
Fall 9-20-2016

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Amelia Gallagher Ph.D.

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Recommended Citation

Gallagher, Amelia Ph.D. (2016) "Mary's House in Ephesus, Turkey: Interfaith Pilgrimage in the Age of Mass Tourism," *Vincentian Heritage Journal*: Vol. 33: Iss. 2, Article 2.

Available at: <https://via.library.depaul.edu/vhj/vol33/iss2/2>

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Mary's House in Ephesus, Turkey: Interfaith Pilgrimage in the Age of Mass Tourism

AMELIA GALLAGHER, PH.D.



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Introduction¹

This article analyzes the intersection of Vincentian history, tourism, and popular religion at Meryem Ana Evi, a Marian shrine located on the Aegean coast of Turkey. In the summer of 1891, two French Vincentian priests discovered some isolated ruins on a mountain overlooking the ancient city of Ephesus in the Ottoman province of Smyrna. Their expedition had set out to uncover the site of the Virgin Mary's final home and claimed to have found precisely that. Over the next century Mary's House developed into a major heritage and pilgrimage destination drawing masses of pilgrims and tourists from the Mediterranean cruise-ship circuit. The development of the site went through several distinct phases, transforming from a Vincentian ("Lazarist") Catholic shrine with a distinctly French pedigree of devotion to become an interreligious pilgrimage destination of international importance. It drew on various groups of Christians, Muslims, and accidental tourists as part of a general itinerary of the ancient ruins of Ephesus and its environs. Today the site is well-maintained, highly organized and adept at hosting thousands of visitors daily during the peak tourist season.

Beyond the pious belief that Mary spent her final days there, as a Turkish heritage site, Mary's House is imbued with additional meanings. These meanings include Turkish Muslims' respect for Christianity, Islamic reverence for Mary and the relevance of Christianity, specifically Roman Catholicism, in a Muslim country. Several groups and organizations with ties to the shrine shape the meaning(s) presented to its wide range of visitors: the Izmir Catholic lay organization which is its official representative, the Capuchin friars who currently serve as its pastors, the Turkish Ministry of Tourism, the municipality of Selçuk (the district in which the house lies), as well as various international and local tourist agencies. Beyond official organizations such as these the shrine still reflects the purpose of its local visitors as a place of petition and healing. These various interpretations of the meaning of Mary's House do not necessarily contradict one another, as it is a place emblematic of our current state of mass religious tourism, where the reasons for visiting sacred places blur between pilgrims and tourists, piety and heritage.

Discovered by the French Vincentian community based in Izmir (then Smyrna) in 1891, Mary's House was under their stewardship until 1952 when the last Lazarist owner, Joseph Euzet, C.M., bequeathed the site to a lay Catholic organization founded by the Archbishop of Izmir, Joseph Descuffi, C.M. Church officials and historians are still unfolding the impact of the discovery of Mary's House and its theological and pastoral implications therein. In 2011 the diocese of Kansas City, Missouri, officially opened the cause for sainthood for Sister Marie de Mandat-Grancey (d. 1915), a Daughter of Charity

1 A note on foreign terminology: General Islamic terms of Arabic origin will appear transliterated according to current standards (*Qur'an*, *shirk*, and *haj*, for example). Terms specifically associated with Mary's House will appear according to modern Turkish spelling (*Meryem*, *bereket* and *ziyaret*, for example).



Portrait of Marie de Mandat-Grancey, D.C. (1837-1915)

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who is honored as the “Foundress of Mary’s house.”² Pious literature promoting the cause of Mandat-Grancey, as well as pronouncements from the Kansas City-St. Joseph diocese, emphasize the Muslim patronage of the shrine, not as incidental, but as a direct result of her saintly legacy.³ Pilgrimage to Mary’s earthly dwelling has come to symbolize inter-religious peace.

Mary’s House served in this capacity as a symbol of reconciliation between the Catholic and Islamic worlds after a period of turbulent relations during the pontificate of Benedict XVI. The pope’s tour of Turkey taken shortly after the Regensburg controversy in September 2006⁴ addressed these troubles. After visiting Istanbul, on 29 November, the pope went to Ephesus where he celebrated an open-air mass at the site of Mary’s House. Pleading for reconciliation in his homily, Benedict invoked Mary as a shared symbol of unity and peace:

...from here in Ephesus, a city blessed by the presence of Mary Most Holy — who we know is loved and venerated also by Muslims — let us lift up to the Lord a special prayer for peace between peoples. From this edge of the

2 Normally the cause for sainthood is opened in the place where the prospective saint died. Marie de Mandat-Grancey died in Izmir, but the archbishop of Izmir, Ruggero Francheschini, felt he lacked the resources to conduct a proper investigation. In 2008, Francheschini urged Bishop Robert W. Finn of Kansas City-St. Joseph, who was visiting Meryem Ana Evi, to take up the cause in his jurisdiction. Jack Smith, “Bishop Opens Sainthood Cause for French Sister,” *National Catholic Reporter*, 26 January 2011.

3 See Tom Gallagher, “An ‘Intercessor with Muslims,’” *National Catholic Reporter*, 11 December 2010.

4 Conflict erupted over a speech given at the University of Regensburg in which Benedict quoted the fourteenth-century Byzantine Emperor Manuel II Palaiologos. As the English translation of Manuel II’s quote reads: “Show me just what Muhammad brought that was new and there you will find things only evil and inhuman, such as his command to spread by the sword the faith he preached.” Objections to the speech across the Muslim world resulted in rioting and violence.

Anatolian peninsula, a natural bridge between continents, let us implore peace and reconciliation, above all for those dwelling in the Land called “Holy” and considered as such by Christians, Jews, and Muslims alike.⁵

Vatican analysts maintain that Pope Benedict’s trip to Turkey brought the Regensburg controversy to a peaceful resolution. His words at Mary’s House held particular meaning given its status as a “shared” pilgrimage site, sacred to both Christians and Muslims. If we are to believe the inhabitants of the village of Çirkince — a nearby village of Orthodox Christians since dispersed and renamed — the site has been sacred for 2,000 years. After its discovery by Vincentian missionaries in modern times it went through a partial process of “transference” from Catholicism to Islam, of the sort that fascinated Frederick Hasluck, the British archeologist-cum-anthropologist who pioneered the study of folk religious culture in Anatolia.⁶ Thus, to say Mary’s House was discovered in 1891 is contested. Known locally as “Panaghia Kapalı,” it was never completely lost, nor was it “discovered” in the true sense. However, neither Hasluck nor the Lazarist archeologists could have anticipated the radical trajectory of transference that continues to take place here.

I first visited Mary’s House in 1999 on a day trip, guided by Muslim friends who lived in Izmir. Over a decade later I spent longer periods of time there during the summer and fall of 2012 as part of my sabbatical research. When I returned Mary’s House I observed a startling increase of tourists on package tours (compared with the same seasonal peak a decade earlier). Accordingly, this additional issue has perhaps the most consequence for the future of Mary’s House as a place of pilgrimage: the overwhelming influx of tourists in recent years in comparison to pilgrims, whether Christian or Muslim.

The Discovery

Pious literature dedicated to Mary’s House is sure to recount the story of its discovery, as it is unusual even in the annals of the miraculous origins of Marian shrines. At the same time modern and ancient, unlike the major Marian shrines of Europe, the house was not constructed based on apparitions of Mary, but rather restored, based upon the belief in the historical Mary’s presence. Its discovery did follow the miraculous paradigm common to other Marian shrines in that the visions of a stigmatic nun, who claimed supernatural access to the details of Mary’s earthly life, led Vincentians to the site. Sensitive to the skepticism such mystical archaeology would invite, the Smyrna Lazarists, educators and intellectuals, set out to prove the ancient origin of the ruins through academic methods gleaned from the burgeoning fields of archeology and anthropology. Therefore, while the history of nineteenth-century Catholicism is often depicted as a clear battle between rationalist,

5 Full text of homily found here: http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/homilies/2006/documents/hf_ben-xvi_hom_20061129_ephesus_en.html

6 Collected in the posthumous Frederick W. Hasluck, *Christianity and Islam under the Sultans*, ed. by Margaret Hasluck (Oxford: 1929). The 2006 single volume reprint is used here.

progressive intellectuals and obscurantist clerics, the story behind the discovery of Mary's House reveals that the intellectual climate was more complex within the Smyrna Lazarist community during the *fin de siècle*.

The establishment and restoration of Mary's House is the most enduring accomplishment of the Ottoman Vincentians. First entering Ottoman Aleppo in 1763, the Congregation made significant gains after the dissolution of the Jesuits, as they took over many of their important Ottoman holdings. In 1784 the Vincentians took possession of the former Jesuit church of Saint Benoit in Istanbul, for example, from which they launched their educational initiatives in the Empire's capital.⁷ And although Vincentians also experienced contractions throughout the turbulent post-revolutionary decades, they managed to retain their missions in Ottoman territory in part because of their diplomatic utility on behalf of France.⁸ By the time of Napoleon's official restoration of the Congregation of the Mission in 1804 several Vincentians had settled in Smyrna, about seventy-five kilometers from the ruins of ancient Ephesus.⁹ In 1845 Vincentian priests took over a secondary school (*collège*) there and began serving Latin Catholics, Armenians, and Orthodox of this diverse port city.¹⁰ The Daughters of Charity first came to Smyrna in 1840 and by the last decade of the nineteenth century, when Mary's House was discovered, they numbered sixty-seven.¹¹ Marie de Mandat-Grancey, who entered the Daughters of Charity in 1862, joined this community in 1886 working as a nurse in the French Naval Hospital.

Today, in the entranceway to Mary's House, those credited with its establishment are embedded in local marble. Marie de Mandat-Gancey, D.C., Henri Jung, C.M., Eugene Poulin, C.M., as well as the two archbishops, were all members of the Smyrna Catholic community who oversaw the discovery, excavation, and preservation of the site as well as promoted its significance to Church history.¹² But the story of the discovery really begins on the adjacent wall of the vestibule where hangs a portrait of Blessed Anne Catherine Emmerich (1774-1824). She, of course, lived well before the house's 1891 discovery. It is a popular devotional portrait of the famous stigmatic in her invalid's bed, head bound in bandages, gazing intently at a crucifix held in her wounded hands. Emmerich was an Augustinian nun who experienced a host of mystical phenomena including stigmata, long periods of inedia, and elaborate visions of the lives of Jesus and Mary. Her visions inspired the Romantic poet Clemens von Bretono to render her utterances in provincial dialect into a more standard German text, thereby popularizing them. By the time of the discovery of Mary's House Emmerich's visions were well-known in the Catholic world, especially among religious communities. Beatified in 2004, the influence of Emmerich's visions is still

7 Charles A. Frazee, "Vincentian Missions in the Islamic World," *Vincentian Heritage* 5:1 (1984), 10.

8 *Ibid.*, 6-11.

9 *Ibid.*, 11.

10 This particular secondary school was taken over from the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary.

11 Frazee, "Vincentian Missions," 19-23.

12 The two archbishops inscribed are Joseph Descuffi, C.M. (1937-1965), and André Timoni (1879-1904).



Popular devotional portrait of Blessed Anne Catherine Emmerich (1774-1824).

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profound in the popular imagination.¹³

The modern discovery of the site revived the ancient notion that Mary lived out her final years and died in Ephesus. While Jerusalem had long claimed Mary's tomb, the proponents of the Ephesus theory emphasized an early-Church tradition based on the crucifixion scene of the Gospel of John in which Jesus commissions the disciple John with the care of his mother.¹⁴ Proponents for the Ephesus theory emphasize early Church references to John among the nascent Christian community there, where several early sanctuaries were also dedicated to both the Evangelist and to Mary.¹⁵ Emmerich's *The Life of the Blessed Virgin Mary* describes a small settlement on a mountain overlooking Ephesus where Mary lived out her last years among a group of Jerusalem refugees. Emmerich described the topography of the settlement as well as the layout of Mary's house itself. Inspired by Emmerich's visions, sources credit Sister Marie de Mandat-Grancey with the idea that the Smyrna Lazarist community should undertake an investigation of the environs of Ephesus in order to vindicate them.

It was not the first time one of Emmerich's enthusiasts set off to link her visions to archeology. A diocesan priest from Paris, Julien Gouyet, claimed he had first discovered the same set of ruins believed to be Mary's house ten years earlier in 1881. It is difficult to evaluate his claim, however, as he published the account of his discovery only after visiting Ephesus for a second time in 1896 to confirm the Lazarist findings. Gouyet dedicates much

13 *The Dolorous Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ* (also mediated by von Bretano) was a significant source for the popular Mel Gibson film, *The Passion of the Christ* (2004).

14 "When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother, 'Woman, here is your son.' Then he said to the disciple, 'Here is your mother.' And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home." John 19:26-27.

15 Deutsch surveys the evidence in favor of Mary's presence in Ephesus from the councils as well as the ancient basilicas. He also evaluates the modern arguments made after the discovery. Bernard F. Deutsch, *Our Lady of Ephesus* (Milwaukee: 1965), 51-80.

of this account to verifying the corpus of visions of Emmerich, including her mystical witness of the crucifixion in Jerusalem before his discovery of the ruins. After his success Gouyet lamented Church authorities in Smyrna did not investigate his findings, and so the site remained unknown for another decade.¹⁶

As for the documented discovery of the site, the 1891 memoir of Eugene Poulin is the most complete account left by the Vincentian founders.¹⁷ Poulin recalls that he was intrigued by the writings of Emmerich, which had been making the rounds among the members of the Smyrna mission. A classicist and the superior of the Lazarist *collège* in Smyrna, Poulin provides disclaimers throughout his memoir concerning his suspicion of “women visionaries.” Despite these misgivings, in the summer of 1891 Poulin organized an amateur team of archeologists at the insistence of Marie de Mandat-Grancey. The scenario of women championing the voice of the visionary against the militant rationalism of their male superiors is too common to dismiss as stereotyping, although it may be a matter of exaggerated skepticism in the recollection of the memoirist.

The leader of the search party was not Poulin himself, but Henri Jung, C.M., a scholar of Hebrew Scripture as well as professor of science and mathematics at the *collège*. Poulin takes care to describe Jung as a proud rationalist “most opposed to everything concerning mysticism, dreams, and visions.”¹⁸ Jung nevertheless found himself at the head of a group of visionary archeologists guided by Emmerich’s terse descriptions, passages that led them to “a hill to the left of the road from Jerusalem, some three and a half hours from Ephesus.”¹⁹ Archeology became a European obsession during the twilight years of the Ottoman Empire, as amateur archeologists along with professional teams flocked to the contracting Ottoman provinces. European excavation teams first began work in the ancient city of Ephesus in 1863. With its temple dedicated to Artemis and the library of Celsus it was established over the course of the nineteenth century as a well-preserved Roman city.²⁰ For this more unconventional forage into the field of archeology Benjamin Vervault, another Vincentian priest visiting from the island of Santorini, joined Jung along with three local men hired to carry supplies and serve as interpreters.

According to Poulin’s memoir from the time they set out from their residence in Smyrna it took three days for the searchers to reach their destination. The group first visited a possible site for Mary’s House located within an Orthodox monastery a few kilometers

16 Julien Gouyet, *Découverte dans la montagne d’Éphèse de la maison où la très sainte vierge est morte et fouilles à faire pour découvrir aussi le tombeau d’où elle s’est élevée au ciel* (Paris: 1898).

17 The original French version of Poulin’s memoirs are published as *Journal du Rev. P. Eug. Poulin alias Gabrielovich, Smyrne-(Izmir), Turquie 1843-1928. Histoire de la découverte de la Maison de la Ste-Vierge à Meryem-Ana-Evi (près d’Ephèse)* (Mechelen, Belgium: 1984).

18 Quoted from the English version, P. Eugene Poulin, *The Holy Virgin’s House: The True Story of Its Discovery*, trans. by Ivi Richichi (Istanbul: 1999), 18.

19 For the English translation, see Sir Michael Palaret, trans., *The Life of the Blessed Virgin Mary from the Visions of Ven. Anne Catherine Emmerich* (Rockford: 1970), 346-47.

20 The first limited excavations were conducted by the British Museum. Since then the Austrian Archeological Institute has been the principle organization associated with the excavation of Ephesus.

to the southeast of Ephesus, in what is now the village of Çamlık. The monks living there denied the monastery was associated with Mary's final days and espoused the majority opinion of Orthodox churches that Mary had died in Jerusalem where her tomb remained.²¹ Despite possessing "an instinctive horror concerning visions and visionaries," Father Jung directed the search team to follow Emmerich's visions more closely. Therefore they decided to scale the mountain directly south of Ephesus known as Bülbül Dağ (Nightingale Mountain). After hiking for several hours up the mountain's slope they found an intriguing plateau of dispersed stone ruins — a settled area that was very old and possibly ancient. As they began to look around they noted similarities found in Emmerich's account of Mary's mountain homestead, with its view of Ephesus and the coastal islands from the same directions described by the visionary.²² Poulin's memoir, quoting the diary of Father Vervault, recorded their initial impressions of the mysterious complex and relating its topography to the features Emmerich described. This initial comparison convinced them that they had indeed discovered the spot of the Virgin Mary's last earthly existence. As Father Vervault recorded:

M. Jung got to the top of Bulbul-Dagh. He looked. Yes it was the place. To the North-east was Ayasoulouk, the plain of Efesus, the ruins lying there of the city of Prion like a horse-shoe. To the West and South-west the sea spread out, Samos was in view with its numerous peaks, looking like islands spread out in the middle of the waves. It would be difficult to express the feelings that filled the soul of our explorer. He was so moved by what he saw.²³

Discovery implies that something had been forgotten or lost. The ruins discovered on the afternoon of 29 July 1891 were not abandoned, however. According to the Lazarist accounts there were people all around that day working on the terraced fields of the mountain and actually pointing the search party directly to the site. Before noon the two French priests and their helpers had drained their supply of water scaling the rocky mountain slopes. They asked a group of women working in a tobacco field for water. The women directed them to a higher altitude, to a fountain "at the monastery."²⁴ Two local men, Yorghis and Andreas, greeted the search party at the monastic spring. Andreas was from Çirkince, a village about a five hour hike from the fields they were tending. As Orthodox Christians the Çirkince villagers spoke a dialect of mixed Greek and Ottoman Turkish, reflected in the hybrid place-name for the "monastery," *Panaya Kapulu*.

The meaning of the name the fieldworkers labeled the monastery certainly intrigued the search party. "Panaghia" (the "All Holy") is a common honorific title for Mary in Greek.

21 The exception to Eastern Orthodox Churches regarding Jerusalem is the Syrian Orthodox Church, which maintains its early tradition in placing the Dormition in Ephesus.

22 Poulin, *The Holy Virgin's House*, 52-53.

23 *Ibid.*, 34. Emmerich's description is vague, "Mary's dwelling was on a hill to the left of the road from Jerusalem some three and a half hours from Ephesus." Quoted from Palaret, *The Life of the Blessed Virgin Mary*, 347.

24 Poulin, *The Holy Virgin's House*, 32.



Sisters riding to Mary's House. The image is noteworthy as it depicts the mountainous terrain of the journey.

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online

<http://stvincentimages.cdm.depaul.edu/>



In Orthodox iconography the “Panaghia” is a distinct pose for icons of Mary in which she is facing the viewer, palms turned up, with a stylized circular image of the Christ child placed in her womb. The word *kapılı* could mean “with a gate” or “door.” Ottoman Turkish vocalization was not standardized, though, and alternative orthography of the term as “*kapalı*” conveys the meaning of something that is closed, covered, hidden, or secret.²⁵ This name, then, like the inhabitants of the village itself, reveals layers of long history.

In 1892 Çirkince was a village of about 4,000 Greek Orthodox Christians. The residents claimed an ancient lineage in their oral history as the remnants of the original Christian Ephesians. With the expansion of Selçuk Turkish rule to the Aegean coast in the fourteenth century²⁶ the remaining population migrated to the new settlement of Çirkince (“The Ugly Place”), so called for its inhospitable rocky soil. Observing a primitive altar constructed within the stone structure of the site, the Vincentians later learned that Çirkince priests celebrated mass at the “monastery” on the feast of Mary’s Dormition, 15 August of each year. The term “Dormition” (asleep, sleeping) was utilized in both the East and the West as a term for death, reflecting scriptural euphemistic usage. While in the West that day was celebrated as the Feast of the “Assumption,” rather than “Dormition,” the belief in Mary’s bodily assumption into heaven was a long-held belief in both Churches.²⁷

25 The official name on the Ottoman registers for the property favors the translation as ‘door.’ “The Panaghia Monastery with Three Doors” (*Panaya üç kapılı monastiri*).

26 The Selçuks were a Turkic slave dynasty arising from the Islamic state practice of neutralizing conquered nomadic groups through the soldier-slave system. The Abbasids channeled Turkish tribal groups to frontier regions such as Asia Minor in this way. By the mid-fifteenth century the Ottoman dynasty had replaced the Selçuks as the foremost Islamic opposition to the Byzantines. By that time, however, the citizens of Ephesus had been in steady decline due to Barbarian invaders (third century), earthquakes (seventh century), and a receding harbor. Beleaguered Ephesians gradually migrated to the more favorable inland town of Aya Soluk (“Sacred Water,” later renamed Selçuk) and, according to local lore, to Çirkince as well.

27 Though there was some degree of debate among Catholic theologians as to whether Mary actually died a physical death before the Assumption, divided along the lines of “mortalists” and “immortalists,” many authoritative figures have referred to her death before the Assumption, such as John Paul II.

But if it was as the Çirkince villagers claimed and they carried with them the traditions of the original Christian Ephesians, these traditions were dispersed along with the village itself after World War I. Today, one significant aspect of Mary's House which the Turkish Ministry of Tourism promotes is that it is a place that honors religious diversity. However, the people of Çirkince are an example of the twentieth century's failure at such a co-existence in the midst of exclusivist nationalisms. After World War I the population exchanges between Greece and Turkey affected approximately 1.5 million inhabitants of the former Ottoman Empire by requiring the "unmixing of peoples," according to the infamous phrase. This process had profound consequences for the religious demographics of the entire Aegean region. The indigenous Anatolian Christians, such as the villagers of Çirkince, were required to relocate to Greece after the Turkish War of Independence (1919-1923). For the populations in question, Greek nationals of the "Moslem religion" and Turkish nationals of the Orthodox religion, relocation was not a return to a fabled motherland but an exile from a homeland with long oral and written histories.²⁸ After Muslims from Greece settled in "The Ugly Place," the village was appropriately renamed Şirince ("The Cute Place").²⁹

And so the Greek nation-state absorbed the local traditions of Çirkince and their cults bound to the surrounding topography, along with the larger Christian population of Anatolia. In this way the population exchanges make the ethnographic work conducted by the Smyrna Lazarists even more valuable, rudimentary as it was. Informally, the investigation into local traditions surrounding Panaghia Kapalı began with information provided by fieldworkers when the search party first arrived. As investigations into the site grew more serious, Father Poulin himself drew up a set of formal interview questions for the residents of Çirkince concerning their beliefs and practices associated with the site, "designed not to inspire any inclination towards Greek fatalism."³⁰

From this ethnographic research Poulin learned that Çirkince villagers made a pilgrimage to the site every year on 15 August in commemoration of Mary's Dormition. They claimed it to be an isolated tradition and that the village of Çirkince was the only known community, Christian or Muslim, undertaking pilgrimage to this particular sanctuary. The Vincentians in France published a short book in which a representative of Çirkince claimed that knowledge of Mary's actual tomb on the site had been lost.³¹ Yet, the representative stated the site was the place of Mary's historical death and Assumption in relation to her sojourns in other locales close by:

28 Renée Hirschon, "'Unmixing Peoples' in the Aegean Region," in *Crossing the Aegean: An Appraisal of the 1923 Compulsory Population Exchange between Greece and Turkey*, ed. by Renée Hirschon (New York: 2003), 8.

29 Quite picturesque, the town has benefitted from the tourist industry's growth surrounding Ephesus. Şirince recently saw an unexpected boom in tourist traffic during the off season. Designated as one of the places to be spared during the hyped Mayan apocalypse of 2012, many wealthy Turks and foreigners flocked to Şirince during the winter of 2011-2012 to witness the Apocalypse from a locale reputed to be exempt from New Age tribulations.

30 Poulin, *The Holy Virgin's House*, 123.

31 *Panaghia-Capouli ou Maison de la Sainte Vierge près d'Éphèse* (Paris: 1896), 89.

Due to the pagans' persecution, the Holy Virgin ended her stay at Kryphi-Panaghia [the "Hidden Panaghia"] then moved to the south — about an hour from there, to Kavaklı Panaghia ["Panaghia of the Poplars"]. Just as today, in that place there were lots of poplar trees. And there is celebrated the Feast of 21 November, the Presentation...

Interviewer: What do they say about Capouli-Panaghia?

That the Virgin left Kavakli-Panaghia and headed towards the west on the mount of Bulbul — The mountain of the Nightingale — at a distance of about two hours from the place of Aya Soulouk [today's Selçuk]; and it was there — during her stay at Capouli where her Dormition took place and where it is celebrated the Feast of the 15 August.³²

As indicated in the extract above, an apocryphal history of Mary's life in the area was known to incorporate several other smaller shrines in their vicinity tied to Mary's final years in Ephesus. In the same interview the representative claimed thirty-three such nearby sanctuaries.³³ While many things remain uncertain it is not unlikely that some local Christian communities nurtured a medieval Byzantine and perhaps ancient cult of the Panaghia surrounding the mountains of Ephesus, such as Bülbul. This cult was bound to the physical topography of the place extending outside the city itself — mountains, grottos, springs, and trees surrounding Ephesus. Names attached to other nearby shrines evoke an aura of subterfuge in hybrid Turkish-Greek. The two sites closest to Panaghia Kapalı were "The Hidden All-Holy" (*ghizli panaghia*) and "The All Holy of the Poplars" (*kavaklı panaghia*). The Çirkince representative maintained Christian sanctuaries of Anatolia have a long history of secrecy due to persecution.³⁴ According to the oral tradition he relayed of the village, Panaghia Kapalı became Mary's final resting place where the Dormition occurred.

At the time skeptics noted that this could simply be a matter of a local Christian community making a pilgrimage to an ancient sanctuary dedicated to Mary in order to commemorate her Dormition and nothing more.³⁵ That they believed the site to be the actual place where the Dormition and Assumption occurred is less certain. Poulin recorded this information during an interview he conducted with the mayor of Çirkince a year after discovery of the site. But there were no direct interviews recorded with the villagers themselves, only the mayor serving as both translator and spokesman. The claim that residents of Çirkince understood and believed that Panaghia Kapalı was the site of

32 *Ibid.*, 88.

33 *Ibid.*, 90.

34 The representative mentioned additional feasts associated with other nearby shrines. On the Friday after Easter the village also celebrated the Eastern feast of Theotokos, the Life-Giving Fountain at Ghizli Panaghia. *Ibid.*, 86-88.

35 "Assomption," *Dictionnaire de la Bible (Supplément)*, ed. by Louis Pirot (Paris: 1928).

Mary's historical domicile and tomb cannot be conclusively determined. That this belief was recorded well after it was known that French missionaries and foreign archeologists had taken interest in the site further casts doubt on Çirkince tradition.

While the Smyrna Lazarists investigated these ruins the pioneering archeologist Frederick Hasluck, researching Anatolian sacred geography during the years 1904-1915, assessed the same area of Ephesus as preserving few points of interest:

...it is apparent that many sites of extraordinary sanctity both in ancient and in Christian times have at the present day lost all tradition of that sanctity. Ephesus, a place of the greatest religious importance during both periods, owes its remaining Christian sanctity to its proximity to Smyrna and the Greek coast-towns, and it seems never to have passed on its religious tradition to Islam.³⁶

Hasluck is likely referring to the renowned Ephesian basilicas of Christian antiquity, but as far as the surrounding areas his valuation is premature. If we are to take into account the testimony of the Orthodox community Vincentians interviewed, local memory upheld the sanctity of Ephesus' environs. Transference of Christian traditions of Ephesus to Islam occurred as well, but decades after Hasluck's writing. However, the surviving Christian cults of Ephesus fell off the beaten trail or were deliberately hidden, so much so that the local Orthodox monastery did not know of their existence according to Vincentian sources. Elsewhere, Hasluck notes, these places of "endurance" are often local and isolated and survive outside official clerical channels (such as the Çamlık Orthodox monastic community the Smyrna Lazarists first interviewed). In keeping with Hasluck's observations about the transference of sacred places from one religion to another this place was not one of the grand basilicas but a small-scale, hidden shrine named for its deliberate obscurity.

After the Lazarists of Smyrna became convinced they had found Mary's House they attempted to enlist the efforts of known scholars of archeology and biblical history. Despite his professed wariness of visionaries Poulin became the primary public advocate of the authenticity of Mary's House based on Emmerich's visions — to the general public, and especially to skeptical elements within his own church. Attempts to enlist the support of French priest and historian Louis Duchesne regarding Panaghia Kapalı's authenticity did not go well. In 1893, hoping to secure an ally in the renowned Duchesne, Poulin presented the evidence of Mary's House based explicitly on Emmerich's visions. Duchesne responded by taking direct aim at Poulin's rationalist sensitivities, asserting, "Archeology relies on witness, not hallucinations."³⁷ Perhaps this was an oblique reference to the visions of the

36 Hasluck, *Christianity and Islam*, 115. On Hasluck's work in Smyrna see Giovanni Salmeri, "Frederick William Hasluck: From Cambridge to Smyrna," in *Archaeology, Anthropology and Heritage in the Balkans and Anatolia*, ed. by David Shankland (Istanbul: 2010), 1:71-104.

37 Poulin, *The Holy Virgin's House*, 130.



Ephesus, Mary's House, c. 1899.

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Vincentians' own visionary, Catherine Labouré, who claimed apparitions in 1830. She later insisted on a series of mystical "digs" at the motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity in Paris during the 1870s. After convincing her superiors that a valuable treasure would be found with which to build a new church they unearthed only a dried well similar to others scattered on the grounds.³⁸

Later, as work to excavate the Ephesus site was underway, Duchesne went on to chide Poulin: "This does not mean that you will not succeed, it would not be the first apocryphal shrine established."³⁹ After the initial exchange with Poulin, Duchesne reported to the Superior General of the Vincentians in Paris. In a letter dated 1892 he stated that if it were publicized that Panaghia Kapalı based its claims on the visions of Emmerich then "sarcasm will fall on the Lazarists of Smyrna."⁴⁰ This perhaps caused some distancing: Poulin published his memoirs of the discovery under a pseudonym, and the original publication of *Panaghia Cappouli*, although also written by him, listed no author. Archeologists enlisted by the Lazarists to study the site concluded with a more promising note, asserting that the structure discovered in 1891 was rebuilt several times on ancient ruins. That the foundations of the House date back to the first century — a claim argued amongst archaeologists at the time — is the standard assessment of guide books published for pilgrims and tourists today. The claim maintains that Mary's House is essentially a Byzantine cuneiform structure rebuilt several times (the last time after its discovery in 1891) on an original foundation dating back to the first century.⁴¹

The notion of a hidden Christian sanctuary surviving a tumultuous two millennia fit into the romantic mystique of nineteenth-century Mediterranean archeology. Cataloging the sanctuaries of late Ottoman Anatolia, conversely, Hasluck instructs us of the human-societal element fueling the enduring charisma of these ancient stones. He reins in the

38 Stafford Poole, "Pierre Coste and Catherine Labouré: The Conflict of Historical Criticism and Popular Devotion," *Vincentian Heritage* 20:2 (1999), 277.

39 Poulin, *The Holy Virgin's House*, 128.

40 *Ibid.*, 116.

41 Deutsch summarizes the arguments for the early dating of the foundation in *Our Lady of Ephesus*, 80-83, based on *Actes du X. Congres International d'Études Byzantines* (Istanbul: 1957).

rampant romanticism fostered by this period's atmosphere of feverish discovery. While Hasluck himself never addressed Panaghia Kapalı, he would likely have attributed its survival to human efforts (the annual pilgrimage and caretaking by local Christians for example) rather than an innate sanctity. And although the Smyrna Lazarists based their venture on a mystical, highly subjective source, they also sought to integrate local custom into their findings. Much like Hasluck's methodology they believed doing so upheld their claims.

Poulin made every effort to express the extent of his and other priests' initial doubt — all of which would be blown away by the weight of the scientific proof found in their subsequent anthropological and archeological research. Such a line of investigation may be standard today. Yet at the time serious inquiry into living religion countered the conventional wisdom of classicists and biblical scholars, who upheld the primacy of ancient texts while dismissing local phenomena as superstition. Hasluck failed to note the lingering cults based on Ephesian legend, but he had not encountered the isolated communities that claimed their guardianship. The Lazarists had not stumbled upon the ruins themselves, but rather the community that visited and valued them. And while Hasluck would reject the notion that archeology's primary purpose is to support biblical texts, the Vincentians set out to do just this by taking a circuitous route through the visions of Emmerich. Despite working from radically different vantage points both the classical archeologist Hasluck and the Smyrna Lazarists anticipated modern anthropological methods, emphasizing the role of living human societies in the preservation of memory and sacred places.⁴²

Aside from the issue of places having enduring sacred meaning the transference of a sacred place from one religious community to another also guided the work of Hasluck. Recording the transference of older Christian sanctuaries into Islam, and how these cults evolved, neither Hasluck nor the Smyrna Lazarists could have foreseen the radical social, political, and economic circumstances that not only prevented Panaghia Kapalı from falling into obscurity, but propelled it into an era of unprecedented international fame.

A Vincentian Shrine

Despite Duchesne's predictions of sarcasm befalling the Lazarists the archbishop of Smyrna, André Timoni, who was not a Vincentian, approved of pilgrimage to the site by the close of 1892. Without any rationalist disclaimers the official report of the archbishop's inquiry made open and full reference to the German stigmatic's role in its discovery:

Some recent researches made according to the indications of Sister Catherine

⁴² On Hasluck's divergence from the field, see David Shankland, "The Life and Times of F.W. Hasluck (1878-1920)," in *Archaeology, Anthropology and Heritage*, 1:17.



The official Commission of Inquiry, Ephesus.

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online

<http://stvincentimages.cdm.depaul.edu/>



Emmerich have seriously attracted the attention of the country to a place situated near Ephesus and called Panaya Kapulu.... There we found the very well preserved ruins of an ancient house or chapel, the construction of which, according to competent archeologists, may trace its origin to the first century of our era and which... corresponds fully and entirely to those things which Catherine Emmerich said in her Revelations concerning the house of the Blessed Virgin at Ephesus.⁴³

In 1895 Pope Leo XIII sent a Commission of Inquiry to investigate the claims associated with Panaghia Kapalı.⁴⁴ Pope Leo augmented the claim of Mary's presence there by the removal of indulgences associated with the Jerusalem site of Mary's tomb in 1896, transferring them to the new-found ruins at Ephesus. In an ecclesiastical sense the transference of Panaghia Kapalı to Roman Catholicism was initiated. In a legal sense this became true as well. Tapping into her ancestral estate, Marie Mandat-Grancey purchased the site and its surroundings in 1892. In the following years, under the authority of the Smyrna Vincentian community, renovations and excavations continued. This characterizes a distinct phase of the shrine's history — its transference from an isolated Greek Orthodox community to Roman Catholic Vincentians.

From the 1892 Vincentian discovery until the outbreak of World War I in 1914 the new caretakers bolstered the charismatic credentials of the ruins with scientific research in anthropology and archeology. During this time the shrine was limited to a distinct audience of pilgrims — Catholics associated with Smyrna missionaries and local Christians of Çirkince. Other regional Orthodox communities did not participate in these early pilgrimages to the site.⁴⁵ In fact the Orthodox Church has never established an ecclesiastic

43 Cited from Deutsch, *Our Lady of Ephesus*, 85.

44 Poulin, *The Holy Virgin's House*, 161-163.

45 *Ibid.*, 139.



Sr. Marie de Mandat-Grancey standing in front of Mary's House.

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presence there and maintains that Mary's tomb remains in Jerusalem.⁴⁶ By 1906, when a group of over 300 Germans visited, the reputation of the shrine had grown strong enough to attract large European tours. There was also a growing stream of visiting ecclesiastical foreign dignitaries which further bolstered the site's reputation in the Roman Catholic world.⁴⁷

The cult of Mary as it evolved in nineteenth-century Europe also shaped the initial expectations and interpretations of Mary's House (re)discovered in Ephesus. The "Marian Century" saw the development of both dogma and popular piety regarding Mary in the West,⁴⁸ and French Catholicism popularized some of its most iconic concepts and images. The Vincentian caretakers of Panaghia Kapalı emphasized certain topographical elements which paralleled well-known Marian shrines in France. The aesthetics of the shrine developed in a similar vein to accommodate the sensibilities of Roman Catholic pilgrims. While the site of the discovery at Ephesus was locally known through Mary's Eastern persona as the "Panaghia," the Smyrna Lazarists emerged from a French visionary culture steeped in iconography of the Immaculate Conception.

46 Today the Patriarchate of Constantinople does not have an official connection with Meryem Ana Evi, although Orthodox patronage of the shrine (especially among Russian Orthodox) is prominent. Orthodox Christian pilgrims reconcile the sanctity of the site by maintaining that Mary sojourned there temporarily. She then returned to Jerusalem where her Dormition, Resurrection, and Assumption took place at the site of the Church of the Sepulcher of Mary, which is under the jurisdiction of the Greek Orthodox Church of Jerusalem.

47 See Deutsch, *Our Lady of Ephesus*, 98.

48 A useful distinction of eras for Catholic historians, "The Marian Century" stretches from the announcement of the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception in 1854 until the Dogma of the Assumption in 1950.

The notion of Mary's exemption from Original Sin was a widespread belief held in the East and West since ancient times.⁴⁹ Not declared dogma in the West until 1854, the official pronouncement reflected popular fervor.⁵⁰ In France especially, recent Marian apparitions fueled the revival of the concept on a popular level. The famous apparitions that took place in the Pyrenean town of Lourdes in 1858 provided a significant theological and practical precedent for the Ephesian discovery. The famous visionary of Lourdes, Bernadette Soubirous, claimed the apparition identified herself not by name but as "The Immaculate Conception."

Earlier, in 1830, an apparition of Mary visited the motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity in Paris. Catherine Labouré claimed a vision of Mary standing on the world, arms outstretched, a banner above with the words "O Mary, *conceived without sin*, pray for us who have recourse to thee" [emphasis mine]. From this image the Daughters of Charity minted the "Miraculous Medal" which became ubiquitous throughout France and the entire Catholic world. The pose Mary strikes on the medal also reflected her persona as the "The Immaculate Conception," mirroring Labouré's vision, palms upturned.⁵¹ Most art historians trace the artistic persona of the Immaculate Conception to the period after the Renaissance. Mary standing alone without child, beaming rays of light from her inverted palms, crowned and surrounded by twelve stars with the moon underfoot. This became a common paradigm for well-known artists such as Valézquez and countless imitators.⁵² In artistry the Immaculate Conception is a celestial and powerful Mary, majestically alone, independent of her son. To French missionaries there was no other choice of iconography for their shrine, discovered during the midst of the Marian century.

While the villagers at Çirkinçe appear to have had no permanent icons installed at the site the visual depictions of Mary the Vincentians brought gave a visual anchor to the growing stream of French and Levantine Catholic pilgrims. In 1892 they placed a cast iron replica of the Mary of the Miraculous Medal pose at the top of the path leading to the ruins of the house. And like other sacred material objects, no repairs were made to the injuries she acquired in the following years. Missing for several years on two occasions, she displays her two missing hands severed at the wrists as a miracle of survival against war, brigands, exposure to the elements, and abandonment by her caretakers. Now this

49 Islam also absorbed this prevalent notion in the form of a well-known *hadith*, an authoritative statement made by the Prophet Muhammad: "Every child that is born, is touched (or stung) by Satan and this touch makes it cry, except Maryam and her son." A.J. Wensinck, "Maryam," *The Encyclopedia of Islam, New Edition* (1991), translated from al-Bukhari, *Anbiya*.

50 While most historians agree that the idea of the Immaculate Conception of Mary first developed in the East, its modern emphasis was exclusive to the Roman Catholic Church. According to the *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, among the Orthodox, "the belief gradually languished... that to the Greek orthodox theologians of the 19th century, the doctrine of Pius IX appeared as an innovation." See Frederick Holwek, "Immaculate Conception," *New Catholic Encyclopedia*.

51 Melissa R. Katz and Robert A. Orsi, *Divine Mirror: The Virgin Mary in the Visual Arts* (Oxford: 2001), 106. Although there is some discrepancy about whether the pose of Mary as stamped on the medal was the actual one first described by Labouré. Poole, "Pierre Coste and Catherine Labouré," 280-81. On the presence of the image of the Immaculate Mary in Catherine's early life, see René Laurentin, *The Life of Catherine Labouré* (London: 1983), 21, 33.

52 Katz and Orsi, *Divine Mirror*, 70.



Portraits of Catherine Labouré, D.C. (1806-1876); and Marie-Bernarde Soubirous (1844-1879) or Bernadette of Lourdes.

St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online

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particular statue is inside the house on the main altar, standing as the dominant image of Our Lady of Ephesus. As the iconic image of Meryem Ana Evi, pictures, medals, and statuettes modeled after her are sold at souvenir shops both here and around Ephesus.⁵³

Though unusual for the nineteenth century as a shrine established without the claim of an apparition, apparitions of Mary at Panaghia Kapalı soon followed. While in many ways the shrine was restored in a manner that reflected Western, especially French, apparition phenomena, the first Marian apparition recorded at the site was claimed by Helen, a local Orthodox daughter of the shrine's hired caretaker. Reported in August of 1902, it was not an apparition of Mary delivering messages, instructions, and warnings to her seers, as was the dominant scenario in Europe. Rather, the Orthodox visionary reported a silent, somber, even mournful Mary draped completely in black. The apparition appeared outside the house and remained visible to the seer for only a half hour before fading into a cloud of smoke. In October of the following year a Daughter of Charity visiting the house claimed a similar apparition experience in the form of an ethereal glowing light. The shrine's French caretakers saw the apparitions at Panaghia Kapalı as an extension of those occurring in Europe. Joseph Euzet likens the caretaker's daughter to the humble French visionaries: "... it is the custom of the Blessed Virgin to prefer to manifest herself to the simple: Catherine Labouré of the Rue du Bac, Melanie of LaSalette, and Bernadette of Lourdes."⁵⁴

The series of apparition visionaries of nineteenth-century Europe especially influenced the Smyrna Daughters of Charity to place confidence in the mystical visions of Emmerich. Just as Emmerich had mystically envisioned Mary's House, so it was miraculously discovered as a physical reality outside of Ephesus about a day's journey from the French hospital and orphanage where the Daughters worked. The phenomenon of visionary archeology also reflects some controversial aspects of the French Marian revival. As part of her claim that Mary appeared to her with instructions, Catherine Labouré's insistence

53 The Smyrna Vincentians later installed the undamaged statue that now stands outside in the original location at the top of the path leading to the house. With the addition of a crown reminiscent of Notre-Dame-des-Victoires, this statue also recreates the Immaculate Conception's gesture of an open embrace.

54 Joseph Euzet, *Historique de la Maison de la Sainte Vierge pres d'Ephese (1891-1961)* (Izmir: 1961), 79.

that there was treasure buried in the Paris convent's garden caused some historians to cite a mental imbalance.⁵⁵ Bernadette's famous unearthing of the spring at Lourdes was also controversial. On this occasion, as instructed by "The Immaculate Conception," Bernadette used her bare hands to uncover a spring in the grotto where the apparitions occurred. She smeared mud on her face in a dramatic display as the water seeped forth; water that has become a central feature of rites performed at this famous healing shrine.

The atmosphere created by the apparition phenomena emanating from France also generated a mystical expectation for tangible evidence of the visionary experience. The hope the Daughters of Charity placed in verifying Emmerich's visions reflected a wider occurrence in which visionaries produced physical tokens of their experiences, such as the Miraculous Medal. In this way Bernadette's apparitions at Lourdes also played into the significance given to the topography uncovered at Mary's House. As in the case of the spring at Lourdes, the natural spring running under Mary's House would become a central focus of the site because of its curative power.

However, before the spring became renowned and as further excavations continued, in 1898 archeologists uncovered the remains of a hearth under the main archway of the house. This gave further vindication to those who defended the visions of Emmerich as historically authentic.⁵⁶ Healings claimed as a result of using the ashes from the excavated hearth are recorded from the years 1901-1903.⁵⁷ Sources indicate that the Daughters of Charity were central in promoting this miraculous cure as a salve applied to the afflicted. The cures included a successful delivery after a prolonged labor (the ashes applied to the body of the mother), the curing of a gangrened arm, and an abscess. One case providing the most detail involved a Bulgarian Catholic woman who brought her son to a hospital in Ottoman Salonika in December of 1904. The Daughters rubbed the child with the hearth's ashes for ten days. The mother also took home a supply of the ashes and after returning to the Salonika hospital in the spring of 1905 the attending doctor gave written testimony to the child's miraculous cure.⁵⁸

While Hasluck cautioned against simplistic theories of the mere "survivalism" of ancient cults he nevertheless remarked upon how the distant past is given meaning by the present. Reflective of the contemporary Marian revival in Europe, Mary's House on the Aegean became a place of apparitions, intercessions, and miraculous mountain springs. This type of phenomena was not foreign to the Orthodox Christian cult of Panaghia Kapalı, but it was given a new urgency by the Vincentian caretakers and paved the way for the international fame the shrine would gain by the end of the twentieth century.

55 Poole, "Pierre Coste and Catherine Labouré," 277.

56 According to the English translation: "The house was divided into two compartments by the hearth in the centre of it. The fireplace was on the floor opposite the door; it was sunk into the ground beside a wall which rose in steps on each side of it up to the ceiling." Palaret, *The Life of the Blessed Virgin Mary*, 348.

57 Deutsch, *Our Lady of Ephesus*, 112-114.

58 *Ibid.*, 114.

The precarious status of Panaghia Kapalı throughout World War I and the upheaval of the post-war years limited excavation and restoration of the house, and actually resulted in accelerated damage. A long ordeal establishing legal ownership of Panaghia Kapalı dragged on through the deposition of the Ottoman Sultanate, the War for Independence, the population exchanges, and the establishment of the Turkish Republic. Furthermore, the new Turkish Republic issued far-reaching secular measures requiring strict approval by the state for public religious activity. The final decision of the Turkish court granted ownership of the property back to the Vincentians under Joseph Euzet. The first post-war pilgrimage of any significance took place in 1932, after the legal battle with the Turkish government concluded. Although he did not study the transference at Panaghia Kapalı, Hasluck described similar perils faced by shrines in Anatolia:

...changes in political and religious conditions, especially change of population, of which Asia Minor has seen so much, can and do obliterate the most ancient religious traditions, and, consequently, that our pretensions to accuracy in delineating local religious history must largely depend on our knowledge of these changes. Without this knowledge, which we seldom or never have, the assumption too often made on the ground of some accidental similarity that one half-known cult had supplanted another is picturesque but unprofitable guesswork.⁵⁹

Hasluck did not discount the possibility of ancient shrines surviving with their sanctity intact (such as Panaghia Kapalı) but given his anthropological considerations he simply noted that such places rarely survived societal upheaval. After decades of regional turmoil the survival of the Panaghia Kapalı cult was a miracle in Hasluck's sense, in that a community preserved the sacred memory of the shrine. In order for a sacred place to endure into modern times, "favorable conditions" must be met such as endowment, organization, and a permanent population.⁶⁰ The twentieth century indeed proved tumultuous for Panaghia Kapalı, particularly because of the complete exile of the community that had guarded the shrine for nearly two millennia (according to oral tradition). And during the decades of war the shrine was in real danger of falling into dereliction, obscurity, and confiscation by the state. The Vincentians provided "favorable conditions" necessary for the survival of the site by replacing the dispersed community of caretakers. As an organization based outside Turkey the Vincentians enjoyed a degree of immunity from the revolutionary changes affecting local Anatolian populations. Nevertheless, as the drawn-out legal battle over possession of the property demonstrated, their status as owners of the site was precarious.

After transference of the shrine from the Çirkince Christians to the Smyrna Vincentians, its identity as a Roman Catholic destination of pilgrimage remained exclusive throughout World War II. But after the war, during the next phase in the shrine's development, it

59 Hasluck, *Christianity and Islam*, 118.

60 *Ibid.*, 115.

became a “shared” sacred place bringing large numbers of foreign Christians and Turkish Muslims to the once-obscure mountain. The process by which this shifting identity occurred recalls another of Hasluck’s observations: “Where the population is of mixed religion, all sects tend to frequent a shrine that has acquired fame by its healing miracles.”⁶¹

The Second Era: A Shared Shrine

To the outside world Panaghia Kapalı remained obscure throughout the 1940s, with no public pilgrimages recorded. The year 1950 marks a new epoch for the site in several respects, especially in relationship to the local population. Regarding this, Hasluck established a truism for understanding the development of Panaghia Kapalı in the twentieth century. He observed that Muslim patronage of Christian shrines has little to do with the religious affiliation of the shrine. Nor is this patronage discouraged by:

...any cult practices theoretically repugnant to Moslems, such, e.g., as involve the use of the cross or of pictures. Practically any of the religions of Turkey may share the use of a sanctuary administered by another, if this sanctuary has a *sufficient reputation for beneficent miracles, among which miracles of healing play a predominant part.*⁶² [Emphasis mine.]

Just as Hasluck observed a half-century earlier, the repute for healing the shrine gained among local Turkish Muslims was a major factor in its growing popularity throughout the 1950s. Although owned, funded, and administered by Roman Catholic missionaries from Europe, the fact that Mary is integral to the Islamic tradition also facilitated growth. Mary is an important figure in the Qur’an’s summation of the prophetic tradition preceding Muhammad. As the virgin mother of the messenger prophet (*rusūl*) Jesus, a chapter of the Qur’an is named after her.⁶³ The Qur’an as well as its commentary (*tafsīr*), and traditions (*hadīth*), present Mary as an exemplar of female chastity and virtue.

The Mary of Islam is not confined to Quranic scripture and official commentary, however.⁶⁴ Through informal interviews and participant observation at Meryem Ana Evi I gained insight to Mary’s significance in popular understanding among Muslims. Sometimes people’s interpretation of her significance took the form of apocryphal detail imbued upon scripture, both Christian and Islamic. For example a merchant at one of the souvenir kiosks on-site relayed a narrative that he insisted came from the Gospels (Turkish: *incil*). As the story went, a woman in Jerusalem was in search of a cure for her sick child. She implored

61 *Ibid.*, 692.

62 *Ibid.*, 68-69.

63 The nineteenth chapter, “Maryam,” is named for her but her narrative is also included in chapter three, “al-‘Imrān.”

64 For a general survey of Mary in canonical Islamic sources, see Jane I. Smith and Yvonne Y. Haddad, “The Virgin Mary in Islamic Tradition and Commentary,” *The Muslim World* LXXIX (1989), 161-187; Jane Dammen McAuliffe, “Chosen of All Women: Mary and Fāṭima in Qur’ānic Exegesis,” *Islamochristiana* 7 (1981), 19-28.

Jesus to heal the child but he refused. She then went to Mary knowing that Jesus could never refuse a request from his mother, and he complied. This apocryphal story is one way Mary is understood by Muslims visiting the site: an intercessor in physical healing.

Scripture also alludes to the physical place of Mary's House itself according to some of my Muslim informants. One Muslim pilgrim insisted that the Qur'an refers to Mary as "she who hides herself in the mountains," but I have been unable to confirm this reference. I observed a Muslim family from the east of Turkey pause before the fountains of water as the patriarch retold the Qur'anic story of Jesus' birth from memory. When he came to the part in which God miraculously provided Mary with sustenance during her labor, he pointed to the fountains before him saying that this was the water God had provided. Alternative or additional narratives such as these demonstrate that alongside canonical sources an Islamic folk tradition has also developed which posits Mary, like her son, as an intercessor especially called upon for physical healing. In this way the figure at the center of this shrine was not an appropriation of a popular Christian saint, which is not uncommon in Anatolia, but a local Muslim cult built on a figure already integral to Islamic scripture, commentary, and popular tradition.

In line with the principle of practicality driving the development of "shared" shrines, the construction of a modern road up the mountain to Panaghia Kapalı enabled easier access to significant numbers of local visitors. The Turkish Ministry of Tourism initiated the plan in 1948 to facilitate the pilgrimage of foreign tourists. Only about thirty people participated in the pilgrimage of 1950 which inaugurated the new road.⁶⁵ But the road made large-scale pilgrimage possible while also providing access to the local Turkish Muslim population. From this point a growing list of petitions and cures claimed by those with Turkish names entered the annals of the shrine. Correspondingly at this time, and reflective of the shifting identity of its pilgrims, the name of the site changed from Panaghia Kapalı to the Turkish, Meryem Ana Evi ("Mother Mary's House"), as it remains today.

During the first part of the century Vincentians saw that the natural features of this site echoed other mountainous Marian shrines in Europe, such as Lourdes. As is common in these shrines natural springs create a central focus of healing rituals. Two separate springs emerged on the grounds of Panaghia Kapalı, both of which ran underneath the house itself. The spring local fieldworkers had directed French explorers to in 1891 emptied into a pool on the first terrace beneath the house. The second water source, which ran under the wing of the house identified by the caretakers as Mary's bed chamber, was tapped in 1898 and directed onto the second terrace beneath the house. It was this source that produced the water renowned for its curative properties. As a universal element water, of course, does not confine its miraculous associations to Roman Catholicism. Use of water to elicit cures has precedent in classical religion, Byzantine Christianity, and Islam. One

⁶⁵ The pilgrimage was led by a Swiss priest named Karl Gschwind who was living in Istanbul during World War II. Deutsch, *Our Lady of Ephesus*, 102.



An early photo of Sisters and pilgrims, Ephesus.
Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online
<http://stvincentimages.cdm.depaul.edu/>



of the Greek Orthodox men the Vincentians first encountered at the site had specifically used the term *ayasma* in association with Panaghia Kapalı.⁶⁶ The word is Greek for “sacred water” and had already crossed over into Turkish, *ayazma*, indicating the appropriation or sharing of sacred water sources. After 1950 the water of the spring at Mary’s House became increasingly important in Turkish Muslims’ rituals of visitation.

Anecdotal evidence also survives indicating reasons why the shrine began to attract locals. *Notre-Dame d’Éphèse* was a journal published by the Petits Freres de Jésus who served as the pastors of Meryem Ana Evi from 1955-1963. The journal contains sporadic reports of cures and successful intercessions.⁶⁷ The pastors of the shrine were careful, though, to distinguish miraculous cures from non-miraculous intercessions. The journal reports, for example, how a Turkish family visited the shrine to recount the recovery of their son through petitions made at the house, but it emphasized that his recovery was “non-miraculous” and procured by means of an operation.⁶⁸

For the year 1961 all of the recipients of “faveurs” were recorded as “Turkish,” including a retired colonel in the Turkish army. Eight maladies were listed: asthma, insomnia, rheumatoid arthritis, cholera, rickets, sciatica, eczema, and a “cure” (*guérison*) for an unspecified illness. Of the cures reported half are expressly attributed to the water but without the specific rites detailed: “from the water,” “thanks to the water,” and “by taking in the water.”⁶⁹ According to the same volume, on Sunday [22 May 1960]:

...a teacher from a local school recounted to Father Gardien that ten years ago she had come here when her baby was crippled (*boiteaux*). She prayed in the

66 Poulin, *The Holy Virgin’s House*, 63.

67 *Notre-Dame d’Éphèse* (March-April 1962), 52.

68 *Ibid.* (September-October 1962), 171.

69 *Ibid.* (March-April 1962), 52.

chapel, washed the baby with water from the sources and as a result, she attested the child has been walking normally since then.⁷⁰

This particular narrative reveals the general pattern of Muslim ritual practice at Meryem Ana Evi: declaration of a petition (stated in the chapel), the healing rite (application with water from the source), and indication of an additional step in the procedure — return to Meryem Ana Evi in thanksgiving, likely in fulfillment of a vow (*adak*) to do so.

The visitation of local Muslims to the shrine grew steadily enough throughout the 1950s to attract the attention of *Hayat*, the Turkish subsidiary of *Life* magazine, in May of 1962. For the first time a national magazine publicized the specific practices associated with Mary's House among Muslims. The multi-page spread featured people visiting specifically to use the water as a means to cure medical conditions. One large photo showed a barefoot man with pants rolled up to his knees standing at the springs (by this time channeled into four separate fountains), his cane propped up against the stone wall in a dramatic visual gesture showing that he no longer had use for it. The article quoted a registry of visitors at length: "I came from Isparta unable to walk, now I leave with that ability." Claimed cures for stroke, paralysis, rheumatoid arthritis, and blindness were recorded in the piece.

Statistics for the shrine in the months following the *Hayat* feature reveal a dramatic increase in visitors and demonstrate the powerful effect of emerging mass media. After publication of the feature, *Notre-Dame d'Éphèse* recorded 13,751 visitors for the month of June 1962, as compared with the previous two Junes: 2,908 (for 1960), and 5,518 (for 1961).⁷¹

The caretakers of the shrine certainly understood the effects of the healing water. According to *Notre-Dame d'Éphèse*, "It is indisputable that the water source attracts more people than the main sanctuary and those who suffer from paralysis frequent the waters the most."⁷² After the article appeared in *Hayat* demand for the waters of Mary's House became so great that during the summer of 1963 the head pastor, Father Allen, a Montefort priest, stated a plan to construct a "Lourdes-like" bath. To be built with funds from a private Izmir donor the planned bath would be divided into two — one for men and one for women.⁷³ While the baths never were constructed the precedent of Lourdes in shaping rites of healing by the spring is clear. The petitioners desired a means of full bodily submersion, as was the procedure at Lourdes. The planned segregation of the sexes at the baths, while mirroring Lourdes' plan, also coincides with Muslim custom. Muslims' ritual approach to the water at Meryem Ana Evi, however, uses running water, somewhat like the use of water during *abtest* — the ritual cleansing required before the performance of canonical prayer (*namaz*).

70 *Ibid.* (July-August, 1960), n.p.

71 *Ibid.* (September-October, 1962), 172.

72 *Ibid.*, 173.

73 Deutsch, *Our Lady of Ephesus*, 118.



A Turkish man at the fountains of Hayat Dergisi,
May 1962.

Originally published in the Turkish subsidiary of
Life magazine.

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Along with the growing numbers of visitors, the 1950s also brought about significant changes in the administration of the shrine. In particular, the pastors of the shrine were no longer exclusively Vincentian. The last Vincentian archbishop of Izmir, Joseph Descuffi, C.M., created the Meryem Ana Derneği (“The Association of Mary’s House,” hereafter, the Dernek), which became the official organization managing the shrine.⁷⁴ As the Dernek also handles relations with the various ministries of the Turkish state it is set up as a “lay charitable” organization in-line with similar non-Muslim groups in the country. Located in Izmir as the organization representing Meryem Ana Evi, the Dernek has remained Roman Catholic and works closely with the Archbishop. Since 1966 the priests and religious serving at Meryem Ana Evi come from the Franciscan family, in keeping with the order’s mission of maintaining a presence in places of early Christian history. Today the Capuchin order, alongside the Sisters of Mary Immaculate, is charged with the pastoral duties of the site. For issues of management and maintenance, though, they defer to the decisions of the Dernek in Izmir. In recent decades these decisions include efforts to maintain the Christian identity of the site while accommodating an increasingly diverse body of visitors.

The identity of the shrine is an important consideration. The pastors working at Meryem Ana Evi noted the demographic shift in *Notre-Dame d’Éphèse*: “There can be no doubt that our sanctuary is becoming more and more popular in Turkey — the percentage of Turks rose in this month (June 1962) to 80%.”⁷⁵ Father Allen explained this phenomenon in a personal letter dated November of 1962: “The great number of Moslems who come here is for the most part, a result of the cures... They come from hundreds of kilometers away, even from the extreme eastern parts of Turkey.”⁷⁶

74 The original name of the association was *Panaya Kapali Derneği*. The name was changed to *Meryem Ana Derneği* in 1959. Incidentally, this was also the year in which the name of the mountain on which Mary’s House is located was changed from *Bülbül Dağ* (Nightingale Mountain) to *Meryem Ana Dağ* (Mother Mary’s Mountain).

75 *Notre-Dame d’Éphèse* (September-October, 1962), 171.

76 Quoted in Deutsch, *Our Lady of Ephesus*, 115.



Mary's House as it stands today.

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Meryem Ana Evi became a shared Christian-Muslim pilgrimage destination, but one in which Muslim visitors predominated. In academic literature this phenomenon is described as appropriation (Hasluck's "transference"). Mary's House evolved into a place that reflects an inclusive ideal, bringing together people of different religions to honor the same figure. Moreover, the motivation behind pilgrims' journeys goes beyond a simple honoring or veneration and extends to more urgent issues closer to their personal lives and concerns. Perhaps because of this commonality Mary's House brings up issues of religious identity, orthodoxy, and orthopraxy among visitors of all identities as well as the pastors and the Dernek. This can be seen through the changing ways in which visitors approach rites of petition at the shrine, and in the physical space of the site and how its devotional topography continues to develop.

Visiting Meryem Ana Evi Today

Observing thousands of pilgrims and tourists completing the circuit of Meryem Ana Evi during peak tourist season in the summer months, the continuous waves of people may appear uniform in their ritual interaction with the site. This is a natural result of guides instructing large groups who have never been to Mary's House before: "go here, stop there, take your candles here, place them there, drink this, tie that." The guides hired by tourist agencies and cruise ships have secularized the rites for non-pilgrim tourists, increasing the routinization. They take into account the religiosity of the site as it developed over the past century, especially how these rites are performed and understood by Turkish Muslims. Although promoted as a "Heritage Site" by the Turkish Ministry of Tourism, Muslim pilgrims see Mary's House as a sacred place of petition. They journey to her house expressly for sacred purposes, usually independently and in small familial groups. Their estimation of the charisma of Mary's House is not unlike Christian understandings. Nevertheless, sustained attention to different groups of visitors has yielded observable distinctions between Christians and Muslims in their approaches to the rites performed.⁷⁷

⁷⁷ The caretakers of the shrine informed me that in my fieldwork Sundays would be the best days to make these types of observations. Even during peak tourist season Sundays are a "day of rest" for tour groups organized by the cruise ships. Hence, the crowds lessened to an extent and more "real" pilgrims could be observed.

It should be noted here that in Islam terms for “pilgrimage” vary. “Pilgrimage” is often the unqualified translation for the *haj* (Turkish: *hac*) denoting the pilgrimage to Mecca, which is theoretically incumbent upon every adult Muslim. Journeys to other sacred places and for other sacred purposes, a saint’s shrine for example, fall under the category of *ziyaret*, which can be usefully translated to “visitation.” It is this type of pilgrimage that Muslims undertake to Meryem Ana Evi, as visitation to a place associated with a saint. The most popular places of visitation in Turkey are tomb-shrines (*türbe*). Places believers designate as where the saint lived or visited (*makam*) are also common shrines, of which Mary’s House is an example.⁷⁸

“Saint” is also a term that needs qualification in its Islamic usage. Terms for sacred individuals, living and dead, vary throughout the Islamic world. In Turkey the honorific title *hazret*, “the exalted,” is often employed for historical individuals (Hazret-i Meryem, for example). Without an official system of canonization saints are often locally determined, locally venerated, and locally visited. Mary’s House is an exceptional place of *ziyaret*, both in its association with a Qur’anic figure and also in its popularity beyond the local vicinity. While my research encountered mainly Turkish Muslims, the pastors at Meryem Ana Evi informed me that groups from Iran and South Africa make annual pilgrimages there. These groups self-identify as Sufi mystics. Practices associated with visitation also vary according to local custom, although rites surrounding healing are especially popular in visitation to living saints. While it is impossible to generalize about saint veneration in Islam because local custom is so influential, the literature on such popular practice has proliferated in recent decades.⁷⁹

Wider concerns over upholding normative Sunni conduct at popular visitation sites in Turkey are reflected in the policies of the Ministry of Religious Affairs (“Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı”). But because Meryem Ana Evi legally belongs to an organization affiliated with the Catholic Church (the Dernek) the government does not involve itself as it does with Sunni Islamic sites under the direct jurisdiction of the state. As it is independent in its operation from government ministry, few regulations concerning proper conduct in piety are posted at the site. One sign in Turkish and English reads simply: “Meryem Ana is a place of worship. Appropriate dress is required.” Nonetheless, rules posted in other places of *ziyaret* around the country under the control of the Ministry are more extensive. And although the Ministry’s notices are not posted at Meryem Ana Evi, their content has implications for visiting Muslims because many of the pious actions associated with the place are cited by the Ministry as contrary to Islam.

Twelve specific actions are forbidden “according to the religion of Islam,” and are posted prominently in places of *ziyaret* throughout Turkey. The following seven practices included on the list are also associated with Meryem Ani Evi: making a vow at the site (*adak*); performing [animal] sacrifices on site; lighting candles; tying cloths; rubbing one’s

78 The term *ziyaret* for the visitation destination is generally used without distinction, however.

79 As a current representative collection on this topic, see Andreas Bandak and Mikkel Bille, eds., *Politics of Worship in the Contemporary Middle East: Sainthood in Fragile States* (Leiden: 2013).



One of a series of signs explaining the significance of the site.

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online

<http://stvincentimages.cdm.depaul.edu/>



face [in a gesture of informal prayer]; asking for help or health from the saint; and lying or sleeping within the place of visitation.⁸⁰ Let us consider these practices and their execution at Meryem Ana Evi.

It is important to understand that the institution of *ziyaret* itself is not the issue behind the Ministry's directives; rather it is what is deemed as proper Islamic practice accompanying it. And while visitation to saints' shrines and tombs is ubiquitous throughout the Muslim world, states that discourage or outlaw the practice cite the suspect Islamic precedent of visitation. Saudi Arabia would be an extreme example of this phenomenon where even visitation sites featuring the tombs of the Prophet Muhammad's companions have been razed, or are in danger of destruction by a state claiming to uphold the integrity of a purified Islam. Turkey is unique in the Muslim world, however, in that measures against visitation were inspired by the state's secular ideology rather than concerns about fidelity to Islamic law and practice. During the early decades of its inception the Turkish Republic outlawed and restricted *ziyaret* visitation to sacred figures and their tombs. Since the 1950s many places of visitation have been re-opened (albeit as museums) and in general restrictions have lessened with each passing year. The shift away from strident secularism in Turkey can be seen in the visit of the Turkish President Abdullah Gül to Meryem Ana Evi in early 2010. He and his wife reportedly partook of the water as well as lit candles in a general petition for "health, forgiveness, and goodness."⁸¹

In order to explore characteristics of Muslims' approach to Meryem Ana Evi the following overview of the site and its sequence of features is necessary. First, visitors enter the grounds from the parking lot onto a path flanked by the offices of the *jandarma* (security is visible and prevalent), a post-office, a restaurant connected to an outdoor café, and a

80 Other discouraged practices listed by the Ministry but not associated with Muslim practice at Mary's House include: entering the space on one's knees (I have observed this practice on occasion among Orthodox Christians entering the altar room, but not among Muslims); leaving money; offering foodstuffs; affixing money or rocks to the walls; and circumambulating the space or objects within the space. I took this particular list of the Ministry's discouraged practices from a tomb attached to a Sunni mosque in Antioch, Turkey, but the rules seem to be uniform throughout Sunni places of *ziyaret* across the nation.

81 Elif Demirci, "Meryem Ana'da Mum Yaktı," *Hürriyet*, 28 March 2010.

souvenir kiosk. The same Turkish family has managed these entranceway amenities since the 1950s, when visitation from locals began to accelerate.⁸² Following this small cluster of buildings at the entrance is an excavated impluvium, a dried cistern which some tour guides mistakenly insist served as a baptismal font in ancient times. A series of large signs in several languages follows the main promenade explaining the discovery and religious significance of the site.⁸³ At the top of the promenade, behind the newer statue of Mary, is a big space with benches reserved for celebrating outdoor masses. The path leads past this area directly to the iconic L-shaped house itself which facilitates the flow of large crowds by a separate entrance and exit. Within the house are three rooms through which visitors walk in sequence: a small entranceway, the main sanctuary, and Mary's bedchamber. After exiting the house a board is found directly to the left of the exit, referred to as the "Qur'an Display." Following the Qur'an display, sizable metal boxes of sand are displayed in which candles are lit and placed. The path then leads the crowd to an uneven stone staircase. The staircase descends past the first terrace, emptying the crowd onto the second terrace below the house overlooking the mountain valley. On this spacious terrace the water fountains and the "Wish Wall" are located. The path continues beyond these stations directing the crowds on to an ascending slope back full-circle to the amenities at the site's entrance where the tour of Mary's House concludes.

The Main Sanctuary

Visitors enter the main room of the house from the entrance. Placed against the far wall is the focal point, a marble altar upon which stands the original, handless "Our Lady of Ephesus" statue in the Immaculate Conception pose. A few chairs and kneelers are found at either side of the room. In addition to the resident monks and religious, often unarmed security guards are sitting in these observing visitors as well as quietly directing them to continue moving past the altar when the volume is high and the line outside long. For people visiting the site for religious purposes this area marks the commencement of a series of religious rites that continue outside the house. Before the altar the religious identity of the visitor is most clearly identified. Roman Catholic and Orthodox Christians make the sign of the cross according to their respective precept, with Orthodox Christians often blessing themselves multiple times. Some Christians kneel before the statue and altar but this is discouraged during busy times.

82 Because the site is not practically accessible on foot, a fee is charged in the parking lot through which cars and busses enter. At this point a sign explains that revenues incurred by this fee go directly to the municipality of Selçuk. Such a disclaimer indicates ambivalence about charging entry fees to a sacred place, which many pilgrims feel should be free.

83 The title of the sign in English reads: "Historic Notes about the Shrine." It offers a succinct list of scriptural and architectural evidence for the authenticity of the site as Mary's last home. This brief history of its nineteenth-century discovery emphasizes the visions of Emmerich in leading the Vincentians to the site. On the opposite side of the sign's boards are front and back images of the Miraculous Medal.

According to practices associated with Islamic *ziyaret*, for which visitation to Mary's House would be an example, specific requests are made to the saint in the form of prayer. Muslims also offer prayer in the cave-like stone room with the altar. This type of prayer comes under the category of *dua*, as opposed to the daily canonical prayer (*namaz*). Although not as elaborate or formulaic as Islamic prayer, specific hand gestures accompany *dua*: arms are raised with palms turned upwards as the prayer is quietly spoken or murmured. Upon completion, the hands pass along the face from the top of the head to the chin. This is not unlike the motion of rinsing the face with water and may have its roots in ritual ablution or *abtest*. This type of prayer is cited by the Ministry of Religious Affairs as un-Islamic in places of *ziyaret*. The *dua* form of the prayer is generally unstructured and spontaneous, although certain invocations (such as the *fatiha*) are commonplace. Here, in the inner sanctum at Mary's House, a Turkish translation of the Ave Maria is embroidered on the altar cloth. The words "Holy Mary, mother of God" are not translated precisely into Turkish though, and read, "Holy Mary, mother of the messiah ("Aziz Meryem Mesih'in Annesi"). This license in translation reflects the Islamic theological understanding of Mary as the mother of a prophet rather than the mother of God.⁸⁴

In seeking a healing or cure *ziyaret* is central. Those seeking saints' efficacious power submit petitions to the local living healers directly or by visitation to their tombs (*türbe*) and places associated with them (*makam*).⁸⁵ Turkish tour guides, in explaining the end of Mary's life on earth to Turkish people, refer to the Assumption of Mary as the *mirac* or "ascent." This terminology has specific sacred meaning to Muslims as it is also the term used for the Night Journey and Ascent of the Prophet Muhammad. While Muslims understand that this is the place of Mary's domicile and not her tomb, the draping and position of the altar in the main room resembles the tomb room of traditional Islamic shrines common throughout Turkey.⁸⁶ Reflective of the larger Islamic taboo against iconic devotional images, Muslims do not house statues in their places of visitation (such as the statue of Mary that appears on the altar).⁸⁷ In this way the embroidered translation of the Ave Maria serves as an alternative focal point for Muslims during their time before the altar. For Muslims the altar of Meryem Ana Evi is the place both of petition and of thanks for help received. Petitioners present their requests in the form of a vow (*adak*) to return to the *ziyaret*, following a common pattern seen in other saints' shrines and in defiance

84 The Qur'an refers to Jesus as a *masih* or messiah, but as the "anointed one" and in a specific way stripped of divine identity.

85 The phenomenon of the visitation to the living healing saint in Turkish Islamic sects has been explored recently in Christopher Dole, *Healing Secular Life: Loss and Devotion in Modern Turkey* (Philadelphia: 2012).

86 On the Vincentians' search for a tomb on the site between 1892 and 1914, see Deutsch, *Our Lady of Ephesus*, 87-88; Poulin, *The Holy Virgin's House*, 105. While the Catholic caretakers seem not to have pursued excavating for this purpose beyond the early years of the twentieth century, the search for Mary's tomb is still followed by the Turkish popular press.

87 Pictures and paintings of saints are more common in shrines frequented by Shi'i and Sufi-centered sects. Statues, however, appear only in Christian shrines.



A photo of the altar, Mary's House, circa 1891.

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online

<http://stvincentimages.cdm.depaul.edu/>



of the Ministry's admonitions. Once the petition has been successfully granted, even if it is years later, then the pilgrim returns in fulfillment of the vow to give thanks in person. In successful petitions for fertility (the issue pastors of Meryem Ana Evi list as the most common brought to the site in recent years), ideally the petitioner returns to Meryem Ana Evi with the baby and performs a short prayer before the altar with their child.

The purpose and procedure of petition at *ziyaret* shrines comes under scrutiny for violating the Islamic injunction against "association" (*shirk*). Attributing human beings or saints with healing power and thereby associating them with the divine falls under this category, as implied by the Ministry of Religious Affairs' list of condemned practices. While this tension has been addressed by Islamic theologians and reformers over the centuries it remains true that shrines such as Mary's House exist throughout the Muslim world as places visited specifically for the efficacious blessings of the saint, termed *bereket*. As I have observed both at Meryem Ana Evi and in other more intimate, local shrines, petitioners are aware of this critique and are concerned with avoiding *shirk*. Not unlike the distinction between "veneration" and "worship," those visiting shrines on *ziyaret* emphasize that they ultimately seek favor from God. The place of request facilitates this by its association with a saintly figure.

Candles

Certain practices at Meryem Ana Evi pre-date its Vincentian discovery and the use of candles is likely one of them. While candles are provided free-of-charge in the main sanctuary before the altar, it is no longer permissible to ignite them within the house itself. Since my visit in 1999 the Dernek has moved the candle stands (in the Eastern style, slender talons propped in a sand box) to the exterior of the house. This change in the locality of rites has practical logic: with the increasing numbers of visitors lighting candles the amount of smoke had a damaging effect on the stone walls of the structure. The exterior candle stands host a brisk turnover. During peak visiting hours one or two attendants wearing large

rubber gloves continuously extinguish lit candles, clearing them to make room for new waves of petitioners' offerings.

Candle-lighting is primarily associated with Christian sacred places in the Middle-East, with limited cross-over practice among Muslims in Turkey. As an example of this delineation I saw a Turkish father directing his children away from the candle stands, explaining, "That is Christian, that is for Christians." I also heard an American tourist ask her Turkish tour guide if he would be lighting a candle. He explained to her that "tying" was more important to Muslims, referring to the practice of binding on the "Wish Wall." Of course, Muslims light candles as symbols of memory, petition, and thanks, especially when visiting Christian sanctuaries and other places of mixed patronage.⁸⁸ But it is a practice clearly associated foremost with Christians. As the candle attendants working at Meryem Ana Evi observe, the most prolific candle offerings are made by Eastern Christians — Armenians and Russians especially. Russian pilgrims designate the two stands on the right for the deceased and the two on the left (facing the house) for health petitions.

The Qur'an Display

Just past the exit of the house before the candle stands is a display of quotes from the Qur'an in four languages: Turkish, French, English, and German. The choice of languages suggests that the quotes are intended to inform non-Muslim visitors of Mary's inclusion in the Qur'an, as well as to facilitate Muslims' scriptural-directed piety. The verses are representative of the Qur'an's Mariology, extolling her as the mother of the Messiah: "obedient," "purified," and "high-honored."⁸⁹ As late as my visit in 1999, the display of Qur'anic quotations adorned the wall of the last room in the house, "Mary's Bedchamber." However, an official guidebook published by the Dernek reveals ambivalence about its placement inside the house, stating that quotes from the Qur'an "might seem out of place in a Christian chapel." The publication also states that it was not the decision of the Dernek to devote space to the verses of the Qur'an in the house, but rather it was at the suggestion of a government official: "They have been placed there at the express wish of the Vali, prefect, of Izmir in 1985-86."⁹⁰ What was perhaps a minor negotiation brings up concerns of both Christians and Muslims about identity and orthopraxy within this shared space. The subsequent placement of the Qur'an display outside has resulted in emphasizing the Christian identity of the house in its interior décor: gifts from popes, for example, are on

88 As a secular cross-over practice lit candles are often seen at politically left-wing protests across Turkey, usually as a memorial of violence at the hands of authorities. I have also observed candles in Alawi tomb shrines in the Hatay district, however these were not lit (there was no place to hold them) but found outside the shrines as a binding material (see below) with their uncut wicks draped over tree branches.

89 The five verses from the Qur'an displayed at Meryem Ana Evi are as follows: "And We gave Jesus the son of Mary the clear signs and confirmed with him the Holy Spirit" (2:87, 253); "Mary, God has chosen thee, and purified thee, and has chosen thee above all women" (3:42); "O Mary, be obedient to thy Lord, prostrating and bowing before him" (3:45); and "Mary, God gives the good tidings of a Word from Him, whose name is Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, high honored shall be in this world and the next, near stationed to God" (21:91).

90 *Meryem Ana Evi* (Izmir: Meryem Ana Evi Derneği, 1999), 68.

prominent display in the apses of the main sanctuary. The fact that a local district leader requested that the Qur'an be prominently represented within the house suggests concerns regarding fidelity to Islamic scripture, especially in the practice of *ziyaret* to a shrine of shared identity.

Keeping trends within the Islamic world and Turkey in mind it is possible to see the references to the Qur'an inside Mary's House as sending a message of scriptural legitimacy, countering possible accusations of polytheism (*shirk*) or undue Christian influence. Yet, because of the repressive secularizing measures taken by the state after the establishment of the Turkish Republic places such as Meryem Ana Evi, despite strong Christian associations, have stood as symbols for the *recovery* of Islam in Turkish public life. Thus, the questioning of *ziyaret* on grounds of dubious Islamic foundations has never taken hold in Turkey as it has in other countries (as it was the secular state that curtailed its practice). Proper intent and proper conduct has been an issue in recent years, as directives from the Ministry of Religious Affairs demonstrate.

The Fountains of the Source

Water is a universal elixir. Hasluck declared that "Turk and Christian are equally prone to mountain and spring cults," citing the connection water has to agrarian communities, both Christian and Muslim, in late Ottoman Anatolia.⁹¹ The miraculous spring at Lourdes served as a potent precedent for the French missionaries in the early development of Panaghia Kapalı.

The water of Meryem Ana Evi's four fountains constantly flows. People wash themselves in it, wash their children and babies, massage it into their limbs, wheel strollers and wheelchairs up to the fountains and pour the waters over the occupant's heads, especially on hot days. It is pure mountain spring water and safe to drink. Commemorative bottles of plastic and glass are also sold at the souvenir stands. For both practical and curative reasons people are intent on filling multiple bottles and the crowds are often clogged before the fountains. The ampullae of water filled here will be given to friends, relatives, and neighbors upon returning home.

Binding

While the use of water seems widespread if not universal in religious rites of healing, affixing materials to the site in some way is a practice that is more common to Muslim pilgrims in recent decades.⁹² Referred to as "binding" by anthropologists, the practice consists of tying a strip of cloth to a convenient place in the sacred vicinity. Often tree branches are the most practical, but man-made structures can be used as receptacles for binding items. The power of this practice rests in the belief in the transference of a particular

91 Hasluck, *Christianity and Islam*, 111.

92 Although Hasluck mentions the practice among Greek Orthodox, binding is an isolated phenomenon among Latin Christians.



The "Wish Wall," on the grounds of Mary's House.

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online

<http://stvincentimages.cdm.depaul.edu/>



problem (infertility, a physical ailment) from the petitioner to the sacred agent associated with the shrine, who acquires the responsibility of a solution or cure. Hasluck identified the practice as a different sort of Anatolian "transference," one in which "the suppliants' ills [transfer from] himself to the object knotted or nailed."⁹³

Binding has taken on several forms at Meryem Ana Evi reflective of both evolving popular practice and official caretaking. A photograph from the 1962 *Hayat* article shows a tree next to the stone walls of the water fountains with cloths tied traditionally to its branches as dangling ribbons. Sadly, that tree did not survive. There are no other trees close enough to the shrine's significant features and it is difficult to find a host on which to tie a material representation of petition. I observed several cloths and paper tissues stuffed into the crevices of the exterior walls of Mary's House despite official discouragement with the construction of a "Wish Wall" for this express purpose. Before the wall, though, the practice of binding took an interesting form. All that remains is a sign left untranslated from the Turkish: (*çiklet-sakiz yapıştırtmak yasak*) "It is forbidden to affix chewing gum." This was the form binding took during my visit in 1999, with thousands of pieces of chewed gum stuck to the stones surrounding the fountains in an elaborate mosaic. Before the visit of Pope Benedict XVI in 2006 the Dernek removed the gum and installed massive iron grates. Within this controlled space tour guides encourage pilgrims to write down their "wish" and tie it to the grates. Today, the grates are packed with thousands of papers, tissues, and tags from cruise ships — any flexible material that can be tied.

The Dernek guidebook refers to the traditional form of binding as "deplorable," a practice that "defiles the spirit of this place."⁹⁴ While it is not surprising that binding, especially in the form of chewed wads of gum, would be a nuisance to those charged with maintaining the shrine, "tying" is also a practice officially discouraged by the Turkish

⁹³ Hasluck, *Christianity and Islam*, 262.

⁹⁴ *Meryem Ana Evi*, 72.

Ministry of Religious Affairs as contrary to the religion of Islam. I observed the ambivalence some Muslims have about the practice of binding first-hand during my most recent visits. Turkish tour guides would reveal their disdain by repeating the theory that binding was a pre-Islamic practice carried over from an ancient pagan past. In other words, it is one of those superstitious left-overs and not a part of “real Islam.” Regarding practices such as “binding” in order to petition a cure from the saint, both Islamic and secular sensibilities converge in their condemnation of “superstition.”

Animal Sacrifice and Incubation

Two discouraged practices cited by the Ministry of Religious Affairs have a history at Mary’s House but have since become defunct. In *ziyaret* practice and Islam generally, animal sacrifices are central. Apart from official feast holidays (the “Feast of the Sacrifice” that concludes the *haj*, for example) animal sacrifices are performed in the fulfillment of a vow given as part of a supplication to a saint. The animal is prepared, killed, cooked, and its meat distributed on the grounds of the shrine itself. Large shrines often have elaborate slaughtering and cooking facilities for this sacred purpose. There is evidence that sacrifices of this type once took place at Meryem Ana Evi. According to *Notre-Dame d’Éphèse*, in January of 1962 an animal sacrifice was offered at the site (the journal uses the Turkish term, *kurban*) as thanks for the birth of a child “after six years of marriage.”⁹⁵ That this Islamic custom seems to have been discontinued here is not surprising as there are no longer facilities for this purpose.

Pastors of the shrine also recorded the practice of sleeping within the sacred vicinity, known in anthropology as “incubation.” Hasluck noted incubation associated with both Orthodox Christian and Islamic places.⁹⁶ Referred to as “sleeping” or “lying” in the shrine by the Ministry of Religious Affairs, it refers to the continuity of the practice in conjunction with *ziyaret* visitation. Unlike the practice of nighttime vigils, in which one desires to remain awake, incubation encourages sleep in the sacred vicinity.⁹⁷ According to the common narrative pattern the saint then appears to the slumbering suppliant in a dream and grants a cure or instructions to procure a cure. In the months following the *Hayat* article in June of 1962 the pastors reported that “many” visitors requested three days at the shrine, including sleeping on-site. This practice was quickly halted, however. According to *Notre-Dame d’Éphèse*, “We accepted the first of them, but then decided not to receive any more overnight visitors.”⁹⁸

95 *Notre-Dame d’Éphèse* (May-June, 1962), 89.

96 Hasluck, *Christianity and Islam*, 693-94.

97 On the types of vigil devotions in Islam, see A.J. Wensinck, “Tahadjjud,” *Encyclopaedia of Islam, First Edition* (1913-1936) (Brill Online, 2016). See: http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-1/tahadjjud-SIM_5609

98 *Notre-Dame d’Éphèse* (September-October, 1962). The practice of incubation at Panaghia Kapalı during the early part of the twentieth century is also mentioned in Deutsch, *Our Lady of Ephesus*, 89.

The history of the encounter between Islam and Christianity is also a history of the appropriation of sacred places — the Aya Sofia in Istanbul and the Grand Mosque of Cordoba are just two famous examples of complete takeover by the religious authority of conquerors. But the history of this encounter also reveals a lineage of shared sacred places, of which Meryem Ana Evi is a prominent modern example. Sacred space successfully shared was, and is, a result of a negotiated process not only among religious authorities but among the people who visit. The Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem are two cases of Christian churches with an early history of Muslim visitation, which fell away due to apprehension over the intrusion of Muslim practice. In these instances the Islamic practice of incubation was a major source of trepidation for Christian clerical authorities.

Priests' Magic

Another controversial method of petition amongst Muslim pilgrims at Mary's House directly involves the Catholic clerics who serve there. Muslims seeking the efficacy of Christian priests in countering certain types of spiritual oppression is an enduring practice despite mutual discomfort on the part of both Christian and Islamic authorities. Well known by the time of Hasluck's documentation of Anatolian folk practices, "priest magic" often accompanies Christian-Muslim historical encounter, whether Orthodox, Catholic, or Armenian.⁹⁹ In Turkey this useful charisma attributed to priests is called the *papas büyüü*, or the "counter-curse of the priest." Although literally meaning "magic" this is often spoken of in terms of a counter-spell. The belief in priestly power over this apotropaic function is similar to the belief in the ubiquitous *nazar borcu*. These are distinctive blue and white talisman crafted in glass to resemble the circularity of the "evil" eye or *nazar* ("hostile gaze"). Thought to be inspired by envy they are considered powerful enough to result in physical and mental distress upon whom the *nazar* is cast. For this reason the talismans are often referred to as "evil eyes" in the tourist trade, even though their purpose is actually to deflect the nefarious gaze.

The enduring belief in "priest magic" brings up pastoral problems unique to Mary's House. The priests I interviewed consistently discouraged this practice, and the Turkish caretakers of Meryem Ana Evi confirmed their difficulty with it as well. Before approaching a priest Turkish caretakers and workers at the shrine are often asked, "Does this priest do praying?" (*bu papas okuyor mu?*) Several meanings to this question can be implied: does the priest recite (as in a prayer); or does he incant a spell (as in magic). The caretakers often believe this question infers the second meaning, magic. The standard answer to such inquiries is along the lines of "Our priests don't do that. They pray for everyone." The priests see it as denigrating their role to a kind of demagogic magician — dolling out

⁹⁹ A current example of a similar phenomenon of priests' "spell-breaking" is found in the Muslim attendance of mass exorcisms held by a charismatic Coptic priest in Cairo. See Omar H. Rahman, "Mass Exorcism in Cairo," *Vice* (24 September 2012).

powers without distinction. One of the priests living at Mary's House explained that when Muslims ask him for a blessing he even refrains from outward Christian gestures, such as the sign of the cross, because they are seen as a hallmark of a type of mercenary "magic." But as pastors-to-all who visit Mary's House the priests do pray with and for Muslims as requested, which requires a delicate balance.

Muslim visitors also approach priests and religious about conversion to Christianity. Wisely the pastors of Meryem Ana Evi often recognize this impulse among young people as a form of rebellion against parental authority and control, although the desire is quite persistent in some. They may declare divine inspiration by virtue of the fact that the idea to become Christian came to them in their dreams. Among some Protestant evangelical missionaries to the Muslim world this phenomenon is recognized as a great opportunity for conversion.¹⁰⁰ Yet the priests and women religious I spoke with saw this as a challenge, potentially upsetting the balance of peaceful Christian-Muslim relations they have sought to maintain.

Turkish law restricts all religious professionals from wearing clerical clothing in public. This limitation derives from secular rather than Islamic sensibilities in Turkey. Because of these restrictions Turkish visitors to Meryem Ana Evi see priests and religious in their traditional robes as a novelty. Within a half hour, during one interview I conducted with a religious dressed in the traditional blue habit of the Sisters of Mary Immaculate over ten individuals politely but insistently requested to have their picture taken with her. The interruptions were so frequent that we had to change the location of our conversation. The priests and religious who serve there are conscious of their liminal position in a country that is both officially secular yet also is witnessing a revival of *shariah*-centered Sunnism. As the policy is based on the French model of *laïcisme*, in legal terms religion is not separate from the state but rather controlled by it under the Ministry of Religious Affairs. In theory and practice non-Muslim places of worship are granted rights to manage internal affairs including their own dress code within the sacred vicinity.

Incidents of violence possibly due to religious differences (both Christian-Muslim and sectarian divides within Islam) have occurred in Turkey in the recent past. The 2010 murder of Archbishop Luigi Padovese, Capuchin Apostolic Vicar of Turkey, was a concern the priests of Mary's House brought up. The accused was the archbishop's personal driver, and whether religion was a motivation is unresolved. The driver's attorneys argued for a defense of insanity, and as of my visits to Meryem Ana Evi in 2012 the case was still awaiting trial.¹⁰¹ At the time, Catholics in Turkey expressed dismay over the slow pace of the prosecution. For them, this demonstrated a lack of serious intent on the part of the state to seek justice for the murdered archbishop. Despite this the priests explained to me that they generally feel safe and respected in Turkey. Local people living around Mary's mountain, both in Selçuk and in the resort town of Kuşadası, refer to the priests of Meryem Ana Evi protectively as "our" priests.

100 As an example of this, see Tom Doyle, *Dreams and Visions: Is Jesus Awakening the Muslim World?* (Nashville: 2012).

101 The accused was convicted of murder in January 2014 and sentenced to fifteen years in prison.



Lines of tourists and pilgrims form outside Mary's House.

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online

<http://stvincentimages.cdm.depaul.edu/>



Conclusion: Pilgrims among the Tourists

The Smyrna Lazarists discovered Mary's House during the Marian century, a time during which visionaries produced physical evidence of Mary's apparitional presence. The ruins on the mountain above Ephesus added to this phenomenon by extending the visionary experience to also include physical evidence of Mary's historical presence. The Vatican's official dogmatic definitions concerning Mary also affected Panaghia Kapali's development beyond the papacy's promotion of the site over Mary's traditional tomb in Jerusalem. The iconic symbol of Mary as Our Lady of Ephesus reflected the image of the Immaculate Conception, declared dogma in 1854. Identified as the site of her Dormition, European visions and local legend converged on the ultimate meaning of Panaghia Kapali and anticipated the Dogma of the Assumption (1950) as well.

Despite its foundation as a Roman Catholic shrine mirroring larger trends in Roman Catholic piety, the appeal of Mary's House extended beyond the Catholic Church, beyond Christianity, and today beyond religion. If Mary's House had been discovered in a majority Christian country it likely would have remained an exclusively Christian site of pilgrimage. Perhaps if it had been discovered in a place far from ancient ruins, removed from the Aegean shores, it would have remained a local shrine drawing only pilgrims. As we enter into the twenty-first century we see that not only has Mary's House come to exemplify pilgrimage in our current age of mass tourism, it has helped define it.

Throughout the twentieth century visitors to Meryem Ana Evi increased in stages. After the wars of the first part of the century concluded construction of a road leading to the site by the Turkish Ministry of Tourism in 1950 drew locals due to the curative reputation of the springs. Having caught the attention of the Turkish popular press the volume of domestic visitors leapt. During the early 1960s pastors at the shrine recorded the fact that Muslim pilgrims far outnumbered Christians. Another sharp increase in visitors came from an increase of foreign tourists generally to Turkey, especially following the conclusion of the Cyprus conflict in 1974. By the 1990s it was clear that the religious identity of visitors to Meryem Ana Evi had further evolved. It was no longer the case that Muslims

outnumbered Christians or even that religious identification mattered. For the past twenty years the international cruise ship industry has aggressively developed markets on the Eastern Aegean and Mediterranean. The site of the ancient city of Ephesus is an important stop on a number of routes. In this regard the location of Meryem Ana Evi is convenient for tour planners — something which could never have been envisioned before the main road was built. In the Ephesus experience, in contrast to its barren, scorched plain, Mary's House serves as a picturesque rest stop where it is always a few degrees cooler on the forested mountain.

The Turkish Ministry of Tourism reports well over half-a-million visitors annually to Mary's House.¹⁰² According to an administrator in the Selçuk branch of this Ministry, of this figure eighty percent are guided to the site during tours of Ephesus organized by the cruise lines. This does not automatically mean that a full eighty percent of the visitors to Mary's House are "strictly" tourists of course. But it does indicate that Mary's House was not the primary destination for their trip. According to the head pastor at the time of my fieldwork approximately seventy percent of visitors are primarily tourists. The Turkish Ministry would view this development as a success as it has supported "faith tourism." This term applies to a type of visitor to Turkey seeking places of religious significance, as much for heritage and history as for piety. According to the Ministry's website, "There is a myriad of important Islamic, Christian, and Jewish sites making the country an attractive destination for faith tourism."¹⁰³ Seeking to promote places with a biblical connection a research report commissioned by the Turkish government recommended Mary's House receive financial support in hopes of courting foreign tourists.

I initially thought that the thousands of tourists visiting Meryem Ana Evi eclipsed the "real" pilgrims and so I sought to conduct my on-site research during times when tour groups were fewer (on Sundays, for example). But after several visits it became clear that tourists become pilgrims, and that too was an important aspect of the shrine's development to understand. In the growing field of literature exploring the interaction between religion and tourism the fluidity between tourists and pilgrims is consistently noted. Certainly pilgrims engage in "tourist" activities such as shopping and dining, but it is also clear that tourists often "slip into the role of pilgrims."¹⁰⁴ At Meryem Ana Evi this slippage occurs through tourists' participation in established rites: the lighting of candles, the consumption and use of the water, and binding materials to the "Wish Wall." While it is impossible to understand everyone's intention, or the belief system behind the performance of these rites, it is possible to observe interactions of non-pilgrim tour groups with these tangible, material features. Further insight into the secular evolution of these rites can be gleaned from the way in which they are presented by tour guides.

102 Statistics issued from the Ministry of Tourism divide visitors between "foreign" and "domestic." For the year 2011, for example, Mary's House recorded 631,389 foreign visitors and 173,784 domestic visitors. These numbers were provided by the Turkish Ministry of Tourism, Selçuk office.

103 Quoted in Michael Stausberg, *Religion and Tourism: Crossroads, Destinations and Encounters* (London: 2011), 41.

104 *Ibid.*, 65.

The volume of tourists to the house has added a new level of uniformity as to how rites at the shrine are executed. A brisk pace through the rites is encouraged to ensure crowd-flow and as a result they are routinized to great extent. Before entry into the house itself guides instruct their groups to “take candles” to light outside. Further on, the universality of water as a healing agent contributes to the popularity of the fountains even among secular tour groups. Although not formally enshrined a common explanation tour guides provide to their flocks regarding the significance of the three fountains is for attainment of “love, health, and money” — and so people duly line up to drink from them. This elucidation of the water’s potential appeals to non-religious tourists interested in the ‘good life.’ The act of binding has also been channeled and presented with secular cross-over appeal as a “Wish Wall” upon which wishes are written down and then affixed to the grates. But this reinterpretation of the rites for tourists is not appreciated by religious sources. According to the official guidebook of the Dernek: “It is wrong to attribute specific virtues to each of the springs (love, health, riches, or intelligence, wisdom, and success)....”¹⁰⁵ In addition to the “Islamization” of rites associated with the house, contested aspects of the site involve the secularization of rites. As a result of this emphasis on catering to tourists, the pastors of the house have distanced themselves from features such as the fountains or “Wish Wall.” I never witnessed the presence of priests or religious on the second tier below the house for any pastoral duty or activity.

The small entrance-room to the house itself, which contains the plaque commemorating the nineteenth-century founders, once housed many more ex-voto offerings than are displayed at present. Today, only a few crutches propped against the wall and a few pairs of baby shoes hanging from a banister make up the display of gifts given in thanks for successful petitions. At the opposite end of the house, at the exit, there is also a “Votive Box,” a glass case featuring small articles left by visitors in thanks for favors granted. These smaller items consist mainly of Roman Catholic devotional medals and other eulogiai. These two ex-voto displays are limited in space. The bulk of the material left over the decades is currently in the possession of the Dernek in Izmir. Earlier guide books would seem to indicate that displays of these types of gifts have been given less prominence over the years. This could be for practical reasons, but it also could reveal a tendency on the part of the Dernek and the pastors to deflect emphasis from the material aspect of intercessions in favor of a more sacramental-focused piety among pilgrims.

At certain times in the history of Mary’s House healing rites were encouraged and even administered by clergy and religious. The Daughters of Charity encouraged use of the hearth’s ashes as a healing salve during the early part of the twentieth century. During Bernard Deutsch’s 1959 visit he noted the enthusiasm of the pastor of the shrine, Father Joseph Bouis, regarding miraculous cures associated with the water. Bouis urged pilgrims to fill ampullae to take home.¹⁰⁶ Such encouragement is hard to imagine among the pastors

105 *Meryem Ana Evi*, 72.

106 Deutsch, *Our Lady of Ephesus*, 126.



Marie de Mandat-Grancey, D.C., kneels on the Stations of the Cross.

The Stations are no longer in existence but are believed to have been behind the house and up the hill from the site.

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today. The healing rites of the shrine have been relinquished in appealing to tourists for what pastors see as a higher order of meaning and purpose.

The secularization of rites among non-pilgrim visitors at Meryem Ana Evi reflects our current technological era as well. In my research to understand how different groups approach the petition regiments of the shrine I accompanied a bus filled with Turkish soldiers along with their guide. At the entrance to the shrine they were greeted by the commanding officer of the *jandarma* station. As a group of about fifty young soldiers in civilian clothing they did not pray in a demonstrative way inside the house, as Turkish pilgrims familiar with the rites do. They did not light any candles, although they took pictures of the candles with their cell phones. Several of them drank at the fountains, though no obvious rites were performed. At the “Wish Wall” they again took many photographs but without actually writing down or tying a request to the grates. They went so far as to pose as if tying a cloth, but they did not actually carry out the rite. Camera phones are ubiquitous, but no one carries a pen.

In interviews conducted with the workers at Meryem Ana Evi all are aware of their role in service of the tourist industry. The priests and religious are especially aware of this difficult responsibility: serving at a shrine that attracts a majority of tourists seeking anything from salvation to heritage to pleasure to healing, or simply a rest on a walking tour. The pastors at times expressed their exasperation with this role as tour guides. In Europe, as they pointed out, pilgrimage sites are primarily for pilgrims, whereas at Meryem Ana Evi pilgrims have been overwhelmed by the sheer volume of tourists. But this fact is also viewed as part of their mission, as a new kind of evangelism among people who might not otherwise encounter religious witness to a tangible salvation history.

Meryem Ana Evi continues to exist as a place of pilgrimage in defiance of simple categorization. Within the space of a century it grew from an obscure place of local pilgrimage to an international, interreligious shrine attracting popes as well as Turkish officials, in addition to the hundreds of thousands of annual visitors to the site. No fewer

than five replicas of Mary's House exist around the world.¹⁰⁷ Today the shrine is held up as an example of interreligious cooperation, but it is difficult to see how the shrine's founders could have conceived of this.

At present, as religious and government authorities vested in Mary's House strive to represent versions of sacrament-based Christianity and state-sponsored scriptural-based Islam, pilgrims and tourists alike to the shrine continue evolving folk traditions of petition that recall the visionary climate of nineteenth-century Catholic piety as well as late-Ottoman popular religion. The most recent addition to the Immaculate Conception iconography at the site is a seven-foot bronze statue of Our Lady of Ephesus on a plateau halfway up the mountain road leading to the shrine.¹⁰⁸ Standing next to this towering representation of Mary is a traditional binding tree — a sapling with colorful strips of cloth tied to its branches. These two elements constitute a unique visual reminder of the mystical and folk foundations of Mary's House as a physical link to the Heavenly mother. Plans are in the works to construct an even grander statue of Our Lady of Ephesus, along the lines of Rio de Janeiro's Christ the Redeemer.¹⁰⁹ How this development, along with the continued growth of visitors, both pilgrim and tourist, will affect the development of Mary's House in the present century remains to be seen.

107 With several other replicas of Mary's House planned, completed models are located in Vermont, Argentina, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Brazil, and the Netherlands.

108 The American Society of Ephesus commissioned the statue in 1991 to commemorate the 100-year anniversary of the discovery of Mary's House. The American Society was founded in 1955 by Bill Quatman, a telecommunications tycoon from Ohio. This philanthropic organization has continued to provide financial assistance to the site, as well as funding various restoration projects in Ephesus. Quatman later revealed that his own mystical experiences during visits to Ephesus in the 1950s inspired his support of Mary's House. See James C.G. Conniff, "Return to Ephesus," *Columbia* 43 (1963), 21-40.

109 See: <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/large-new-statue-of-virgin-mary-statue-planned-in-selcuk-.aspx?pageID=238&nID=95537&NewsCatID=393>

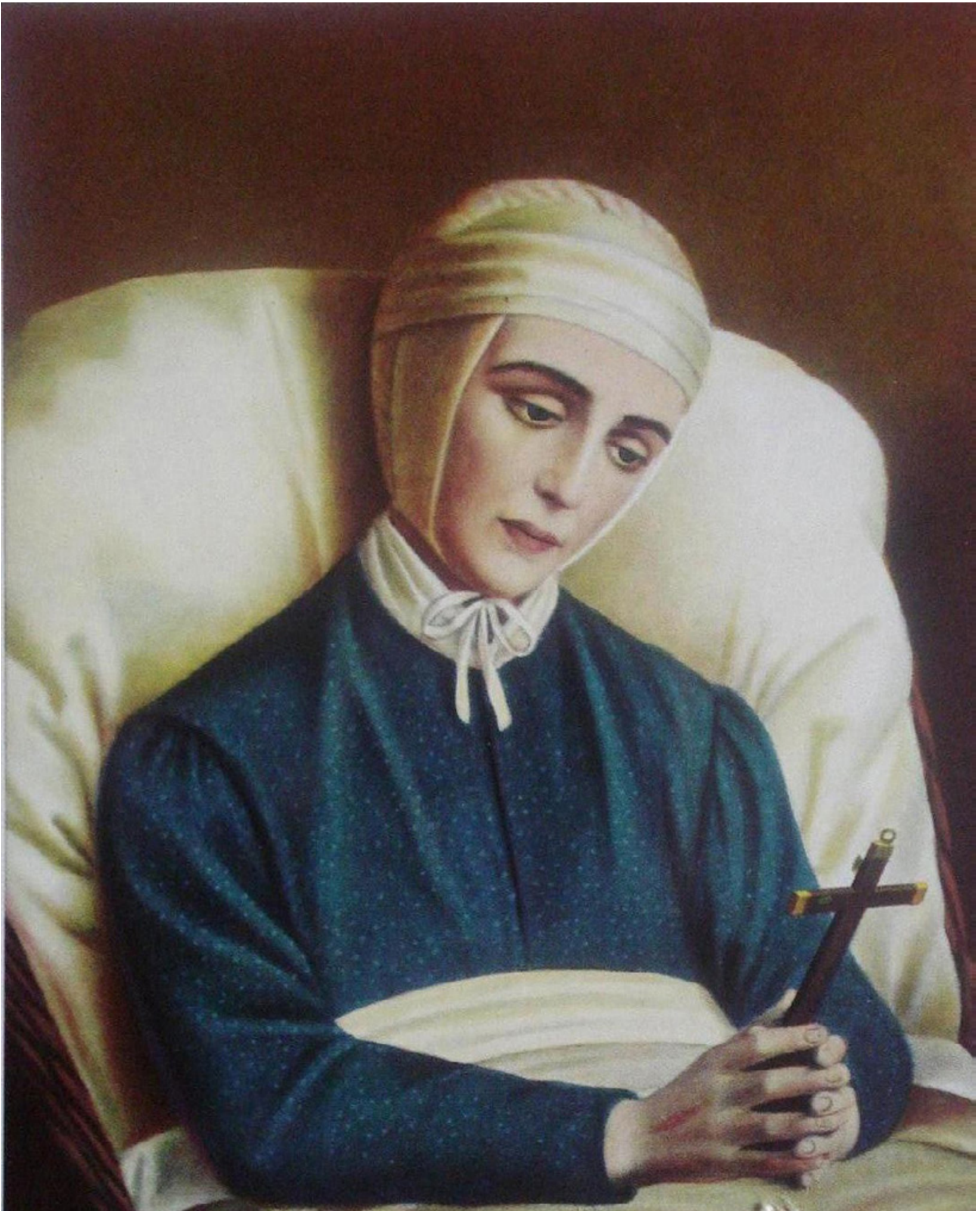




Portrait of Marie de Mandat-Grancey, D.C. (1837-1915)

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Popular devotional portrait of Blessed Anne Catherine Emmerich (1774-1824).

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Sisters riding to Mary's House. The image is noteworthy as it depicts the mountainous terrain of the journey.

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online

<http://stvincentimages.cdm.depaul.edu/>





Ephesus, Mary's House, c. 1899.

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online

<http://stvincentimages.cdm.depaul.edu/>





The official Commission of Inquiry, Ephesus.

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online

<http://stvincentimages.cdm.depaul.edu/>





Sr. Marie de Mandat-Grancey standing in front of Mary's House.

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Portraits of Catherine Labouré, D.C. (1806-1876);
and Marie-Bernarde Soubirous (1844-1879) or Bernadette of Lourdes.

St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online

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An early photo of Sisters and pilgrims, Ephesus.
Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online
<http://stvincentimages.cdm.depaul.edu/>





A Turkish man at the fountains of Hayat Dergisi, May 1962.
Originally published in the Turkish subsidiary of *Life* magazine.
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Mary's House as it stands today.

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NOTICE ABOUT THE SHRINE...
 This place is considered to be the last home of the Blessed Virgin, the Mother of Jesus Christ.
THE FACTS ACCORDING TO THE SCRIPTURES St. John, in his Gospel, tells us that Jesus, before dying on the Cross, entrusted to him the care of His Mother when He said: "Here is your Mother," and from that hour St. John took Her to his own.

The Acts of the Apostles relate how, after the death of Christ, His followers were persecuted in Jerusalem. St. Stephen was stoned in 37 A.D. St. James was beheaded in 42 A.D. And they further relate how they divided the world between them for preaching the Gospel, and Saint John was given Asia Minor. Now Mary had been given to his care and with the persecutions, probably brought her with him to Asia Minor.

THE FACTS ARE CONFIRMED HISTORICALLY There are 2 evidences: 1-the presence of the tomb Of St. John in Ephesus, and 2-the presence of the first Basilica of the world dedicated to the Blessed Virgin. In the early days of the Church, places of worship were only dedicated to persons who had lived or died in the locality.

Also, the Ecumenical Council of 431 was held in Ephesus in this Basilica for the definition of the dogma of the Divine Motherhood of Mary. The Council Fathers write about Nestorius: "...after his arrival to Ephesus, where John the Theologian and the Holy Virgin Mary, Mother of God..."

There is another confirmation in the oral tradition of Villagers of Kirkindje. These people were the descendants of the christians of Ephesus. They had passed from generation to generation, the belief of the death of Mary in this place, so they called PANAGHIA KAPULU. They have kept this tradition alive through the annual pilgrimage of 15th August.

DISCOVERY OF THIS PLACE IN 19th CENTURY During the "19th Century book" Life of the Blessed Virgin was published in Germany. The material for this book come from the revelations of a stigmatized Nun, Anna Catherina Emmerich. She was an invalid and had never left Germany. In her visions she described with amazing accuracy the hills of Ephesus and the house where she saw the Blessed Virgin spending her last years.

Accordingly, 2 scientific expeditions were organized, and they found this place perfectly agreeing with her description.

THE CHAPEL The chapel was rebuilt upon the original foundations that have been determined to date as of the 1st and 4th centuries. Part of the building is of the 7th century and the last restoration took place in 1951.

FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE APPLY TO THE ADDRESS BELOW:
THE AMERICAN SOCIETY OF EPHESUS, INC.
 (GEORGE B. OVATMAN FOUNDATION) 327 NORTH ELIZABETH STREET LIMA, OHIO 45801 U.S.A.

One of a series of signs explaining the significance of the site.
 Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online
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A photo of the altar, Mary's House, circa 1891.

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online

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The "Wish Wall," on the grounds of Mary's House.

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online

<http://stvincentimages.cdm.depaul.edu/>





Lines of tourists and pilgrims form outside Mary's House.

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online

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Marie de Mandat-Grancey, D.C., kneels on the Stations of the Cross.
The Stations are no longer in existence but are believed to have been
behind the house and up the hill from the site.

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