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La Serenissima in Cyprus: Aspects of Venetian Art on the Edge of a Maritime Empire, 1474/89–1570/1

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Abstract: This article investigates the manifestation of Venetian visual culture of the Renaissance in the island of Cyprus, which, between 1474/89 and 1570/1, stood as one of Venice's Mediterranean colonies. To date, scholarship on panel and wall painting production of Venetian Cyprus has devoted careful attention to the infiltration of Italian details and styles in the broader sense—mainly drawn from the Italian Middle Ages—thus failing to notice any correlations between Cypriot visual arts and contemporary Venetian. In this study, I aim to provide an overarching perspective that will illuminate the presence and assimilation of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Venetian visual vocabulary in Cypriot artistic capital. With an emphasis on devotional painting, I will examine iconographic schemes, such as the Man of Sorrows and the Holy Conversation, and facets of stylistic and iconographic correspondences between the two territories. I will also probe the architectural function, purpose, and tenor of lunette-shaped panels in Cyprus and collate them with their Venetian equivalents. Put simply, I hope to flesh out the artistic contact Cypriot artists and their sponsors maintained with Venice rather than with Italy as a whole.

Keywords: Renaissance Venice; Venetian Cyprus; Man of Sorrows; Sacra Conversazione; lunette-shaped panels; artistic contacts; icon and wall painting



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The Serene Republic of Venice dominated the island of Cyprus for almost a century and, as one might expect, its presence is manifested in various aspects of Cypriot culture, such as language, music, poetry, goods and chattels, clothing, fashion, architecture, and painting (see selectively: [Grivaud 2009](#); [Nicolaou-Konnari 2009](#); [Papacostas 2010](#), pp. 136–72; [Skoufari 2011](#); [Frigerio-Zeniou 2012](#); [Arbel et al. 2013](#); [Markou 2017](#), pp. 600–9; [Papacostas 2020](#), pp. 219–55; [Rodosthenous-Balafa 2022](#)). While recent studies have investigated the role of Cypriot aristocratic circles and the ties they forged with Venice and their commission of celebrated works of art and musical compositions (either in Cyprus or Venice), a wider approach that examines the reception of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Venetian visual aesthetics in Cyprus has been lacking. In addition, art historians have studied the icon and wall painting production on the island by focusing on the appropriation of Italian iconographic and stylistic details in religious visual arts without engaging with contemporary Venetian painting in a more concrete fashion. This article explores the transcultural relations between Venetian art of the Renaissance and contemporary painting in Cyprus via the study of a selection of iconographies, styles, and functions of artworks. In doing so, it will hopefully afford fresh insights into the artistic output of anonymous (or unidentified) artists, art patrons, and their dialogue, not broadly with Italian art but specifically with the art of Venice.

Under Venetian colonial rule in Cyprus, monumental art and icon painting thrived. A multitude of churches were erected and embellished with murals, while hundreds of icons were crafted. The Byzantine painting of the island was enriched with new iconographies and became increasingly narrative and more variegated, both iconographically and stylistically. Italian art was particularly popular among Cypriot artists, and, as such,

Italian details infiltrated the local Byzantine religious imagery (Constantinides 2007, p. 95; Chotzakoglou 2009, pp. 437–39).¹ It is axiomatic that painters working in Cyprus followed the Byzantine tradition, but, at the same time, they infused iconographic constituents from the International Gothic style and Italian art of the *trecento* into their opus. This phenomenon is not unknown in the post-Byzantine Orthodox world, and post-Byzantine painters owe their eclecticism to the variety of iconographic models and techniques they had at their disposal, presumably through model books and prints (Garidis 1987, p. 26). The frescoes of painter Philippos Goul in the church of the Holy Cross of Agiasmati, Platanistassa (1494) is an indicative example (Stylianou and Stylianou 1997, pp. 186–218; Argyrou and Myrianthefts 2004). Goul's knowledge of Italian models is mainly evident in the extravagant architectural backgrounds of his syntheses and in the motions of secondary figures in narrative scenes, instantiated in the *Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple* (Constantinides 2007, p. 100; Andronikou 2017, p. 21). On the other hand, different painters, albeit following Byzantine iconography, imbibed Italian painting more meaningfully. They mastered the late Constantinopolitan tradition and late Medieval and Renaissance Italian art (Constantinides 2007, pp. 111–12, 119). The latter's painterly tendency has been variously termed "Italo-Byzantine", "Italo-Cypriot", and "Cypro-Renaissance" (Stylianou and Stylianou 1996, pp. 1344–52; Frigerio-Zeniou 1998; Garidis 1980, vol. 1, pp. 115–21; Eliades 2008, vol. 1, pp. 81–88). Outstanding examples of this artistic mode are the frescoes in the churches of the Panagia Podithou in Galata (Papageorgiou 1975, pp. 86–94; Frigerio-Zeniou 1998, pp. 9–98; Constantoudaki-Kitromilides and Myrianthefts 2005, pp. 10–47), the Akathistos Hymn Chapel at the Monastery of Saint John Lampadistis in Kalopanagiotis (Figure 1) (Stylianou and Stylianou 1997, pp. 312–20; Frigerio-Zeniou 1998, pp. 99–203; Papageorgiou 2007, pp. 43–52; Eliades 2008, vol. 1, pp. 89–194), and the murals in the church of the Panagia Iamatiki in Arakapas (Frigerio-Zeniou 1998, pp. 205–24). Scholarship on the topic has proven that the same artistic workshop decorated the three monuments. It is plausible that their artists must have had the opportunity to receive their training in Italy and become acquainted with contemporary but also earlier Italian visual culture (Garidis 1987, p. 87; Frigerio-Zeniou 1998, p. 196; Gkioles 2003, p. 188).

The dissemination of Venetian artistic tradition on the island was expressed in two ways: directly and indirectly. I have suggested elsewhere that Venetian painters plied their trade in Cyprus in the mid/late fourteenth century (Andronikou 2022, pp. 244–91), but, apart from that, there is no substantial evidence of the activity of Venetian artists on the island or of masters trained in Venice before the takeover of Cyprus by the Serene Republic. When the island became part of the *Stato da mar* several Cypriots received their education in northern Italy, and there were certainly painters among them. It is highly probable that many of these individuals returned to Cyprus carrying their Venetian artistic baggage. A rather late example is the painter Domenikos of Cyprus (Domenico Cipriotto depentor), who, around 1560, is tracked down in Venice as a member of the Greek Confraternity. Moreover, in the wake of the Turkish conquest of the island in 1570/1, numerous Cypriots are documented to have taken refuge in Venice, with a celebrated example being Ioannis Kyprios (Zuane depentor Cipriotto), who participated in the decoration of San Giorgio dei Greci (Mertzios 1939, pp. 230–31, 246; Constantoudaki-Kitromilides 2002, pp. 356–67).² However, in the sixteenth century and with the advancement of printing—as happened in Crete and elsewhere—the most common means of transmission of ideas and imageries was through the dissemination of prints (for the use of such prints by post-Byzantine painters: Rigopoulos 2017). Western European and Italian prints circulated in the eastern Mediterranean world, and there are strong grounds for believing that such works were used by Cretan painters. Likely, these kinds of prints would also have been available to artists active in Cyprus (Constantoudaki 1974, p. 247).³ A few engravings, though not Venetian, have been identified as being utilised by Cypriot painters. More interestingly, illustrated editions of liturgical books published in Venice, and which can be traced throughout sixteenth-century Cyprus, seemed to have been known to masters earning their living on

the island (Layton 1994, p. 79, fig. 74; Frigerio-Zeniou 2003–2004, pp. 199–215, fig. 10). As Stella Frigerio-Zeniou has shown, a woodcut/engraving of the Crucifixion, inspired by the work of Giovanni Bellini (c. 1435–1516) and Carlo Crivelli (c. 1433–95), appears in several Venetian editions of ecclesiastical books, as, for instance, in a *Minaion* for August in the Church of the Panagia Katholiki in Pelendri (1558, edition by Andrea Spinelli), and was used as a model for the *lypiron* panel of Saint John the Evangelist in the church of Saint Kyprianos in Meniko (Figure 2) (Frigerio-Zeniou 2005, pp. 130–31; Gerasimou et al. 2005, pp. 160–61) [entry: Christodoulos Hadjichristodoulou].⁴ In the following lines, I hope to yield insights into instances of Venetian echoes in the arts of Cyprus, starting with the Man of Sorrows. I will continue with the imagery of the *Sacra Conversazione* (Holy Conversation), followed by stylistic and iconographic resonances. I will conclude with lunette-shaped panels and, eventually, flag up pathways to future research topics.



Figure 1. View from the south (vault), sixteenth-century wall paintings. Akathistos Hymn Chapel, Monastery of Saint John Lampadistis, Kalopanagiotis. Photo: Author, by permission of the Cyprus Department of Antiquities and the Holy Bishopric of Morfou.



Figure 2. *The Crucifixion*, from a *Minaion* (August), 1558, print from an engraving. Church of the Panagia Katholiki, Pelendri. Photo: Author, by permission of the Cyprus Department of Antiquities and the Holy Bishopric of Limassol.

1. Transfusing the Blood of the Redeemer and Christ Tied to the Column into the Man of Sorrows (?)

The Italian approach to the Man of Sorrows, one of the foremost Byzantine subjects, and its Cypriot adaptation comprise the first part of this essay (for the Man of Sorrows in Byzantine art, see: [Millet 1916](#), pp. 483–88; [Belting 1980–1981](#), pp. 1–16, figs. 1–22. For the history of the Man of Sorrows in Western Europe, see [Schiller 1972](#), pp. 197–230; [Van Os 1978](#), pp. 65–75, figs. 10–15; [Ringbom 1984](#), pp. 25–26, 66–69, 107–16).⁵ The iconography, which first emerged in the Byzantine world in the twelfth century, reached Western Europe in the thirteenth and became prevalent in the course of the following century ([Mâle 1922](#), pp. 98–107; [Belting 1980–1981](#), p. 4; [Ringbom 1984](#), pp. 25, 66). The imagery of the Man of Sorrows usually depicts the dead Christ, either as a bust, half-length, or almost whole-body, against a neutral background or the Cross. His arms are crossed or folded over his body, and the Instruments of the Passion are frequently added on either side of the image. In Western European imagery, in later variations of the subject, Christ is sustained either by lamenting angels or by the Virgin Mary and saints or through a grouping with the Trinity, which furnished the theme “Christ supported by God the Father” ([Van Os 1978](#), pp. 69–73; [Ringbom 1984](#), pp. 68–69). In late Byzantine art, the iconography was

modified and shortly after 1453, including “Western” details was recurrent, especially in fifteenth-century Cretan icons. In panels by the *pittori*, Angelos Akotantos (†1450) and Nikolaos Tzafouris († before 1501), Christ is portrayed dead and half-length inside his sarcophagus (Figure 3), sometimes bracketed on either side by the Virgin Mary and Saint John (Chatzidakis 1977, pl. 33, no. 40; Acheimastou-Potamianou 1988, pp. 138, 213–14, no. 55 [entry: Manolis Chatzidakis]; Giardini et al. 1993, p. 51, no. 25; Chatzidakis 1993, pp. 148–51, no. 35 and p. 151, fig. 15; Vassilaki 2010b, pp. 200–1, no. 49 [entry: Maria Constantoudaki-Kitromilides]; Constantoudaki-Kitromilides 2013, pp. 164–83).

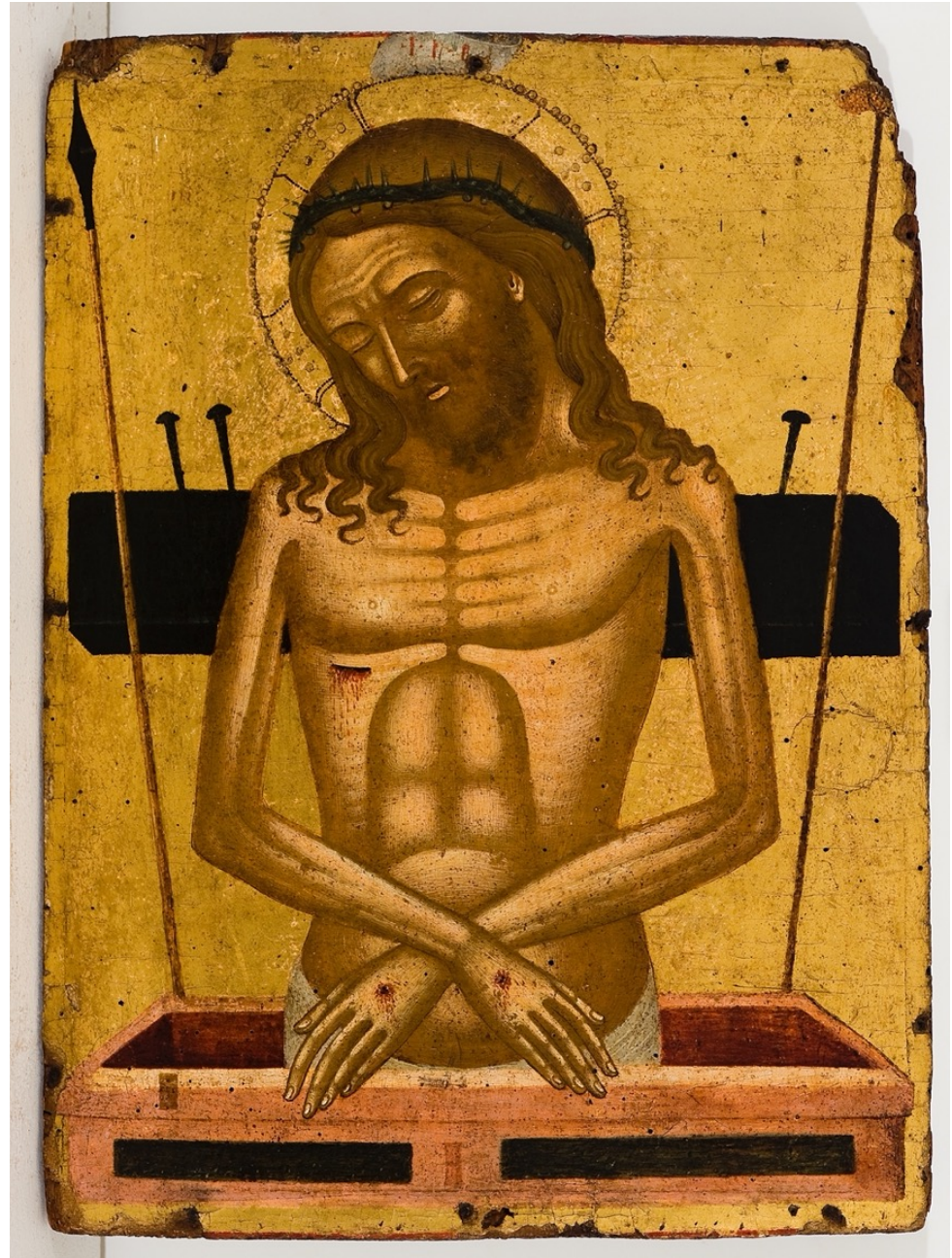


Figure 3. Nikolaos Tzafouris (attributed), *The Man of Sorrows*, late fifteenth century, panel, 77 × 56.5 cm. Byzantine and Christian Museum, Athens, BXM 14004 (formerly in the Zoodochos Pigi Monastery, Patmos). Photo: Courtesy of © Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports-Hellenic Organization of Cultural Resources Development, Byzantine and Christian Museum.

Undoubtedly, the Man of Sorrows was a devotional image and was used in the Divine Liturgy and the Eucharist, which are imbued with Passion symbolism (Van Os 1978, pp. 73–74; Ringbom 1984, pp. 52–59; Belting 1980–1981, p. 4). It was also an image appropriate for the Passion service, which stretched from Maundy Thursday through to Holy Saturday (Belting 1980–1981, pp. 4, 11; Constantoudaki-Kitromilides 2013, p. 148). Icons of the Man of Sorrows were also used as objects of private devotion,⁶ while, in funerals, minuscule icons of the Man of Sorrows (*Akra Tapeinosis*) were laid on the chest of the deceased (Belting 1980–1981, p. 8; Acheimastou-Potamianou 1991, p. 50, pl. I).⁷

In Venice, these images were meant for private worship or meditation during the Eucharist (Goffen 1989, pp. 68, 78). A Man of Sorrows in bust would often occupy the vertical, central axis of an altarpiece, specifically, as an upper part of a polyptych (see for example Figure 30); such representations pointed up the Eucharist's miraculous transubstantiation of the bread and wine into the true body and blood of Christ on the altar that hosted an altarpiece (Humfrey 1993b, p. 74; 1993a, p. 628). The full-length Man of Sorrows was hardly known in Italy before the fifteenth century. However, there existed a type that presented a whole-bodied Christ, who dripped his blood into a chalice, giving the name to an iconographic variation of the Man of Sorrows known as "Blood of the Redeemer" (*Sangue del Redentore*)—even though a chalice does not appear in all surviving examples (Figure 4) (Dalvit 2017, pp. 29–59, at 39–44). The full-length, standing Christ in the Blood of the Redeemer was more often linked with actual liturgical objects, such as doors for tabernacles, where the Holy Communion bread was stored (Humfrey 1993b, p. 74), thus performing a more pragmatic function (Goffen 1989, p. 82).

The Man of Sorrows was a familiar subject in the Veneto by the mid-fourteenth century, and it is from northern Italy that the iconography spread to the rest of the peninsula (Dalvit 2017, p. 47).⁸ A *Man of Sorrows* is seen on the wooden cover (*Pala Feriale*, that is, weekday altarpiece) of the Pala d'Oro in San Marco in Venice (1345), a work by Paolo Veneziano and his sons, Luca and Giovanni (Figure 5) (Muraro 1970, pp. 46–51, figs. 41–2, 46; Witty 2021, p. 50, fig. 33). The dead Christ is depicted from the waist up and positioned between the Virgin Mary and John the Evangelist and is the point of convergence.⁹ The appearance of the triad-type of the Man of Sorrows in such a prestigious context, above the high altar and the relics of Saint Mark, implies that this iconographic variation was by then fairly ubiquitous in the Veneto (Van Os 1978, p. 72), while, by the *quattrocento*, Venetian masters such as Jacopo Bellini (c. 1400–70/71) (Ringbom 1984, pp. 109–10, fig. 63; Goffen 1989, p. 71, fig. 48), Michele Giambono (c. 1400–62) (Barcham 2013b, pp. 191–218), Alvise Vivarini (1442/53–1503/5) (Humfrey 1993a, pp. 627–29; and more on the Vivarinis and the Man of Sorrows: Barcham 2013a, pp. 57–72), and Giovanni Bellini, devised relevant imagery and usually rendered Christ from the loins or the waist up (Goffen 1989, pp. 66–88). The Man of Sorrows is a recurrent theme in Giovanni Bellini's oeuvre, and his work seems to have been known to Cypriot artists because, as we shall see, they integrated iconographic features from his output into their creations. The Venetian master painted the dead Christ isolated, occasionally hoisted up by wailing putti or angels, and every so often, lamented by his mother and Saint John the Evangelist. Christ is the key figure in all these compositions, and, in most cases, he is placed within a sarcophagus or behind a parapet; sporadically, a landscape complements the configuration (Figure 6) (Goffen 1989, pp. 67–68, 78).



Figure 4. Giovanni Bellini, *The Blood of the Redeemer*, c. 1460–8, panel, 47.6 × 35.2 cm. National Gallery, London. Photo: Public domain (Wikimedia Commons).

In Cyprus almost a dozen oblong portable icons with the *Akra Tapeinosis* have survived and they can be placed between the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and are listed here in brief: (a) an icon of the *Akra Tapeinosis* with the dead Christ placed between ten saints in bust (99 × 67 cm), by Philippos Goul, once in the church of the Panagia Chrysopantanassa in Palaichori (Papageorgiou 1992, pp. 110, 115, fig. 70; Sophocleous and Hadjichristodoulou 2002, pp. 194–95); (b) an icon formerly situated in the church of Saint Luke in Nicosia (83 × 40 cm) and currently held in the Byzantine Museum of the same city (Figure 7) (Papageorgiou 1992, pp. 113, 115, fig. 71); (c) a panel coming from the church of the Holy Cross in Pedoulas (Hadjichristodoulou 1999, p. 11; Bakirtzis 2019, vol. 1, pp. 922–23 and vol. 3, p. 1535 [entry: Thekla Kalli]);¹⁰ (d) and a corresponding one from the church of the Panagia Chryseleousa in Strovolos (Papageorgiou 1992, p. 115);

(e) furthermore, an icon originating from the church of the Panagia Kivotos (63.5×18.5 cm) in the village Agios Theodoros (Sophocleous 2006, pp. 26, 168, no. 18); (f) a *Man of Sorrows* (69.8×35.1 cm) formerly in the church of the Panagia in Arakapas (Figure 8) (Sophocleous 2006, pp. 41–42, 178, no. 47);¹¹ (g) an icon in the monastery of the Panagia Amasgou (70×26.4 cm; Sophocleous 2006, pp. 157, 245, no. 230); (h) a *lypiron* on the iconostasis of the monastery of Saint Neophytos in Paphos (Sotiriou 1935, pl. 105b; Papageorgiou 1992, p. 116; Sophocleous 2006, p. 42); (i) a panel from the Maronite church in Nicosia (73×42 cm) (mid-sixteenth century) (Talbot Rice 1937, p. 253, no. 109)¹²; (j) a rectangular sixteenth-century *Akra Tapeinosis* exhibited in the Museum of the Holy Monastery of Kykkos (E105) (116.5×45 cm) (Perdikis 2010, p. 356); (k) and, finally, a *Man of Sorrows* that previously belonged to the church of the Panagia Chryseleousa in Kato Archimandrita but may now be found in the Byzantine Museum of Paphos (late sixteenth century).



Figure 5. Paolo, Luca, and Giovanni Veneziano, *Pala feriale*, 1345, panel (59×325 cm). Museo di San Marco, Venice (formerly covering the Pala d’Oro, San Marco). Photo: © Per gentile concessione della Procuratoria di San Marco.

In these works, a full-length and standing Christ, with his hands folded over his abdomen, is positioned against a sarcophagus, while in some of these icons, a naturalistic landscape springs up in the background (Triantaphyllopoulos 2001, p. 627; 2002, p. 324); the symbols of the Passion are not always displayed on these panels.¹³ At first glance, the Cypriot works look Byzantine in their conception, especially when we bear in mind that Christ’s arms are not crossed but folded over his stomach, a leitmotif in Byzantine images. As Maria Constantoudaki-Kitromilides asserts in relation to Philippos Goul’s *Man of Sorrows*—and her conclusion is relevant to all the Cypriot panels mentioned above—although it blends Byzantine and “Western” features, the *Man of Sorrows* remains strongly Byzantine (Constantoudaki-Kitromilides 2013, pp. 181–83).¹⁴ Here, I would like to suggest that the Cypriot artists who painted a full-bodied Christ as a *Man of Sorrows* might have taken the notion of a whole-body, upright Christ before a landscape, as well as the emphasis on the sarcophagus, from works of Venetian masters, such as Giovanni Bellini, or panels attributed to (or replicating) Zanino di Pietro, alias Giovanni di Francia (1389–before 1448). The painters of Cyprus chose not to include any auxiliary figures to avoid assigning a narrative quality to the theme. On the other hand, the absence of topographical references, a norm in Byzantine representations of the subject, is not predominant in the Cypriot icons under discussion, perhaps connoting their conformity to their Italian counterparts. Pertinently, Christ in the *Man of Sorrows*, which was once in the church of Saint Luke in Nicosia, stands in front of a rugged, U-shaped rocky setting, which is redolent of the mountainous backdrop in Giovanni Bellini’s panel of the *Imago Pietatis* (c. 1460) at the Poldi Pezzoli Museum, Milan (Figures 6 and 7).



Figure 6. Giovanni Bellini, *Imago Pietatis*, c. 1460, panel, 50 × 40.4 cm. Museo Poldi Pezzoli, Milan. Photo: Public domain (Wikimedia Commons).

In regard to the image of Christ, Cypriot masters preferred to paint Christ in full-length and standing rather than half-length as was customary in Venetian painting (Ringbom 1984, pp. 107–16, figs. 61–72). As Constantoudaki-Kitromilides stated, it is, perhaps, possible that Cypriot painters appropriated the concept of the full-length Christ from Blood of the Redeemer, a variation of the Man of Sorrows with Eucharistic connotations, which is to be found in the work of Giovanni Bellini (Figure 4) (e.g., National Gallery of London, 1460–8) and Vittore Carpaccio (Museo Civico, Udine, 1496) (Constantoudaki-Kitromilides 2009, p. 171; Humfrey 1991, p. 58, no. 13; Goffen 1989, p. 82, fig. 57; Lucco and Villa 2008, pp. 152–55, no. 7 [entry: Mauro Lucco]; Humfrey 2022, pp. 152–54, no. 19 [entry: Peter Humfrey]). Cypriot artists could have altered the position of Christ's body and adjusted it to the traditional Byzantine type of the Man of Sorrows. They might have rendered Christ's hands folded over his stomach and added the Cross behind Christ as usual in the depictions of the Man of Sorrows; they also inserted the sarcophagus and the Instruments of the Passion and painted Christ with his eyes shut. Therefore, one might postulate that Cypriot painters translated a set of imagery (and its permutations) popular among Venetian painters and devised their iconography, attuned to the needs and tastes of their local communities and clientele. In contrast, Cretan painters took heed of Venetian prototypes differently. For instance, Nikolaos Tzafouris, an artist operating in Candia and painting in

the Italo-Cretan technique, portrayed Christ in half-length, shown either solitary (Figure 3) (Chatzidakis 1977, pp. 89–90, pl. 40; Constantoudaki-Kitromilides 2013, pp. 164–79),¹⁵ or flanked by saints (Chatzidakis 1993, p. 151, fig. 15).¹⁶



Figure 7. *The Man of Sorrows*, sixteenth century, icon, 83 × 40 cm. Byzantine Museum of the Archbishop Makarios III Foundation, Nicosia (formerly in the church of Saint Luke, Nicosia). Photo: © Byzantine Museum and Art Gallery of the Archbishop Makarios III Foundation.



Figure 8. *The Man of Sorrows*, sixteenth century, icon, 69.8 × 35.1 cm. Church of the Panagia Iamatiki, Arakapas (formerly in the old church of the Panagia Iamatiki). Photo: Courtesy of Sophocles Sophocleous and the EIKONOLOGION.

An alternative source could be the iconography not of the Man of Sorrows in the type of Blood of the Redeemer but of *Christ tied to the Column*, as illustrated in two paintings attributed to either Zanino di Pietro or to an artist called the “Maestro di Santa Barbara a Matera”, whose art was nurtured by Venetian visual aesthetics. The two panels are oblong and are held in the city of Barletta, the first in the cathedral of Santa Maria Maggiore (Figure 9) and the other in the church of Sant’Agostino (D’Elia 1964, p. 54; Boskovits 1984, pp. 235–36, fig. 6; Baradel 2019, p. 41, note 98).¹⁷ Although their iconography does not represent a dead Christ, both paintings suggest the Man of Sorrows. They show Christ wearing only his loincloth and the crown of thorns, with his eyes half-shut; he embraces the column of the flagellation with his arms crossed. The way Christ’s hands are crossed across his abdomen alludes to similar gestures in depictions of the Man of Sorrows, like that of the Kykkos Museum and the Kato Archimandrita *Man of Sorrows*. In the same vein, Cretan painter Angelos Bitzamanos (1467–1535), treading on the heels of Zanino Di Pietro (or the “Maestro di Santa Barbara”), created, in Barletta, a panel presenting the same subject and destined for the church of the Santissima Annunziata in San Mauro Forte in Matera (Figure 10) (202 × 76 cm) (Belli D’Elia 1988, pp. 141–42, no. 47 [entry: Clara Gelao]; Constantoudaki-Kitromilides 2009, pp. 171, 185, note 67; Voulgaropoulou 2021, p. 17). To sum up, despite the fact that the Cypriot panels of the *Akra Tapeinosis* are more Byzantine in their iconography, some details do stand out as Italian and imply that their painters were privy to and creatively reconceptualised Venetian paintings of the *quattrocento*, or of Cretan works, that in turn, emulated Venetian ones. The specificities and the agencies of transmission of kindred models to Cyprus is a topic that future scholarship is invited to disentangle.

In his discussion of artworks from Cyprus, Athanasios Papageorgiou maintained that the icons of the Man of Sorrows were either self-sufficient or were placed on the apex of the iconostasis, as was the case of the *lypiron* panel from Saint Neophytos monastery (Papageorgiou 1992, p. 115). Sophocles Sophocleous proposed that panels of the *Akra Tapeinosis* were used for the service of Good Friday in lieu of an embroidered *Epitaphios* (Sophocleous 2006, p. 42).¹⁸ Even though the topic needs further research, I agree with both scholars and add that these icons may have been taken out in processions during Holy Week. For one thing, the large size of the panels nullifies their use for private devotion. Another further testament to their use in Holy Week rituals is the inscription Η ΑΠΟΚΑΘΗΛΩΣΙΣ (the Descent from the Cross) that features on the icons from Arakapas and Pedoulas (Figure 8) (Hadjichristodoulou 1999, p. 11; Sophocleous 2006, p. 178, no. 47). The Man of Sorrows is here named as Descent from the Cross, implying that its designation denoted its purpose during the Passion rituals. The signified (i.e., dead Christ) stands for the Deposition of Christ from the Cross, thus also explaining the addition of the Cross in the background (Belting 1980–1981, p. 7; see also: Triantaphyllopoulos 2001, pp. 626–27).¹⁹ The involvement of the *Akra Tapeinosis* icons in liturgical performances and processions could also justify the choice of the artists and their patrons of a full-length, standing portrait of Christ.



Figure 9. Petrus de Calugiara of Barletta, *Christ tied to the Column*, 1523, panel. Cathedral of Santa Maria Maggiore, Barletta. Photo: Author.



Figure 10. Angelos Bitzamanos, *Christ Embracing the Column of the Flagellation*, first decades of the sixteenth century, panel, 202 × 76 cm. Church of the Santissima Annunziata, San Mauro Forte, Matera. Photo: Public domain (Wikimedia Commons).

2. Cypriot Reinterpretations of the *Sacra Conversazione*

The second part of the study deals with the manifestation of the *Sacra Conversazione* (Holy Conversation) in portable panels in Cyprus. This is an arbitrary term used to describe

an iconographic subject, which first materialised in Italy in the first half of the fifteenth century and peaked in the sixteenth (Burckhardt 1988, p. 64). The subject of the *Sacra Conversazione* requires the depiction of the Virgin Mary and Child amidst a group of saints, all shown in a kind of informal assembly. Sometimes, the holy group is coupled with donors. The saints are rendered anachronistically and often without having any obvious interrelationship; instead, they muse on their calmness and engage in conversation silently. In other words, there is an implicit sense of their communication with one another and the Virgin Mary and Christ (Figure 11). Most critically, the *Sacra Conversazione* substitutes the austere triptychs and polyptychs—in which each saint occupies an individual compartment—with formats in which figures interact within a unified space (Goffen 1979, pp. 198–222; Schmidt Arcangeli 1990, pp. 703–26; Constantoudaki-Kitromilides 2001, p. 394). At the outset of the type, the saints were represented full-length, in stiff and hierarchical poses. By the end of the fifteenth century, nevertheless, the type underwent many typological changes that engendered variations, wherein the saints were pictured half-length, inhabiting the foreground (Rylands 1992, pp. 81–85; Humfrey 1993b, pp. 184–88, 201–17, 232–48, 304–10). The *Sacra Conversazione* was the most popular subject of Venetian altarpieces, as it was for panels intended for private devotion (Rylands 1992, p. 67; Humfrey 1995, p. 27).



Figure 11. Shop of Giovanni Bellini (Marco Bello?), *Madonna and Child with Four Saints and a Donor*, c. 1500, panel (transferred on canvas), 76.8 × 112.7 cm. The Pierpont Morgan Library, New York. Photo: The Morgan Library & Museum, New York.

In Cyprus, the *Sacra Conversazione* can be traced in a handful of icons. A panel with a *Sacra Conversazione-cum-the Holy Family* is preserved in the church of the Archangel Michael Trypiotis in Nicosia (65 × 86 cm). The painting has been studied diligently by Constantoudaki-Kitromilides and, therefore, it will not be analysed here (Constantoudaki-Kitromilides 2001, pp. 385–409; see also in: Casu et al. 2005, pp. 56–57, no. 10 [entry: Christodoulos Hadjichristodoulou]). The work represents the Virgin Mary *Hodigitria* flanked by Saint Joseph the Minister and Mary Magdalene from the waist up. The holy

protagonists modestly interact with one another in a single space and are not placed in isolation, unlike, for instance, in the fifteenth-century tripartite Cretan icon by Andreas Ritzos, held in the Basilica of San Nicola in Bari ([Constantoudaki-Kitromilides 2001](#), p. 393; [Cattapan 1973](#), p. 273, pl. C.1; [Belli D'Elia 1988](#), pp. 138–39, no. 43). In all likelihood, the Trypiotis panel drew on Venetian *Sacre Conversazioni*, with telling examples to be found in the oeuvre of Giovanni Bellini and his assistants ([Constantoudaki-Kitromilides 2001](#), p. 394; [Goffen 1989](#), figs. 36, 40, 42; [Heinemann 1991](#), p. 190, fig. 37), Palma Vecchio, and many other painters who pursued their careers in the Veneto ([Rylands 1992](#), no. 51).

Another fascinating panel, which became the subject of a legend, is a painting from the 1530s and was once kept in the monastery of Saint John Chrysostom at Koutsovendis, Kyrenia (Figure 12) (70 × 92 cm). Unfortunately, the panel has been missing since the Turkish invasion of the island in 1974, despite its detection in 1997, in Germany, in possession of a Turkish dealer of antiquities ([Talbot Rice 1937](#), no. 152, p. 274; [Papageorgiou 1970](#), pp. 104, 115; [Papageorgiou 1992](#), p. 143, fig. 95; [Frigerio-Zeniou 2003–2004](#), p. 274, note 72; [2012](#), pp. 184–86). The painting shows Cyprus' native saint, John the Almsgiver, introducing two kneeling worshippers to the enthroned Virgin (portrayed in three quarters), with the Child perched on her right knee. The supplicants/donors address their prayers to the Virgin Mary and grip rosaries in their hands. The Virgin stares out at the viewer while Christ turns his head towards his mother while blessing the donors. The inscription that identifies the devotees is almost abraded. However, one can still read the following: “Η ΔΕΙΤΣΙC TIC ΔΟΥ/ΛΙC (ΤΟΥ ΘΕΟΥ Μ)ΑΡΙΑC/ΤΟΥ (. . .) Ο/(. . .) Ο(?)/(. . .) ΜΟΛΙΝ” (supplication of the servant of God Maria [. . .] Molin) ([Papageorgiou 1992](#), pp. 141, 143, fig. 95; [Frigerio-Zeniou 2003–2004](#), p. 274). As we will see presently, the dedicatory inscription and the laypersons' portraits identify a likely Greek-speaking mother named Maria and her son, dressed in Venetian fashion and possibly of Venetian background.



Figure 12. Enthroned Virgin and Child with Saint John the Almsgiver and two supplicants, c. 1530s, panel, 70 × 92 cm. Vanished but formerly in the Monastery of Saint John Chrysostom, Koutsovendis. Photo: Courtesy of the Cyprus Department of Antiquities.

But what of the iconography? Such imagery is Venetian in conception and unusual in Cyprus, thus making the Koutsovendis painting more of an Italian panel rather than a Byzantine icon (Carr 2005a, p. 343). The panel takes in the imagery of the *Sacra Conversazione* but is at variance with the type because it encompasses only one saint alongside the Virgin Mary and Child. Technically speaking, the rudiment of a *Sacra Conversazione* is the addition of two saints at least, but, as we have already seen, this appellation is an arbitrary one; if you will, it is a blanket term that labels the iconography delineated above. In any case, a *Sacra Conversazione* with only one saint was not unknown in Venetian painting. One such instance is to be seen in a picture with the *Virgin and Child with Saint Peter and a Donor* (c. 1515), attributed to Palma Vecchio (c. 1485–1528), now in the Chapter Hall Museum in Birgu, Malta (Cottrell 1998, pp. 239–52). Knowledge of early sixteenth-century Venetian art becomes apparent in the Koutsovendis panel and especially knowledge of paintings depicting the Holy Conversation produced by Giovanni Bellini and his workshop (Heinemann 1991, figs. 74, 75; Constantoudaki-Kitromilides 2009, p. 173). Such an example is the *Madonna and Child with Four Saints and a Donor* (c. 1500), currently in the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York (Figure 11) (Goffen 1989, p. 178, fig. 133). Some other iconographic formulas that are detectable in the panel are also Venetian. The idea of representing a patron/supplicant being blessed by the Christ Child nestled on his mother's knee—the latter group filling up the right-hand side of the composition—was a tremendously influential type and was first designed in the workshop of Giovanni Bellini at the close of the fifteenth century, well exemplified in the aforementioned painting in the Pierpont Morgan Library; the iconography was later advanced by other artists, including Lorenzo Lotto and Titian (Cottrell 1998, pp. 242–43).

Turning our attention to Saint John, we know that the saint was born in Amathus near Limassol in around 560 and was the patriarch of Alexandria. In the Koutsovendis painting, Saint John is essentially the most Byzantine figure among all the protagonists in this Holy Conversation (for Saint John the Almsgiver, see Festugière and Rydén 1974). His inclusion in a picture and his promotion as the protector saint of a family of Venetian background, and possibly of Catholic rite, illustrates compellingly the diversified cultural milieu of Venetian Cyprus. Maria Molino and her son chose to commemorate their patron saint in the same way as Venetian donors of altarpieces in the late fifteenth century (Humfrey 1980, pp. 355–56); in other words, by deciding to hail Saint John as a member of a blessed and unified *Sacra Conversazione*. That being said, the concept of portraying a donor being introduced by a saint to the Virgin and Child can be traced back to fourteenth-century Venice and is epitomised in Doge Francesco Dandolo's funerary panel in Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari by Paolo Veneziano (Figure 28), but the idea was kept up in succeeding centuries by other prominent artists such as Giovanni Bellini (Cottrell 1998, p. 243).

The pose of Mother and Child, with the Christ Child resting on his mother's knee and the Virgin Mary slightly leaning towards her son, is alien to Byzantine iconographical tradition but can be found abundantly in paintings by Giovanni Bellini (Tempestini 1999, p. 220, no. 87), Vincenzo Catena (Figure 13) (Robertson 1954, pls. 4, 11, 26), and other Venetian masters. Likewise, the costume of Maria Molino and her son echoes the fashion of northern Italy (Semoglou 2001, pp. 503–6). Taking the likeness of Maria into account, for instance, the ample sleeves of her dress resonate with those of the sitter in Titian's "*La Schiavona*", (c. 1510–1512) (Frigerio-Zeniou 2003–2004, p. 274. For "*La Schiavona*": Humfrey 2007, p. 57, fig. 38).



Figure 13. Vincenzo Catena, *Holy Family with Saint Anne*, c. 1518–20, panel, 86.3 × 134.6 cm. San Diego Museum of Art, San Diego, California. Photo: Public domain (Wikimedia Commons).

The Koutsovendis supplicants must have followed the Catholic rite, considering the rosaries they clasp in their hands, their predilection for the *Sacra Conversazione*, and their surname. They might have been Hellenised Venetians. Members of the Venetian Molin family, such as Andrea, Marco, and Polo, turn up in archival records as the owners and captains of galleys or as merchants who traded barley and wheat from Cyprus to Venice and vice versa (Aristeidou 1990–2003, vol. 2, pp. 45, no. 12, 174, note 2, pp. 252–53, no. 134). A Molini family of Venetian extraction figures among Cypriot nobility, and a member of that family is attested to as being part of the Consiglio Maggiore in 1570 (Rudt de Collenberg 1995–1996, p. 859; Frigerio-Zeniou 2012, p. 185). Athanasios Sakellarios, who handed down to us the complete inscription of the panel, identifies the portrayed donors as Maria and Antonino di Molino—possibly the spouse and scion of a certain Philippe Molino, respectively. The inscription read by Sakellarios ran like this: “Ἡ δέησις τῆς δού/λης τοῦ θεοῦ Μαρίας/τοῦ (Φιλίππου) Μολίνο/Καὶ Ἀντωνίνου τοῦ/Φιλίππου Μολίνο” (supplication of the servant of God Maria [wife?] of Philippe Molino and Antonino [son?] of Philippe Molino). Philippe is mentioned twice in the inscription and was possibly a Venetian nobleman who resided in Cyprus. According to Sakellarios, the family might have funded some repairs in the Koutsovendis monastery or made some donations (Sakellarios 1855, pp. 135–36; Hackett 1901, p. 357, note 1; Frigerio-Zeniou 2012, p. 185).²⁰ In the early twentieth century, George Jeffery identified a tomb in the narthex of the church, which had been described by a visitor, Giovanni Mariti, in the 1760s, as a “noble lady’s” sepulchre (Jeffery 1918, p. 274; Mariti 1909, p. 57).²¹ Similarly, when Sakellarios visited the church about a century after Mariti, he mentioned that the monks of the monastery had shown him Maria’s tomb, but they erroneously believed that, like the icon in question, it belonged to a legendary queen, the foundress of the monastery. The mid-eighteenth-century pilgrim Richard Pococke recounted the story of a queen who had leprosy and who, after the counsel of Saint John Chrysostom, built the monastery, thereby finding a cure. Two of her sceptres and her crown were kept near the door of the church, according to the story he was told by the monks (Pococke 1745, p. 222; Jeffery 1918, p. 274).²² The confusion of the mythic queen with Maria di Molino evidently occurred earlier, from at least the dawn of the nineteenth

century, and was questioned, for the first time, in 1805, by the traveller, Ali Bey. When Ali Bey visited Koutsovendis, he was presented with the panel at issue and was told that it showed *the Queen*, the founder of the monastery. However, the traveller could read the name Maria and the surname Molino. He commented in disdain, “it is quite certain that when the Palace of the Queen was built, nothing was yet known of Marias or Philips or Molinos, still less a monastery of S. John Chrysostom.” (Cobham 1908, p. 400).²³ Tassos Papacostas, in a most recent and painstaking publication of the monastery, suggests that the icon was brought from elsewhere after the monastery’s reconstitution in the early Ottoman period. It is the very same panel that gave rise to the fictitious tradition of the queen and the foundation of the monastery (Papacostas et al. 2007, pp. 92–93).

Be that as it may, the preference of the panel’s devotees, or a different commissioner on their behalf, for Saint John the Almsgiver should not puzzle us since Saint John was not a stranger to Venice. His holy cadaver was taken to the *Serenissima* in 1247 and is conserved in the church of San Giovanni in Bragora, whereas a different church dedicated to Saint John the Almsgiver (San Giovanni Elemosinario) existed before the translation of the saint’s relic to Venice (Sansovino 1581, p. 9v; Cornelio 1749, pp. 342–43; Kyprianos 1788, p. 349; Andreis 1885, pp. 19–21; Bishop of Fanarion Agathangelos et al. 2005, pp. 200–7). Saint John was also portrayed by major Venetian artists such as Titian in the altarpiece he painted for the aforesaid church of San Giovanni Elemosinario in around 1545 (Nichols 2007, p. 153). John the Almsgiver’s inclusion in the Koutsovendis painting, aside from personal devotion to the saint, may also hint at charitable activities and almsgivings offered by the suppliants/donors to the destitute or the sick of the Cypriot society of their time. In a way, in this painting, Saint John the Almsgiver bridges the Greek and Latin rites, mirroring the background of the Molino family itself. The fact that the panel spurred myths in ensuing centuries demonstrates the importance the monks of the monastery attached to it, and it is, perhaps, its distinctive, non-Byzantine iconography of the *Sacra Conversazione* that made it stand out and gave it the power to inspire fictional tales.

Finally, a third panel, which in my view shows a *Sacra Conversazione*, was uncovered just lately and is located in the church of Saint Nicholas in Enkomi, Nicosia (41.5 × 39.8 cm) (Bakirtzis 2019, vol. 1, pp. 6–7, and vol. 2, p. 11 [entry: Thekla Kalli]). On the left side of the icon, the Virgin Enthroned and Child, attired in luxurious garb and seated on an ornamented marble throne, are pictured, and, to the right, a standing male saint is quietly communicating with them (Figure 14). The young saint, dressed as a pilgrim and holding a stick in his left hand, is lifting the hem of his tunic with his right to expose his thigh. The so far unidentified holy man should be identified as Saint Roch of Montpellier, a fourteenth-century Catholic saint who is considered the guardian of the faithful against the plague and had a special bond with Venice. He is traditionally portrayed as a pilgrim clutching a staff and revealing his bubo (swollen lymph node). The Enkomi *Sacra Conversazione* is resonant with the Koutsovendis panel in the sense that both paintings include only one saint close to Mary and Christ—although the latter dwell in the left section of the painting and not in the right. Perhaps the panel’s sponsor or members of their family suffered from or had a fear of the plague, and they ordered this painting to ensure their safety during a pestilence. Or, maybe they commissioned the piece as an offering of gratitude to the saint for interceding with the Virgin and Christ for their recovery from the disease.

Saint Roch’s cult grew extremely prominent in Venice during the late fifteenth century, especially after 1478, when the Scuola Grande di San Rocco was founded in the city and the noble Francesco Diedo penned the saint’s biography; and also, in 1485, when the remains of the saint were taken to Venice to be sheltered in the confraternity’s church of San Rocco (Voulgaropoulou 2023, p. 5; See also: Réau 1958, pp. 1155–61; Marshall 1994, pp. 503–6; Boeckl 2000, pp. 57–60; Manno 2015, pp. 8–24), and portraits of the saint had already emerged in paintings by Andrea da Murano (c. 1478) and Carlo Crivelli (c. 1480/90) (De Nicolò Salmazo 1976, pp. 17–23; Ingamells 1985, pp. 266–68).²⁴ The cult of Saint Roch spread from Venice to other regions of northern Italy and far and wide in Venice’s Mediterranean colonies, including the islands of Crete and Cythera. In the Greek-speaking

lands of the *Stato da mar*, the saint's veneration became so widespread that it rose above communal and interfaith barriers, with icons, altars and churches made in his honour (Kazanaki-Lappa 2000, pp. 163–68; Voulgaropoulou 2023, pp. 4–7).



Figure 14. *Enthroned Virgin and Child with Saint Roch*, seventeenth century, panel, 41.5 × 39.8 cm. Church of Saint Nicholas, Enkomi. Photo: Author, by permission of the Holy Archbishopric of Cyprus.

Cyprus was not immune to the plague either and experienced outbreaks as early as 1174, with a large epidemic claiming the lives of 20,000 citizens of Nicosia in 1438 and then again ravaging the same city in 1470 and 1494 (Darrouzès 1956, no. 16, pp. 43–44, 46; Grivaud 1998, pp. 439–40; Jennings 1993, pp. 182–88). Famagusta was also stricken by plague waves in April 1533, with seven to eight people dying daily at the start and 2000 succumbing within five months (Aristeidou 1990–2003, vol. 4, no. 65, pp. 16, 140–45; Jennings 1993, pp. 184–85). Then again, in 1572, the island was afflicted by the plague, which left behind several victims, while breakouts of the disease tormented the island

severely in the mid-seventeenth century ([Darrouzès 1956](#), no. 14, pp. 43, 46; [Jennings 1993](#), pp. 186–88). As befitted a Venetian colony racked by the pestilence, the cult of Saint Roch, so popular in Venice itself, would have certainly reached the coasts of Cyprus, which were particularly prone to epidemics due to the ports that welcomed ships and visitors from around the world. Indeed, a church of Saint Roch existed in the port town of Larnaca and was noticed by Dutch voyager Johannes Cotovicus (Jan van Cootwijk) between 1598 and 1599. Apparently, the church was a pre-Ottoman structure, but, as Cotovicus comments, this “fine building” was no longer used as a church and was converted into a grain store ([Cotovico 1619](#), p. 95; [Cobham 1908](#), p. 191). Furthermore, two icons featuring the Virgin Mary and Saint Roch survive in two private collections in Cyprus dating to the seventeenth century, when Cyprus was under Ottoman control ([Perdikis 2005](#), pp. 271–73),²⁵ and the Enkomi panel, to my thinking, should be assigned to the same time frame. The panel bears comparison with the work of prolific painter Pavlos Loukianos, alias Ierographos, who contrived icons and frescoes in different regions of the island and whose dated works range from 1622 to 1668 (for Pavlos Ierographos, see: [Eliades 2007](#), pp. 415–20; [Hadjichristodoulou 2012](#), pp. 329–31).²⁶

The commissioner of the Enkomi painting must have adhered to the Catholic rite, a choice that is in tune with the adoption of the Latin Saint Roch and the *Sacra Conversazione*. Nonetheless, despite the penetration of Italian iconography and the choice of a Latin saint, a Byzantine aura emanates from the panel, resulting in a Cypriot adaptation of the iconography, in which the Holy Conversation is veiled in a more rigid mantle. Yet, by melding a favourite Venetian trope and a Byzantine style, the Enkomi *Sacra Conversazione* proves anew the eclectic culture once prevailing in Venetian Cyprus, which transcended doctrinal and ethnic differences and lasted even after the Ottoman conquest of the island (for the mutability of cultural identities by the elite in Ottoman Cyprus, see: [Given and Hadjianastasis 2010](#), pp. 46–54).

3. Random Counterparts in Style and Iconographies

Venetian stylistic infiltrations are difficult to garner, for, in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Cypriot painting, the Italian art of the *duecento* and *trecento* predominated over contemporary Venetian art ([Garidis 1987](#), p. 26). An appropriate question that arises is why fifteenth and sixteenth-century Cypriot painters opted for Italian art of previous centuries at the expense of the contemporary Venetian kind. One possible explanation could be that the style and iconography of Italian visual culture of the past were much closer to Byzantine painting, whereas the realistic art of Renaissance Venice differed significantly from the aesthetics of the various Christian denominations who lived on the island and were accustomed to the Byzantine visual tradition ([Andronikou 2017](#), pp. 21–22). An answer may be found in the proceedings of the Greek Confraternity in Venice, apropos of their collaboration with Ioannis Kyprios. The Cypriot *maestro* was contracted to adorn the dome of San Giorgio dei Greci, but his work had to be occasionally monitored by Jacopo Tintoretto. Tintoretto was tasked with inspecting and rectifying the drawings and figures to be proportionate to those around them. Still, the council members insisted that “the style, the clothes, the figures, and their countenance should be Greek, following the precepts of true Greek art.” ([Mertzios 1939](#), pp. 231–32).²⁷ In the same spirit, contemporary Venetian features in Cypriot art provide evidence that painters who worked in Cyprus were cognisant of Venetian artistic currents but chose not to take them in. For example, in the case of the arts of the Greeks, any absorption of Venetian art was confined, in most cases, to individual details, which could not alter the Orthodox essence of paintings ([Triantaphyllopoulos 2002](#), p. 336).

A focus on more specific instances makes clear that the superb frescoes preserved in the Akathistos Hymn Chapel at Kalopanagiotis are inspired by different stylistic trends of Italian art ([Constantinides 2007](#), pp. 114–15).²⁸ The “Latin Chapel”—as it is otherwise known—is a vaulted building annexed to the north of the *katholikon* of the monastery of Saint John Lampadistis. It has been termed “Latin” due to its Italianate wall paintings

(Frigerio-Zeniou 1998, pp. 101–2) (Figures 1 and 19). However, there is no direct evidence that the space was used by a Catholic rite congregation. Different views have been put forward in respect of the doctrine denomination of the chapel, among others that it was destined for a community of Greek Uniates (Garidis 1987, pp. 49, 51), or it belonged to Latins converted to Greek Orthodoxy (Constantinides 2007, pp. 127–28). Furthermore, an Orthodox patron who was sympathetic towards the Catholic Church and sought to proclaim equality between the two churches after the Council of Ferrara-Florence (1439), has also been suggested (Frigerio-Zeniou 1997, p. 102). A Latin use has also been considered because of the lack of an iconostasis, that is, a sanctuary screen (Gkioles 2003, p. 188, note 326). Ultimately, it has been avowed that the chapel was sponsored by supporters of the Reunification of the two churches and that the style of its murals acted as a means of Latin propaganda (Triantaphyllopoulos 2002, pp. 328–29).

Whether these frescoes were painted in the early or late sixteenth century is still debated among art historians and will not be revisited here. An examination of the chapel's frescoes reveals that the proportion of Byzantine and Italian details varies from scene to scene (Garidis 1987, p. 46). The iconographic and stylistic diversity that is seen in the frescoes of the chapel indicates painters who either trained or worked in Italy or had a variety of relevant prints and model books available (Frigerio-Zeniou 1998, p. 97). Andreas and Judith Stylianou acknowledged Italian details, which led them to date the frescoes to the early sixteenth-century on account of the "Peruginistic refinement" of the disciples' faces painted above the conch (Stylianou and Stylianou 1997, p. 320). Likewise, Efthalia Constantinides averred that, in the portrayal of the Virgin, particularly in the 23rd and 24th Stances of the *Akathistos Hymn*, the taste for Italian *trecento* art is palpable. According to this scholar, the Virgin's broad face and moody expression are consonant with conventions of fourteenth-century Italy, instantiated in a panel of the Virgin and Child (c. 1315–20) by Giotto held in the National Gallery, Washington, DC (Constantinides 2007, p. 122, note 57. For Giotto's panel, see: Gardner 2002, pp. 160, 172).

But what of any contemporary Venetian impact on the wall paintings? I would argue that its presence is not as straightforward, perhaps even scanty. In the 11th Stance of the *Akathistos Hymn* (Frigerio-Zeniou 1998, p. 143), which iconographically renders the *Flight into Egypt*, the figure of the shepherd walking behind the donkey recalls the reclining herdsman in Jacopo Bassano's (c. 1510–1592) *Annunciation to the Shepherds* in the National Gallery of Art in Washington (c. 1558) (Brown and Marini 1992, pp. 330–32, no. 30) (Figures 15 and 16). The eyebrows, the highlights on the nose, the pointed beard and, particularly, the wide-brimmed hat are comparable in both works. The bust portrait of Saint Bartholomew (Frigerio-Zeniou 1998, p. 186), who is painted as a young man with wavy hair and beard, resonates with Carpaccio's (c. 1465–1525/6) *Saint Augustine*, now in the Philbrook Museum of Art–Samuel H. Kress Foundation (c. 1507) (Humphrey 1991, p. 123, no. 35) (Figures 17 and 18). Moreover, the imposing image of Saint Peter (Frigerio-Zeniou 1998, p. 187) summons up the likeness of the same saint on the *Conegliano* altarpiece (1492–3) in the Duomo of Conegliano, a work by Cima da Conegliano (1459/60–1517/18) (Humphrey 1993b, p. 349, pl. 198; Villa 2010, no. 9, pp. 111–13 [entry: Marta Mazza]) (Figures 19 and 20). Finally, in the church of the Panagia Iamatiki in Arakapas, the frontal likeness of an unidentifiable saint (perhaps Saint Simon), who is bald and wears a short beard, is remarkable (Frigerio-Zeniou 1998, p. 210).²⁹ His facial features echo Saint Peter in Giovanni Bellini's *San Zaccaria* altarpiece (1505), intimating that the Arakapas artist was mindful of Bellini's work (Humphrey 1993b, pl. 80).

In the realm of panel painting, the sixteenth-century *Adoration of the Magi*, once sheltered in the church of the Panagia Phaneromeni in Nicosia and currently in the Byzantine Museum of the city (80 × 101.3 cm), is thought to have been executed by a Cypriot artist who worked in Venice (Figure 21) (Talbot Rice 1937, pp. 274–75, no. 153; Papageorgiou 1992, p. 142, fig. 94; Sophocleous 2005, p. 94, pl. 7; Casu et al. 2005, pp. 60–61, no. 12 [entry Ioannis A. Eliades]).³⁰ The Virgin Mary is depicted seated on the left side, holding the Child, while Saint Joseph is situated in the left corner, inclining towards the Mother

and Child. The three Magi are represented before the Holy Family, offering their gifts. A lyrical landscape provides the backdrop to the scene. Venetian aesthetics of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries are noticeable in the painting. The pose of the Virgin holding the Child in her lap and her inclination to the front, as well as the plump infant Christ, who is leaning to bless the worshippers, is a pattern recurrent in the oeuvre of Giovanni Bellini and was taken up by his students (Heinemann 1991, pp. 156, 193–94, 52, 210, 216, 218). In terms of style, the Cypriot icon exhibits some similarities with two paintings of the *Holy Family with Saint Anne* (c. 1518–20) by Vincenzo Catena in the San Diego Museum of Art and in the Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Dresden (Robertson 1954, pp. 56–58, pls. 26–7; Humfrey 1997, p. 132, fig. 134) (Figure 13). The subtle face of Mary and Joseph's facial traits recall the canvases by Catena. Even so, it must be reiterated that any direct relation between the two works is not verifiable; the observation above is only an attempt to mark resemblances that prove that artists working on the island had a familiarity with Venetian art. In addition, Venetian overtones in the painting are also evident in the painter's endeavour to convey an idyllic landscape. The detailed vegetation, as well as the aspiration of the painter to generate an atmospheric feeling, denotes acquaintance with late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century Venetian works. It would come as little surprise if the Phaneromeni panel artist was aware of artworks by Giovanni Bellini, Giorgione, Titian, Lazzaro Bastiani, and Cima da Conegliano, to mention but a few.



Figure 15. “Having shed in Egypt the beams of thy truth ...”, Akathistos Hymn, Eleventh Stanza: south wall, sixteenth century, wall painting. Akathistos Hymn Chapel, Monastery of Saint John Lampadistis, Kalopanagiotis. Photo: Author, by permission of the Cyprus Department of Antiquities and the Holy Bishopric of Morfou.



Figure 16. Jacopo Bassano, *The Annunciation to the Shepherds (detail)*, c. 1558, canvas, 106 × 83 cm. National Gallery of Art, Washington, Samuel H. Kress Collection. Photo: Public domain (Courtesy of the National Gallery of Art, Washington).



Figure 17. *Saint Bartholomew*, sixteenth century, wall painting, vault. Akathistos Hymn Chapel, Monastery of Saint John Lampadistis, Kalopanagiotis. Photo: Author, by permission of the Cyprus Department of Antiquities and the Holy Bishopric of Morfou.



Figure 18. Carpaccio, *Saint Augustine (detail)*, c. 1507, panel, 113.5 × 39.5 cm. Philbrook Art Museum, Tulsa, Oklahoma—Samuel H. Kress Foundation, New York. Photo: Public domain (Courtesy of the Samuel H. Kress Foundation).



Figure 19. Vault (detail with Saint Peter), sixteenth century, wall painting. Akathistos Hymn Chapel, Monastery of Saint John Lampadistis, Kalopanagiotis. Photo: Author, by permission of the Cyprus Department of Antiquities and the Holy Bishopric of Morfou.



Figure 20. Cima da Conegliano, *Saints Peter and Francis* (detail from the Conegliano altarpiece), 1492–3, panel (transferred to canvas). Duomo of Conegliano. Photo: Public domain (Wikimedia Commons).



Figure 21. *The Adoration of the Magi*, sixteenth century, panel, 80 × 101.3 cm. Byzantine Museum of the Archbishop Makarios III Foundation, Nicosia (formerly in the church of the Panagia Phaneromeni, Nicosia). Photo: © Byzantine Museum and Art Gallery of the Archbishop Makarios III Foundation.

Constantoudaki-Kitromilides contends that the panel reflects the output of Greek painters who were trained in the Byzantine manner and had the chance to operate in Venice (Constantoudaki-Kitromilides 2009, p. 177). These artists accepted commissions from a Greek Orthodox clientele, most likely comprising members of the Greek Confraternity of the city, and were certainly affected and stimulated by the artistic environment in which they worked (Constantoudaki-Kitromilides 1999, p. 1205). Notwithstanding their Venetian experience, their Byzantine education is mainly revealed by their technique, the linearity in the drapery of their figures and their use of opaque colours. It can also be gleaned through comparison with paintings created by other Greek artists who worked in the *Serenissima*. Taking the African Magus into account, how he raises his right hand, holding his gift, can be seen in a counterpart figure in the *Adoration of the Magi* in the Walters Art Gallery in Baltimore, which dates from the late sixteenth century (inv. no. 37.1079) (Figure 22) (Zeri 1976, pp. 414–15, no. 286, pl. 197). What is more, his tall red headdress (*zamṭ*) is matched in comparable icons of the same subject matter, such as two paintings by Cretan Ioannis Permeniatīs, the first one in a private Collection and the other in the Benaki Museum, Athens (Chatzidakis 1991, pp. 713–41, pls. 391–97; Constantoudaki-Kitromilides 1999, pp. 1209–11, figs. 1307, 1309). In Cyprus, similar headgear is worn by five participants in the *Crucifixion* in the church of the Panagia Podithou in Galata (Frigerio-Zeniou 1998, p. 55; Constantoudaki-Kitromilides and Myrianthefs 2005, p. 24). Of course, matching tall, shaggy caps can be seen in paintings by Carpaccio and Cima da Conegliano, among other Venetian masters (Villa 2010, p. 149, no. 25; Humfrey 2022, pp. 172–73 [entry: Sara Menato]). Yet the Nicosia panel painter rendered the Magus' *zamṭ* in an awkward manner and made no attempt to refine the hat's furry texture. Lastly, the face of the youthful Magus calls up the matching youth in the celebrated *Adoration of the Magi* (sixteenth century) by Cretan painter Michael Damaskinos (Borboudakis 1993, pp. 451–53, no. 97 [entry: Maria

Constantoudaki-Kitromilides]]—but the Magus on the Cypriot icon is delineated with less dexterity. Perhaps we may assume that the parallels set out above point to knowledge of engravings that, in turn, replicated specific paintings.



Figure 22. The *Adoration of the Magi*, sixteenth century, panel, 38.9 × 31.8 cm. Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore. Photo: Public domain (courtesy of the Walters Art Museum).

An octagonal sixteenth-century panel displaying the *Enthroned Virgin Mary and Child*, formerly kept in the Holy Archbishopric in Nicosia and currently in the Byzantine Museum of the city (93 × 77.5 cm) ([Eliades 2010](#), p. 28, fig. 31), is another case of a painting that demonstrates associations with Venice (Figure 23). The imagery, which shows a Virgin clad in opulent clothing and seated on a sophisticated marble throne, evokes the oeuvre of Antonio Vivarini (c. 1418–76/84), as seen, for example, in the *Parenzo Polyptych* (1440) in the Basilica Eufraiana at Poreč ([Holgate 1998](#), fig. 1). Even Mary's facial traits, with her small eyes and lowering gaze, her chubby cheeks and pursed lips, recall figures by Vivarini and his collaborators, such as those depicted in the *Poldi Pezzoli Madonna* (c. 1449–50) in the Poldi Pezzoli Museum, Milan, a painting by Giovanni d'Alemagna and Antonio Vivarini

(Figure 24) (Holgate 1998, fig. 14). Moreover, the sumptuous attire of the Virgin and Child, with the lavish use of gold, is in keeping with the International Gothic style and the traditional Venetian penchant for material richness, qualities repeated in Vivarini's work and that of his associates (Humphrey 1995, p. 49; Fortini Brown 1997, pp. 52, 54; Holgate 1998, figs. 1, 10, 14–15). The placement of Mary and Christ on an elaborate marble throne with a semicircular back reinforces the thought that the Cypriot artist(s) might have seen paintings or availed themselves of prints that reproduced the artworks of Antonio Vivarini. Finally, it should be noted that a series of Cypriot icons featuring the enthroned Virgin or Christ clothed in elaborate brocade garments and seated on magnificent marble thrones survives in Cyprus (Papageorgiou 1970, pp. 93, 95, 114; Eliades 2010, figs. 32, 38) and mimics the pleasure Early Renaissance Venetian painters took in the illusionistic renderings of marbles and mosaics (Humphrey 1995, p. 9).



Figure 23. *Enthroned Virgin and Child*, sixteenth century, panel, 93 × 77.5 cm. Byzantine Museum of the Archbishop Makarios III Foundation, Nicosia (formerly in the Holy Archbishopric, Nicosia). Photo: © Byzantine Museum and Art Gallery of the Archbishop Makarios III Foundation.



Figure 24. Antonio Vivarini and Giovanni d'Alemagna, *Enthroned Virgin with Child and Two Angels* (Poldi Pezzoli Madonna), c. 1449–50, panel, 188.9 × 102.3 cm. Museo Poldi Pezzoli, Milan. Photo: Public domain (Wikimedia Commons).

4. Lunette-Shaped Panels: Cypriotising an Italian Concept

The last part of the essay probes lunette-shaped panels, a topic which, although significant, cries out for further investigation since these works and their usage have only been studied tangentially. The first panel I consider is held in the church of the Panagia Katholiki in Pelendri and belongs to the sixteenth century (Figure 25). It is a *Deisis* that comprises the Christ enthroned at the centre, flanked by the Virgin Mary and Saint John the Baptist in supplication (47.7 × 104.5 cm). The icon is attributed to the master who

painted the series of icons of the Great *Deïsis* on the epistyle of the iconostasis in the same church (Papageorgiou 1992, p. 116, fig. 73; Gerasimou 2005, p. 117; Sophocleous 2006, pp. 127, 231, no. 197). A second lunette panel, which dates from around 1511 and lies in the *katholikon* of the Monastery of Saint Neophytos in Paphos, displays the *Dormition of the Virgin* (150 × 169 cm) and features a commemorative inscription in the foreground, close to the Virgin's bier, which reads as follows: "Supplication of the servants of God, Timotheos the priest and abbot of the venerable monastery of Enkleistra and of the late Neophytos the monk" (Gunnis 1947, p. 201; Talbot Rice 1937, p. 272, no. 149; Papageorgiou 1992, pp. 153, 161, fig. 110; Papageorgiou 2004, p. 62).³¹ A third icon of that kind, also from Paphos, is a gigantic panel with a rounded top (171 × 163.5 cm) that presents Saint George, called *Pervoliatis*, with scenes from his life, currently in the Byzantine Museum of Paphos. The work was formerly housed in the church of Saint Kendeas and is datable to the early sixteenth century (Papageorgiou 1992, pp. 142, 146, fig. 98; 1996, p. 177, fig. 113). A fourth lunette with a slightly pointed arched top is a *Saint Mamas on the back of a lion with six donors* (1500). An inscription on the right side of the panel and above the head of a female suppliant, most probably Antona, reads: "the servant of God Antona, a priest's wife, fell asleep. Those who read [this inscription] pray for her to be blessed—on the 29th of February 1500 [. . .]." The icon was once kept in the church of the Panagia Chrysaliniotissa in Nicosia (199 × 200 cm) and now hangs in the Byzantine Museum of the city (Figure 26) (Talbot Rice 1937, pp. 237–38, no. 78; Frigerio-Zeniou 2012, pp. 29–32). A fifth panel of similar shape, formerly in Chrysaliniotissa, shows the *Virgin and Child*, called *Kamariotissa*, with six supplicants; the painting is equally monumental in size (210 × 120 cm) and dates to the late fifteenth century (Figure 27). Two inscriptions frame the throne of the Virgin. The first one in black, atop a darkly dressed female suppliant, reads: "Prayer of the servant of God Bella, daughter of lord Nicholas, bishop of Nicosia, of blessed memory, and her children. And pray for them to the all-pure Mother of God." On our right-hand side, the short text in white, above a male donor, runs as follows: "Lord, remember your servants Lord Eustathios and his daughter Helen. May those who read this commemorate them as blessed." (Talbot Rice 1937, pp. 230–31, no. 64; Koumparidou 2001, pp. 527–34; Carr 2005b, pp. 159–63; McNulty 2018, pp. 283–87). Last, a sixth lunette icon from Chrysaliniotissa again includes the *Three Hierarchs* receiving Christ's blessing. It is a gigantic oblong panel with a pointed arch at the top (238.5 × 141.5 cm) and dates from the late fourteenth/early fifteenth century (Papageorgiou 1992, pp. 67, 71, fig. 48; Eliades 2019, p. 131, no. 39).



Figure 25. *Deïsis with the Virgin Mary and Saint John the Baptist*, sixteenth century, panel, 47.7 × 104.5 cm. Church of the Panagia Katholiki, Pelendri. Photo: Author, by permission of the Cyprus Department of Antiquities and the Holy Bishopric of Limassol.



Figure 26. *Saint Mamas on the back of a lion with six donors*, 1500, panel, 199 × 200 cm. Byzantine Museum of the Archbishop Makarios III Foundation, Nicosia (formerly in the church of the Panagia Chrysaliniotissa, Nicosia). Photo: © Byzantine Museum and Art Gallery of the Archbishop Makarios III Foundation.

Lunette panels find their correspondences in Italy, especially in Venice. Except for the *Three Hierarchs* lunette, all the surviving examples in Cyprus belong to the Venetian period of the island, and they probably became known and popularised by means of Venice. Italian lunette panels generally date from the late thirteenth to the late fifteenth centuries and find their roots in Venice and also in Liguria, Tuscany, Naples, and Sicily; they were either set into tympana atop doors or into sepulchral monuments in the area beneath the baldachin or canopy (Schmidt 2002, pp. 83, 87). A renowned example with a funerary use is the panel (145 × 233 cm) by Paolo Veneziano (c. 1300–c. 1365) for the Franciscan Basilica of Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari in Venice (Figure 28) (Goffen 1989, p. 102, fig. 72). Veneziano's lunette depicts *Doge Francesco Dandolo* († 1339) and his wife, *Elisabetta Contarini*, being presented to the *Virgin and Child* by *Saint Francis* and *Elizabeth of Hungary*. A drawing of 1754 by Jan van Grevenbroeck (1731–1807) verifies that the panel comprised part of the tomb of the Doge, once laid in the chapterhouse of the Frari (Pincus 2000, pp. 105–20; Schmidt 2002, p. 83, figs. 1–2). The practice of inserting a lunette panel painting in an architectural setting such as an arcaded niche seems to have endured throughout the fifteenth century. Much like Veneziano's painting, Lazzaro Bastiani's (1429–1512) lunette panel (100 × 180 cm; completed 1484) with the *Virgin and Child*, *Saints John the Baptist*, and *Donato* introducing the donor, the canon *Giovanni degli Angeli* († 1481), graced the latter's tomb in the church of *Santi Maria e Donato* in Murano and was undoubtedly influenced by Veneziano's lunette (Figure 29) (Goffen 1989, p. 102, fig. 71; Sartor 1997, pp. 45–46, fig. 7). Sepulchral and architectural functions aside, Italian lunette-shaped panels, with a

rounded arch at their top, constituted the apex of many Renaissance altarpieces (Schmidt 2002, p. 87). For instance, fifteenth-century Venetian lunettes that fulfilled this purpose were part of four triptychs destined for the church of Santa Maria della Carità and were produced by the workshop of Jacopo Bellini between 1460 and 1464 (Figure 30) (Humfrey 1990, pp. 190–211; Humfrey 1993b, p. 96, pls. 86–89).



Figure 27. *The Virgin Kamariotissa with six supplicants*, late fifteenth century, panel, 210 × 120 cm. Byzantine Museum of the Archbishop Makarios III Foundation, Nicosia (formerly in the church of the Panagia Chrysaliniotissa, Nicosia). Photo: © Byzantine Museum and Art Gallery of the Archbishop Makarios III Foundation.



Figure 28. Paolo Veneziano, *Virgin and Child with Saints Francis and Elizabeth of Hungary, Presenting the Doge Francesco Dandolo, and His Wife, Elisabetta Contarini*, c. 1339, panel, 145 × 233 cm. Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari, Venice. Photo: Public domain (Wikimedia Commons).



Figure 29. Lazzaro Bastiani, *Enthroned Virgin and Child with Saints John the Baptist and Donato, and the donor Giovanni degli Angeli*, 1484, panel, 100 × 180 cm. Santi Maria e Donato, Murano. Photo: Public domain (Wikimedia Commons).

Considering the role of these panels in Italian contexts and reflecting on their placement in a highly culturally intermingled society like that of Venetian Cyprus, one could suggest that arched icons were set on the upper part of altarpieces in Latin-rite churches or Latin parishes in Greek churches, following the Venetian vogue (for the use of Latin chapels in Greek churches, see: [Olympios 2013](#), pp. 326–27). Athanasios Papageorgiou suggested that the lunette-shaped icon from Pelendri was possibly situated “above the royal door of an iconostasis”, but I do not find this thesis persuasive ([Papageorgiou 1992](#), p. 116).³² For one thing, sixteenth-century sanctuary screens include doors that usually end in a horseshoe or a pointed arch or a trilobe, the last of these being the shape of the Pelendri

iconostasis gates. Moreover, the painters or the commissioners of the portable panels would not have placed an icon of the *Deïsis* on the iconostasis because the *Trimorphon* (i.e., Christ between the Virgin and Saint John the Baptist in prayer) was already part of the Great *Deïsis* on the epistyle of the Panagia Katholiki. Therefore, repeating an identical subject in the same setting would be redundant. Its smaller size, when compared to the other extant Cypriot lunettes, may indicate it was fitted to a recessed tympanum above a door or that it formed the very top of an altarpiece.³³ It is worth mentioning, in this respect, the existence of oblong panels in Cyprus, which could comprise the central tier of triptychs or polyptychs. The shape of three sixteenth-century icons displaying Saints John the Baptist, John the Evangelist, and Peter from the church of the Panagia tou Kampou in Akapnou (110 × 25.5–32 cm) is particularly suggestive of that kind of function (Papageorgiou 1992, p. 143, figs. 101–3; Sophocleous 2006, pp. 37–38, 172–73, nos. 28–30). However, the subject matter and immense size of the surviving Cypriot lunettes do not encourage us to pursue the altarpiece-hypothesis further. Unlike the Venetian altarpiece-lunettes, which commonly depict the Man of Sorrows (Figure 30) and the Virgin and Child (Humfrey 1993b, p. 130, fig. 113), the surviving lunettes in Cyprus do not feature themes or iconography with an evident tie to the Eucharist, with the exception of the *Three Hierarchs* icon.



Figure 30. Jacopo Bellini and assistants, *Triptych of the Madonna with Child and Saints*, 1460–4, lunette: 59 × 170 cm. Gallerie dell’Accademia, Venice (formerly in the church of Santa Maria della Carità, Venice). Photo: Public domain (Wikimedia Commons).

An alternative use for those panels is a sepulchral one, and, to my mind, this seems more likely.³⁴ The church of Saint Mamas in Morfou provides firm evidence on this matter. In the church interior is sited the shrine of Saint Mamas, set within a recess and framed by a richly ornate arch (Figure 31) (Enlart 1987, pp. 369–70, fig. 333). Above the sarcophagus of the saint, within an arched niche, there is a triptych with a wooden frame, which hosts three contemporary large icons with individual saints. On top of these icons abuts a rounded grid of thirty-eight conjoint sixteenth-century panels, which visually narrate the life and miracles of Saint Mamas (Carr 2005b, pp. 154–55; Bacci 2009a, pp. 29–30; Remsen 2010, p. 88, figs. 2.10 and 3.16). For all the differences in the layout of the icons, the actual choice to fill in the tympanum with panel paintings instead of a fresco is salient and most probably inspired by Italian practices. Michele Bacci, in an in-depth study of such recesses in Cypriot churches—which he believes, for the most part, were niche-chapels housing small altars—has argued that some of them performed a funerary role, not only in Latin-rite churches but also in Eastern Christian and Greek-rite spaces of worship. Some of these niches were decorated with *pro anima* (votive) frescoes portraying holy figures and donors in small scale (Bacci 2009a, pp. 20, 22–23, 27–28).



Figure 31. Tomb of Saint Mamas, church of Saint Mamas, Morfou. Photo: Courtesy of Petros Lazarou, by permission of the Holy Bishopric of Morfou.

Four of the six Cypriot lunette-shaped panels would be appropriate candidates for a sepulchral function since their iconography or inscriptions commemorate a deceased supplicant. The *Deïsis* in the Pelendri lunette may take on an eschatological dimension and refer to the judgement that mankind will receive during Christ's Second Coming and to the intercessional role of the Virgin Mary and John the Baptist for humans' salvation—but, as we have already seen, its reduced dimensions question this assumption (Mouriki 1968, pp. 23–24; Walter 1968, p. 312). Likewise, the *Dormition of the Virgin* from Saint Neophytos comprises a burial subject, which in Byzantine contexts, for instance, became a favourite theme in spaces with sepulchral use, such as the narthex or funerary chapels (Mavroudis 2017, pp. 303, 305–7)—in addition, the remembrance of a deceased monk intimates a likely use. In Venice, the *Dormition of the Virgin* in sculpted relief form embellishes Francesco Dandolo's tomb chest, the first time the Byzantine theme is incorporated in an Italian tomb repertory (Pincus 2000, pp. 113–14). In the icons of *Saint Mamas* and the *Virgin Kamariotissa*, on the other hand, it is the commemorative inscriptions, coupled with donors, that give away the panels' funeral aspect. I posit that these two *pro anima* paintings were located above or nearby the tombs of the deceased Antona in the *Saint Mamas* icon and of Eustathios and Helen in the *Virgin Kamariotissa* panel, respectively (Talbot Rice 1937, p. 237; Frigerio-Zeniou 2012, pp. 29–30).³⁵ A corresponding funerary setting must have accommodated monk Neophytos' lunette-shaped icon. In any case, the *Saint Mamas*, the *Virgin Kamariotissa*, and the Saint Neophytos *Dormition of the Virgin* lunette panels suggest that the Saint Kendeas *Saint George* and the Chrysaliniotissa *Three Hierarchs* may have fulfilled an analogous sepulchral role. Remarkably, the practice of attaching lunette panels to arcosolia had existed in another Venetian protectorate, Crete, and is supported by documentary evidence. A case in point is that of the priest Ioannis Kaliakis, who, in his will of 1638, requested that an icon of the *Three Hierarchs*, painted by his son, be fixed to the arched recess over his tomb in the church of Saint Kyriaki tou Kastrou in Candia (Constantoudaki 1975, pp. 37–38, footnote 5; Giapitsoglou 2021, p. 149).³⁶

It is striking that three of the six extant lunettes come from the church of the Panagia Chrysaliniotissa, especially when we bear in mind that funerary icons of rectangular, elongated shape, such as those of *Christ, an Angel and the Xeros family* (1356), the *Saint Eleftherios with supplicants* (second half of the fourteenth century), or *Saint Paraskevi with a donor* (early fifteenth century), and a *Virgin Hodigitria with devotees* (fifteenth century), were also formerly kept in the Chrysaliniotissa (Carr 2001, pp. 599–618; 2005b, pp. 153–73; Eliades 2019, p. 101, no. 09). To my eyes, the panels thereof corroborate once more the funerary use of the lunettes, including the *Three Hierarchs*, and these (i.e., the lunettes), must have been affixed to burial niches. Interestingly, in his work *Lacrimae Nicossienses*, James Tankerville remarks that according to a vague, old tradition, “a number of ancient religious panels” he saw in Chrysaliniotissa were reckoned to have been transferred there from the Gothic cathedral of the Holy Wisdom in 1570 on the eve of the Ottoman siege of the city (Tankerville 1894, p. 5).³⁷ Still, this information cannot be substantiated, and, as will be discussed shortly, Tankerville's version conflicts with a different lore. In any event, all these “commemorative panels”, as Barbara McNulty calls them, may indicate a funerary space in Nicosia, perhaps no longer extant, whose icons were carried to a shelter for protection. Might these panels come from one of the many churches or monasteries that stood near the Flatro and Caraffa bastions and which were demolished in 1567 to make room for the construction of the city's Venetian enceinte (for a thorough catalogue of these monasteries and churches, see: Grivaud 1992, pp. 281–306; see also: Leventis 2005, p. 327)?³⁸

According to a mid-nineteenth-century oral tradition, a few residents of the Saint Kassianos and Chrysaliniotissa parishes were informed by a Greek woman who had access to Muslim households that the Ottomans retained a copious number of icons and used them in a profane way. It was understood that these panels came from the Latin Cathedral of the Holy Wisdom and the adjacent Greek Cathedral of the Virgin Hodigitria. Upon hearing the news with astonishment and with the assistance of a Turkish aga, the residents of these quarters organised a clandestine mission to muster all the panels they could trace. After

they had rescued many of them, they transferred half of the group to the church of Saint Kassianos and the remainder to the church of the Virgin Chrysaliniotissa (Koumparidou 1968, pp. 87–97). This tale thus explains as to why such an enormous quantity of icons was held in the Chrysaliniotissa. One wonders how the people who transmitted this oral tradition knew that the icons had explicitly come from these two churches. And why had these panels not been seen by the inhabitants of Nicosia before 1850? Does this imply that the holy asset was stored away by the Nicosians before the Ottoman siege of the city, only to be uncovered accidentally by the Ottomans hundreds of years later, somewhere within or close to the Ayasofya/Selimiye mosque (Holy Wisdom) and the Bedestan (Virgin Hodigitria)?³⁹

As I have previously noted, one of the earliest funerary panels (1356) from Chrysaliniotissa is the elongated painting that displays the deceased young woman, Maria Xeros, and her parents, Manuel *anagnostis* (lector in the Orthodox Church) and Euphemia.⁴⁰ The icon was deemed installed in a slim niche or a pier within a Gothic architectural context (Carr 2001, p. 600; 2005b, pp. 156, 164). Intriguingly, in a twelfth-century *Synaxarion* (Paris. Gr. 1589), several fourteenth-century annotations refer to the Greek Cathedral of the Virgin Hodigitria in Nicosia. In these glosses, we read about the ordination of a priest, Κωνσταντίνος Ξηρός (Constantinos Xeros), which took place in the Hodigitria on 3 February 1389 (Darrouzès 1953, pp. 84, 90–91, no. 21) (Figure 32).⁴¹ The shared surnames of Constantinos and Manuel Xeros, along with their ecclesiastical vocation, may signify a relation between the two men and perhaps a traditional and continuous association of the family with the Greek cathedral. Could the presence of Constantinos Xeros in the Hodigitria help us demarcate Maria Xeros' icon and tomb within the boundaries of the Greek cathedral? It is noteworthy that in the same manuscript individuals, like the physician Peser (1389), the priest Basilios Armenopoulos (1395), or the clergyman (ἐβδομαδάριος), Sir Georgios Orkomosiatis (1402), who passed away in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, are mentioned as interred in the Greek cathedral (Darrouzès 1953, p. 89, no. 10, p. 90, nos. 12–13). The lunettes of *Saint Mamas* and the *Virgin Kamariotissa*, which also involve Orthodox clerics, invite us to infer that the funerary setting of these lunettes may have also been the Greek cathedral.⁴² Related to this thought, Michele Bacci has argued that the sixteenth-century flat niches in the north façade of the Hodigitria were meant to host icons, as did the niches in the western portal of the Holy Wisdom (Bacci 2014a, p. 154). As far as we can tell, the building was quite long in the fourteenth century, having six bays in the nave and aisles, while in the fifteenth, the church underwent a large-scale reconstruction, with the rebuild of the northern aisle and the addition of a southern one. Moreover, the north façade and parts of the nave were constructed in the following century (Plagnieux and Soulard 2006, pp. 181–89; Papacostas 2005, pp. 15–25; Olympios 2015, pp. 328–33, 342; Kaffenberger 2016, pp. 412–16, no. 126). The identification of this funerary space (or spaces) inside the Greek cathedral is something that merits attention but will not be addressed here. At any rate, this burial locale hosted tombs adorned with funerary panel paintings of various shapes. It must have begun to be used for burials from the mid-fourteenth century, lasting up to the sixteenth, thanks to the placement of these funerary panels within this timeframe. It appears that the people shown in these obituary icons were wealthy and high-status members of the Cypriot social fabric. It would be little wonder if they served in the various ranks of the Hodigitria church ministry and enjoyed the privilege, together with their families, of being interred in the church they used to minister.⁴³

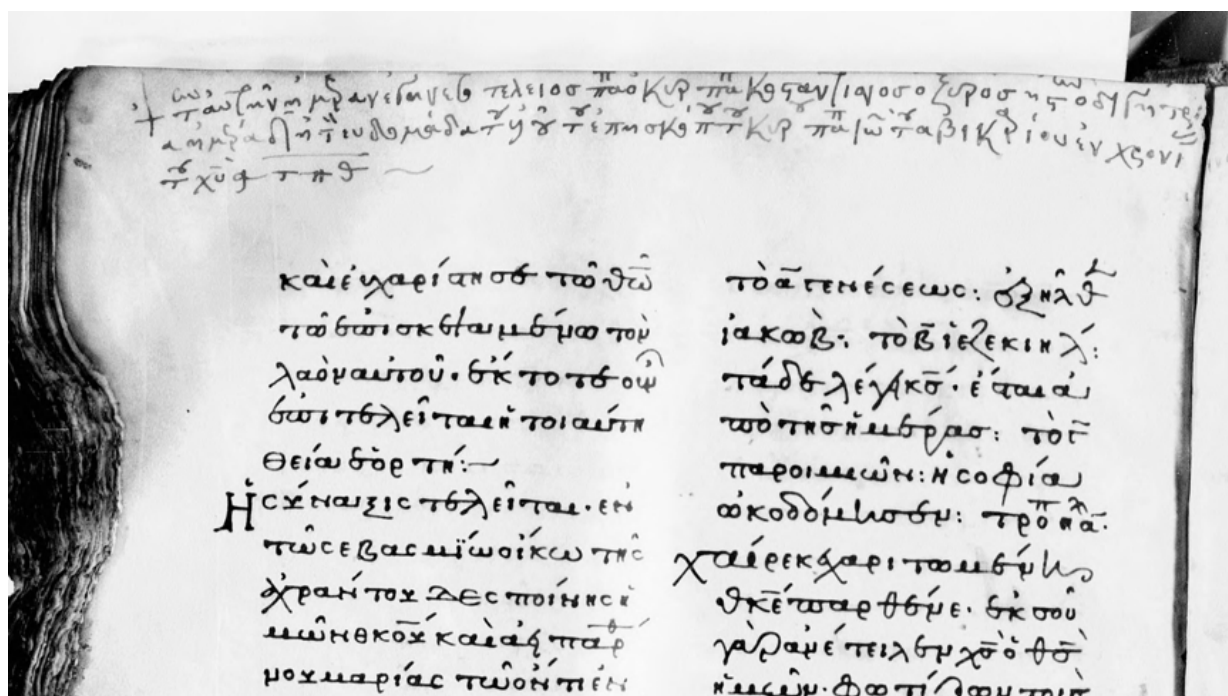


Figure 32. Marginal annotation recording the ordination of Constantinos Xeros, 1389, *Synaxarion* (Collection of saints' lives) (Paris. gr. 1589), twelfth century, manuscript, parchment, fol. 251v. Bibliothèque nationale de France. Photo: Public domain (courtesy of the BnF ou Bibliothèque nationale de France).

To summarise, Venice and Cyprus exhibit parallel usages of lunette-shaped panels in architectural and sepulchral settings. Yet mounting the Pelendri panel as a top compartment of an altarpiece may also be a possibility, but the current state of research cannot verify the assumption. Whatever the case, the function, location, and iconography of lunette panel paintings in Cyprus and the intersections with Venice are topics that beg for future research. To be sure, the members of Cypriot society, be it urban or rural, assimilated and Cypriotised a type of panel rooted in Catholic Italy, and they inserted it successfully into their devotional practices. The panels with *Saint Mamas*, the *Virgin Kamariotissa*, and the *Dormition of the Virgin* constitute emphatic cases of lunettes whose donors or defunct devotees had a confirmed Orthodox identity (priest, bishop, monk), hence bolstering the idea of the use of such arched panels not only by the Latin-rite believers of Cyprus but also by the non-Latin-rite ones.

5. Conclusions

In the previous paragraphs, I hope that I have effectively spotlighted aspects of Venetian painting in Cyprus between the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, which have been discussed only peripherally. Of course, a host of relevant issues has remained unexplored; among these is the introduction of the gilded iconostasis supporting the so-called *lypira* and the cue Cypriot artisans took from Venetian polyptychs. Venetian *trecento* and *quattrocento* polyptych frames were highly sought after, not only within the Lagoon but also far afield; they were a hallmark of Venetian craftsmanship. A proof of the importance of such commodities and the esteem in which they were held in Venice is that woodcarving as a skill was protected by government legislation (Silver 2020, pp. 69–85; Witty 2021, pp. 51–55). For this reason, I cannot help noting that the resonance of such desirable commodities would be felt in the Mediterranean colony of Cyprus. The dialogue between the Venetian polyptych and the post-Byzantine iconostasis is a fascinating field, which Iosif Hadjikyriakos, Michele Bacci and Stella Frigerio-Zeniou have partly unlocked, and their work may inspire future scholars to delve more deeply in the field (Hadjikyriakos 2012,

pp. 268–83, with an emphasis on Venetian architecture; Bacci 2016, pp. 107–15; Frigerio-Zeniou 2019, pp. 341–43). Moreover, a study zeroing in on altarpieces in Cyprus under Venice is an uncharted topic, apart from the altarpiece in Lusignan Cyprus, which has been expertly handled by Michalis Olympios (Olympios 2014, pp. 47–72). A one-off instance in this respect is a fragment of a late fifteenth-century pinnacled triptych, which displayed the enthroned Virgin and Child flanked by Saints Athanasios and Cyril and was once housed in the church of Saint George in Aradippou (Figure 33) (157 × 132 cm). Unfortunately, the panels of the Virgin Mary and Saint Athanasios are missing. The existence of the whole piece has been known through the publications of Rupert Gunnis (1947) and David Talbot Rice (1937).⁴⁴ Its format is evocative of altarpieces that reproduced the layout of the compartmentalised polyptych as seen in fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Venetian works (Gunnis 1947, p. 173; Talbot Rice 1937, pp. 50, 194–95, pl. VIII; Papageorgiou 1970, p. 108; Papageorgiou 1992, pp. 142–43; Constantoudaki-Kitromilides 2009, p. 167; Olympios 2014, pp. 60–61). The configuration of the artwork, which specified the placement of the saints under an arcade, the latter bearing twisted colonettes and a series of apostles in a bust in the predella, is reminiscent of polyptychs that were created by Paolo Veneziano and his workshop, such as the *Grisolera* polyptych (1349–54) in the Museo Civico Correr (Muraro 1970, pp. 56, 129, pls. 30–32; Flores d’Arcais and Gentili 2002, pp. 168–69, no. 32 [entry: Francesca Flores d’Arcais]), but also of polyptychs that were manufactured by Jacopo Bellini, Bartolomeo Vivarini, and Zanino di Pietro (Humfrey 1993b, figs. 158, 205, 208), among other artists. The Aradippou triptych, which fuses saints portrayed in the Byzantine manner and iconography, Greek inscriptions, and an Italian design in its frame, alludes to the famous Monopoli polyptych from the monastery of Santo Stefano in Monopoli. The Monopoli painting, now preserved in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, combines Byzantine and Italian style and iconography and at the same time exhibits a Late Gothic format in its gilded and carved wooden frame, whereas its overall aesthetic approach is Venetian (Constantoudaki-Kitromilides 1993–1994, pp. 285–301; Vassilaki 2010a, pp. 61–63; Bacci 2014b, pp. 91–95; Drandaki 2014, pp. 46–47).

In connection with the design of frames in Venice and their reinterpretation by *intagliatori* at work in Cyprus, the cases of the epistyle in the *pergola* of the cathedral of Santa Maria Assunta in Torcello and of the late fifteenth-century Great *Deïsis* icons from the church of the Holy Cross in Parekklesia are notable (Figures 34 and 35) (Sophocleous 2006, pp. 106–7, 209–10, 440–45, cat. nos. 132–37, fig. 8). The panels on the entablature in Torcello have a scalloped top and display a series of apostles, who frame the central icon of the Virgin and Child, thus hinting at a Great *Deïsis*. The paintings were made by Zanino di Pietro between 1418 and 1423, and although their frame was made by Annibale Spoldi in 1889, it faithfully reproduced the original, which was probably gilded (Bacci 2009b, p. 96; Baradel 2019, pp. 133, 139–40, 201–22, pls. XVIII–XL). By the same token, the Parekklesia icon maker(s) produced a series of epistyle icons with the Great *Deïsis*, a staple in post-Byzantine Cypriot churches’ iconostases, which, however, had a similar shape with the Venetian-made Torcello panels. Religious artworks like the Aradippou triptych or the Parekklesia multifoil-arched icons unveil the dynamics of hybrid pictorial forms that dissolved confessional boundaries and appealed to the devotional needs of the various Christian denominations, among them the Latins and Greeks.

From the foregoing discussion, I believe it has become clear that, with a few exceptions, most of the Venetian qualities in artworks from Cyprus stem from Early Renaissance artistic expression. As has already been stated, this phenomenon might be because the aesthetics of such paintings were closer to the visual habits of a Cypriot audience, be it Greek, Latin, or Eastern Christian. Furthermore, the fact that Early Renaissance artists in Venice employed egg tempera as a pictorial technique—a typical feature of Byzantine panel painting—and Giovanni Bellini’s deep awareness of the Byzantine legacy of Venetian artistic tradition may have also contributed to the selection of aspects of his/their work by painters in Cyprus (Humfrey 1995, pp. 71, 79; Fortini Brown 1997, pp. 30–31; Dunkerton 2004, pp. 198, 207; Wallace Maze 2021, pp. 36, 38). At this point, Crete’s involvement in

transmitting Venetian visual culture to Cyprus is a field of research that invites future scholarship. With a long-established Venetian presence, Crete became a major artistic centre in the eastern Mediterranean, especially after the fall of Constantinople. As a result, its cultural capital had a significant impact on other Christian centres, including those in Cyprus ([Lymberopoulou 2007](#), pp. 187–206).



Figure 33. *Enthroned Virgin and Child with Saints Athanasius and Cyril*, late fifteenth century, panel, 157 × 132 cm. Byzantine Museum of the Archbishop Makarios III Foundation (the Virgin Mary and Saint Athanasios are missing; formerly in the church of Saint George, Aradippou). Photo: Talbot-Rice 1937, pl. VIII.



Figure 34. *Pergola* (rood screen), panels by Zanino di Pietro, 1418–23, Basilica of Santa Maria Assunta, Torcello. Photo: Public domain (Wikimedia Commons).

On the one hand, any affinities between Cypriot and Cretan works may be due to the utilisation of common Byzantine and Italian sources. Conversely, a direct acquaintance with the oeuvre of Cretan artists who worked in Cyprus and Venice should not be rejected. It is likely that a portion of the production of Cypriot icons and frescoes was informed by Cretan painting, which, by the late fifteenth century, had already crystallised popular iconographic imagery, such as the Man of Sorrows, the *Pietà*, or the *Madre della Consolazione*, and had forged an international artistic reputation that went beyond the Italian peninsula ([Constantoudaki-Kitromilides 2009](#), pp. 173–77; [Drandaki 2009](#), pp. 16–18; [Olympios 2016](#), p. 430). Future studies that will steer the discussion in the right direction are keenly awaited.



Figure 35. *Saint John the Baptist* (epistyle icon, part of a Great *Deisis* series), late fifteenth century, 49.6 × 35.6 cm. Church of the Archangel Michael, Parekklesia, Limassol (formerly in the church of the Holy Cross, Parekklesia). Photo: Courtesy of Sophocles Sophocleous and the EIKONOLOGION.

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Notes

- ¹ Italy was not a nation-state like it is today but was split into different, independent political entities such as city-states, which frequently fought one another; for that matter, Venice was a republic. Traditionally, the art created across the Italian peninsula during the late Middle Ages and Renaissance has been divided by art critics into "schools", which correlate to the visual culture produced by each city/region and are based on some consistent aesthetic attributes they exhibit in each case. By that account, "schools" like the Florentine, Venetian, Sienese, Bolognese, Parmesan, and so forth have been formed in art history scholarship. For example, the painting created in Venice is defined by its emphasis on the warmth of colours, and light, the attention to surfaces and patterns, and the gratifying realism, as opposed to the prominence given to draughtsmanship and design as the preferred modes in Florence (Humfrey 1995, pp. 2–4; Fortini Brown 1997, p. 15). It must be borne in mind, however, that regardless of any stylistic and aesthetic differences, the pictorial tradition developed on the Italian peninsula had a powerful sense of coherence as artists travelled from court to court within Italy and exchanged (or were exposed to) common ideas, concepts, and stimuli. In this study, I focus mostly on the art generated in the city of Venice, although, on occasion, I also consider painters active on the Venetian mainland (Stato da tera).
- ² On 11 November 1589, Ioannis Kyprios was commissioned to paint the church's dome, a task he completed in less than a year, by 4 October 1590 (Mertzios 1939, pp. 231–32).
- ³ In Venetian Candia, paintings by foremost Venetian masters such as Giovanni Bellini, Antonio Vivarini, Palma il Vecchio and Titian were known to have been present. It would, therefore, not be inappropriate to suggest that pictures by artists of this calibre might have been preserved in Cyprus as well. Georgios Markou has illuminatingly uncovered the case of the Synglitiko family, who owned a set of six paintings displaying the *Triumphs of Petrarch* by Bonifazio de' Pitati and had them hung in their residence in San Basilio in Venice (Markou 2017, pp. 600, 607–8). However, as Anastasia Drandaki affirms, it was mainly through prints that painters could access a mass of compositions that otherwise would have remained unknown to them (Drandaki 2009, p. 17).
- ⁴ The *Minaion* is a liturgical book of the Orthodox Church that includes hymns and prayers for the feasts and commemorations of the saints according to the fixed calendar. Each month of the liturgical year (September–August) is represented by its own *Minaion* volume. *Lypira* (singular *lypiron*) refer to cut-out panels portraying the Virgin Mary and Saint John the Evangelist, which are positioned alongside the Crucified Christ. These panels are typically situated at the highest point of a post-Byzantine iconostasis.
- ⁵ The Greek name for the Man of Sorrows is *Akra Tapeinosis*, which means Utmost Humiliation (Isaiah 53:8).
- ⁶ A mural found in the church of Saint Demetrius in Peć (fourteenth century) depicts the imprisoned Saint Demetrius finding consolation in a minuscule icon of the Man of Sorrows, apparently belonging to him.
- ⁷ This custom is represented in some icons displaying the funeral of Saint Ephraim the Syrian. Such an example is a fifteenth-century Cretan icon exhibited in the Byzantine Museum of Athens.
- ⁸ Its dissemination has been associated with a relic of the Holy Blood preserved in Mantua.
- ⁹ The three-figured composition is flanked by Saints George and Mark on the left-hand side and Peter and Nicholas on the right-hand, alluding to the Byzantine Great *Deïsis* iconographic scheme. The tier below shows episodes from the life of Saint Mark.
- ¹⁰ On the right corner, a portrait of a suppliant appears, as does the inscription "Δ(ΕΗΣΙΣ) Τ(ΟΥ) Δ(ΟΥ)Λ(ΟΥ) [ΤΟΥ] Θ(ΕΟΥ)Υ/ΛΟΥΚΑ" (supplication of the servant of God Loukas) above the sarcophagus slab. The Holy Lance and the Sponge are also shown in the icon.
- ¹¹ The painting is now preserved inside the Holy Bema of the modern church of the Panagia Iamatiki.

- 12 The panel includes the Passion symbols and displays Christ standing on his sarcophagus against a gold and dark green background with no landscape. A supplicant is also painted, and there is the inscription: “Ἡ δέησις τοῦ δοῦλου τοῦ Θεοῦ Ἀλεσάντρη τοῦ Φασαρί” (Supplication of the servant of God Alessandri Phasari).
- 13 The Kykkos Museum and Kato Archimandrita icons are atypical of the iconography in Cyprus in that Christ has his hands crossed and laid in front of his genitalia and over his abdomen, respectively.
- 14 In most Cypriot churches, the Man of Sorrows is reserved for the conch of the *Prothesis* and is inextricably tied up with the Eucharist. In terms of iconography, the type remains loyal to the Byzantine pictorial tradition since Christ is typically painted in half body, with his arms folded (and less frequently crossed) onto his stomach or fallen below it. In the background, the Cross and symbols of the Passion are inserted (Triantaphyllopoulos 2001, pp. 626–27). Related images can be found in the churches of the Holy Cross in Agiasmati (1494), Panagia Theotokos in Galata (1514), Dormition of the Virgin at Kourdali (sixteenth century), Archangel Michael in Kholi (late fifteenth/sixteenth century), Saint Nicholas in Galataria (sixteenth century), Saint Basil in Kaminaria (sixteenth century), and the Transfiguration of the Saviour in Palaichori (sixteenth century), to name a few. An exception is the *Man of Sorrows* in the conch of the *Prothesis* in the church of the Holy Cross at Kannavia (sixteenth century), where Christ is held from behind by an angel and is waist-deep in a box-like sarcophagus, following the “Bellinian” fashion. A further irregular example is the fragmentary, full-length *Man of Sorrows* (sixteenth century), who is confined within a mandorla, as if in glory, and is propped up by angels, while the *Hetoimasia* with the Passion symbols and Adam and Eve round out the drama. The scheme takes up the eastern pediment of the church of Saint Nicholas in Tsakistra in a theme that operates in both an eschatological and Eucharistic dimension, and it undoubtedly deserves deeper investigation in the future.
- 15 See, for example, the *Man of Sorrows* (late fifteenth century) once in the *katholikon* of the Monastery of Zoodochos Pigi on the island of Patmos.
- 16 See, for instance, the *Man of Sorrows* in the Vienna Kunsthistorisches Museum (last quarter of the fifteenth century), where Christ is lamented by the Virgin and Saint John.
- 17 The panel in Santa Maria Maggiore was erroneously attributed to Zanino di Pietro and dated 1434. A restoration of the work, undertaken in the late twentieth century, established that the painting was made by Petrus de Calugiara of Barletta in 1523 (in a band below Christ’s feet, one can read: “HOC OPUS FIERI FECIT PETRUS DE CALUGIARA DE BARULO MCCCCCXXIII”). Apparently, Petrus’ work replicated Zanino’s/“Maestro di Santa Barbara’s” painting in Sant’Agostino, dating from around the mid-fifteenth century (Mavelli 1998, p. 363, no. 8; for the reading of this inscription, see: Catalogo generale dei Beni Culturali). Available online: <https://catalogo.beniculturali.it/detail/HistoricOrArtisticProperty/1600040071> (accessed on 8 July 2023).
- 18 Succinctly put, *Epitaphios*, from the Greek, “upon the tomb,” is a liturgical textile that displays the lifeless body of Christ, after it has been taken down from the Cross and made ready for burial.
- 19 The Arakapas and Pedoulas icons validate Hans Belting’s slant on the Man of Sorrows to compound the Deposition, Lamentation, and Burial in a single iconography (Belting 1980–1981, p. 6).
- 20 Sakellarios reports that the panel was held behind the altar in the monastery, whereas in 1918, Jeffery spotted it mounted on the iconostasis. Hackett must not have seen the panel first-hand, as he wrongly states that the inscription was placed on the lower part of the painting. On the other hand, Frigerio-Zeniou doubts the accuracy of Sakellarios’ reading of the inscription because so many words would not be able to fit within the limited space of the surviving text. However, Sakellarios’ transcription follows exactly the layout of the inscription on the panel, thus making his reading highly reliable.
- 21 Mariti writes, “in the porch is a sepulchral stone over which the Greeks keep a lamp continually burning, for they say that this is the tomb of that noble lady who built the church”. I believe that in his description, Mariti considered that in that sepulchre, a queen, not Maria Molino, was laid to rest.
- 22 Jeffery is of the opinion that the sceptre and the crown were, perhaps, frescoes, and they rendered coat-of-arms.
- 23 “I was shown an old picture, painted on wood, about two feet square, which represents *the Queen*, the foundress, according to the monks, of both the palace and the monastery. She is depicted at her prayers before an image of the Virgin Mary. The artist has made the Queen as beautiful as he could but has dressed her in modern Greek costume. At the foot of the picture is an inscription, half-effaced, in Greek, in which one may still read her supposed name Maria, daughter of Philip Molinos, etc”.
- 24 Andrea da Murano paints the saint in a polyptych with Saints Vincent Ferrer, Sebastian, Peter, the Virgin of Mercy, Saint Sigismund, and Dominican saints (Gallerie dell’Accademia, Venice). Carlo Crivelli’s Saint Roch (The Wallace Collection, London) was also part of a polyptych, possibly as a counterpart to a figure of Saint Sebastian now at the Poldi Pezzoli Museum.
- 25 I was unable to see either of the two icons or their photos. Stylianos Perdakis, who studied them, attributes one of the panels to Pavlos Ierographos.
- 26 Pavlos’ flair is visible through the dark underpaint in the somewhat rounded faces of his figures, as well as in the heavily brocaded apparel of the Virgin Mary and the decorative patterns in the marble throne. The Enthroned Virgin and Child from the churches of Archangel Michael in Lakatamia and Saint Barbara in Hagia Varvara and the portrait of a youngish John the Baptist in the Byzantine Museum of Nicosia (BM 421) draw an obvious analogy with the Enkomi icon.
- 27 “Costruendo pero il stil, habiti, figure et aeri greci seconda ricerca la vera arte greca”.

- 28 The appellation Akathistos Hymn Chapel is owed to the inclusion of the *Akathistos Hymn*, a cycle comprising twenty-four *oikoi* that unfolds in three zones on the south and north walls of the chapel.
- 29 Frigerio-Zeniou identifies the saint as Simon, by virtue of his facial traits that conjure up Simon's portraits in the church of the Panagia Podithou and the Akathistos Hymn Chapel.
- 30 The icon is now housed in the Byzantine Museum of Nicosia.
- 31 In 1936, Rupert Gunnis saw the panel stored near the north wall of the *katholikon*. Papageorgiou's study of 1992 asserts that the icon was mounted on the iconostasis, but there is no reasoning behind this proposal. The inscription in Greek is: "Δ[έ]σις ἡμῶν [τῶν δούλων] τοῦ Θεοῦ Τιμοθέου ἱερομ[ονά]χου καὶ καθηγουμένου τῆς σεβασμίας μονῆς τῆς Ἐγκλιστρίας καὶ τοῦ μακαρι[τ]οῦ Νεοφύτου μοναχοῦ." The English translation is based on Talbot Rice's (1937) reading but slightly altered, p. 272. The word μακαριτοῦ (or μακαρίτου/μακαρίου) indicates that Neophytos, the monk, was dead (for the meaning of the word μακαρίτης, μακάριος, and μακαριτός, see: Kriaras 1985, pp. 287–88).
- 32 The lunette can be discerned on the south section of the iconostasis' epistyle in a shot taken in 1989 (Sophocleous 2001, p. 468, pl. 3). It is thus conceivable that Papageorgiou saw the panel fitted in that spot of the church and assumed the icon's original home was somewhere on the chancel screen.
- 33 For more on the conversion of churches in Pelendri into the Catholic rite by members of the Cypriot family of the Podocataro, see (Andronikou 2022, pp. 279–80).
- 34 The first scholar to suggest a funerary function for panels with a pointed arch while examining the icon of the *Virgin Kamariotissa* is Annemarie Weyl Carr (Carr 2005b, pp. 163–64).
- 35 For the Saint Mamas inscription I use Frigerio-Zeniou's transcription: "ΕΚΟΙΜΗΘ(Η)—Η ΔΟΥΛ(Η) ΤΟΥ Θ(ΕΟ)Υ/ΑΝΤΟΝΑ ΠΡΕΣΒΥΤ/ΕΡ(Α)/Η ΑΝΑ(ΓΙΝΩΣ)Κ(ΟΝΤΕΣ) ΜΑΚ(Α)ΡΙΣΑ/ΤΕ ΑΥΤΗΝ ΕΝ ΜΗ(Ν)Η ΦΕ(ΒΡΟΥ)Α(ΡΙΩ)/ΚΘ ΑΦ/[. . .]." For the *Virgin Kamariotissa*'s English rendition of the inscriptions, I follow Annemarie Weyl Carr's lines, but with some modifications (for the transcription of the inscriptions in Greek, see: (Koumparidou 2001, pp. 529, 533–34). The text in Greek reads as [to the left of the Virgin]: "Μνήσθητι Κύριε τοῦ δούλου σου κυροῦ Εἰσταθίου καὶ τῆς θυγατρὸς αὐτοῦ Ἑλένης καὶ οἱ ἀναγινώσκοντες μακαρίσατε αὐτούς." And on the Virgin Mary's right side: "Δέσις τῆς δούλης τοῦ Θεοῦ Μπέλας θυγατρὸς μακαρίου κυροῦ Νικολάου ἐπισκόπου Λευκουσίας καὶ τῶν τέκνων τῆς καὶ εὐχεσθε αὐτοὺς διὰ τὴν Πανάχραντον." Anastasia Koumparidou postulates that a short inscription above the two young men on the right corner of the icon reveals that these were the painters of the panel—one obviously from Crete: "Ἰωάννου τοῦ Κρητὸς καὶ Γεωργίου" (of John the Cretan and George).
- 36 "θέλο να με θάψουσι επα ιστην εκκλησιαν μας, στην ἄρκλα μας, να μπορούσι τὰ πεδία μου απο το πραγμα μου να καμουσι ένα βόλτο αποπανοθιο τζη αρκλας να βάλουσι ένα κόνισμα να ζωγραφήσι ο υιός μου ὁ δῆακος τοὺς τρις ἄρχιερίς, Βασίλιον, Γριγόριον καὶ Χρισόστομο να το βάλη μεσα εις τὸ βόλτο να αυτη το κανδηλι πασα Σάββάτο αργὰ ὅλη νίκτα."
- 37 Note that both churches are located within a 500-m reach (Papacostas 2012, p. 97).
- 38 The majority of the houses, mansions, and churches that were razed to the ground lay near the Flatro and Caraffa bastions.
- 39 It would be quite difficult for the icons to have remained in situ inside the two cathedrals if we contemplated the fate of the Holy Wisdom in the days and years following the fall of Nicosia in September 1570. The choir and all altars were dismantled, sculptural decoration within easy reach was damaged, the wall paintings were plastered and whitewashed, the tombs were opened, and the funerary slabs were repurposed as flooring, among others (see Rizopoulou-Egoumenidou 2012, p. 274, with further bibliography). Therefore, the survival of religious icons under these circumstances and within a mosque would seem unlikely.
- 40 The dedicatory inscription reads: "Ἐκοιμήθη ἡ δούλη τοῦ Θεοῦ Μαρία παρθένος θυγάτηρ κυροῦ Μανουῆλ Ἀναγνώστη τοῦ Ξηροῦ ἐν ἔτη, ζωξδ' μηνὶ Αὐγούστῳ ἡμέρα α'" and "Δέσις τῆς δούλης τοῦ Θεοῦ Εὐφημίας καὶ Δέσις τοῦ δούλου τοῦ Θεοῦ Μ[ανουῆλ] Ἀναγνώστη τοῦ Ξηροῦ." (Carr 2005b, p. 168, note 5).
- 41 On the upper margin of folio 251v we read: "Τὴν αὐτὴν ἡμέραν ἐγένετο τέλειος παπ(ᾶς) ὁ κῦρ παπ(ᾶς) Κωνσταντῖνος ὁ Ξυρὸς ἡς τὴν Ὀδιγήτρια, ἡμέρα δ' ἦτον ἐνδομάδα τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ ἐπισκόπου τοῦ κυροῦ παπ(ᾶ) Ἰω(άννου) τοῦ ἀβικαρίου, ἐν χρόνῳ Χρ(ιστοῦ) ὧ ατπθ'."
- 42 In the fifteenth-century funerary icon of the *Virgin Hodigitria with devotees*, formerly in Chrysaliniotissa, the male member of the family must have also had the duty of the *anagnostis* in the church (McNulty 2018, p. 283).
- 43 The *Synaxarion* was in the possession of the Hodigitria cathedral at least from the late fourteenth century, but at some point after 1479 (this is the latest date penned in the marginalia), it had been stolen and was restored decades later by the monk Paul Doria in 1516 (Darrouzès 1953, p. 89, no. 6, p. 91, nos. 26–7).
- 44 The remaining part of the triptych is exhibited in the Byzantine Museum of Nicosia.

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