

Unique photos of the Dutch Protestant Church in Izmir: A 400-Year Old Testimony to Turkish-Dutch Relations

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Cornelis Haga (1578-1654) was the first Dutch envoy to the Ottoman court. Between 1612 and 1639, Haga built a network of consulates throughout the Ottoman Empire. But, beside consulates, Haga had the Dutch Protestant Church built in Izmir. From the size of the church, one can assume there was a substantial Protestant community in Izmir, which was one of the principal ports of the Ottoman Empire with many trade relations with Europe and a resulting European expatriate community in residence. Although the church still exists, it is no longer used by the original Protestant community. It was repaired in 1981 by the Greek government and now serves the spiritual needs of the small Orthodox community, mostly of Greeks ('Rum') continuing to live in the city.

The decorative elements reflecting Greek Orthodox liturgy that have been added to the interior of the building, which still retains the style of the Protestant Church with its ceiling, arched windows and stained glass window panes, creates an unusual and somewhat dissonant combination. However, the fact that the original stone plaques dating from the Protestant period have been retained, mounted on the interior surfaces, as well as the decorated Protestant gravestones in the garden, show a commendable respect for the earlier life of the Church. This mixture of different cultures using the same building in different periods is a typical example of the complex layers of history found in Ottoman/ Anatolian cities, particularly in cosmopolitan ones like Izmir and Istanbul, which had important populations of non-Muslim minorities and Western expatriates (the 'Levantines'). Izmir to this day has remained a home to many Turks of Jewish and Christian descent. The Dutch have made their mark as well, through places like this Protestant Church. Further research should reveal more such places with evidence of the influence of Holland in Turkey.

For the photo competition "Netherlands – Turkey: 400 years of Architecture, urban planning and interior decoration", Mrs. Sahika Yildirim and Mr. Nuri Yildirim contacted the Greek Consulate in Izmir, who hold the key to the church and open it for use on specific occasions. Mrs. Yildirim took a set of wonderful photos of this more than 400-year-old building. This can be viewed on the website of leading partner Inclusive Works: www.inclusiveworks.eu

The partners of the photo competition, Atelier Puuur, Deniz Altay Kaya, Eda Yucesoy, Ege Yildirim, Inclusive Works and the Institute of Turkish Studies **are grateful to Mrs. Yilirim** for her effort in capturing this unique piece of architecture that demonstrates the relation between Netherlands and Turkey in the last four centuries.

Everyone in Turkey and the Netherlands is welcome to submit photo's that show the Dutch influence on Turkish architecture, urban planning and interior design. As well as photo's from the Netherlands that show the Turkish on the same areas.

References:

On Cornelis Haga <http://www.levantineheritage.com/haga.htm>

On the Dutch Protestant Church <http://www.levantineheritage.com/dutchcem.htm>

