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# The Architecture of the Hafiz Ahmed Agha Library of the Medieval City of Rhodes and the Religious, Educational and Charitable Institutions that Surround it

## Introduction

This study aims to present the architecture of the Hafiz Ahmed Agha library 1793-4<sup>1</sup> in the medieval town of Rhodes, in conjunction with the surrounding religious, educational and charitable foundations. The library, containing rare manuscripts focused on the Ottoman and broader Muslim world was donated by its founder to the town of Rhodes, intended for the benefit of visitors, scholars, and researchers. The manuscripts it contained were written mainly in the Arabic and Ottoman Turkish language.

Public libraries were an integral part of the Ottoman Empire’s educational system and functioned as knowledge centers, conserving and disseminating Islamic, scientific, and philosophic works. Their founding helped paving the way towards the Tanzimat reforms (1839-1876), which promoted the modernisation of the Empire and the wider spreading of education. Most libraries were stand-alone buildings or integrated into mosques, *medreses* (religious schools), and *tekkes* (place of worship). The libraries were often funded by *vakufs* (religious and charitable foundations), such as the Hafiz Ahmed Agha foundation in Rhodes.

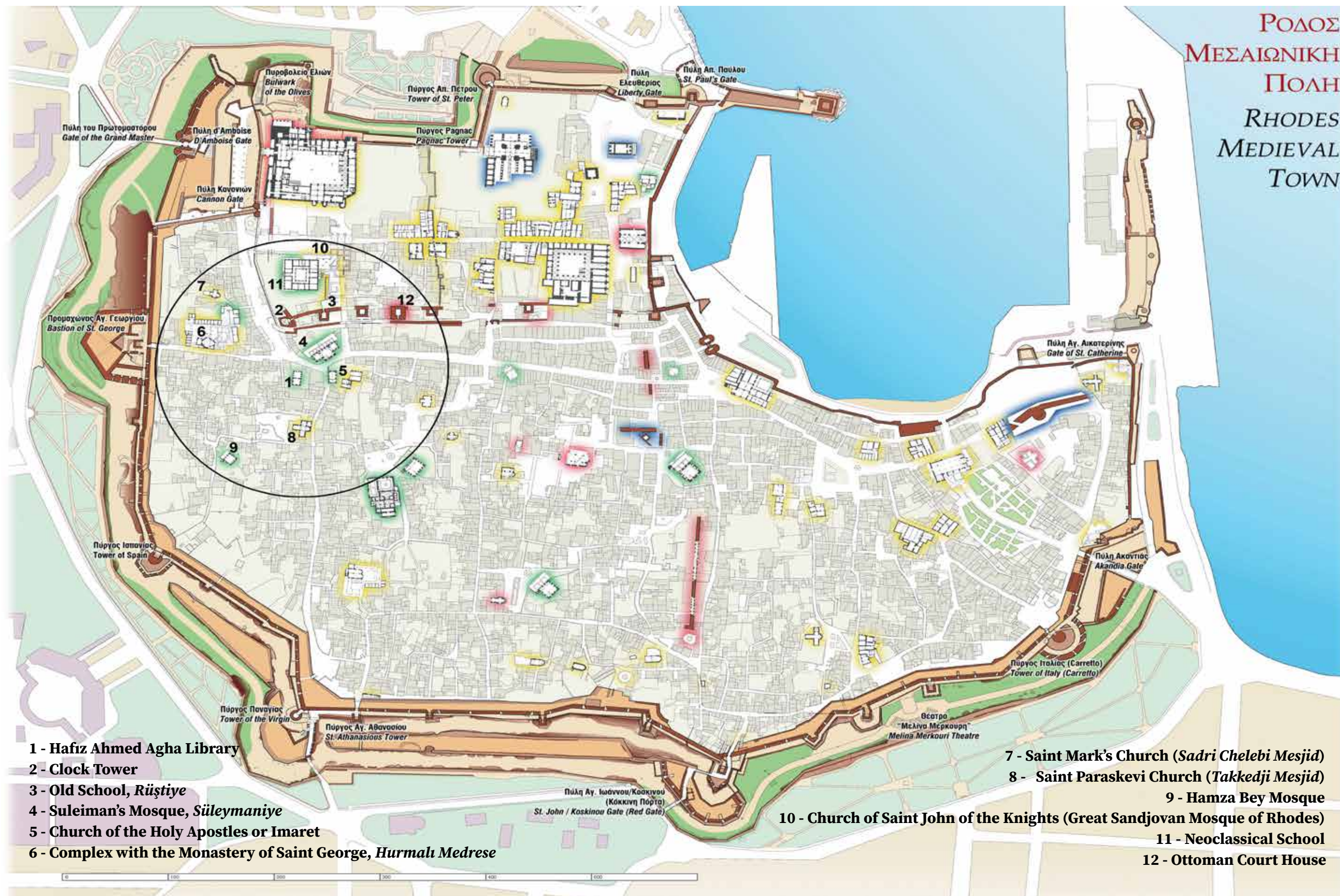
The most important libraries include: the Edirnekapi library (Constantinople, 1828); the Feizullah Efendi Public Library (Constantinople, 1828); the Nuruosmaniye Library (Constantinople, 1755); Fatih Medrese Library (Constantinople, 19th century); the Gazi Hüseyin Paşa Library (Salonica, 19th century); the Mehmed Ali Paşa Library (Kavala, 19th century)<sup>2</sup>.

The continuation of the founder’s donation by his son Ahmed Fethi Pasha, who in 1852<sup>3</sup> built the Clock on the SW corner tower of the Byzantine Castle and the Collachium of the Knights, and the School in the adjacent building in conjunction with the second Byzantine tower, came as a complement to the great creation of Suleiman’s social foundation.

Following Rhodes’ treaty of conquest by the Ottomans in 1522-23, Suleiman attempted to organise charitable and educational institutions. They converted the use of big churches into mosques, such as the Great *Sandjovan* Mosque, in the conventual church of Saint John of the Collachium and the *Kaduri* mosque in the Knights’ cathedral and previously the Byzantine cathedral of Our Lady of the Castle<sup>4</sup> or smaller Catholic and Orthodox churches into *masjids* for the old town’s *mahalles* (small neighbourhoods). He organised the theological school in the *Hurmali Medrese* in Agios Georgios’ convent<sup>5</sup> and the soup kitchen for the poor, the *Imaret*<sup>6</sup>, next to the Ottoman library. At the same time, they first proceeded with the construction of big mosques, such as Ibrahim Pasha’s Mosque,

1 Γεωργαλή (2008), 382-3; Balducci (1932), 65-66.  
2 Information on Google.  
3 Information on Google <https://www.fethipasavakfi.com/gr/muvakkithane-saat-kulesi-rustiye-mektebi.php>  
4 Manousou & Ntellas (2022), 158.  
5 Gabriel (1923), 202-207; Ορλάνδος (1948), 99-106; Ντέλλας et al. (1997), 532, 535-538, 550-551; Ντέλλας (2008c), 37-43.  
6 Ντέλλας et al. (1997), loc. cit.; Ντέλλας (1998), 167-178; Ντέλλας (2008l), 376-377.

ΡΟΔΟΣ  
ΜΕΣΑΙΩΝΙΚΗ  
ΠΟΛΗ  
RHODES  
MEDIEVAL  
TOWN



- 1 - Hafız Ahmed Agha Library
- 2 - Clock Tower
- 3 - Old School, *Rüstiye*
- 4 - Suleiman's Mosque, *Süleymaniye*
- 5 - Church of the Holy Apostles or Imaret
- 6 - Complex with the Monastery of Saint George, *Hurmalı Medrese*

- 7 - Saint Mark's Church (*Sadri Chelebi Mesjid*)
- 8 - Saint Paraskevi Church (*Takkedji Mesjid*)
- 9 - Hamza Bey Mosque
- 10 - Church of Saint John of the Knights (Great Sandjovan Mosque of Rhodes)
- 11 - Neoclassical School
- 12 - Ottoman Court House

which was originally dedicated to Sultan Suleiman<sup>1</sup>, and Redjep Pasha’s Mosque<sup>2</sup>, and hammams, such as the *Eski* Hammam and the New Hammam<sup>3</sup>. Suleiman appointed *imams*, Muslim clerics and teachers, and he specified the real estate property of his foundation, the *vakufs*, for their and the mosques’ upkeep. But most importantly, he endowed his foundation with the taxes from Rhodes and Kos, but also the *maktu* (lump-sum taxes) of the other privileged islands of the South Sporades. Indicatively, the tax income for Rhodes in the 17th century amounted to 345 881 akche, administered by the *mütevelli*. At various times during the 18th century and up until the Italian period (1912-1948), the taxation of Rhodes and Kos, but also of the other islands, became heavier<sup>4</sup>. Nonetheless, the 18th and 19th centuries crack-down on piracy by the Ottoman fleet enforced the sense of security and peace and contributed to the development of the islands’ economy. Rhodes and Kos in particular, being centers of the wider SE Aegean region, had leading roles in the abundant agricultural production and the dynamic trade and shipping, in conjunction with its industry, ports, and shipyards.

At the same time, the Greeks and the Jews dominate the shops of the bazaar and the old market in the 19th century, as well as the trade with Smyrna and Alexandria, but also the West and East<sup>5</sup>. Therefore, this explains the increase in income from tax for the *Vakuf* foundation and the construction of important mosques in the 18th and 19th centuries, such as the Sultan-Mustafa mosque 1764-5<sup>6</sup>, the Suleiman mosque 1808<sup>7</sup>, the Mehmet Agha mosque 1820<sup>8</sup> and more. Correspondingly, the Christians also built post-Byzantine churches in the 18th century, particularly the cross-groined vaulted churches, such as the Rhodes Cathedral (*Mitropoli*) in 1750<sup>9</sup>, the Holy Virgin of Trianta in 1756, St Nicholas in 1759, Our Lady Tsambika the Lower in Archangelos in 1760, St Irene in Lachania in 1760, and the monastery of Archangel Michael Panormitis in Symi in 1783, as well as many churches from the 19th century until 1924 (a total of approximately 135) in the town’s *marasia* (neighbourhoods outside the old town) and the other villages of Rhodes, but also of the Dodecanese and across the straits on the coast of Asia Minor<sup>10</sup>. Jewish synagogues were also built in the Medieval town of Rhodes<sup>11</sup>. At the same time, public baths and educational buildings get built for the Muslims (the Yeni or Mustafa Hammam,<sup>12</sup> the Neoclassical School 1876 and following its destruction in 1898), the Orthodox, and the Jews of Rhodes.

The private *vakuf* foundation of Hafiz Ahmed Agha with the Library (1793-4) in the 18th century, and his son Ahmed Fethi Pasha with the Clock Tower and the *Rüştiye* (Junior High School, 1852) in the 19th century came as a complement to education and the charitable foundations of Suleiman’s public *vakuf*, raising and promoting the town as an important cultural center in the Ottoman Empire’s eastern Mediterranean.

Rhodes has been a lively intertemporal town from its founding in 408 B.C. to this day and it has preserved important monuments from all the periods of its long history. The Medieval Town in particular, which is the center of ancient Rhodes, retains excavations of the Ancient town and the most important monuments of the Byzantine (5th century - 1309), Hospitaller (1309-1522), Ottoman (1523-1912), Italian (1912-1947) and modern Greek periods. Restorations done in recent years have showcased most of them. The importance of the Medieval Town of Rhodes led to its designation as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1988. The coexistence of monuments from all these periods creates a rich historical environment for the life and function of the Library and contributes to its showcasing and exposure on the western end of the Medieval town’s bazaar.

1 - The Hafiz Ahmed Agha Library

During this period, private initiatives also emerged—such as that of Hafiz Ahmed Agha, chief equerry to Sultan Selim III (r. 1789–1807)—who donated a building in 1793–94 to establish the Ottoman library in Rhodes. His aim was to improve the education of the town’s Muslim population, particularly serving the imams and students of the Hurmali Medrese, which had been founded under the Suleiman Foundation. The library collection was originally stored by Hafiz Ahmed Agha in Murat Reis Tekke<sup>13</sup> and when the Library building was completed in 1794, it was transferred there<sup>14</sup>. Later it also supported the needs of the other educational institutions, the *Rüştiye* gymnasium in between the library and the Hospitaller Grand Master’s Palace, built by Ahmed Fethi Pasha, son of Hafiz Ahmed Agha in 1852 along with the Clock tower<sup>15</sup>. But also the newer foundations, like the School of the first building of the “Suleiman Medrese of 1876”, which was built on the ruins of the Great Sendjovan Mosque following its destruction in 1856. But even after its destruction and rebuilding in 1898, it supported the needs of today’s Neoclassical School. The School functioned as a Primary, Middle and High School for boys and girls from Rhodes, but also from the other islands, Cyprus and Asia Minor<sup>16</sup>. And finally it served the *Idadiye* (High School) in Mandraki, Rhodes, the building that during the Italian period (1912-1948) was converted into a Court House. At the same time, Rhodes would be visited by scholars of the medieval Qurans in the old Ottoman writing, in Arabic and Persian that indicate the town’s important place in the Muslim world of the eastern Mediterranean, along with the other centers of the Ottoman Empire like Constantinople, Smyrna, Salonica etc.

The library complex is accessed through the monumental entrance on Orpheus Street, across from the western main entrance of the Suleiman Mosque at the end of Socrates Street. The main structure is in the center of the courtyard<sup>17</sup>, which is surrounded by a high wall. On either side of the entrance, to the east and to the west, there is an auxiliary two-story building, serving to support the library’s functions and its wardens’ accommodation. Auxiliary spaces in the back of the courtyard provide storage and sanitary facilities. The library building consists of two tall square rooms measuring 7.5 x 7.5 m each. They are covered by semi-spherical domes resting on octagonal bases formed of the four corners and the four diagonals supported by acute quarter-spherical triangles adorned with radiating ribs. The northern square space, serving as the entrance, has three openings

1 Manousou & Ntellas (2022), 161; Balducci (1932), 93-99; Ντέλλας (2008j), 364-365.  
2 Balducci (1932), 98-113; Μάγος (2008), 366-367; Ντέλλας (2017), 171-179; Manousou & Ntellas (2022), 161-2.  
3 Balducci (1932), 39-58.  
4 Ντέλλας (2012), 104-105; Παπαχριστοδούλου (1994), 400, 435.  
5 Ντέλλας (2012), 94-96.  
6 Balducci (1932), 113-127; Ντέλλας (2008k), 368-369.  
7 Balducci (1932), 126-139; Βογιατζής (2007), 396–400; Ντέλλας (2008i), 360-363; Ντέλλας et al (2009), 129-154.  
8 Balducci (1932), 87-92; Ντέλλας (2008g), 91-96; Οικονομίδου (2007), 140-144.  
9 Ντέλλας (2021), 19-52.  
10 Ντέλλας (2012), and in the churches in the ΚΣΕΔ annex.  
11 Ντέλλας (2008h), 101-106 and also the Kahal-Shalom synagogue, 113-114.  
12 Balducci (1932), 45-58, Κανετάκη (2008), 380-381.

13 Balducci (1932), 81-86.  
14 Manousou & Ntellas (2022), 153.  
15 Γεωργαλή (2008), 382-3.  
16 Ντέλλας et al (2017), 345-348.  
17 Balducci (1932), 65-66.



FIGURE 2: The Hafız Ahmed Agha Library complex, a mini külliye, consisting of the Library, the former classroom (left) and the librarian house (right) in the courtyard. Photo: G. Ntellas, 2025.

on the outside. The southern square space has two windows and one light aperture on its external sides. The main entrances to the courtyard and to the main library building are both monumental; they are accessed via semi-circular marble steps and highlight their architecture.



FIGURE 3: The Hafiz Ahmed Agha Library reading room.  
Photo: T. Tuten, 2025

lowered arches. The arced light apertures have wooden lattice panels on the outside, and wooden frames with glass on the inside.

The distinctive features of the library's openings—characterized by composite cross-sections that frame them—set them apart from the corresponding elements in Hospitaller architecture. While similar in form, they differ in width and depth, being thinner and less shallow, and reflect a development within the tradition of medieval Rhodian architecture. This feature appears in many such monuments of the same period in Rhodes. Thus, doorway frames with similar shapes and cross-sections appear in churches from the 1750-60 period in Rhodes such as the Cathedral, Our Lady of Tsambika the Lower in Archangelos, the Holy Virgin of Trianta, Agios Nicholas in Rhodes town and more. Similar doorway frames appear in mosques, such as the Sultan Mustafa Mosque

The morphological elements of the library are of particular interest, highlighting their architectural construction in the 18th century post-Byzantine period. The doors leading from the street into the courtyard, the main building and the internal connections are arched, with lowered arches and rectangular frames with composite cross-sections. The main entrance lintel is taller and includes the Ottoman inscription: 'Sâhibu'l-hayrât ve'l-hasenât sâbikan Rikabdâr-ı Hazret-i Şehriyârî Rodosî Hâfız Ahmed Ağa' (Possessor of charitable deeds and former chief equerry to his Sovereign Sultan, Hafız Ahmed Agha from Rhodes 1208=1794).<sup>18</sup> The library's main entrance is topped by a horizontal fringe with a composite cross-section. The wooden door bears decorative sheathing with local motifs similar to those of other areas in the Balkans. On the exterior, the rectangular windows have protective grating and glass in wooden frames with composite cross-sections, as well as arced lintels with composite cross-sections. Internally, they are covered by built-in arced openings with

1764-5, the Murat Reis Mosque from 1636-7 and 1797, but also in synagogues. For example, the *Kahal Kadosh* Synagogue, aka Holy Synagogue of Peace or New Synagogue, is a building from the last Ottoman period, perhaps from the early 19th century, according to the date on its pebble mosaic 5601=1841.

The main facades of the library are topped by a complex, coated, built-in fringe of large dimensions, implying a later intervention with neoclassical influences, perhaps from 1852 when the founder's son, Ahmed Fethi Pasha, took charge.

The library is constructed of walls made of visible ashlar masonry in porous limestone, as is common in monuments of all periods in Rhodes. The doorways are made of gray and white marble. The floor is wooden, while the courtyard floor is made of pebble mosaics decorated with lace ribbons and vine frames designed with white and black pebbles. The roof's domes are built with Rhodian limestone and wooden shuttering, covered with *Khorasani* mortar, which is one of the best insulating materials used in Rhodian monuments.



FIGURE 4: The librarian house, nowadays the residence of the caretakers (left) and the former classroom.  
Photos: G. Ntellas, 2005

According to the 1793 foundation charter, the library's two day-time doormen and two night-watchmen were to reside inside the complex. It therefore stands to reason that the auxiliary structures must have existed since then, to accommodate the guards. Oral tradition claims they were built by the founder's successor, Ahmed Fethi Pasha, but this is probably when the final organisation of the two auxiliary buildings was completed<sup>19</sup>.

The layout of the two auxiliary structures follows the architecture of 18th and 19th century Balkan houses, which was prevalent at the time. The western wing's ground floor functioned as day offices for the guards, while the eastern wing's ground floor was the nighttime room. The two rooms on the western wing's first story and the corresponding one on the eastern wing functioned as *odas* and stand-alone living quarters, in accordance with the Muslim way of life. Of particular importance are the western wing's first-story NW *oda* and the corresponding one in the eastern wing. They are arranged with a raised wooden floor, a fireplace, and surrounding *sedie* beds for sleeping or lounging. On the lower level, on the wall next to the *oda's* entrance a ceiling-high *musandıra* closet is

<sup>18</sup> Foundation's website [www.fethipasavakfi.com](http://www.fethipasavakfi.com)

<sup>19</sup> Γεωργαλή (2008), 382-3.

placed to serve the needs of the residence. On their external facades and toward the *hayat*, the *odas* are connected to windows and rectangular light apertures.

On the western wing's ground floor there is an open-air gallery in front of the rooms opening to the courtyard; its facade is made of stonework and it has a series of two arches with a light aperture in between. On the first story outside the *odas*, an open-air gallery is formed on the *hayat* by a wooden construction with stanchions, grating, and characteristic corbels that give the impression of an arched shape. On the eastern wing's ground floor the gallery is formed by a series of stone piers and wooden beams, as is the wooden gallery on the corresponding *hayat* on the first story. They have a mezzanine and flat wooden roof made of beams, decking and the local traditional *patelia* insulation (made of clay soil). The buildings are protected from rain by a wooden canopy (*tourades*) with bowed metal sheets, found on the upper zone of the facades, above the windows or light apertures and the balcony. Farther up, the parapet is covered with *Khorasani* mortar (an insulating material made of ground roof tiles) to protect the masonry from humidity.

The complex and the guards' houses are served by two small auxiliary spaces integrated into the south side of the courtyard: a vault-storage room, and a sanitary facility with toilets.

The library complex was studied and recorded between 1988 and May 1991, and it was repaired by the Medieval Town Office of Rhodes Municipality. The work revealed morphological elements of the building, the other structures, and of the courtyard, which were restored<sup>20</sup>. The building continues to function as a library.

## 2 - The Clock Tower (Ahmed Fethi Pasha)

Ahmed Fethi Pasha's clock tower is integrated into the SW corner tower of the *Guardia* of the Byzantine castle or the Hospitaller *Collachium*. The bottom part of the old tower survives, with a four-sided space accessed from the northern interior side of the Byzantine castle, in the courtyard of the Neoclassical School. The etchings by E. Flandin, published in 1853<sup>21</sup>, record its exact condition before the gunpowder explosion in the Great Sandjuvan Mosque (1856), and the construction of the Clock Tower (1852). At the time there was also a very interesting 18th-19th century mansion that was unfortunately destroyed in the 1856 explosion; it was situated in front of the Great Sandjuvan Mosque and its minaret, and north of the SW tower of the Collachium. We can therefore know that the Byzantine tower had already mostly fallen, since only a part of the cross-groin vault with diagonal ribs remained. This is evidence that, prior to the construction of the Clock Tower, Fethi Pasha had the tower restored, with its vaulted construction and a groin vault with ribs at right angles. The Byzantine outwork and the road separating it from the main wall are retained to a considerable height in parts of the western and southern sides of the tower. During the Ottoman period, a road has been created in the SW corner that connects the lower level of Orpheus street to the west with the intermediate level of the Byzantine wall and southern outwork, eventually reaching Panaetius street on the low level and continuing east to Theophiliscus street. The segment of the Hospitaller era southern moat, between the southern wall and the courtyard of Suleiman's Mosque, was restored in 1991-92.

20 Γεωργαλή (2008), 382-3.

21 Flandin (1853)



FIGURE 5: Engraving of the SW tower of Guardia, E. Flandin 1853



FIGURE 6: Ahmed Fethi Pasha's Clock Tower from Suleiman's Mosque  
Photo: G. Geroympos, 2005

Above the lowest tower, close to his father's manuscript library, Ahmed Fethi Pasha then built the Clock Tower and the *Muvakkithane* (timekeeper's room) of Rhodes as a sign of gratitude for Sultan Abdulmedjid's 1850 visit, according to the inscription at the entrance<sup>22</sup>. The aim was both to honour the memory of his father, Hafiz Ahmed Agha, but also to serve the common good of the people of Rhodes, enabling them to know the time "both alaturca and alafranga". Of course, in 1856, four years after its construction, the tower had the ill fortune to be greatly damaged by the gunpowder explosion in the neighbouring Great Sandjovan Mosque, ruining its upper floors as evidenced by a contemporary engraving<sup>23</sup>. Ahmed Fethi Pasha immediately had it restored, and thus the Clock Tower was preserved. The architect of the Clock Tower is not known, but it is likely that it is a work of some member of the Balyan family. Garabet Amira (1800 - 1866), and his son Nigoğayos Balyan (1826 - 1858) were the architects of the Imperial Armoury (*Tophane-i Amire*) Clock Tower, which quite resembles the one in Rhodes<sup>24</sup>. The old clockwork, which simultaneously operated the clock faces on all four sides of the tower, is now exhibited on the courtyard of the Old School.

The Clock Tower is accessed from the road of the southern outwork. From a small courtyard to the east of the tower, a stone staircase leads to the level of the tower and its entrance. The Clock Tower is tall, pyramidal, with a peculiar roof and a wooden light aperture. Its walls are constructed of visible Rhodian limestone masonry and the domed roof is coated with *Khorasani* mortar; there are four levels with wooden mezzanines and internal stairs. The architectural style is particularly interesting, its morphological elements including eclectic baroque features. The baroque style was in use in the 19th and 20th centuries Ottoman Empire and particularly loved in Constantinople. Consequently, the Clock Tower shares similar characteristics with constructions from the capital, such as the *Tophane-i Amire* clock. Similarities can also be found with the bell towers of 19th century churches in Rhodes and the Dodecanese, but also more widely in Greece and Asia Minor<sup>25</sup>.

The ground-level facades include arched windows and an entrance to the east with frames and inverted keys and finials with fringes and a rectangular inscription niche above the door. They have sixteen additional external small cylindrical columns of limestone two by two, on raised stands with

22 According to the translation by Mehmet Rifat for the Archaeological Department of the Ministry of Culture and Manousou & Ntellas (2022), 151.

23 Ντέλλας (2007), 374 and table 328a.

24 According to information by the foundation [www.fethipasavakfi.com/gr/muvakkithane-saat-kulesi-rustiye-mektebi.php](http://www.fethipasavakfi.com/gr/muvakkithane-saat-kulesi-rustiye-mektebi.php): "Ahmed Fethi Pasha completed the Rhodes Clock Tower and Timekeeper's house near his father's manuscript library in 1850-1852 period. It is believed that the Clock Tower was built on the foundations of a Byzantine defense tower. Although there is no definite information about the architect of the tower, it bears very similar architectural features to the Tophane-i Amire Clock Tower, the first clock tower of Istanbul built by Abdülmecit I in 1847-1848 during Fethi Pasha's tenure as the Marshal of Tophane-i Amire. At the very least, we can assume that the Rhodes Clock Tower's eclectic Baroque design of the period was the work of the members of the Balyan Family, the famous 18th and 19th century *Hassa* architects, probably Garabet Amira (1800 - 1866) and his son Nigoğayos Balyan (1826 - 1858), who were also the architects of the Tophane-i Amire Clock Tower. The clock of the tower in Rhodes was purchased from Edward Prior (1780 - 1859) and his firm Edward Prior, Chambers & Co., members of the Prior family of London, a well-known manufacturer and merchant of the period and a clock supplier to the Ottoman Empire. During the tower renovation in the last years, the 170-year-old mechanism which simultaneously operated the clocks on the four facades of the tower, was removed from its place and now exhibited on the terrace on the tower floor, and an electromechanical renovation of the tower clock is planned."

25 Ντέλλας (2012), 359-363, and in the ΚΣΕΔ annex: In Agios Nicholas in Emporio, Chalki by architect Eleutherios Sellas (1894); in Agios Giorgios in Malona (1895) and in the Dormition of the Virgin (1924), in Afandou, Rhodes, by Lindians Theodoros Frantzis and his son Filimonas Frantzis; in Agia Photeini in Smyrna, by architect X. Latris (1856); etc.

quadrilateral capitals and stands with curved cross-sections, fringes on the stands and the finials of the small columns and stone balls above the fringes of the small columns.

The second floor is recessed and more modest in design, featuring protruding corner pilasters with bases and curved plaster finials, atop which smaller stone spheres are placed. It has rectangular openings on the four sides, with protruding frames and a complex fringe whose ends are supported on protruding small semicolumns at half the height of the window with a complex capital.



FIGURE 7: Ahmed Fethi Pasha's Clock Tower from the East  
Photo: G. Ntellas, 2025

The third floor corresponds to the second, also indented. The openings differ and are made of double-lobed windows with finials of the circular clock with a composite arch frame and gabled finials with a curved fringe.

The fourth floor under the roof is made of an octalateral stone dome. This consists of four segments of curved cross-section domes on the facades and four intermediate corresponding curved cross-section segments that start in the corners and end upwards in the idiosyncratic dome. This is protected externally with *Khorasani* mortar.

At the top it resolves in an illuminative lantern topped with a small rectangular wooden light aperture and a four-pitched roof that bears the clock's bell. The clock tower is open to visitors in the courtyard of the neighbouring Rushtiye School and there are efforts underway to restore the old clockwork.

3 - The Old School (*Rüştiye*)

The School-Gymnasium (*Rushtiye Mektebi* or *Rüştiye Mektebi* in modern Turkish spelling) which was located next to the Clock Tower, was built by Ahmed Fethi Pasha in 1852-1853. The inscription above the building's entrance mentions, among other things, how upon the visit Sultan Abdul Medjid Khan, field marshal and commander of the artillery squad Fethi Pasha built this School, which he

added to his late father Ahmed Agha's *Vakuf* and finally this great School was inaugurated in the memory of his wife Atiye Sultan<sup>26</sup>. Next to Suleiman's western entrance there is an old two-story house with an inscription on its western facade mentioning that it used to be a Medrese built in 1803. It seems that Ahmed Fethi Pasha probably built a larger school in 1853 and perhaps replaced the previous one.

The School was a two-story building that originally included a third story in the second to the east Byzantine tower of the southern wall of the Collachium and three courtyards (one eastern, one northern, and one western). Northern access was gained from the southern road between the Byzantine wall and the outwork, under the vaulted passage in a ground-floor space with pointed openings and three open-air spaces. Today the ground floor houses sanitary facilities. A pointed arch was connected to the eastern courtyard and the ground floor of the Byzantine tower and a staircase leads to the northern courtyard on a higher level. From there an eastern entrance existed to the tower's first floor, which was obviously used as a classroom with two connected spaces and with one window each. Another smaller staircase leads to the western building's upper floor, which consists of four spaces, with two rooms intended as classrooms with tall windows. Another internal staircase led from the western building to the second floor above the Byzantine tower with two



FIGURE 8: Ahmed Fethi Pasha's Old School, *Rüştiye* above Byzantine and Medieval walls  
Photo: G. Ntellas, 2025

spaces used as classrooms; the northern one had six windows while the western had five, and they were connected through a door.

The ground floor of the tower consists of thick masonry, which remains visible, and it bears the characteristic Byzantine upward deviation on the outside. The southern entrance is the only opening and it was obviously used as a storage space. The collapse of the second floor and excavation work in the tower's ground floor brought a Hospitaller doorway to light, connecting to the interior of the Collachium. These events made the medieval fortification visible and showcased the Byzantine tower, with the wall and the southern outwork and moat.



FIGURE 9: Medieval fortification on Panaitiou Street, Suleiman's Mosque (left) and Clock Tower in the background  
Photo: G. Ntellas, 2025

The ground floor of the School's western building is of wide masonry, while the upper floor is 20 cm thick. Externally it is coated in *Khorasani* mortar for water insulation. The windows are large and rectangular, like most 19th century buildings, being the development of the 18th century mansions. Today the building operates as a residence of the foundation on the upper floor and the courtyard space serves as a cafeteria catering to the Clock Tower's visitors with toilet spaces on the ground floor.

4 - Suleiman's Mosque

Suleiman's Mosque is situated outside the SW tower of the Guardia and the Clock Tower of the southern wall of the Collachium and the Byzantine town of Rhodes, at the end of Socratus street in the center of the old market. The mosque<sup>27</sup> comprises three square spaces, with the central one being the largest and tallest (15m high), covered with domes and lead sheathing and two consecutive porticos along the northern side. The first consists of seven semi-spherical domes that rest on a colonnade, and it is surrounded by a second, U-shaped one, which is wooden and covered with roof tiles. The minaret with its two balconies rises between the central and western domes, reaching 34.5 m in height. The northern courtyard includes the octagonal water fountain, which is also covered by a semi-spherical dome and supported on eight columns.

27 Balducci (1932), 126-139; Βογιατζής (2007) 396-400; Ντέλλας (2008i), 360-363; Ντέλλας et al. (2009), 129-154.

26 According to the translation by Mehmet Rifat and Manousou & Ntellas (2022), 151.

Particularly remarkable is the transition from the square ground plan to the semi-spherical vault of the central dome, which is achieved in two stages. In the lower part, four squinches decorated with ‘stalactites’ curve the square ground plan’s corners. Higher up, four quarter-spheres in the corners together with four shallow arches in the center of the sides resolve in eight points that are bridged by corresponding spherical triangles and create the circular rim that supports the semi-spherical dome.

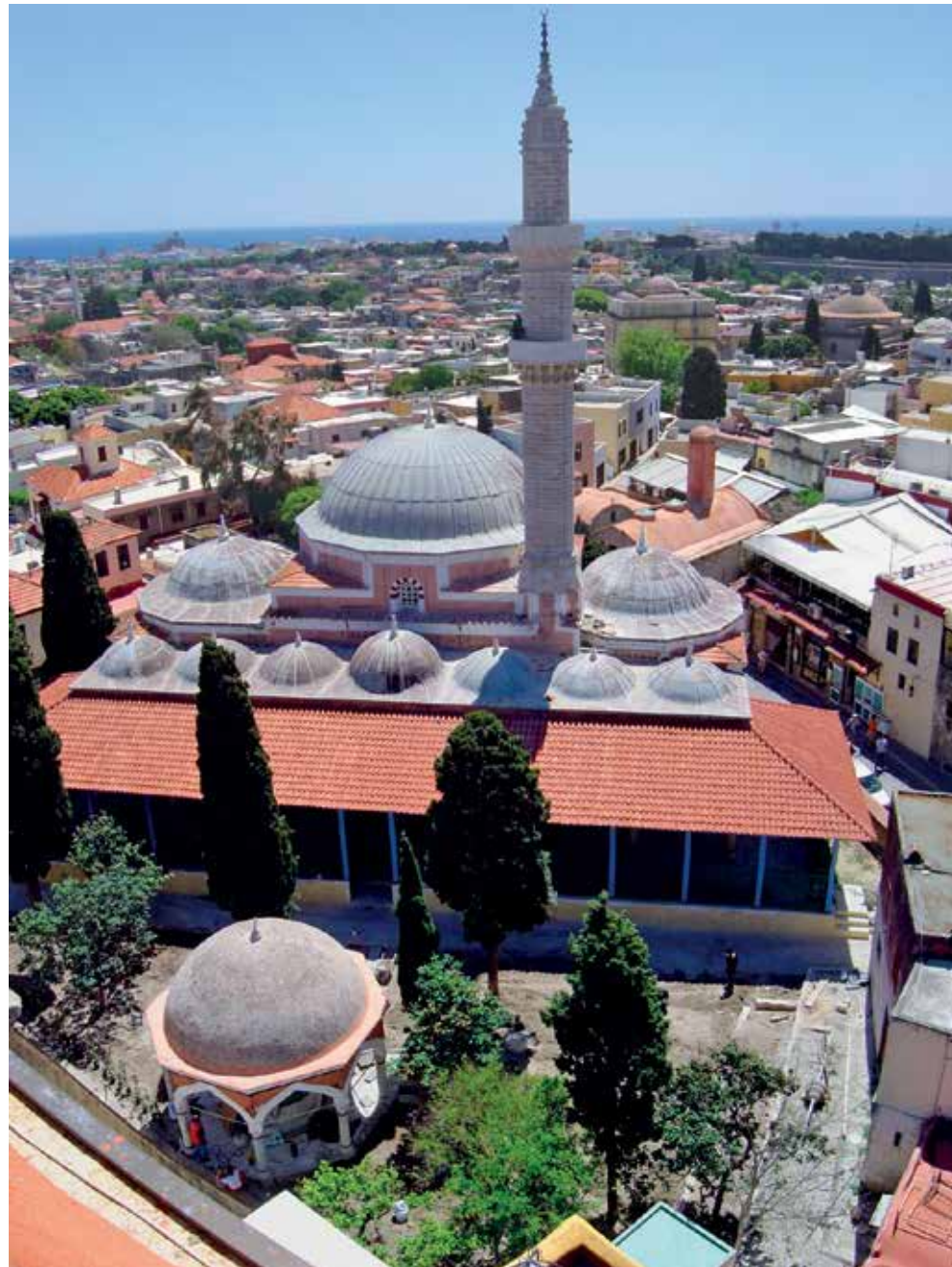


FIGURE 10: Suleyman's Mosque, *Süleymaniye Camii*, Photo: G. Ntellas, 2005

The T-shaped ground plan and the arrangement of the facades, openings, and morphological elements of the mosque are symmetrical. The two side spaces each have two openings on their three sides and one large arch connecting to the central one on the fourth side. The central space has three openings on the north, two windows with the *mihrab* niche in the center of the south side, and one window each on the protrusions of the other two sides and two rows of clerestory windows. The three doors towards the northern portico have lowered arches with two-coloured, red and white, arch stones. The rectangular windows of the lower zone have pointed discharging arches, as visible in the northern facade towards the portico, while in the other external facades consecutive renderings through the years appear to have converted them to semicircles.



FIGURE 11: Interior of Suleyman's Mosque and the garden fountain  
Photos: G. Ntellas, 2005



According to the latest research, the mosque was completed in 1808<sup>28</sup>. Engravings from the 19th century and old photographs show the mosque and its minaret with only one *şerefe* (balcony), while another one shows the fountain and its historic plane tree. The decoration of the central entrance may have made use of the, suitably modified, Renaissance-era *arcosolium*, originating in the ruins of Saint John<sup>29</sup>. Besides, it does not have an inscription about the identity of the monument. Extensive damage was probably caused by the great earthquakes in 1856 and in 1863; 1856 was also the year of the great explosion ignited by a thunderstrike to a forgotten powder store in the belfry of the nearby Great Sandjovan Mosque (originally the conventual church of the Order of the Knights of Saint John), which caused widespread destruction. Consequently, the wooden portico was added, and the mosque was repaired. The minaret was replaced in the 19th century; the new one had two balconies, as seen in subsequent depictions, marking its new status as Imperial Mosque of Suleiman. At the same time, the double-tiered minaret of the old Suleiman Mosque was substituted by one with a single balcony, and the Mosque was renamed in honour of Ibrahim Pasha who had commissioned it

28 Manousou & Ntellas (2022), 161-2.

29 Guerin (1856), 138; Balducci (1931), 14–24, tables III–V; Kollias (1998), 137.

in 1540 in honour of the Sultan. As it transpires from Italian era photographs, this same minaret was rebuilt, perhaps after the great earthquake of 1928; further work was done to strengthen its upper portion that had collapsed in the 1956-57 earthquakes.

In the 1980s, the minaret presented a steep tilt, resulting in parts of its upper balcony collapsing on 15/12/1987. In 1988, Ministry of Culture agencies in collaboration with the Rhodes Framework Agreement Office, urgently proceeded with the controlled lowering of the minaret to prevent further damage or loss of life. At a later stage, work was undertaken to restore and configure the neighbouring Byzantine fortification of the southern wall of the Collachium and the moat; the stone doorway of the mosque's courtyard was transported further south in 1991 in order to showcase it.

At the time, the mosque presented serious problems due to the collapse of the minaret and the destruction of the domes' lead sheathing. Small cracks had appeared in the walls and there was corrosion to the wall paintings and to the plaster, metal, and marble decorations; the woodcarvings had been corrupted by more recent overpainting. The wooden portico was falling apart and the water fountain had problems with subsidence and cracks. The work for the restoration and conservation of the Suleiman Mosque monumental complex, as well as the configuration of its environs, was completed by the Ministry of Culture between 1998 and 2005<sup>30</sup>.

First the damaged lead sheathing of the domes was replaced. The external *Khorasani* coating was repaired and then painted with lime paint to protect the mosque and its decorations from corrosion due to humidity. Using a special wooden scaffolding, the minaret was rebuilt with new limestone masonry and strengthened with horizontal metal blades, vertical titanium pirus, and lead fixing for the masonry joints<sup>31</sup>. The fountain was restored. The repairs to the interior of the mosque and the porticos were completed. Preservation and enhancement work was carried out on the wall paintings, the plaster decorations, the wood carvings with their overpainting, the casings, metal elements, marble architectural features, and the Renaissance-era marble doorframe of the main entrance. Finally, the mosque's courtyard and garden were configured and the old imam's house was restored.

These projects showcased an important monument of the town, a symbol for its identity and a place of worship for the Muslims of Rhodes. The Ministry of Culture and the Public Vakuf Administration of Rhodes are responsible for the monument's operation and it is periodically open to the public, providing the appropriate respect is shown for the mosque and Muslim traditions.

5 - Church of the Holy Apostles or Imaret

The Church of the Holy Apostles and the Old Municipal Soup Kitchen or *Imaret* is located on the south side of Socratus street, across from Suleiman's Mosque in the medieval town of Rhodes<sup>32</sup>. The space of the Old Soup Kitchen was formerly occupied by a three-aisled Catholic church from the 14th or 15th century, which was probably destroyed during the first great siege of Rhodes in 1480 and the powerful earthquake that followed in 1481. A cylindrical stone pillar with a capital of composite cross-section, belonging to the original church's south colonnade, is also found *in situ*; the base of another pillar, belonging to the northern colonnade, has been revealed across from the first one. During the excavation and inspection work on the foundations of the Soup Kitchen's storage domes,

the ruin of an underground crypt was revealed; it has a three-sided arch to the east and traces of a windowsill have been preserved to the southeast, as well as the western entrance with a segment of the Hospitaller staircase that leads to it<sup>33</sup>.



FIGURE 12: Church of the Holy Apostles, Photo: G. Gerolympos, 2003

A small, single-spaced church was later built on its ruins, between 1480 and 1522. The church was originally covered by a Gothic groin vault with ribs and featured an interior five-sided arch formed by a vault with radiating smaller vaults and ribs. It also had an arched doorway on the northern side of the sanctuary—now walled up—and an arched niche on the southern side. Other preserved elements include a pointed window in the sanctuary and another northern arched doorway that was later converted into a rectangle, the lower part of an entrance on the western side and two lighting apertures, a rectangular one on the western and a circular one on the eastern side of the groin vault.

A vaulted space was later added to the south side, ending in a straight wall to the east, with an arched apse in the eastern part of the north side, probably an arcossolium. It was therefore likely a mortuary chapel, since underground grave crypts were discovered beneath the eastern part of the two spaces. An arched doorway was opened in the south side of the church to connect it to the chapel, whose few architectural elements consist of a niche with a triangular pointed top on the south side and a rectangular window on the western side.

30 Nτέλλας (2008a), 17-27.  
31 Χατζηδάκης & Φλώρος (2007), 152-159.  
32 Nτέλλας et al (1997), 538-540, 551-2; Nτέλλας (1998), 167-178; Nτέλλας (2000), 357-358, Nτέλλας (2008), 376-377.

33 The excavation was performed by the Eph. of Antiquities of the Dodecanese with archaeologist Natasa Psarologaki.



FIGURE 13: Holy Apostels and Old Sistiium  
Photo: G. Gerolympos, 2004

During the work for configuring the pebble mosaic courtyard, excavations revealed a carved marble plaque *in situ* before the western entrance of the church, with Renaissance sepulchral decoration and an inscription of Venetian nobleman Jacobus de Priolis who died in 1476. This is evidence that the three-aisled church was in use at the time, as it must have been a burial above the floor and inside the church.

Following the 1522 conquest of Rhodes by the Turks, Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent founded a poorhouse, or *Imaret*, in the space of the church, which bears his name<sup>34</sup>. Of particular interest is the impressive doorframe with the arched gate and pilasters with bases and capitals, a tall architrave and a complex cornice as a finial. The marble plaque at the center of the architrave with the Arabic inscription “we feed you by the will of God” indicates the use of the space as a soup kitchen for the poor. Two vaulted storage rooms were constructed for the needs of the charitable foundation above the underground crypt to the northeast of the church, with arched doors, rectangular and arched windows and lighting apertures. An even larger pointed vault was built to the west, the kitchen, where the food would be cooked and distributed. The rectangular windows and the doors have horizontal transoms and discharging arches. The tall chimney has pointed holes in the tip and a cover with Ottoman-style elements. Two six-sided light apertures at the center of the dome serve as ventilation. The church underwent modifications, the sanctuary arch being converted into an oven. Fragments remain of the reed-latticed groin vault of the main church, which was probably destroyed in the siege of 1522; it was substituted with a bowed arch and the oven chimney was added.

34 Manousou & Ntellas (2022), 158.



FIGURE 14: Old SoupKitchen, the Ottoman *Imaret*  
Photo: G. Gerolympos, 2005

During the work by the Ministry of Culture to restore the monumental complex (1986-1999), the Soup Kitchen’s structures were fastened. The storage room vaults were restored with internal connection and a raised wooden floor for the presentation of the underground crypt of the large church, where the foundations were appropriately configured and the Hospitaller staircase was completed to provide access from the courtyard. The church and its western rectangular entrance were restored. The floors of the underground crypt and the church were restored with *Khorasani*, as were the roofs of the domes. The pebble mosaic courtyard was configured and the remnants of a medieval silo in the northwestern corner of the complex were showcased (an underground stone-built space for storing wheat during sieges); the cylindrical well in the center of the courtyard was also restored. As it presented deep cracks from the lateral pressures, the dome of the kitchen had to be restored by lifting it to its original position, and strengthened with underpinning, metal tie rods, and wooden tie rods in the attic.

Additionally, new uses were integrated in the complex, with periodic exhibitions by the Municipal Gallery of Rhodes in the eastern domes and a municipal cafeteria in the cooking space, where a kitchen space was configured on the southern side and an attic with a stair internally. Spaces for hygiene utilities were configured in the eastern part of the courtyard<sup>35</sup>. Monuments periodically open to the public include the underground crypt and the church with the southern addition, which houses a small exhibition on the history of the complex and the restoration work.

35 Ντέλλας (2011), 68-69.

6 - Complex with the Monastery of Agios Georgios (Hurmali Medrese)

The Monastery of Agios Georgios is located in the western part of the Medieval Town, on the axis of the market and Socratus street, between the Byzantine and the Hospitaller fortification. The three-winged layout of the cells and of the *catholicon* (the conventual church) circumferentially and with the courtyard at the center, are typical of Byzantine monastery architecture.



FIGURE 15: Monastery of Agios Georgios-Khourmali Madrasah, *Hurmali Medrese*  
Photo: G. Gerolympos, 2004

The *catholicon* is a domed tetraconch, probably from the 14th or early 15th century with additions made in the 15th and early 16th century.<sup>36</sup> It has a narthex with a semicylindrical arch to the west, an open portico with a ribbed groin vault to the north, and traces of a second one to the northwest.

36 Gabriel (1923), 202-207; Ορλάνδος (1948), 99-106; Ντέλλας et al (1997), 532, 535-538, 550-551, Ντέλλας (2008c), 37-43.

The church was constructed on top of an older, perhaps middle-Byzantine, church, whose remnants can be found in a small space to its southeast, according to an engraved decorated marble with a performance of Deesis, the Virgin Mary among honoring angels, that was found on a step in the entrance<sup>37</sup>. A document from 3 November 1347 mentions a gate in the town's wall through which one passes on the way to the church of Agios Georg of Cappadocia.



FIGURE 16: Agios Georgios-Khourmali Madrasah  
Photo: G. Gerolympos, 2003

The emphasis on the vertical axis in conjunction with the general aesthetic approach towards the interior of the church in Byzantine architecture, with the dome acting as a sky lit up by the windows, in the case of *tetraconch* churches, nearly reaches perfection in spite of their small size.

37 Παπαβασιλείου (2021), 243-256.

The morphological elements of its doorways, corbels, fringes, an arcosolium, and the blind apses of the dome and the entrance combine Byzantine and Gothic influences, with semicircular and pointed arches, composite cross-sections, and engraved decorations in the first (15th century) and second (late 15th-early 16th century) ‘Rhodian style’. This rare type in Greece, the high quality of construction, and the interesting morphological elements of local style give particular artistic value to the monument, which is an excellent example of Hospitaller-era Rhodian architecture.



**FIGURE 17:** Agios Georgios-Khourmali Madrasah (above) and North side and the residence (below).  
Photo: G. Ntellas, 2005

Excavations in the eastern part of the monastery’s courtyard revealed a patio with marble inlays on the floor, possibly of a 5th-6th century paleochristian church<sup>38</sup>, integrated in the boundaries of a block of the ancient town’s Hippodamian town-planning grid.

The ground floor cells of the northern and western wing present similarities and can be traced to the Hospitaller period, perhaps the 14th century. They are stone-built in rows, roofed with lowered domes. They have doors with rectilinear lintels externally, discharge arches internally, small rectangular fanlights towards the courtyard and simple slits, perhaps crenellations, rectangular indents for closets, and small niches with lowered arches for devotional stands, in the Byzantine style. The upper floor features an open-air corridor (facing the courtyard in the case of the western wing, and the back side in the case of the northern one), which connects several rooms, small *odas*, with small windows and fanlights, fireplaces, and closets; stone stairs lead down to the courtyard. It was added during the Ottoman period, possibly in the 18th-19th century. The two floors of the east side were similarly arranged with *odas*, a gallery with built pillars and horizontal stone arches for architraves on the ground floor’s facade towards the courtyard and an open covered wooden *hayat* on the upper floor from the 19th century.

On the western side of the northern cells a door connects to the monastery’s courtyard, which today features the garden of the Marc de Montalembert Foundation, resurrecting its historical character, with the old house, the traditional water well and the restored cistern with the canals for watering all the plants. Traditionally a windmill would be in operation to draw the water and water the garden.

The two-story mansion, along with a small two-story auxiliary construction on Hierocles street<sup>39</sup>, which was restored by the Ministry of Culture, is directly adjacent to the northern and eastern cells. It has typical elements of 18th and 19th century Balkan mansions, constructed of Rhodian limestone and wooden elements. The groundfloor and the upper floor initially includes two rooms (*odas*) with an open intermediate space and the T-shaped *hayat*, and stretches along the eastern part of the courtyard. On the face of the ground floor’s outdoor *hayat* there are two pointed arched openings with a lighting aperture in between, while on the upper story there used to be a wooden balcony with railing, which was later transformed into a wood-framed wall, was covered with planks and windows and a built-in *sofa*<sup>40</sup> on the western side with windows and light apertures. At a later stage, a kitchen and a hammam were added to the northern side of the upper floor. The ground floor has been constructed of masonry of sufficient thickness. Whereas the upper story consists mostly of thin walls (20 cm) and five horizontal timber reinforcements. The mezzanine and the roof are wooden. Interesting structural elements with windows and plaster lighting apertures, while the southern “good *oda*” stands out with the carved closet (*musandıra*), a fireplace that included carved and painted plaster palmettes and plant elements on the bellows and the chimney cap with the wooden navicular cover and wood-carved and painted decoration. The mansion has been restored and is expected to be integrated into the operations of the monastery, serving as a monument open to visitors and a venue for cultural activities.

38 Αρχαιολογική Δελτίον 37 (1982), Χρονικά, 407-410, figure 2, table 282a; ΑΔ 38 (1983), Χρονικά, 399; ΑΔ 42 (1987), Β2 Χρονικά, 664-6.

39 Ντέλλας (2008b), 28-44.

40 Translator’s Note: although the English sofa and the Greek *sofas* come from the same root (the Arabic *sufa*), the Greek term denotes a kind of raised platform found in traditional houses. It was a type of multi-purpose furniture, used for sleeping, sitting etc and often with storage space underneath.

During the Ottoman period, Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent converted the monastery into a *medrese* by the name of Hurmali, using the cells as students' dormitories and the *catholicon* as a mosque<sup>41</sup>. A girls' school operated in the east wing's cells<sup>42</sup> during the final years of the Ottoman period, while during the 20th century the monastery was turned into housing for poor families.

The additions to the houses surrounding the *catholicon* were removed during the Italian period. Subsequent restoration work, conducted between 1974 and 1985, was followed by intermittent excavations in the courtyard, which continued until 2001.

Large-scale restoration work and configuration of the space in the entire monastery (1995-2001) restored and showcased the complex that functions today as a monument and archaeological site periodically open to the public<sup>43</sup>. It houses exhibitions in the ground-floor cells, special concerts and masses in the *catholicon*, seminars in the upper floor, and workshops in the eastern wing's ground floor.

**7 - Saint Mark's Church (Sadri Chelebi Mesjid)**

The small church that is found on the northwestern side of the Rhodes *Burgo* close to the Monastery of Agios Georgios, has a free cross-plan with a raised central bay in transverse barrel vault acting as a dome, which is a rare type that spread in the 14th c<sup>44</sup>. The pointed arches of one light aperture and the vaults of the cross's arms reveal Hospitaller influences, even though the dome's arch is semi-cylindrical, and the apse is quarter-spherical. Originally the church's western arm was longer, but it was shortened after sustaining damage. A small arch-covered semi-open space in the northeastern corner leads to the later eastern entrance in the northern arm of the church, but two newer ones have been revealed, in the northern and southern walls and a newer one in the western wall of the north arm across from the current entrance.



**FIGURE 18:** Saint Mark's Church (Sadri Chelebi Mesjid)  
Photo: G. Ntellas, 2004

41 Manousou & Ntellas (2022), 158.  
42 Balducci (1932), 146-148.  
43 Αρχαιολογική Δελτίον 42 (1987), Β2 Χρονικά, 669-670; Ντέλλας (2011), 68-71.  
44 Gabriel (1923), 190; Ορλάνδος (1948), 89-91 and image 82, 84; Μανούσου-Ντέλλα (2001), 128-9 .

During the 1986-7 and 1998-9 excavation work in the interior of the church and the courtyard, the original floor came to light, as well as various burials beneath it and the part of the western arm that had collapsed. On the internal side of the southern wall, in the part that had been blocked by the newer western and in the lower zone of the masonry, fragments of wall paintings were discovered, of 15th century Palaeologan art<sup>45</sup>. They were the only ones that survived the Ottoman era interventions, when the church was converted into a mosque, the Sadri Chelebi Mesjid. Traces of three *mihrab* niches on the inside of the church and one in the southeastern corner of the courtyard, are remnants of the Ottoman phase.



**FIGURE 19:** Saint Mark's Church (Sadri Chelebi Mesjid)  
Photo: G. Ntellas, 2004

The excavations were followed by strengthening and preservation work of the segments with the wall paintings. The facades of the church were repaired and enhanced, and the roof tiling was restored. The entrance and the cobbled western courtyard were configured, and the floorplan of the church and the *Khorasani*-floored western arm, as well as a Muslim fountain, were showcased in 2004<sup>46</sup>.

To the west, the monument connects with the restored garden of the Marc de Montalembert Foundation that provides opportunities for further visibility in conjunction with a historical tour of the area's monuments. The church is periodically open, particularly on Saint Mark's day when a service is held and the monument participates in the ceremonies of the Marc de Montalembert Foundation with its historic garden and its visit.

45 Βολανάκης (2014), 52-53. The work was undertaken by the Ministry of Culture and the excavation with oversight by archaeologist Anastasis Psarologaki.  
46 Ντέλλας (2011), 71-72.

8 - Agia Paraskevi Church (Takkedji Mesjid)

The church of Agia Paraskevi is located on Hippodamus street, in the western part of the Burgo of the Medieval Town of Rhodes. It belongs to the free cross plan dome type and probably dates to the 15th or early 16th c<sup>47</sup>, while the church was converted into a mosque during the Ottoman period known as Takkedji Mesjid.



FIGURE 20: Agia Paraskevi (Takkedji Mesjid)  
Photo: G. Ntellas, 2025

The eastern arm of the cross is shorter than the others, which are roughly equal in length, a feature also found in other Rhodian churches of this type. In the northern side it has a Prothesis Apse, while the western part presents the peculiarity of lowering after the dome support. The altar apse is three-sided externally and semicircular internally, covered by a quarter-spherical vault. The cross's arms are covered with pointed arches. The main dome rises at their intersection, with an externally twelve-sided tympanum, on which there are four windows aligning with the church's axes. In its northern end an underground mortuary crypt is preserved.

The morphological elements of the Church of Agia Paraskevi indicate Byzantine and Gothic influences. It has three important doorways and interesting windows and light apertures. The main western entrance, as well as the one towards the northeastern courtyard, are rectangular doors with semicircular overdoor apses with frames and fringes, they have composite cross-sections and Rhodian characteristics, which combine Gothic and Byzantine morphological elements. It has a sharp decorative upper point with reversed curvature in the middle of the lintel, and a place for carving a coat of arms on the intrados. This type of doorway decoration was widely used in the Hospitaller-era urban architecture of Rhodes. The entrance doorway to the northeastern courtyard is

analogous. It only differs in that it has two curved corbels to minimise the opening of the door's lintel. The eastern entrance to the northern arm of the cross is rectangular with a circular cross-section, and it has carved decoration on the lintel, with symmetrical heart-shaped leaves and buttons in between. The light apertures in the altar apse and the dome are semicircular with a composite cross-section, whereas the windows have similar characteristics to the urban ones of Hospitaller Rhodes, with horizontal lintels externally and lowered arches internally.

The church's dimensions, its careful construction with ashlar masonry in local limestone, and its noteworthy morphological and typological elements, make it one of the most imposing in the medieval town.

The church houses a 17th century wall painting exhibition from the Tharri monastery in Rhodes, and it is a periodically open monument.

9 - Hamza Bey Mosque

It is located on Timocreon street in the western part of the Saint Phanourios neighbourhood or Burgo. It consists of a square prayer room covered with a dome and is roofed with Byzantine-type roof tiles, an open portico with a simple wooden canopy covered with sheet metal and the minaret in the western corner<sup>48</sup>.



FIGURE 21: Hamza Bey Mosque  
Photo: G. Gerolympas, 2004

Each facade, symmetrically organised, has two rectangular authentic windows with a composite Muslim discharge arch and a similarly shaped cupboard in the middle of the flanks. Correspondingly, instead of an arch, the windows of the main facade have a discharge triangle with stepped sides. At the top level at the center of each facade there is a pointed light aperture, except for the main facade where it is round. The main entrance is of particular morphological interest, with a lowered arch externally flanked by two rectangular cornices with curved cross-sections. All the openings have wooden frames with interesting woodworking technique, as well as the gratings on the external side and the glass-containing frames on the inside. The south side *mihrab* is of interest, the semicircular niche topped with a conical curved endpiece decorated with carved stalactites. The niche is framed by a rectangular, carved, curved, and painted cornice that rises in the middle of the upper side. The upper zone of the two spherical triangles of the *mihrab* side's dome are also decorated with stalactites, while the lower zone has carved stripes.

The mosque is constructed of externally visible masonry with horizontal courses, topped by a curved cornice with curved cross-sections, and hidden horizontal wood binding at two heights at least, at the window lintels and in the upper zone of the four sides, in other words at the base of the semi-spherical vault of the dome that strengthens the construction.

47 Gabriel (1923), 191-192; Ορλάνδος (1948), 109 and image 96; Βολανάκης (2014), 39-40.

48 Gabriel (1923), 191-192; Ορλάνδος (1948), 109 and image 96; Βολανάκης (2014), 39-40.

The restoration of the mosque was completed in 2004<sup>49</sup>. The cylindrical minaret is also stone-built with an internal spiral staircase and octagonal base, which concludes with radiating stripes on its trunk. It has one balcony, configured with a continuous cantilever and composite molding. Deep cracks and disarranged masonry were causing problems to the minaret, which led to a metal scaffolding being used to support it and the systematic removal of its upper part to prevent accidents. The mosque is accessible to visitors with the help of neighbours.

10 - Church of Saint John of the Knights (Great Sandjovan Mosque of Rhodes)

The foundations of the conventual church of Saint John began being laid upon the arrival of the Knights Hospitaller in Rhodes in 1310, at the highest point of the Collachium, close to the Grand Master's Palace<sup>50</sup>. In 1314 it was fully functional<sup>51</sup>. The Order's religious, but also political activities would be carried out here (such as synods, election of the Grand Master, and the interring of illustrious knights)<sup>52</sup>. According to the information provided by numerous medieval pilgrims, the holy relics kept there were renowned<sup>53</sup>.

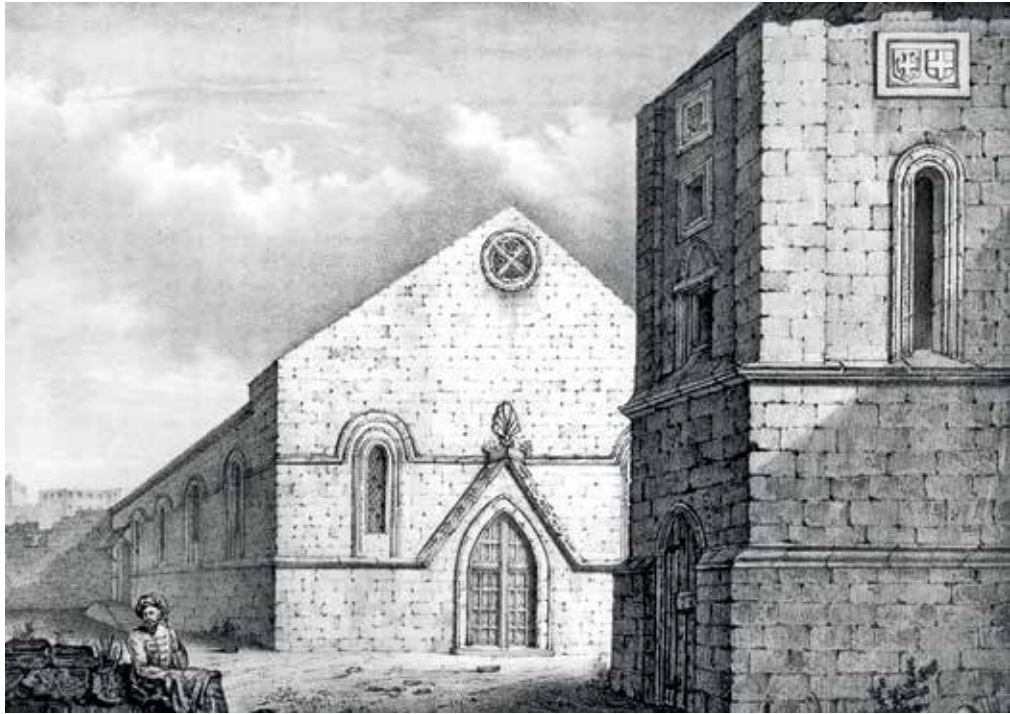


FIGURE 22: Church of St. John of the Knights. C. Rottiers, 1828.

49 With architectural plans and supervision by architect Michalis Zerlentis.  
50 Lojacono (1936), 254; Gabriel (1923), 167-170; Kollias (1998), 99-101.  
51 Luttrell (2003), 174.  
52 Bosio (1630), 362.  
53 Such as Nicola de Martoni in 1394-1395, Seigneur d' Anglure in 1395-1396, Luchino dal Campo in 1413 etc

During the Hospitaller period seven chapels were added, probably mortuary chapels<sup>54</sup>, and during the reign of GM Fluvian (1421-1437) the directly related *canonica* was constructed, in other words the quarters of the church's prior, Jean Morel (1437)<sup>55</sup>.

Following the town's surrender to the Ottomans in 1523, it was converted to the principal Muslim mosque, the Great Sandjovan Mosque of Rhodes<sup>56</sup>. The church was destroyed when the forgotten gunpowder store inside the belfry exploded due to a lightning strike in 1856<sup>57</sup>. In 1932-34, P. Lojacono attempted to graphically restore the monument following exploratory excavations. A collapse of the school wall in 1989 led to its systematic excavation, and today it is freely accessible having been configured with the aim of showcasing the church.

The main church was a three-aisled, wooden-roofed basilica, with two arcades and four cylindrical columns. It had a transept consisting of four Gothic groin vaults. Three of them corresponded to aisles, while the fourth one covered the rectangular sanctuary. The groin vault of the transept, found in the middle, was taller than the others, covered by a double-pitched roof with roof tiles, and lit by pointed light apertures to the north and south, and round ones to the east and west. Internally, the wooden semi-cylindrical roof was decorated with wood carvings and painted stars. The side aisles were covered by a single-pitched wooden roof<sup>58</sup>.

Of the three gates, the western was the greatest, pointed and framed with a decorative fringed gable, with a carved palmette at the top. The western facade had a characteristic triangular tip pointing upward, and it was complemented by the circular light aperture and the two large windows. The northern gate was comparable to the western one only smaller, and the southern one, being rectangular with a lintel above the door in the shape of a horizontal arch, must have been a later addition.

The main church was lit by pointed windows, while the transept and the sanctuary had double-lobed windows framed by pointed arches with composite cross-sections. Below the sanctuary apse, at a lower level due to the ground's layout, a transverse tunnel connected the northern and southern parts of the church.

Upon its conversion into a mosque in 1523, a mihrab pointing to the southeasterly direction of Mecca was built into the middle of the eastern section of the central aisle; the minaret was raised on top of the bell tower. The church is mainly known from the depictions of 19th century travelers, particularly Rottiers, Flandin, and Berg<sup>59</sup>.

11 - The Neoclassical School

The original two-story school was built in 1876 on the ruins of the catholic Church of Saint John of the Knights or Great Sandjovan Mosque of Rhodes, as it was known after 1523, which exploded in 1856 when a lightning strike ignited the powder store forgotten inside its belfry. The original 1876 school had morphological elements influenced by Hospitaller-era Rhodian architecture, but this too was destroyed by a fire, or an earthquake and a considerably larger, ground-floor, neoclassical

54 Bosio (1630), 145-147, 362, 567-568.  
55 Τσιριπανλής (1995), 94-95, 294-298.  
56 Manousou & Ntellas (2022), 147-149.  
57 Gehlhoff-Βολανάκη (1982), 52 et seq.  
58 Ντέλλας (2007), v. Α' 370-395 and v. Β' 325-354.  
59 Rottiers (1828), tables 25 and 26; Berg (1862), 53, 55.

building was rebuilt in 1898<sup>60</sup>. The Church of Saint John of the Knights, which was excavated following a collapse of the school's eastern stone fence, was configured and enhanced with the restoration of the surrounding extant foundations until the height of the floor and the remaining pillar bases<sup>61</sup>.

The Neoclassical School is a raised single-story quadrangle with a rectangular internal patio and a surrounding gallery that gives access to the twelve classrooms. It is covered by wooden roofs with French roof tiles. The problems and the deep cracks led to the school being closed in the 1980's. After being abandoned, the school's condition deteriorated significantly.



FIGURE 23: Rare photo of the old "Süleymaniye Madrasah" (1876-1898), Hurmalı Medrese in front, Fethi Pasha's Clock Tower in the back.  
From the Hamidian Album, late 1870s.

The monument's restoration by the Ministry of Culture aims to showcase its architectural and cultural value and to ensure safety in its new functional use. There are plans to configure the courtyard and the archaeological walking tour of the western and southern wall of the Byzantine castle, and the new access from Cleobulus square. The Region of the South Aegean, which is administering the building, has decided to house a modern and multifaceted cultural and educational center in it. According to the plans, expected strengthening and restoration interventions include repairing, strengthening and restoration of the foundations, the masonry of the superstructure and the wooden

60 Nτέλλας et al (2017), 345-348.

61 Nτέλλας (2008d), 45-52.

roof, the coating, the wooden frames, the maintenance of the painted decorations, the marble and wooden floors, new toilet facilities and cafeteria, as well as electrical and mechanical installations. Following restoration to their original shape, most rooms are planned to serve multiple purposes depending on the Center's needs. In particular, apart from exhibitions, they can host meetings and conferences, a library, offices relating to the operation of the Center, and a cafeteria. The patio in particular will be able to host events (concerts etc.).

At this time, the school is being restored as an educational and cultural center. The work started in 2011-2015 and then continued in 2022 and is expected to be completed in 2026<sup>62</sup>.

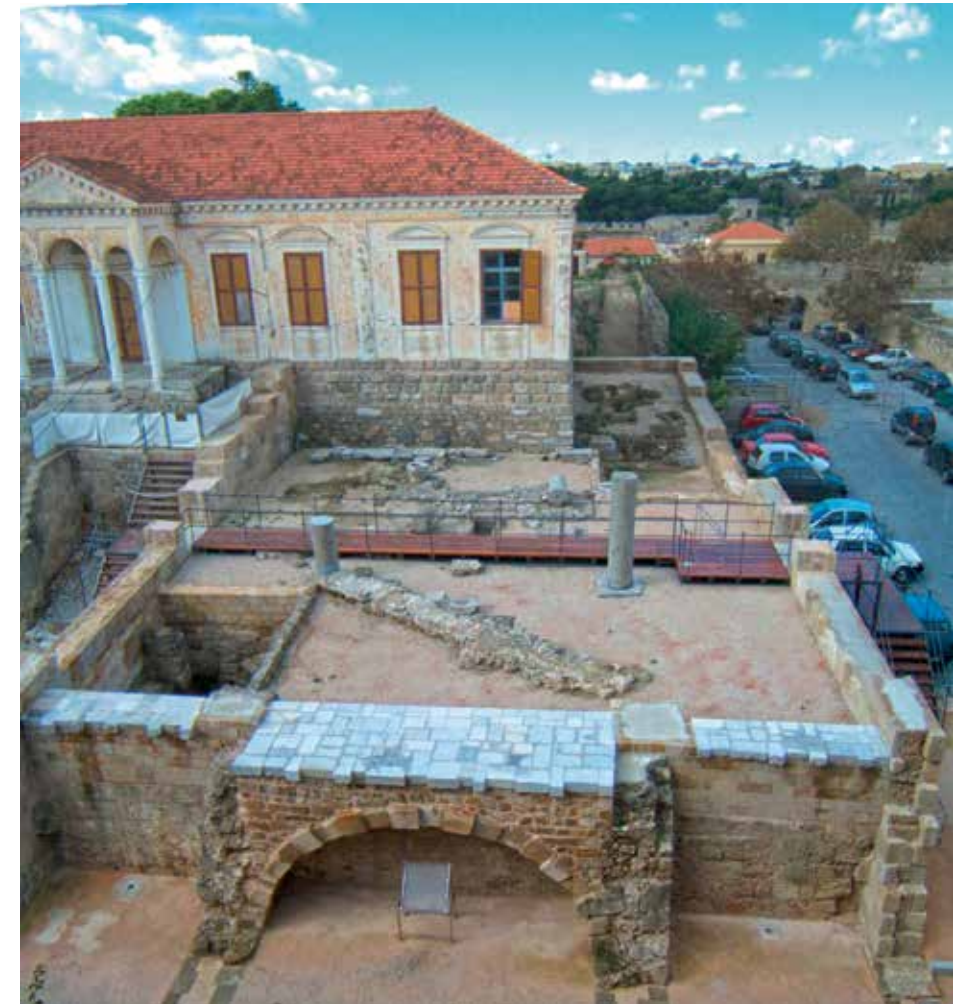


FIGURE 24: Excavation works at the location of the Church of St. John's with the Neoclassical School.  
Photo: G. Ntellas, 2006

62 The project is ongoing from 2022 until 2026, with subcontracting and with direct supervision by the Service of Modern Monuments and Technical Works of Dodecanese and the technical supervision team consisting of: Evangelia Kaka and Natalia Morari, architects; Stephania Fachouridou and Kostas Psomas, civil engineers; Kostas Kapnoulas, electrical engineer; Nectaria Dassacli and Paraskevi Nikolaidou, art conservators.

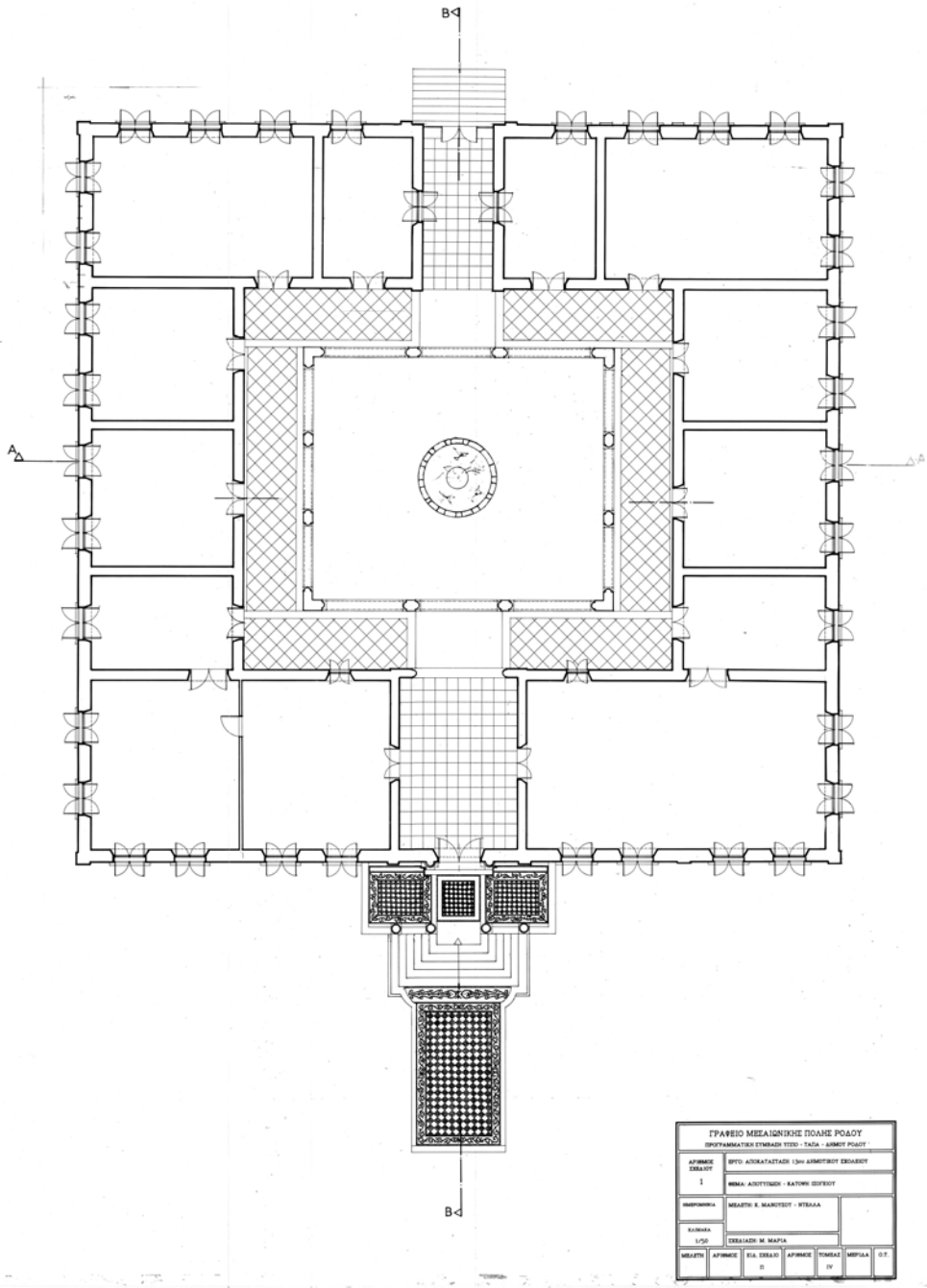


**FIGURE 25:** Floorplan of the Neoclassical School (1898) by Katerina Manousou-Ntella (1993).

## 12 - Ottoman Court House

This is a neoclassical building built on top of a Byzantine tower on the southern wall of the castle (or Collachium) on Theophlicus street in the medieval town of Rhodes. It is a building from 1907 that used to be the seat of the *kadi* of Rhodes. Above the main entrance and below the windowsill of the central window of the upper floor's southern facade, the inscription of Sultan Abdul Hamid II (1876-1909) is built in, as well as the building's construction year 1329 (=1907). The Ottoman Court House continued to operate during the Italian period (1912-1945), as indicated by the inscription on the facade "Tribunale sceri"<sup>63</sup>.



**FIGURE 26:** Ottoman Courthouse, 1907.  
Photo: G. Gerolympos, 2003

On the tower, the two-storey Ottoman Court House was built, having the southern as the main facade. The raised bottom floor consists of the main monumental entrance with two rectangular pilasters, with a semicircular ground plan with two columns, as well as two symmetrical access staircases. The main entrance doorway to the neoclassical building leads to a small hall and from there to a *hayat* space towards the back courtyard, which has been configured on top of the Byzantine wall. From this point, access is provided to the two corner rooms, *odas*, on either side of

63 Ντέλλας (2008e), 61-64.

the entrance, as well as to the toilet in the northeastern corner and the wooden staircase leading to the upper floor. The upper floor is arranged similarly to the ground floor, two corner *odas*, a smaller space between them, perhaps the *eyvan*, the *hayat*, and the corresponding toilet in the same corner, which retains the traditional eastern-style marble toilet bowl. The mezzanine is wooden, as is the floor of the two ground-floor *odas*. The rest of the ground floor and the courtyard are covered with pebbled floors. The main structure is covered with a four-pitched wooden roof, while the toilets have an independent double-pitched one on a lower level. The typology of the building is of particular architectural interest, as it represents a transitional type from the 18th-19th century. Ottoman period mansion to the neoclassical building.

The arrangement of the southern main facade is entirely symmetrical. It includes large neoclassical rectangular windows with light apertures and French shutters and iron grating with the characteristic ‘snail’ designs of Rhodes. Similar grating is found on the transom windows of the main paneled entrance and the door towards the back courtyard. The windows are framed by a protruding zone of plaster and topped with horizontal architraves and fringes. Six vertical rectangular pilasters on the plaster, as well as a horizontal strip on the mezzanine and one more on the finial accompanied by base moldings and a protruding ledge that bears the tip of the roof made of French roof tiles.

The building was operational until the ‘90s, and it housed the offices of the Public Vakuf of Rhodes. Serious problems made its restoration by the Ministry of Culture necessary. The restoration work was completed in 2002.

Even today one can easily discern the robustness of the Byzantine tower at the base of the building. At the lower section of the southern facade of the main entrance, the access door to the semi-basement tower is located. Of the square Byzantine tower, a vault with massive walls remains. The walled-up old northern and authentic door from the castle was restored, and the repair of the internal and external sides of the Byzantine tower and the *Khorasani* cover of the floor, which delivered one of the rare extant remnants of the Byzantine fortification of the castle of Rhodes.

In recent years, the building has housed the studies of visitor-students of the American universities with the ‘Paedia’ Center for Greek Studies and a small museum in the Byzantine tower.

Epilogue

The great works of the Ottoman period in the end of the 18th c. until the early 20th c. reveal the particular importance of Rhodes. The coexistence of architectural monuments from all periods within an ancient grid of Hippodamean urban planning and the renowned medieval walled town has created a rich complex of works. The reuse of medieval churches as mosques and other social and educational functions shows, on the one hand, the Ottoman administration’s stance towards the old monuments and the attempt to utilise and incorporate them into their way of life. At the same time, the construction of new monuments in the central unbuilt area complements the necessary functions and provides the town with even greater monumentality. The beginning was defined by the construction of the Ottoman Library in 1793-4, then the “Medrese of Suleiman” of 1803 and Suleiman’s Mosque of 1808, the Clock Tower and the school-gymnasium “Rüştiye” by Ahmed Fethi Pasha in 1852-1853. The explosion of the Great Sandjuvan Mosque of 1856, was followed by the first two-story Neoclassical School in 1876 and after its destruction by the single floor one of 1898, and finally the Ottoman courthouse of 1907. The Hamza Bey Mosque comes from the same period.

Along with the older and newer houses and shops, all these social, educational, and religious monuments clustered around the Hafiz Ahmed Agha library in the NW area, as they have been preserved, restored, and showcased in the contemporary era, represent a typical example and mark the intertemporality of the medieval town of Rhodes.

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**Rhodes Harbour**  
Steel engraving, 1840s  
by John Henry Le Keux (1812–1896)  
Hafiz Ahmed Agha Library archive, Rhodes