ancient buildings purely through the lens of architectonic values and, listed or not, the Ottoman architecture in Cyprus did not fully receive his appreciation. Like his predecessor Jeffery, Megaw was more concerned with the neglected state of the island's pre-Ottoman medieval monuments.[59] As indicated by his directions in various instances, he prioritized the preservation of the *waqf* built properties with Western origins. For instance, he declared the conservation projects for the converted Gothic cathedral-mosques in Nicosia and Famagusta as possessing a unique character. He ensured that these projects were prepared by the DoA.[60] On the

54 Todorova (1996), pp. 57–9; Altınyıldız (2007), p. 296.
55 Biddulph (1885).
56 Bağışkan (2009), p. 502.
57 Brown (1905); Delafons (1997).
58 Sabri (2017), p. 64.
59 Rosser (2007), p. 152.
60 Sabri (2013), p. 269.

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other hand, Megaw was happy with the *Evkaf* preparing and implementing conservation works on the listed *waqf* properties with Ottoman origins as long as his permission was sought.

Evidently, even after their listing, Ottoman ancient monuments were left in poor condition. If, for instance, it had not been listed as an ancient monument in the Second Schedule of the Antiquities Law, the Büyük Han in Nicosia would have been demolished in 1937. The *han* was rented by *Evkaf* to families who migrated to Nicosia from villages, and Dr. Derviş, the then mayor of Nicosia, declared it derelict and unsuitable as a residence.[61] Accordingly, the mayor announced that if *Evkaf* needed to use it for residential purposes, the building had to be pulled down and reconstructed in accordance with a plan to be drawn up by the municipal engineer. Since the *han* was a listed monument, its demolition was out of the question. However, when consulted, Megaw did not see anything of a special character requiring his expertise. Thus, plans for an invasive renovation were forwarded to the PWD, and were prepared and executed under the supervision of PWD engineer Joseph Gaffiero.[62] Accordingly, Gaffiero's project involved, among other actions, pulling down the intermediate walls of two sets of rooms near the main gate and making them into one room.

These radical physical interventions contradicted the evolving conservation principles in the West. Correspondence shows that Megaw had no issue with knocking down walls wherever required or replacing original components with new ones. His only objections were to the alterations on the exterior fabric. That in 1941 the building was overhauled at the municipality's request reveals that the Director of Antiquities was not proactive in inspecting and initiating the required conservation works himself. While Megaw kept an eye on the physical interventions to the scheduled Ottoman buildings, he always intervened whenever there were intrusions to the external fabric or maintenance works for which his permission had not been sought.

Megaw's disinterest in the Ottoman fabric remained noticeable until the end of the colonial period. This is exemplified by the continuing derelict condition of the Büyük Han until the mid-1950s, captured in photographs published

61 Letter by Dr. T. Dervis, dated 26 March 1937, addressing the Delegates of *Evkaf*, in BEF 1935–245-5038.

62 Specifications of the Contract Signed by the Delegates of Evkaf, Contractor and the Government Engineer, 11 August 1936, in BEF 1935–245-5038.

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in the London daily *The Times* on 19 October 1954.[63] Trying to find a solution to the problem, Megaw declared that there would be no objection from the antiquities angle if the building were subjected to a major overhaul (including rooms being merged, extra window space being created, or an additional entrance into the courtyard), as long as the *han* continued to "look inwards".[64] Despite the fact that the *han* was a listed ancient monument, the Director of the DoA was not entirely convinced that it had much architectural significance. However, there were no public resources for its restoration, and *Evkaf*, by that time, had lost its capacity to allocate financial resources for major repair work on *waqf* properties because those resources were directed to other needs of the Turkish Cypriots.[65]

A shift in colonial politics: Reconsidering the value of the Ottoman *waqf* built heritage

With the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, there was a change in European imperialist cultural heritage politics in former Ottoman territories. By the 1930s, nationalist heritage projects focused on the pre-Ottoman medieval periods had yielded some positive results. Through eventual disassociation from that past, the Ottoman legacy was no longer a threat. Thus, albeit in a limited scope, the hitherto neglected Ottoman-era fabric began to receive some preservation attention in Turkey and the Arab territories.[66] Partially coinciding with these developments elsewhere, a set of Ottoman buildings were covered by the revised Antiquities Law of 1935 in Cyprus, as mentioned in the previous section.

The 1930s were a politically problematic period in Cyprus. The island's proclamation as a British colony in 1925 had further encouraged the Greek *enosis* ("union," that is, the independence of Cyprus and unification with Greece) sentiment, in turn intensifying the Turkish community's ethnonationalist awakening. The 1931 revolt, organized by Greek Cypriots seeking

63 Mentioned in the document, dated 3 November 1954 in BEF 1927–180-4057. Also see the letter from the Colonial Office in London to Fletcher-Cooke (Colonial Secretary in Cyprus), dated 19 October 1954, in BEF 1927–180-4057.

64 Report titled "Future of the Buyuk Han: Preliminary conclusion of the governmental meeting," dated 19 November 1954, in BEF 1927–180-4057.

65 Sabri (2015), p. 523; (2019), p. 140.

66 Altınyıldız (2007), pp. 296–9; Sanders (2008), p 16.

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independence, ultimately triggered the colonial government's attempts to prevent the further evolution of ethno-national identities.[67] Attempts were, in part, focused on diverting the Turkish Cypriots away from subscribing to the Kemalist nationalism of Turkey, but to no avail.[68]

These developments led to conflicting colonial and local agendas for monument-making and conservation processes regarding Ottoman buildings. The British rulers adopted a political position that influenced such processes, and a political shift from the Orientalist bias regarding the Ottoman buildings' architectonic values gained visibility. The colonial government's strategic approach to the Ottoman legacy can be traced back to the moment when the architectural vestiges with a construction date up to 1700 were included in the revised Antiquities Law of 1935, as mentioned above. Bayraktar Mosque (Fig. 1a), built in the Constanza Bastion at the Nicosia fortifications, which is known as the spot where the standard bearer first flew the Ottoman flag during the Ottoman conquest of 1571, was the first Ottoman building to be listed as an ancient monument after the enactment of the 1935 Antiquities Law.[69] The fact that the existing building dates to the late 18th and early 19th century and lacks the architectonic values of Ottoman classical architecture suggests that its appreciation was due to its symbolic and associative values. Yet the colonial authorities were cautious: they initiated the monument-making process, but were also very slow at increasing the number of inscribed properties on the list. Only a small set of Ottoman-era built properties were added to the list between 1935 and 1960, and the DoA ensured that their overall appearance reflected an acceptable state of preservation and presentation with minimal effort.

The restoration of Mevlevi Tekke in Nicosia (Fig. 1c) to serve its original function in the wake of the 1931 revolt is another significant case of governmental involvement with political implications. It must be emphasized that this building was not actually listed as an ancient monument. Nevertheless, although providing loans for the restoration of Ottoman buildings was not a standard option and petitions by the sheikh of the *Tekke* for repairs had been rejected in the past, the government now undertook a wholesale restoration, which would continue until the late 1930s.[70] The official gazettes regularly em-

67 Given (1998).
68 Nevzat & Hatay (2009).
69 Blackall (1935), pp. 324–8.
70 Sabri (2015), pp. 514–52.

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phasized these buildings' benefit to the Muslim community.[71] Not only had the government provided the required funding, but George Jeffery's expertise was also sought for the planning and supervision of the work.[72]

Yet, as I have demonstrated elsewhere,[73] once secular forces became more powerful within the Turkish community, its involvement in the upkeep of the Ottoman religious buildings declined. This was particularly the case with the *tekke* complexes. Dr. Fazıl Küçük, then the Turkish Cypriot community's leader, adopted a negative stance toward the restoration of the *tekke* buildings despite the fact that the newspapers in the 1940s reported their ruinous condition.[74] He saw these buildings as representing an outdated Ottoman identity and promoted their replacement with modern buildings, following the footsteps of the then Kemalist leadership of Turkey.[75] This negative stance would continue until the final years of British rule. Notwithstanding the objections of the community leaders, a few years later, in 1953, the island's governor initiated a rehabilitation project to improve the presentation of the Hala Sultan Tekke in Larnaca (Fig. 1f).[76]

Conclusion

When Cyprus came under the control of the British Empire in 1878, it was their first Ottoman acquisition. Evidently, the British did not have more than a fleeting knowledge regarding the *waqf* institution when they acquired control of Cyprus.[77] The initial investigations indicated the importance of this historically rooted Islamic institution in the lives of Muslim communities. Its immediate abolition was not possible for two reasons: first, this would have caused a diplomatic crisis between the Ottoman and British empires. Second, the initial

71 Godwin-Austen & Munir (1936), pp. 235–6; Godwin-Austen & Munir (1937), p. 137.

72 Sabri (2017), p. 66.

73 Sabri (2013, 2015, 2017, 2019).

74 Sabri (2017), p. 75; (2019), pp. 125–6.

75 Sabri (2017, 2019).

76 Sabri (2017), pp. 68–76.

77 Although the British encountered the *waqf* system previously in India, the Indian Religious Endowments Act of 1863 had allowed for autonomous management of *waqf*s. According to Beverly (2011, p. 162), "the colonial state in India had rhetorically upheld religious freedom in the personal domain, and in doing so left avenues open to Muslim elites for maintaining their privileged status."

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investigations revealed that the *waqf* institution was going to be instrumental in consolidating power amongst the island's Muslim-Turkish community. The British rulers ensured the local partners remained tranquil while actual control was exercised by the British authorities, allowing them to take the required legislative, administrative and financial steps to integrate the Ottoman *waqf* institution into the colonial bureaucracy. The British colonial authorities argued that the *Evkaf* needed 'modernization' and 'good governance'. Orientalism had become a convenient way to justify British colonialism. Based on their opinion that the native people were incapable of professional conduct, the colonial authorities in Cyprus ensured that technical planning and implementation of prestigious projects for *waqf* properties remained in the hands of British engineers in the newly established PWD. The British Orientalist views were instrumentalized throughout the 'modernization' and administrative restructuring processes until the early 1930s.

On the one hand, the 'modernization' drives dissolved the *waqf*'s traditional upkeep and maintenance system, which relied on community participation and effective use of endowed resources in the upkeep of the buildings. On the other hand, the British authorities adopted a selective conservation approach. They prioritized the conservation of the medieval-Latin origin properties belonging to the *Evkaf*. Many of these properties were examples of Gothic architecture, which was seen as a highpoint of Western European national heritages. Hence, though confined to a few examples, these properties benefited from government attention from the outset of the colonial period on the island. At the same time, the colonial authorities neutralized the *waqf* properties with Ottoman origins as ordinary assets devoid of historical and architectonic values.

The changing political climate following the proclamation of the island as a British colony in 1925 introduced a new layer to the Ottoman *waqf* legacy. The Ottoman Empire was dissolved after WWI and was no longer a threat. The emerging Kemalist nationalism among the Turkish Cypriots after the 1931 Greek Revolt prompted the British administration to reconsider their approach toward the Ottoman built legacy. Henceforth, they strategically selected a set of properties to help consolidate religious identity among the island's secularizing Turkish community.

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