

In search of non-Muslim religious buildings in Foça

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Abstract

This paper aims to trace the non-Muslim religious buildings of Foça (Eski Foça), which were partially and/or completely destroyed after the Compulsory Population Exchange in 1923. Foça, as a multi-layered and multi-cultural city, overlaps the archaeological remains of ancient Phokaia and reflects the architectural heritage of the Ottoman period as its top historical layer. Examples of Ottoman civil architecture are today's most evident physical elements of cultural heritage. Besides, the Ottoman period has non-existent buildings, including non-Muslim religious buildings. Foça was inhabited by the Greek-Orthodox community, and for that reason, it belongs to traces of Greek-Orthodox churches dated to the 18th and 19th centuries. In this study, spatial traces of ten churches were examined by written sources, historical maps and drawings, old photographs, and field studies. Revealing the traces of churches is essential in terms of showing the changes in the urban development of Foça and reflecting its historical accumulation.



1. Non-Muslim communities of Foça in the Ottoman Period

Foça, also known as Eski Foça, situated on the Aegean Sea, is a district in the İzmir Province of Turkey. Yeni Foça, a neighbourhood of Foça, is located 20 km away from Foça. The modern city of Foça is located on the ancient city of Phokaia which dates to the Early Bronze Age (circa 3000 BC). The history of Phokaia, starting in the Early Bronze Age, continued with hosting many different cultures from ancient times until today, and this gives a multi-layered character to the city. Foça, as a multi-layered city, was settled from the Prehistoric period to the Archaic, Classical, Hellenistic, Roman, Byzantine, Genoese, and Ottoman-Turkish periods [1]. Today, it is a touristic coastal settlement with a historical urban fabric reflecting Mediterranean culture. Despite the importance of ancient Phokaia and other periods, the civil architectural heritage of the Ottoman period attracts more attention from tourists and local people, as it is in the top layer [2]. However, Foça has a diverse cultural heritage element that has partially and/or completely destroyed, have either partially and/or totally underground, and belong to periods whose existence is known or has not become definite. Non-Muslim religious buildings of the Ottoman period can be an example of

partially and/or completely destroyed cultural heritage of the Greek-Orthodox and Jewish communities in Foça. They played a significant role in the economic, social, and cultural life of Foça. Thus, Greek-Orthodox churches were significant landmarks that not only served as places of worship but also as centers of community life and cultural expression for the non-Muslim communities.

Foça, which was the central town of the county of Foçateyn, had a diverse population composed of various ethnic and religious groups, similar to many other settlements in the Ottoman Empire throughout history. Foça and Yenifoça together were named Foçateyn by the Ottomans. Foçateyn was a county reporting to the Saruhan Sanjak until the mid-19th century. In 1868, Foçateyn became the county of İzmir Sanjak. The center of administration of Foçateyn was in Foça [5]. The population statistics of the 16th century based on the Ottoman Archives of the Turkish Republic Prime Ministry showed that Foça had approximately 1810 population consisting of 1200 Muslim and 610 non-Muslims in 1531 and approximately 3485 population consisted of 2870 Muslims and 615 non-Muslims in 1575 [3]. In 1531, there were 362 households in Eski Foça, 122 of those belonging to non-Muslims [3]. Similar to the 16th century, Muslims continued to be the majority in the county of Foçateyn in the early 19th century, as in many

of the coastal settlements of Western Anatolia. The English traveller William J. Hamilton estimated the population of 1000 households, of which 40 % were Greek, after his visit to Foça in 1835 [4]. However, the Greek population who came from the Aegean Islands to Western Anatolia during the second half of the 19th century shifted the population statistics [5-7]. During this period, the non-Muslim community primarily consisted of Greek-Orthodox people, who were commonly referred to as "Rum", and a limited number of Jews. According to the 1884 dated yearbook of the Aydın Province, the total population of Foçateyn was 11730, including 3642 Muslims, 7876 Greeks and 212 Jews [5]. It is seen that the Greek population was more than twice that of the Muslims. The reason for this population increase may be the labour shortage resulting from the investments made by Western countries in İzmir and the permission to construct churches after the Tanzimat Reform (1839) and Islahat Reform (1856) in the Ottoman Empire [7, 8].

In 1914, before the migration of the Greek Orthodox community from Foça, the Ottoman Empire conducted an official census. The population in the county of Foçateyn was 7427 Muslims, 15670 Greeks and 83 Jews [9, 10]. It is evident that life in Foça, as the entire northwestern Anatolian coastline, was deeply affected by the Balkan Wars between 1912 and 1913. In the spring of 1914, a few months later after the official census of the Ottoman Empire, the entire Greek population migrated to the Aegean islands (Lesbos/Midilli, Chios/Sakız) and the mainland for their safety [11]. As a result of the forced migration, a total of 18067 Greek people migrated, including 9250 of them from Eski Foça, according to the Greek Ministry of Social Services [8]. In 1917, an official census was carried out by the Committee of Union and Progress. According to this census, there were 8147 Muslims and 69 Jews, and no Greeks remained in Foça [8]. After the Greek invasion of Western Anatolia in 1919, the majority of Greeks (75 %) who were forced to migrate from Foça due to the events of 1914 returned to Foça by the end of 1921 [8]. According to the Greek Government Inspectorate records in early 1921, there were 1300 Muslims and 6100 Greeks in Foça [8, 9]. In 1922, after the Turkish War of Independence, the entire Greek population in Foça, as Anatolia, turned back to Greece. With the compulsory population exchange that took place following the 1923 agreement between the governments of Greece and Turkey, Muslims migrated from the islands, mainly Limni, Midilli, Crete, and Kavala, settled in Eski Foça [12].

It is evident that the demographic structure of Foçateyn experienced significant changes due to large numbers of migrations following the Tanzimat Reform, the forced migration in 1914, the Greek occupation in 1919 and the compulsory population exchange in 1923. All these developments have also changed the urban character of the city, affecting its architectural heritage. It is known that together with the Tanzimat Reform (1839) and Islahat Reform (1856) in the Ottoman Empire, the construction activities of the non-Muslims in the cities were increased, and these activities focused primarily on education and religious buildings. In addition, the oral testimonies showed that EskiFoça was

the important center of Foçateyn, where residents from surrounding villages gathered on specific days for religious ceremonies [11]. In the light of the information mentioned above, the aim is to reveal the traces of the non-existent churches of the 18th and 19th century in Foça. Overall, this study contributes to the preservation of cultural heritage and historical memory by documenting and interpreting the architectural legacy of Foça within the broader context of urban development and social change.

2. Method

This study focuses on ten Greek-Orthodox churches built after 18th century, which do not exist today in the city centre of Foça. Written sources, historical maps and drawings, old photographs, legal documents, and field studies were used to obtain information on the demographic structure of Foça and the architectural features of churches. This study was mainly based on the information of churches mentioned in the yearbook of the Aydın Province starting from 1891 and the maps dated 1913 belonging to Felix Sartiaux. Sartiaux was a French archaeologist who was officially assigned to carry out archaeological excavations in Foça. During his works, Sartiaux marked important buildings in the city on the maps, including churches, synagogue, mosques, schools, etc. Sartiaux also took numerous photographs of Foça from the years 1913 and 1920 [13].

By using these maps and photographs, first, the location of the churches was determined, and then mapping of the non-existent churches in the current urban area was carried out. The current state of the areas where churches were located in the past was defined with the help of old and new photographs. Thus, the changes in the urban development of Foça in the historical process could be traced and analysed.

3. Non-Muslim religious buildings in Foça

In the Ottoman Empire, after the conquest of Istanbul in 1453, non-Muslims were not allowed to construct new religious buildings until the 18th century; only the repair of existing ones was permitted. As a result of the political developments at the beginning of the 18th century, new rights were granted to non-Muslims, leading to an increase in construction activities among non-Muslim communities. In particular, following the Tanzimat Reform and Islahat Reform, numerous churches were constructed in every region of Anatolia [14].

Greek-Orthodox churches built after 18th century located in Aegean region, Antalya Sanjak and Kayaköy have been examined in various studies [14-18]. These studies revealed that churches were generally small-scale with a single-nave plan. A single-nave church typically had a single room ending in an apse. The ceiling could be rounded (barrel-vaulted) or flat. These single-nave churches had simple floor plans, characterized by a rectangular nave and a semi-circular apse. Some of these churches also included a bell tower. In contrast, larger churches were designed with a basilica plan which had a long central hall with side aisles separated by pillars. In these churches, walls were built in a rough mortared

rubble with little brick and sometimes ashlar masonry [14-18].

In the Republican period, the Convention of the Population Exchange was signed in the winter of 1922–23 [19]. After the migration of the Greek-Orthodox community, the approach of state authorities in preserving abandoned and undamaged churches and monasteries was of great importance. In this context, in 1922, the National Assembly introduced the ‘Law on the Administration of Movable and Immovable Properties Belonging to Those Who Escaped or Were Absent in the Liberated Provinces’ (*Memâlik-i Müstahlasadan Firar ve Gaybûbet Eden Ahâlînin Emvâl-i Menkule ve Gayrimenkullerinin İdâresi Hakkında Kanun*) [20, 21]. However, this law was abrogated in April 1923 and according to the 19th article of a new regulation, dated 29 April 1923, the relics, furniture, and books in the church buildings would be deposited and preserved with great care, and the school buildings of the Christian communities would be turned over to the Provincial Administration for Schools (*Maârif İdâresi*) [20]. Thus, many houses, stores, religious buildings, workshops, and factories were confiscated by the Commission of the Abandoned Properties (*Emvâl-i Metruke Komisyonu*) following the population exchange in 1923 [20].

The Kemalist Republic adopted a pragmatic approach towards the properties left behind by Greek-Orthodox communities and convert their buildings to public structures such as schools, museums, and mosques, rather than destroying them [20]. For that reason, many modern educational buildings in Western Anatolia were constructed on sites where churches once stood. However, the commercial buildings mostly continued to function despite changes in ownership, whereas religious buildings were either demolished or converted [20].

In parallel with the mentioned developments in the Ottoman Empire, the existence of ten churches were identified in Eski Foça and its surroundings. Churches located in surrounding villages, farms and Yeni Foça are not included in the scope of this study. Besides, Sazlıca Village exchange heritage and three churches in Yeni Foça-Hagia Ioannes, Hagia Georgios and Maşatlık Church-, which are existing today, have been previously examined in detail [14, 22].

Information on the type and number of buildings in Foça during 19th and 20th centuries was obtained from yearbooks of the Aydın Province. According to the 1891 dated yearbook of the Aydın Province, there were four churches and one synagogue in Foça [5]. In the yearbooks between 1899 and 1908, it is mentioned that there were 16 churches and one synagogue in Foça [5]. In the yearbook dated 1918, 4 churches, 34 monasteries and one synagogue in Foça were revealed [6]. In the late 19th century and early 20th century, there were a total of five churches in the county of Foçateyn (three in Eski Foça and two in Yeni Foça), as indicated in yearbooks of the Aydın Province. However, neither the yearbooks nor Sartiaux's notes mention the churches located in the villages. Therefore, no connection could be established between the churches examined in this study and the churches mentioned in the historical sources, and no direct information was found about the history or

construction process of the churches.

The original source regarding the period when the churches in Foça were built could not be reached. However, based on existing information, it is assumed that in addition to the existing churches, new ones were constructed in the early 19th century as the Greek population increased. Considering the presence of a non-Muslim population in the official census of 1531, it is thought that there may be religious buildings in Foça. Here, existing churches are attributed to the possibility of the existence of these structures [5, 13, 23].



Figure 1. Present location of churches in Foça.

Table 1. List of churches.

Name of the church	Type of plan	Year of construction	State of preservation	Current state
1. Hagia Eirene	metropolitan church in basilica plan with a bell tower	1797	destroyed	school
2. Hagia Triada	single-nave church with a bell tower	n.a.	destroyed	road
3. Hagia Anastasia	rectangular church	n.a.	destroyed	parking lot
4. Hagios Nikolaos	rectangular church	1890-1892	destroyed	house
5. Hagia Paraskevi	rectangular church	n.a.	destroyed	olive grove
6. Panagia Galeteri	single-nave church	n.a.	significantly destroyed	wall remains
7. Hagios Constantino	rectangular church	n.a.	destroyed	military zone
8. Hagios Georgios	rectangular church	n.a.	destroyed	military zone
9. Hagios Theodoros	rectangular church	n.a.	destroyed	house
10. Hagia Elia (Profiti İlia)	rectangular church	n.a.	partially destroyed	wall remains

The churches in the Foçateyn District were affiliated with the Metropolis of Ephesus, whose centre was in the Bornova township of Izmir [24]. These are the examples of the Orthodox-Rum churches that likely existed in Foça during the 18th and 19th centuries: Hagia Eirene, Hagia Triada, Hagia Anastasia, Hagios Nikolaos, Hagia Paraskevi, Panagia Galeteri, Hagios Constantinos, Hagios Georgios, Hagios Theodoros, Hagia Elia (Figure 1, Table

1) [13, 23]. There were three churches in Foça city center that were larger than the other churches: Hagia Eirene Church, Hagia Triada Church, and Hagia Anastasia Church. Additionally, there were churches on a smaller scale in Foça: Hagios Nikolaos, Hagios Constantinos, Hagios Georgios, Hagios Theodoros, Hagia Paraskevi, Hagia Paraskevi, Hagia Elia. The founder, architect, and destruction date of the churches are unknown (Table 1).

All these churches were partially and/or completely destroyed after the Compulsory Population Exchange in 1923, similar to churches and cemeteries in Western Anatolia [20]. During that period, even newly built churches had to be abandoned before they could be completed. While the exact number and names of churches in Foça may vary depending on historical sources and periods, several prominent Orthodox-Rum churches existed in Foça during that time. In this context, Greek-Orthodox churches in Foça (except few wall remains) do not exist today, but their historical significance is noteworthy.

3.1. Hagia Eirene Church

Hagia Eirene Church, a metropolitan church of Foçateyn, was in the " Chora " district in the Ottoman period. It was on the peninsula and in the marketplace [13]. Today, this area is within the borders of the Atatürk Quarter. This church was built in honour of Hagia Eirene, who was the patron saint of Foça [23]. According to the Mentoros, the church was built in 1797, and its wood-carved icon cabinet with depictions was found in the Hagia Photini Church in Izmir [5].

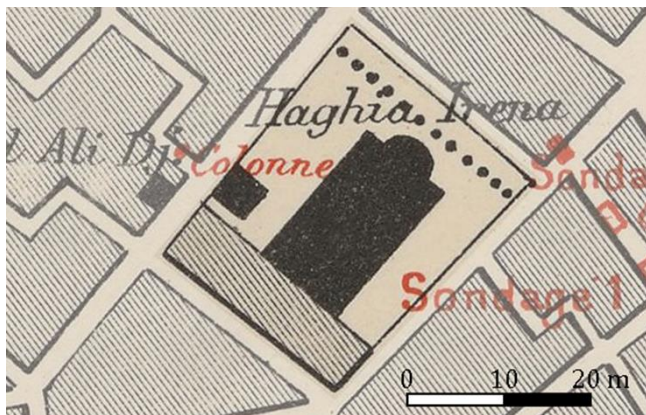


Figure 2. Site plan of Hagia Eirene in 1913 [13].

The church was a rectangular structure that extended in the northeast-southwest direction (Figure 2). According to the dimensions of the church, it could be in basilica plan. It was in masonry and reflected a plain spatial arrangement. The apse of the church was semicircular. It had a high bell tower and a wooden carved altar. Its walls were stone, and they were plastered (Figure 3). There were holy springs and icons in the church. In the photographs, stone columns located in the courtyard of the church can be seen. After the events in 1914, the Greeks who left Foça took the icons with them to Lesbos. During this period, the church suffered great destruction. During the migration after 1923, the icons remained in Foça. It is written that the icons were damaged during this period [23].



Figure 3. The courtyard and bell tower of Hagia Eirene Church in 1920 [13].

There is also a Greek school attached to this church [13, 23]. Initially, the school, originally affiliated with Hagia Eirene Church, provided co-educational education. Later, it was divided into separate schools for boys and girls. The girls' school provided education in the courtyard of Hagia Eirene Church and houses. These houses were donated to the church over time and converted into classrooms. This school had been used as a girls' school in its last education period [23].



Figure 4. Necla Midilli Secondary School.

Today, Necla Midilli Secondary School, built in 1967, is located on the site of the church (Figure 4) [25]. No traces of the church have been found. However, it is said that traces of marble floors were detected here in the 1950s [23].

3.2. Hagia Triada Church

Hagia Triada Church was in the Boya Quarter, northeast of the Maltepe Tumulus [13, 23]. It is written that the workers working in the salt depots in Foça built the church [23].

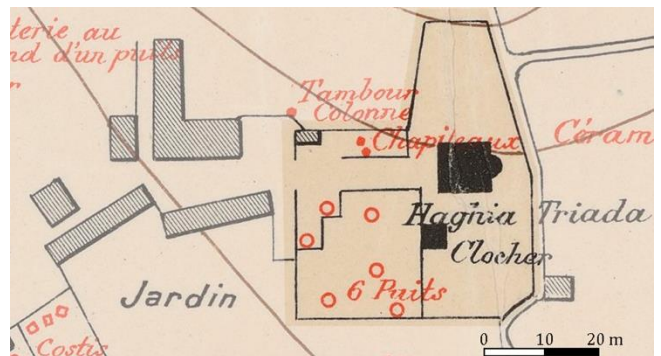


Figure 5. Site plan of Hagia Triada in 1913 [13].

Hagia Triada Church was a single-nave, and it extended in the east-west direction (Figure 5). It was in masonry with stone walls and reflected a plain spatial arrangement. The apse of the church was semicircular. It also had a bell tower in the courtyard (Figure 6).

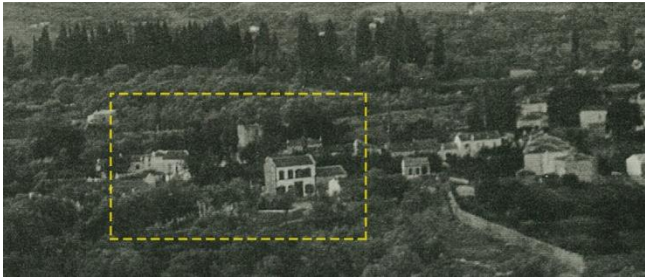


Figure 6. Hagia Triada Church and parsonage [13].

There is no trace of the church structure today. The area where the church was located is covered with roads (Figure 7). However, near this area are two historic residential buildings that are said to be priest's houses. One of these buildings has the name of the church priest inscribed on its door lintel (Figure 8).



Figure 7. The area where Hagia Triada was located.



Figure 8. Parsonage and stone door frame of the building.

3.3. Hagia Anastasia Church

Hagia Anastasia Church was in the district called "Chora" in the Ottoman period [13, 23]. Today, this area is within the borders of the Atatürk Quarter. It was on the peninsula, and the first building on the left of the cobblestone road separating the two salt depots [23].

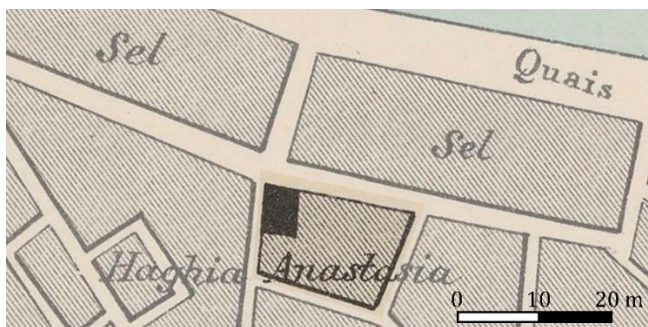


Figure 9. Site plan of Hagia Anastasia in 1913 [13].



Figure 10. Hagia Anastasia Church in 1920 [13].

Hagia Anastasia Church was a rectangular structure and built in masonry with stone walls (Figure 9). In the photograph taken by Sartiaux, stone columns with Doric column capital, stone door frames belonged to the main entrance and two stone window frames were determined (Figure 10).



Figure 11. A parking lot.

There are no remains of the building today. There is an empty area where the church was located in the past, which is now used as a parking lot (Figure 11).

3.4. Hagios Nicholaos Church

Hagios Nicholaos Church is located behind the castle in "Chora", in the neighbourhood called "Fasla Ağa" during the Ottoman Period (Figure 12) [13, 23]. Presently, this locality falls within the confines of the Atatürk Quarter.

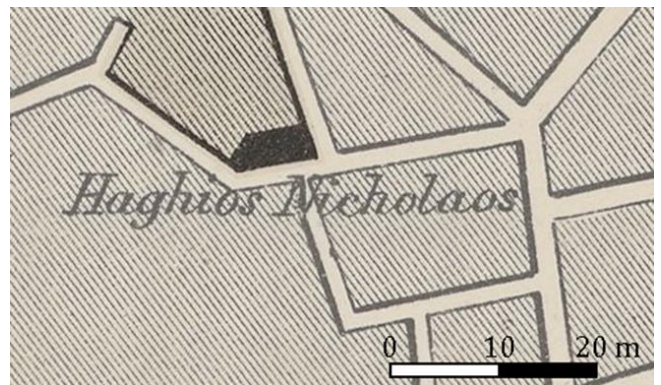


Figure 12. Site plan of Hagios Nicholaos in 1913 [13].



Figure 13. Hagios Nicholaos Church in 1920 [13].

The church was built in masonry. Stone walls, stone columns with Corinthian column capital and wooden roof beams can be determined from the old photograph taken by Sartiaus in 1920 (Figure 13). According to the Horbou, Hagios Nicholaos Church belongs to the Byzantine period [23]. However, information obtained by the oral narrative archive at the Center for Asia Minor Studies, the year of construction is stated to be between 1890 and 1892 [8, 24]. Today, the church is located in a residential area with a lot of low-rise houses (Figure 14).



Figure 14. The residential building.

3.5. Hagia Paraskevi Church

Hagia Paraskevi Church was located east of the city centre and on the northern slope of the Maltepe tumulus [13, 23]. Today, this area is within the Fevzipaşa Quarter.



Figure 15. Site plan of Hagia Paraskevi in 1913 [13].

It was a small-scale church with a rectangular form, extending in the east-west direction (Figure 15). Currently, no ruins can be found in the area. The area where the church was situated is an olive grove (Figure 16).



Figure 16. The area where Hagia Paraskevi was located.

3.6. Panagia Galeteri Church

Panagia Galeteri or Hamili Panagia was located northeast of Değirmenli Tepe [13, 23]. Currently, this region belongs to the Fevzipaşa Quarter. The reason why it was called "Hamili" (low) was because it was located in a narrow strait [23].

The church was a single-nave, and it extended in the east-west direction (Figure 17). It was built in masonry with stone walls. The apse of the church was semicircular. Today, few traces of stone walls, believed to belong to the church, can be observed (Figure 18).



Figure 17. Site plan of Panagia Galeteri in 1913 [13].



Figure 18. Stone wall ruins of Panagia Galeteri [26].

3.7. Hagios Constantinos Church

Hagios Constantinos Church, as a small cemetery church, was located on a small hill outside the settlement at the northern end of the town [13, 23]. Today, this area is on the border of the İsmetpaşa Quarter.

Since it was a small cemetery church, it did not function regularly. It is written that its interior was covered with ceramic decorations [23]. It was built in masonry using stone walls with hipped roof. The church, surrounded by stone garden walls, had a simple plan and a bell tower (Figure 19 and Figure 20).

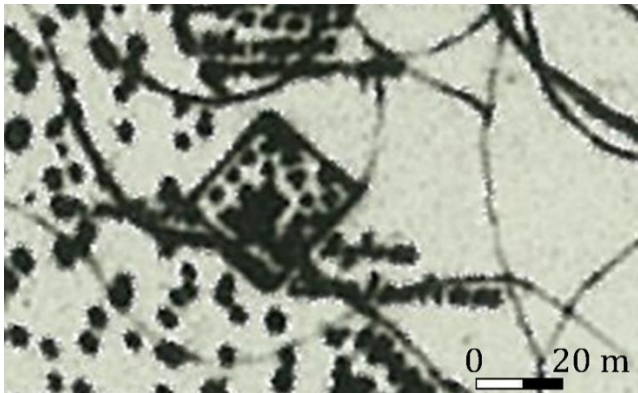


Figure 19. Site plan of Hagios Constantinos in 1913 [13].

Since the area where the church was located is currently a military zone, fieldwork could not be done for this church (Figure 21). However, it is said that such a variety of remains have been found recently.

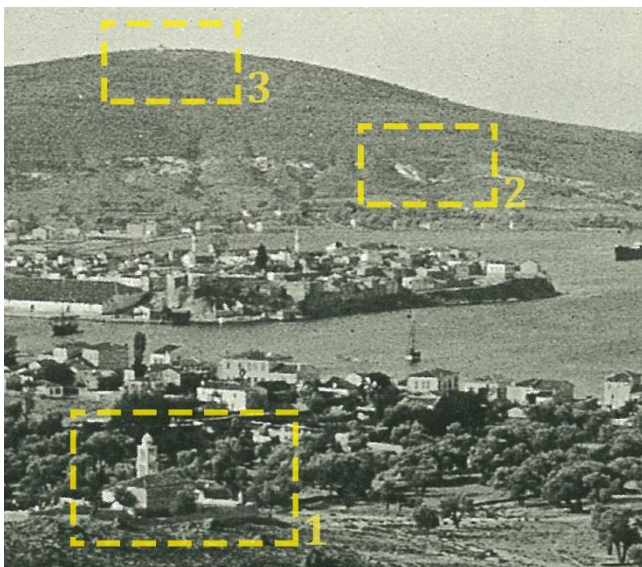


Figure 20. Hagios Constantinos and its cemetery (1), Hagios Theodoros (2), and Hagia Elia (3) in 1913 [13].

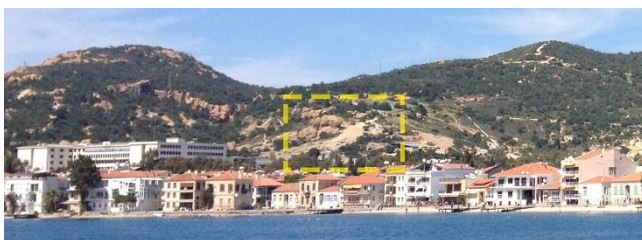


Figure 21. Area of Hagios Constantinos in a military zone.

3.8. Hagios Georgios Church

Hagios Georgios Church was located outside the city centre, approximately three hundred meters northwest

of the Hagios Constantinos Church [13, 23]. This area is on the border of the İsmetpaşa Quarter.

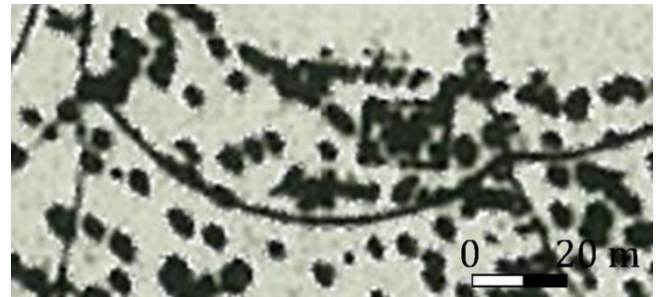


Figure 22. Site plan of Hagios Georgios in 1913 [13].

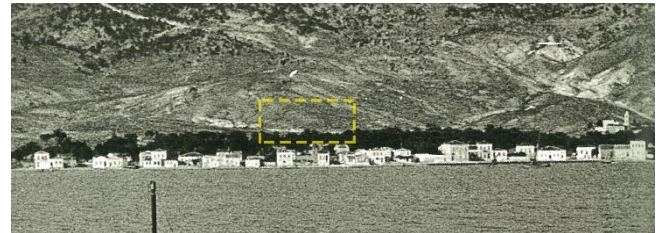


Figure 23. Hagios Georgios Church in 1913 [13].

This small-scale church with the graveyard for the poor was surrounded by stone garden walls (Figure 22) [23]. Since it is located in a military zone today, no field work has been done on the ruins of the church building.

3.9. Hagios Theodoros Church

Hagios Theodoros Church was at the foot of the Kale Mountain (Profiti İlia) (Figure 20) [13, 23]. Today, this area is called Atatürk District.

It was a small-scale rectangular planned masonry structure extending in the north-south direction (Figure 24). In this church, the tradition of slaughtering lambs and roasting and distributing them was a tradition during the annual Agios Theodoros festival lasting one week [23].



Figure 24. Site plan of Hagios Theodoros in 1913 [13].

Today, the area where the church was located is home to a large residential complex consisting of numerous summer houses (Figure 25). Therefore, no remains of the church have been found.

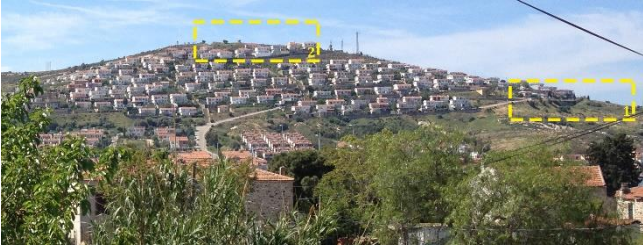


Figure 25. Areas where Hagios Theodoros (1) and Hagia Elia (2) were located.

3.10. Hagia Elia Church

Hagia Elia Church (Profiti Iliia) was located at the highest peak of Kale Mountain (Figure 20) [13, 23]. This hill took its name from the church located there [23]. Today, this area is called "Çan Dede Tepesi," and it is within the boundaries of the Atatürk Quarter.



Figure 26. Site plan of Hagia Elia in 1913 [13].

Church was a square-shaped and had a simple plan (Figure 26). Church was in masonry using stone walls. Sartiaux mentioned that there was an Ionic capital reused in Turkish tomb located in Hagia Elia (Figure 27).

Today, the hill has been largely developed with low-rise summer houses (Figure 25). However, remains of walls believed to belong to the church have been identified in the area (Figure 28).



Figure 27. Ionic capital reused in Turkish tomb located in Hagia Elia [13].



Figure 28. Remains of Hagia Elia [26].

4. Conclusion

Raising awareness about lost cultural heritage is essential for safeguarding the collective history. The churches in Foça, which are the physical reflections of the religious lives of Greek-Orthodox community as non-Muslims, are historical documents of their periods. However, the buildings reflecting the religious architectural features of the city, which hosts different cultures, have not reached today. The Compulsory Population Exchange between Greece and Turkey in 1923 led to significant population movements and resulted in the abandonment, destruction, or conversion of religious structures in areas where populations were exchanged. In the Republic period, the approach of state authorities for abandoned properties in preserving abandoned and undamaged churches and monasteries, which were symbols and meeting places of the communities, was of great importance. The main approach was to convert abandoned buildings to public structures such as schools, museums, and mosques, rather than destruction. However, many churches and other religious buildings in Foça were partially and/or completely destroyed, similar to many settlements in Western Anatolia. This period left significant impacts on the cultural heritage of both Greece and Turkey and had lasting consequences on the cultural and religious landscape of the region. For that reason, it is of great importance to pursue the traces of the lost cultural heritage to preserve collective memory.

Conflicts of interest

There is no conflict of interest between the authors.

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