

WORSHIPING PILGRIMAGE AND RELIGIOUS TOURISM IN GREECE AND CYPRUS DURING ANCIENT TIMES

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Pilgrimage travel is not a recent activity of modern civilization. It is a phenomenon, which has existed since ancient times. It has grown over time and evolved into Religious and Pilgrimage tourism, depending upon the various changes that were observed in the course of humanity. Pilgrimage along with the Religious tourism is usually considered the oldest form of non-economic travel and is one of the most understudied areas in tourism research. Every year it is estimated that approximately 240 million people travel to major pilgrimage destinations around the world both ancient, like Greece and Cyprus, as well as modern in origin. Increases in spiritually motivated travel in the modern era, have coincided with the growth of tourism in all eras, especially after the 19th century, where the development of tourism was generally based on the leisure time of people and on their movements to various countries.

Keywords: *Pilgrimage travel, worship centres, religious tourism.*



INTRODUCTION

Traditionally and historically, pilgrimage has been defined as a physical journey in search of truth, in search of what is sacred or holy (Vukonic, 1996:80). Thus, the devotional gatherings in worship centres were based on the idea that some places were different from others. Historically the search for the metaphysical or the supernatural has led people to worship centres and holy places where, in their minds there was the potential to commune with the “holy” (Hauser-Schaublin, 1998).

It is also surprising because holy places with religion have played a key role in the development of travel and leisure over centuries and have influenced how people utilize their leisure time (Kelly, 1982). Therefore, a kind of journey was attempted, usually with long distance and because of this a sort of preparation and testing was required by the traveller (Haller, 1995). Following this habit, it is discovered that it has its roots in ancient times, since Homer’s era, with a clear reference to the sacred monuments of the glorious civilization of the ancient Greeks. In ancient times, moving from place to place is defined as travel, tour, roaming; that definition was far from its present form, which is trip, recreation, rest and vacation (Robichaud, 1999). The free and economically prosperous citizens could participate in different types of travels. The main purpose of travel, then, was the spiritual growth and benefit of the traveller, who was conveying his experiences and diverse cultural elements to other people and other cultures (Fährnich, 1996). For this reason, the travel to sacred areas outside the city/state of the pilgrim was a very important cultural element among the Cypriots and Greeks.

The aim of this article is to contribute to the literature on religiously motivated travel since 1200 BC, by examining and analysing the various events, concepts, practices and celebrations related to pilgrimage and other forms of religious travel to the various worship centres and holy places of ancient Greece and

Cyprus. It focuses on a number of theoretical and practical perspectives related to spiritual journeys, including the nature, creation and management of hallowed places and worship centres (DH Olsen, DJ Timothy, 2006). In addition much of this article examines the intersections and the relationships of religion and pilgrimage from a perspective that has been little studied, even the perspective of religion and spirituality or the perspectives of religious adherents who travel to these holy places in search of truth and enlightenment, making sacrifices, or seeking a cure for illness, which finally lead to their spiritual benefits.

WORSHIP CENTRES IN ANCIENT GREECE: A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

We know, for example, that people climbed the mountain of Zeus and gathered; they coexisted creatively there to pray for rain. Zeus' temples on Mount Olympus and other mountaintops are well known, as well as the one on the highest mountain in Aegina, called Panhellenic Zeus (Ellanios¹) (Nilsson, 1979). In this temple, a structure was built for pilgrims to retreat. To this day, believers, in a manner similar to the one in the honour of Zeus, gather in mountaintops, to honour Prophet Elias (the rainmaker Saint) who has a chapel dedicated to him on every mountaintop. The Cypriot place name known as "Mouti tou Dkia²" (Top of Zeus) is characteristic, with a nearby place name "Gremos tis Eras³" (Cliff of Hera - Hera, Zeus' wife), in an area with many ancient place names, such as Vassa (apparently from the ancient Greek word βᾶσσα, vassa = βῆσσα, vissa, wooded valley), Gerovassa⁴ (from ieri vassa⁵, sacred wooded valley, cf. Geroskipou⁶ from ierous kipous⁷, sacred gardens of Aphrodite) and Gerasa.

The ancient Greek religion created countless monuments and temples due to the worship of what is known as Dodekatheon⁸. It has attracted many people from all over Greece, but also from other

parts of the known world. Dodekatheon has also contributed to the development of Pilgrimage and Religious tourism, as well as to the exchange of customs, traditions, ideas and perceptions (Jackowski και Smith, 1992). The ancient Greeks honoured the tradition of fasting as a prerequisite and a preparation for their journey. They covered great distances to go to specific sacred sites (Dillon, 1997) and take part in sacred ceremonies, even though each city/state in Greece had its own religious centres, altars and temples. These gatherings intensified during the major festivals and fairs (Perlman, 2000), such as the ones in the honour of Poseidon, Athena Pallas, Demeter, and of course during the Olympic Games, which were held every four years in Olympia (Matthew, 2001). A high turnout of believers was noted from all parts of the known world and to certain sacred places, such as Eleusis, Olympia, Dodona, Delphi (Thesaurus Linguae Graecae 5.0), Epidaurus, Ephesus, etc., and thus great mobility was created in these areas. This was the beginning of the first pilgrimages (Nilsson, 1979).

Another distinguishing fact is that most important holy places are full of offerings and donations from pilgrims (Burkert - Mpezantakos – Afr. Avagianou, 1993. Ancient Cypriot Literature 1-6, 1995-2008)⁹. This fact is also observed today, gifts presented as donations or offerings from pilgrims in the context of Religious and Pilgrimage tourism in various monasteries and shrines (Kowalzig, 2005). This phenomenon occurs mainly in oracles, in prophecy centres (Lloyd-Jones, 1976) revealing the tendency of ancient Greeks to regard the reception of prophecies by the interested parties themselves or their delegates as a key element of their faith (Parke, 1979). Since ancient times, the desire of man to discover the future is known, and it is connected to one's inner need to reach eternity, by breaking the time barrier, the manifestation of one's finite existence (Kroch, 1996). Soothsaying was the art by which people interpreted the signs of the will of gods or communicated with them (Plutarch, On the EI at Delphi 387a-b)¹⁰. This wish was interwoven with the daily life of the ancient Greeks, and this is proven by the

many oracles that were present during ancient times in the area of Greece, and by stories that reveal the trust of those people in the prophecies (Eidinow, 2007). The ancient Greeks relied upon different oracles to get advice on public and private affairs.

Herodotus mentions at least eighteen temples which included oracles, as well as several missions to request advice from an oracle, like the ones of Delphi (Parke, 1979) and of Dodona (Odyssey, 14. 327-30 and 19. 296-99)¹¹. He was one of the first “traveller-tourists”, who never stopped expressing his interest in the religion, the customs, the practices and the arts of the sites he was visiting. His tours reached Sicily, Egypt and Persia. Today, Herodotus can be described, according to the modern searches on tourist typologies, as a “model” for tourists and he should be included in the category of the “intelligent tourist” (Yang, J., Yang, W., Denecke, M., & Waibel, A., 1999). This need can be linked to the current search of people who identify themselves with their desire to visit the holy places of Palestine, Mount Athos, and various monasteries in Greece and Cyprus, especially on the day of the local Saint’s feast, for example, on August 15, the day of Our Lady of Tinos’ feast.

In these cases, great eremites and Fathers, Saints of the Orthodox Church have been and still are, like contemporary blessed elders, poles of attraction for many pilgrims (Rodosthenous, 2012). The purpose of the believers’ visit is to listen to spiritual speeches, many of them also testify and confess their sins and heal spiritually. A typical example is the case of St. Paisios, when he was visiting the monastery of Souroti in Thessaloniki from Mount Athos, the place became overly crowded, since the believers sought to meet and benefit from the elder.

Asclepeia of ancient Greece, is another distinctive gathering of believers, the best known ones being those of Triki (Trikala), of Titani, of Athens, of Kos, of Lissos, of Levinos, of Cyrene and of Epidaurus (Kavvadias, 1900, Aravantinos, 1907). The healing temples of the god Asclepius were located in almost every Greek

city. They were in fact the first hospitals or rather health building blocks (Gesler, 1993) of not only the Greek area, but of the whole Western civilization. They offered their services for many centuries, approximately from the time of the Trojan War to the 6th century AD, the period of the predominance of Christianity. Perhaps it should be highly emphasized, at this point that despite the persecution that the Ancient Greek civilization suffered as a pagan practice, mainly by Emperor Theodosius in 392 AD (Anastasiou, 2008), it was impossible to completely eliminate the worship of Asclepius and especially the health care offered in Asclepeia for about two more centuries (Sigerist, 1987).

Nowadays there are many remarkable monasteries and holy shrines, which serve as hospitals and clinics to all those who suffer primarily spiritually but physically, as well. Some of them are the monastery of St. Nektarios in Aegina, of Our Lady of Tinos, of Sts. Raphael, Nicholas and Irene in Mytilene, St. Ephraim in Nea Makri, St. Spyridon in Corfu, and many more. A characteristic case is that of Pausanias (Spawforth in S. Hornblower - T. Spawforth, 2000. Kroch, 1996), who lived during the 2nd century AD and went on several trips to Egypt, Syria, Palestine, Rome and other places in Italy, Southern Macedonia and Thessaly. He must have visited Southern Greece more often, when he conceived the idea of writing the extensive work *Description of Greece*¹² (around 173 AD). Pausanias describes ancient Greece as an eye and ear witness, utilizing his passion to visit and get to know the ancient sites with their centuries old temples and venerable sanctuaries, local worships and beliefs, historical memories and popular religious traditions, for which he had a weak spot. The sanctuaries of ancient Greece are a pilgrimage to the Traveller (Geldard, 2000). For the subsequent generation of travellers Pausanias was a valuable source of abundant knowledge relating to mythology, politics, history and popular culture, but also a guide to the excavations in ancient topography (Pretzler, 2013), when the major excavations began in ancient Olympia (1875), in the acropolis of Mycenae (1876), in

Orchomenus in Boeotia (1880), in the Asklepeion of Epidaurus (1881), in Eleusis (1882), in the Acropolis of Athens and Tiryns (1884), in Mantinea (1887), in Megalopolis (1890), in Delphi (1892) by Greek and foreign archaeologists.

TRAVELLING HABITS: ORGANISED RELIGIOUS TRAVEL AND TOUR

During the ancient times apart from the individual pilgrimages, there also existed organized group tours, which in fact required complex administrative organization and state care (Casson, 1994). These are similar to the current package holidays (packages), which are organized by tourist offices, major tourist agencies, or airlines and include the travel, usually by air, accommodation, hotel, transportation, tours and meals. Their travels were linked in antiquity mainly with religious rites, as well as several national sporting events. The crowds flocking to religious rites, wished to ensure peace of mind in the present state of life (Nilsson, 1979) and bliss after death, with the initiations into the Eleusinian (Clinton, 1974) and other similar mysteries. This initiation was considered to be a force capable of purifying and sanctifying the individuals and somehow uniting them with God, whose powers and properties they acquired.

The official "pilgrims-spectators", who attended certain religious events, represented their city/states and undertook the organization of pilgrimages (Rutherford, 2000). They were, very often, accompanied by private citizens, who wanted to go on pilgrimage to the same destination. Even in the case of a war, there was a ceasefire so as the believers were given a chance to perform their rites and celebrations or even visit various holy sites safely and without fear (Dillon, 1997). Families were regularly going on pilgrimages, as well. Parents with their children are often depicted on vases or gravestones attending ritual worships of deities. The

depictions are very similar to modern pilgrimages. Everyone had many different reasons for wanting to honor their chosen deity. Pilgrimage had a special meaning for the women of antiquity (Rutherford, 2007). It constituted a break from normal life, which is everyday life, with something extraordinary and special. It was a travel away from home and their relatives, with a strictly religious purpose. Women traveled alone or with their family to distant destinations, such as Asia Minor, the Aegean islands, to sanctuaries like the ones in Delos, Epidaurus and Delphi, seeking alternative medicine in healing deities for their treatment of a disease or infertility.

Communication with the divine, man's approach towards God, in any religion, covers a multitude of mental and emotional needs and emotions, which are directly linked to the very existence of man both in ancient and current religions (Firth, 1996). In times of misery and deprivation man feels the need to ask religion for relief and consolation (Nilsson, 1979). The religious sentiment, as it has evolved during the historical course, has become a source of creation for man, as a result the holy places of Greek antiquity extremely highlight the most important works of the world's cultural heritage. Holy places usually "work" within an environment of particular natural beauty, they were and are also involved and actively participate in the momentous historical events, in order to become an attraction for visitors of a much wider range of interests, not exclusively religious ones. Holy places and monuments of Christian worship in Greece are an integral part of the national heritage and a direct continuation of the ancient Greek civilization (Mackridge, 2008). Erected literally on the foundations of the ancient Greek temples, they perpetuate the sanctity of ancient shrines and they help carry this habit and tradition of the ancient Greeks to travel for reasons of worship on, through the centuries, developing various pilgrimages and then the Religious and Pilgrimage tourism in Greece (Coleman & Elsner, 1995).

From the above, it is clear that the movement of the ancient Greeks for worshipping purposes to various holy sites was accompanied by sacrifices, and in celebrations as such the most important elements were the games and festivals. This is how pilgrimage, as well as the first form of religious tourism, were created; since the main feature of a festival was the abundance of people who gathered from neighbouring and distant states and colonies, from all over Greece (Murray & Price, 1991). The great games, the Olympia, the Pythian, the Isthmian and the Nemean were first of all festivals, the most renowned ones being the Olympic Games (Feidas, 2010)¹³, which were dedicated to the gods and combined worship rituals with sports events; athletes from the Greek cities and colonies participated. At the same time, the games were shaping the spiritual life of the Greeks, the national consciousness, the unity of the Greek nation, as well as the cultivation of relationships and ties among the states (Feidas, 2010).

In all festivals there was a market of products and this seemed to attract more interest. The word festival means primarily fair (De Ligt & De Neeve, 1988). Such fairs were held in Delos (Wilson, 2013), where all the Ionians gathered. In this way people's need to gather, have fun, celebrate and rejoice is satisfied, thereby stopping and lightening the monotonous rhythm of their daily lives. It is this social need that was satisfied by the ancient Greek religion (Anastasiou, 2008), it is in fact the same need that has been maintained until today more than anything else in such gatherings. The many fairs organized today in Greece and Cyprus are results of this religious tradition (Hatzioannou, 1990). Sakellarios, 1890/1991)¹⁴, especially on the day when a local saint is celebrated. Besides local fairs, we also observe that large gatherings of people, such as the Olympic Games held in Greece in 2004, as well as various religious ceremonies attract millions of tourists and pilgrims from all around the world.

WORSHIP CENTRES IN ANCIENT CYPRUS AND THE WORSHIP OF GODDESS APHRODITE

Since ancient times, Cyprus was the cradle of civilization and has always been linked to the Greek world (Sutton, 1997). One aspect of this civilization was the great religiosity of Cypriots. During the long period of antiquity there were many religions in Cyprus; Greek, Phoenician and Egyptian deities were worshiped. According to Kyriakos Hatzioannou (1990), the religion of ancient Cyprus has a consistency in all aspects of its manifestations. The pillars of this religion were the two Eteocypriots' ¹⁵ gods Aphrodite and Apollo and two Greek Cypriots' gods Zeus and Athena. All other deities were supplementary. The first two, Aphrodite and Apollo, gods of fertility, vegetation and believers, gods of agriculture, shaped the citizens who worshiped them into peaceful and gentle people. Moreover, Aphrodite carried the epithet *ipidoros* ¹⁶ (Iliad Z 251 ¹⁷, she who has received and / or offered soothing gifts, mild, meek, gentle, loving). Zeus and Athena, mostly the latter, offered the citizens who worshiped them martial virtues. Thus we see the revolt of the Cypriots against the Persians begin at Salamis, where Zeus and Athena were worshiped eminently." What is also illustrated through this is the pastoral aspect of religion in ancient Cyprus, which means that the gods shaped people into their image and likeness, with virtues such as meekness, peace and love (Lawson, 2012).

According to Herodotus (Herodotus 1.105.2-3) ¹⁸, the oldest temple of Aphrodite Urania was the one in Ashkelon, Syria; the Temple of Aphrodite in Cyprus originated from there, namely that of Paphos, as Herodotus was told by the Cypriots themselves (Karagiorgi, 2007, Peristianis, 1995) ¹⁹. The first pilgrimages, as well as the first form of religious tourism are observed in ancient Cyprus during this period, since the ancient Cypriots who once lived in parts

of Palestine, which was part of Syria, carried the worship of goddess Aphrodite with them to the island.

However, according to mythology, Cyprus was the place where Aphrodite arrived after her emergence from the sea (Hesiod *Theogony* VS. 193-200)²⁰ and Paphos was her special place of worship. This belief of Aphrodite's origin was common throughout the ancient Greek and Roman world (Powell, 2012). In ancient sources the goddess is often referred to as Kipris²¹ (Cypriot, in the *Iliad*, E 330, 422, 458, 760 and 883)²², Kiprian²³ (Cypriot woman) and Kiprogenis²⁴ (born in Cyprus) (Hesiod *Theogony* VS. 193-200)²⁵, while Cyprus itself was called her country, her kingdom or her property (ACyL1). Euripides' verses are remarkable (*The Bacchae*, VS. 402 and on)²⁶: "may I arrive in Cyprus, the island of Aphrodite, where heart-stealing Cupids keep company with mortals...".

The worship of the goddess is presented in Cyprus in its most characteristic form during the 2nd millennium BC and rites in her honour were popular until the 5th century AD. This fact reveals the religious tradition of the ancient Cypriots throughout the centuries, and the pastoral aspect expressed in worship. Aphrodite, given that she came from Cyprus, took pride of place in the Cypriot pantheon, as evidenced inter alia by her enduring and various types of worship, the large, for such a small island, number of shrines and sites dedicated to her and the huge amount of archaeological findings linked to her worship (Hatzioannou, 1990).

There is, however, the question why is Aphrodite's worship so closely associated with Cyprus and especially Paphos. According to many scholars Paphos was an important centre of indigenous worship, which was identified with Aphrodite in historical times (Ustinova, 1999); this was not a historical coincidence, but rather the revival of past traditions of the area (Ioannou, 2005)²⁷. This substantiates that the tree of religion and worship had deep roots, both in ancient Greece and Cyprus. It also substantiates, by

extension, the existence of a spiritual and religious view and relationship between the two countries throughout the ages, which is maintained until today. The movement of people for purely worshipping reasons created the conditions and incentives required for the creation of the first pilgrimage and, consequently, the development of Religious and Pilgrimage tourism. After all, Greece appears to remain, even today, the preferred touristic and pilgrimage destination for Cypriots.

Notably Paphos was considered to be the place where the goddess appeared first (Cyrino, 2012), and she was often called Paphia²⁸ (woman from Paphos) (ACyL1). Besides, the goddess's emergence from the sea may not only symbolize her purity, but it is also quite possible that it refers to the scientific view that life on earth started from water. The celebrations, as well as the parade for the birth of the goddess Aphrodite took place every year (Kliridis, 2005)²⁹ and they lasted three days, from the first to the third of April. People gathered from the ends of Cyprus and from all Greek cities to honor the goddess and, as eloquently described by Kliridis:

“All the pilgrims had to be luminously dressed, crowned with myrtle, bathed with precious spices. In each city they stopped they offered sacrifices to the gods and separately to Aphrodite. The procession reached Old Paphos, where the famous temple of Aphrodite was. The king and high priest of the temple greeted the praying crowd, which delivered the precious gifts to the priests, received oracles, sang hymns to the goddess and made countless sacrifices on nearby altars. Music-poetry games then followed and winners were crowned by the king-high priest”.

Many were those who preferred to travel by ships and boats to reach Palaepaphos³⁰ and take part in the religious events in Aphrodite's honor, as this served them better than any other means of transportation (Price, 1999). This great religious event resulted in the movement of many people, locals and foreigners, thus creating worship migrations and a touristic and religious current towards Cyprus.

Aphrodite Kipris was unmarried and her worship varied from place to place in Cyprus. There were, of course plenty of sanctuaries, shrines and groves dedicated to the goddess everywhere in the island (Peristianis, 1995)³¹. The most important centre of worship, as well as the oldest, was as mentioned above, in Palepaphos (modern place name Kouklia) (Ohnefalsch-Richter, 1891). There are surviving remains of the centre, most of them from the Roman period. It functioned as a centre of worship and as an oracle, where there were a hundred altars for offerings and libations from the crowds of worshippers who flocked there. The temples built from the 12th century BC and on are large and monumental. They were built with axed stones and they consisted of a court and a sanctuary, where the statue of the deity and valuables must have been kept. The ceremonies in the courts of the temples must also have been important, as there were tables for offerings and altars present.

The goddess's temenos in Palepaphos (Pavlidis, Vol. I, 1993)³² was one of the three famous temene in Cyprus and those who resorted there had the right to apply for asylum. The other two temene were Aphrodite's temples in Amathus and Zeus' temples in Salamis. Amathus was also an important centre of Aphrodite's worship, whose grandiose temple (as evidenced by its ruins) was the dominant building on the impressive citadel, much like Athens's Parthenon. There was also a sanctuary dedicated to Aphrodite in New (Lower) Paphos, as well as at cape Zephyros, where a sacred grove was created. Aphrodite's temples were also reported to exist in Soli, in Marion (Polis Chrysochous), in Salamis, in Agia Napa, at Cape Greco, on top of the mountain where the monastery of Stavrovouni was later founded. Other temples were reported in Tamassos, in Idalion, in neighboring Golgi (Athienou), where there was a sacred grove. Morphou appeared to be a rather important centre of worship. Morphou's name originated from Aphrodite's epithet Morfo³³ (Hatzioannou, 1990), as Lycophron mentions.

Tzetzes adds that the epithet meant “to take form, to embody” (from *morfume*)³⁴. What has been mentioned above substantiates the great devotional and spiritual life of the ancient Cypriots, due to the fact that Cyprus was studded with temples, shrines, oracles and worship centres, mostly in Aphrodite’s honour (Cook, J. M., & Blackman, 1965).

Strabo mentions Aphrodite’s sanctuary at Cape Apostolos Andreas, writing that the temple there was “forbidden for women and invisible to them”³⁵ (Karagiorgis, 1998)³⁶. This meant that women were not only forbidden from entering, but also from approaching it, as are the current cases of Mount Athos and the Monastery of Stavrovouni in Cyprus. Cape Apostolos Andreas (Apostle Andreas) is in the most remote and isolated part of Cyprus (Spilling, & Spilling, 2009). The existence of the sanctuary there, especially at a time when pilgrims had to get there on foot or by horse and carriage, implied that it was a place of hermitage, retreat and isolation. A very important pastoral aspect of Religious and Pilgrimage tourism is observed here, that of monasticism and retreat, something that suggests the spiritual progress of that era. The same fact is expressed through the existence of Aphrodite’s temples in other remote and inaccessible locations. Such was the area where Stavrovouni was built later, as well as Pentadaktylos peak, later called St. Hilarion. These sites were spiritual lighthouses and monasteries from ancient times until today (Sabo, Peitz-Hlebec, & Schwarz, 2001).

Two cities dedicated to Aphrodite had flourished in the Karpasia peninsula, on the north coast (Strabo, Geography 14.6.3)³⁷. One called Aphrodision³⁸ or Aphrodisia³⁹ and the other called Urania⁴⁰ (Herodotus, Histories⁴¹ 1.105.3. Pausanias, Description of Greece 1.14.7.). Urania was an epithet of Aphrodite, as she was Uranus’ daughter, but also a celestial deity, as she is praised by Euripides (Phaethon, 227-235)⁴²: “the virgin and nuptial Aphrodite.”⁴³ The pastoral aspect of the Cypriots’ worship is considered equally important. The ceremonies in Aphrodite’s

honour were headed by a high priest who was called agitor⁴⁴ (leader) as we are informed by Hesychius (Brunel, 2015). The existence of Aphrodite's priests, at least in Paphos, who were called "Kinyrades," demonstrates the existence of shepherds with rich pastoral and spiritual work. According to Hesychius, they are considered to be descendants of the mythical king Kinyras, the goddess's first great high priest. This may mean that the clergy was constituted by a separate caste, and it is possible that clergy positions were hereditary (Brunel, 2015). This is still true today even in the Orthodox church; apart from the parish's priest/priests there is also a high priest, a bishop or an archbishop witnessing the celebrations in honor of the church's local Saint.

Litanies and processions of the statue of Aphrodite seemed to take place in Amathus (ACyL3]30 F1 / [ACyL4]33 F. Plutarch, Theseus 20.3-7⁴⁵). This reflects the value and the feast dedicated to the gods of the era. Such value is also exhibited by St. Tychonas's life, a local bishop, who forcefully intervened and once broke up such a ceremony (Galanos, 1988)⁴⁶. The custom of the procession of a Saint's icon is still followed to this day. The procession is an opportunity for believers to walk with the Saint, to walk under his/her icon in order to get the Saint's blessing. Aphrodite's various properties, as well as the honor and respect shown by the locals, are exhibited through her various epithets presented in inscriptions and literary sources. An inscription in Golgi calls the goddess Mykirodon⁴⁷, probably from the word 'mykiros'⁴⁸, which means almond (even today Paphos produces many almonds), thus "goddess of almond." In her various places of worship the goddess was called Paphia⁴⁹, Golgia⁵⁰, Amathusia⁵¹, Zefyritis⁵², Idalia⁵³, Iepokipia⁵⁴, Orea⁵⁵, Salaminia⁵⁶, Akraea⁵⁷, etc. Hesychius mentions that in Cyprus the goddess was called Eleimon⁵⁸ (merciful.) This was a particularly expressive epithet regarding her relationship with the island. The epithet's survival until today is impressive. "Eleousa"⁵⁹

(merciful) is what the miraculous icon of the Virgin of Kykkos is going to be called, the handmade icon of St. Luke."

As a sea goddess, Aphrodite also had Poseidon's properties in Cyprus, including the epithets Limenia⁶⁰ (protector of ports), Enalia⁶¹ (of the sea), Anadyomene⁶² (emerged from the sea), Pontia⁶³, Efplia⁶⁴. The goddess was also protector of sailors and sea voyage (Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae*, 15.675-6)⁶⁵, like St. Nicholas of the Orthodox Church is considered the protector of sailors, the Greek Navy and the Coast Guard. In literary sources Aphrodite is called Anassa⁶⁶ (queen) and Despina of Cyprus ("Despina" was later established as the most common invocation for the Virgin in Cyprus, while in Paphos the Virgin is called Aphroditissa⁶⁷. The epithet Kourotropos⁶⁸ indicates that Aphrodite was the protector of motherhood. It is worth noting that there is a small 17th century monastery in the village Flasou of Solea dedicated to the Virgin Mary Kousouliotissa, who protects and heals children (called kousouli) (Virgin Mary Kousouliotissa 2009)⁶⁹.

Aphrodite also carried the epithets Anthia⁷⁰, Iostefanos⁷¹, Efstefanos⁷², as a goddess of nature, blossoming and fruition. The epithet Epikoos⁷³ suggested the goddess's unflinching interest for people. The Docheiariou monastery at the monastic state of Mount Athos houses the icon of the Virgin "Gorgoepikoos" or "she who is quick to hear [prayers]". The same devotion is shown to Our Lady in the island. She has hundreds of epithets, such as Eleousa, Faneromeni⁷⁴ (she who appeared), Machairiotissa⁷⁵ (she who bears a knife), Chrysopantanassa⁷⁶ (golden lady of everything), Kousouliotissa⁷⁷ (protector and healer of children), Trooditissa⁷⁸ (from Troodos Mountains), Evangelistria⁷⁹ (from Evangelismos, Annunciation), Chryseleousa⁸⁰ (gold and merciful), Odigitria⁸¹ (Leader), Our Lady of Kykkos, of Asinou, of Araka, Glikofilousa⁸² (soft kissing), Kallionitissa⁸³ and more. The vast majority of churches and monasteries of the island are dedicated to Our Lady. This was a natural outcome, if one takes into account the centuries of profound faith in a female deity. After all, there are many

similarities between the worship of Mary and the worship of Aphrodite (Haarmann, H. (1998). One is Aphrodite's "kestos himas" or simply "keston" which is worn by the goddess in her performances. "Kestos" means embroidered and "himas" means belt. The term refers to Aphrodite's belt, which was tied around the waist and, according to Homer's expression, was adorned with all the "allures". Aphrodite's "kestos" symbolizes fertility, since it surrounds the abdomen.

In Christian times the Holy Belt of Virgin Mary, known as Cincture of the Theotokos, is a highly honored and miraculous relic. Piece of the Cincture of the Theotokos is located in the Holy and Great Monastery of Vatopedi on Mount Athos and it is the only relic saved from her life. The Cincture of the Theotokos is said to cure cancer and infertility in women. Cyprus has always been an island of gods and saints (Hryhorovyč-Barskyj, 1996). Apart from the cult of Aphrodite, there are many gods mentioned throughout the centuries, which prove the effects of occasional invaders or neighboring peoples. There was no lack of kings' worship either, mainly conquerors, since some of them demanded to be honored as gods by their subjects. Such claims were made mainly by Ptolemaic and Roman kings. In some areas of ancient Cyprus temples were built, with priests and priestesses, for the deification and worship of the royal figures (Kralidis, 2010)⁸⁴. Ancient Cypriots had annual religious events to commemorate some particular deities, such as the Adonia, the Aphrodisia, the mysteries of Kinyras and others smaller ones. It can be observed, from all the above, that the inhabitants of the island had great love and respect for the gods, the rulers and their shepherds, offering ceremonies, sacrifices and oblations through religious festivals and ceremonies (Hatzioannou, 1990). These are very important elements and they are significant in pastoral terms for a benevolent people who were really seeking, throughout the ages, to find the true god.

In almost all the temples of antiquity there were altars for sacrifices, which constituted a key element of the worship rituals of the inhabitants. It can be said that sacrifices were the greatest way for people to intellectually communicate with their deities (Eidinow, 2007). Through sacrifices they addressed thanks to the gods for help or protection which they had supposedly received from them. In other cases, sacrifices were the means of mediation between people and gods, in order for people to achieve something they longed for. These elements are also considered very important from a pastoral standpoint, because they can release people from everything worldly and elevate them to the heavenly and divine. They also seek to attract God's mercy towards man.

CONCLUSIONS

People went to sanctuaries for all sorts of reasons: consulting oracles, attending festivals, making sacrifices, watching the Panhellenic games, or seeking a cure for illness; there were variations in the participants (individuals or state-delegations, small groups or large), and variations in the length of distance traversed to get to the sanctuary; finally, changes occurred in the shape of pilgrimage over time: pilgrimage is not the same in the Hellenistic period as it is in the classical period, and pilgrimage in the Roman world is different again (Rutherford, 2000).

Leaving early prehistoric periods and approaching more modern ones, worship becomes more formalized and it is practiced on a more systematic basis. There is a great diversity between the ancient pilgrimages and the contemporary pilgrimage-related phenomena. The reasons that have contributed to this are various and they are related to both the settlement of new colonists and to the improvement of social and economic conditions on the island. Based on the statuettes found, there are two possible places of worship, one in Lempa and another in Kissonerga, Paphos. There are also several

archaeological data mentioning Cypriot temples, especially during the Bronze Age, when an increasing number of such sites were observed. Sanctuaries were also found in cities like Palepaphos, Kition, Engomi, Idalion, Chytri and villages such as Agia Irini, Myrtou and Agios Iakovos in Famagusta (Ioannou, 2005). The existence of all these sanctuaries and places of worship testifies both to the spiritual progress of the ancient Cypriots and to the great pastoral work constantly progressing on the island, thus attracting numerous foreign visitors and pilgrims.

In large temples that were dedicated to the Olympian gods, the ancient Cypriots also maintained oracles, which were supervised by the arch-oracle. The Cypriots' relation with the oracle of Delphi was also close (Papageorgiou, 2003)⁸⁵, as evidenced by several Cypriot objects offered as a gift to the famous oracle. It is mentioned that "Many Cypriots were appointed theorodokoi, became consuls of Delphi having various privileges, like priority in trials, asking for divinations first, tax exemption, etc." The existence of Religious and Pilgrimage tourism between Cyprus and Greece is confirmed with the transition of ancient Cypriots to Delphi, Delos and elsewhere for religious and worshipping reasons. All the reports mentioned above are concluded before the coming of Christ on earth. The positions of all of the aforementioned gods are taken by Orthodox Saints and especially Virgin Mary. Apart from the data mentioned above, the transcendental presence of Virgin Mary on the island remains an eternal and indisputable fact (Pavlidis, 1993). Cyprus is studded with place names inspired by Virgin Mary and traditions associated with her innumerable miracles. All these constitute indelible evidence of her transcendental presence.

The establishment of churches on the ruins of ancient temples was common, such as the cases of the Parthenon in Athens, which became the church of Virgin Mary, the temple of Tyche (Fortune) in Antioch, which became the church of Saint Ignatius and the Temple of Poseidon in Istanbul, which became the church of Saint Menas.

In Cyprus the majestic church of Virgin Mary the Catholic was built on the ruins the famous temple of Aphrodite at Kouklia, while the church of Saint Fotios was built on the temple of Aphrodite at Golgoi. The sanctuary of Athena at Idalion was also replaced by the stately church of Saint George, and so forth (Hatzioannou, 1990).

With all that has already been mentioned, it is substantiated that since ancient times Cyprus has been a centre of worship not only for Cypriots and Greeks but for many other peoples of the region too. The movement of all these pilgrims resulted in the creation of the first pilgrimages on the island. It is observed that these ancient worship centres, temples and sanctuaries composed the basis for the creation of the first Christian Church of the island. By extension they also contributed to the continuation and increase of pilgrims, visitors and tourists in Cyprus, thereby contributing to the development of Religious and Pilgrimage tourism (Rodosthenous, 2012). With the arrival of the first Apostles of Christ in Cyprus, the formerly pagan "island of Aphrodite" is abandoning the darkness of such ignorance; it enters the light and knowledge of God and gradually becomes, over the centuries, a God-bearing place. Cyprus is eventually transformed into an Island of Virgin Mary and the Saints, a place of worshiping pilgrimage and religious tourism.

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ENDNOTES

1. Greek: Ἑλλάγιος.
2. Greek: Μούττη του Δκιά.
3. Greek: Γκρεμμὸς της Ἐρας.
4. Greek: Γεροβάσα.
5. Greek: ἱερὴ βᾶσσα.
6. Greek: Γεροσκίπου.
7. Greek: ἱερούς κήπους.
8. TN: Dodekathemon (Greek: Δωδεκάθεον from δώδεκα, dodeka, "twelve" and θεοί, theoi, "gods".)
9. TN: Offered translation, original reference: (Burkert - Μπεζαντάκος – Ἀφρ. Ἀβαγιανού, 1993. Αρχαία Κυπριακή Γραμματεία¹⁻⁶, 1995-2008) from now on referred to as "ACyL".
10. Original title: Περὶ τοῦ Εἰ τοῦ ἐν Δελοφίς.

11. Original reference: (Οδύσσεια, ξ 327-30 και τ 296-99).
12. Original title: Έλλάδος περιήγησις.
13. Original reference: Φειδάς, 2010.
14. Original reference: Χατζηιωάννου, 1990. Σακελλάριος, 1890/1991.
15. TN: The name refers to native Cypriots.
16. Greek: ήπιόδωρος.
17. Original reference: Ίλιάδα Z 251.
18. Original reference: Ηρόδοτος 1.105.2-3.
19. Original reference: Καραγιώργη 2007. Περιστιάνης, 1995.
20. Original reference: Ησίοδος Θεογονία στ. 193-200.
21. Greek: Κύπρις.
22. Original reference: Ίλιάδα, E 330, 422, 458, 760 και 883.
23. Greek: Κυπρίαν.
24. Greek: Κυπρογενής.
25. Original reference: Ησίοδος Θεογονία στ. 193-200.
26. Original reference: Βάκχαι, στ. 402 κ.εξ.
27. Original reference: Ιωάννου, 2005.
28. Greek: Παφία.
29. Original reference: Κληρίδης, 2005.
30. NT: Old Paphos.
31. Original reference: Περιστιάνης, 1995.
32. Original reference: Παυλίδης, Τόμ. Α, 1993.
33. Greek: Μορφώ.
34. Greek: μορφούμαι.
35. TN: Ancient Greek in the text, άδυτος γυναιξί και άόρατος.
36. Original reference: Καραγιώργης, 1998.
37. Original reference: Στράβων, Γεωγραφικά 14.6.3.
38. Greek: Άφροδίσιον.
39. Greek: Άφροδισία.
40. Greek: Ούρανία.
41. Original title: Ηρόδοτος, Ίστορίαι.
42. Original reference: Φαέθων, 227 – 235.
43. Ancient Greek in text “τάν παρθένον γαμήλιον Άφροδίταν.”
44. Greek: άγήτωρ.
45. Original reference: Πλουτ. Θησ. 20.3-7.
46. Original reference: Γαλανός, 1988.
47. Greek: Μυκηρόδον.
48. Greek: μύκηρος.
49. Greek: Παφία.
50. Greek: Γολγία.
51. Greek: Αμαθουσία.
52. Greek: Ζεφύριτις.

53. Greek: *Ιδαλία*.
54. Greek: *Ιεροκηπία*.
55. Greek: *Ορεία*.
56. Greek: *Σαλαμινία*.
57. Greek: *Ακραία*.
58. Greek: *Ελεήμων*.
59. Greek: *Ελεούσα*.
60. Greek: *Λιμενία*.
61. Greek: *Εναλία*.
62. Greek: *Αναδύομενη*.
63. Greek: *Ποντία*.
64. Greek: *Ευπλοία*.
65. Original reference: *Αθήναιος, Δειπνοσοφισταί, 15.675-6*.
66. Greek: *Άνασσα*.
67. Greek: *Αφροδίτισσα*.
68. Greek: *Κουροτρόφος*.
69. Original reference: *Παναγία Κουσουλιώτισσα 2009*.
70. Greek: *Άνθεια*.
71. Greek: *Ιοστέφανος*.
72. Greek: *Εϋστέφανος*.
73. Greek: *Επήκοος*.
74. Greek: *Φανερωμένη*.
75. Greek: *Μαχαριώτισσα*.
76. Greek: *Χρυσοπαντάνασσα*.
77. Greek: *Κουσουλιώτισσα*.
78. Greek: *Τροοδίτισσα*.
79. Greek: *Ευαγγελίστρια*.
80. Greek: *Χρυσελεούσα*.
81. Greek: *Οδηγήτρια*.
82. Greek: *Γλυκοφιλούσα*.
83. Greek: *Καλλονίτισσα*.
84. Original reference: *Κραλίδης, 2010*.
85. Original reference: *Παπαγεωργίου, 2003*.

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