

ARTICULATING GREEK VISUAL IDENTITY  
IN THE “LONG” MIDDLE AGES:  
AN ECCLESIASTICAL, SOCIAL AND ARCHITECTURAL  
HISTORY OF THE BEDESTAN IN NICOSIA

**Principal Investigator: Michalis Olympios, Associate Professor,  
Archaeological Research Unit,  
Department of History and Archaeology, Faculty of Letters,  
University of Cyprus**

***Abstract***

The former Greek cathedral of the Panagia Hodegetria – now commonly known as the Bedestan – lies at the heart of medieval Nicosia’s long and turbulent history. Located directly adjacent to the grand Latin cathedral of Saint Sophia, in the centre of the walled town, the present edifice is an intriguing and perplexing palimpsest. Construction and remodelling phases span many centuries, from Late Antiquity to the modern era: an Early Christian basilica (fifth/sixth century) was superseded by a series of Gothic-style projects during the Lusignan and Venetian periods (1192–1570/1), before the structure’s conversion into a covered market in the Ottoman period (1570/1–1878). The haphazard juxtaposition of parts erected at different dates attests to the site’s longstanding use as the seat of the Greek prelate of Solea (or Nicosia), an institution having just cause to celebrate its antiquity as a prestigious prerogative setting it apart from the other Christian communities making up the island’s multi-creedal religious fabric. Yet for a building that stands as one of the most poignant witnesses to Greek religious history in Cyprus for more than a thousand years, the Bedestan remained effectively unstudied.

The project’s primary aim was to produce the first in-depth study of the history of the Hodegetria and the bishopric that it once served. Our research explored the documentary history of the capital’s Greek episcopal see in the Middle Ages, focusing on

prosopography and relations with the secular and ecclesiastical authorities. Furthermore, it broached questions of religious and social identity with respect to the church's late medieval patrons. The project also examined and documented the architectural fabric of the Bedestan in an attempt to disentangle the chronology of the building's many phases of construction and refurbishment, and the relationship of these phases to other church-building campaigns on the island between the sixth and sixteenth centuries. Lastly, the project explored the extant Ottoman documentation concerning the post-medieval uses to which the cathedral was put. These research activities were framed by fresh archival research in Cyprus, Italy, Turkey and the United Kingdom, as well as on-site re-examination of the architecture, sculpture and painting. The project's ultimate goal will be to make the findings (including unpublished archival materials) available to scholars in the form of a multi-author volume that will serve as a template for analogous projects in future.

### ***Introduction and Objectives***

The principal aim of the Leventis research project entitled 'Articulating Greek Visual Identity in the "Long" Middle Ages: An Ecclesiastical, Social and Architectural History of the Bedestan in Nicosia' ('Historic Bedestan' for short) was to produce the first in-depth study of the Bedestan, namely the medieval Greek cathedral church of the Panagia Hodegetria, coupled with that of the institution that it once served, the Greek see of Solea (or Nicosia). The relatively modest scholarly interest hitherto attracted by the Hodegetria (compared, for instance, to the imposing Latin cathedrals of Saint Sophia in Nicosia and Saint Nicholas the Confessor in Famagusta, or even the equally intriguing Greek cathedral of Saint George in the latter town) is genuinely perplexing, if one but considers the absolutely central role played by the Greek bishopric of Solea in shaping Greek religious and cultural identity, not only in the capital, but also throughout Cyprus, during the late medieval and early modern periods. At the moment of writing this report, a comprehensive history of the see, complete with full prosopographical lists of incumbents and employed personnel as attested in the extant documentation, is still sorely lacking. Moreover, the cathedral building itself, lying at the centre of the walled town of Nicosia, immediately to the southwest of its Latin counterpart, has thus far been examined mainly within the context of broad-strokes surveys of Cypriot Gothic architecture. Nevertheless, none of the extant accounts of the edifice's fabric and layout has done full justice to its long, convoluted and fascinating history, which spanned the centuries from Late Antiquity (Early Christian basilica, fifth/sixth century) to the Lusignan and Venetian periods (multi-phase Gothic church, fourteenth-sixteenth centuries), to its conversion into a covered market and grain store in the Ottoman and British periods (sixteenth-twentieth centuries). A new,

more detailed study of the Hodegetria's overall construction chronology and successive shifts in spatial and visual design from a *longue durée* perspective was needed, informed by a conscious effort to relate developments at this site not only to the wider trends in Gothic architecture in both Cyprus and Europe, but also to contemporary fashions in the Greek-rite buildings gracing the island's urban and rural landscapes. By correlating original research in archival collections with an attentive reexamination of the cathedral's physical fabric, this project aspired to filling a substantial gap in our knowledge of medieval Cypriot ecclesiastical and architectural history while, at the same time, furnishing a roadmap for future research in this field.

Since no monographic study on this scale has ever been undertaken for any Cypriot Gothic monument, the 'Historic Bedestan' project needed to set out its own agenda, with a clearly defined series of short- and long-term goals. The basic breakdown of the project's main goals is as follows:

- The exploration of the historical context informing the creation and function(s) of the Bedestan throughout the Middle Ages (fifth/sixth century–1570/1). This entailed the tracking down of relevant documentary sources, both published and unpublished, and their use in producing a fresh synthesis highlighting aspects of the building's patronage and ritual or other uses. The most important of any unedited documents were to be transcribed and published for the benefit of the academic community at large.
- The close reading of the Bedestan's fabric across all pertinent artistic media – architecture, sculpture and painting – with a view to authoring an up-to-date account of the building's chronology and design history. Apart from renewed scrutiny of the masonry and ornament in their present form and condition, the project envisaged the systematic parallel consultation of textual and graphic testimony to the edifice's state prior to the (occasionally radical) twentieth-century interventions. Given that this process of historical authentication has never been attempted before for the Bedestan (nor for any other Cypriot Gothic monument), and much of the archived evidence remains unpublished, the prime intention was, once again, to make major relevant documents available to scholars.
- The contextualisation of the Bedestan's architecture, sculpture and painting within local and European design traditions, with the aim of comprehending the creative choices made in each case on a patronal level. Comparative analyses with other monuments in Cyprus, the Latin East and western Europe (both north and south of the Alps) were expected to illuminate the sources of inspiration tapped by the master masons, sculptors and painters engaged in erecting

and embellishing the church, the ambitions and self-image of the people who commissioned the work and the latter's place within the framework of later Cypriot medieval art.

- The resolution of a number of vexing issues in the history of Gothic architecture in Lusignan (1192–1474/89) and Venetian Cyprus (1474/89–1570/1). Seeing that the dates of the Bedestan's individual construction phases span the entirety of the period of Latin rule, making it a true reference point for contemporary building, their more accurate delimitation was expected to aid in sorting out the chronology of other, formally related structures. This would definitely be a welcome complement to scholars' methodological arsenal, especially considering the dearth of documentary or archaeological chronological anchors for this period's architectural production.
- The investigation of the Bedestan's post-medieval career, particularly during the Ottoman period (1570/1–1878), when the building was turned over to secular uses. As scholarly research on the Bedestan had hitherto focused almost exclusively on its medieval cursus, this was relatively uncharted territory, promising exciting new data and insights. As with the medieval period, a selection of the most significant documents would be published, both in the original and in English translation, to accommodate non-Ottomanist scholars, for whom the texts would otherwise be linguistically inaccessible.
- The long-term instigation of further research initiatives on the history of the Bedestan and Cypriot Gothic architecture in general. The proposed project was conceived as a stepping-stone towards future research grants, which would allow the cataloguing and digitisation of the full array of available textual and visual sources for the study of the monument, starting, for instance, with the British Museum's collection of photographs and drawings assembled in the 1980s by Michael Willis.

### ***Brief Literature Review and Relation to the Project***

The Bedestan occupies a distinct, vital and perhaps unenviable place in the history of medieval architecture on the island of Cyprus. Nicosia's former Greek cathedral appears adrift in a historical no-man's-land at the intersection of the island's time-honoured Byzantine religious traditions and the impressive Gothic architecture meant to contain and aggrandise them. The literature review to follow positions the monument at the disciplinary fault-line between the study of the art of Byzantium and that of medieval (and early modern) western Europe into high relief, as both Byzantinists and medievalists have engaged with it from within the ambit of their respective spe-

cialisms. As will be presently seen, scholars of European art have been attracted to the building's elaborate Gothic carapace, reflective of the styles favoured for the edifices of the ecclesiastical and secular Latin elite since the dawn of the Lusignan period; at the other end, Byzantinists have focused on the pre-Lusignan phases and the plausible meaning of its dome for medieval Greek religious identity. Consequently, vignettes into the history of the church and its fabric have been partial, and the scholarship fragmentary. This situation is symptomatic of broader scholarly attitudes towards the monumental heritage of medieval Cyprus, a research legacy that the 'Historic Bedestan' project has attempted to venture beyond in its multidisciplinary and integrated approach to institutional and architectural history.

Even though art-historical scholarship on the Bedestan goes back to the late nineteenth century, to this day no monograph has been dedicated to this pivotal monument in the history of medieval Cypriot architecture.<sup>1</sup> The available literature on the former Greek cathedral includes brief chapters in volumes treating Cypriot Gothic architecture and sculpture or Cypriot cultural heritage in general, more focused studies dealing with particular problems raised by either the building's history or its material fabric, and more or less fleeting mentions in works concerned with larger issues, to which the Bedestan may be directly or tangentially relevant.<sup>2</sup>

Early studies focused almost exclusively on questions of building chronology, typology and architectural style. The edifice, as we still experience it today, constitutes an ungainly hodgepodge of building campaigns and does not truly fit any of the universally acknowledged medieval church types: It comprises a rib-vaulted nave fitted with a dome over the crossing and ending in a protruding polygonal apse, the whole flanked by equally rib-vaulted aisles of varying length, height, width and date. Camille Enlart, George Jeffery and Alban D. R. Caröe all grappled with the site's layered physical makeup, to a greater or lesser degree, in an attempt at dissecting, analysing and clas-

1 Edward L'Anson and Sydney Vacher, 'Mediaeval and Other Buildings in the Island of Cyprus', *Transactions of the Royal Institute of British Architects* (1882–1883), 13–32, at 17–18, 29.

2 For general works containing brisk references to the monument, see, for instance, Nicola Coldstream, *Nicosia – Gothic City to Venetian Fortress*, The Leventis Municipal Museum of Nicosia Annual Lectures 3 (Nicosia, 1993), 5, 12; Eadem, 'Gothic Architecture in the Lusignan Kingdom', in *Byzantine Medieval Cyprus*, eds Demetra Papanikola-Bakirtzis and Maria Iacovou (Nicosia, 1998), 51–60, at 60; Monique Rivoire-Richard, 'Η γοθθική τέχνη στην Κύπρο', in *Ιστορία της Κύπρου, τόμος Ε': Μεσαιωνικόν βασιλείον – Ενετοκρατία, μέρος Β'*, ed. Theodoros Papadopoulos (Nicosia, 1996), 1415–1454, at 1420, 1443 and passim; Andreas Stylianou and Judith Stylianou, 'Η βυζαντινή τέχνη κατά την περίοδο της Φραγκοκρατίας (1191–1570)'; *ibidem*, 1229–1407, at 1242–1243, 1245; Charalambos G. Chotzakoglou, 'Βυζαντινή αρχιτεκτονική και τέχνη στην Κύπρο', in *Ιστορία της Κύπρου, τόμος Γ': Βυζαντινή Κύπρος*, ed. Theodoros Papadopoulos (Nicosia, 2005), 465–787, at 466, 511; Tassos Papacostas, 'Μια ξεχασμένη κληρονομιά: Η γοθθική αρχιτεκτονική της Κύπρου', in *Κύπρος: Από την αρχαιότητα έως σήμερα*, eds Anna Marangou, Giorgos Georgis, Triantafyllos E. Sklavenitis and Konstantinos S. Staikos (Athens, 2007), 332–347, at 341 and passim; Philippe Plagnieux, 'L'architecture gothique en Chypre: Entre Occident et Orient', in *Chypre entre Byzance et l'Occident, IV<sup>e</sup>–XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle*, eds Jannic Durand and Dorota Giovannoni with the assistance of Dimitra Mastoraki (Paris, 2012), 218–229, at 229.

sifying individual construction campaigns and the styles in which they were wrought.<sup>3</sup> The Lusignan- and Venetian-period phases were foremost on their minds, given that no incontrovertible evidence had yet surfaced at the site regarding any earlier vestiges, and that the Ottoman-period alterations to the structure were of little immediate interest.

Nevertheless, the discovery by the nascent Department of Antiquities, in the mid-1930s, of the remains of the east end of an Early Christian basilica, with part of its *opus sectile* pavement still intact, helped nuance the chronology even further.<sup>4</sup> In a seminal article published in the 1980s, Michael Willis assembled the extant evidence for the site's 'Byzantine' origin, showing that the present late medieval edifice overlay a fifth-century basilica, the still-buried remains of which have since been further investigated by means of geophysical prospection.<sup>5</sup> The *opus sectile* floor uncovered in the Early Christian building's main apse eventually came under close art-historical scrutiny, furnishing additional confirmation for the site's ecclesiastical use from a date much earlier than previously thought.<sup>6</sup>

The uncovering of the Bedestan's substantial pre-Lusignan past prompted a number of detailed studies of its potential role and significance in the topography and religious life of Byzantine and Lusignan/Venetian Nicosia. Tassos Papacostas, Panos Leventis and Michalis Olympios re-examined the published architectural, archaeological and documentary evidence with a view to comprehending the dynamic relationship that developed between the Greek and Latin cathedrals in Nicosia's old ecclesiastical centre.<sup>7</sup> The church's dedication to the Panagia Hodegetria, and its function as the seat

3 Camille Enlart, *L'art gothique et la Renaissance en Chypre*, 2 vols (Paris, 1899), I, 150–162; English translation in Idem, *Gothic Art and the Renaissance in Cyprus* (London, 1987), 136–146; George Jeffery, *A Description of the Historic Monuments of Cyprus: Studies in the Archaeology and Architecture of the Island* (London, 1918), 84–89; A. D. R. Caröe, 'Cyprus Architecture. The Fusion of Byzantine, Western and Mahommedan Architectural Styles in Cyprus', *Journal of the Royal Institute of British Architects* 26 (1932), 45–56, at 47–49.

4 J. R. Hilton, 'Repairs to Ancient Monuments', *Report of the Department of Antiquities, Cyprus* (1936), 1–5, at 3–4; A. H. S. Megaw, 'Shorter Reports. Repairs to Ancient Monuments', *Report of the Department of Antiquities, Cyprus* (1939), 97–100, at 97; A. H. S. Megaw, 'Investigation of Ancient Monuments 1937–1939', *Report of the Department of Antiquities, Cyprus* (1951), 191–197, at 191–192.

5 Michael D. Willis, 'Byzantine Beginnings of the Bedesten', *Κυπριακάί Σπουδαί* 50 (1986), 185–192; Marilena Cozzolino, Paolo Mauriello and Domenico Patella, 'Resistivity Tomography Imaging of the Substratum of the Bedestan Monumental Complex at Nicosia, Cyprus', *Archaeometry* 56/2 (2013), 331–350.

6 Demetrios Michaelides, 'Opus sectile in Cyprus', in *The Sweet Land of Cyprus*, eds Anthony A. M. Bryer and George S. Georghallides (Nicosia, 1993), 69–113, at 75–76; Fryni Hadjichristophi, 'Les pavements du VI<sup>e</sup> siècle à Chypre', in *Πρακτικά του Τρίτου Διεθνούς Κυπριολογικού Συνεδρίου*, eds Georgios K. Ioannides and Stelios A. Chatzistyllis, 3 vols (Nicosia, 2000), I, 531–544, at 539, 542; Demetrios Michaelides, 'The Opus sectile of Nicosia and an Archaeological Puzzle', in *Marmoribus vestita. Miscellanea in onore di Federico Guidobaldi*, 2 vols, Studi di antichità cristiana pubblicati a cura del Pontificio Istituto di Archeologia Cristiana 63 (Vatican City, 2011), 945–963, at 947–949.

7 Panos Leventis, *Twelve Times in Nicosia. Nicosia, Cyprus, 1192–1570: Topography, Architecture and Urban Experience in a Diversified Capital City*, Cyprus Research Centre – Texts and Studies in the History of Cyprus 49 (Nicosia, 2005), 284–299; Tassos Papacostas, 'In Search of a Lost Byzantine Monument: Saint Sophia of Nicosia', *Επετηρίδα του Κέντρου Επιστημονικών Ερευνών Κύπρου* 31 (2005), 11–37; Tassos Papacostas,

of the town's Greek bishopric during the late medieval period, which had hitherto been proposed but not universally accepted, were now conclusively proven on the strength of copious textual testimony. What is more, it was argued that the site of the Bedestan, with its demonstrably long history, had been occupied by the Greek see even prior to the establishment of the Lusignan regime, and that the Early Christian church come to light could be identified with the Byzantine cathedral of Saint Sophia. In the absence of concrete archaeological data from the Latin cathedral of Saint Sophia next door (another likely site for the Byzantine mother church), such a hypothesis will have to remain speculative – yet the ongoing debate about the Bedestan's place in Nicosia's ecclesiastical topography unequivocally shows how crucial a more holistic understanding of the building's architectural transmutations and uses would be for clarifying the early history of Nicosia's Greek episcopal see, as well as comprehending the latter's complex relationship with its Latin counterpart in the Central and Late Middle Ages.

However, scholarly discussion of the Bedestan in the last thirty years or so has not exhausted itself on questions of topography and institutional history. Philippe Plagnieux and Thierry Soulard have offered an updated building chronology, taking into account the early-twentieth-century archaeological finds; this was further refined by Olympios for the parts belonging to the fifteenth century.<sup>8</sup> In addition to these offerings, a few attempts have been made to discuss some of the published textual sources concerning the Bedestan's functions during the Ottoman period, even though a more systematic treatment is still pending.<sup>9</sup>

From the point of view of design and *Stilkritik*, two main subjects have retained scholarly interest. Georgios Soteriou's thesis regarding the delineation of a category of medieval buildings termed 'Franco-Byzantine' and classified as neither 'Gothic' nor 'Byzantine' in style, due to representing a combination of a Gothic rib-vaulted basilica with a Byzantine dome, was later adopted and elaborated by Athanasios Papageorghiou, only

<sup>7</sup> 'Byzantine Nicosia 650–1191', in *Historic Nicosia*, ed. Demetrios Michaelides (Nicosia, 2012), 77–109, at 91–93; Michalis Olympios, 'Institutional Identities in Late Medieval Cyprus: The Case of Nicosia Cathedral', in *Identity/Identities in Late Medieval Cyprus*, eds Tassos Papacostas and Guillaume Saint-Guillain (Nicosia, 2014), 195–240, at 201–202.

<sup>8</sup> Thierry Soulard, 'L'architecture gothique grecque du royaume des Lusignan: Les cathédrales de Famagoste et Nicosie', in *Identités croisées en un milieu méditerranéen: Le cas de Chypre (Antiquité – Moyen Âge)*, eds Sabine Fourrier and Gilles Grivaud (Mont-Saint-Aignan, 2006), 355–384, at 365–384; Philippe Plagnieux and Thierry Soulard, 'Nicosie: Le Bédestan (cathédrale grecque de Nicosie)', in *L'art gothique en Chypre*, eds Jean-Bernard de Vaivre and Philippe Plagnieux, Mémoires de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres 34 (Paris, 2006), 181–189; Michalis Olympios, 'Resting in Pieces: Gothic Architecture in Cyprus in the Long Fifteenth Century', in *Medieval Cyprus: A Place of Cultural Encounter*, eds Sabine Rogge and Michael Grünbart, Schriften des Instituts für Interdisziplinäre Zypern-Studien 11 (Münster, 2015), 309–353, at 328–333, 340–343.

<sup>9</sup> Tuncer Başışkan, *Ottoman, Islamic and Islamised Monuments in Cyprus*, trans. Thomas A. Sinclair (Nicosia, 2009), 506; Euphrosyne Rizopoulou-Egoumenidou, 'Nicosia under Ottoman Rule 1570–1878: Part II', in *Historic Nicosia*, ed. Demetrios Michaelides (Nicosia, 2012), 265–322, at 300.

to be debunked by Papacostas.<sup>10</sup> The significance of this argument for the Bedestan lay in the latter author's view that its dome, usually thought to date from the sixteenth century, was less contingent on a display of Byzantine/Greek religious identity than on the contemporary 'revival' of the dome in the architecture of Renaissance Venice. Emphasis has lately also been placed on the northern front, which features a series of three portals exuberantly adorned with a bombastic display of Gothic sculpture and spiced up with *all'antica* motifs evocative of the Italian Renaissance.<sup>11</sup> This 'Renaissance Gothic' mode, variants of which have been observed throughout sixteenth-century northern Europe and the Iberian Peninsula, as well as in other places in the Latin East (such as Crete and Rhodes), has a distinctly local retrospective flavour, which, in Cyprus, represents a callback to the major monuments of the fourteenth-century Lusignan kingdom. The reasons for this 'revival' of a bygone style in Venetian Cyprus may be linked to the patrons' representational ambitions, which would have been predicated on the edifice's – and the bishopric's – long presence in the island's ecclesiastical history.<sup>12</sup>

### **Methodology**

Despite a relatively steady stream of publications on the Bedestan's history and architecture over the last 140 years, scholars have but merely scratched the surface, and much more remains to be done. Even in those areas where substantial contributions have already been made, there is still much scope for refinement and further elaboration. For all the architectural analyses proffered so far, not a single account has organically incorporated the wealth of documentary information on the twentieth-century archaeological investigations, restorations and uses of the structure. The exploitation of such textual and visual testimonies to the building's state at various stages of its life is now all the more imperative, given the intrusive nature of the latest major restoration

10 Georgios Soteriou, 'Τα παλαιοχριστιανικά και βυζαντινά μνημεία της Κύπρου', *Πρακτικά της Ακαδημίας Αθηνών* (1931), 477–490; Athanasios Papageorgiou, 'L'art byzantin de Chypre et l'art des Croisés. Influences reciproques', *Report of the Department of Antiquities, Cyprus* (1982), 217–226, at 218, 222–223; Athanasios Papageorgiou, 'Crusader Influence on the Byzantine Art of Cyprus', in *Η Κύπρος και οι Σταυροφορίες/Cyprus and the Crusades*, eds Nicholas Coureas and Jonathan Riley-Smith (Nicosia, 1995), 275–294, at 276–277; Tassos Papacostas, 'Byzantine Rite in a Gothic Setting: Aspects of Cultural Appropriation in Late Medieval Cyprus', in *Towards Rewriting? New Approaches to Byzantine Archaeology and Art*, eds Piotr Ł. Grotowski and Sławomir Skrzyniarz, Series Byzantina 8 (Warsaw, 2010), 117–132.

11. Tassos Papacostas, 'Echoes of the Renaissance in the Eastern Confines of the *Stato da Mar*: Architectural Evidence from Venetian Cyprus', *Acta Byzantina Fennica* 3 (2010), 136–172, at 166–167; Thomas Kaffenberger, 'Portale als künstlerische Schaustücke und Orte sozialer Inszenierung. Die griechische Kathedrale der Panagia Hodegetria in Nicosia, Zypern', in *Das Kirchenportal im Mittelalter*, eds Stephan Albrecht, Stefan Breiting and Rainer Drewello (Petersberg, 2019), 190–201.

12. Michalis Olympios, "Fino al tempo delli Re di Cipro": Retro-Gothic and Nostalgic Identities in Venetian Cyprus', in *Ἐν Σοφίᾳ μαθητεύσαντες: Essays in Byzantine Material Culture and Society in Honour of Sophia Kalopissi-Verti*, eds Charikleia Diamanti and Anastasia Vassiliou in collaboration with Smaragdi Arvaniti (Oxford, 2019), 48–63.

campaign, undertaken in the 2000s, and the curtailed potential for technical/laboratory analyses of materials such as wood or lime mortar due to the ongoing military occupation of the island's northern sector, where the monument is located.

What is more, research on the local reception of the Gothic style by religious communities other than the Latins is still in its infancy, obscuring the patronal decisions that led to the adoption of the style for a Greek religious building, as well as the modifications meant to align it with hallowed Greek tradition (such as, possibly, the addition of a dome). Further to this, very little attention has hitherto been paid to the Bedestan's afterlife, namely its impact on the architecture of later Greek churches in both town and countryside. Arguably the most glaring deficiency of all, however, resides in our extremely limited knowledge of the structure's history during the Ottoman period, a field in which research is once again bedevilled by the relative inaccessibility of the primary source material.

'Historic Bedestan' proposed to remedy the currently prevailing situation in several of the aforementioned areas. Given that thoroughgoing archival research was a quintessential part of the project from the very beginning, a number of missions were scheduled to institutions in possession of pertinent materials in Italy (Venice, Rome), Turkey (Istanbul) and Cyprus. Ludivine Voisin (Université de Rouen Normandie), Tassos Papacostas (King's College London) and Georgios E. Markou (University of Cambridge/Princeton University) combed through the Italian archival collections with questions of patronage, use and historical context firmly in mind for the very first time, while Dr Theoharis Stavrides (University of Cyprus) sought to locate relevant Ottoman- and British-period documentation in Turkish and Cypriot archives. The amassed documentary evidence is now being employed in crafting altogether new, innovative syntheses of the history of Nicosia's Greek see and the Bedestan's creation and life course through the Middle Ages and the Ottoman period, to the modern era. Furthermore, the most significant documents uncovered through these missions were always intended to be transcribed and published for the benefit of the wider scholarly community.

In addition to enriching the documentary record, the 'Historic Bedestan' project was committed to reassessing the building's architecture, sculptural and pictorial ornament from the ground up. Michalis Olympios (University of Cyprus and project PI), Thomas Kaffenberger (Université de Fribourg), Michael Willis (British Museum) and Fryni Hadjichristofi (Department of Antiquities, Cyprus) were all engaged in exploring different periods and facets of the building's architectural design, whereas Georgios E. Markou dealt with the surviving or documented relief sculpture and fragments of wall painting. On account of last century's often large-scale interventions to the monument's fabric, on-site examination was required to dovetail with the study of the documentary, photographic

and graphic material regarding twentieth-century excavation, consolidation, restoration and valorisation work. This data is now kept in various Cypriot and British public archives, as well as in two private archival collections (namely those of Michael Willis and Peter Megaw, the latter now kept at the Archaeological Research Unit of the University of Cyprus). Concurrently, the monument's immediate and broader architectural context were evaluated in order to determine the multiplicity of design sources (whether 'Gothic', 'Byzantine' or 'Renaissance'/'*allantica*') that fed into the shaping of each of its constituent parts, as well as the influence the latter exerted on subsequent architectural enterprises, in both an urban and a rural environment. Two research missions were planned and carried out in response to these issues, that is, an intense study trip and photographic survey of Venetian architecture dating from the thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries (carried out by Michalis Olympios) and a study visit to select Cypriot churches of the Greek rite in both town and countryside (undertaken by Thomas Kaffenberger).

In dealing with matters of style and design transmission, an attempt was made to address questions relating to the reception and perception of distinctive artistic and architectural modes in the multicultural environment of Lusignan and Venetian Cyprus: Why was a Byzantine-type dome chosen to cap off a building, the stylistic debts of which were otherwise largely to the majestic urban Gothic structures then gracing Nicosia? Is such a choice revelatory of late medieval Greek attitudes to the Gothic – a style initially associated with the Latin ecclesiastical and secular authorities – and to the island's long Byzantine building tradition, and what could it mean for the formation of Greek visual identity in this period? Ultimately, such queries led back to considerations of patronage: Who could have been responsible for the Bedestan's composite stylistic countenance, and what might have been their social status, professional vocation and creedal affiliation? This cascade of neatly interlocking questions necessitated the implementation of a novel, integrative approach to the study of the history of the Bedestan, calibrated in such a way as to encompass the prosopographical and socio-historical elements of the equation, together with the architectural- and art-historical.

### ***Findings and Analysis***

During the project's two-year run, the 'Historic Bedestan' team concentrated on carrying out research missions in Cyprus, Venice, Rome, Istanbul and London, as already stated in the previous section. What follows constitutes a very brief (and highly selective) outline of the research conducted by team members and the ways in which it contributes to our knowledge and critical reevaluation of the history and architecture of the church of the Panagia Hodegetria in Nicosia and its post-medieval fate.

Research into a new documentary history of the Greek bishopric of Solea/Nicosia and its buildings in the island's administrative and ecclesiastical capital during the

Lusignan and Venetian periods consisted of scouring six archival repositories in Italy for any pertinent unpublished sources: the Archivio di Stato di Venezia (ASVe), the Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana (BNM) and the Museo Civico Correr (MCC) library in Venice, as well as the Archivio Segreto Vaticano (ASV, since renamed the Archivio Apostolico Vaticano or AAV), the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana (BAV) and the Archivio della Congregazione per la Dottrina della Fede (ACDF) in the Vatican, Rome. Although the vast majority of the Cyprus-related documentation kept in these archives and libraries concerns the Latin Church and broader political developments, some new evidence has surfaced to complement what was thus far known about the situation of the island's Greek Church in the later Lusignan and Venetian periods. On account of the project's time constraints and the extremely dispersed nature of the evidence, investigations in the Vatican have yielded fewer untapped documents than those in Venice, which, on the contrary, have proven quite fruitful.

The new data that have come to light prove essential for delving deeper into questions of prosopography and several other facets of the island's ecclesiastical history during the period in question. Highlights include new evidence for the improving fortunes and rising status of Nicosia's Greek prelates vis-à-vis their Latin counterparts in the course of the Venetian period, which set the stage for the mounting tensions observed between the two sees in the aftermath of the Council of Trent (1545–1563). More important-- and the prominence of the bishops in the extant documentation notwithstanding-- additional information has now also come to the fore about the Greek cathedral staff once administering the see and manning the Panagia Hodegetria. Although the positions and titles of some of these dignitaries have long been known (the *skeuophylax*, the *oikonomos*, an *hebdomadarios* and several *papades* employed at the cathedral were mentioned in previously published sources), we now learn, from textual testimony of the late 1560s, of an *oeconomus* of *Solia*, in addition to that of *Sta Oditria*, as well as a *prothopapa* and a *capellanus* of *Sta Oditria*. This is an important discovery, for it shows (among other things) that the distinction introduced between the cathedral staff of Solea and that of Nicosia (i.e., the Hodegetria) following the consolidation of the transfer of the primary seat of Nicosia's Greek see to Solea at the time of the *Bulla Cypria* (1260) was stringently maintained even long after the reestablishment of the Greek bishop in the capital in the later medieval period (note the simultaneous existence of separate *oikonomoi* for Solea and the Hodegetria). Doubtless, the correlation of this and other archival evidence located by the 'Historic Bedestan' project with information drawn from the published sources will enable Ludivine Voisin to write a far more complete account of the history of the Greek see of Solea/Nicosia than has hitherto been possible for the collected essay volume meant to represent the project's ultimate end product.

Further research in Italian archives and monuments has unearthed a wealth of comparative and circumstantial evidence affording a more insightful interpretation of the charges on the six armorial shields carved on the limestone lintel of the principal doorway of the Hodegetria's north front. Placed by consensus in the Venetian period, possibly in about the mid-sixteenth century, these coats of arms have so far eluded secure identification, with the exception of those of the Costanzo, a prominent family of southern Italian origin established on Cyprus and in the Veneto since the late fifteenth century. Nevertheless, solving the puzzle may open up the way to date more accurately than hitherto feasible the entire north façade, and thus to place this major building campaign – the last one undertaken on the site – within its proper context; even more importantly, it may also reveal who was behind this ambitious undertaking. Comparanda in Venice and the Veneto have made absolutely clear that such heraldic groupings usually represented either a group of patrons or officials acting together for the benefit of a religious foundation/public amenity structure, or individuals with a common professional background commemorating their contemporaneous service within the same institution. What is more, consultation of numerous (mostly sixteenth-century) Venetian genealogical treatises and armorial compilations has conclusively shown that the Hodegetria arms find no match therein, thus discrediting the long-held assumption that they belonged to Venetian families. This important step forward opened up a few other avenues of inquiry, involving looking into whether the arms belonged to Cypriot families acting as the cathedral's patrons; whether they represented the armorial bearings of the Hodegetria clergy or even the bishops of Solea/Nicosia; whether they stood for lay individuals acting together in some professional capacity; or whether they constituted corporate emblems meant to promote institutional identity. Proceeding by the process of elimination and by combining evidence from published and unpublished documentary and visual sources, Tassos Papacostas is making a case for the third of these options, advocating that the Hodegetria arms might have belonged to a professional group of some description. It would be tempting to argue, as he does, that the leadership of the *università* (i.e., the town council), which held in its hands considerable power in Nicosian affairs and consisted of members of the local aristocracy (including a Costanzo in the 1550s and '60s), might have had a role to play in the refurbishment of the Hodegetria, in which case the six heraldic shields could represent a combination of higher clergy and procurators of the *università* (in theory, three served simultaneously).

Leaving aside questions of institutional history and patronage, a sustained engagement with various aspects of the Bedestan's architectural design necessitated, first and foremost, a sound understanding of contemporary architecture in both Cyprus and Venice, seeing as the largest part of the present edifice was erected during the Vene-

tian period. Extensive fieldwork in both places demonstrated that, although Italianate *all'antica* architecture made a moderately large impact in Cyprus, especially on major public works such as fortifications or public buildings, Venetian Gothic, which went gradually out of fashion in the City of the Doges by the early sixteenth century, bequeathed Cypriot masonry only a few ornamental motifs with remarkable staying power, such as the cable moulding (the latest datable attestations seem to be from the mid-sixteenth century). This is all the more surprising given how unmitigatedly Gothic the Panagia Hodegetria looks – it would appear that its design drew almost exclusively on local sources (the neighbouring Latin cathedral of Saint Sophia, Saint Catherine and perhaps other Nicosian edifices no longer surviving), a trend that gained momentum everywhere in Europe outside of north and central Italy. Armed with a more intimate familiarity with and a sounder understanding of Venetian architecture, Michalis Olympios is currently exploring the matter further by scrutinising the diffusion of these few Venetian motifs in Cyprus by looking at other media, such as wood carving and painting; the results of such an inquiry should help contextualise the presence of these features at the Hodegetria and contribute towards assigning dates to individual building campaigns there, as well as evaluating the extent of Venice's influence on non-state-run building sites (a category that included most of church building in this period). Moreover, Thomas Kaffenberger has been tracing and evaluating cases of formal cross-pollination between the Hodegetria and Greek churches in both the island's urban centres and the countryside, drawing parallels with relatively high-profile monuments in different regions, ranging from Famagusta's cathedral of Saint George (mid-fourteenth century) to the monastic churches of Saint Mamas, Morphou and the Panagia Eleousa in the Karpas (both sixteenth-century).

The only way to properly approach the Bedestan's complex problems of chronology, masonry stratigraphy and form is through any available records of the structure's past condition and restorations. To this end, all and any information on repair, consolidation and modification works carried out at the site since the beginning of the British period (1878–1960) was sought in the pertinent folders kept at the Department of Antiquities Archive (DAA) and Photographic Archive (DAPA); in a variety of different dossiers held by the Cyprus State Archives (CSA); in unpublished reports by the Department of Antiquities, drawn up during World War II, and other documents now preserved in The National Archives, Kew (TNA); and in the private collections of personal notes and photographic stills in the hands of Michael Willis (who engaged with the edifice's history in the 1980s, long before the most recent bout of restorations) and Peter Megaw (who oversaw the Department of Antiquities' restorations). Many of the written reports, line drawings and photographs contained therein record the building's condition prior to and during the major restoration works undertaken by

the Department of Antiquities in the 1930s, '40s and '50s and were thus invaluable in gauging the authenticity of the present masonry and for learning of the several exciting discoveries made in the course of these thoroughgoing interventions. Only two salient examples need be cited here: Reconstruction of the west end of the arcade framing the main vessel on the south side, carried out in 1940, uncovered a fragmentary fresco of Saint Andrew on the interior face of the west front, concealed under later masonry and apparently never seriously studied by specialists of medieval Cypriot painting; six years later, the replacement of decayed stonework in the southwest pier carrying the dome in the main vessel revealed the existence of an earlier rectangular support (and, thus, an earlier construction phase) encased within it. These instances represent only a minute sample of the new data culled from archival research into the Bedestan's restoration history, and are certain to usher in a radical reassessment of the building's chronology, the spatial and functional arrangement of its medieval and early modern interior, as well as the nature and quality of the artistic media that contributed to its erstwhile adornment.

Theoharis Stavrides' contribution to the 'Historic Bedestan' project was envisioned as the first documentary history of the building during the Ottoman and early British periods, leading up to its restoration and treatment as a monument by the Department of Antiquities. To this end, extensive archival research was carried out at the Prime Ministry Ottoman Archives (Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi, BOA) in Istanbul. The earliest, and certainly the most important unpublished document located on this occasion concerning Nicosia's Bedestan is an order of Sultan Selim II dated 16 Receb AH 981 (11 November 1573) and addressed to the *Beylerbeyi* and the *Defterdar* of Cyprus, which signalled the beginning of the Greek cathedral's Ottoman afterlife. In this order, the sultan responded favourably to a letter from the *Beylerbeyi*, who informed his sovereign of the request of the merchants resident in Nicosia that the ruined church in the market of Aya Sofya (obviously the Panagia Hodegetria, the dilapidated state of which at this stage of its history was not known from elsewhere) be repaired and converted into a *bedestan*, or covered market. The building's use as a marketplace is attested throughout the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries by sporadic references in documents and travelogues (e.g., Cornelis van Bruyn in 1683, Giovanni Mariti in the 1760s) although no archival material has yet been found from that period. Nineteenth-century travellers, however, indicate that, by the middle of that century, the function of the building had shifted to that of a granary and storeroom (see, for instance, Ludwig Ross in 1845, the archduke Louis Salvator of Austria in 1873 or Franz von Löher in 1878). Be that as it may, contemporary Ottoman *vakıf* (pious foundation) accounts, also to be found in Istanbul's BOA, list the Bedestan as one of the foundations sending contributions to the Two Holy Cities of Islam, Mecca and Medina, which

probably meant that the building was partly used as a grain market, yet may also have provided further income to the pious foundation through the renting of shops in the premises. Another set of documents in the CSA concern the building's fate immediately after the British takeover in 1878. Although still in use at that time as a storeroom for grain and cotton, the Bedestan piqued the interest of the Anglican Church, who wished to restore it to Christian worship; the project ultimately foundered due to the reluctance of the British colonial authorities to greenlight an initiative that was likely to provoke the ire of the Muslim community. The continued use of the former church for storage exacerbated the effects of age and insufficient maintenance on its masonry, becoming a cause for concern with the colonial administration and leading to the substantial repairs undertaken in the 1920s by George Jeffery, Curator of Ancient Monuments. Even though brief and sporadic references to some of these episodes in the Bedestan's later history may be found in the earlier literature, many of the pertinent documents were discovered or exploited for the very first time within the framework of the 'Historic Bedestan' project, arguably making its Ottoman-/British-period component its most original contribution to research on the building.

### **Conclusions**

At its conclusion in late February 2019, the 'Historic Bedestan' project had already delved deeper than any other previous research venture into the documentary, architectural and art history of the Bedestan/Panagia Hodegetria from the late medieval to the end of the British period. As may be glimpsed through the pages of this brief report, painstaking archival investigations, both in Cyprus and abroad, as well as a renewed critical look at the fabric of the building itself and its wider monumental context in Cyprus and Italy have generated a host of new and fascinating data poised not only to refine previous interpretations, but to fundamentally change our mental image of the monument, its chronology, its place in Cypriot and European architectural developments and its significance in the history of medieval and early modern Nicosia. The newly emerging impression imparted by the edifice under scrutiny is that of a rich palimpsest of forms (Byzantine, Gothic, *all'antica*), construction phases (with the repeated encasement of earlier architectural vestiges within later building and refurbishment campaigns) and functions (cathedral church, market, storeroom). While in use as a metropolitan church during the Lusignan and Venetian periods, the Hodegetria's conspicuous layering of history must have served the growing jurisdictional and spiritual ambitions of the Greek see of Solea/Nicosia, who would have been eager to showcase the venerable antiquity of their institution and its long presence within the capital's religious landscape in an eloquent response to the challenge of its forced removal to the countryside since the thirteenth century. Perhaps more significantly

for current scholarship, the Greek cathedral of Nicosia encapsulates more than 1,500 years of religious and architectural history – a feat seemingly unmatched by its better-known and more rigorously studied Latin counterparts – and thus justly deserves to play a far more prominent role in future accounts of either.

The dissemination of the final results of the ‘Historic Bedestan’ project via a multi-author publication should go some way towards underlining the monument’s centrality for medieval Cypriot history and partly making up for the relatively tepid scholarly response to the stimulating problems that it continues to pose. Presently in preparation, the book will contain chapters offering up-to-date treatments of all the questions tackled by the project, fully integrating the newly acquired data into the discussion. Select primary source material first discovered or exploited by ‘Historic Bedestan’, whether textual or visual, will be made available to the scholarly community in dedicated appendices. What is more, a combined set of new line drawings (plans, elevation sections, details of moulding profiles etc.) and 3D reconstructions of the building’s phasing will help better visualise the project’s main arguments, suggestions and overall vision for the Bedestan’s complex chronology, which was, rather confusingly, characterised by both spatial agglutination and progressive stratification. Once completed and published, this volume is anticipated to considerably enrich our understanding of a major architectural landmark at the proverbial heart of medieval and modern Nicosia, as well as of the monumental landscape of the late medieval Eastern Mediterranean and Europe as a whole.