

# SIDE ALTARS AND “PRO ANIMA” CHAPELS IN THE MEDIEVAL MEDITERRANEAN: EVIDENCE FROM CYPRUS

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## Introduction: Chapels and Altars

Side altars were a distinctive feature of late medieval sacred buildings: even if for the most part they did not survive the alterations of subsequent epochs, such as the new setting of church interiors shaped by the Counter-Reformation and the extensive restoration campaigns of the twentieth century, several extant literary and documentary sources attest to their great numbers and their sometimes odd locations, such as close to piers, columns, and small portions of the church walls.<sup>1</sup>

Such altars played a key role in lay piety since they were most often associated with the performance of anniversaries and masses for the sake of one's soul, although this did not necessarily mean that they were used as individual and exclusive segments of sacred space: on the contrary, they often happened to be shared by several chaplains who lived off the rents granted to them by testamentary bequests for the commemoration of the deceased. Sometimes they were already built when testators gave orders to associate a private chantry to them and, consequently, provided them with congruous ornaments; in many other cases, they were built by individuals when still alive to be endowed later with cloths, chalices, books, crosses, ampullae for wine and water, altarpieces, and many other objects necessary for the liturgy.<sup>2</sup>

Late medieval documents often describe “altars” as synonymous with “chapels.” The term *capella*, far from being associated with a specific architectural type or structure, hinted at a functional unit provided with all that was needed or best employed for the performance of a Mass, i.e., *vasa sacra*, ornaments, paintings, recesses for storing ampullae and utensils, and a set of vestments sufficient for

<sup>1</sup> I have addressed the use and meaning of side altars and chapels and their connections to burials in the following publications: Michele Bacci, “*Pro remedio animae*.” *Immagini sacre e pratiche devozionali in Italia centrale (secoli XIII e XIV)* (Pisa: Gisem-ETS, 2000), chaps. 3 and 4, pp. 227-429; *Investimenti per l'aldilà. Arte e raccomandazione dell'anima nel Medioevo* (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 2003), pp. 134-47; “Aspetti della committenza testamentaria di opere d'arte nella Siena del Due e Trecento,” in *Morire nel Medioevo. Il caso di Siena. Atti del convegno di studi (14 - 15 novembre 2002)*, ed. by Silvia Colucci (Siena: Accademia Senese degli Intronati, 2004) [*Bollettino senese di storia patria* 90 (2003)], pp. 137-58; and *Lo spazio dell'anima. Vita di una chiesa medievale* (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 2005), pp. 85-92. On the historical and functional meaning of side altars, see Joseph Braun, *Der christliche Altar in seiner geschichtlichen Entwicklung* (Munich: Alte Meister Guenther Koch & Co., 1924), vol. 1, pp. 368-83, and Justin E.A. Kroesen and Regnerus Steensma, *The Interior of the Medieval Village Church. Het middeleeuwse dorpskerkinterieur* (Louvain: Peeters, 2004), pp. 51-57.

<sup>2</sup> On chantries and chantry chapels, see Ernest Fraser Jacob, “Founders and Foundations in the Later Middle Ages,” *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research* 35 (1962), pp. 29-46. Kathleen Wood-Legh, *Perpetual Chantries in Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965); Alan Kreider, *English Chantries. The Road to Dissolution* (Cambridge, Mass.: Cambridge University Press, 1979); Clive Burgess, “For the Increase of Divine Service: Chantries in Late Medieval Bristol,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 36 (1985), pp. 48-65; Nicholas Orme, “Church and Chapel in Medieval England,” *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, ser. VI, 6 (1996), pp. 75-102; Jacques Chiffolleau, *La comptabilité de l'audelà. Les hommes, la mort et la religion dans la région d'Avignon à la fin du Moyen Âge (vers 1320-vers 1480)* (Rome: École française de Rome, 1980), esp. pp. 171-79 and 332-39; Samuel K. Cohn, *The Cult of Remembrance and the Black Death. Six Renaissance Cities in Central Italy* (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1992), esp. pp. 205-27; Richard A. Goldthwaite, *Wealth and the Demand for Art in Italy 1300-1600* (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1993), pp. 121-29; Bacci, *Investimenti*, pp. 134-38.

a priest, a deacon, and two acolytes. Notwithstanding this secondary role, individuals often used them as a means to display their own piety and religious zeal and made efforts to replicate the solemnity of main altars by commissioning for them precious textiles, crosses, and sumptuous panels; the frescoed polyptychs seen within the side chapels of some churches in Siena and its surroundings may be interpreted as low-cost imitations of the auratic power attributed to the place where the eucharistic miracle took place.<sup>3</sup>

A privileged few managed to obtain the right to build an even more solemn space around the altar associated with the sake of their soul, which they did by breaking through a wall and constructing an autonomous room.<sup>4</sup> In general terms, the best way to pay respect to an altar used in the commemoration of one's soul was to include it within a roofed structure. This could entail either building a vault over it, as often happened within mendicant churches—the flat roofs of the friars' originally scant churches were often transformed into ribbed coverings—or including it within a stone, wooden, or even gessoed aedicule, canopy, or baldachin, often referred to in Italy as *tabernacolo*, *taulito*, *chappello*, or even *cielo*, a consequence of its being decorated with a star-dotted blue sky, echoing the kind of ornament most often encountered in the decoration of ceilings and canopies.<sup>5</sup> Some were temporary structures designed to emphasize elements of the sacred space on the occasion of special festivities: for example, for the feast of the Annunciation, a statue of the Virgin Mary located on a side altar in Pisa Cathedral was usually covered, according to fourteenth-century inventories, with a real embroidered baldachin supported by staffs.<sup>6</sup>

Even if altars were not expressly meant to be used as private spaces for the commemoration of either an individual or the members of a distinct familial group, the desire for a more direct, even physical involvement in the salvific power attributed to the prayers and liturgical offices endowed by testators encouraged many to request burial close to the chapels they had founded in such a specific way that it is not rare for sarcophagi and tombs to be integrated within the structure of the altar-

<sup>3</sup> On Sienese frescoed altarpieces, see Enrico Castelnuovo, "Arte delle città, arte delle corti tra XII e XIV secolo," in *Storia d'Italia V: Dal Medioevo al Quattrocento* (Torino: Einaudi, 1983), pp. 167-227, esp. p. 215 and figs. 125-26; Henk van Os, *Sienese Altarpieces 1215-1460. Form, Content, Function*, vol. 2 (Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 1990), p. 36; Andrea De Marchi, "La tavola d'altare," in *Storia delle arti in Toscana. Il Trecento*, ed. by Max Seidel (Florence: Edifir, 2004), pp. 15-44, esp. 41-43.

<sup>4</sup> Studies devoted to late medieval chapels include Renate Wagner-Rieger, "Zur Typologie italienischer Bettelordenskirchen," *Römische historische Mitteilungen* 2 (1957-58), pp. 266-98, esp. 290-92; George Henry Cook, *Mediaeval Chantries and Chantry Chapels* (London: Phoenix House, 1963); Annegret Höger, "Studien zur Entstehung der Familienkapellen und zu Familienkapellen und -altären des Trecento in Florentiner Kirchen" (Ph.D. thesis, Bonn: Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität, 1976); Marco Paoli, *Arte e committenza privata a Lucca nel Trecento e nel Quattrocento. Produzione artistica e cultura libraria* (Lucca: Pacini Fazzi, 1986), pp. 192-263; Joaquín Yarza Luaces, *La capilla funeraria hispana en torno a 1400*, in *La idea y el sentimiento de la muerte en la historia y el arte de la Edad Media* (Santiago de Compostela: Servicio de Publicaciones y Intercambio Científico, 1988), pp. 67-91; Colin Platt, *The Architecture of Medieval Britain. A Social History* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990), pp. 135-43 and 169-80; Howard Colvin, *Architecture and the Afterlife*

(New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1991), chaps. 9 and 10, pp. 152-89 and 190-216; Isidro Bango Torviso, "Espacios para enterramientos privilegiados en la arquitectura medieval española," *Anuario del Departamento de historia y teoría del arte* 4 (1992), pp. 92-132; Antje Grewolls, *Die Kapellen der norddeutschen Kirchen im Mittelalter. Architektur und Funktion* (Kiel: Ludwig, 1999); Christian Freigang, "Chapelles latérales privées. Origines, fonctions, financements: le cas de Notre-Dame de Paris," in *Art, cérémonial et liturgie au Moyen Âge. Actes du colloque de 3e cycle Romand de lettres Lausanne-Fribourg, 24-25 mars, 14-15 avril, 12-13 mai 2000*, ed. by Nicolas Bock, Peter Kurmann, Serena Romano, and Jean-Michel Spieser (Rome: Viella, 2002), pp. 525-44; Julian Gardner, "The Family Chapel: Artistic Patronage and Architectural Transformation in Italy circa 1275-1325," *ibid.*, pp. 546-64; and *Demeures d'éternité. Églises et chapelles funéraires aux XV<sup>e</sup> et XVI<sup>e</sup> siècles. Actes du colloque tenu à Tours du 11 au 14 juin 1996*, ed. by Jean Guillaume (Paris: Picard, 2005).

<sup>5</sup> On such structures, cf. Braun, *Der christliche Altar*, vol. 2, pp. 262-71; Verena Fuchß, *Das Altarensemble. Eine Analyse des Kompositcharakters früh- und hochmittelalterlicher Altarausstattung* (Weimar: VDG, 1999), pp. 140-54; De Marchi, "La tavola d'altare," pp. 43-44.

<sup>6</sup> Riccardo Barsotti, *Gli antichi inventari della cattedrale di Pisa* (Pisa: Istituto di storia dell'arte 1959), p. 61; Bacci, *Lo spazio dell'anima*, p. 137.

chapel itself, as was the case for some tombs of saints and members of the high clergy as well as of eminent laypeople.<sup>7</sup> In a way, the association of altars and tombs was instrumental to the performance of anniversaries, when the ritual characteristics of the exequies were replicated and the incised or carved image of the dead could be used as a substitute for the corpse—more specifically, the tomb was usually covered with the same black pall used in the funeral rites to cover the coffin.<sup>8</sup> It is a well-known fact that since the fourteenth century, the interiors of mendicant and other churches have been dotted with an extraordinarily large number of private burials, most of them slabs on the floor close to altars: from the perspective of laypeople, they were considered integral parts of the chapels, much like tabernacles and altarpieces.<sup>9</sup> Modern pavements have almost completely destroyed the dynamic system of interrelationships between liturgical spaces and burials that was established in the late Middle Ages, and which has been inherited in part by subsequent centuries. Sometimes, however, we are lucky enough to get an idea of them from maps of church interiors sketched by eighteenth-century scholars (who were mainly interested in genealogic studies) before the removal of the slabs.

One such sketch allows us, for example, to reconstruct the web of tomb locations within the Gothic church of San Pier Cigoli, in Lucca, before the making of its pavement in about 1730 (fig. 1). It is easy to understand that most of the tombs were located in the westernmost part of the nave—i.e.,

<sup>7</sup> Irene Hueck, “Il cardinale Napoleone Orsini e la cappella di San Nicola nella Basilica francescana ad Assisi,” in *Roma anno 1300. Atti della IV settimana di studi di storia dell’arte medievale dell’Università di Roma “La Sapienza”*: (19 - 24 maggio 1980), ed. by Angiola Maria Romanini (Rome: L’Erma di Bretschneider, 1983), pp. 187-98; Julian Gardner, *The Tomb and the Tiara* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 38-40 and *passim*; Francis Ames-Lewis, *Tuscan Marble Carving 1250-1350. Sculpture and Civic Pride* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1997), pp. 187-88; Joanna Cannon, “Popular Saints and Private Chantry. The Sienese Tomb Altar of Margherita of Cortona and Questions of Liturgical Use,” in *Kunst und Liturgie im Mittelalter. Akten des internationalen Kongresses der Bibliotheca Hertziana und des Nederlandse Instituut te Rome, Rom, 28. - 30. September 1997*, ed. by Nicolas Bock, Sible de Blaauw, Christoph L. Frommel, and Herbert L. Kessler (Munich: Hirmer, 2000), pp. 149-62; Guido Tigler, “Tipologie di monumenti funebri,” in *Storia delle arti in Toscana. Il Trecento*, pp. 45-74, esp. 68-70.

<sup>8</sup> Renate Kroos, “Grabbräuche – Grabbilder,” in *Memoria. Der geschichtliche Zeugniswert des liturgischen Gedenkens im Mittelalter*, ed. by Karl Schmid and Joachim Wollasch (Munich: W. Fink, 1984), pp. 285-353, esp. 314. Although there is an abundant bibliography on tombs and the commemorative meaning of their iconographic programs, much less attention has been paid to their association with altars and chapels. General books on the topic include Kurt Bauch, *Das mittelalterliche Grabbild. Figürliche Grabmäler des 11. bis 15. Jahrhunderts in Europa* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1976); Andrew Martindale, “Patrons and Minders: The Intrusion of the Secular into Sacred Spaces in the Late Middle Ages,” in *The Church and the Arts. Papers Read at the 1990 Summer Meeting and the 1991 Winter Meeting of the Ecclesiastical History Society*, ed. by Diana Wood (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), pp. 143-78; Ingo Herklotz, “Sepulcra” e

“monumenta” del Medioevo. *Studi sull’arte sepolcrale in Italia* (Naples: Liguori, 2001); Caroline Horch, *Der Memorialgedanke und das Spektrum seiner Funktionen in der bildenden Kunst des Mittelalters* (Königstein im Taunus: Langewiesche, 2001); *Grabmäler. Tendenzen der Forschung an Beispielen aus Mittelalter und früher Neuzeit*, ed. by Wilhelm Maier, Wolfgang Schmid, and Michael V. Schwarz (Berlin: Mann, 2000); Anne McGee Morganstern, *Gothic Tombs of Kinship in France, the Low Countries, and England* (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000); Nigel Saul, *Death, Art, and Memory in Medieval England: The Cobham Family and Their Monuments, 1300-1500* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2001); and *Memory and the Medieval Tomb*, ed. by Elizabeth Valdez del Álamo with Carol Stamatis Pendergast (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), including the interesting paper by Anne McGee Morganstern, “The Tomb as Prompter for the Chantry: Four Examples from Late Medieval England,” pp. 81-97. See also the remarks by Joan A. Holladay, “Tombs and Memory: Some Recent Books,” *Speculum* 78 (2003), pp. 440-50.

<sup>9</sup> This attitude is best manifested by some extant inscriptions, such as that incised on the now-missing tomb slab of Francesco Alberti (d. 1334), which was once located close to the altar of Saint Albert in the nave of San Francesco in Pistoia: “ISTAM CAPPELLAM CUM ALTARE TABULA ET SEP(ULTU)RA CONSTRUI FECIT LAPUS ALBERTI AD HONOREM DEI ET BEATI ALBERTI IN REMEDIO A(N)I(M)E SUAE ET SUORUM IACET FRANCISCUS FILIUS EIUS QUI OBIT A. D. MCCCXXXIII.” Cf. Alessandro Andreini, Cristina Cerrato, and Giuliano Feola, “I cicli costruttivi della chiesa e del convento di S. Francesco dal XIII al XV secolo: analisi storico-architettonica,” in *S. Francesco. La chiesa e il convento in Pistoia*, ed. by Lucia Gai (Pisa: Pacini, 1993), pp. 47-80, esp. 59-60 and 282, note 84.



1. Sketch showing the locations of tombs and altars within the church of San Pier Cigoli, Lucca, in the 18th century (sketch: author)

not infrequently, such a function was illustrated by a frescoed decoration displaying the objects that were supposed to be kept therein.<sup>14</sup>

within the so-called *ecclesia laicorum*—being separated from the choir by means of a rood screen.<sup>10</sup> Since the map describes the structure of the church as it was during the Counter-Reformation, we see that the only side altars were those built on the south and north aisles; but from extant documentary evidence we learn that other altars were present in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. One of them was built below the pulpit known as the *pergamo* of Saint Michael, leaning against the second southern pier; the tomb slab of its founder, a merchant named Bartolomeo Cimacchi (fig. 1, no. 4), was located in front of it, and his son Andrea made a testamentary bequest to complete his father's work by decorating the altar with a painted panel displaying the archangel and by including it within a decorous and honorable chapel.<sup>11</sup>

The covering of an altar was enough to transform it into an autonomous liturgical space, symbolically epitomizing the aura of sacredness associated with the presbytery. Many were rather diminutive because of lack of space, such as the "chapel and altar made of brick and a gessoed reed grating" made in a "contracted" way in 1358 on the initiative of a lay testator for the church of San Domenico in Siena,<sup>12</sup> or the one leaning against a corner of the pilaster located close to the rood screen, which was granted to a Pisan testatrix in the church of Santa Caterina, Pisa, in 1348.<sup>13</sup> Although such structures have almost completely disappeared, one can easily get an idea of them by looking at more monumental examples, such as the Dragomanni Chapel in San Domenico, Arezzo, which still includes an altar, a stone *cielo*, and a small recess that was meant as a small aumbry for storing ampullae:

<sup>10</sup> Michele Bacci, "Le antiche lapidi della chiesa del Carmine," *Laldilà* 3 (1997), no. 1, pp. 19–53.

<sup>11</sup> Archivio di Stato, Lucca, *Notari*, part I, no. 226, fol. 63rbis (March 30, 1387). Bacci, "Pro remedio animae," p. 319, note 259.

<sup>12</sup> *Die Kirchen von Siena*, ed. by Peter Anselm Riedl and Max Seidel, vol. 2 (Munich: Bruckmann, 1995), pp. 893–94, doc. no. 111.

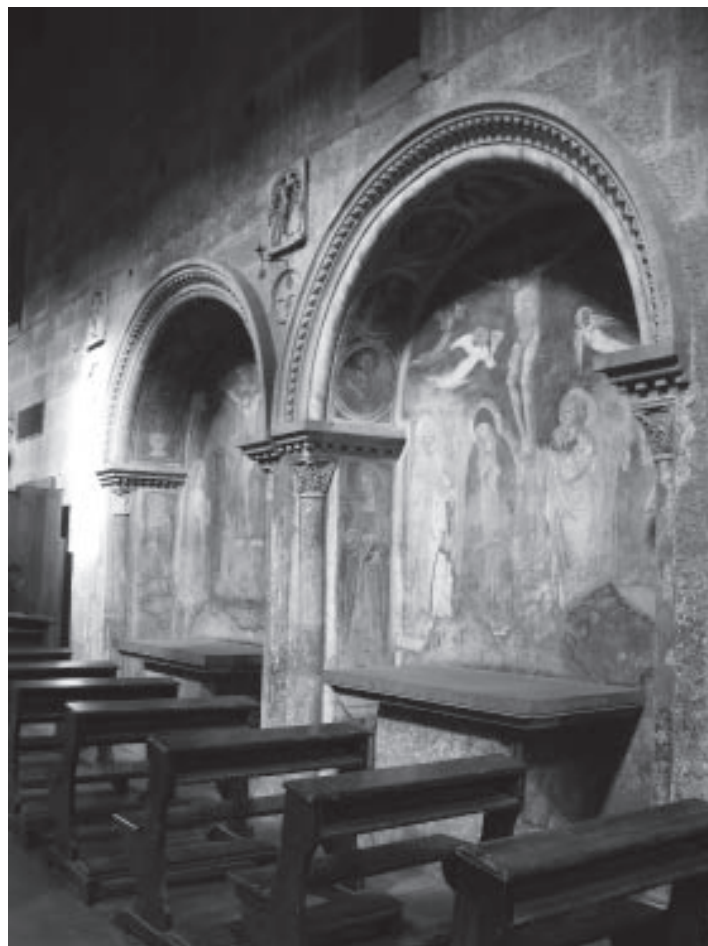
<sup>13</sup> Archivio Arcivescovile, Pisa, *Cancellaria* 1.1, *Atti esecutoriali* 1350–1417, fols. 266v–267v; Bacci, *Investimenti*, p. 137.

<sup>14</sup> Bacci, *Investimenti*, p. 138; Bacci, *Lo spazio dell'anima*, p. 89; Aldo Galli, "Appunti per la scultura gotica ad Arezzo," in *Arte in terra d'Arezzo. Il Trecento*, ed. by Aldo Galli and Paola Refice (Florence: Edifir, 2005), pp. 113–37, esp. 128–30. Joseph Braun mentioned this chapel as an early example of "*Halbciborium*" (*Der christliche Altar*, pp. 242–48), whereas he spoke of "*Nischenciborium*" and "*Nischenaltar*" when referring to niche-chapels (vol. 2, pp. 248–51).



In the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, another kind of *capella* started to be integrated within the nave walls: the niche-chapel. The popularity of such structures is evidenced by the fact that, within many churches, they happened to be included within specially built sequences of wall recesses meant to house side altars and the tomb slabs of their donors. In many respects, their shape echoed that of the *arcosolia* traditionally used in the cemeteries and funerary spaces within the church precincts, and one can suppose that they deliberately imitated such models as a consequence of their use as commemorative places directly connected with individual or family burials. Extant examples show that they could be embellished by marble revetments and frescoed decorations, as is the case with the elegant late thirteenth- and fourteenth-century niche-chapels preserved in the church of Santa Maria Nuova in Viterbo,<sup>15</sup> where soteriological themes and portraits of supplicants give expression to the individuals’ quest for salvation (fig. 2). From several sources, including Sassetta’s 1423 painting representing the Miracle of the Sacrament, in Durham,<sup>16</sup> we learn that they could also house composite polyptychs and lunette-shaped panels, not unlike those occasionally used for tombs, which were recently discussed by Victor Schmidt.<sup>17</sup> To the best of my knowledge, the only case of a chapel still including a painted image of this kind is the diminutive church of the Porziuncola at Santa Maria degli Angeli, Assisi, which was decorated in 1393 with the enormous arched *pala* signed by Ilario da Viterbo and commissioned by Brother Francesco da San Gemini, who made use of alms given by laypeople (and, especially, of a merchant and a knight represented as supplicants in the lower edge of the panel; see fig. 21).<sup>18</sup>

Not infrequently, the iconographic program was directly inspired by testators’ desire for salvation and included the saints typically invoked by them and portraits of the donors as supplicants as well as other hallmarks hinting at their corporate or individual identity (such as coats-of-arms and inscriptions revealing the association of the space with the commemoration of the dead). Noteworthy is the case of a doctor from Volterra, who gave orders, in his testament of 1374, to be buried either in the cathedral or in the churches of the Friars Minor or the Augustinians, provided that his tomb was



2. Niche-chapel, Santa Maria Nuova, Viterbo, 14th century (photo: author)

<sup>15</sup> *Il centro storico di Viterbo. Chiese, conventi, palazzi, musei e fontane*, ed. by Maria Giuseppina Gimma (Viterbo: Betagamma, 2001), pp. 95-107; Bacci, *Lo spazio dell'anima*, p. 90 and col. pl. 9.

<sup>16</sup> *Painting in Renaissance Siena 1420-1500*, ed. by Keith Christiansen, Laurence B. Canter, and Carl Brandon Strehlke (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1988), pp. 72-74, no. 1c (catalogue entry by Keith Christiansen).

<sup>17</sup> Victor M. Schmidt, “The Lunette-Shaped Panel and Some Characteristics of Panel Painting,” in *Italian Panel Painting of the Duecento and Trecento*, ed. by Victor M. Schmidt (Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 2002), pp. 395-425. Cf. also van Os, *Sienese Altarpieces*, vol. 2, pp. 175-92.

<sup>18</sup> Mario Sensi, *Il perdono di Assisi* (Santa Maria degli Angeli: Edizioni Porziuncola, 2002), pp. 99-119.

located close to an altar-chapel decorated with a triptych displaying the Virgin and Child, Saint Francis, and Saint Nicholas of Tolentino.<sup>19</sup> Most frequently, donors were represented close to the holy personages and shown wearing recognizable dress hinting at their social or professional status—or replicating that used for burial and eventually displayed on the tomb slab—and often interacting with their patron saints.

### Cyprus

In the fourteenth century, such structures, being instrumental to the expression of individual piety and to the desires of laypeople to appropriate the holy, were introduced in the easternmost Frankish-ruled country in the Levant, the Lusignan Kingdom of Cyprus. The island still preserves many architectural and artistic documents that deserve special attention, since they have preserved many elements that have disappeared elsewhere and, what is most worthy of further research, they seem to have served as models for similar chapels employed in the decoration of buildings not intended for the Latin rite. The present paper is a preliminary description of such uninvestigated material, which will be the subject of more detailed research in the future.

As in western Europe and the Holy Land,<sup>20</sup> Cypriot parish churches were provided with annexed cemeteries that housed burials of their parishioners; nonetheless, individuals had soon started asking for burial within the interiors of mendicant churches. As early as 1254, the archbishop of Nicosia, Hugh of Fagiano, accused the friars of inducing the dying to ask for inhumation within their churches and to make bequests for the making of tombs and architectural works in order to defraud the secular clergy of their major incomes.<sup>21</sup> The kings themselves had chosen the church of Saint Dominic's, located next to the royal palace, as their dynastic pantheon, and we know that this building, destroyed by the Venetians to make space for Giulio Savorgnan's new city walls in 1567, actually contained many altar-chapels. One of them was described by the historian Stefano Lusignano in these terms:

“L'an de grace mil cinq cens soixante et sept, quand on mit par terre l'Eglise saint Dominique de Nicossie, on trouva sous l'autel de sainte Eulalie plusieurs reliques de saints: entre autres sept chefs, ausquels on voyoit encore le playes. Il y avoit pareillement des os, et une robbe de femme, qui

<sup>19</sup> Mario Battistini, *Ricerche storiche volterrane*, ed. by A. Marrucci (Volterra: Accademia dei Sepolti, 1998), p. 778. On the iconographic and compositional devices of the images connected to an individual's quest for the soul's sake, cf. Bacci, “Pro remedio,” chapter 5, and idem, *Investimenti*, chapter 5. In general on the quest for salvation as a source of inspiration for the art of the late Middle Ages, see Alarich Rooth, *Stifterbilder in Flandern und Brabant. Stadtbürgerliche Selbstdarstellung in der sakralen Malerei des 15. Jahrhunderts* (Essen: Die Blaue Eule, 1988); Andrew Martindale, *Heroes, Ancestors, Relatives and the Birth of the Portrait* (Maarssen-The Hague: Gary Schwartz/SDU, 1988); *Materielle Kultur und religiöse Stiftung im Spätmittelalter. Internationales Round-Table-Gespräch Krems an der Donau, 26. September 1998*, ed. by Gerhard Jaritz (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1990); Corine Schleif, *Donatio et Memoria. Stifter, Stiftungen und Motivationen an Beispielen aus der Lorenzkirche in Nürnberg* (Munich: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 1990); Cohn, *The Cult of Remembrance*; Corine Schleif, “Hands that Appoint, Anoint and Ally: Late-Medieval Donor Strategies for Appropriating

Approbation through Painting,” *Art History* 16 (1993), pp. 1-32; Wolfgang Schmid, *Stifter und Auftraggeber im spätmittelalterlichen Köln* (Cologne: Kölnisches Stadtmuseum, 1994); *The Place of the Dead: Death and Remembrance in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Bruce Gordon and Peter Marshall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Victor M. Schmidt, *Painted Piety: Panel Paintings for Personal Devotion in Tuscany, 1250-1400* (Florence: Centro Di, 2005); *Care for the Here and the Hereafter: Memoria, Art and Ritual in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Truus van Bueren in collaboration with Andrea van Leerdam (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005).

<sup>20</sup> On Crusader cemeteries in Palestine, see Adrian J. Boas, *Crusader Archaeology. The Material Culture of the Latin East* (New York: Routledge, 1999), pp. 227-28.

<sup>21</sup> As reported by Pope Innocent IV's brief to the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, dated May 10, 1254, edited in *The Cartulary of the Cathedral of Holy Wisdom of Nicosia*, ed. by Nicholas Coureas and Christopher Schabel (Nicosia: Kentro epistimonikon erevnon, 1997), pp. 128-30, doc. no. 38; cf. also the introductory remarks, *ibid.*, pp. 26-27.

estoit toute de soye, deux fleches, et une espee sanglante, comme aussi estoit ceste robbe: puis des rameaux de palme, et quelques carmes escrit en un petit tableau sur du parchemin, en loüange de sainte Eulalie, Ursule, et Marie Magdalene, qui estoient les saintes ausquelles cest autel estoit dédié. De ce qui se pouvait voir, nous iugeasmes que ces reliques estoient celles des saintes vierges, compagnes de sainte Ursule, lesquelles avoient esté mises en ce lieu par la Royne Alienor d'Aragon, femme du roy Pierre de Lusignan, du temps que les Genevois couroient et pillioient l'isle de Cypre. Ce qui se pouvoit croire plus facilement, pource que au hault de l'autel ces trois saintes estoient peintes, et ladicte Royne à genoux devant icelles” (In the year of grace 1567, when the church of Saint Dominic at Nicosia was demolished, many relics of saints were found under the altar of Saint Eulalia. Among others were seven heads on which the wounds could still be seen. There were also some bones, a woman's garment made of silk, two arrows and a sword stained with blood, as was the garment also; then there were some palm branches, and some anthems inscribed in a small frame on parchment in praise of Saint Eulalia, Saint Ursula and Saint Mary Magdalen, who were the saints to whom that altar was dedicated. From what we could see we concluded that the relics were of certain holy virgins, companions of Saint Ursula, and that they had been placed there by Queen Eleanor of Aragón, wife of King Peter of Lusignan, at the time when the Genoese were ravaging and plundering the island of Cyprus [i.e., 1373-74]. Which is easier to believe, for on top of the altar were painted these three saints and the aforementioned Queen, kneeling before them).<sup>22</sup>

The use of painted panels as ornaments for altar tables is documented by ancient sources. One such panel was commissioned by Archbishop Giovanni Conti (d. 1332) for the side chapel dedicated to Saint Thomas Aquinas in the Cathedral of Saint Sophia in Nicosia, and since it is known that it included scenes from his life, one can easily infer that it was a kind of “*vita* retable,”<sup>23</sup> probably not unlike that of Saint Nicholas offered by a Latin knight of the Ravendel family for the Greek-rite church of Saint Nicholas of the Roof in Kakopetria.<sup>24</sup> Another kind of altar decoration was represented by statues, since at least one was clearly set within a Gothic niche located on the east wall of the early fourteenth-century church of Saint George of the Latins in Famagusta (fig. 3).<sup>25</sup> Such phenomena are not surprising given that there is ground for thinking that the decoration of the tables of altars with

<sup>22</sup> Estienne de Lusignan, *Description de toute l'isle de Cypre* (Paris, 1580), pp. 63v-64r [anastatic edition with an introduction by G. Grivaud (Nicosia: Cultural Foundation of the Bank of Cyprus, 2004), pp. 147-48].

<sup>23</sup> The involvement of Giovanni Conti in the embellishment of Saint Sophia is mainly witnessed by the sixteenth-century chronicle of Francesco Amadi, critical edition by René de Mas Latrie, *Chroniques d'Amadi et de Strambaldi* (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1891), vol. 1, p. 405-6; the altarpiece is described by the fifteenth-century pilgrim Felix Fabri, *Evagatorium in Terrae Sanctae Arabiae et Egypti peregrinationem*, ed. by Konrad Dietrich Haßler (Stuttgart: Litterarischer Verein, 1843-49), vol. 3, p. 230.

<sup>24</sup> On this icon, see, most recently, *San Nicola. Splendori d'arte d'Oriente e d'Occidente*, ed. by Michele Bacci (Milan: Skira, 2006), pp. 287-89, no. V.4, with earlier bibliography (catalogue entry by Ioannis A. Iliadis).

<sup>25</sup> On this church, see Camille Enlart, *Gothic Art and the Renaissance in Cyprus*, English trans. by David Hunt (London: Trigraph, 1987) [orig. ed. *L'art gothique et la Renaissance en Chypre* (Paris: É. Leroux, 1899)], pp. 258-62; George E. Jeffery, *A Description of the Historic Monuments*

*of Cyprus* (Nicosia: W. J. Archer, 1918), pp. 128-31; Nicola Coldstream, “The Church of Saint George the Latin,” *Report of the Department of Antiquities Cyprus* (1975), pp. 147-51; Monique Rivoire-Richard, “Η γοτθική τέχνη στην Κύπρο,” in *Ιστορία της Κύπρου*, ed. by Theodoros Papadopoulos, (Nicosia: Archbishop Makarios III Foundation, 1996), vol. 5, pp. 1415-54, esp. 1423-24; Nikolaos Gioles, *Η χριστιανική τέχνη στην Κύπρο* (Nicosia: Mouseion Ieras Monis Kykkou, 2003), p. 150; Alpay Özdural, “The Church of St. George of the Latins in Famagusta: A Case Study in Medieval Metrology and Design Techniques,” in *Ad quadratum: The Practical Application of Geometry in Medieval Architecture*, ed. by Nancy Y. Wu (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), pp. 217-42; Anna G. Marangou, *Αμμόχωστος. Η ιστορία της πόλης* (Nicosia: Imprinta, 2005), pp. 122-25; Philippe Plagnieux and Thierry Soulard, “L'Église Saint-Georges des Latins (Saint-George des Génois?),” in *L'art gothique en Chypre*, ed. by Jean-Bernard de Vaivre and Philippe Plagnieux (Paris: Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, 2007), pp. 243-47. An analogous niche is preserved in the ruined church located close to the Mustafa Pasha Camii: cf. Enlart, *Gothic Art*, pp. 296-97.





3. Gothic niche originally housing a 14th-century statue, Saint George of the Latins, Famagusta (photo: author)

images already existed in the Latin-ruled Holy Land: Jaroslav Folda has recently pointed out a passage in the late thirteenth-century chronicle of the Templars of Tyre (usually known as the *Gestes des Chyprois*) that mentions “une table enpainte de sains par devant” (a panel painting with pictures of saints on the front of it), which can be interpreted as hinting at a kind of dossal.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, the representation of the author’s portrait in the illuminated cycle of William of Tyre’s chronicle in the Vatican Library, supposedly made in Antioch in the 1260s and repainted in the late fourteenth century, shows him sitting in meditation in front of an altar with a painted panel of the Virgin and Child on its rear end.<sup>27</sup> The use of cult statues is also attested, especially from Islamic sources.<sup>28</sup>

Such Western types of sacred images were imported by Latins into lands where the Byzantine model of the bidimensional icon was extremely well rooted. Actually, altarpieces were morphologically connected to Byzantine models, and their shape could coincide with that of Greek painted panels; their function was clearly different, however, since no icon was meant to be located on the altar, although on some special occasions it could be kept behind it. On Cyprus and in the Holy Land, the furnishings of the Lord’s table also included the standard liturgical tools—i.e., altar and corporal cloths, silver chalices and the towels used to clean them, glass ampullae for the wine and water, priests’ vestments,

and wooden pyxes, which were supposed to be kept closed so that they were not gnawed by woodworms. As a consequence of the need to store such objects in a safe place, all main altars necessarily included *piscinae* and eucharistic tabernacles (*armaria seu sacraria*), open in the nearby wall, as stated by a synod held in Limassol in 1298.<sup>29</sup> Although the latter have not survived, in a subterranean church

<sup>26</sup> Jaroslav Folda, *Crusader Art in the Holy Land, from the Third Crusade to the Fall of Acre, 1187-1291* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 435-36.

<sup>27</sup> Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Rome, Ms. Pal. lat. 1963, fol. 1r. Jaroslav Folda, “A Crusader Manuscript from Antioch,” *Atti della Pontificia Accademia romana di archeologia. Rendiconti*, ser. III, 42 (1969-70), pp. 283-98; Folda, *Crusader Art*, p. 348. For a color illustration, see *Arte e storia nel Medioevo. III. Del vedere: pubblici, forme e funzioni*, ed. by Enrico Castelnuovo and Giuseppe Sergi (Turin: Einaudi, 2004), col. pl. 10. Folda’s dating of the repainted image to the late fourteenth century seems to me too late, since I do not believe that its stylistic features may be interpreted as hallmarks of the Gothic International

period. I do not see any impediment to considering it the work of a late thirteenth-century painter, though different from the author of the rest of the cycle.

<sup>28</sup> Carole Hillenbrand, *The Crusades. Islamic Perspectives* (New York: Routledge, 1999), pp. 285-91 and 308. A three-dimensional twelfth-century wooden crucifix, possibly made for a church in Lebanon and purchased in Akko by Z. Goldmann, was recently published by Boas, *Crusader Archaeology*, pp. 198-99, pl. 75.

<sup>29</sup> *Council of Limassol in the year 1298*, VI. g. 3, ed. Christopher Schabel, *The Synodicum Nicosiense and Other Documents of the Latin Church of Cyprus, 1196-1373* (Nicosia: Kentro epistimonikon erevnon, 2001), pp. 196-98.





4. Underground chapel to the north of Martinengo Bastion, Famagusta, view of east wall with apsidal niche and recess meant to house the eucharistic tabernacle, 14th century (photo: author)

outside the northern walls of Famagusta (actually a Hellenistic tomb turned into a Christian cult place in the Lusignan period),<sup>30</sup> the elongated shape still visible to the left of the shallow apsidal niche (fig. 4) was probably meant to house a cupboard with a towerlike crown, not unlike those known mainly from German and northern European fourteenth-century examples.<sup>31</sup>

When the Ottomans conquered Cyprus in 1570–71, some of the Latin churches were destroyed or given to the Greeks, whereas others—the most illustrious and sumptuous—were converted into mosques.<sup>32</sup> Even if this proved less destructive than refurbishings inspired by the new criteria of church furnishing promoted by the Counter-Reformation, altars usually did not survive and were more or less systematically destroyed, as witnessed by contemporary sources.<sup>33</sup> This prevents us from immediately understanding the original function of the wall niches so often encountered within the ruined

<sup>30</sup> Theophilus Mogabgab, “Un Unidentified Church in Famagusta,” *Report of the Department of Antiquities Cyprus* (1936), p. 96; idem, “Excavations and Researches in Famagusta, 1937–1939,” *Report of the Department of Antiquities Cyprus* (1937–39), pp. 181–90, esp. 186; Jean-Bernard de Vaivre, “Le décor héraldique,” in *L’art gothique en Chypre*, pp. 425–72, esp. 444–45.

<sup>31</sup> For possible comparanda, see Kroesen and Steensma, *The Interior of the Medieval Village Church*, pp. 105–38.

<sup>32</sup> Paolo Cuneo, “Chiese latine trasformate in moschee. Il

caso di Cipro,” in *Saggi in onore di Renato Bonelli*, ed. by Corrado Bozzoni, Giovanni Carbonara, and Gabriella Villetti (Rome: Multigrafica Ed., 1992), pp. 285–94.

<sup>33</sup> As witnessed by Friar Angelo Calepio, *Vera et fidelissima narratione del successo, et defensione del Regno de Cipro*, edited as an appendix to Stefano Lusignano, *Chorografia et breve historia universale dell’isola de Cipro* (Bologna: Alessandro Benaccio, 1573) [anastatic edition with a foreword by Gilles Grivaud (Nicosia: Cultural Foundation of the Bank of Cyprus, 2004), pp. 211–51, esp. 239].



5. Altars on inner facade of Sinan Paşa Camii (Saints Peter and Paul), Famagusta (photo: author)



6. Niche-chapels on northern wall of Sinan Paşa Camii (Saints Peter and Paul), Famagusta (photo: author)

churches of Famagusta. Starting with Camille Enlart, almost all scholars have automatically interpreted them as funerary *enfeux* without considering the possibility that they were meant to house side altars: i.e., that they served as chapels for the performance of votive masses.<sup>34</sup> Such an assumption proves only natural if we take into account that both structures were imbued with soteriological meanings and were often associated and combined with each other.

We are now fortunate enough, however, to recognize that in the church presently known after its Turkish name, Sinan Paşa Camii, the conquerors removed just the high altar and simply concealed those located in the northern and southern aisles as well as those on the inner facade; they were rediscovered by the local representative of the Department of Antiquities, Theophilus Mogabgab, in the 1930s.<sup>35</sup> The alleged presence of Syrian inscriptions as well as a few indications provided by medieval sources encouraged some scholars to reject Enlart's identification of the building as "Saints Peter and Paul" and to hypothesize its connection to Arab Christians, possibly the powerful Nestorians often mentioned in old chronicles, but its inner arrangement, with its many side altars, as well as its location close to the royal palace, make it more plausible that it was a Latin church passed on to the Syrians in a later period.

The two structures leaning against the wall of the counterfacade (fig. 5) may have originally been parts of side altars covered with now-disappeared *cieli*, whereas one niche-chapel is clearly discernible in the southern aisle and another three can be seen in the northern one (fig. 6). Each includes its original, rectangular

<sup>34</sup> See Enlart, *Gothic Art*, pp. 366-68; Brunehilde Imhaus, "La mort dans la société franque de Chypre," *Επετηρίδα κέντρου επιστημονικών ερευνών* 24 (1998), pp. 1-75, esp. 31-32. The only notable exception to this cliché is that of Philippe Plagnieux and Thierry Soulard in *L'art gothique en Chypre*, p. 281, who remark that wall niches could sometimes be too slender to house funerary monuments, whereas they could include altars.

<sup>35</sup> Mogabgab, "Excavations," p. 188. On the church, traditionally identified as that of "Saints Peter and Paul" and thought to be associated with either Dominican friars or Arab Christians (possibly Nestorians), see Enlart, *Gothic Art*, pp. 246-53; Jeffery, *A Description*, p. 152; Thomas Sherrer Ross

Boase, "The Arts in Cyprus. A. Ecclesiastical Art," in *A History of the Crusades*, ed. by Kenneth M. Setton (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1969-89), vol. 4 (*The Art and Architecture of the Crusader States*, ed. by Harry W. Hazard, 1977), pp. 165-95, esp. 177-78; Michel Balard, "Famagouste au début du XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle," in *Fortifications, portes de villes, places publiques dans le monde méditerranée*, ed. by Jacques Heers (Paris: Presses de l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne 1985), pp. 279-99, esp. 283-84; Peter Edbury, "Famagusta in 1300," in *Η Κύπρος και οι σταυροφορίες/Cyprus and the Crusades. Papers Given at the International Conference "Cyprus and the Crusades," Nicosia, 6-9 September 1994*, ed. by Nicholas Coureas and John Riley-Smith (Nicosia: Kentro



7. Niche-chapel on northern wall of Sinan Paşa Camii (Saints Peter and Paul), Famagusta (photo: author)



8. Iron ring in one of the niche-chapels in Sinan Paşa Camii (Saints Peter and Paul), Famagusta (photo: author)

altar, but only one—the westernmost in the northern aisle—is provided with a hole originally meant to house relics. This structure is distinct from the other three because it is covered by a basket arch encompassing a platband, instead of a pointed arch (fig. 7). Two of the chapels preserve, at the center of the intrados, the hook originally used either to support a lamp (fig. 8) or to fasten a wooden canopy or a large painted panel to the wall. Extant documents attest that such structures could be rather complex. We can

get an idea of them from the 1382 will of a merchant from Lucca who, oddly enough, made bequests almost exclusively for restorations to be done in the funerary chapel he possessed in the cemetery church of Santa Caterina, close to the basilica of San Frediano. It included a statue of the titular saint, Nicholas, which was fastened to the wall by means of an iron hook and was usually covered with a blue veil in order to protect it from winds; such a veil was fastened to the wooden *cielo*, whose intrados was decorated with a blue sky dotted with golden stars. It also included figures of saints, both sculpted and painted, as well as protruding elements and colonnettes.<sup>36</sup> Another interesting case is that of the “tabernacle” of the altar of Saint Daniel in the nave of Siena Cathedral (mentioned in 1379-80), which consisted of a painted cupboard provided with doors and including an image of the titular saint.<sup>37</sup>

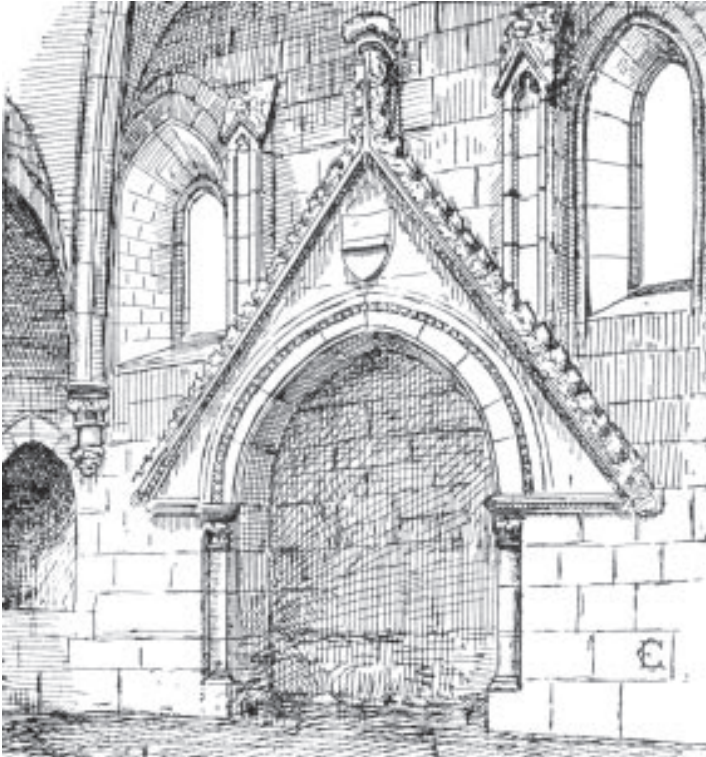
epistimonikon erevnon, 1995), pp. 337-53, esp. 343; Rivoire-Richard, “Η γοτθική τέχνη,” p. 1423; Gioles, *Η χριστιανική τέχνη*, p. 150; Marangou, *Αμμόχωστος*, pp. 108-11; M. Walsh, “Saint Peter and Paul Church (Sinan Pasha Mosque), Famagusta: A Forgotten Gothic Moment in Northern Cyprus,” *Inferno School of Art History, University of St. Andrews, Postgraduate Journal* 9 (2004), pp. 41-51; Catherine Otten-Froux, “Notes sur quelques monuments de Famagouste à la fin du Moyen Âge,” in *Mosaic. Festschrift for A.H.S. Megaw* (London: British School at Athens, 2001), pp. 145-54, esp. 147-48; Annemarie Weyl Carr, “Art,” in *Cyprus. Society and Culture 1191-1374*, ed. by Angel Nikolaou Konnari and Chris Schabel (Leiden: Brill, 2005), pp. 285-328, esp. 316;

Philippe Plagnieux and Thierry Soulard, “L’Église Saint-Pierre Saint-Paul,” in *L’art gothique en Chypre*, pp. 271-85.

<sup>36</sup> Archivio di Stato, Lucca, *Notari*, part I, no. 292, fols. 2r-6v (May 31, 1382), published in Bacci, “*Pro remedio animae*,” pp. 324-28.

<sup>37</sup> Monika Butzek, “Chronologie,” in *Die Kirchen von Siena. 3.1.1.1. Der Dom S. Maria Assunta. Architektur*, ed. by Walter Haas and Dethard von Winterfeld (Munich: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2006), pp. 1-262, esp. 86, 88. Cf. also therein the recently rediscovered structure of the fifteenth-century altar chapel of the Crucifix; Barbara Tavorari, “Il ritrovato altare del Crocifisso nel Duomo di Siena,” *Accademia dei Rozzi* 13/25 (2006), pp. 24-28.





9. Wall tomb in northern annex of Famagusta Cathedral, 14th century (photo: from Enlart, *L'art gothique*, 1899)



10. Niche-chapel on southern wall of unidentified church to the south of Sinan Paşa Camii, Famagusta (photo: author)

If we return to the Sinan Paşa mosque, we see that the other two niche-chapels on the northern aisle have a pointed-arched structure, including small altars. Large recesses at either side were intended for setting a stone structure inside; an element is still preserved in one of them, consisting of a white rectangular stone whose exterior corner is hollow, in the same manner as the ashlar below. The same device occurs in the other niche-chapels and was probably meant to house colonnettes, as was the case in a later structure included in a funerary space annexed to the southern arm of the transept of Saint Nicholas Cathedral (fig. 9).<sup>38</sup> The niche-chapel on the southern aisle lacks this device, but it includes a feature that is shared by two of the structures on the northern side: the lower portion of wall happens to be hollow, probably in order to insert a stone basement in the floor of the chapel.

Niche-chapels were standard features within the Latin-rite churches of Famagusta. An unidentified fourteenth-century ruined building to the south of the Sinan Paşa mosque<sup>39</sup> preserves two such structures: one is located on the southern wall of the westernmost part of the nave and includes remnants of an altar and an elevated basement (fig. 10); the other is included within the choir precinct, next to the fragmentary pier that possibly supported a rood screen (fig. 11). Both display a pointed-arched shape and the impost is decorated with thin brackets, which did not contribute to the static structure of the niche itself and were consequently meant either as bare ornaments or as supports for some now-vanished element. We will see that such a device occurs frequently in the town buildings of the same century.

<sup>38</sup> Enlart, *Gothic Art*, p. 370, fig. 335. Cf. also Jeffery, *A Description*, pp. 124-25; Philippe Plagnieux and Thierry Soulard, "La cathédrale Saint-Nicolas," in *L'art gothique en Chypre*, pp. 218-37, esp. 223-24.

<sup>39</sup> Enlart, *Gothic Art*, pp. 297-98; Jeffery, *A Description*, pp. 157-58.



If we turn to the Carmelite church, a ruined building usually reputed to date from the 1360s, we can distinctly recognize that different purposes were associated with different types of chapels.<sup>40</sup> At about its midpoint the northern wall opens up to a large annexed room that can possibly be identified as the ritual space where the body of the Blessed Peter Thomae (d. 1367) was venerated (according to his last will, he wanted himself to be buried “in introitu chori”);<sup>41</sup> some scant remnants of murals indicate that this more “solemn” chapel, functioning as a real cult-place, was decorated with narrative scenes, whereas the decoration of the interior consisted for the most part of votive or, better, *pro anima* frescoes that lacked any iconographic or stylistic uniformity and were strictly associated with individual donors’ desire for salvation. Not surprisingly, many such murals were confined to the westernmost part of the nave, where three niche-chapels were also built. All of them have a pointed-arch shape and an intrados that preserves traces of painting; the one on the southern wall is located just below a frescoed “*vita retable*” of Saint Catherine of Alexandria, which is still readable despite the whitewashes that partially conceal it (fig. 12). It is evident that here, as in Italy, such compositions specifically replicated a typology of painted panels (represented in Cyprus by such enormous icons as that of Saint Nicholas and the Virgin of the Carmelites in the Byzantine Museum, Nicosia)<sup>42</sup> whose purpose was to add emphasis to holy figures deserving special worship. That was the case with Saint Catherine, reputed to have been the daughter of the governor of the nearby Roman town of Constantia, and whose “prison,” identified with a



11. Niche-chapel on northern wall of unidentified church to the south of Sinan Paşa Camii, Famagusta (photo: author)



12. Niche-chapel and traces of murals in the Carmelite church, Famagusta, 14th century (photo: author)

<sup>40</sup> On this church, cf. Enlart, *Gothic Art*, pp. 267-74; Jeffery, *A Description*, pp. 137-40; Boase, “The Arts in Cyprus,” p. 179; Marangou, *Αμύχωστος*, pp. 140-41; and Philippe Plagnieux and Thierry Soulard, “L’église Sainte-Marie du Carmel,” in *L’art gothique en Chypre*, pp. 251-60.

<sup>41</sup> Philippe de Mézières, *The Life of Saint Peter Thomas*, ed. by Joachim Smet (Rome: Institutum Carmelitanum, 1954), p. 148.

<sup>42</sup> Carr, “Art,” pp. 305-6. On the typological devices of the “*vita icon*,” see Nancy Patterson Ševčenko, “The *Vita*-Icon and the Painter as Hagiographer,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 53 (1999), pp. 149-65.



13. Altar in the southern chapel of the church of the Friars Minor, Famagusta, 14th century (photo: author)



14. Niche-chapel on southern wall and niche for the ampullae in the church of the Friars Minor, Famagusta, 14th century (photo: author)

tomb dating from the seventh century B.C., was a pilgrimage goal for both Cypriot and foreign visitors.<sup>43</sup> Moreover, this structure displays two familiar devices that had not yet been combined together in the previously discussed cases: two thin molded brackets, and, above them, two parallel hollows that are not unlike those in the Sinan Paşa mosque and are absent in the twin chapels on the northern wall, which are provided with either two brackets or two stronger stone corbels.

A similar combination of extended chapels for cultic purposes and niche-chapels associated with funerary and commemorative functions is found within the church of the Friars Minor,<sup>44</sup> where a groin-vaulted space—which preserves its original altar, an elevated basement, and a recess for storing *vasa sacra*—opens into the southern wall. One wonders if this may be identified as the chapel of Saint Catherine, often described by late medieval pilgrims as the original location of the school where the holy martyr had received her education (fig. 13).<sup>45</sup> In the westernmost part of the nave are several sumptuous niche-chapels, whose pointed arches are decorated with moldings in their extrados. The one located on the southern wall, close to the larger chapel (fig. 14), displays many interesting details: it still preserves part of its basement, a small pointed-arched recess for *vasa sacra*, and the same combination of brackets and hollows found in the Carmelite church. It is interesting that the excavated intrados corresponds with a line of smaller stones in the niche wall, which may reinforce the hypothesis that an altar table was originally inserted in that position. In a nearby building, now used as a sculptor's studio, we see structures decorated with similarly elabo-

<sup>43</sup> John Hackett, *A History of the Orthodox Church of Cyprus* (London: Methuen & Co., 1901), pp. 394-97; Chris Schabel, "Religion," in *Cyprus. Society and Culture*, pp. 156-218, esp. 214. See also Andreas Mitsidis, "Αικατερίνης αγίας, φυλακή," in *Θρησκευτική και ηθική εγκυκλοπαιδεία* (Athens: Martinos, 1962-68), vol. 1 (1962), cols. 1041-1042, and idem, "Αικατερίνης αγίας φυλακή," in *Μεγάλη Κυπριακή εγκυκλοπαιδεία* (Nicosia: Philokyprios, 1984-97), vol. 1 (1984), p. 275.

<sup>44</sup> Enlart, *Gothic Art*, pp. 262-67; George Jeffery, "On the Franciscan Church at Famagusta, Cyprus," *Proceedings of*

*the Society of Antiquaries of London* 24 (1912), pp. 301-11; Jeffery, *A Description*, pp. 132-36; Boase, "The Arts in Cyprus," p. 179; Rivoire-Richard, "Η γοτθική τέχνη," pp. 1426, 1430, 1437, 1447; Marangou, *Αμμόχωστος*, pp. 126-27; Philippe Plagnieux and Thierry Soulard, "L'église des Franciscains," in *L'art gothique en Chypre*, pp. 238-42.

<sup>45</sup> As witnessed, for example, by an early fifteenth-century anonymous Spanish *Viaje de Terra Santa*, ed. by J.R. Jones, *Viajeros españoles a Tierra Santa (siglos XVI y XVII)* (Madrid: Miraguano, 1998), pp. 109-243, esp. 142.



rate moldings; unfortunately, these niches were walled up in a later period.<sup>46</sup> There is evidence to support the idea that the making of elegantly carved side chapels was taken further in the centuries that followed, the most striking example being the sixteenth-century Renaissance-style *Halbciboria* in the church of Saint Mamas in the village of Agios Sozomenos (fig. 15).<sup>47</sup>

It is evident that an archaeological survey would prove extremely useful, since in all of the Famagustan churches, which for the most part were left deserted and ruined after the Ottoman conquest of the town, there may be unearthed remnants of the original structures; unfortunately, at present this is impossible because of the political situation in northern Cyprus, particularly since some buildings were included within a military camp up to some years ago (among them the Carmelite church). The last archaeological surveys date from the 1940s and were organized by the local representative of the Department of Antiquities, the above-mentioned Theophilus Mogabgab. The most thorough intervention he made involved the church known, after Enlart's work, as that of the Templars; the interior pavement was completely excavated in 1947, and many burials were unearthed. This shows that the interiors of Latin churches were extensively employed for the inhumation of laypeople and that most of them, as in Lucca, made use of underground tombs instead of wall monuments.<sup>48</sup>

On Cyprus, as elsewhere, the practice of indoor burial was regarded as a privilege, enabling individuals to be more deeply involved in the auratic power of both the church space and the holy liturgy. Most such tombs, however, consist of simple incised or carved slabs, and their interaction with chantry altars and chapels was limited to mere proximity. More sumptuous types of sepulchres were less common: some extant sculpted sarcophagi, preserved in Nicosia and Limassol, are supposed to have been made to be either stood on a pediment or suspended on corbels; it is also commonplace to associate them with a location within *enfeux*, such as the above-mentioned structure in the Cathedral



15. Renaissance-style side chapel in the church of Saint Mamas, Agios Sozomenos, 16th century (photo: author)

<sup>46</sup> Jeffery, *A Description*, p. 161; Mogabgab, “Excavations,” pp. 176 and 187; Jean-Bernard de Vaivre, “Sur les pas de Camille Enlart en Chypre,” in *L'art gothique en Chypre*, pp. 15-56, esp. 50.

<sup>47</sup> Enlart, *Gothic Art*, pp. 170-72; Gunnis, *Historic Cyprus*, p. 205. On the area, cf. Nolwenn Lécuyer, “Marqueurs identitaires médiévaux et modernes sur le territoire de Potamia-Agios Sozomenos,” in *Identités croisées en un milieu méditerranéen: le cas de Chypre (Antiquité – Moyen Âge)*, ed. by Sabine Fourrier and Gilles Grivaud (Mont-Saint-Aignan: Publications des Universités de Rouen et du Havre, 2006), pp. 242-56.

<sup>48</sup> For remarks on medieval Cypriot funerary spaces, see Imhaus, “La mort,” pp. 35-40. Cf. also eadem, “Tombeaux et fragments funéraires médiévaux de l'île de Chypre,” *Report of the Department of Antiquities, Cyprus* (1998), pp. 225-231; eadem, “Le concept de la mort et les rites funéraires en Chypre,” in *Lacrimae cypriae. Les larmes de Chypre ou recueil des inscriptions lapidaires pour la plupart funéraires de la période franque et vénitienne de l'île de Chypre*, ed. by Brunehilde Imhaus (Nicosia: Department of Antiquities, 2004), vol. 2, pp. 81-88.



16. Funerary chapel of Abbess Échive de Dampierre, Armenian Church (Saint Mary of Tortosa), Nicosia, 1340 (photo: author)



17. Dug grave beneath sarcophagus of Abbess Échive de Dampierre, after vandalism (photo: author)

of Saint Nicholas (fig. 9). This one was located in a vaulted room added on the southeast of the main church, which was probably built as a funerary annex and had its own altar. This is hardly surprising given that other examples from Latin-ruled areas reveal that eminent personages were eventually granted the right of burial within the *ius patronatus* of such privileged spaces as the chapels located to the north and south of the choir.<sup>49</sup> On the contrary, canopied tombs were rare, a notable exception being the so-called proskynetarion in the church of Agios Georgios tou Kastrou at Geraki, in the Peloponnese, dating from the second half of the fourteenth century.<sup>50</sup>

A most revealing example of a “contracted chapel” can be recognized in the funerary *enfau* of Abbess Échive de Dampierre (d. 1340), which lies in bad condition in the northern porch of the now-deserted Armenian church of Nicosia (figs. 16-17). (The church, known in Frankish times as the abbey church of Our Lady of Tortosa, was inhabited by nuns referred to as the “Carpitane” of Antioch.<sup>51</sup>)

<sup>49</sup> Cf. the relevant examples in the Arap Camii (Saints Peter and Paul), Galata, and Agia Paraskevi, Negroponte: Eric A. Ivison, “Latin Tomb Monuments in the Levant 1204-ca. 1450,” in *The Archaeology of Medieval Greece*, ed. by Peter Lock and G. D. R. Sanders (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 1996), pp. 91-106; Nikolaos D. Delinikolas and Vasiliki Vemi, “Η Αγία Παρασκευή Χαλκίδας. Ένα βενετικό πρόγραμμα ανοικοδόμησης το 13<sup>ο</sup> αιώνα,” in *Βενετία – Εύβοια από τον Έγριπο στο Νεγροπόντε*, proceedings of the international congress (Chalkis, November 12–14, 2004), ed. by Chrysa A. Maltezou and Christina E. Papakosta (Venice and Athens: Hellenic Institute of Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Studies, 2006), esp. 239-66, esp. 238-54.

<sup>50</sup> This structure has been convincingly interpreted as the tomb of the Rhodian knight Inigo d’Alfero, supposedly executed about 1378-81 by Aspasia Louvi-Kizi, “Το γλυπτό ‘προσκυνητάρι’ στο ναό του Αγίου Γεωργίου του Κάστρου στο Γεράκι,” in *Δελτίον της χριστιανικής αρχαιολογικής εταιρείας*, ser. IV, 25 (2004), pp. 111-25. For later examples from Crete, cf. Giuseppe Gerola, *Monumenti veneti nell’isola di Creta* (Venice: R. Istituto veneto di scienze, lettere ed arti, 1905-1932), vol. 2 (1908), pp. 354-62.

<sup>51</sup> Tankerville J. Chamberlayne, *Lacrimae Nicossenses. Recueil d’inscriptions funéraires la plupart françaises existant encore dans l’île de Chypre* (Paris: Librairies-imprimeries réunies, 1894), p. 109, no. 229, pl. XIX; Enlart, *Gothic Art*, pp.



This monument consists of an arcaded niche that is surmounted by a pediment and richly ornamented: it includes the original altar, whose table is inserted within the two jambs, and is flanked by two small recesses for storing the *vasa sacra*. Most interestingly, the abbess's sepulchre lies horizontally against the altar basement and is integrated within the chapel itself, as if it were meant to be used as a threshold. If this solution is original, there is reason to believe that it may reflect the abbess's desire for a more direct involvement in the aura of sacredness attributed to that small liturgical space, in accordance with the feelings and practices of late medieval testators. This structure sounded odd to Enlart, who took for granted that it had been modified; however, if this tomb had been put there in a later period, it would probably not have covered a dug grave, such as the one recently revealed by vandalism, which caused the incised marble cover to separate from the body of the sepulchre.<sup>52</sup>

## Conclusion

We can attempt to summarize this survey of Famagustan niche-chapels by saying that their shape was at least partly a consequence of their function: side altars needed to be embellished with proper coverings, and an arched recess in the wall could play the same role as a canopied *cielo*. At the same time, the direct involvement of such structures in the performance of votive masses and anniversaries and their association with individual tombs were more efficaciously emphasized by echoing an *arcosolium* shape. This would explain why niche-chapels were soon appropriated even by the other Christian communities living in the multicultural milieu of Famagusta. Eastern Christians, fascinated by the Western approach to the afterlife, not only came to make use of Latin-style tomb-slabs,<sup>53</sup> they also started to promote the building of *pro anima* chapels, such as that endowed by a mid-fifteenth-century Syrian Cypriot testator within the Jacobite church of Nicosia.<sup>54</sup> Although this structure has vanished, one wonders if it had the same shape as the elegant wall recess in the vestibule of the Syrian-rite church of Agios Georgios Exorinos in Famagusta (fig. 18),<sup>55</sup> or maybe that of the even more striking wall niches lining the nave of the Byzantine-rite church of Saint George of the Greeks, built in Gothic forms in the 1360s as the Orthodox metropolitan church (fig. 19).<sup>56</sup>

366-67; Brunehilde Imhaus, “Un monastère féminin de Nicosie: Notre-Dame de Tortose,” in *Dei Gesta per Francos. Études sur les croisades dédiées à Jean Richard*, ed. by Michel Balard, Benjamin Z. Kedar, and John Riley-Smith (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), pp. 389-401, esp. 400-401; Jean Richard, “Un but de pèlerinage: Notre-Dame de Nicosie,” in *Mosaic*, pp. 135-38; Imhaus, *Lacrimae cypriae*, vol. 1, pp. 62-63. Although the representation of the *gisant* on the front side of the sarcophagus is unusual in French tradition, it is rather widespread in Italian tomb sculpture; see Bauch, *Das mittelalterliche Grabbild*, pp. 158-60.

<sup>52</sup> Figure 17 was taken on February 2, 2004, and figure 18 on June 11, 2005; from this evidence, it is clear that the vandalism took place between my two visits. Enlart's and Imhaus's idea that the tomb was not originally included in the canopied structure has also been questioned by Philippe Plagnieux and Thierry Soulard, “L'église des Bénédictines Notre-Dame de Tortose,” in *L'art gothique en Chypre*, pp. 170-75, esp. 175.

<sup>53</sup> The relevant examples, dating from the fourteenth to the sixteenth centuries, have been collected by Imhaus, *Lacrimae cypriae*, vol. 1, pp. 261-87.

<sup>54</sup> Jean Richard, “Une famille de ‘Vénitiens blancs’ dans le royaume de Chypre au milieu du XV<sup>e</sup> siècle: les Audeth et la seigneurie de Marathasse,” *Rivista di studi bizantini e slavi* 1 (1981), pp. 89-129bis, esp. 118-22; also in idem, *Croisés, missionnaires et voyageurs. Les perspectives orientales du monde latin médiéval* (London: Variorum, 1983), chap. 10. For other relevant examples, see Michele Bacci, “Arte e raccomandazione dell'anima nei domini latini del Levante: alcune riflessioni,” in *Oltre la morte. Testamenti di Greci e Veneziani redatti a Venezia o in territorio greco-veneziano nei secoli XIV-XVIII*, proceedings of the international symposium (Venice, January 22-23, 2007), ed. by Chryssa Maltzou and Gogo Varzelioti (Venice: Istituto ellenico di studi bizantini e post-bizantini, 2008), pp. 131-59.

<sup>55</sup> Enlart, *Gothic Art*, pp. 280-86; Michele Bacci, “Syrian, Palaiologan, and Gothic Murals in the ‘Nestorian’ Church of Famagusta,” *Δελτίον της χριστιανικής αρχαιολογικής εταιρείας*, ser. IV, 27 (2006), pp. 207-20; Philippe Plagnieux and Thierry Soulard, “L'église des Nestoriens,” in *L'art gothique en Chypre*, pp. 266-70, esp. 270.

<sup>56</sup> Enlart, *Gothic Art*, pp. 253-58; Jeffery, *A Description*, pp. 147-51; G. Sotiriou, *Τα βυζαντινά μνημεία της Κύπρου*



18. Wall niche and remnants of murals from Agios Georgios Exorinos, Famagusta, first half of 14th century (photo: author)



19. Wall niche, Saint George of the Greeks, Famagusta, second half of 14th century (photo: author)

In such cases, the Eastern Christian rule of the unity of liturgy within sacred spaces prevents us from thinking that such structures originally included altars, and we can only imagine that they were intended as burial places.<sup>57</sup> Nonetheless, their elongated shape as well as their Gothic features and, most of all, their location within the church interiors (instead of within annexed spaces, as was usual in Byzantium) attest that they had much in common with the Latin model of the niche-chapel. Several other instances of such structures are preserved within stylistically mixed buildings in the Cypriot countryside, such as those in Agia Marina at Phrenaros, Agios Andronikos at Liopetri, and the Panagia at Choulou, which display interesting cycles of *pro anima* murals with holy people and supplicating donors.<sup>58</sup> Such programs are replicated in a few fourteenth- through sixteenth-century pointed-arched icons that were meant to be set within such wall niches or analogous structures, and

(Athens: Akadimia Athinon, 1935), pl. 34, figs 48, 49<sup>a</sup>, 50<sup>a</sup>, 60<sup>b</sup>; Boase, "The Arts in Cyprus," pp. 177-79; Rivoire-Richard, "Η γοτθική τέχνη," p. 1423; Gioles, *Η χριστιανική τέχνη*, p. 144; Marangou, *Αμμόχωστος*, pp. 112-17; Carr, "Art," pp. 315-16; Thierry Soulard, "L'architecture gothique grecque du royaume des Lusignans: les cathédrales de Famagouste et Nicosie," in *Identités croisées*, pp. 355-84, esp. 356-65; Philippe Plagnieux and Thierry Soulard, "La cathédrale Saint-Georges des Grecs," in *L'art gothique en Chypre*, pp. 286-96.

<sup>57</sup> For Byzantine church regulations concerning the use of altars, cf. Gordana Babić, *Les chapelles annexes des églises*

*byzantines. Fonction liturgique et programmes iconographiques* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1969), pp. 9-11; Natalia Teteriatnikov, *The Liturgical Planning of Byzantine Churches in Cappadocia* (Rome: Pontificio Istituto Orientale, 1996), pp. 70-78.

<sup>58</sup> Gunnis, *Historic Cyprus*, pp. 269-70 (Choulou), 387 (Phrenaros), and 326-27 (Liopetri). For the murals at Choulou, see also Ioannis A. Iliadis, "Η κυπριακή ζωγραφική και οι σχέσεις της με την Ιταλική τέχνη κατά τη Φραγκοκρατία και τη Βενετοκρατία: 1191-1571," in *Θεοτόκος/ Madonna*, ed. by Stefano G. Casu, Christodoulos Chatzichristodoulou, and Giannis Toumazis (Nicosia: Pierides Foundation, 2005), p. 33.



20. Tomb of Saint Mamas, Agios Mamas, Morphou, 14th century (photo: author)



21. View of interior of the Porziuncola Chapel decorated with Ilario da Viterbo's pointed-arched panel (1393), Basilica di Santa Maria degli Angeli, Assisi (photo: author)

which prove to be morphologically related to the lunette-shaped panels used to decorate tombs in late medieval Italy.<sup>59</sup> Among the latter, there is at least one monument whose enormity, solemnity, and complex decoration program point to a closer imitation of Italian wall niches: the Gothic tomb of Saint Mamas in his shrine at Morphou (fig. 20), which is contained within a tall recess embellished by an elegant extrados displaying foliate ornaments and filled with a set of round-arched and quadrangular icons.<sup>60</sup> This odd solution has no precedent in the history of Eastern Christian icon painting and church furnishings, and its features prove to be very close to the composite and odd-shaped panels employed in Italy for the decoration of minimal units of sacred space, such as wall chapels and diminutive churches (fig. 21). This may be because Morphou, even if it was officiated by a Greek priest, was a transconfessional place of pilgrimage, shared by both Latin and Greek Cypriots as well as by visitors from western Europe, who were told that Mamas was a German holy man.<sup>61</sup> It was probably not by

<sup>59</sup> For relevant examples, see Athanasios Papageorgiou, *Icons of Cyprus* (Nicosia: Holy Archbishopric of Cyprus, 1992), figs. 48, 73, and 98.

<sup>60</sup> Annemarie Weyl Carr, “Cypriot Funerary Icons: Questions of Convergence in a Complex Land,” in *Medieval Paradigms. Essays in Honor of Jeremy Duquesnay Adams*, ed. by Stephanie Hayes-Healy (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), pp. 153–73, esp. 164 and 173, note 41. The lunette-shaped panel, dating from the sixteenth century, is decorated with scenes of Saint Mamas's life, whereas the

lower icons, dating from 1907 though probably replacing older ones, display Mamas and two military saints.

<sup>61</sup> In general on this hagiographic figure and his cult on Cyprus, see Charalampos E. Kourris, *Άγιος Μάμας ο μεγάλος άγιος της Μόρφου*, in *Ιερά Μητρόπολις Μόρφου. 2000 χρόνια τέχνης και αγιότητα* (Nicosia: Bank of Cyprus, 2000), pp. 229–39. On Latin promotion of his cult, see Gilles Grivaud, “Les Lusignan patrons d'églises grecques,” *Byzantinische Forschungen* 29 (2007), pp. 257–69.

chance that the tomb of this saint, believed to pour forth a most holy *myron*, was included within an architectural structure that echoed the contracted chapels used in Latin church interiors to commemorate the dead and solemnize their holy protectors. Indeed, this is hardly surprising if one considers that, as so often happened on this culturally mixed island, each community was accustomed to freely appropriating and taking advantage of the artistic models and formal solutions worked out by their neighbors, provided that they proved useful for the pursuit of spiritual benefit and for the sake of their souls.