

The Story of Hala Sultan Tekke

As the last breath escaped her body and her lifeless gaze fell upon a bright sky, the battle for Cyprus raged on. The donkey, which, up until a moment ago, had been her seat of honor, snuffed at her ruffled hair and then lunged away from her body as the jarring sounds of approaching soldiers drew near. Umm Haram was dead.

Umm Haram's story began in 649 A.D., during the Arab raids for the Mediterranean Sea region in an effort to expand the Muslim empire. Arab Governor of Syria, Moawiya, launched a naval expedition against the Christian Byzantine people living in Cyprus. Under orders from Governor Moawiya and his military officers, Umm Haram was to accompany her husband on this military expedition. After the success of the campaign, they planned to settle and live in Cyprus to expand the Arabian empire.

Cypriot legend holds that Umm Haram was an aunt or close friend of the prophet Mohammad. She had followed Mohammed in his Hegira (withdrawal) from Mecca to Medina in September of 622 A.D. Once during a short visit to Umm Haram's home, Mohammed shared with her a vision from God that the Muslim believers would conquer the Mediterranean Sea region to spread their faith. He also promised her she would be among the first who would fight to conquer the islands. When the time came to join her husband onboard a battle ship bound for Cyprus, Umm Haram remembered the vision the prophet Mohammad had disclosed to her. She was eager to take part in this conquering expedition of Cyprus and to be included as part of a formidable navy.

Under Moawaiya's command, the Arab naval force attacked Cyprus with a massive fleet of 1700 ships. The Arab navy with its powerful ships successfully defeated the forces in Cyprus. Victorious, Umm Haram, with the other conquerors, came ashore and prepared a glorious celebration that included a victory parade, marching into the heart of Cyprus. Because of her assistance in the capture of Cyprus and her relationship

to the prophet Mohammad, Umm Haram was given a position of honor and rode a donkey in the parade, while others walked. Unfortunately, as the victory parade progressed inland, the Arab forces were attacked by the Genoese, another marauding group of the Mediterranean region. As the Genoese proceeded with their attack, Umm Haram fell from the donkey she was riding. From the fall she sustained a broken neck and died on the spot from her injuries. She was buried on the exact spot where she had fallen.

Later, a mosque was constructed around her tomb because of her close relationship to the prophet Mohammad. The Mosque of Umm Haram is the chief Muslim shrine on the island of Cyprus and an important holy site for the entire Muslim world.

Story Location Clue: The Hala Sultan Tekke is the third most revered site of pilgrimage in the Muslim world. It is located south and east of Saint Hilarion Castle and directly west of the Salt Lake and southwest of the city of Larnaca.

- *Hala Sultan is the Turkish form of Umm Haram.*
- *Umm Haram translated from Arabic means ~The Mother of the Pyramid.*