

Documentation and damage prevention in conflict areas: The acheiropoietos monastery, cyprus

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ABSTRACT: The analysis of the Αχειροποίητος monastery shows the superimposition of different buildings: a domed church with a central plan, built in late Byzantine times over the ruins of an early Christian basilica, enlarged by the addition of three successive narthexes, and therefore transformed into a longitudinal basilica. The name Αχειροποίητος, literally “made without hands”, referred to a sacred icon hosted therein. A walled enclosure surrounds the church and contains the monastery, which developed in subsequent phases, with different additions, demolitions and restorations. We outlined the formation process of the complex, from the VI cent. Basilica, to the transformation of the monastery into military barracks in the 1970, as a premise for the restoration project. Recently the Department of Antiquities assigned the monastery to the Girne American University for its restoration and it is urgent to accomplish some restorations. The management of this site, hence the political situation of northern Cyprus, represents an interesting case study on the contested heritage issue. Nevertheless, the heritage management in Cyprus, for the complex political situation of the island, bears more difficulties than in other UE countries, but we should consider that every heritage site has somehow a contested character. An architectural project was experimented, according to the typo-morphological approach of the Muratorian Italian School, based on the principle that new buildings should be the continuation of the old ones, without imitating them, but following their formation process, as the last step of an ongoing process. We did not conceive the new architecture as an object contrasting with the context, but following the full understanding of the processual transformations of the site, it was possible to design the new addition to the monastic building as a living organism, in conformity with the sacred context.

Keywords: Urban morphology, Architectural design, Architectural Heritage

1 FORMATION PROCESS

The complex is located in the outskirts of *Lapithos*, an urban settlement on the north coast of Cyprus, documented until the seventh century when, following the Syrian raids in Cyprus, the inhabitants abandoned it settling in other sites uphill. In 653 Abu ‘L-Awar, leading a Syrian army, sacked Cyprus. *Lapithos* was the last stronghold of the invasion and after the destruction of its walls; it capitulated following an agreement to trade gold and silver in change of the life for the inhabitants (Hill 1940, p. 285). It was probably at this time that someone buried the *Lambousa* treasure to save it from the invaders. In 655 AD, a bishop of *Lapithos* named Eusebius is documented, in the same time also Eulalius is quoted as bishop of *Lapithos*, with an uncertain date. The urban area of *Lapithos* has undergone some archaeological searching in the past, John Myres excavated the acropolis in 1913, and some of the fragments that are now in the monastery derive from these findings, like the several mosaics now inside the southern building. Here is today still visible the base of a statue of the emperor Tiberius, with a Greek inscription, dated 29 AD, that was originally placed in the gymnasium of *Lapithos*

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(Dittenberger 1903, n. 583, pp. 274275). The name *Ἀχειροποίητος*, literally made without hands, in the first phase of the church, was connected to an icon “made without hands”, so probably one of the numerous images of Christ or of the Virgin that are referred in history. There are other churches sharing this same name, including one in Thessalonica (built in 470 AD), and another one in Constantinople (built in 463 AD), both belonging to the Abramites. The name survives to this day through several misspellings, and we should consider it as an example of intangible heritage, testifying the history of a building conceived, and therefore named, to host this particular sacred image. The International Centre for Heritage Studies was established at Girne American University in August 2012 to bring together scholars and practitioners, and support a comprehensive approach to the study of heritage. The affiliates are academics in the fields related to heritage studies (such as architecture, restoration, history, and archaeology) working at local, national, and international levels. The research centre’s mission is to host researches and studies on heritage, in Cyprus and abroad, with particular focus on Architectural Heritage, including history, survey, documentation, restoration and design. During the international workshop “Reading and designing the area of Lambousa, Karavas”, held in Girne in 2014, we started different researches on the monastery. Specifically the activities accomplished include the laser scanner survey of the whole complex, the documentation of mosaics, *spolia* and wooden artefacts, the study of the different historical phases of the monastery, the design of a museum to host the *Lambousa* treasure, the design of a garden, and the design of an addition to the building. The international workshop was essential for the wider international cooperation framework and an essential prerequisite for the preservation and continuation into the future of the monument together with the UNDP and the Technical Committee for Cultural Heritage in Cyprus.

2 DESIGN METHODOLOGY

The reconstruction of the formation process of routes and settlements in the area of the monastery is one of the premises, following the Italian school of urban morphology, for the design of an addition to the monastery. On the northern coast of Cyprus, a main mountain ridge goes all the way from the East to the West; from this main ridge, secondary ridges descend towards the sea organizing the slope in a readable territorial organism. Only with the full multi-scalar understanding of the urban, territorial and built organism, it is possible to design an architecture conceived as the continuation of the ongoing process. We conceived the contemporary design not as opposed to history, but rather as a continuation of the past into the future. Teaching architectural design focused on archaeology is essential in Cyprus where ruins bear a relevant symbolic value: for the students the ruins become the living testimonies of a forgotten past. Several educational experiences have shown that architecture students, in front of a ruin, assume a reflective attitude that forces them to consider the *context*, in this case the *archaeological context*, as an integral part of the architectural design process. Often architecture students cannot understand ancient architectures, and therefore they are pushed to question their real subject expertise. They are indeed concerned about the ruins, since they belong to architecture, although old and abandoned, but cannot really deal with them. In other words, the relationship with the archaeological context triggers students’ particular attention and leads them to consider the place and the artefacts that were there in the past as a single organism. The mental process of understanding the relationships between different parts of an ancient building facilitates the transposition of these relationships to the contemporary design of a *living organism*. Most difficult for an educational project within an archaeological area, is to transmit the choice of a quiet poetic: a compositional process based on the dialectics between foreground and background. If the main subject of the composition are the ruins, the proposed new architecture should assume a background role, cautiously avoiding any desire to emerge as an independent form. This composition exercise becomes crucial in contemporary architecture, where the research seems dominated by *striking figures* rather than by the silent construction of architectures in continuity with a still *ongoing process* (Strappa 2014). Designing within an archaeological area, we should also consider the absence

of a given frame or limit. In the ordinary design process, the frame is determined by the property limits, and inside this frame, the architect usually displays his compositional figures. An archaeological project instead overlaps different frames, one given by the excavation perimeter, the other by the limits of existing public and private properties, another one comes from the limit of urban areas, the perimeter of archaeological restraints is very important, and finally the perimeter of the ancient architecture and its pertinence. In these cases, architects should design their composition within a complex framework, and not as a single meaningful subject. If the project normally consists in the elaboration of an architectural figure within a given frame, in this case the design exercise consists rather in the development of a complex system of frames inside an existing figure, the archaeological site. Usually ruins look like an incomplete figure, a partially obliterated picture, and herein the project should develop an *independent relationship* with the past avoiding any historicist mimicry.



Figure 1. Front view of the church (photo: A. Camiz, 2014).

The correct way for an architect to walk on a *classical soil* is to design the limit of the ancient site as a contemporary place. In addition, the design of an architecture within the ruins highlights the sustainability of pre-capitalist architecture, which can be opposed to most contemporary architecture. From Vitruvius to Alberti, from Michelangelo to Bernini, the *envois* of the *Prix de Rome*, Schinkel, Louis Kahn, Le Corbusier, Libera and Quaroni, most important architects have dealt with archaeology within their work: archaeology offers a *catharsis* for contemporary architecture; it is not a place where to bury *ancient* or *modern* repeatable styles. Designing the space between the city and an archaeological site therefore provides some educational tools to guide future designers even in small historical centres (Strappa, Carlotti, and Camiz 2016). Herein the same *silent poetic* and balanced relationship between foreground (historical context) and background (contemporary project), can reasonably be replicated and experienced with the specific purpose of reconstituting a formal relationship between the context and the contemporary design process. Different design groups, coordinated by the writer, have adopted a general strategy specification to design some small projects; all the proposed interventions follow the sustainability, and the design principles defined by Cesare Brandi, i.e. *reversibility*, *recognisability*, *compatibility*, *minimal intervention*

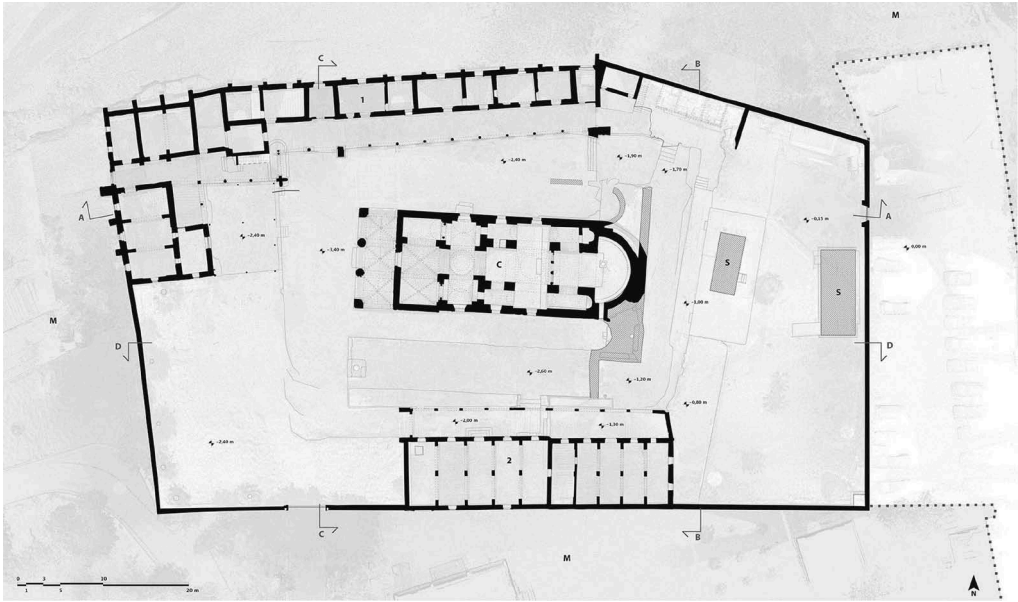


Figure 2. Carmine Canaletti (2015), Laser survey, plan of the Monastery, Lettura e progetto dell'area di Lambousa-Karavas, Cipro, rapp. G. Verdiani, co-rapp. A. Camiz, Università degli Studi di Firenze, Scuola di Architettura, Laurea Magistrale in Architettura 4/s.

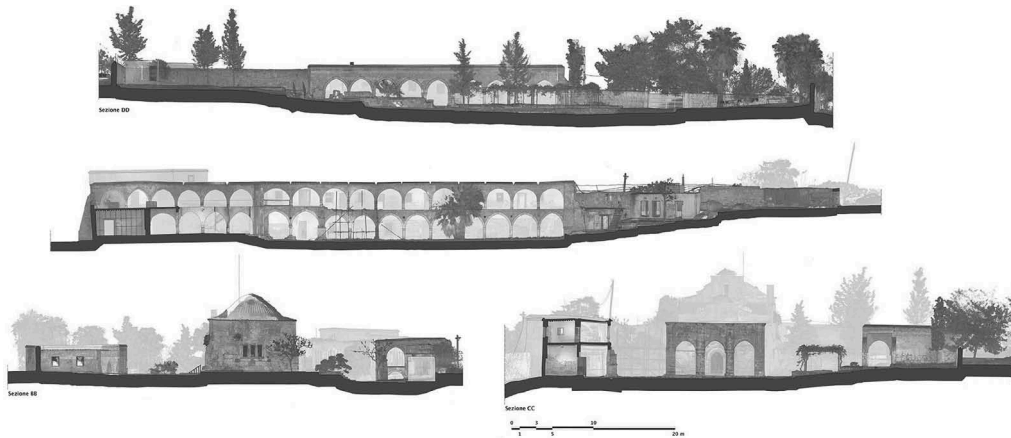


Figure 3. Internal elevations and sections of the Monastery, Lettura e progetto dell'area di Lambousa-Karavas, Cipro, rapp. G. Verdiani, co-rapp. A. Camiz, Università degli Studi di Firenze, Scuola di Architettura, Laurea Magistrale in Architettura 4/s.

and the partial image reintegration. (Brandi 1963). The project completes the formation process of the anti-polar Eastern special building. We considered the ancient monastery as a living organism to be continued by a new addition, the project therefore, using contemporary materials such as steel, stone and wood, replicates the same measure of the bays of the monastery so to develop the addition. We designed the elevation of the new composition to extend the fundamental lines of the ancient monastery: ground line, base, elevation, connection and conclusion lines were continued in the new composition, strictly avoiding any *mimesis*

of the ancient buildings, and continuing the same organism started with the construction of the ancient church. The nodes where the new architecture encounters the old buildings are the crucial part of the design operation. The addition completes the living organism of the monastery, avoiding strictly any kind of aesthetical contraposition. Neither touching the old building, or bearing loads on the old walls. The new building is thus recognizable as another part and a different piece of a composition that shows even today and unique character. The distributive system of the complex, expresses the continuity with the past by granting full accessibility to all the parts, even for people with disabilities.

3 CONCLUSIONS

Within the workshop, we compared different definitions of landscape: the one given by the European Convention of Landscape, “an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors” (EU, 2000), and that provided by Emilio Sereni, “the form that man, in the course and for the purpose of its agricultural production, consciously and systematically gives to the natural landscape” (Sereni, 1961). The discussion questioned if the landscape design should be a conscious material transformation of a living organism, or an aesthetically oriented manipulation of an in-animated object, and then proposed strategies for the education of conscious communities that can guide the transformations so not to follow only speculative interests. Following these premises, we conceived a garden within the monastery of *Acheiropoietos*, inspired to Walafrid Strabo’s poem. The *Hortulus* was composed in Latin in the IX century using hexameters to describe the monastic garden of Reichenau. In the poem, 23 different plants are described. These same plants were chosen as a living model for the project. The project uses wooden floor and flowers beds with a self-sufficient irrigation system and green hedges, demonstrating how it is possible to design a contemporary garden, following a medieval model, in an



Figure 4. The scaffolding is holding in place the leaning column, urgent intervention is required (photo: A. Camiz, 2014).

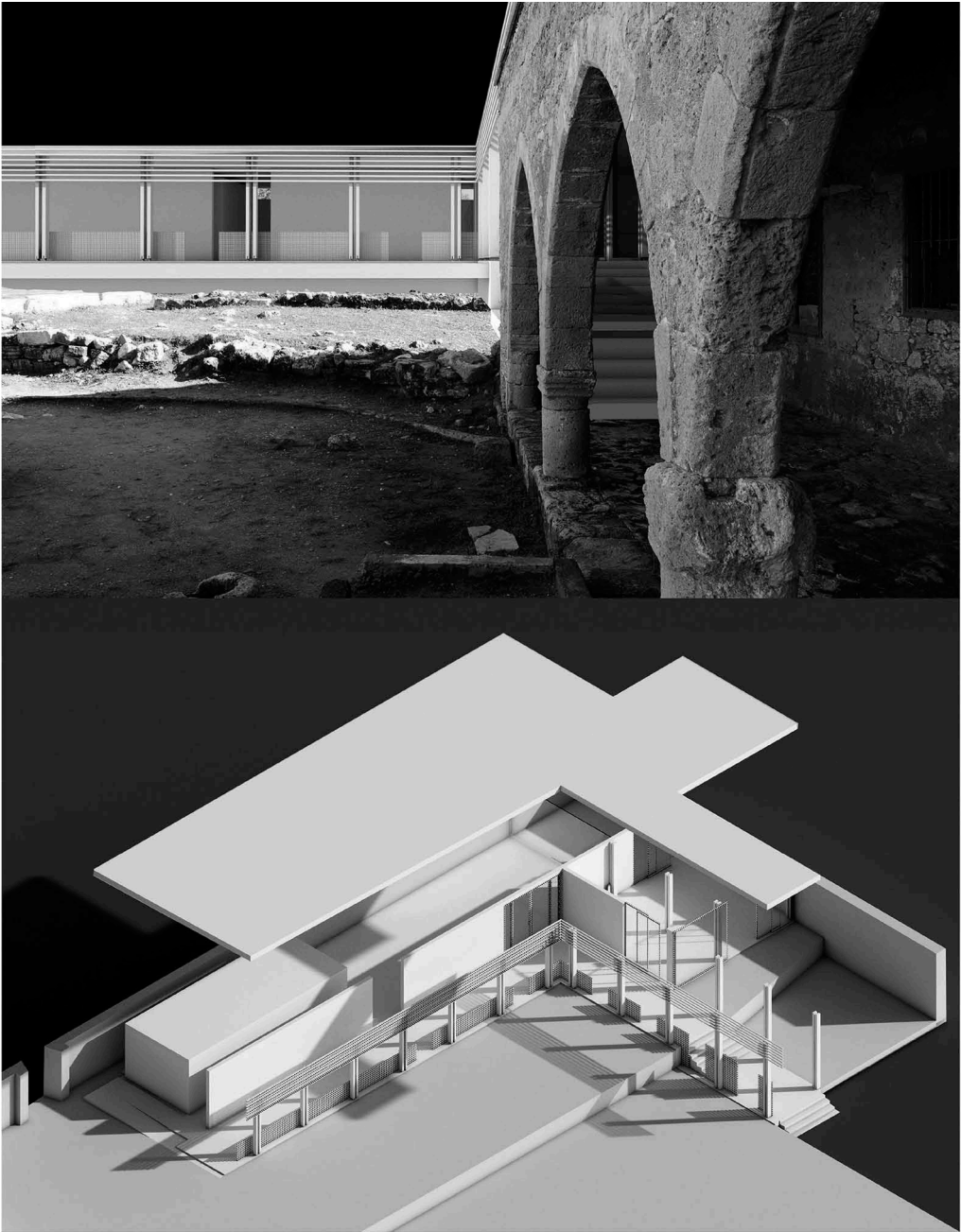


Figure 5. The formation process of the project, C. Camerota, A. Venneri, E. Vizioli, Architectural reading and design of the continuation of the Acheiropoietos Monastery, tutors: A. Camiz, L. Ferroglio, International design workshop/Graduation laboratory (Architecture and Restoration) Reading and designing the area of Lambousa-Karavas, Cyprus, 2014, Girne American University, “Sapienza” University of Rome, 2014.

archaeological site, according to the analysis of Urban Morphology, and the principles of restoration described by Cesare Brandi: i.e. recognisability, compatibility, reversibility, minimum intervention. (Brandi 1963). This enclosed medieval garden was designed to host, in one part the twenty-three plants described in Walafrid Strabo’s *Hortulus*, and in the other part,



Figure 6. The formation process of the project, D. Michele Daniele, F. Lofiego, V.D. Matteis, Architectural reading and design of the continuation of the Acheiropoietos Monastery, tutors: A. Camiz, L. Ferroglio, International design workshop/Graduation laboratory (Architecture and Restoration) Reading and designing the area of Lambousa-Karavas, Cyprus, 2014, Girne American University, "Sapienza" University of Rome, 2014.

a garden dedicated to mint plants. Both of the two parts of the garden were designed, using sustainable materials and very simple technologies, so to propose a possible solution for a compatible, reversible and recognizable design within the site of the ancient Monastery. The continuation of the existing path of the portico was outlined as a system of matrix, planned

construction and connection routes, so to dispose the flowerbeds containing the plants in a way that simulates the formation process of an urban tissue within the monastery. The result is a continuation of the formation process of the monastery that enhances the site and its history, without imitating the past.

None of the proposed projects will be built in reality, but they were conceived as the experimental application of a theoretical method. The proposed method, based on the careful examination of each context and its history, recovers the rules of the transformation from the analytical reading of the formation process of the artefact. Through a project, not intended as an *impromptu* academic exercise, but rather as a design experiment, we intend to suggest to the local authorities some possible interventions in the area of the Monastery. The projects represent diverse topics, such as the reintegration of the image, or that of the construction of the margin, but they are all, in different ways, set on the transposition of the Brandi's principles of restoration to the architectural composition. All proposed projects are reversible, recognizable, consistent, and based on the minimum intervention, but finally the resulting picture certainly does not belong to the domain of the restoration itself, but rather to that of architectural composition in an archaeological area. In the analysis of the formation process of the monastery, the contribution of urban morphology and architectural typology was essential, so to develop analytically the proposal of an addition to the monastery as the continuation of an ongoing process.

In the faculties of Architecture offer undergraduate curricula in architecture which usually include only two exams in history of architecture, one theoretical exam in restoration and no elective courses in history, archaeology, restoration and survey. In addition, the different curricula available in the bachelor, master and PhD, do not include any specific option regarding heritage, so no curriculum is available for the future architects, in restoration, history or heritage management.

By comparison in Italy most of the faculties of architecture include three exams in history, two studio exams in restoration, one exam in survey and one in heritage in their curriculum, in addition to this there are specific master curricula dedicated to heritage (such as the master in Architecture (restoration) at "Sapienza" University of Rome). Also in Italy there are a specialization course (post master courses) in restoration, and several PhD programs in restoration, history and survey within the faculties of architecture. Many Faculties of architecture do have a Department of History and Restoration: and before the last university reform, which forced all Universities to aggregate their departments (so to have over 50 members) every faculty had one Department dedicated to history and restoration. In addition to this, following the compulsory professional continuing education that every practicing architect have to follow, 20 credits per year, some Chapters of Architects (such as the Rome Chapter of Architects) developed specific professional training programs dedicated to heritage. There is a Department of Heritage in the Roman Chapter of Architects, founded in 2008 and directed by Virginia Rossini. In these last seven years the policy that the largest chapter of architects in Europe has adopted (Rome has 18224 registered members. Source: Chapter of Architects President, September 2015) for professional training includes heritage as an important topic.

In the last years seminars, conferences, and workshops contributed in increasing the level of understanding of heritage within registered professionals. In countries with a history of several millenniums of civilization such as Italy and Cyprus, adopting a specific teaching policy dedicated to heritage can increase the jobs available for the new generations, and help the registered professionals to catch up with the many activities the often are offered through tender calls by UNPD and EU.

Today with this situation in education there is no option for architects trained in this country to work in the Heritage sector. The professional activities that architects can follow in Heritage, include the survey of monuments, archaeological sites and urban tissues, the documentation of heritage, the restoration, the management of Museums, archaeological sites and archaeological parks, the design of all the above, and also the design of new architectures in historical and archaeological contexts and finally, of course, the historical research. We are proposing here a new direction in architectural education in Cyprus which would affect seriously the job offer in the future, but also help Cypriot architects to participate to heritage

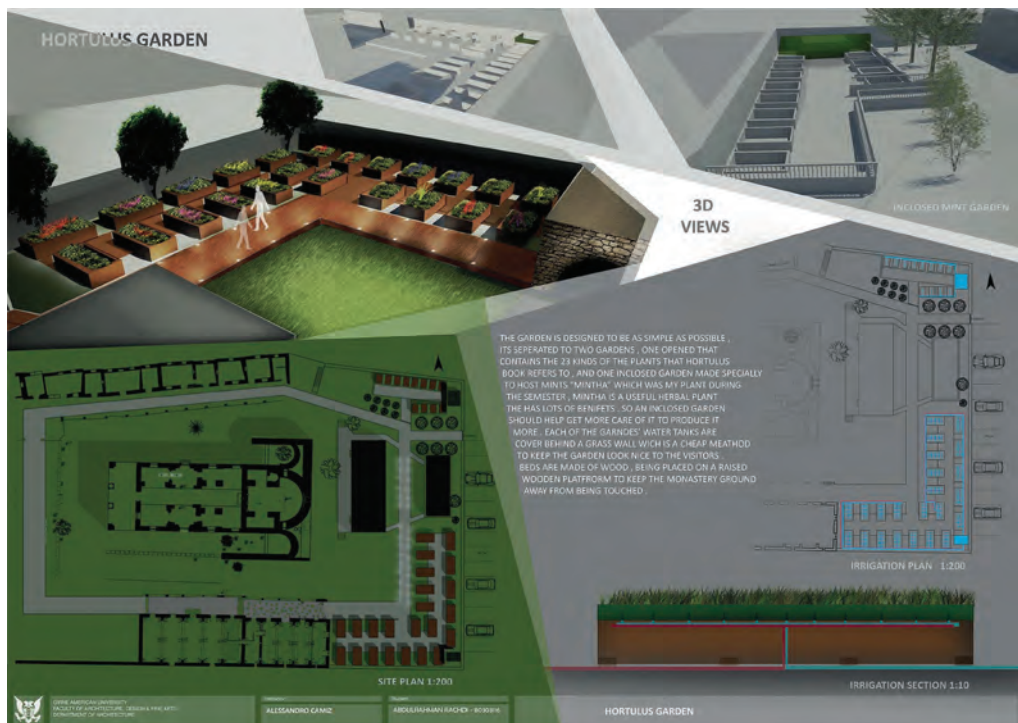


Figure 7. Abdul Rahman Rachdi, Walafrid Strabo's Hortulus in the Acheiropoietos Monastery, Cyprus, (ARCH371- Landscape Design, Asst. Prof. Dr. Arch. Alessandro Camiz, Girne American University Faculty of Architecture, Design and Fine Arts, Fall 2014). Designing the area of Lambousa-Karavas, Cyprus, 2014, Girne American University, "Sapienza" University of Rome, 2014.

design and management outside the island, and with a serious outcome in the perception of heritage in the people, and therefore in the inherited collective memory of the Country.

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BUILT HERITAGE IN POST-DISASTER SCENARIOS

IMPROVING RESILIENCE
AND AWARENESS TOWARDS
PRESERVATION, RISK MITIGATION
AND GOVERNANCE STRATEGIES

EDITED BY

MARCELLO BALZANI
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BUILT HERITAGE IN POST-DISASTER SCENARIOS

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