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Field Reports

Title

Field Report: The Festival of Saint Neophytos Saint Neophytos Monastery, Near Tala, Cyprus September 26th-27th, 2025

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Field Report:

The Festival of Saint Neophytos

Saint Neophytos Monastery, Near Tala, Cyprus

September 26th-27th, 2025



Field Report prepared September 29th, 2025

Updated XXX

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OpenHeritage3D project infrastructure is supported by Professor Falko Kuester & Dr. Dominique Rissolo, Cultural Heritage Engineering Initiative (CHEI) at the University of California San Diego

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Expedition Overview:

The Holy Monastery of St. Neophytos the Recluse lies in a valley approximately 1 km north from the village of Tala, and 15 kilometers northeast of the city of Paphos. The site includes painted caves created by a 13th century hermit who, through his writings, would become one of the leading theologians in Cyprus. A church and monastery was built some 100 m to the east, which houses his body along with a number of other icons and relics.



The Hermitage of St. Neophytos is a complex system of painted caves and stone structures built into a natural cliff face. The site lies in a seismically active zone (expecting an average yearly horizontal displacement of 8mm, and vertical displacement of 3.2mm). The site is also at risk to wildfires and associated soil erosion. The surrounding hillsides are covered in brush and were impacted by a recent wildfire. We must create foundational spatial references to support long-term ongoing activities, at geological and architectural scales (for which a resolution of 5mm and spatial accuracy of 1cm is desired). These references must effectively link interior and exterior structures, as their relative positions are critical to an understanding of the dynamic movement of the cave system. The references must also detail the surface quality of interior frescos (for which a resolution of 0.5mm and spatial accuracy of 3mm is required), enabling the tracking of surface cracks.

Previous 3D survey work, including drone, SLAM, and Terrestrial LiDAR models, are made available through [OpenHeritage3D](#) (Mnemosyne Research Centre 2025).

The monastery is intended to be the Cypriot submission to the TwinIt2 project, a European Union funded project promoting the curation of 3D models in cultural heritage. In this second phase, we will focus on adding narrative elements to the 3D models, which will serve as foundational spatial references for storytelling.

A video preview of this expedition is available here:

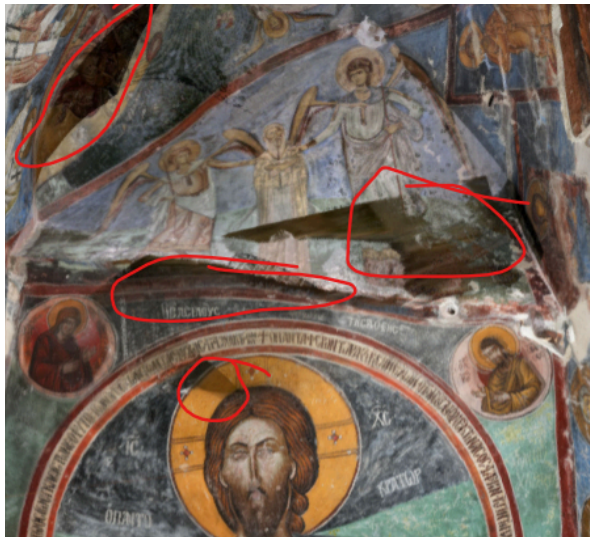
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RD4PsMgqJB8>

The purposes of this expedition were:

- 1) Document the festival of St. Neophytos, including the rituals and liturgy performed by the priests and lay attendees.



2) Perform additional photogrammetric capture of the cave interior to fill several gaps left in a previous LiDAR and spherical photogrammetric survey performed earlier in May of 2025.



Field Team

Pambos Charalambous - Professional Photographer, Independent
Sebough Voskeritchian - Professional Photographer, Independent
Scott McAvoy - Data Scientist, amateur photographer, UC San Diego

Data Processing Team

Drew Baker (lead) - Researcher at Mnemosyne research center on Digital Heritage
Scott McAvoy - Data Scientist at UC San Diego

This expedition was performed under an agreement with the Monastery of St. Neophytos
Special thanks to the Fulbright Global Scholar program, and U.S. Embassy in Cyprus, who have supported this collaboration.

Data Acquisition:

Saturday Sep 27, 2025 , 4pm to 9pm

Pambos set up two fixed Sony a7 cameras with microphones inside. From here he recorded the service and the liturgy, involving readings, singing, and various other rituals.

Sebough began by capturing some video of the market lining the road into the monastery with the DJI Osmo. He later captured some aerial video of the Monastery exterior via drone before the service began. Then he switched to using a DJI Osmo on a monopod, allowing him to place the camera above the crowd, moving in and out of the church, and following processions.

Scott floated between interior and exterior with a Sony a7 r3, capturing the service and the crowds at eye level. Early in the evening he broke away from the service to capture some images of the interior of the lower cave (while it was deserted) , to add on to a previous 3D survey.

Events:

1. Lighting of candles
2. Kissing of icons
3. Opening calls, one monk made several periodic walks around the church, beating a long board with a wooden mallet to signify that the
4. Beginning of service, monks beating wooden and metal placards to call participants into the church
5. Liturgy of St Neophytos (including song)
6. Spreading of fragrant leaves in courtyard
7. Procession following priests and sailors carrying the silver coffin of St Neophytos. Attendees took turns passing beneath the coffin as the sailors held it on their shoulders.
8. Eucharist, distributing fresh loaves of bread by hand

Sunday Sep 28, 2025 , 6am to 11am

Again Pambos set up two fixed Sony a7 cameras with microphones inside. From here he recorded the service and the liturgy, involving readings, singing, and various other rituals. This time Pambos also used a DJI Osmo on an extended monopod to follow processions.

Sebough used a DJI Osmo on an extended, passing in and out of the church and following processions.

Scott floated between interior and exterior with a Sony a7 r3, capturing the service and the crowds at eye level.

1. Entry procession, of priests and monks
2. Lighting of candles
3. Kissing of icons
4. Beginning of service, monks beating wooden and metal placards to call participants into the church
5. Liturgy of St Neophytos (including song)
6. Procession following priests and sailors carrying the silver coffin of St Neophytos. Attendees took turns passing beneath the coffin as the sailors held it on their shoulders.
7. Eucharist, distributing dry bread in large bowls placed inside and outside of the church

Terrestrial photography and photogrammetry



Collected by:
Scott and Pambos

3x Sony a7 r3, very good cameras for low light environments (caves, churches)

3x Sony a7 r4 Pambos

Aerial photography DJI Mini



Collected by:
Sebough

Several videos of monastery exterior from above, some following worshipers as they made their way to the church

Video DJI Osmo Pocket 3



Collected by:
Sebough and Pambos

Action shots, above the crowd, in the church, and exterior

Microphone Rode VideoMicro



Collected by Pambos

High quality audio of liturgy

Data Quality and Availability

The data provided by this project is not certified by a licensed surveyor. Measurements provided are subject to error. If an application requires a particularly high level of accuracy or precision (for example, a hydrological analysis) please contact the authors of this report.

The data is made available via a Creative Commons [4.0 BY NC SA](#) license, meaning that any re-use of this data must cite its original authors and source.

Known issues:

Time metadata on smcavoy datasets is inaccurate, set one hour earlier

Data Inventory

id	Description	Creator	Device	Location
1	Media September 27th - 620 images (raw and jpg) , xxx video	Scott McAvoy	Sony A7R3	"...st_nephytos_monastery\neophytos_sept_2025\master\media\smcavoy_9_27_25"
2	Media September 28th - 1076 images (raw and jpg) xxx video	Scott McAvoy	Sony A7R3	"...st_nephytos_monastery\neophytos_sept_2025\master\media\smcavoy_9_28_25"
3	Photogrammetry September 27th - 86 images of lower cave interior (raw and jpg)	Scott McAvoy	Sony A7R3	"...st_nephytos_monastery\neophytos_sept_2025\master\photogrammetry\smcavoy_9_26_2025"
4	Flyover Video	Sebough Voskeritchian	DJI Mini	Managed by Mnemosyne Research Centre (https://digitalheritagelab.eu/)
5	Video of crowd	Sebough Voskeritchian	DJI Osmo 3	Managed by Mnemosyne Research Centre (https://digitalheritagelab.eu/)
6	Video of Liturgies	Pambos Charalambous	Sony A7R3	Managed by Mnemosyne Research Centre (https://digitalheritagelab.eu/)
7	Video of crowd	Pambos Charalambous	DJI Osmo 3	Managed by Mnemosyne Research Centre (https://digitalheritagelab.eu/)

References

Mnemosyne Research Center, UNESCO Chair on Digital Cultural Heritage, Cyprus University of Technology : The Hermitage of St. Neophytos - Photogrammetry - Aerial, LiDAR - Terrestrial, LiDAR - Mobile. Distributed by Open Heritage 3D. <https://doi.org/10.34946/D6HP4V>