

Dressing the Port, Re-Dressing the Square: Signs and Signifiers in the Urban Landscape of Famagusta, Cyprus, 1291-1571

Panos Leventis

Drury University

Abstract

This article discusses and interprets the development, urban topography and main signifiers of the port city of Famagusta, Cyprus between the 14th and 16th centuries. It traces the city's three distinct patterns of development, directly paralleling the three administrations in the years constituting the late Lusignan, Genoese and Venetian periods:

In the late Lusignan period (1291-1373), the city's initially unfortified waterfront becomes a collection of socio-urban clusters of merchants and others that echoes their mother cities' socio-cultural and visual heritage. Simultaneously, at the urban core, in the area surrounding the central square, the rising Cathedral of Saint Nicholas (c.1300-c.1340) and the expanding Palace of the Lusignan become physical and symbolic bookends for the city's most important civic space.

In the late 1360s, on the eve of the Genoese occupation, and due to the construction of the city's fortifications, the merchant administration centers relocate to the area surrounding the main square, superimposing their loggias onto the urban core. Nearby, the impressive Church of Saints Peter and Paul, constructed with eastern merchant funding, reiterates the balance of power at this time and completes the area's urban identity. Throughout the years of Genoese administration (1373-1464), financial and political difficulties deny the city of further development, resulting in a humbler, if not outright neglected, urban

fabric. Nevertheless, a surviving building in the square, possibly the Catalan loggia, can attest to continuous construction during this time.

During the Venetian Period (1473-1571) this situation is partially reversed when a series of defensive and civic renovation works are undertaken. In the prevailing spirit of the Renaissance, Venetian authorities redress a number of structures such as the Castle and Sea Gate by the port (1490s-1520s), and the Palace in the main square (1540s-1550s), appropriating spolia from the island's ancient past within a uniquely Venetian cultural and urban narrative.

1. URBAN COLLECTIVES: FAMAGUSTA AND ITS WATERFRONT IN 1291

The port city of Famagusta lies in the middle of a large bay which forms the eastern shores of Cyprus. In the city's vicinity, a series of settlements sheltered socio-urban development and cultural production from prehistory through early Byzantine times. The last and most significant of those settlements, Salamis, was abandoned following a series of destructive raids and earthquakes between the 6th and 9th centuries AD. Famagusta, whose Greek name Αμμόχωστος literally translates as 'buried in sand', was founded in the 10th century at a distance of five kilometers to the south of Salamis as the main eastern port of the restored (but distant) Byzantine province of Cyprus.

From the Rise of a Lionheart to the Fall of Acre

During the first two hundred years of its development the city was rarely mentioned in imperial documents or other sources. That was to change quickly when Cyprus was captured from the Byzantines by the English King Richard the Lionheart in 1191. While on his way to Jerusalem during the third crusade, Richard swiftly defeated the island's local rebellious ruler. He immediately sold Cyprus, first to the Templar Knights and, following a disastrous and violent year-long rule by the Knights, he then re-sold it to the Lusignan, a longtime crusading family from the same-named town in the Poitou region of western France.

Famagusta's importance, situated as it was just across the waters from the threatened and fragile Holy Land Crusader Kingdoms, was quickly understood by the Lusignan. Accordingly, throughout the 13th century the island's new ruling family undertook civic, defensive and religious works in the city, which grew to become the second largest in Cyprus (following the capital, Nicosia), surpassing in both size and

significance the older port towns of Limassol and Paphos, respectively situated on the island's southern and western shores.

The fall of Crusader Acre in 1291 signaled the definitive collapse of the Holy Land Crusader Kingdoms and simultaneously led to the further development and growth of Famagusta. Thousands of refugees settled in the city, and merchants from across Europe and beyond adopted it as their port of call and primary node of commercial and cultural exchange.

Merchant settlers resided in fairly easily identifiable areas of Famagusta, joining smaller, preexisting communities of fellow citizens. Significantly, these quarters were not legally or physically exclusive, as had been the case in Acre and other Crusader cities in the Holy Land, but were rather areas which fell within the authority of the island's royal domain, in which merchants comprised an increasingly large percentage of the population.¹ The core of the growing Genoese, Venetian, Pisan and other communes of Famagusta was naturally located at the water's edge, by the port. Micro socio-urban versions of the merchants' mother cities developed along Famagusta's initially unfortified seafront:

A Genoese Waterfront

Genoese settling in Cyprus can be traced back to at least as early as 1203,² and a decade later Queen Alice granted Genoa various privileges, among them land in Famagusta in order to construct "houses".³ Perhaps it was the same site that King Henry I (re)-granted the Genoese in 1232, one that was bound on one side by an adjacent house, on two sides by streets, and on the fourth by the sea.⁴ In turn, this is probably the same property that yielded rents in 1249, and almost certainly can be identified as the site that developed into the official Genoese *loggia*, when in 1299 a galley docked directly alongside it.⁵

A Genoese notary named Lamberto di Sambuceto recorded this last information. Lamberto worked in Cyprus, mostly in Famagusta, from as early as 1294 until his departure for Genoa in 1307. As official 'notary and scribe' of the Genoese commune in Famagusta until 1300, he conducted the majority of his business in the Genoese *loggia*.⁶ Numerous Genoese citizens and protégés feature in Lamberto's documents, some as part of the royal family's official staff (*criers* or *jurats*), others dealing in the clothing trade, some accepting or investing sums of money, others buying property.⁷ Naturally, the forty-six will documents that are found in Lamberto's Cyprus registers concern, in their vast majority, citizens of Genoa. Of those, about two thirds were merchants or temporary visitors to Famagusta,⁸ often persons renting residential properties by the port, near the *staciones* of the Genoese commune and the fish market.⁹ The Genoese-dominated merchant quarter of Famagusta was thus in full development by 1301, when a Genoese *podestà* arrived to replace and upgrade the previous Genoese administration (consul), and included the *loggia*, the adjoining *staciones* or *fondaco*,¹⁰ various shops and leased properties, and the city's fish market.

There exists no documentation whether a church dedicated to San Lorenzo was ever constructed in the quarter, as had been the wish of Famagusta's Genoese community in 1301,¹¹ but during the same year the Genoese *loggia* did possess a chapel dedicated to Saint George,¹² Genoa's patron saint. At the same time, a Hospital of Saint Anthony, which adjoined the fish market and the Genoese *loggia*, is linked in many documents to Famagusta's Genoese community.¹³ The ruins of the church of Saint Anthony (Figure 1), identified as such in the late 19th century, can still be seen inside Famagusta's harbor wall, between the Sea Gate and the Arsenal.¹⁴

Diversifying the Port: Venice, Pisa and Marseilles in Famagusta

Venice already enjoyed substantial commercial and trading ties with the Byzantine province of Cyprus well before 1191. Throughout the 13th century, Venetians acquired various privileges from the Lusignan, including fiscal exemptions, judicial autonomy and substantial land properties.¹⁵ However, Venetian-Lusignan relations fluctuated greatly during this time, and even as late as 1291 Venice was still not as established on the island as Genoa was.¹⁶ The substantial influx of Venetian citizens and protégés from the fallen Crusader Kingdoms, especially Acre, altered this situation.

A document of 1302 includes Venice's persistent request for either the granting of, or permission to acquire, churches, streets, squares, and *loggie* in Nicosia, Limassol and Famagusta.¹⁷ Lamberto di Sambuceto writes that in the same year a Genoese-owned house was found next to Famagusta's Venetian *loggia*,¹⁸ and yet another mention from 1302 locates the Venetian *loggia* by the sea, next to the city's customs house or *commerzium*,¹⁹ permitting us to localize the core of the Venetian quarter also by the sea, adjoining the port's royal center of commercial activity and control. Though a treaty of 1306 denied the Venetians the granting of a complete (and thus safer) urban quarter they had requested four years earlier,²⁰ there is no doubt that, by that year, both perceived and actual, physical Venetian presence at the port of Famagusta had begun to rival that of Genoa.

The Republic of Pisa also had commercial relations with Cyprus since the first crusade,²¹ enjoyed exemptions and privileges throughout the 13th century, and operated out of Limassol, until then the island's major port, as Genoa and Venice had done.²² While even into the 1290s, and despite its fateful 1284 defeat by Genoa in the Battle of Meloria, Pisa continued to maintain its center of activity and administration in Cyprus at Limassol. Famagusta was by then home to a Pisan consul and a growing community,²³ and a number of Pisan brokers and middlemen still conducted merchant transactions there in the early 1300s.²⁴ Also in 1302, and despite not having a substantial population in Famagusta, Marseilles maintained a consul and a prominent *fondaco* at the port,²⁵ certainly in order to safeguard its commercial privileges and interests in the quickly growing city.

2. BISHOPS, KINGS AND MERCHANTS IN THE CITY CENTER: STAGING THE SQUARE, 1291-1473

Only about 300 meters away from the port and its swelling, dense merchant quarter, Famagusta's main square was taking shape in what was becoming the geographic middle of the quickly growing urban landscape. During the 1290s and well into the following decades, the square was flanked to the east by the construction site of the city's new cathedral church, and to the west by the expanding royal palace, residence of the Lusignan whenever they found themselves in Famagusta. Throughout the 14th and 15th centuries, the square provided a stage for almost the entirety of coronations, celebrations, processions, disagreements, fights, and open conflicts between the royal domain, the church authorities, the mercantile communities, and the various nations now dwelling the city. Modifications of existing buildings and new constructions surrounding the square signified, to both residents and visitors to the city, shifts in alliances and affiliations, changes in political power, and military occupations.

Between Cathedral and Palace: The Main Square in the Fourteenth Century

The Cathedral of Saint Nicholas still towers in the east side of the main square of Famagusta.²⁶ The building is a late 13th century massive reconstruction of an existing church,²⁷ and construction phases appear to span the first four decades of the 14th century.²⁸ Though the impressive façade of Saint Nicholas (Figure 2) has been 'appropriated' by a number of art historians and is still variably described as influenced by contemporary High Gothic styles of regions of France or Germany, without a definitive answer the reality on the ground must have been that, entering the square from the street leading west out of the port, the cathedral gave one the perception of arriving into the center of a developing and prospering city at the core of Europe. Attached to the north side of Saint Nicholas was the Latin bishop's residence with its adjoining garden and a number of mansions belonging to the nobility, all of these further reinforcing the impressive visual impact of the square's east side.

It is again from Lamberto di Sambuceto, in two documents dated April 28, 1300, that we first learn of the *logia domini regis*, situated on the square's west side.²⁹ The chronicles note that ten years after these mentions, Amaury of Tyre, usurper of the throne between 1306 and 1310, ordered urban works to be conducted in the city, reflecting the realities of the city's quickly growing population and size, but also its fearing Ottoman (and possibly Crusader) threats. These works included reformulating and widening works for the main square.³⁰ It appears that the dense urban fabric, some of which still exists east of the church of Saints Peter and Paul at the southwest end of the square,³¹ was a safety concern for Amaury.

Unfortunately for him, the restructuring of the square did not alter history's route, and following his 1310 assassination, his brother King Henry II returned from exile and initially resided not in the capital, Nicosia, but at the royal court in Famagusta. There he constructed a bridge connecting the court to the church and monastery of Saint Francis, located at the northwest corner of the square.³² The Franciscans were favored by Henry, who often sought meditative refuge in their church via this bridge. Henry's successors, Hugh IV and Peter I, the former a humanist and patron of the Arts, and the latter a warrior and patron of the idea of Crusade, dwelled in Nicosia, but often stayed in Famagusta with their courts. Henry's bridge and spiritual refuge was quickly forgotten and sadly converted into a shooting gallery.

By the time of Peter's reign (1359-1369), the chronicles and visitors recount that both his royal court and the city of Famagusta lived in "unimaginable wealth and unspeakable sin." It is thus not surprising that Saint Bridget of Sweden arrived in the city in 1372, consulted with the royals and preached to the people gathered in the square for the event, hoping to rid Famagusta of the "malignant devil" encroaching it.³³ Her efforts did not bear fruit, and divine wrath descended less than a year later in the form of Genoese galleys. Following months of conflict and negotiation, the city was surrendered to Genoa in return for peace, with the condition that all Cypriot trade be conducted via Famagusta, and thus monopolized by Genoa.

The Loggias Relocate to the Center

While still located by the waterfront as late as 1368, the Genoese, Venetian and Pisan³⁴ centers of commercial activity had undergone a significant change during the first half of the 14th century: The construction of the eastern city wall, facing the sea, which commenced *circa* 1310³⁵ and continued with frequent reinforcements in the following decades, materialized along the edge of the merchant quarter. Even if this construction did not necessitate large-scale demolitions within the quarter,³⁶ a statement of which one cannot be certain, it must have certainly restricted the quarter's further development and prosperity. The previously mentioned church at the hospital of Saint Anthony³⁷ was constructed *circa* 1330-1350 in this area with a north-south rather than an east-west orientation, obviously due to lack of space between the new walls and the pre-existing street and urban fabric.

Meanwhile, by the mid 14th century, as Eastern Mediterranean trading routes became increasingly constricted, maritime state relations worsened again. Trading conflicts, legal battles and fights spread. Famagusta was not spared: The Venetian *loggia* was still adjoining the *commerzium* in 1368, when during Genoese-Venetian fighting, Genoese fighters climbed on the *commercium*'s roof and threw stones into Venice's *loggia*.³⁸ By now, the constantly quarreling, powerful but suffocating merchants needed not only to have more available space, but also to position themselves closer to the city's center of power. Sometime after 1368, and presumably following a collective treaty, the merchants moved their headquarters

to the middle of the city, superimposing their administration centers onto the central square, the area of the *plathea Famagoste*.³⁹

A 1372 incident confirms the new location of the Italian *loggias*: Only four years after the Genoese were throwing stones into the Venetian *loggia* at the harbor, it was now Venetians and Cypriots that encircled the new Genoese *loggia*, located next to Saint Francis, which itself adjoined the north side of the Palace, as mentioned earlier. As the Genoese tried to escape by jumping from their *loggia* into Saint Francis, the mob attacked Genoese shops and merchant houses in the surrounding area before finally being appeased by royal forces⁴⁰. This was the incident, using as pretext ceremonial differences following the coronation of Peter II as King of Jerusalem in Saint Nicholas Cathedral across the square, which resulted in the death of numerous Genoese in the subsequent invasion of Genoese forces, and in the 85-year occupation and administration of Famagusta by Genoa.

On November 27, 1395, more than twenty years following the end of the Cyprus-Genoa war, the notary Nicola de Martoni, on a tour of the Holy Land, landed in Famagusta. He described “fine squares,” buildings and impressive fortifications, but was also quick to point out that already a third of Famagusta lay uninhabited and in ruins as a result of Genoese rule.⁴¹ He saw the impoverished Genoese bishop at the cathedral, he visited the palace, which was now residence of the Genoese *Commandante*, and between them he strolled the main square which he described as the “fruit market,” and where bread, a great variety of fruit and vegetables, clothes and other goods were sold or auctioned.⁴² While under Genoese rule the main square of Famagusta thus acquired humbler uses than its royal past would have imagined, the Italian *loggias* were still functioning in 1420, when Emanuel Piloti specified their location, i.e., “along the great street that began at the main square and led north,” and was of the opinion that the Pisan was the most beautiful.⁴³

On the other side of the main square, meanwhile, heading west alongside the south façade of the palace, the covered street had long constituted the heart of the central commercial quarter.⁴⁴ Along the covered street, numerous merchants set up their *staciones*, small shops in or adjoining arcaded or vaulted spaces.⁴⁵ Since the 14th century, wooden balconies often covered the entrances to these shops, and trading places, tables and other urban furniture filled the covered street and the other commercial arteries.

A Merchant Church by the Square

On the covered street’s south side, at the southwestern edge of the palace, lies one of the most imposing, intriguing and mysterious monuments of Famagusta, the church identified as that of Saints Peter and Paul (Figure 3). It owes this identification to Camille Enlart who, based on a sixteenth century chronicle, named it and dated it to the mid-14th century.⁴⁶ In the 110 years since that assertion, the building was

also proposed to have been an Orthodox foundation of an earlier time,⁴⁷ a Latin church of a later time,⁴⁸ and even the main church of the monastery of Saint Dominic of Famagusta.⁴⁹ The interpretation favoring the Dominican friars does not appear to hold, and it remains most probable that this was the building allegedly constructed with funds amounting to only one-third of the profits made on a single trip to Syria by a prominent Famagusta merchant, Simon Nostrano,⁵⁰ descendant of a family that had arrived from the East and settled in the city during the early 14th century.

The church is situated just west of the square in the heart of the commercial district, at the crossroads where the covered street leads west to the artery that exits Famagusta through the Land Gate. And while of the two frescoes uncovered recently in the church's interior, the largest one depicts the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste and poses intriguing questions as to the building's attribution, dedication and history,⁵¹ an unidentified graffiti painted high on the west wall, depicting a sailing ship,⁵² could speak to the building's and the neighborhood's history, tradition and memory as the city's area of merchants in the late 14th century.

It was in this landscape of Famagusta's central square area, a simultaneously impressive and decaying urban enclosure surrounded by the towering silhouettes of Saint Nicholas, the Palace and Saints Peter and Paul, and suffering under the draining financial decisions of Genoese colonial administration, that merchants conducted their business in the first half of the 15th century. As a Mamluk attack on the island in 1426 and the plague of 1438 completed an unfortunate pattern of destruction in the city,⁵³ it was also in the main square that, as part of both the city's università and popolo, based on either their citizenship and/or status, Famagustans took oaths of allegiance first to the Casa di San Giorgio in 1447, when Genoa finally decided to transfer the city's administration directly to its most powerful banking institution, and then to King James II, the last Lusignan ruler of Cyprus, when his men succeeded in recapturing the city in 1464.⁵⁴

3. RE-DRESSING THE PIAZZA: FRAGMENTS OF THE RENAISSANCE IN FAMAGUSTA, 1473-1571

Following its 1464 recapture by James, largely desolate Famagusta witnessed yet another destructive plague in 1470, an event that prompted the King's appeal to Venice, his ally against Genoa, to send settlers for the repopulation of the cities and villages of the island. The most significant "settler" that Venice responded with was a wife for the Cypriot King. Via a series of clever political maneuverings, young Caterina Cornaro, of the powerful Venetian family, wed James and moved to Cyprus. It was through James's death in 1472, and the abdication of Caterina in 1489, that Venice would finally rule over Cyprus as its colony.

The sixteenth century indeed saw the city's fortunes reverse, through an impressive influx of population and a steady, if of humble scale, revitalization of buildings and neighborhoods. While foreign trade through the port was minimal compared to the 14th century, as new routes to and from the Americas

in the west and Ottoman conquests in the East had redirected commercial focus, the city edged toward its last decades of prominence.

A Final Constructed Act of Non-Venetian Power?

Soon after 1489, Venice would face its first challenge on Cyprus in the form of the powerful earthquake of 1491. This earthquake coincided with a list of grievances presented by the Famagustans to their new ruler across the sea, Agostino Barbarigo.⁵⁵ Among others, they wondered what purpose the royal cathedral and Latin bishopric of the city served, since, following the catastrophes and in the absence of a bishop, they lay in ruin and at any moment could collapse.

Back in the Square, by now simply referred to as the *Piazza*, a building still stands as part of that complex of endangered structures that the Famagustans spoke of (Figure 4). It is attached to the southwestern corner of Saint Nicholas Cathedral and forms the piazza's southern edge. While the single scholar thus far who engaged this building thought that it dates partly from the late 14th or early 15th century, he reiterated that as a whole the building should be dated a century later, at the beginning of Venetian rule.⁵⁶ In a well-known late 19th century interpretation, he also mentioned that *colonnettes* in the Cathedral, taken from this building, "are in the Aragonese style, identical to ones in the cloister of Saint Anne in Barcelona and others in the Barcelona archaeological museum," and he thought the whole structure was a Catalan work of the late 15th century.⁵⁷

Could this be a work initiated and/or funded by the Catalan Luis Perez Fabricius, Archbishop of Cyprus in the 1470s,⁵⁸ or even the Catalan *loggia* of the time, of which a few commentaries survive?⁵⁹ The Catalans had a significant presence in 15th century Cyprus. Following King James' death in the year 1472, it was the continued Catalan plots,⁶⁰ especially the one to abduct the Queen and wed her to Alfonso of Naples in 1488, which led to the final Venetian push for Caterina to abdicate⁶¹ and to the end of Catalan influence on the island. It is thus possible that the Venetians renovated an existing building, possibly Fabricius' disused bishopric or the Catalan *loggia*, in their attempt to give the piazza a post-1491 renewed, civic, Renaissance, and most of all Venetian, character.

This hypothesis on the building's possible 15th century uses is reinforced by the fact that the structure initially carried a second floor, since a stairway survives attached to its side, outside the piazza, and there are vestiges of balconies. The archway to the street, much less decorated with the attached stair to its side, and the balcony above it, would suggest an entry from the piazza into an interior cortile, and not leading out to a street, accounting for either a bishop's residence after the wishes of the Catalan Archbishop, or a commercial *loggia* for the Catalans with a colonnade on the second floor looking out on the piazza.

The 6-meter marble slab with acanthus and other natural motifs surviving at the side of this build-

ing, left of the grand archway, appear to have been a final “urban furniture” addition by the Venetians to the renovation of this building. Researchers have mentioned the abandoned Hellenistic to early Byzantine city of Salamina, 5 km north of Famagusta, as provenance of this piece. In fact, throughout Venetian rule Salamina was repeatedly the architectural quarry for additions and decorations to new or renovated buildings, and the piazza of Famagusta bears multiple testimonies to that.

The Palace of the Proveditors

The *Palazzo dei Proveditori* dominates the *piazza*'s west side. During Caterina's reign (1473-1489), the complex still stood as the 14th century Lusignan palace and the 15th century Genoese commander's residence. Caterina initially resided there. Intimidated by her Venetian brethren while continuously insisting that she deliver the island to Venice the *Serenissima*, she lived in forced isolation. For months she dealt with uncertainty, uprisings and assassinations right in the palace halls and courtyards.⁶² On an April morning, standing at the main stairway, Caterina's father, Marco, shouted into the square that the queen and her family were prisoners in their own court.⁶³

It wasn't until a slave stormed into the royal bedroom waving a dagger at her in early 1474⁶⁴ that the queen was finally convinced to hand the Palace to the Proveditors and move into a smaller, safer mansion just north of the *piazza*, one adjoining the Venetian *loggia*. Two years following that move Caterina left her new, humbler Palazzo for the capital, Nicosia. Under Venice the *Serenissima*'s watchful eye, she ruled Cyprus from Nicosia's Royal Court between 1476 and 1489. In Famagusta, a late 15th century singular façade north of the *piazza*'s west side is in all probability what still remains of either the 1474-1476 “*Palazzo della Regina*”⁶⁵ or the renovated Venetian *loggia*.⁶⁶

Between 1487 and 1489, visits from Venice by members of Caterina's family, including her mother and brother, had as intent to persuade her to relinquish power⁶⁷. Against both her and her subjects' wishes, Caterina finally gave in. On February 15th, 1489, she left Nicosia for Famagusta, dressed in black and veiled, in a tearful procession. As she exited the court, soldiers summoned by the Venetians shouted “*Marco, Marco*”, while citizens wept.⁶⁸ A solemn mass was held upon her arrival in Famagusta, and the standard of the Venetian Republic was raised in front of the palace in the *piazza*.⁶⁹

The marble slabs above the city's Sea Gate and citadel entrance conserve the dates 1491 and 1496, and the names of Proveditors Nicolo Foscarini and Nicolo Priuli.⁷⁰ It may have also been at this time that the palace's damaged Great Hall was replaced by a rectangular, two-storey building, constructed in a simple, disciplined High Renaissance manner. Its north and west outer walls still tower today, overlooking the medieval windows of Saints Peter and Paul across the empty court.

Work on Famagusta's fortifications was naturally the primary care for Venice in her effort to head

off an Ottoman attack. This work, interrupted by the destructive War of Cambrai, resumed in the 1520s and 1530s and involved the Sanmichelis. The date 1544 is conserved above the Land Gate at the city's southwest end.⁷¹ It was also in the 1540s, one of the most stable decades of Venetian rule in Cyprus, that the city's authorities felt the need for a "redressing" of the old palace. A new façade was constructed in front of the fourteenth century structure (Figure 5).⁷² The marble coat of arms of Capitano Giovanni Renier on the keystone of the central arch is dated 1552.⁷³

The Columns and the Sarcophagus

The 1571 map of the Ottoman siege of Famagusta, published in Brescia by Stephano Gibellino, bears an index which has shed considerable light in the topography of the city under Venetian rule. The first item on the index, one might imagine the most significant, reads: "*S. Nicolo, Domo di Franchi, davanti al qual gli e l'arca di Venere posta fra due colonne*".⁷⁴ This designation, filled with Renaissance imagination and conviction that the tomb of Venus lay in the middle of Famagusta's *piazza*, reflects a long and continuous Venetian attitude towards the Classical past and its re-appropriation.⁷⁵

Another Stephano contemporary to Gibellino, the Cypriot chronicler Lusignan, mentions the discovery of the tomb of Venus during excavations in 1564, and retells her life as Queen of Cyprus.⁷⁶ The imagining of Venus as Queen of Cyprus predates Lusignan and Gibellino's time, as it is also tied to the beginning of Venetian rule and Doge Agostino Barbarigo, the recipient of the 1491 list of complaints by Famagusta's *universita*.⁷⁷ Two years earlier, in February 1489, Barbarigo had also received Caterina Cornaro in Venice following her final departure from Cyprus, sailing with her to the Piazza San Marco on the Bucentaur in a rare and splendid ceremony.⁷⁸

In the same year Barbarigo proudly decided to showcase the inclusion of Cyprus in the *Stato di Mare* by his commission to the Lombardo workshop of four fireplaces in the Doge's apartment at the Palazzo Ducale in Venice. The apartment was ready by 1492. Richard Cocks has recently argued that two of the fireplaces show Cyprus as Venus and Crete as Jupiter flanking Venice as the Lion of St Marc, among *amoretti* and cornucopias representing the abundance of agricultural products connected with Venice's new island possession, which was to be its breadbasket for the next century. The importance of the marble sarcophagus as the Goddess's tomb between the two columns (Figure 6) with the winged lion in the middle of the *piazza* is thus of significant symbolism, and together with the Ducal fireplaces it completes a Cyprus-in-Venice and Venice-in-Cyprus cycle of representations which would last on through to the final days of Famagusta as part of the Venetian empire, that is, until the city was overrun by the Ottoman army following a year-long siege in 1571.

SUMMARY

The urban topography of Famagusta and its main signifiers between the 14th and 16th centuries follow three distinct patterns of development, directly paralleling the city's three administrations in the years constituting the late Lusignan, Genoese and Venetian periods. In the late Lusignan period (1291-1373), following Famagusta's post-1291 explosive growth, the city's initially unfortified waterfront grew to become a collection of socio-urban clusters of merchants and other dwellers that echoed their mother cities' socio-cultural and visual heritage. At the urban core, in the area in and around the central square, the rising Cathedral of Saint Nicholas (c.1300-c.1340) and the expanding Palace of the Lusignan became physical and symbolic bookends for the prospering city's most important civic space. In the late 1360s, on the eve of the Genoese occupation, and partly due to the constructions of the city's extensive fortifications, the merchant centers of administration relocated to the area surrounding the main square, superimposing their *loggias* onto the urban core. The imposing Church of Saints Peter and Paul, constructed with eastern merchant funding in the area of the square, reiterates the balance of power in the city at this time and completes the area's urban landscape. During Genoese administration (1373-1464), financial and other difficulties denied the city of further development, resulting in a neglected and humbler urban fabric. Nevertheless, a surviving building in the square, possibly the Catalan *loggia*, can attest to continuous construction during this time. This situation was partially reversed during the Venetian Period (1473-1571), when a series of both defensive and civic renovation works were undertaken, especially in the 1490s, the 1520s, and the 1550s. In the prevailing spirit of the Renaissance, Venetian authorities redressed a number of structures such as the Castle and Sea Gate by the port (1490s-1520s), and the Palace in the main square (1540s-1550s), appropriating the island's ancient past within a uniquely Venetian cultural and urban narrative.

Late medieval and Renaissance Famagusta can thus be understood as an unusually multicultural port city for its time and geographic location which, unlike earlier examples in the Holy Land Crusader Kingdoms, was deliberately given a unified, fortified character and form by the Lusignan. This was a socio-urban form which Famagusta would not lose through the Genoese and Venetian periods. Within this form dwelled citizens of all social strata, including visitors and merchants of various ethno-linguistic and religious groups—often uneasily and in competition, but by necessity shaping an unavoidably common urban fabric of unique architectural and cultural richness.

Images



Figure 1. Saint Anthony. (Photo by author)



Figure 2. Saint Nicholas. (Photo by author)



Figure 3. Saints Peter and Paul. (Photo by author)



Figure 4. Saint Nicholas and Unidentified Building. (Photo by author)



Figure 5. Palazzo. (Photo by author)



Figure 6. Columns in the Piazza. (Photo by author)

Notes

- 1 Michel Balard, "Famagouste au Début du XIV^e Siècle," in *Fortifications, Portes des Villes, Places Publiques dans le Monde Méditerranéen*, ed. Jaques Heers (Paris: Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 1985), 294; Benjamin Arbel, "Urban Assemblies and Town Councils in Frankish and Venetian Cyprus," in Πρακτικά του Δεύτερου Διεθνούς Κυπριολογικού Συνεδρίου, ed. Theodoros Papadopoulos, vol. 2 (Nicosia: Society of Cypriot Studies, 1986), 203; Peter Edbury, "Famagusta in 1300," in *Cyprus and the Crusades*, ed. Nicholas Coureas and Jonathan Riley-Smith (Nicosia: Society for the Study of the Crusades and the Latin East, and Cyprus Research Center, 1995) 346; Angel Nikolaou-Konnari, "Greeks," in *Cyprus: Society and Culture 1191-1374*, ed. Angel Nikolaou-Konnari and Chris Schabel (Laiden: Brill, 2005), 17.
- 2 Louis de Mas Latrie, *Histoire de l'Île de Chypre sous le Règne des Princes de la Maison de Lusignan*, vol. II (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1852), 39; David Jacoby, "The Rise of a New Emporium in the Eastern Mediterranean: Famagusta in the Late Thirteenth Century," in Μελέται και Υπομνήματα 1 (Nicosia, 1984), 159.
- 3 Mas Latrie, *Histoire*, II, 39; Jacoby, "The Rise of a New Emporium," 159.
- 4 Mas Latrie, *Histoire*, II, 54; Edbury, "Famagusta in 1300," 338.
- 5 Michel Balard, ed. *Notai Genovesi in Oltremare. Atti Rogati a Cipro da Lamberto di Sambuceto, 11 Ottobre 1296 – 23 Giugno 1299*, vol. 39 of *Collana Storica di Fonti e Studi diretta da Geo Pistarino* (Genoa: Università di Genova, 1983), 167; Edbury, "Famagusta in 1300," 339.
- 6 Peter Edbury, "Famagusta Society ca.1300 from the Registers of Lamberto di Sambuceto," in *Die Kreuzfahrerstaaten als Multikulturelle Gesellschaft. Die Rolle der Einwanderer in Kirche, Staat, Verwaltung, Wirtschaft und Kultur*, ed. H. E. Meyer (Munich: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1997), 87-88. The Genoese *loggia* was an establishment that already in 1300 merited a full-time guardian (Jacoby, "The Rise of a New Emporium," 163).
- 7 Edbury, "Famagusta Society," 90-91.
- 8 Peter Edbury, "The Genoese Community in Famagusta around the Year 1300: A Historical Vignette," in *Oriente e Occidente tra Medioevo ed Età Moderna. Studi in Onore di Geo Pistarino*, ed. Laura Balletto (Genoa: Glauco Brigati, 1997), 236-237.
- 9 Edbury, "Famagusta in 1300," 339-340.
- 10 Jacoby, "The Rise of a New Emporium," 163.
- 11 Valeria Polonio, ed. *Notai Genovesi in Oltremare. Atti Rogati a Cipro da Lamberto di Sambuceto, 3 Luglio 1300 – 3 Agosto 1301*, vol. 31 of *Collana Storica di Fonti e Studi diretta di Geo Pistarino* (Genoa: Università di Genova, 1982), 416; Jacoby, "The Rise of a New Emporium," 164.
- 12 Balard, "Famagouste," 284.
- 13 Balard, *Notai Genovesi*, 33; Romeo Pavoni, ed. *Notai Genovesi in Oltremare. Atti Rogati a Cipro da Lamberto di Sambuceto, 6 Luglio - 27 Ottobre 1301*, vol. 32 of *Collana Storica di Fonti e Studi diretta di Geo Pistarino* (Genoa: Università di Genova, 1982), 60; Romeo Pavoni, ed. *Notai Genovesi in Oltremare. Atti Rogati a Cipro da Lamberto di Sambuceto, Gennaio - Agosto 1302*, vol. 49 of *Collana Storica di Fonti e Studi diretta di Geo Pistarino* (Genoa: Università di

- Genova, 1987), 219, 303; Balard, "Famagouste," 285; Edbury, "Famagusta in 1300," 339-340.
- 14 On the hospital of Saint Anthony from the 14th to the 16th century see Panos Leventis, "The Urban Landscape of Late Medieval and Renaissance Famagusta," in *Famagusta*, eds. Gilles Grivaud, Angel Nikolaou-Konnari, Catherine Otten-Froux and Chris Schabel (Turnhout: Brepols, forthcoming).
- 15 Jacoby, "The Rise of a New Emporium," 164-166.
- 16 Jacoby, "The Rise of a New Emporium," 166.
- 17 Louis de Mas-Latrie, ed, "Nouvelles Preuves de l'Histoire de Chypre," in *Bibliothèque de l'École de Chartes* 34 (Paris: Librairie d'Alphonse Picard, 1873), 55; Jacoby, "The Rise of a New Emporium," 167, provides an incorrect page number for the Mas-Latrie citation.
- 18 Pavoni, *Notai Genovesi* (1987), 83; Edbury, "Famagusta in 1300," 346.
- 19 Jacoby, "The Rise of a New Emporium," 171.
- 20 Mas-Latrie, *Histoire*, II, 102-108; Jacoby, "The Rise of a New Emporium," 179; Edbury, "Famagusta in 1300," 351.
- 21 Catherine Otten-Froux, "Les Pisans en Chypre au Moyen-Age," in Πρακτικά του Δεύτερου Διεθνούς Κυπριολογικού Συνεδρίου, ed. Theodoros Papadopoulos, vol. 2 (Nicosia: Society of Cypriot Studies, 1986), 127-128.
- 22 Jacoby, "The Rise of a New Emporium," 154-157.
- 23 Jacoby, "The Rise of a New Emporium," 158-159; Otten-Froux, "Les Pisans en Chypre," 137.
- 24 Jacoby, "The Rise of a New Emporium," 158; Otten-Froux, "Les Pisans en Chypre," 133.
- 25 Jacoby, "The Rise of a New Emporium," 172.
- 26 For art-historical studies of the Cathedral of Saint Nicholas see primarily Camille Enlart, *L'Art Gothique et la Renaissance en Chypre, Illustré de 34 Planches et 421 Figures* (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1899), 2 vols; edited and translated by David Hunt as *Gothic Art and the Renaissance in Cyprus* (London: Trigraph, 1987), 222-245; and George Jeffery, *A Description of the Historic Monuments of Cyprus* (Nicosia: G.P.O., 1918, reprinted London: Zeno, 1983), 116-127. For more recent interpretations see Philippe Plagnieux and Thierry Soulard, "La Cathédrale Saint-Nicolas", in *L'Art Gothique en Chypre*, ed. Jean-Bernard De Vaivre and Philippe Plagnieux (Paris: Boccard, 2006), 218-237; and Arne Franke, "St Nicholas in Famagusta: A New Approach to the Dating, Chronology and Sources of Architectural Language," in *Medieval and Renaissance Famagusta*, ed. Michael J.K. Walsh, Peter W. Edbury and Nicholas S. H. Coureas (Surrey and Burlington, 2012), 75-91.
- 27 Though the century-long debate on the building's exact chronology continues, most scholars agree that a pre-existing church, possibly the Byzantine metropolis, was to be found on the construction site of Saint Nicholas, for which construction sums of money are left, naming the building as such, as per wills of 1298-1300 for the first time.
- 28 Franke, "St Nicholas in Famagusta," 82-83, 91.
- 29 Balard, Duba and Schabel 2012, 124-126.

- 30 Francesco Amadi, *Cronaca di Cipro*, published as “Chronique d’Amadi” in *Collection des Documents Inédits sur l’Histoire de France: Histoire Politique I*, ed. René de Mas Latrie (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1891), reprinted in Κυπριολογική Βιβλιοθήκη 9, ed. Theodoros Papadopoulos, intro. Sylvain Beraud (Nicosia: Idryma Archiepiskopou Makariou III, 1999) 326-327. See also Florio Bustron, *Historia Overo Commentarii de Cipro*, published as “Chronique de l’île de Chypre” in *Collection des Documents Inédits sur l’Histoire de France: Mélanges Historiques, Tome Cinquième*, ed. René de Mas Latrie (Paris 1886), reprinted in Κυπριολογική Βιβλιοθήκη 8, ed. Theodoros Papadopoulos, intro. Gilles Grivaud (Nicosia: Idryma Archiepiskopou Makariou III, 1998) 194. See also Edbury, “Famagusta in 1300”, 338 and 343.
- 31 On the church of Saints Peter and Paul see further in this article.
- 32 On Saint Francis see Michalis Olympios, “The Franciscan Convent of Famagusta and its Place Within the Context of Early-Fourteenth-Century Cypriot Gothic Architecture, Κυπριακά Σπουδαί 73 (Nicosia: Etaireia Kypriakon Spoudon 2009, published 2011), 103-122.
- 33 Enlart, *Gothic Art*, 211.
- 34 Along with the Genoese and Venetian *loggias* already mentioned in the beginning of the 14th century, the Pisan *loggia* also featured in documents from 1307 to 1324 (Jacoby, “The Rise of a New Emporium,” 158; Otten-Froux, “Les Pisans en Chypre,” 129). Banking was a prominent Pisan activity in Famagusta. Numerous ‘Pisan’ bankers were in fact Florentines who had registered themselves as Pisans in order to enjoy lower taxation for business conducted in Cyprus (Jacoby, “The Rise of a New Emporium”, 157-158; Otten-Foux, “Les Pisans en Chypre”, 138). The 1333 will of Iohannes de Rau, member of a prominent Pisan family of bankers, conserves his close relations to religious establishments in Famagusta, among them the Hospital of Saint Stephen and the nunnery of Saint Claire (Otten-Froux, in “Les Pisans en Chypre,” 136-137, mentions that this is the earliest mention to this establishment). Though Nicosia possessed a “Saint Peter of the Pisans” in 1367 (Otten-Froux, “Les Pisans en Chypre,” 138), the sources have not thus far revealed a mention to a church in Famagusta owned by the Pisan community.
- 35 Amadi, *Cronaca di Cipro*, 326-327; Edbury, “Famagusta in 1300,” 338.
- 36 Edbury, “Famagusta in 1300,” 340-341.
- 37 Edbury, “Famagusta in 1300,” 341.
- 38 Leontios Makhairas, *Χρονικόν*, translated as *Recital concerning the Sweet Land of Cyprus entitled “Chronicle”*, ed. R. M. Dawkins (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1932), vol. 1, 229; see also Edbury, “Famagusta in 1300,” 340.
- 39 I have not yet been able to locate this citation in the primary sources. It is used without reference in Balard, “Famagouste,” 282.
- 40 Makhairas, *Χρονικόν*, 330-331; Balard, “Famagouste,” 283.
- 41 Nicola de Martoni. *Nicolai de Marthono, Notarii, Liber Peregrinationis ad Loca Sancta*, ca.1395-1396 [BN, MS.6521]; edited as “Relation du Pèlerinage a Jérusalem de Nicolas de Martoni, Notaire Italien”, ed. Léon LeGrand, *ROL* (Paris), 3 (1895), reprinted Brussels, 1964, pp. 566-669 [Cyprus pp. 625-638]; text on Cyprus translated in Cobham, *Excerpta Cypria* (pp. 22-28), p.22.
- 42 Martoni in Cobham, 23.

- 43 Piloti in Enlart, *Gothic Art*, 455; see also Balard, “Famagouste,” 286.
- 44 Enlart, *Gothic Art*, 214; Balard, “Famagouste,” 287.
- 45 Enlart, *Gothic Art*, 459.
- 46 Enlart, *Gothic Art*, 246.
- 47 Michael Walsh, “Martyrs and Mariners: Some Surviving Art in the Church of Saints Peter and Paul, Famagusta,” in *Mediterranean Studies* 15 (Philadelphia: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), 24.
- 48 Jeffery, *A Description of the Historic Monuments*, 152; Walsh, “Martyrs and Mariners,” 24.
- 49 Edbury, “Famagusta in 1300”, 343.
- 50 Enlart, *Gothic Art*, 246; Walsh, “Martyrs and Mariners,” 24.
- 51 Walsh, “Martyrs and Mariners,” 26-29.
- 52 Walsh, “Martyrs and Mariners,” 29-31.
- 53 Benjamin Arbel, “Cypriot Population under Venetian Rule 1473-1571: A Demographic Study,” in *Μελέται και Υπομνήματα*, I (Nicosia: Idryma Arhiepiskopou Makariou, 1984), 184.
- 54 Bustron, *Historia*, 411-416; Enlart, *Gothic Art*, 446; Arbel, “Urban Assemblies,” 206.
- 55 Enlart, *Gothic Art*, 461; Arbel, “Cypriot Population,” 198.
- 56 Enlart, *Gothic Art*, 461-462.
- 57 Enlart, *Gothic Art*, 245 and 462.
- 58 Enlart, *Gothic Art*, 67-68.
- 59 Mas-Latrie, *Histoire*, 184; Enlart, *Gothic Art*, 457.
- 60 Bustron, *Cronaca*, 436-437 and 445-446.
- 61 Richard Cocke, “Doge Agostino Barbarigo and the Image of Cyprus,” in *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 67/3 (Berlin: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2004), 423.
- 62 For the infamous “Cornaro murders” of November 13, 1473 which took place in the Royal Palace and the Citadel of Famagusta see Georgios Boustronios, *Διήγησις κρόνικας Κύπρου αρχεύοντα από την εχρονίαν αυγς’ Χριστού*, published in *Bibliotheca Graeca Medii Aevi* II, ed. Constantine Sathas (Venice, 1873, reprinted Athens: Vas. N. Gregoriades, 1972), 490-493. See also *The Chronicle of George Boustronios, 1456-1489*, transl. intro. R. M. Dawkins (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1964), 38-40; *George Boustronios: A Narrative of the Chronicles of Cyprus, 1456-1489*, transl. and intro. Nicholas Coureas (Nicosia: Cyprus Research Center, 2005), 131-134; Bustron, *Historia*, 438-440; Enlart, *Gothic Art*, 464.
- 63 Louis de Mas-Latrie, “Documents Nouveaux servant de Preuves à l’Histoire de l’Île de Chypre sous le Règne des Princes de la Maison de Lusignan,” in *Collection des documents inédits sur l’Histoire de France: Mélanges Historiques*, IV (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1882),

- 472; Enlart, *Gothic Art*, 466-467.
- 64 Bustron, *Historia*, 453; Enlart, *Gothic Art*, 464.
- 65 Mentioned as such as number 11 on Stephano Ghibellino's map of the siege of Famagusta, for which see further in this article.
- 66 Enlart, *Gothic Art*, 454-455.
- 67 Boustronios in Sathas, 542; Boustronios in Dawkins, 59; Boustronios in Coureas, 173; Bustron, *Historia*, 454-457.
- 68 Boustronios in Sathas, 542-543; Boustronios in Dawkins, 59-60; Boustronios in Coureas, 174.
- 69 Bustron, *Historia*, 458; see also Brunehilde Imhaus, "Venice-Cyprus: Between Commercial Relations and Political Strategies," in *Cyprus: Jewel in the Crown of Venice* (Nicosia: Anastasios G. Leventis Foundation, 2003) (21-30), 26.
- 70 Enlart, *Gothic Art*, 452-453. See also Tassos Papacostas, "Echoes of the Renaissance in the eastern confines of the *stato da mar*: Architectural evidence from Venetian Cyprus," *Acta Byzantina Fennica* 3 (Helsinki: Finnish Society for Byzantine Studies, 2010), 144-149.
- 71 Enlart, *Gothic Art*, 452-453.
- 72 See Papacostas, "Echoes of the Renaissance," 159-164.
- 73 While Enlart clearly shows Renier's coat of arms in his sketch of the Palazzo's façade (*Gothic Art*, 467), he mentions in describing the building that no coats of arms can be seen on its facade (*Gothic Art*, 468).
- 74 Enlart, *Gothic Art*, 462-463.
- 75 For which see Lorenzo Calvelli, *Cipro e la Memoria dell'Antico fra Medioevo e Rinascimento. La Percezione del Passato Romano dell'Isola nel Mondo Occidentale* (Venice: Istituto Veneto di Scienze Lettere ed Arti, 2009).
- 76 Enlart, *Gothic Art*, 462-463.
- 77 Enlart, *Gothic Art*, 461.
- 78 Hill, *History*, III, 759; Cocke, "Doge Agostino Barbarigo," 423.

About the Author

Panos Leventis holds a B.Arch. from USC, an M.Arch. from UCLA, and a Ph.D. from McGill University. He is Associate Professor at the Hammons School of Architecture of Drury University in Springfield, Missouri. He served as Director of Drury's Study Abroad Centre in Greece, and also taught for USC in Milan and Como, for McGill in Montréal, and for the University of Cyprus in Nicosia. He is a licensed and practising architect in both Cyprus and Greece. He is the author of "*Twelve Times in Nicosia. Nicosia, Cyprus, 1192-1570: Architecture, Topography and Urban Experience in a Diversified Capital City.*"