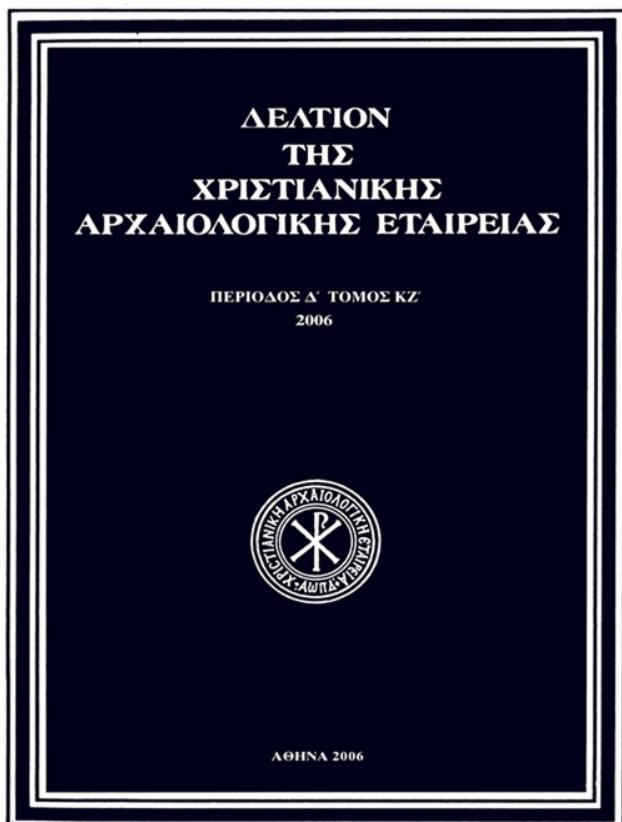


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Αμμοχώτου

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# ΔΕΛΤΙΟΝ ΤΗΣ ΧΡΙΣΤΙΑΝΙΚΗΣ ΑΡΧΑΙΟΛΟΓΙΚΗΣ ΕΤΑΙΡΕΙΑΣ

Syrian, Palaiologan, and Gothic Murals in the  
“Nestorian” Church of Famagusta

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Michele BACCI

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**ΑΘΗΝΑ 2006**

Michele Bacci

## SYRIAN, PALAIOLOGAN, AND GOTHIC MURALS IN THE “NESTORIAN” CHURCH OF FAMAGUSTA\*

A considerably large amount of murals still survives within the ruined Medieval churches of the old town of Famagusta, notwithstanding their precarious and fragmentary state. Even if they are nothing but scant remains, they deserve special consideration as they happen to be the only extant witnesses to an extraordinary phase of cultural and artistic vitality which took place in the course of the late thirteenth and fourteenth century, when the main port of the Lusignan Kingdom of Cyprus (at least up to its conquest by the Genoese in 1373) enjoyed a period of great prosperity and was supposed to be one of the richest towns in the world. Famagusta’s complex, multicultural and multiconfessional society, comprising Greeks, Latins, Syrians, Armenians, Georgians, Copts, Ethiopians, Jews, Arabs and Turks, has left a strong imprint on its architectural and artistic heritage, which proves to be characterized by the coexistence and sometimes even by the mixture of different artistic languages. The present article will focus on one of the key-monuments of the town, the so-called “Nestorian” church, whose frescoed decoration is an excellent example of such a cosmopolite character.

The literature on this building is mainly based on Camille Enlart’s analysis in his fundamental book on Gothic architecture in Cyprus, dating back to 1899<sup>1</sup>. The French scholar first acknowledged that some of the frescoes preserved in its interior displayed Syriac inscriptions and considered them to be a sufficient proof to identify the church with that which, according to the Cypriot chroniclers Leontios Machairas and Diomede Strambaldi, had been built up “from the foundations” in about 1360 on the initiative of the Lakhas (or Lakhanopoulos) brothers, two East Syrian, i.e. “Nestorian”, merchants (possibly from Mosul) who were much praised because of their exceptional wealth; accordingly, he pointed out that the architectural and sculptural features, reminding him of Southern French and Italian Gothic buildings, pointed to a date not much different from that indicated by the written sources and could be interpreted as a result of the journey which King Peter I had made to Avignon in 1363. Enlart’s proposal was accepted by George Jeffery and by almost all of the scholars dealing with the history of Medieval Famagusta<sup>2</sup>; most recently, Joseph Yacoub

\* Although I have never known Prof. Drandakis personally, on several occasions I happened to appreciate his publications, and was often struck by his systematic knowledge of unexplored monuments combined with a thoughtful analysis of their iconographic, stylistic, and functional features. In some ways the present article is intended to follow Prof. Drandakis’ method, as it deals with the first results of a research activity on the hitherto neglected frescoes of Medieval Famagusta that is based on a photographic campaign organized by me and Prof. Spiridione Curuni (Rome) in February 2004.

<sup>1</sup> C. Enlart, *Gothic Art and the Renaissance in Cyprus*, D. Hunt (ed.), London 1987, 280-6. An updated “Enlart”, i.e. a systematic publication of the Gothic buildings of Cyprus, is currently prepared by a team of French scholars directed by Thierry Soulard.

<sup>2</sup> G. Jeffery, *A Description of the Historic Monuments of Cyprus. Studies in the Archaeology and Architecture of the Island*, Nicosia 1918, 144-7. R. Gunnis, *Historic Cyprus*, Nicosia 1973<sup>3</sup>, 99-100. Th. Mogabgab, “Excavations and Researches in Famagusta, 1937-1939”, *RDAC* 1937-1939, 181-90, esp. 185. K. Keshishian, *Famagusta Town and District*, Nicosia

1985, 60-61. M. Iakovou, *Αμμόχωστος. Εγκαμη - Σαλαμίνα - Αμμόχωστος, 16ος αιώνας π.Χ. - 16ος αιώνας μ.Χ.*, Athens 1993, 38. M. Rivoire-Richard, “Η γοτθική τέχνη στην Κύπρο”, *Ιστορία της Κύπρου, Ε: Μεσαιωνικόν βασιλείου, Ενετοκρατία, Β'*, Th. Papadopoulos (ed.), Nicosia 1996, 1415-54, esp. 1427, 1430, 1432, 1440, 1448. A. G. Marangou and A. G. Koutas, *Αμμόχωστος. Η ιστορία της πόλης*, Nicosia 2005, 128-33. The only notable exception is that of the late T. R. S. Boase, “The Arts in Cyprus. A. Ecclesiastical Art”, *The Art and Architecture of the Crusader States*, H. W. Hazard ed., Madison 1977 (= K. M. Setton (ed.), *A History of the Crusades*, V), 165-95, esp. 177-8, according to whom it was the building identified by Enlart (246-53) as Sts Peter and Paul that had functioned as a church for the Nestorian rite. This huge and majestic structure, whose architectural features point to a datation within the third quarter of the fourteenth century, preserves Syriac inscriptions as well (cf. Mogabgab, op.cit., 188) and this matter of fact can corroborate the information provided by sixteenth century sources, according to which the church had been sponsored by a Syrian merchant named Simone Nostrano: Francesco Attar, *Relazione del Regno di*

has pointed out that this must have been the church mentioned as “Mart Maryam” in a letter written in 1581 by the East Syrian metropolite of Amid to Cardinal Antonio Caraffa<sup>3</sup>.

The so-called “Nestorian” church looks rather unpretentious (Fig. 2). It is not such a tall building as Sts Peter and Paul or St George of the Greeks, and, even if it is made of a fine ashlar masonry, its only embellishment consists of plain and old-fashioned decorations, such as the zigzag displayed on the remnants of an archway originally delimiting the entrance to a side-building, most probably a monastic complex located to the south of the church. As was correctly remarked by Enlart, the original plan consisted only of a single-nave structure with protruding apse, whose bays were covered with simple groined vaults separated by rectangular transverse ribs (Fig. 1); in a subsequent period, when the church was extended by the addition of two aisles and minor apses, the walls of the central and eastern bay were demolished and substituted by arcades supported by square pillars, while the western bay was transformed into a kind of narthex or vestibule. The interior is lit by splayed pointed-arched windows, three in each bays of the southern side, instead of one as on the northern wall. On the exterior the original façade displays a plain portal and a round window; the later portal of the southern aisle is more elaborate, since it is embellished not only by another *œil-de-beuf*, but also by marble mouldings shaping a pointed arch springing from slender colonnettes. Such a device constituted an impediment to

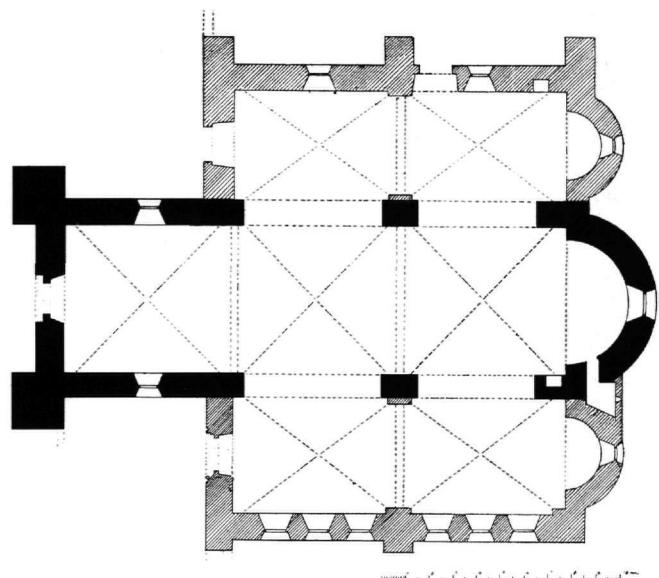


Fig. 1. Plan of the “Nestorian” church in Famagusta (after Enlart).

Enlart’s reconstruction, since it admittedly looked “older and more French in style”, and one would have been obliged to think that it was transferred there from a lateral doorway of the older building.

Some considerations lead us to believe that the name-identification and date of this church need to be revised. First of all, several decorative motifs (such as the zigzag-moulding on the exterior archway) seem to draw on a Romanesque repertory

Cipro, ca. 1520, L. de Mas Latrie ed., *Histoire de l'île de Chypre sous le règne des princes de la maison de Lusignan*, Paris 1852-1861, III, 519-36, esp. 524. Stefano Lusignano, *Chorographia et breve historia universale dell'isola di Cipro*, Bologna 1573, 57v; id. [Étienne de Lusignan], *Description de toute l'isle de Cypre*, Paris 1580, 147v (both texts are now reprinted in anastatycal edition with a forward of G. Grivaud, Nicosia 2004). If one admits that “Nostrano” could be a corrupted form for “Nestorano” (i.e. “Nestorian”), one may infer that such a personage could be a member of the Lakhas family and conclude that they sponsored a building which was to be reputed one of the most beautiful in town. However, the same word (used only in the Italian edition of Lusignan’s text) may also mean that the merchant Simon was “ours”, i.e. from Cyprus, and Attar states that he was a “Suriano christiano, sive Marano”, the latter term being interpreted by the editor Mas Latrie as “Maronite”. In any case, there is evidence that a church entitled to Sts Peter and Paul existed already by the year 1300, and that it was officiated by Eastern Christians (a parish priest named Dimitrios, probably a Greek, is recorded in a document dating from 1301: cf. C. Desimoni (ed.), *Actes passés à Famagouste de 1299 à 1301 par devant le notaire génois Lamberto di Sambueto*, AOL 2 (1884), 3-120, nos 134-35); this means that Simone Nostrano had sponsored a restyling or rebuilding of an earlier church. Cf. also

P. Edbury, “Famagusta in 1300”, *H Κύπρος καὶ οἱ σταυροφοροί* / *Cyprus and the Crusades, Proceedings of the International Symposium, Nicosia, 6-9 September 1994*, N. Coureas - J. Riley-Smith eds, Nicosia 1995, 337-53, esp. 343 (proposing to identify the church as that of the Dominicans, notwithstanding the evidence of Stefano Gibellino’s plan of the siege of Famagusta, where St Dominic’s is located on the northern part of the town); M. Balard, “Il paesaggio urbano di Famagosta negli anni 1300”, *La storia dei Genovesi. Atti del convegno di studi sui ceti dirigenti nelle istituzioni della Repubblica di Genova (Genoa, April 12-14, 1984)*, Genoa 1985, 277-291, esp. 282, and id., “Famagouste au début du XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle”, in J. Heers (ed.), *Fortifications, portes de villes, places publiques dans le monde méditerranéen*, Paris 1985, 279-99, esp. 283-4. An analysis of the still unpublished frescoes preserved in the church may be of help in understanding its history and religious affiliation: cf. a brief description in M. Walsh, “Saint Peter and Paul Church (Sinan Pasha Mosque), Famagusta: A Forgotten Gothic Moment in Northern Cyprus”, *Inferno School of Art History, University of St. Andrews, Post-graduate Journal* 9 (2004), 41-51.

<sup>3</sup> J. Yacoub, “La reprise à Chypre en 1445 du nom de ‘Chaldéens’ par les fidèles de l’Église de l’Orient”, *Istina* 49 (2004), 378-90, esp. 379-80 and 389.

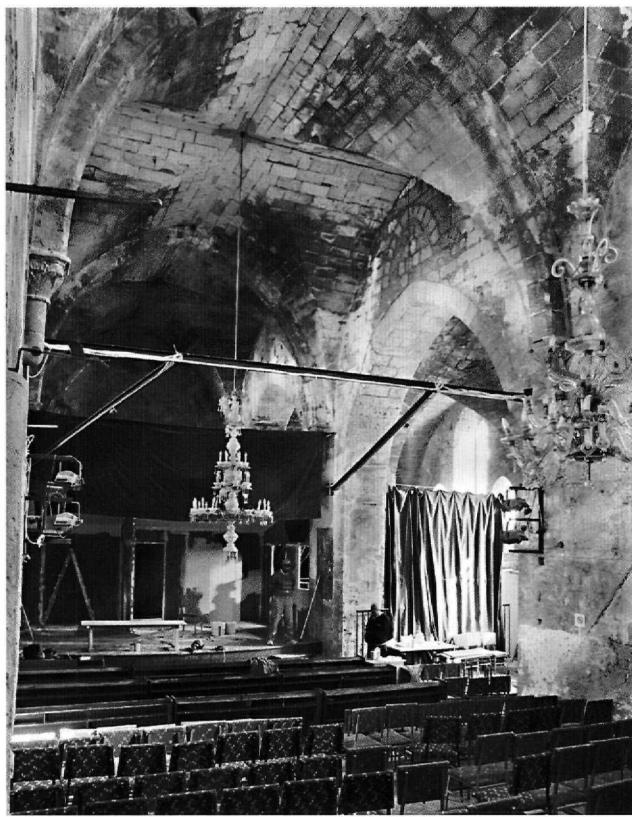


Fig. 2. Famagusta, "Nestorian" church. View of the interior (photo: Spiridione Curuni, Rome).

which would have been obsolete in the second half of the fourteenth century; more clearly, such features as the shafts of columns supporting the vaulting of the central nave and starting out of the wall in the form of a right angle, are reminiscent of the elbow-columns known from Crusader monuments in Palestine (as, for example, the church at Abu Ghosh<sup>4</sup>). Moreover, the use of groined, instead of ribbed vaults, supports the hypothesis of an earlier datation; such a covering is found also in the Famagustan church of the "Hospitallers" (which was recently dated back to the early fourteenth century by Jean-Baptiste de Vaivre<sup>5</sup>) and in the now inaccessible chapel of Saint Anne (known to have been a Maronite church)<sup>6</sup>.

Camille Enlart was not unaware of the fact that some of these devices contradicted his reading of the architectural features. For instance, he felt obliged to attribute the use of groined vaults to the influence of local tradition. On the other hand, he supposed that such features as the three windows on the bays of the southern wall might have been influenced by the solutions adopted in some Gothic buildings in the Veneto, and he attributed Italian origins to the chromatic effects resulting from the use of alternately red and white limestones in the voussoirs of the sanctuary arch and in the cross-shaped key-stones of the vaults. Such chromatic effects, however, were used in Italy in much a different way, i.e. they usually consisted of much more elaborate and large wall-coverings; these plain embellishments, shaping Greek crosses, seem to be better paralleled by those found in the area of the Crusader states, such as in Mar Shallita in Tannourine Fawqa, Lebanon<sup>7</sup>.

The general plan of the original church has much to share with the ecclesiastical architecture of the twelfth and thirteenth century on the Syrian and Palestinian coasts. Single-nave buildings with protruding apses were standard in the Christian villages of Palestine and Syria, according to a traditional scheme found in that area since the fifth and sixth centuries; their east end was usually provided with small rooms or simple recesses within the apse wall which were used as the prothesis and diaconicon: such was probably the function of the analogous structure set between the main apse and the southern apse in the "Nestorian" church of Famagusta. The same plan was also appropriated by the Crusaders for small churches already in the twelfth century. The introduction of groined vaults was one of the major contributions of Western tradition to local architecture; even if the traditional barrel-vaulting deemed standard among the Arab Christians of the Holy Land, Romanesque types started being used for some major buildings. Such were the three-nave church of Saint Porphyrius at Bait Jibrin near Gaza, ca. 1150-1160, which was most probably built for a Melkite community, or the twelfth century Syrian Orthodox chapel of Sitti Maryam in 'Abud<sup>8</sup>. To a Syriac *milieu* pertains also the church of Mar Saba at Eddé, Lebanon, analogously cov-

<sup>4</sup> Rivoire-Richard, op.cit., 1432-33. On Abu Ghosh, cf. D. Pringle, *The Churches of the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem. A Corpus*, Cambridge 1993-1998, I, 7-17, esp. 10 and figs I-II on p. 12.

<sup>5</sup> J.-B. de Vaivre, "Identifications hasardeuses et datation de monuments à Famagouste: le cas des «églises jumelles des Templiers et des

Hospitalliers»", *CRAI* 2002/1, 45-55.

<sup>6</sup> Enlart, op.cit., 274-9.

<sup>7</sup> L. Nordigian and J.-C. Voisin, *Châteaux et églises du moyen âge au Liban*, Beirut 1999, 181.

<sup>8</sup> Pringle, op.cit., 1993, I, 216-20 (Bait Jibrin) and 18-20 ('Abud).

ered with groined vaults supported by thick square piers<sup>9</sup>. Lebanon, and more precisely its Northern area corresponding to the territory of the ancient County of Tripoli, provides the most interesting *comparanda*. The County of Tripoli was situated on the sea-shore opposite Famagusta, and it is a well known fact that a large part of its Latin and Syrian population fled to Cyprus before and after the fall of the capital to the Mamlukes in 1289. As some recent studies have pointed out, the local Syrian Christians were inclined to draw on the repertory of Romanesque architecture represented in that area by such buildings as the Cistercian abbey of Balamand or Jbail and Beirut cathedrals. *Oeil-de-beuf* and splayed ogive-shaped windows, as well as moulded archways, were frequently imitated in the village churches. Such devices are also quoted by the “Nestorian” church in Famagusta: if one compares it with the small square church of the Holy Saviour in Koubba, for example, some common features will be immediately recognized, such as the composition on the side walls consisting of a central splayed window flanked by two smaller ones, as well as the combination of the portal with a small round window<sup>10</sup>. The presence of rectangular holes in the façade at Koubba and over the southern entrance at Famagusta indicates that both were originally decorated with a porch or aedicule (possibly something like the Baptistry adjoining Jbail Cathedral); in any case, the westernmost bay of the central nave used as a vestibule is a feature which characterizes the structure of several Crusader buildings, Beirut Cathedral being the most remarkable in the Lebanon<sup>11</sup>. All this evidence makes plausible that the first building campaign was initiated in the last decades of the thirteenth century on the initiative of a group of refugees from the Holy Land, and that it was enlarged not much later, probably in the early fourteenth century, when the Syrian quarter had become one of the most densely-crowded in town.

Just as in most of Lebanese churches, the frescoed decoration in the “Nestorian” church is not ruled by any unified and cohesive program, such as that usually intended for Orthodox churches since the middle-Byzantine era<sup>12</sup>. Even a quick look reveals that they were executed in different periods and by different hands, and that they did not conform to any hierarchical system of decoration, although a more co-

herent program could have originally embellished the apse area. Unfortunately, many paintings have long since vanished because of the difficulties faced up by the building: abandoned after the fall of Famagusta to the Ottomans in 1571, the church was used as a stable for camels and functioned as a church only once a year, on the occasion of the feast of “Saint George the Exiler” (according to the intitulation, Ἅγιος Γεώργιος ὁ Ἐξόριωτος, which was handed down to us); only by 1905 it had become a parish church for the local Greek population. In the 1930s, according to Rupert Gunnis, most of the frescoes described by Enlart in 1899 had already disappeared. In the last decades, as a consequence of the troubled political situation in Cyprus, the church happened to be used as a shelter for refugees and was probably subjected to further damage<sup>13</sup>.

According to both Enlart and Jeffery, the apse displayed the standard theory of holy prelates in the lower register, and a much more unconventional scene in the tribuna, comprising a kind of *Traditio clavis* with Christ handing down the keys to Saint Peter, and a kind of *Majestas Domini*. Most probably their identification was wrong, but it is worth mentioning, however, that the Christian communities in Syria always proved to be very conservative as regards iconography and frequently drew on the Early Christian repertory. The apostle Peter was usually given a prominent place within the painted decoration of apses in Lebanese churches, such as at Mar Phokas, Amioun, Mar Tadros, Bahdeidat, and Mar Charbel, Ma’ad; this may be intended also as a consequence of Peter’s role as the first bishop of Antioch, the ecclesiastical capital of many of the local confessions, a matter of fact that probably explains why Peter is given a central position in some Syriac miniatures representing the Pentecost<sup>14</sup>. Even if we do not accept the traditional view interpreting the *Traditio* as a properly Western (Roman) motif<sup>15</sup>, we have however no other comparanda at our disposal in the Late Medieval art of both Western and Eastern Christianity.

At the other end of the original building, i.e. in the westernmost bay to the right of the entrance, is preserved a frescoed panel whose stylistic features point to further connections with the Syrian mainland. It displays three saints standing in

<sup>9</sup> Nordigui - Voisin, op.cit., 163. E. Cruikshank Dodd, *Medieval Painting in the Lebanon*, Wiesbaden 2004, no. 15, 281.

<sup>10</sup> Nordigui - Voisin, op.cit., 133-7.

<sup>11</sup> Pringle, op.cit. (n. 4), I, 112-5; J. Folda, *The Art of the Crusaders in the Holy Land, 1098-1187*, Cambridge 1995, 70-1.

<sup>12</sup> Cruikshank Dodd, op.cit., 32.

<sup>13</sup> Gunnis, op.cit. (n. 2), 99.

<sup>14</sup> J. Leroy, *Les manuscrits syriaques à peintures conservés dans les bibliothèques d’Europe et d’Orient*, Paris 1964, pl. 126 fig. 2.

<sup>15</sup> Such a view has been recently rejected by J.-M. Spieser, *Autour de la ‘Traditio legis’*, Thessaloniki 2004.

rigidly frontal poses (Fig. 3): on the sides are represented two bare-headed and long-bearded holy monks flanking a central female figure, clad in a bluish veil, who holds a medallion including the image of the Crucifix. Such a detail allows us to identify her with Saint Paraskeve, the second-century martyr from Asia Minor who was worshipped as a personification of the Holy Friday and whose image, often found in middle and late Byzantine art, is especially widespread on Cyprus<sup>16</sup>. Syriac inscriptions are still visible next to the heads of both the monk on the left and Paraskeve: according to palaeographical analysis, they prove to be an *estranghelo* script, originally associated with the Church of the East (or "Nestorian" Church) but employed in the twelfth and thirteenth century by almost all of the Arab Christian communities of Syriac rite. Unfortunately, only the letters on the left of both saints' heads can be clearly deciphered: they read "qad(isho) mor(y)" (the holy – male – saint) and "qadishto mart(y)" (the holy – female – saint). On the other hand, the standard Greek abbreviations IC XP for "Ιησοῦς Χριστός" are used to qualify the Crucifix within Paraskeve's medallion<sup>17</sup>.

The treatment of such features as hairs and facial details indicate strong links with the style of the mid-thirteenth century fresco cycles in Ma'ad and Bahdeidat<sup>18</sup>. As recently stated by Erica Cruikshank Dodd, this trend of monumental painting in the Lebanon reflects the style characterizing the frescoes of the Syrian monastery of Mar Musa al-Habashi, dated 1192, and other paintings in Syria (Saints Sergius and Bacchus and Deir Yakub in Qar'a) and should be labelled as specifically Syrian, since it proves to be different from either Byzantine or Western art and to have much more in common with contemporary Muslim painting<sup>19</sup>. The main characteristics of such a stylistic tendency are the predominance



Fig. 3. Famagusta, "Nestorian" Church. Saint Paraskeve and Two Holy Monks, c. 1300 (photo: author).

of a linear quality in the shaping of the form combined with a strong sense of monumentality. The figures' frontal stare, as well as the use of regular geometric patterns in the rendering of the body and of strong lines marking the facial features, are found both in the Syro-Lebanese frescoes and in Famagusta. This conclusion is reinforced by such details as the conventional treatment of hairs with uninterrupted black brushstrokes outlining thick curls, the faces' oval shape, the use of a streak of green paint modelling the physiognomic features (as is still visible in Paraskeve's neck), and the extremely schematized folds of the garments.

The elegant pearlized rims decorating the nimbi have been sometimes interpreted as revealing connection with Syria (Qar'a)<sup>20</sup>, or alternatively as devices indicating Western in-

<sup>16</sup> D. Mouriki, "The Cult of Cypriot Saints in Medieval Cyprus as Attested by Church Decorations and Icon Painting", in A. A. M. Bryer and G. S. Georghallidis (eds), 'The Sweet Land of Cyprus'. Papers Given at the Twenty-Fifth Jubilee Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, Birmingham, March 1991, Nicosia 1993, 237-77, esp. 253.

<sup>17</sup> I am indebted to Prof. Sebastian Brock (Oxford) and Prof. Emidio Vergani (Rome) for their invaluable help in deciphering and dating the Syriac inscriptions within the "Nestorian" church in Famagusta. Although the *estranghelo* script is sometimes labelled as "Nestorian", in the twelfth through fourteenth century it was commonly used also by other Syriac-rite churches: cf. E. Cruikshank Dodd, *The Frescoes of Mar Musa al-Habashi. A Study in Medieval Painting in Syria*, Toronto 2001, 17-8.

<sup>18</sup> Cruikshank Dodd, *Medieval Painting* (n. 9), 316-60 and colour pls LXIX-LXXXVI.

<sup>19</sup> Cruikshank Dodd, *Mar Musa*, 109-27: ead., *Medieval Painting* (n. 9),

95-6, refers to this style as "Syrian Orthodox", but Stephan Westphalen has recently stated that it was not related to any specific confession: cf. A. Schmidt, "Conference Report 'Christian Art and Identity in Medieval Syria. Qara, Dair Mar Yakub - The Museum Fragments'", Damascus, May 20-22, 2004", *Hugoye: Journal of Syriac Studies* [<http://syrcm.cua.edu/syrcm/Hugoye>] 8/1 (2005), par. 4.

<sup>20</sup> D. Mouriki, "Thirteenth-Century Icon Painting in Cyprus", *The Grifon*, n.s., 1-2 (1985-1986), 9-77, esp. 69; ead., "Εἰκόνες ἀπό τὸν 12ο ὥς τὸν 15ο αἰώνα", in K. A. Manaphis (ed.), *Σινᾶ. Οἱ θησαυροί τῆς Ι. Μονῆς Ἀγίας Αἰκατερίνης*, Athens 1990, 101-25, esp. 121. Cf. Cruikshank Dodd, *Mar Musa* (n. 17), 112. The same features are found even in some fresco cycles in the southernmost area of Apulia, whose connections with the Mani murals have been emphasized by M. Panayiotidi, "Quelques affinités intéressantes entre certaines peintures dans la Magne et dans l'Italie méridionale", *Ad ovest di Bisanzio. Il Salento medioevale*, Galatina 1990, 117-25.

fluence<sup>21</sup>, even if they are often encountered also in Middle-Byzantine frescoes in Cyprus (Trikomo, Asinou, Lagoudera) and elsewhere; most of all, they seem to be archaizing features, dating back to the pre-Iconoclastic era (see, for example, Christ's pearlized halo in the apse of San Vitale, Ravenna), which were preserved by the art of the Christian communities in the Middle East: among the most relevant examples, one can recall the recently discovered tenth century frescoes in the Syrian monastery (Deir al-Surian) in the Wadi al-Natrun, Egypt, as well as similar instances in the Dırekli kilise at Belizırma in Cappadocia (10th c.) or in the first layer of frescoes (dated to 991/992) in Agios Panteleimon at Epano Boularioi in the Mani (which, according to Prof. Drandakis' hypothesis, show a Cappadocian style)<sup>22</sup>.

A homogeneous group of very deteriorated frescoes is scattered on the northern wall of the same bay and seems to be associated with a pointed-arched recess probably meant as a tomb-niche. This structure, whose higher section is decorated with an elegant marble moulding, was originally painted on both its outer and inner parts; traces of paint are to be seen on the extrados, as well as on the right part of the intrados (where the outline of a holy king, possibly David, is still to be seen). Even if its function derived from that of the ancient *arcosolia* which were also increasingly employed as funerary spaces within the narthexes of Late Byzantine churches<sup>23</sup>, the Gothic-shaped wall niche was an important element of Famagusta's local architecture, since it is found in its Latin, Greek, and Syrian churches. In Western practice, such structures (simply known as «chapels») were conceived as small liturgical spaces for performing masses for the soul's sake of individual donors and, while unfailingly including altars, they were not always associated with sepulchres<sup>24</sup>. Lateral altars, however, would probably have contradicted the Eastern Christian principle of the unity of ritu-

al practice, and so there is no doubt that they did function only as funerary places, as is confirmed by the last will dictated in 1453 by a Syrian Orthodox, sir Anthony Audeth, who ordered his heirs to bury his corpse within the chapel he had previously built within the Jacobite church of Nicosia<sup>25</sup>.

The nearby images need being read in their association with the chapel-tomb, since all of them seems to stress the role of the Virgin as a special advocate for the human genre seeking salvation in the afterlife. Marian themes are by far the most widespread in the church murals, since a Mother of God Enthroned is still to be seen also on the western side of the south-eastern pier of the second bay, and other figures of the Virgin were noticed by Enlart in 1899<sup>26</sup>; however, nowhere else has been laid so much emphasis on this particular subject. In the fragmentary fresco to the left an orant Mother of God can still be discerned, whereas the Annunciation was originally represented in the spandrels of the niche. Over it is located a very rare composition displaying three personages in frontal orant pose flanked by six scenes now almost completely vanished (Fig. 4). By means of a sketch it has been possible to understand that it originally displayed a type not unlike that known in Late Medieval Italy as *sant'Anna Metterza*, even if in that iconographic scheme (not witnessed before the fourteenth century) the figures were usually represented enthroned, instead of standing in the orant pose<sup>27</sup>. A medallion with the bust of Christ Emmanuel (symbolizing the pre-Incarnated God) is displayed on His mother's chest, whereas exactly behind Mary is represented Saint Anne in a praying gesture echoing that of the Mother of God; the latter's haloed head happens to be located in just the same position as Christ's medallion. Next to the upper left margin is represented a bowing angel just as in many Marian icons and in the remnant of fresco below. It seems self-evident that the image aimed at emphasizing the divine

<sup>21</sup> K. Weitzmann, "Icon Painting in the Crusader Kingdom", *DOP* 20 (1966), 49-83, esp. 59.

<sup>22</sup> N. B. Drandakis, *Bυζαντινές τοιχογραφίες της Μέσα Μάνης*, Athens 1995, 385-7. For previous examples see T. Velmans - V. Korać - M. Šuput, *Bisanzio. Lo splendore dell'arte monumentale*, Milan 1999, pls 4 and 14.

<sup>23</sup> S. Brooks, "Sculpture and the Late Byzantine Tomb", *Byzantium. Faith and Power (1261-1557)*, Exh. Cat., Metropolitan Museum of Art, H. C. Evans (ed.), New Haven-London 2004, 95-103.

<sup>24</sup> M. Bacci, *Investimenti per l'aldilà. Arte e raccomandazione dell'anima nel Medioevo*, Bari-Rome 2003, 135-47. Reflections about the use of niche-chapels in Cypriot architecture and their possible decoration with icons are to be found in A. Weyl Carr, "Cypriot Funerary Icons: Questions of Convergence in a Complex Land", *Essays in Honor of Jeremy*

*Duquesnay Adams*, S. Hayes-Healy (ed.), New York 2005, vol. I, 153-73.

<sup>25</sup> The document is published in J. Richard, "Une famille de «Vénitiens blancs» dans le royaume de Chypre au milieu du XVème siècle : les Audeth et la seigneurie de Marathasse", *RSBS* 1 (1981), 89-129bis (repr. in id., *Croisés, missionnaires et voyageurs. Les perspectives orientales du monde latin médiéval*, London 1983, chap. X), esp. 118-22.

<sup>26</sup> Mary and Christ are represented in a rather linear way under a round arch supported, on the right, by a telamon-like figure; over it are displayed two scenes, now almost completely illegible. Enlart, op.cit. (n. 1), 284.

<sup>27</sup> J.H. Emminghaus, "Anna Selbdritt", *LChrl*, V, cols 185-190; A. Reinle and E. von Witzleben, "Anna, hl. IV. Ikonographie, 2. Anna-Selbdritt", *Marienlexikon*, R. Bäumer and L. Scheffszky (eds), St. Ottilien 1988, I, 155-6.



Fig. 4. Famagusta, "Nestorian" church. Sketch of a fresco displaying Saint Anne and the Virgin Mary "Platytera" flanked by six scenes of Mary's Infancy (author's sketch).

conception of Saint Anne by stressing the iconographical analogy of the two figures<sup>28</sup>.

Notwithstanding their bad state of preservation, the side-scenes contain many clues which enable us to identify them as episodes of the Virgin's Infancy as they were known from the apocryphal Protoevangelion of James: on the lower reg-

ister to the left, one can still discern the shape of Saint Joachim approached by an angel in the wilderness, while on the right side the central and lower scenes originally displayed the Virgin blessed by the priests and Her presentation to the Temple. The narration was probably completed by such episodes as Joachim's offerings rejected and Joachim and Anne returning home to the left and the Nativity of Mary to the right<sup>29</sup>. By means of such a selection of scenes, the image functioned as an abridged version of the major cycles illustrating Mary's Life so widespread in Byzantine art in the Palaiologan period, and represented in Cyprus by the mid-fourteenth century frescoes in the Timios Stavros church at Pelendri<sup>30</sup>.

From the late thirteenth through the fourteenth century, analogous cycles were being introduced and developed also in Italian art, as is best evidenced by a painted panel attributed to the "Master of San Martino" and dating back to the 1270s, now preserved in the National Museum in Pisa<sup>31</sup>. As has been noted, this Marian image first seems to appropriate a compositional device traditionally employed in Pisa for images of saints, that of the central figure flanked on the two sides by a selection of scenes, which probably must be understood as a local version of the Byzantine "Vita-icon" (where the scenes usually encircled the holy portrait). Most interestingly, the same device is occasionally found in some borderlands of the Greek world, such as in Northern Macedonia or in Crimea; on Cyprus, it is best witnessed by two huge late thirteenth-century icons preserved in the Byzantine Museum of the Archbishop Makarios III Foundation in Nicosia, one displaying Saint Nicholas and another representing an Enthroned Virgin and Child spreading Her mantle over a group of Carmelite friars<sup>32</sup>.

<sup>28</sup> In Cypriot murals Saint Anne is usually shown alone or coupled with Saint Joachim wearing a red mantle and a green tunic and holding a cross: cf. C.L. Connor, "Female Saints in Church Decoration of the Troodos Mountains in Cyprus", *Medieval Cyprus. Studies in Art, Architecture, and History in Memory of Doula Mouriki*, N. P. Ševčenko and Ch. Moss (eds), Princeton 1999, 211-40, esp. 218 and fig. 11 (narthex of Asinou).

<sup>29</sup> Basic references on the iconographic features in J. Lafontaine-Dosogne, *Iconographie de l'enfance de la Vierge dans l'empire byzantin et en Occident*, Brussels 1964, I, 62-5 (Joachim's Offerings Rejected), 65-7 (Joachim and Anne Returning Home), 77-81 (Saint Joachim in the Wilderness), 91-121 (Nativity of the Virgin), 128-33 (The Virgin Blessed by the Priests), 136-67 (The Presentation of the Virgin to the Temple).

<sup>30</sup> On the Palaiologan examples cf. J. Lafontaine-Dosogne, "Iconography of the Cycle of the Life of the Virgin", in P. Underwood (ed.), *The Kariye Djami. Studies in the Kariye Djami and Its Intellectual Background*,

vol. IV, London-Princeton 1975, 161-94. On Pelendri see I. Christoforaki, "Cyprus Between Byzantium and the Levant: Eclecticism and Interchange in the Cycle of the Life of the Virgin in the Church of the Holy Cross at Pelendri", *EKEE* 21 (1996), 215-55.

<sup>31</sup> A. Caleca, "Pittura del Duecento e del Trecento a Pisa e a Lucca", in E. Castelnuovo (ed.), *La pittura in Italia. Il Duecento e il Trecento*, Milan 1986, 233-64, esp. 242 and figs 364-5.

<sup>32</sup> On the *Vita-icon*, see most recently N. P. Ševčenko, "The *Vita* Icon and the Painter as Hagiographer", *DOP* 53 (1999), 149-65; for the Italianate features of the two Cypriot icons cf. A. Weyl Carr, "Art in the Kingdom of the Lusignan Kings", *H Κύπρος και οι σταυροφοροίς* (n. 2), 242-3 (repr. in ead., *Cyprus and the Devotional Arts of Byzantium in the Era of the Crusades*, Aldershot 2005, chap. VII); A. Papageorgiou, *Εικόνες τῆς Κύπρου*, Nicosia 1991, 46-9 and figs 31-2. For a Byzantine case of such a compositional typology cf. L. Milyaeva, "The Icon of Saint George, with Scenes from His Life, from the Town of Mariupol",

In Trecento Italy such panels became rare, but their cheaper replicas within the frescoed decorations of church interiors continued to be executed: they were usually meant as means to sponsor and enhance the public worship of a new saint and as a very good device for laypeople seeking to obtain the salvation of their souls; without obeying to any program of united decoration like that used in Byzantine churches, an extraordinary amount of such autonomous, individual images covered the side-walls of naves (where the laypeople were supposed to stay during Mass) and was often physically associated to tombs and chapels for the performance of votive masses<sup>33</sup>. Also the Latin churches of Famagusta displayed several images of this kind, as is best witnessed by the rather chaotic series of frescoed panels which are still to be seen on the walls of the Carmelite church: among them, over an arcosolium-chapel, can still be discerned a full-standing image of Saint Catherine of Alexandria flanked by ten scenes of her life and miracles, being Italianate in style and probably dating to the mid-fourteenth century<sup>34</sup>. The functional analogy of this latter image and the Saint Anne in the “Nestorian” church is enough to suggest that in certain circumstances Western patterns of church decoration, inspired by commonly shared devotional feelings, could be adopted even by non-Latin believers.

However, this is only one side of the coin, since if one approaches those parts of the church dating from the second building campaign, a completely different style and iconography is encountered. In the southern aisle, close to the entrance, is displayed a rather huge figure of the Archangel Michael, according to the standard type often found in both Byzantium and Cyprus (cf., among many other instances, the gigantic rendering of Him in the southern wall of the naos at Lagoudera, 1192). To the right of the door are represented a holy monk and the Egyptian martyr Menas in orant pose, with the bust of the Pantocrator included in a medallion on his chest (Fig. 5), whereas the western side of the north-west pier of the central bay is decorated with the fig-



Fig. 5. Famagusta, “Nestorian” church. A holy monk and the martyr Menas, c. 1350-1370 (photo: author).

ure of a young apostle, possibly Saint Philip (Fig. 6). All of these frescoes are painted in a Palaiologan style of very high quality, which has no such parallels in the decorative programs preserved in other areas of Cyprus. As a matter of fact, for a long time the art made for Greek patrons outside Famagusta remained loyal to the Late Comnenian schemes introduced by the great cycles at the Enkleistra of St Neophytos, at Lagoudera and elsewhere, and, during the last quarter of the thirteenth century, was developed that curious artistic experience, combining East Christian and Western motifs with the local Byzantine tradition, which was labelled by Doula Mouriki as the “maniera cypria”<sup>35</sup>. As scholars have emphasized, the Palaiologan style was first introduced in the fourteenth century, as is best witnessed by a series of painted icons, even if the contemporary monumental decorations, as far as we can observe in the extant cycles (like those at Dali, in part of the decoration of Ayios Niko-

in O. Z. Pevny ed., *Perceptions of Byzantium and Its Neighbors (843-1261)*, New York 2000, 102-17.

<sup>33</sup> M. Bacci, “La nuova iconografia religiosa”, in M. Seidel (ed.), *Storia delle arti in Toscana. Il Trecento*, Florence 2004, 147-69, esp. 163-4 and figs 176a-b.

<sup>34</sup> Enlart, op.cit. (n. 1), 272-3 and fig. 228. Enlart’s sketch does not include the five scenes which are still to be seen on the left side of the image.

<sup>35</sup> A. Papageorgiou, “Ιδάξουσαι βυζαντινά τοιχογραφία τοῦ 13ον αιώνος ἐν Κύπρῳ”, *Πρακτικά των πρώτων διεθνούς κυπριολογικών συνεδρίων*, Nicosia 1972, II, 201-12; D. Mouriki, “The Wall Paintings of

the Church of the Panagia at Moutoullas”, in H. Hutter (ed.), *Byzanz und der Westen. Studien zur Kunst des europäischen Mittelalters*, Vienna 1984, 143-70; ead., “Thirteenth-Century Icon Painting”, op.cit. (n. 20); A. Weyl Carr - L. J. Morrocco, *A Byzantine Masterpiece Recovered. The Thirteenth-Century Murals of Lysi, Cyprus*, Austin 1991, esp. 99-113; J. Folda, “The Saint Marina Icon: Maniera Cypria, Lingua Franca, or Crusader Art?”, in B. Davezac (ed.), *Four Icons in the Menil Collection*, Houston 1992, 106-33; M. Bacci, “Tra Pisa e Cipro. La committenza artistica di Giovanni Conti († 1332)”, *AnnPisa*, n.s., 5 (2000), 343-86; N. Gioles, *Η χρυστιανική τέχνη στην Κύπρο*, Nicosia 2003, 172-3, 224-5.

laos tis Steyi at Kakopetria, in the narthex of Asinou, in the dome of the Panagia Chryseleousa at Strovolos, in the "catacomb" of Ayia Solomoni in Paphos, etc.) seem to remain loyal to the tradition established in the twelfth century, and they only occasionally happen to borrow some stylistic motifs from the new artistic trends of the Byzantine mainland. A clear example of the Palaiologan style is encountered in the Timios Stavros church at Pelendri, dating from the third quarter of the fourteenth century: as is especially revealed by the figures of the Evangelists in the spandrels of the dome, the murals display features directly connected with the art of the major centres of the Empire, and seem to be much different from other murals in the church, nearly contemporary but displaying a mixture of traditional Cypriot and Westernizing devices<sup>36</sup>.

Since a considerable number of Palaiologan-style murals is still preserved within the churches of Famagusta, it is reasonable to think that this town must have been the centre of dissemination of such a new trend to the rest of the island; even if their state of preservation is very precarious, they still display many common features which enable us to hypothesize that they were all executed at about the same date by the same hands, those of a team of painters coming from one of the major centres of the Byzantine empire. Since this style is encountered in such different buildings as the Latin conventional church of the Carmelites, the Byzantine-rite cathedral of St George of the Greeks and its small adjacent church, the Maronite chapel of St Anne and the "Nestorian" church<sup>37</sup>, one has to conclude that such masters enjoyed a great success in town and accepted to work for different patrons and religious communities; on the other hand, this points out that the pictorial tradition of Byzantium was still appreciated and reputed to be authoritative even by non-Greek christians.



Fig. 6. Famagusta, "Nestorian" church. A young Apostle (Saint Philip?), c. 1350-1370 (photo: author).

<sup>36</sup> A. and J. Stylianou, *The Painted Churches of Cyprus. Treasures of Byzantine Art*, Nicosia 1985, 126-40, 134-6, 425-7; A. Weyl Carr, "Byzantines and Italians on Cyprus: Images from Art", *DOP* 49 (1995), 339-57, esp. 345 (repr. in ead., *Cyprus* (n. 32), chap. XI); ead., "Art in the Kingdom of the Lusignan Kings", op.cit. (n. 32); ead., "A Palaiologan Funerary Icon from Gothic Cyprus", *Πρακτικά τοῦ τρίτου διεθνοῦς κυπρολογικοῦ συνεδρίου*, A. Papageorgiou (ed.), Nicosia 2001, II, 599-619 (repr. in ead., *Cyprus* (n. 32), chap. IX); Papageorgiou, *Εἰκόνες τῆς Κύπρου* (n. 32), pls 39, 42, 44, 57, 49; A. Stylianou, "Η βυζαντινή τέχνη κατά την περίοδο της Φραγκοκρατίας (1191-1570)", *Ιστορία της Κύπρου* (n. 2), 1229-1407, esp. 1302-7 and 1313-8; I. Christophoraki, "Η τέχνη στην Κύπρο την εποχή του Α. Μαχαιρά και του Γ. Βουστρωνίου", *Πρακτικά συμποσίου «Λεόντιος Μαχαιράς - Γεώργιος Βουστρωνίος, δύο χρονικά της μεσαιωνικής Κύπρου»*, Nicosia 1996, 87-96, esp. 89; ead., "Cyrus Between Byzantium and the Levant",

op.cit. (n. 30); A. Papageorgiou, "The Painting in the Dome of the Church of the Panagia Chryseleousa", *Medieval Cyprus* (n. 28), 147-60; Y. Philotheou, "Η μνημειακή ζωγραφική στήν περιοχή τῆς μητροπολιτικῆς περιφέρειας Μόρρου", *Ιερά Μητρόπολις Μόρρου. 2000 χρόνια τέχνης καὶ ἀγιότητος*, Nicosia 2000, 109-26, esp. 118. The use of twelfth and thirteenth century models by Cypriot painters of the fourteenth and even fifteenth century is pointed out by M. Emmanuel, "Monumental Painting in Cyprus During the Last Phase of the Lusignan Dynasty, 1374-1489", *Medieval Cyprus* (n. 28), 241-62, esp. 243; cf. also Gioles, op. cit., 173-8.

<sup>37</sup> A. Papageorgiou, "L'art byzantin de Chypre et l'art des Croisés. Influences réciproques", *RDAC* 1982, 217-26, esp. 219-21 and pl. 29 figs 2-3. Most of the extant murals are still unpublished and are in a very bad state of preservation.

Whereas the inscriptions of St George's are in Greek and those of the Maronite church are in Latin, the *tituli* still readable on the fresco with a holy monk and Saint Menas in the "Nestorian" church display a very elegant and ornate *estranghelo* script, being much different from that seen on the fresco in the westernmost bay and not unlike that found in twelfth-thirteenth century Syriac manuscripts. The one to the left of the monk's head reads "qad(isho) m(ory)" (the holy saint), as does that located next to Menas; however, the name "myn" (for Menas) seems to have been attributed to the holy monk, since it is inscribed just to the right of the latter's face; there is no doubt that such an oddity must be understood as a mistake of the Greek painter who probably happened to write out the wrong inscription of those he had been provided with by his Syrian donors.

It is worth observing that all of the figures are represented staring at the viewer, in a frontal pose that does not look stiff, since it is refined by a light, delicate inclination of the right leg. The folds, best visible in the young apostle's figure, are intended to reveal the body's limbs and prove to be imbued with a classicizing quality, also evidenced by the dynamically curling edge of the himation. The facial features indicate a strong plastical rendering, as is best emphasized by the figure of Saint Menas, where an effect of soft modelling is obtained by applying wide greenish shades along the contour lines of the light ochre surface of both his face and neck. This figure displays dark-outlined eyelashes, whose contour is echoed by that of the eyelids, prominent cheekbones emphasized by reddish shadings, and carefully rendered ears, as well as a round-shaped head wearing a greyish hair and beard, both rendered, by means of thin brush-strokes alternating brown and white tones, as small hanks arranged in rows vertically juxtaposed.

The "neohellenistic" tone of the image is somewhat reminiscent of the classicizing, monumental trend of the first Palaiologan era, as was best represented by the frescoes in

the Protaton at Karyes (1295-1300) known as the work of the semi-legendary Thessalonikan painter Manuil Panselinos, but is different because of some stylistic features, such as the chromatic scale ruling out primary colours and privileging half shades, the taste for effects of luminescence and transparency, or the "expressionist" qualities manifested by the refined movements of the body and its embellishment with jewels and precious garments (as is the case with Menas); a strong realistic accent may also be detected in the rather crude treatment of the ears, which is even further emphasized in the figure of Saint Nicholas in the Carmelite church (Fig. 7)<sup>38</sup>. The latter should not be mistaken for a Western work of art because of the Roman catholic *paraphernalia* worn by the holy bishop – an iconographic choice which was perfectly logical for an image meant for a Latin audience – since the treatment of the facial features, as well as of the hair, beard and folds, is perfectly identical with that found in the "Nestorian" church.

Both reveal stylistic features which are best paralleled by Palaiologan frescoes executed in the sixth through the eighth decades of the fourteenth century in Thessaloniki and its area of influence. The monumental decoration of Vlatadon Monastery (ca. 1350-1370), as well as some features of John Theoranos's mid-fourteenth-century murals in Ohrid, provide good comparanda for the Famagustan frescoes, especially as regards the plastic modelling of the body, its proportions and refined movements, as well as the treatment of both hair and facial features<sup>39</sup>. Maria Panayiotidi, Chryssanthi Mavropoulou-Tsioumi and Evangelos Kyriakoudis, among others, have pointed out that the above-mentioned cycles were an important step in the development of a new pictorial trend which reinterpreted the monumental and voluminous style of the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries as a classicizing expressionism characterized by linearly-rendered heightenings and affected poses and movements, coupled with a strong realistic treatment of some details (such as ears, fingers, eyes)<sup>40</sup>.

<sup>38</sup> This image, which is still unpublished, is mentioned only by Enlart, op.cit. (n. 1), 271.

<sup>39</sup> Ch. Mavropoulou-Tsioumi, "Οι τοιχογραφίες της μονής Βλατάδων, τελευταία αναλαμπή της βυζαντινής ζωγραφικής στη Θεσσαλονίκη", *Η Θεσσαλονίκη* 1 (1985), 231-7; ead., *Μονή Βλατάδων*, Thessaloniki 1988, 42-6. On the work of John Theoranos in Ohrid (ca. 1350) cf. V. Djurić, *Byzantinische Fresken in Jugoslawien*, Belgrad 1976, 68-9, 99, 103, and fig. 68, as well as C. Grozdanov, *Ohridsko zidno slikarstvo XIV veka*, Belgrade 1980, 67-102.

<sup>40</sup> Ch. Mavropoulou-Tsioumi, "Μνημειακή ζωγραφική στη Θεσσαλονίκη στο δεύτερο μισό του 14ου αιώνα", *Ενρρόστηνον. Αφιέρωμα στον*

*Μανόλη Χατζηδάκη*, Athens 1992, vol. II, 658-68; M. Panayiotidi, "Les tendances de la peinture de Thessalonique en comparaison avec celles de Constantinople, comme expression de la situation politico-économique de ces villes pendant le XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle", *Βυζάντιο και Σερβία κατά τον ΙΔ<sup>ου</sup> αιώνα*, Athens 1996, 351-62; E. N. Kyriakoudis, "The Morava School and the Art of Thessaloniki in the Light of New Data and Observations", *Zograf* 26 (1997), 95-105; E. N. Tsigaridas, *Τοιχογραφίες της περιόδου των Παλαιολόγων σε ναούς της Μακεδονίας*, Thessaloniki 1999, 331-40 and passim. On the classicizing trend of the mid-fourteenth century in its connections with the stylistic features of the later "Morava school" see V. J. Djurić, "Solunsko pereklo resavskog živopisa", *ZRV* 6 (1960), 111-28.

Elements of such a trend, being only one of the possible expressions of late Palaiologan “neohellenism” (cf., e.g., the much different style one can recognize in the pictorial and monumental quality of the murals in the Katholikon of the Pantokrator Monastery, dating from 1360-1370<sup>41</sup>), can be detected also in the fresco displaying Joasaph with Gregory Palamas in St Demetrios in Thessaloniki<sup>42</sup>, in the murals of the Prophitis Ilias church in the same town (which give even more emphasis to the combination of classicizing and realistic devices<sup>43</sup>), as well as in a series of icons in the Vlatadon collection, dating from the third quarter of the fourteenth century<sup>44</sup>. Such stylistic connections may indicate that the painters working in the “Nestorian” church in Famagusta had arrived from Thessaloniki; however, an origin from Constantinople, whose role in the art of this period remains rather obscure, cannot be ruled out, since scholars have emphasized that, although the classicizing trend of the mature Palaiologan painting is best witnessed by extant cycles in the second town of the Empire and its area of influence, it would be misleading to consider it a local phenomenon<sup>45</sup>. As a matter of fact, however, the murals in the “Nestorian” church reveal the activity of a much experienced and well trained atelier from the Byzantine mainland, and needs being further investigated by means of a thorough publication of the fragmentary murals still preserved within the churches of Famagusta.

Close to the figure of the Archangel Michael is displayed a remnant of fresco whose stylistic features point to still another artistic tradition, that of the Latin West (Fig. 8). Against a deep blue (or “ultramarine”) background were originally represented three female figures; that of Saint Mary Magdalene can still be seen on the right, whereas the silhouette of a flying angel holding the edge of a cloth is the only preserved fragment of a major composition which most probably included a Virgin of Mercy spreading Her mantle over a group of worshippers. That the composition was in-



Fig. 7. Famagusta, Carmelite church. Saint Nicholas in western attire, c. 1350-1370 (photo: author).

spired by contemporary Italian art is easily demonstrated by the ornamental band decorating its upper edge, which displays a rather conventional combination of foliage and quadrilobes housing coats-of-arms<sup>46</sup>. The embellishment of the haloes with incised rays is also Italianate, and Magdalene’s loose hair best suits the Westerners’ devotion and taste, even if such detail proves to be uncommon in the iconic representations of this holy woman<sup>47</sup>.

However, if we accept that this image was done in a “Western” style, we have to ask ourselves who was responsible for

<sup>41</sup> E. N. Tsigaridas, “Nouveaux éléments sur le décor du catholicon du monastère du Pantocrator au Mont Athos”, *Zograf* 26 (1997), 75-80 (Greek translation in id., *Τοιχογραφίες*, op.cit., 55-80).

<sup>42</sup> A. Xyngopoulos, *Σχεδίασμα τῆς ιστορίας τῆς θρησκευτικῆς ζωγραφικῆς μετά τὴν Ἀλωσιν*, Athens 1952, 211; Ch. Mavropoulou-Tsioumi, *Βυζαντινή Θεοσαλονίκη*, Thessaloniki 1992, 665-8; Panayiotidi, “Les tendances”, op.cit., 356-7.

<sup>43</sup> Djurić, op.cit. (n. 39), 284; Th. Papazotos, “Ο ναός του Προφήτη Ηλία”, *Η Θεοσαλονίκη και τα μνημεία της*, Thessaloniki 1985, 128-36; Mavropoulou-Tsioumi, “Μνημειακή ζωγραφική”, op.cit. (n. 40), 663; Panayiotidi, “Les tendances”, op.cit., 358.

<sup>44</sup> Kyriakoudis, op.cit., 102 (with earlier bibliography).

<sup>45</sup> Cf. esp. T. Velmans, “La peinture murale byzantine d’inspiration con-

stantinopolitaine du milieu du XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle (1330-1370): son rayonnement en Géorgie”, *Dečani et l’art byzantin au milieu du XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Belgrade 1989, 75-95; Panayiotidi, “Les tendances”, op.cit., 359-62.

<sup>46</sup> Similar motifs, which are to be seen also in the southern apse of Saint George of the Greeks and in Bellapais Abbey, will be repeated in the sixteenth-century cycle in the Latin Chapel of Kalopanagiotis: cf. S. Frigerio-Zeniou, *L’art “italo-byzantin” à Chypre au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle. Trois témoins de la peinture religieuse: Panagia Podithou, la Chapelle Latine et Panagia Iamatiké*, Venice 1998, 186.

<sup>47</sup> Magdalene is shown either naked with loose hair within a grotto or clad in red garments; a loose hair is also displayed in the scene of the Crucifixion.

its execution. The actual activity of Latin painters in Outremer has been much debated after Hugo Buchthal's and Kurt Weitzmann's pioneering studies in the 1950s and 1960s<sup>48</sup>; since all of the works thought to be "Crusader" antedated the formal innovations worked out in Central Italy and best represented by Giotto's style, such materials cannot be used for our understanding of the strong Gothic qualities of this Famagustan fresco. Italianate devices are sometimes to be found in the major ports of the Aegean and in the Latin-ruled countries of the Levant in the fourteenth century: for example, a figure of Saint Lucy in the church of the Panagia tou Kastrou in Rhodes was most probably executed by an itinerant Italian artist in about 1320<sup>49</sup>, and some remnants of Gothic murals are still to be seen in the porch of Bellapais Abbey and in the Carmelite church in Famagusta<sup>50</sup>. The bad state of preservation of the image prevents us from providing an analytic reading of its style, but it is worth emphasizing that some features, like the treatment of Magdalene's nose and mouth or the rendering of the foliage as slender leaves, seem to reveal some knowledge of Byzantine artistic practice; on the other hand, the holy woman's hair seems to have been inspired by sculptural models like the syrens in one of brackets of the chapter house of Bellapais Abbey (Fig. 9). One wonders if such "mixed" qualities may represent the pictorial tradition of local Latin Cypriot artists, of whom at least one – named *Perrottus*, i.e. most probably a Francophone – is recorded by a text dating back to the second half of the fourteenth century, Philippe de Mezières' *Life of Saint Peter Thomas*<sup>51</sup>.

Quite interestingly, the most clearly Italianate fresco in Famagusta is preserved within an Arab Christian church, as the evidence of the Syriac inscriptions points out. The image, though commissioned by Latin patrons and made in a Latin pictorial language, was by sure not intended for Western beholders. A small detail, that of the coat-of-arms displayed on the upper edge, helps us to clear up the mystery: they invariably consist of



Fig. 8. Famagusta, "Nestorian" church. Fragment of a Virgin of Mercy and Saint Mary Magdalene, first half of the 14th century (photo: author).

the eight-pointed star which was associated with the Genoese family of the Embriaco-Gibelet, i.e. with the old rulers of the fief of Jbail in the County of Tripoli, whose population had gradually fled to Cyprus during the second half of the thirteenth century<sup>52</sup>. The inhabitants of "Gibelletto" (as Italians used to call it) mainly settled in Famagusta and, as citizens of the Republic of Genoa, they had been granted the same privileges (in such matters as tax and justice administration) they had obtained in their homeland; although many of them were Latin, several others who took advantage from Genoese citizenship (and were known as "White Genoese") were Arab Christians, Armenians, Jews and even Muslims of Lebanese origin. Such circumstances make plausible that the building functioned as the "national" church of a group of Syriac-rite refugees from Jbail, and the presence of the Gibelet's coats-of-arms points out that they still had strong connections with their

<sup>48</sup> H. Buchthal, *Miniatuare Painting in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem*, Oxford 1957; K. Weitzmann, "Thirteenth-Century Crusader Icons on Mount Sinai", *ArtB* 45 (1963), 179-203; id., "Icon Painting", op.cit. (n. 21). For a summary of the scholarly debate on this special issue and some important insights see B. Zeitler, "Two Iconostasis Beams from Mount Sinai: Object Lessons in Crusader Art", in A. Lidov (ed.), *Ikono-stas. Proiskhozhdenie - razvitiye - simvolika*, Moscow 2000, 221-42.

<sup>49</sup> M. Acheimastou-Potamianou, "Η εκκλησία της Παναγίας του Κάστρου της Ρόδου", *ADelt* 23 (1968), Meletai, 221-63, esp. 267-8; E. Kollias, *Η μεσανατολική πόλη της Ρόδου και το παλάτι του Μεγάλου Μαγιστρου*, Athens 1994, 117-9 and fig. 61.

<sup>50</sup> Enlart, op.cit. (n. 1), 183-4 (Bellapais), 270-4 (Carmelite church in

Famagusta).

<sup>51</sup> J. Smet, *The Life of Saint Peter Thomas by Philippe de Mezières Edited from hitherto Unpublished Manuscripts*, Rome 1954, 172, where mention is made of "Agnes, uxor Perrotti pictoris". On the late thirteenth century sculptures in the Chapter House of Bellapais Abbey cf. Enlart, op.cit. (n. 1), 195-6.

<sup>52</sup> W.-H. Rudt de Collenberg, "L'héraldique de Chypre", *CahHér* 3 (1977), 85-158, esp. 100 n. 250, 103 n. 297, 111, 126 n. 36 and fig. 14. On the Gibelet, see also the remarks scattered in id., *Familles de l'Orient latin XIIe-XIVe siècles*, London 1983, chaps III and IV, as well as E. G. Rey, "Les seigneurs de Gibelet", *ROL* 3 (1895), 399-422.

former rulers (who actually played an important role among the major aristocratic families of the Lusignan Kingdom)<sup>53</sup>.

This evidence seems to rule out the "Nestorians". Although Enlart's proposal has often been used even by scholars dealing with the history of the Church of the East and willing to emphasize its iconolatry (which is mainly demonstrated by figurative documents from Central and Far Eastern Asia)<sup>54</sup>, there are enough iconographic clues hinting at a completely different religious confession. First, one is struck by the occurrence of so many saints, since it is known that the Eastern Syrian sanctoral proved to be extremely scarce<sup>55</sup>, and never included Menas, whose Egyptian *martyrium*, according to Coptic sources, had been even diminished and depaupered by some followers of Nestorius working in synergy with the Caliph in the times past<sup>56</sup>. Saint Paraskeve should also be regarded as an odd subject for this religious group, whereas Saint Anne, whose scheme probably aimed at visualizing the theological idea of Mary's Immaculate Conception, seems to be in sharp contrast with the Eastern Syrian believing of the Virgin's role only as Mother of Christ (as had been stated once again in the "Book of the Tower" written in Famagusta in the 1330s by the "Nestorian" theologian Saliba al-Mawsili<sup>57</sup>).

It is much more likely that the "White Genoese" refugees from Jbail had been Syrian Orthodox or Melkite. The "Jacobite" church, as a consequence of its emphasis on the Son's divinity, was inclined to accept that Mary ought to be pure and exempt from the original sin since the very moment of Her conception<sup>58</sup>, and shared with the Copts a deeply rooted worship for Saint Menas<sup>59</sup>. Such details may favour an at-



Fig. 9. Bellapais Abbey, Chapter House. Bracket decorated with a man and two syrens, first half of the fourteenth century (photo: author).

tribution of the building to this Syriac-rite group, even if one is struck by the holy monks' garments, none of them including the decorated *koukoulion* usually worn in Syria<sup>60</sup>. We know that the Syrian Orthodox possessed several churches in Cyprus, one of them being that of Mar Benham in Famagusta, which seems to have been located on the cathedral parvis<sup>61</sup>; this does not prevent us from thinking that further cult-places were intended for the same rite, especially if they served as "national" churches for diaspora communities. Nonetheless, a Melkite affiliation cannot be ruled out, especially because of Saint Paraskeve, who seems to have been ignored by the "Jacobites": but one should bear in mind that the West Syrian lectionaries – like that written by the monk Rabban Sliba at the end of the thirteenth century – often appro-

<sup>53</sup> D. Jacoby, "Citoyens, sujets et protégés de Venise et de Gênes en Chypre du XIII<sup>e</sup> au XVe siècle", *ByzF* 5 (1977), 159-88, esp. 162-3. About the non-Chalcedonian communities in Medieval Cyprus see J. Hackett, *A History of the Orthodox Church in Cyprus*, London 1901, 522-35; G. Hill, *A History of Cyprus*, Cambridge 1940-1952, IV, 1045-1046; N. Coureas, "Non-Chalcedonian Christians on Latin Cyprus", *Dei Gestae per Francos. Études sur les croisades dédiées à Jean Richard* (ed. M. Balard - B.Z. Kedar - J. Riley-Smith), Aldershot 2001, 349-60.

<sup>54</sup> J. Dauvillier, "Quelques témoignages littéraires et archéologiques sur la présence et sur le culte des images dans l'ancienne église chaldéenne", *OrSyr* 1 (1956), 297-304, esp. 301; P. Pelliot, *Recherches sur les chrétiens d'Asie Centrale et d'Extrême Orient*, Paris 1973, 159; V. N. Zalesskaya, "Hristiane na vostoke", in M. B. Piotrovsky ed., *Hristiane na vostoke. Iskysstvo Mel'kitov i inoslavnyh hristian*, Saint Petersburg 1998, 12-21, esp. 19-20.

<sup>55</sup> J.-M. Fiey, "Le sanctoral syrien oriental d'après les évangéliaires et les bréviaires du XI<sup>e</sup> au XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle", *OrSyr* 8 (1963), 21-54.

<sup>56</sup> So according to the *History of the Patriarchs of Alexandria* (PO X, 510-512).

<sup>57</sup> H. Teule, "Saint Louis and the East Syrians. East Syrian Attitudes to the

West", *East and West in the Crusader States. Context - Contacts - Confrontations. Acta of the Congress Held at Herten Castle in September 2000* (ed. K. Ciggaar and H. Teule), Leuven 2003, 101-22, esp. 103 and 117-8.

<sup>58</sup> On the Immaculate Conception among the Western Syrians cf. J. Madey, "Syrer", *Marienlexikon* (n. 27), VI, 343-44, and M. Gordillo, *Mariologia orientalis*, Rome 1954, 97-101.

<sup>59</sup> He was commemorated on November 11: cf. A. Baumstark, *Festbrevier und Kirchenjahr der syrischen Jacobiten*, Paderborn 1910, 199-200. Magdalene was also worshipped, and it is a known fact that the Syrian Orthodox monks who fled to Cyprus already in 1187 had owned the church of Saint Mary Magdalene in Jerusalem: cf. S. Brock, *The Hidden Pearl: The Aramaic Heritage*, Rome 2001, 158.

<sup>60</sup> For some examples see Cruikshank Dodd, *Mar Musa* (n. 17), figs 52 and 72.

<sup>61</sup> P. Mouterde, "Deux inscriptions jacobites", *Mélanges de l'Université Saint-Joseph* 22 (1939), 49-56. Mouterde considered the foundation-inscription of Mar Benham to date from the 16th century, but this is contradicted by the earlier mention of the same church in the last will of John Audeth (1451): cf. Richard, "Une famille de «Vénitiens blancs»", op.cit. (n. 25), 112-115.

priated Melkite feasts<sup>62</sup>. On the other hand, the use of Syriac script was common to all of the Arab Christian communities of Syria and Lebanon in that period and cannot by itself reveal the religious community ruling the church-building; however, it is enough to contradict the statement of Friar James of Verona, who wrote in 1335 that the non-Chalcedonian Christians of Famagusta used Greek as their liturgical language: as most Westerners, he was probably unable to understand the difference between Greek and Syriac<sup>63</sup>. To sum up, several iconographic, palaeographic, and stylistic features point to a strong connection with Arab Christians from the County of Tripoli, being most probably a White Genoese community of Syriac-rite refugees from Jbail/Giblet. Accordingly, Enlart's identification with the "Nestorian"

church must be rejected. Whereas the architectural setting repeats many devices worked out in Outremer, the painted decoration was executed in subsequent periods by painters of very different training and culture: the earliest phase, probably dating back to the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century, is that best represented by the frescoed panel displaying Saint Paraskeve and two holy monks, whose style is that described as specifically Syrian by Erica Cruikshank Dodd; the second phase, that of the Gothic fresco, is difficult to interpret, but it probably does not postdate the mid-fourteenth century and may be attributed to a Latin Cypriot artist; the latest layer of murals must be attributed to a team of Palaiologan painters, possibly from Thessaloniki, who were responsible for the decoration of several churches in Famagusta in ca. 1350-1370.

**Michele Bacci**

## ΣΥΡΙΑΚΕΣ, ΠΑΛΑΙΟΛΟΓΕΙΕΣ ΚΑΙ ΓΟΤΘΙΚΕΣ ΤΟΙΧΟΓΡΑΦΙΕΣ ΣΤΟΝ «ΝΕΣΤΟΡΙΑΝΟ» ΝΑΟ ΤΗΣ ΑΜΜΟΧΩΣΤΟΥ

Οι μεσαιωνικοί ναοί της Αμμοχώστου διασώζουν αρκετά κατάλοιπα του αρχικού τοιχογραφικού τους διακόσμου, κατά κανόνα σωζόμενου αποσπασματικά και με άμεση ανάγκη συντήρησης, ενώ ελάχιστοι μελετητές έχουν ασχοληθεί με αυτά, ύστερα από το θεμελιώδες έργο του Camille Enlart για τη γοτθική Κύπρο (1899). Ωστόσο, τα σύνολα αυτά έχουν ιδιαίτερο ενδιαφέρον, καθώς μας βοηθούν να κατανοήσουμε την έντονη καλλιτεχνική δραστηριότητα μιας μικρής πόλης η οποία κατά τον ύστερο 13ο και τον 14ο αιώνα εθεωρείτο μία από τις πιο κοσμοπολίτικες, πλούσιες και ονομαστές στον χριστιανικό κόσμο.

Στην παρούσα μελέτη δίδεται έμφαση στον εκτενή εσωτερικό επιτοίχιο διάκοσμο του ναού του Αγίου Γεωργίου του Εξορινού, τον οποίο ο Enlart ταύτισε με τον ναό της «νεστοριανής» κοινότητας της Αμμοχώστου. Αυτή η υπόθεση δεν ευσταθεί πλέον καθώς στην πραγματικότητα τα εικονογραφικά θέματα των τοιχογραφιών δεν φαίνεται να συνδέονται με το λειτουργικό ημερολό-

γιο ή με τις θεολογικές πεποιθήσεις των χριστιανών της ανατολικής Συρίας, ενώ η απόδοσή τους σε μία κοινότητα Μελκιτών ή Δυτικών Σύρων από τον Λίβανο μοιάζει πιο πιθανή, όπως δηλώνει και η παρουσία των οικοσήμων της βασιλικής οικογένειας των Jbail (Λίβανος). Στον διάκοσμο του ναού διακρίνονται τοντλάχιστον τρεις φάσεις: η πρώτη χρονολογείται στον ύστερο 13ο-πρώιμο 14ο αιώνα και μπορεί να αποδοθεί σε ζωγράφο από την ενδοχώρα της Συρίας: η δεύτερη μπορεί να συνδεθεί με κάποιο Λατίνο ζωγράφο από την Κύπρο, ο οποίος εργάστηκε στο πρώτο μισό του 14ου αιώνα: τέλος, περί το 1350-1370 ένας καλλιτέχνης ή μια ομάδα καλλιτεχνών από κάποιο μεγάλο κέντρο της βυζαντινής αυτοκρατορίας (Θεσσαλονίκη ή Κωνσταντινούπολη) ανέλαβε τη ζωγράφηση ορισμένων μορφών αγίων, των οποίων τα τεχνοτροπικά χαρακτηριστικά ανιχνεύονται και σε άλλους ναούς της Αμμοχώστου και χρήζουν επισταμένης έρευνας.

<sup>62</sup> P. Peeters, "Le martyrologe de Rabban Sliba", *AnBoll* 27 (1908), 129-200.

<sup>63</sup> James of Verona, *Liber peregrinationis* [1335] (ed. U. Monneret de Villard), *Liber Peregrinationis di Jacopo da Verona*, Rome 1950, 19. Cf.

A.-D. von den Brincken, *Die Nationes Christianorum im Verständnis der lateinischen Historiographie von der Mitte des 12. Jahrhunderts bis in die zweite Hälfte des 14. Jahrhunderts*, Köln 1974, 203, 226, 240, 319.