



# EVKAF

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*"Your compassion will bring compassion."*

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## THE ANCIENT STORY OF WATER IN CYPRUS

One of the most important reasons for the prevalence of water-related foundations in our history is the narrations that listening to the soothing sounds of water is a Sunnah of the Prophet, as well as the words about the great reward for giving water to those who are stranded, quenching the thirst of those who are thirsty, digging wells, and irrigating arid lands.

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Sarayönü Square Fountain

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Waqf Bringing Coolness in the Summer Heat



## Cyprus's Historical Heritage Comes to Life in a Digital Environment

The Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus has taken an important step towards preserving and digitising immovable cultural assets that bear the traces of the Ottoman Waqf Civilisation. Under the 'Protection of Cultural Heritage' clause of the 2025 Economic and Financial Cooperation Agreement signed between the Republic of Turkey and the TRNC on 21 March 2025, inventorying efforts have officially commenced.

Within this scope, the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism and the Cyprus Evkaf Administration

have been designated as the responsible institutions for the implementation of this project. The work will be carried out with the aim of documenting all immovable cultural heritage in Cyprus and converting it into a digital database.

On 23 June 2025, a delegation led by Mr. Kadir Kantekin, Director of the Department of Foreign Relations of the General Directorate of Foundations of the Republic of Turkey, held important meetings with officials in the TRNC. During the meetings, the scope of the inventory work, the methodologies to be applied, and the relations with the partners to be cooperated with were discussed in detail. The work is planned to be completed by the end of 2025.

Within the framework of the project, various visits

will be organised today to explore Cyprus's rich cultural heritage more closely. These visits will include historical sites such as the Closed Maraş Region, Bilal Ağa Mosque, Lala Mustafa Pasha Mosque and Madrasa, and Kutup Osman Tomb and Tekke.

This initiative, which is of great importance for the preservation of historical heritage and its transmission to future generations, will also contribute to strengthening cultural interaction and a shared sense of history. The inventory to be prepared will serve as an important reference source for restoration projects and will be accessible in a digital format.



## Our Director General Prof. Dr. Mustafa Tümer Received the Azerbaijani Delegation at His Office

The Director General of the Cyprus Evkaf Administration, Prof. Dr. Mustafa Tümer, received Vügar İsgenderov, Member of the Azerbaijani Parliament and Member of the Azerbaijan-Cyprus Inter-Parliamentary Friendship Group, at his office.

During the meeting, issues related to friendship and cooperation between the two countries were discussed. Also present at the meeting were Nadir İsrailov, Member of the Board of Directors of the Azerbaijan Press Council and journalist-writer; Orhan Hasanoglu, President of the Azerbaijan-Cyprus Friendship Society; and Şentürk Hoşgür, President of the Manisa Azerbaijan Cultural Association.

During the visit, potential joint initiatives to further strengthen cultural, social, and historical ties were discussed. The historical role of the endowment tradition and its importance in the solidarity-based development of societies were particularly emphasised. The participants in the meeting

explored possible collaborations to ensure that this strong tradition is passed on to future generations in both the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus and Azerbaijan.

Prof. Dr. Mustafa Tümer expressed his pleasure at hosting the Azerbaijani delegation and stated that strengthening relations between the two brotherly countries is of great importance for regional peace and cultural richness.

During the meeting, Azerbaijani MP Vügar İsgenderov thanked Prof. Dr. Mustafa Tümer for his support for the work of the Turkic Academy and He also thanked him for his contributions to the section on the transportation sector in the "Turkic Economies 2024" report published within the scope of the Turkic World cooperation, particularly for his contributions to the important institutions mentioned under the heading "Institutional Structure in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus," namely the TRNC Development Bank, the

TRNC Central Bank, the Turkish Cypriot Chamber of Industry, and the Turkish Cypriot Chamber of Commerce. İsgenderov emphasised that these contributions have greatly contributed to both a deeper understanding of the economic structure of the TRNC and the strengthening of regional cooperation and development.

In addition, the meeting also discussed the Turkic Academy's upcoming report, "Turkic States Economies 2025: Transition to a Green Economy," to be published in 2025. This study is expected to analyse how the member and observer countries of the Organisation of Turkic States align their economic policies with climate goals and develop solutions to address environmental risks, while evaluating the transition processes towards low-emission, resource-efficient, and inclusive economies.

# SARAYÖNÜ SQUARE FOUNTAIN

*A fine example of the Cypriot tradition of endowments, this fountain carries not only water, but also; memories, culture and architectural value.*



*The fountain in Sarayönü Square is a silent witness that has stood the challenge of centuries.*

## A fountain in Nicosia whose sound has faded but memory lives on...

In the historic Sarayönü Square of Lefkoşa, there is a quietly flowing fountain; every drop holds a memory, every stone bears a trace. This elegant structure, situated at the heart of today's Atatürk Square, is not merely a source of water but also a monument that showcases Cyprus's endowment tradition, architectural aesthetics, and its connection with the people.

This fountain was restored in the early 19th century by Es-Seyyid Mehmet Emin Efendi, the Cypriot tax collector, and is described in waqf records as the "fountain near the well-known three-door coffeehouse." Originally believed to date back to the mid-18th century, this structure underwent extensive restoration between 1816 and 1821 and was incorporated into the endowment system. Since then, it has stood as a silent witness to the transformations of Nicosia.

## What Do the Witnesses of the Past Say?

An Italian traveller visiting the island in the 1760s described this fountain as "a Turkish fountain supplied with very good water, like the other fountains in the city." Louis Salvator's notes from 1873 mention that one of the two fountains in the square was located in the courtyard of a mosque and the other in the square itself.

## Information Box

Es-Seyyid Mehmet Emin Efendi was an Ottoman administrator who served in Cyprus in the 19th century. He played an important role in the restoration of many endowment buildings in Nicosia. He kept the spirit of endowment alive with the restoration of the Sarayönü Meydan Çeşmesi.

## How to get there?



*You can reach Sarayönü Square and the historic fountain by scanning the QR code above.*

## A Fountain in Nicosia's Social Memory

The people of Lefkoşa in the past, especially those from Samanbahçalı, used to draw water from this fountain and carry it home in containers. Children would distribute water throughout the streets in small carts. This water was not just a necessity; it was a traditional meeting place.

The octagonal fountain features elegant double-arched niches on each surface. Its tiled roof, which has since disappeared, and its half-columned cornice structure made it one of the most important architectural examples of its time. It shares similarities with the Hacı Hamid Bey Waqf Fountain in Tuzla. However, only the lower section of the fountain, which lost its upper roof in the late 1950s, has survived to the present day. It was restored and revived in 1976 by the Directorate of Antiquities and Museums.



*The old form of the Old Sarayönü Square and the Es-Seyyid Mehmet Emin Efendi square fountain, Nicosia, photo: John P. Foscolo, c.1920.*

# Waqf Brings Coolness in the Summer Heat

*The Ataullah Efendi Waqf, established in Istanbul in the 16th century, provided ice-cold water to those who were thirsty during the summer months.*

## A Teacher's Last Will: Kindness and Water

Ataullah Efendi was a student of Sheikh al-Islam Ebussuud Efendi, one of the most prominent scholars of the Ottoman Empire. He earned the title "Hoca-yi Sultani" (Teacher of the Sultan) for serving as a teacher to Sultan Selim II during his reign in Manisa.

Having dedicated his life to serving his nation, Ataullah Efendi made an important will to his close

ones in the final years of his life:

"Do not neglect the water distribution work of our waqf. Make sure to provide iced water during the summer months. Distributing water to people is a great act of kindness and a means of earning prayers."

These words were the most beautiful expression of his love for kindness and his devotion to society.

## A Glass of Water and Love for Humanity

Ataullah Efendi once received the following advice from his teacher, Ebussuud Efendi:

"One day, people will sell even a glass of water for money. I prayed that we would not live to see such days."

At the time, these words were not taken seriously. However, unfortunately, this situation has become a reality today. Ataullah Efendi's waqf has set an example of love by providing free water to ensure people do not go thirsty, standing against this harsh reality

## Conditions of the Ataullah Efendi Waqf's Water Service

- A water fountain will be constructed on the waqf's premises,
- During the summer months, iced or snow-cold water will be made available,
- Free water will be served to everyone who comes using the waqf's cups,
- Iced cold water will be provided for four months, and regular water will be provided during the remaining months,
- The waqf's revenues will be used to sustain this service.



Depiction representing the activities of the waqf during the Ottoman Empire.

## Waqf Details

Date of Establishment  
979 Hijri (1571 AD)

Place of Establishment  
Istanbul, Türkiye

Founder  
Ataullah Efendi bin Şemseddin



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