

CLOSE WINDOW



All About All Crusades

THE "BÜYÜK HAMAM" IS MOST LIKELY NOT ST GEORGE THE LATIN..!

BÜYÜK HAMAM, "THE BATH OF THE WOMEN", RESTORED

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 (Click the thumbnails below - left and right - to see enlarged versions).



BÜYÜK HAMAM: "The Bath of the Women" - This building has been identified by the French historians De Mas Latrie and Enlart with the XIVth century church of St George the Latin (or of the "Poulains") of the principal piazza of Nicosia. However, the British architect and Cyprus expert George Jeffery (1918) states: "No evidence is forthcoming for such an identification, and the learned archaeologists seem to have overlooked the fact that although the building much resembles a mediaeval church in appearance it does not conform to the invariable planning of such buildings".



I am inclined to agree with Jeffery, who continues: "Instead of lying east and west it is built north and south in a manner which would have been almost impossible until perhaps the period of the Venetian Occupation. The interior is a vaulted hall of three bays without any trace of ecclesiastical character, and the only feature about the building which has led to a supposition that it may have been at one time a church is the richly ornamented doorway."



"This doorway constructed of mutilated fragments from another building which have been pieced together in a clumsy manner, is remarkable as having been originally an exact replica of the west portal of the church of **Akhiropietos Monastery** ("A Description of the Historic Monuments of Cyprus", George Jeffery, 1918, vide Part VI, Kyrenia District). The same elaborate carved mouldings with the curious motif of interlacing leafage filled with birds are evidently by the same artist who worked at the monastery about the year 1563.

In consequence of the decay of surrounding buildings this Bath House is buried to a depth of about one metre and a half below the present level of the neighbouring roads and



lanes.

About the year 1890 a most interesting grave-slab was discovered doing duty as part of the floor of this bath house. The effigy represented a Lusignan Prince, judging by the coat of arms and the crown on his head. Almost directly it had been identified by the late Major Chamberlayne, it was stolen, and it has been lost sight of ever since.

Within the reveals of the doorway are niches in a Turkish style, the whole of this side of the building having been added to with an immense thickness of second hand masonry, in which fragments of XVith century sculpture occur.



(To upload and insert here: 360 degrees pics (by Bo de Visser, Holland, pictured at left), which were taken inside the Büyük Hamam, during the restoration, December 2009. - Hans Doeleman)

It is perhaps singular that this "Bath of the Women" does not at all resemble in construction the more usual "Hamam" or Turkish Bath of the Levant. There seems a possibility that the building may have served for its present use even before the Ottoman Turkish Occupation (1570/1)." (Or the Grand Bath *could* have been built on top of the foundation of some Lusignan church/building... Doubt and questions! - Hans Doeleman)

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