



Church of St Antonio



Build in chiselled stone, the parish church of St Antonio is located in the south part of the Massari occupied community, on the left side of the road to Katokopia. Dated circa 15th century, it is a small single-naved domed church with a semicircular archade on the east, topped by a semi-cupola. Externally, the north and south walls are both attached to buttresses. Internally, the arch rests on an arch-boutant. There are three entrances to the church.

Above the arched lintel on the west side entrance and in particular at the west gable wall there is a small rectangular window as well as at the centre of the apse. A little above there are three poles slots and flags and banners in the culmination where there was a small stoned cross. Around the building there are Venetian gutters.

The temple according to reports both of the villagers and of Rubert Gunnis¹ indicate that there were paintings all over the church and more specifically on the west side are so far but is surrounded with asvestochrisma made shortly before the 1920s. Over and over the arch was walled plates which were removed from Turkish invaders. Still standing today are the pits. The wood-carved iconostasis, now lost, is of unknown date, probably around the 18th to 19th centuries. It had old and new images, special mention and reference is made to efestio great pilgrimage

picture of St. Anthony, which, according to residents Masari is "charming."

Immediately after the Turkish invasion of 1974, the Turks completely loot the iconostasis, images, objects and generally all the equipment of the church. Finally closed all entrances. The church is now almost dilapidated, crumbling, ruined completely looted, there is nothing inside. The altar, the cherubim, the holy vestments of clergy, the chandeliers, the psalters, the stool, they were no longer as a bitter memory.



The cemetery is located east of the temple (right behind the sanctuary) is completely desecrated and used as pasture.

Because the small church could not respond adequately to growing religious needs of the crew christeponymou Community, the Church authorities of Masari in consultation with the Diocese Form (which is the ecclesiastical community of Masari) decided to erect a new larger church of St. Anthony, north of the current church in the village center.

Until 1974 the lost their home, the native Greek inhabitants of the village had built the foundations of the new church.

Now 35 years later, the Community Council Masari and the church committee out efforts to start maintenance and restoration of the church of the Ayios Antoniou. With the support of Morphou Bishop Neophytos, as well as the understanding and support of the Technical Committee on Cultural Heritage as well as other agencies there is hope to proceed with the maintenance and restoration of the church.

by Dr Eleftherios Antoniou

¹ Rubert Gunnis, *Historic Cyprus 1947 – A Guide to its Towns and Villages, Monasteries and Castles*, page 340.