

Sustainable Religious Use of a World Heritage Site
A Long-Term Overview of Spatial Segregation at "Ephesus"

Introduction: "Ephesus" as World Heritage Property of Religious Significance

In 2015, "Ephesus" in Selçuk, Turkey was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List as a serial property of four components (Fig. 1). The property's Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) is justified based on Criteria (iii) and (iv), as a unique settlement landscape that enabled continual habitation since prehistory in changing locations which provide exceptional testimony to cultural traditions of the Hellenistic, Imperial Roman, and Early Christian periods.

Continuity is demonstrated also in religious significance and use diachronically from Neolithic "goddess" figurines at "Çukuriçi Mound" and the Sanctuary of Artemis up to contemporary Marian commemorations in the "House of Virgin Mary", with the Church of St. Mary in the ancient city and Basilica of St. John on Ayasuluk hill presented among the most important Christian pilgrimage destinations in the Mediterranean, in justification of Criterion (vi).

This poster presents the potential such dispersion in space and time has a successful strategy for managing crucial dogmatic differences between Christian communities, thus enabling ongoing cultural and spiritual sustainability of the property's religious use.

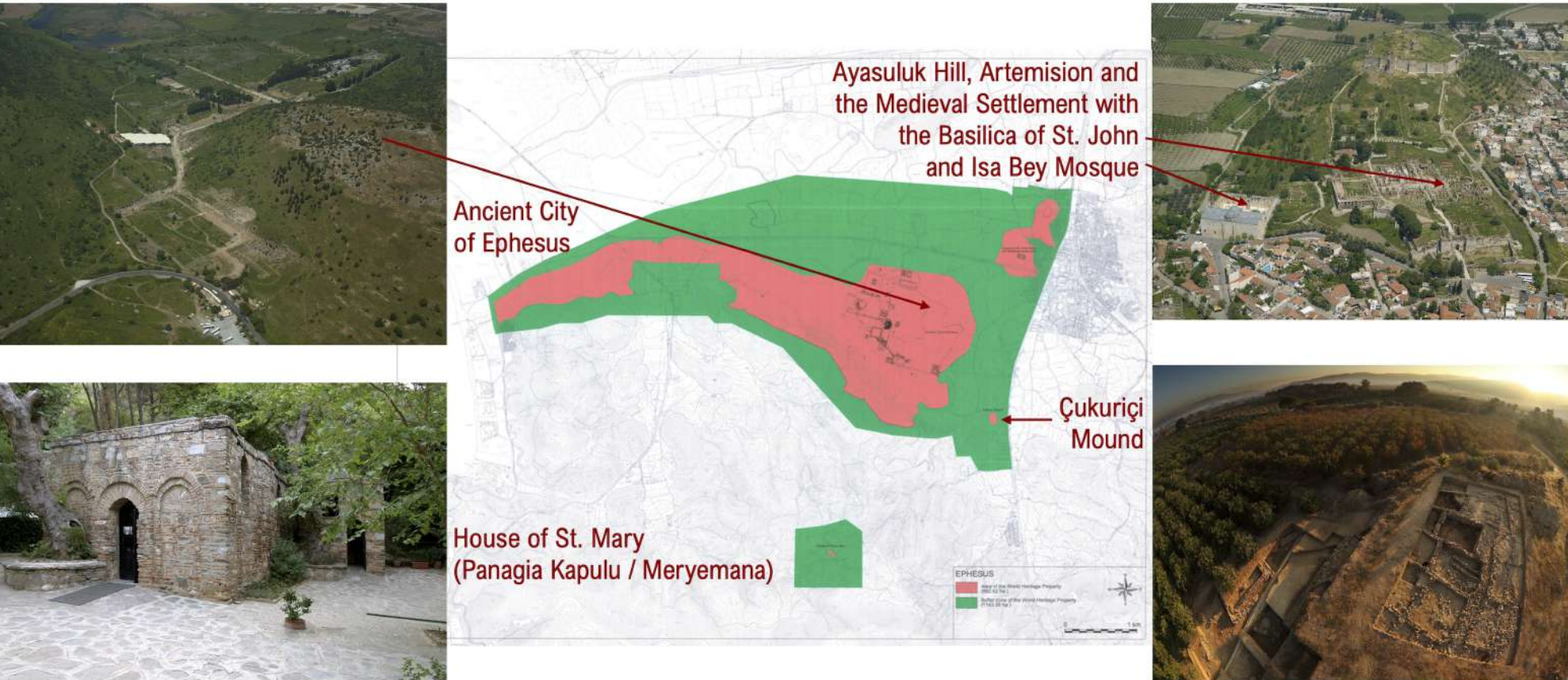


Fig. 1 "Ephesus" serial World Heritage property components and boundaries (map: "Ephesus" nomination dossier; upper left and right: ©Municipality of Selçuk; lower left: ©OeAW-OeAI/A. Pülz; lower right: ©OeAW-OeAI/Niki Gail)

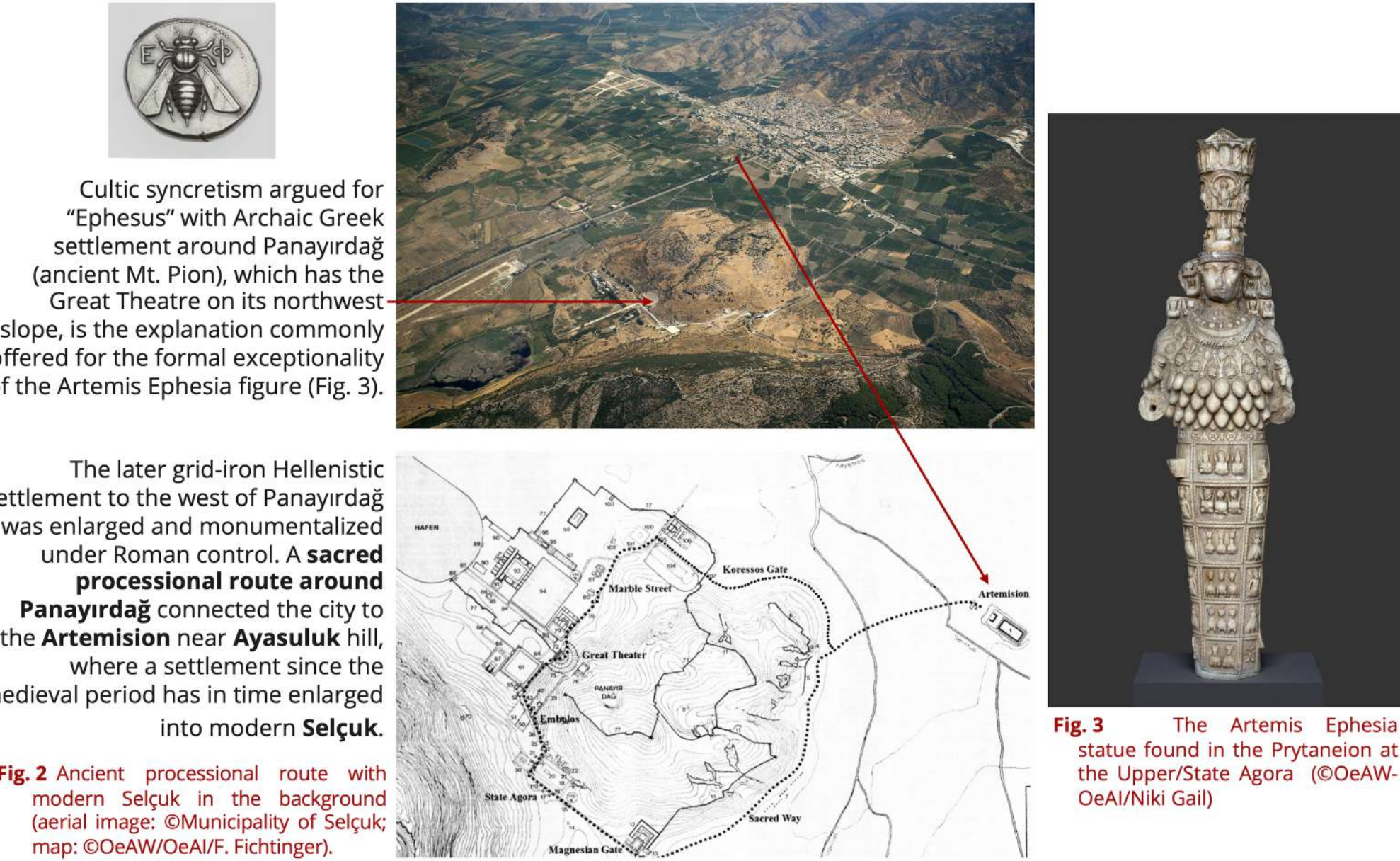


Fig. 2 Ancient processional route with modern Selçuk in the background (aerial image: ©Municipality of Selçuk; map: ©OeAW/OeAI/F. Fichtinger).

(Re)Invention of Christian Traditions

There were no temples in the city except those dedicated to Roman emperors, and one to Serapis. Modern research finds suggest this as the only pagan temple that was converted into a church upon conversion of Ephesus into one of the great centres of the Christian church (Fig. 5). All other temples were found to have been demolished and built over while some architectural elements of the Artemision were reused in the construction of the overlooking Basilica of St. John presumably on the Apostle's tomb (Figs. 1, 4).



Fig. 3 The Artemis Ephesia statue found in the Prytaneion at the Upper/State Agora (©OeAW-OeAI/Niki Gail)

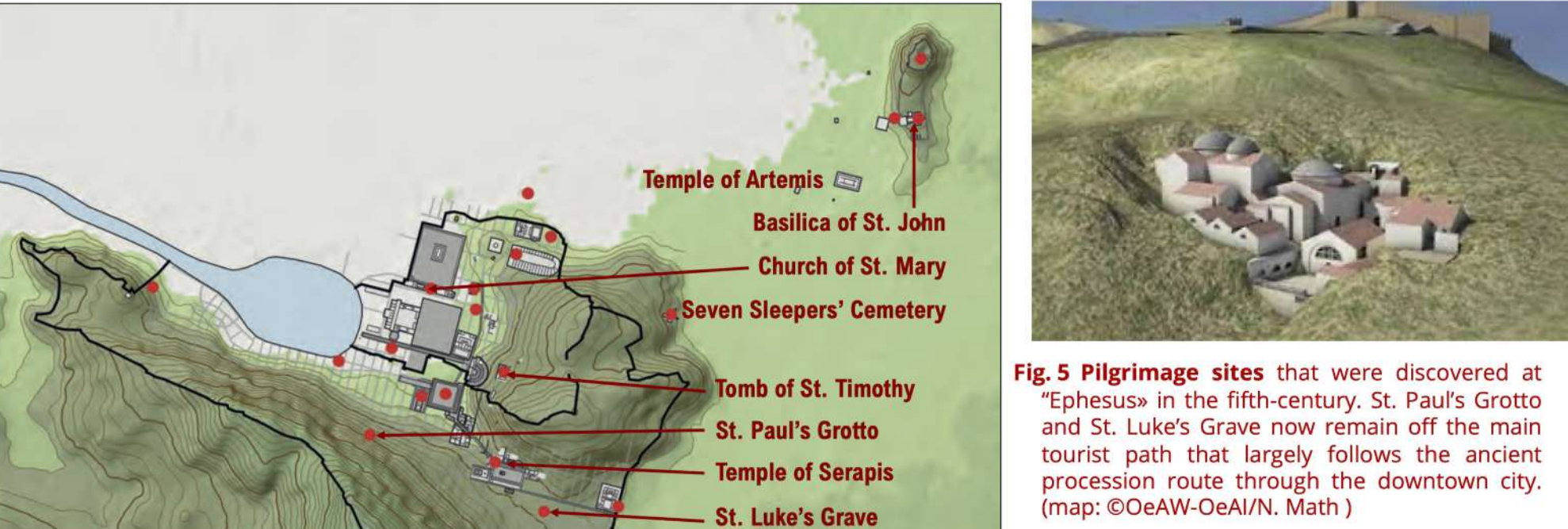


Fig. 5 Pilgrimage sites that were discovered at "Ephesus" in the fifth-century. St. Paul's Grotto and St. Luke's Grave now remain off the main tourist path that largely follows the ancient procession route through the downtown city. (map: ©OeAW-OeAI/N. Math)



Remains and digital reconstruction of the Tomb of St. Luke to the east of the Upper/State Agora was converted from a second-century fountain into a pilgrimage church around a crypt with graves. (left: ©OeAW-OeAI; right: ©OeAW-OeAI/Treasors; A. Pülz).

Grotto of St. Paul on a high hill overlooking the Late Antique harbour takes its name from St. Paul's presumed imprisonment in Ephesus. The grotto is mentioned in Biblical tours of Ephesus due to its sixth-century frescoes identified as depicting stories of St. Paul with St. Thecla in Iconium, of Jesus and St. George, and of Isaac's blinding with Abraham, in addition to graffiti. (top: www.HolyLandPhotos.org; bottom: OeAW-OeAI/Niki Gail)

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Spatio-Temporal Segregation of Religious Communities: Appropriations

After Aydinid conquest in 1304, St. John's was converted into Ayasuluk's first Friday mosque, following the Turco-Islamic gaza (holy war) observance of converting the episcopal seats or major churches in conquered cities. Western travellers' accounts document continued visits to the Apostle's crypt afterwards by paying a penny, as an early example of religious tourism income.

By the time of Mongol destruction of Ayasuluk in 1403, Isa Bey was already completed as the new Friday mosque of Ayasuluk in 1375. A group of Catholics residing in Izmir reportedly frequented Ephesus to celebrate certain apostolic feasts in the 1860s and 70s, meeting and praying at an altar in this monument. Archbishop Spaccapietra of the Smyrna Catholic Church was reportedly sustaining the participants' belief that the monument was initially a church while postcards circulated of Isa Bey as St. John's.

In the meanwhile, Orthodox Christian Greeks were conducting their regular prayers in a (now lost) small church erected at the site of St. John's, and the Turks were going to Kuşadası for the first morning prayer of the Ramadan feast as only one of the masjids in Ayasuluk was occasionally used for praying, and there were no resident imams to conduct the ritual.

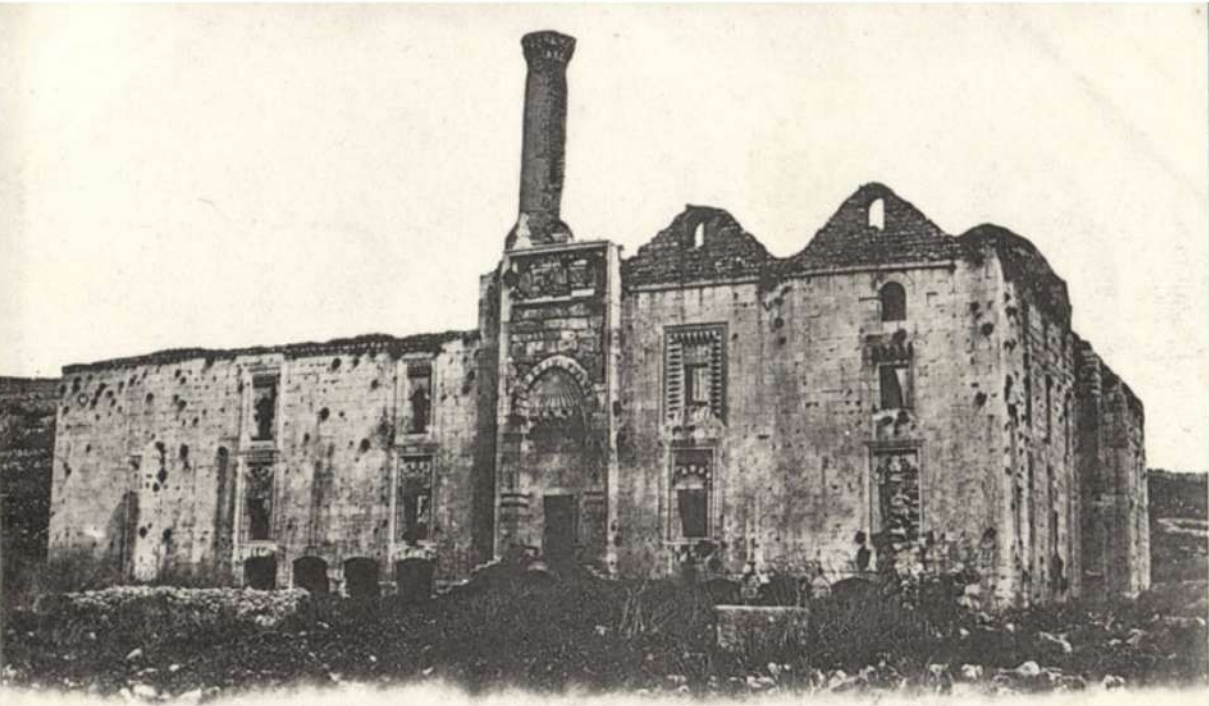


Fig. 6 A postcard of Isa Bey Mosque on Ayasuluk Hill as the Church of St. John by Alphonse Rubellin (possibly dated to 1875-1880), from: <http://www.levantineheritage.com/ephesus.htm>

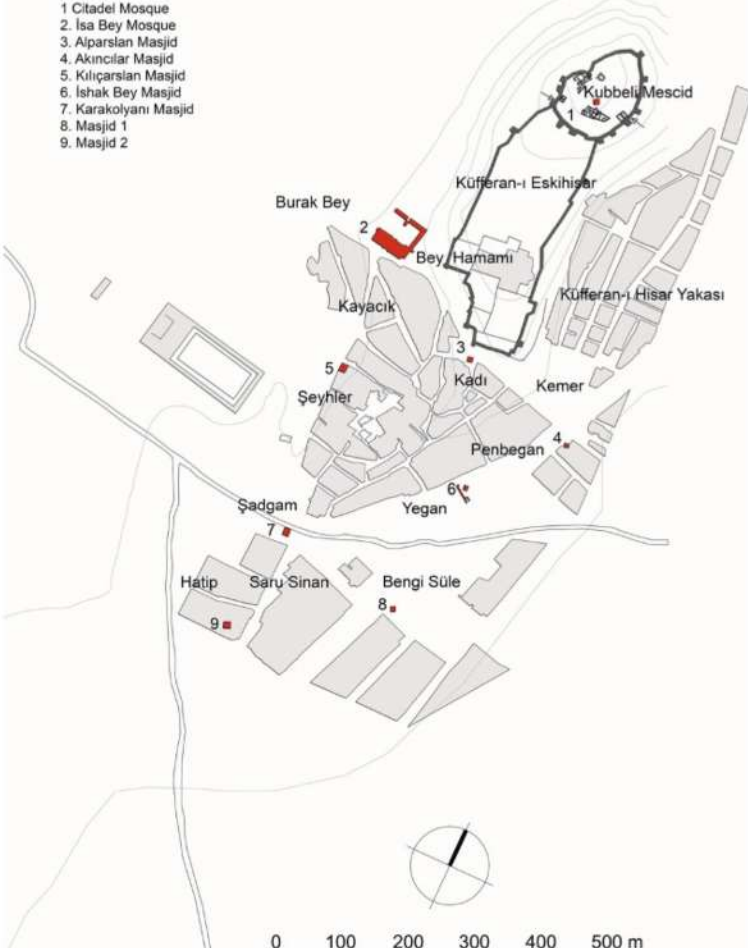


Fig. 7 Mosques and masjids around Ayasuluk under Aydinid Principate, from: Çağla Caner Yüksel (2019). "A Tale of Two Port Cities: Ayasuluk (Ephesus) and Balat (Miletus) during the Beylik Period", *Al-Masāqī*, 31(3): 346.

Therefore, different religious places were used by the mentioned ethnic communities only occasionally and at different dates. A similar spatio-temporal segregation persists in our day, though in a completely different conjuncture, after World War I, the following control of Ayasuluk (which was named Selçuk in 1914) from the Greek mainland, and population exchange between Greece and Turkey after re-establishment of Turkish control in the region.

Participated by a large community, the First Divine Liturgy of the Greek Orthodox Church was held at Basilica of St. John in August 1922 when Selçuk was controlled by Greece after World War 1, from May 1919 to September 1922. This was when St. John's was excavated from 1921 onwards by G.A. Sotiriou of the School of Theology in Athens, who discovered in the crypt debris lamps and various ecclesiastical utensils alongside bones that were carefully preserved and later taken to Greece. Greek Orthodox sermons still take place in St. John's. (©Municipality of Selçuk)



The Church of St. Mary was converted around AD 500 from the Market Basilica near the Roman harbour, which was itself converted from the south stoa of the Temple of Hadrian Olympios. The Third Ecumenical Council of Bishops is believed to have congregated in this basilica to approve St. Mary's epithet "Theotokos" (or "God-bearer") against Nestorianism in 431. After singular observances in 1951 and 1967, a Catholic community of various affiliations celebrate the Feast of Theotokos on the second Sunday of October since 1986. (all images from <https://www.selcukhaber.com/efes-antik-kentinde-meryem-ana-ayini-63623.html>)

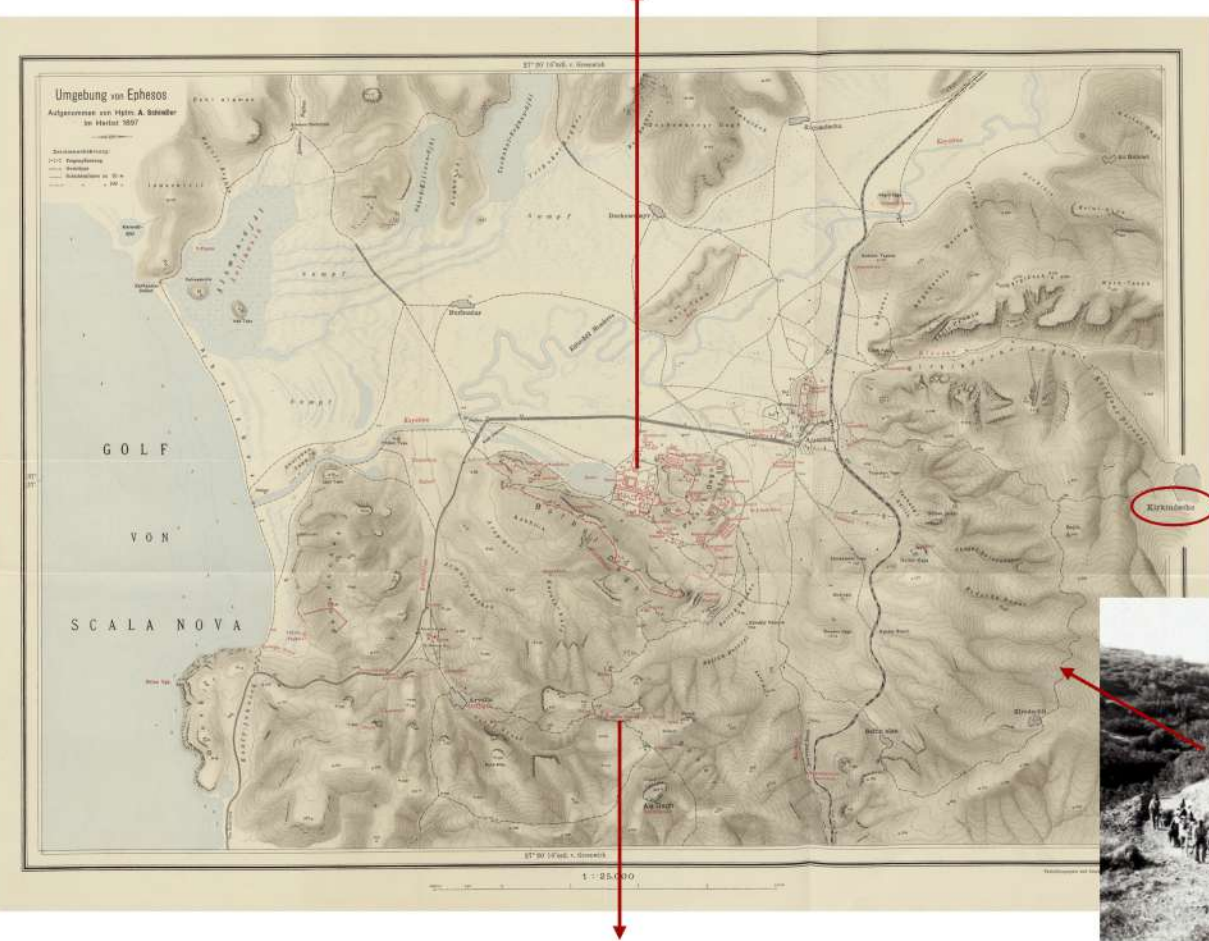


Fig. 4 Topographic relation of the Artemision, Basilica of St. John, Isa Bey Mosque, and Citadel at Ayasuluk (©Zeynep Aktüre, 2013).

The Greek Orthodox community now resident in Izmir celebrates the Feast of the Dormition on August 15 in the nineteenth-century St. Demetrius (or Ayasosli) Church in lower Şirince (earlier Çirkince, Fig. 8).

In the 1860s, Greek villagers from Çirkince reportedly followed a mountain track for pilgrimage to the "House of Virgin Mary" before its discovery by the Catholics in 1891. (map: ©OeAW-OeAI/A. Schindler; B&W photo: <http://www.levantineheritage.com/ephesus.htm>)

Fig. 8 St. Demetrius Church in Şirince (© Anıl Karadağ, 2016)



Fig. 9 The "House of Virgin Mary" during the Assumption celebrations (top left and centre, from: [visitephesus.org](http://www.visitephesus.org)) and daily visits (centre bottom and right: ©Zeynep Aktüre, 2011; interior panorama: [www.ToursCE.com](http://www.ToursCE.com))

The "House of Virgin Mary" under the custody of the Lazarist Catholic community now hosts the densest religious and spiritual use in "Ephesus". Here, the Assumption of St. Mary is celebrated annually on August 15 by a large community.

In the 1860s, the site was characterized by a sacred spring now flowing from fountains. Since the first one in 1896, visits by Popes to the House extended also to the Church of St. Mary in the "Ancient City".



In Conclusion

These examples from "Ephesus" serial World Heritage property reveal the inherent dynamism of belief systems and their links with religious heritage places through pilgrimage and other ritual practices involving many different forms of reuses.

Spatial and temporal segregation of various Christian communities' religious uses of the site appears as a successful strategy for managing crucial dogmatic differences between them, thus enabling ongoing cultural and spiritual sustainability of the property's religious use.



Fig. 10 High tourist density in the Ancient City of Ephesus (©OeAW-OeAI/Niki Gail, 2018)