

THE ART AND ARCHAEOLOGY OF LUSIGNAN AND VENETIAN CYPRUS (1192–1571)

STUDIES IN THE VISUAL CULTURES OF THE MIDDLE AGES  
VOL. 12

Series Editor:

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# The Art and Archaeology of Lusignan and Venetian Cyprus (1192–1571)

RECENT RESEARCH AND NEW DISCOVERIES

EDITED BY  
MICHALIS OLYMPIOS  
MARIA PARANI

BREPOLS

Cover: Agios Sozomenos village, with the church of the Panagia and the unfinished church in the foreground, and the rock-cut hermitage of Saint Sozomenos in the rocky slope far in the distance. (Photo: Thomas Kaffenberger)



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D/2019/0095/67

ISBN 978-2-503-57803-3

Printed in the EU on acid-free paper.

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# CONTENTS

Acknowledgments	5
Note on Transliteration	6
Introduction: Towards a More Holistic Appreciation of the Art, Archaeology, and Material Culture of Lusignan and Venetian Cyprus <i>Michalis Olympios and Maria Parani</i>	7

## **Rethinking Visual Culture in Lusignan Cyprus**

The Art of Lusignan Cyprus and the Christian East: Some Thoughts on Historiography and Methodology <i>Michele Bacci</i>	21
A Panel in Search of Identity: The <i>Madonna di Andria</i> between Apulia and Cyprus <i>Anthi A. Andronikou</i>	43
Hunting with Falcons and Its Symbolism: A Depiction in the Royal Chapel at Pyrga <i>Dimitrios Minasidis</i>	63

## ***Bau und Kult: Architecture and Cult in the Long Perspective***

Revisiting the Monastic Legacy of Saint Sozomenos near Potamia <i>Nikolas Bakirtzis</i>	83
A Rural Church for an Urban Elite? Thoughts on the Unfinished Sixteenth-Century Church of Agios Sozomenos <i>Thomas Kaffenberger</i>	101
Famagusta and Its Environs in the Venetian Period: The Foundation of the Monastery of Agia Napa and the Origin of Its Fountain <i>Max Ritter</i>	125
A Stone Iconostasis in a Multi-Confessional Sanctuary in Lusignan and Venetian Cyprus? An Art-Historical Approach to the Cave Church in Agia Napa <i>Guido Petras</i>	145

## **In Search of the Lost Urban Landscapes of Lusignan and Venetian Cyprus**

- La représentation picturale d'une architecture disparue : quelques sites chypriotes au début de la période vénitienne illustrés dans un manuscrit du XV<sup>e</sup> siècle  
*Hesperia Iliadou and Philippe Trélat* 169
- The Investigation and Comprehension of a Medieval Building in the Walled City of Nicosia  
*Nasso Chrysochou* 187

## **Facets of Lusignan and Venetian Cyprus through the Lens of Archaeology**

- New Light on the Topography of Nicosia:  
The 'Archbishopric' Excavation  
*Fryni Hadjichristofi* 205
- Avli, Tillyria:  
An Unidentified Medieval Edifice  
*Stylianos Perdikis* 217
- Stirring Pots on Fire:*  
Medieval Technology, Diet, and Daily Life in Cyprus  
*Athanasios K. Vionis, Maria Dikomitou-Eliadou, Maria Roumpou, Nick Kalogeropoulos, and Vassilis Kilikoglou* 241

## **Art Production and Consumption in Venetian Cyprus**

- Quelques réflexions et quelques portes en vue d'une nouvelle approche des iconostases chypriotes du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle  
*Stella Frigerio-Zeniou* 265
- Metalwork Products Destined for Cyprus?  
The Sixteenth-Century Dishes in the Leventis Municipal Museum of Nicosia  
*Elena Poyiadji-Richter* 283
- Negotiating Identity and Status:  
The Silverware of the Cypriot Nobles in Renaissance Venice  
*Georgios E. Markou* 301
- Renaissance Portrait Medals for Eminent Cypriots:  
An Untold yet Telling Tale  
*Tassos Papacostas* 321

Bibliography	351
Index	407
About the Authors	423
Color Plates	429



## REVISITING THE MONASTIC LEGACY OF SAINT SOZOMENOS NEAR POTAMIA\*

NIKOLAS BAKIRTZIS

The legacy of a Byzantine holy man still dominates the experience of the rural landscape in the outskirts of the sprawling city of Nicosia. Located near the village of Potamia and approximately 25 km southeast of the Cypriot capital, the cave chapel of Saint Sozomenos is the site of a surprising flow of pilgrims arriving daily to pay their respects to this Cypriot healing saint.<sup>1</sup> The locality of the homonymous village situated within a valley irrigated by the rivers Alikos and Yalias preserves a rich layered tradition of cult and inhabitation that can be traced back to the Byzantine period and the feats of a solitary monk who presumably sought seclusion in the natural cavern.<sup>2</sup> At the heart of the village of Agios Sozomenos, abandoned since 1964, lie two ecclesiastical monuments whose presence provides evidence for the continuation of religious cult at the site throughout the period of Latin rule in Cyprus.<sup>3</sup> The remaining houses of the village, spreading along the north bank of the

\* This essay builds on the paper presented at the international conference 'Art and Archaeology of Lusignan and Venetian Cyprus (1192–1571): Recent Research and New Discoveries' organized and hosted by the Archaeological Research Unit of the University of Cyprus. I want to thank Maria Parani and Michalis Olympios for their invitation to participate, their constructive editorial suggestions, and for leading this publication effort. My gratitude goes to Athanasios Papageorgiou for his valuable advice and comments. I also want to thank Ourania Perdiki for her generous help and for sharing with me parts of her recently completed dissertation. Many thanks are due to Charalambos Ioannou, Danai Konstantinidou, Harry Varnavas, and Despina Papacharalambous for the beautiful plans and their assistance in the preparation of this essay. Finally, I want to acknowledge the support of the Department of Antiquities as well as the Getty Research Institute and the Getty Foundation, as the final stages of this essay were being prepared under a residential scholarship in Los Angeles.

<sup>1</sup> On the cave chapel, see Athanasios Papageorgiou, 'Λαξευτά ασκητήρια καὶ μοναστήρια στὴν Κύπρο', *Ἐπετηρίδα Κέντρου Μελετῶν Ἱερᾶς Μονῆς Κύκκου* 4 (1999): 33–96, at 47–52; also, Nearchos I. Clerides, 'Ὁ Ἅγιος Σωζόμενος, προλεγόμενα καὶ κείμενο τῆς Ἀκολουθίας', *Κυπριακαὶ Σπουδαί* 2 (1938): 105–20, esp. 106–08; Andreas Stylianou and Judith Stylianou, *The Painted Churches of Cyprus: Treasures of Byzantine Art*, 2<sup>nd</sup> rev. ed. (Nicosia: A. G. Leventis Foundation, 1997), 511–15; Andréas Nicolaidès and Catherine Vanderheyde, 'La topographie culturelle chrétienne de la région de Potamia-Agios Sozomenos', *Cahiers du Centre d'Études Chypriotes* 34 (2004): 251–66. The wall-paintings of the cave chapel are currently studied by Dr Ourania Perdiki in the context of the research project *La constitution des paysages en Orient médiéval: Potamia-Agios Sozomenos (Chypre)*, which commenced in 2000 and is led by the French School at Athens in collaboration with LA3M (*Laboratoire d'Archéologie Médiévale et Moderne en Méditerranée*) and the University of Cyprus. In anticipation

of the systematic study and publication of this important body of material, the present study draws on the available publications and on on-site observations by the author.

<sup>2</sup> The broader Potamia-Agios Sozomenos area was the focus of a systematic interdisciplinary archaeological survey, see Nolwenn Lécuyer and Demetrios Michaelides, 'Archaeological Survey at Potamia', in *Archaeological Field Survey in Cyprus: Past History, Future Potentials*, ed. Maria Iacovou, British School at Athens Studies 11 (London: British School at Athens, 2000), 139–49; Nolwenn Lécuyer et al., 'Potamia-Agios Sozomenos (Chypre). La constitution des paysages dans l'Orient médiéval', *Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique* 125 (2001): 655–78; Nolwenn Lécuyer et al., 'Potamia-Agios Sozomenos (Chypre). La constitution des paysages dans l'Orient médiéval', *Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique* 126 (2002): 598–614. Also, 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. Sabine Fourrier and Gilles Grivaud (Mont-Saint-Aignan: Publications des Universités de Rouen et du Havre, 2006), 241–56. An earlier survey of the Yalias river valley also included the locality, Hector W. Catling, 'The Ancient Topography of the Yalias Valley', *Report of the Department of Antiquities, Cyprus* (1982): 227–36, esp. 234–36.

<sup>3</sup> The village was abandoned by its Turkish Cypriot inhabitants in 1964 due to the eruption of armed hostilities with Greek Cypriots. The incident was described in *Time Magazine*'s February 14, 1964 issue (vol. 83, no. 7). On the medieval churches at the site, see Camille Enlart, *Gothic Art and the Renaissance in Cyprus*, ed. and trans. David Hunt (London: Trigraph, 1987), 170–73; George Jeffery, *A Description of the Historic Monuments of Cyprus: Studies in the Archaeology and Architecture of the Island* (Nicosia: Government Printing Office, 1918; repr. London: Zeno, 1983), 206; Rupert Gunnis, *Historic Cyprus: A Guide to Its Towns and Villages, Monasteries and Castles* (London: Methuen, 1936), 204–05.

Alikos river, point to a rural community inhabiting the site from at least the late medieval period onwards.<sup>4</sup>

Agios Sozomenos's monastic legacy and its Cypriot locality are keys to unlocking this complex landscape and understanding better the spatial relations of its chronologically disparate components. This essay addresses the art and archaeology of the site through the lens of a monastic foundational model, which evolved around the actions of Byzantine holy men establishing a sacred lineage of tradition that secured the subsequent growth of organized monasteries.<sup>5</sup> Asceticism as a prelude to the foundation of organized communal monasticism was widely practiced in Byzantium.<sup>6</sup> Drawing on the legacy of the early fathers of monasticism, this phenomenon became a pattern in Middle and Late Byzantine foundations. Although evidence for this practice has been frequently dismissed due to the hagiographic nature of its textual sources and traditions, an increased scholarly interest in the analysis of monastic sources such as *typika* (monastic foundation documents) and saints' lives has provided a fertile ground to reassess the process of monastic foundations and re-foundations.<sup>7</sup>

In Cyprus, the last centuries of Byzantine rule saw the growth of numerous rural monasteries endowed with elegant churches and decorative programs.<sup>8</sup> These works and their patrons demonstrate the strong socioeconomic mechanisms behind the growth of monastic life in rural Cyprus. In this context, cave chapels active during the Byzantine period and connected to the ascetic deeds of holy men provide valuable testimony to the existence of a monastic foundational scheme that relied on these sites as relics of monastic practice and narrative.<sup>9</sup> Solitary ascetic practice was gradually replaced by organized communities who carefully kept the legacy of their founders, preserving the evidence of their ascetic existence as well as their relics within cavernous chapels that became centers of cult and pilgrimage. Effectively, these Byzantine institutions outlasted the arrival of Western crusaders to the

<sup>4</sup> Lécuyer et al., 'Potamia-Agios Sozoménois 2002', 599–600, 613–14; Lécuyer, 'Marqueurs identitaires', 246.

<sup>5</sup> Nikolas Bakirtzis, 'Architecture and the Monastic Experience', in *Cambridge World History of Religious Architecture*, ed. Richard Etlin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming); idem, 'Locating Byzantine Monasteries: Spatial Considerations and Strategies in the Rural Landscape', in *Experiencing Byzantium*, ed. Claire Nesbitt and Mark Jackson (Farnham – Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2013), 114–23.

<sup>6</sup> Alice-Mary Talbot, 'Founders' Choices: Monastery Site Selection in Byzantium', in *Founders and Refounders of Byzantine Monasteries*, ed. Margaret Mullett (Belfast: Queen's University of Belfast, 2007), 43–62. Also, Svetlana Popović, 'The Byzantine Monastery: Its Spatial Iconography and Sacredness', in *Hierotopy: The Creation of Sacred Space in Byzantium*, ed. Alexei Lidov (Moscow: Indrik, 2006), 149–85, at 169–72; Nikolas Bakirtzis, 'The Creation of a Hierotopos in Byzantium: Ascetic Practice and Its Sacred Topography on Mt. Menoikeion', in *Hierotopy*, 126–49.

<sup>7</sup> Indicatively on the use of *typika* in archaeological and historical research, see Svetlana Popović, 'Are Typika Sources for Architecture? The Case of Monasteries of Theotokos Evergetis, Chilandari and Studenica', in *Work and Worship at the Theotokos Evergetis*, ed. Margaret Mullett and Anthony Kirby (Belfast: Queen's University of Belfast, 1997), 266–84; Alice-Mary Talbot, 'Byzantine Monastic Horticulture: The Textual Evidence', in *Byzantine Garden Culture*, ed. Antony Littlewood, Henry Maguire,

and Joachim Wolschke-Bulmahn (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 2002), 37–41; Konstantinos Smyrlis, 'The Management of Monastic Estates: The Evidence of the Typika', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 56 (2002): 245–61.

<sup>8</sup> George Hill, *A History of Cyprus*, 4 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1940–52; repr. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 1:295–320; Aikaterini Asdracha, 'Η Κύπρος υπό τούς Κομνηνούς', in *Ιστορία τής Κύπρου, τόμος Γ': Βυζαντινή Κύπρος*, ed. Theodoros Papadopoulos (Nicosia: Archbishop Makarios III Cultural Foundation, 2005), 293–412; David M. Metcalf, *Byzantine Cyprus 491–1191*, Texts and Studies in the History of Cyprus 52 (Nicosia: Cyprus Research Centre, 2009), 499–578. Also, Tassos Papacostas, 'Byzantine Cyprus: The Testimony of Its Churches, 650–1200' (D.Phil. diss., University of Oxford, 1999); Stylianos and Stylianos, *Painted Churches*; Tassos Papacostas, 'Monastic Estates in the Middle Byzantine Period: Evidence from Cyprus for Local and Overseas Landowners', in *Medieval Cyprus: A Place of Cultural Encounter*, ed. Sabine Rogge and Michael Grünbart, Schriften des Instituts für interdisziplinäre Zypern-Studien 11 (Münster – New York: Waxmann, 2015), 123–48.

<sup>9</sup> Papageorgiou, 'Λάξευτὰ ἀσκητήρια', 33–96; Slobodan Ćurčić, 'Cave and Church. An Eastern Christian Hierotopical Synthesis', in *Hierotopy*, 216–36. Also, Ludovic Bender, 'Ermitages et monastères rupestres de la Laconie byzantine (XI<sup>e</sup>–XV<sup>e</sup> siècle): archéologie, topographie et paysages' (PhD diss., Université de Fribourg, 2016).

island and flourished during the centuries of Lusignan and Venetian rule. The resiliency of these communities, closely associated with Byzantium, was not coincidental but relied on the spiritual foundations of the aforementioned model laid out before the coming of the Latins.

Indicative of this scheme and providing instructive comparisons to Saint Sozomenos, are two known examples of monastic foundations from the countryside of Paphos: the famous monastery of Saint Neophytos near the village of Tala and the so-called 'Old Enkleistra' (hermitage) of Neophytos near the small village of Souskiou, not far from Kouklia-Palaipaphos, adhere to similar historical, topographical, and organizational patterns.

The site of the monastery of Saint Neophytos remains to this day the focus of a popular cult anchored around the saint's ascetic legacy.<sup>10</sup> Juxtaposed along the two sides of a mountainous ravine are the hermitage and the organized architectural complex.<sup>11</sup> On the western side of the gorge is Neophytos's Enkleistra, offering palpable proof of his ascetic deeds and the establishment of monasticism at the site in the second half of the twelfth century. The frescoed hermitage contains a chapel as well as the saint's cell, featuring his bed, desk, shelves for the contents of his library, as well as his very tomb, which housed his relics after his death.<sup>12</sup> Around the Enkleistra, remains of other cavernous monastic cells suggest the existence of a small lavra of monks that gathered around the cell of their spiritual father. Opposite Neophytos's hermitage, the flatter and more auspicious east side of the ravine accommodates the organized monastery, which developed around the three-aisle domed basilica of Saint Neophytos, dating to the beginning of the sixteenth century.<sup>13</sup> It is worth mentioning that the community's growth and the development of the architectural complex took place under Latin rule following the founder's death.

Another comparable example is the so-called 'Old Enkleistra' of Saint Neophytos located in the Fatalas river gorge close to Souskiou.<sup>14</sup> The link of the cave cell's designation with Neophytos is a local tradition explained by the wide influence of the cult of the saint in the wider Paphos region. The cavernous cell has been identified with the monastery of Saint Epiphanius of Kouklia, a community linked with the activity of the monk and 'enkleistos' (encaged) Euthymios, who resided at the site at the beginning of the thirteenth century.<sup>15</sup> The cave is decorated with colorful frescoes assigned an estimated date in the late fifteenth century.<sup>16</sup> There are also limited remains from an earlier painting layer, stylistically dated to the thirteenth century. The presence of a built tomb, framed by a pointed arch forming an arcosolium and situated in a carved niche in the eastern side of the cavern, suggests the space's funerary use following the prototypical model of an ascetic's cell becoming his tomb and subsequently a site of cult and pilgrimage. The use of the cave as a chapel cannot be substantiated since there is no sanctuary or any other evidence of such a function.

<sup>10</sup> Cyril Mango and Ernest J. W. Hawkins, 'The Hermitage of Saint Neophytos and Its Wall Paintings', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 20 (1966): 119–206; Catia Galatariotou, *The Making of a Saint: The Life, Times and Sanctification of Neophytos the Recluse* (Cambridge – New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

<sup>11</sup> Bakirtzis, 'Locating Byzantine Monasteries', 118–19; Ćurčić, 'Cave and Church', 216–36.

<sup>12</sup> Mango and Hawkins, 'Hermitage of Neophytos', 132–35; Stylianou and Stylianou, *Painted Churches*, 355–69; Papageorgiou, 'Λαξευτὰ ἀσκητήρια', 59; Dimitra Kotoula, 'The Tomb of the Founder-Saint', in *Founders and Refounders of Byzantine Monasteries*, ed. Margaret Mullett (Belfast: Queen's University of Belfast, 2007), 210–33.

<sup>13</sup> Tassos Papacostas, 'An Exceptional Structure in a

Conventional Setting: Preliminary Observations about the Katholikon of Saint Neophytos (Paphos, Cyprus)', in *Caterina Cornaro: ultima regina di Cipro e figlia di Venezia / Last Queen of Cyprus and Daughter of Venice*, ed. Candida Syndikus and Sabine Rogge, *Schriften des Instituts für Interdisziplinäre Zypern-Studien* 9 (Münster – New York: Waxmann, 2013), 293–310; Stylianou and Stylianou, *Painted Churches*, 369–81.

<sup>14</sup> Gunnis, *Historic Cyprus*, 290; Georgios A. Soteriou, *Τὰ βυζαντινὰ μνημεῖα τῆς Κύπρου* (Athens: Ἀκαδημία Ἀθηνῶν, 1935), pls 46, 57a, 74–77; Papageorgiou, 'Λαξευτὰ ἀσκητήρια', 57–59; Bakirtzis, 'Locating Byzantine Monasteries', 119–21.

<sup>15</sup> Papageorgiou, 'Λαξευτὰ ἀσκητήρια', 57–58.

<sup>16</sup> Stylianou and Stylianou, *Painted Churches*, 397–400; Papageorgiou, 'Λαξευτὰ ἀσκητήρια', 59.





Fig. 1. General view of the site of the abandoned village of Agios Sozomenos with the location of Saint Sozomenos's hermitage in the background (Photo: author).

Similar to the monastery of Saint Neophytos, the site of the Souskiou hermitage preserves evidence of both solitary and organized monastic activity.<sup>17</sup> The existence of two more carved caverns, which once contained traces of painted decoration, points to the presence of a small lavra at the site. Furthermore, in close proximity to the hermitage is the small church of Saints Constantine and Helena, which is the only edifice standing from a small monastic complex, evident from the remains of buildings around it.<sup>18</sup> The church contains fresco remains of two layers of painted decoration, dating from the twelfth century and the late fifteenth or early sixteenth century respectively. Most probably, the development of the monastery is directly linked to the hermitage and the small lavra. According to the available evidence we can only hypothesize on the chronological relation of the cave cells to the nearby monastic complex. Textual evidence on the presence of the monk Euthymios and the proposed date of the early painted cycle from the church of Saints Constantine and Helena suggest that both the small lavra and the monastery existed in the early years of the thirteenth century. Nonetheless, considering the known models and traditions of early and middle Byzantine monastic foundations, like that of Saint Neophytos, I believe that ascetic activity at the site, whether initiated or revived by Euthymios, preceded, even for a limited time, the foundation of the organized community.

The cave chapel of Saint Sozomenos is located at the side of an outcrop overlooking the abandoned village of the same name near Nicosia (Fig. 1). The chapel is also known as the Virgin of Agios Sozomenos, a secondary dedication that is possibly explained by the fact that the saint is commemorated on November 21, the feast day of the Presentation of the Virgin Mary to the Temple.<sup>19</sup> The identification of the saint presents a number of challenges due to the lack of hagiographic sources; there is no *vita* preserved and a liturgical text (*ακολουθία*) dedicated to Sozomenos, dating to 1780,

<sup>17</sup> Bakirtzis, 'Locating Byzantine Monasteries', 119–21.

<sup>18</sup> Athanasios Papageorgiou, *Ιερά Μητρόπολις Πάφου: ιστορία και τέχνη. 1950 χρόνια από την ίδρυσή της*

(Nicosia: Imprinta, 1996), 74; Gunnis, *Historic Cyprus*, 291; Soteriou, *Βυζαντινά μνημεία*, pls 38, 74a, 75, 77a.

<sup>19</sup> Nicolaïdès and Vanderheyde, 'Topographie culturelle', 254.



makes only general reference to the miracle-working and healing abilities of the saint.<sup>20</sup> Mentioned as ‘Sozomenos of Potamia’ by Leontios Machairas, he has been linked to the so-called ‘Three Hundred Alaman Saints’ as well as to Saint Sozomenos of Karpasia.<sup>21</sup> Until new evidence emerges, the proposed tenth-century date of the earliest fresco decoration in the cave chapel, described below, should be considered as a *terminus ante quem* for his physical presence at the site.<sup>22</sup> Nonetheless, as explicated below, the iconography of scenes from the life of the saint included in the decoration of the cave chapel suggests that the more plausible identification for Sozomenos is that of a local hermit, who resided, died, and was buried in the cavern near Potamia, thus planting the root of an important local cult.

The spacious cave chapel has a north–south axis and an approximate length of 8.80 m to a width of 3.60 m (Figs 2–3).<sup>23</sup> Its maximum height reaches almost 3.70 m (Fig. 4). The north part of the cave provides a compact yet instructive example of an ascetic’s hermitage turned burial chapel. A niche extending from the western wall to almost 3.80 m in length to the east and of an approximate width of 1.70 m accommodates what appears to be a tomb (2.60 m length to 0.95 m width) carved in the natural bedrock floor of the cave. The preserved level of the tomb’s bottom lies approximately 0.90 m below the cave chapel’s floor level. At the east end of the tomb was a carved well, which was originally used by the resident of the cave and was later utilized as an *agiasma* (sacred



Fig. 2. Interior view, Hermitage of Saint Sozomenos, Agios Sozomenos (Photo: author).

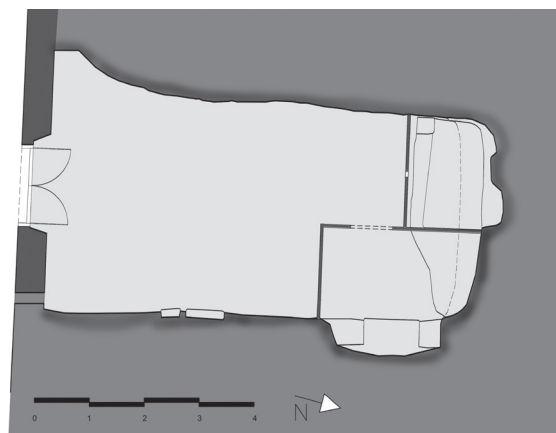


Fig. 3. Ground plan, Hermitage of Saint Sozomenos, Agios Sozomenos (Plan: Charalambos Ioannou, Harry Varnavas, Danai Konstantinidou).

<sup>20</sup> Clerides, ‘Ο Άγιος Σωζόμενος’, 110–20.

<sup>21</sup> Leontios Makhairas, *Recital Concerning the Sweet Land of Cyprus Entitled ‘Chronicle’*, trans. and ed. Richard MacGillivray Dawkins, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1932; repr. Famagusta: L’Oiseau, 1970 and New York: AMS Press, 1980), 1:§ 32 and § 77; Archimandrite Kyprianos, *Ιστορία χρονολογική τῆς νήσου Κύπρου* (Venice: Nikolaos Glykes, 1788; repr. Nicosia: Εκδόσεις Κ. Επιφανίου, 2001), 525. See the related discussion in Clerides, ‘Ο Άγιος Σωζόμενος’, 105–10; Papageorgiou, ‘Αἰξενυτὰ ἀσκητήρια’, 48; Nicolaïdès and Vanderheyde, ‘Topographie culturelle’, 252–53; Sophia Kalopissi-Verti, ‘The Murals of the Narthex. The Paintings of the Late Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries’, in *Asinou across*

*Time: Studies in the Architecture and Murals of the Panagia Phorbiotissa, Cyprus*, ed. Annemarie Weyl-Carr and Andréas Nicolaïdès, Dumbarton Oaks Studies 43 (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2012), 115–208, at 167–68; Ourania Perdiki, ‘L’iconographie des saints locaux à Chypre (X<sup>e</sup>–XV<sup>e</sup> siècles)’ (PhD diss., Aix-Marseille Université, 2016), 458–59. Also, Kostas P. Kyrris, ‘The Three Hundred Alaman Saints: Problems of Origin and Identity’, in *The Sweet Land of Cyprus*, ed. Anthony Bryer and George S. Georghallides (Nicosia: Cyprus Research Centre), 203–35, at 215.

<sup>22</sup> Papageorgiou, ‘Αἰξενυτὰ ἀσκητήρια’, 48.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 47–49, pl. 20; for an earlier description, see Clerides, ‘Ο Άγιος Σωζόμενος’, 106–08.

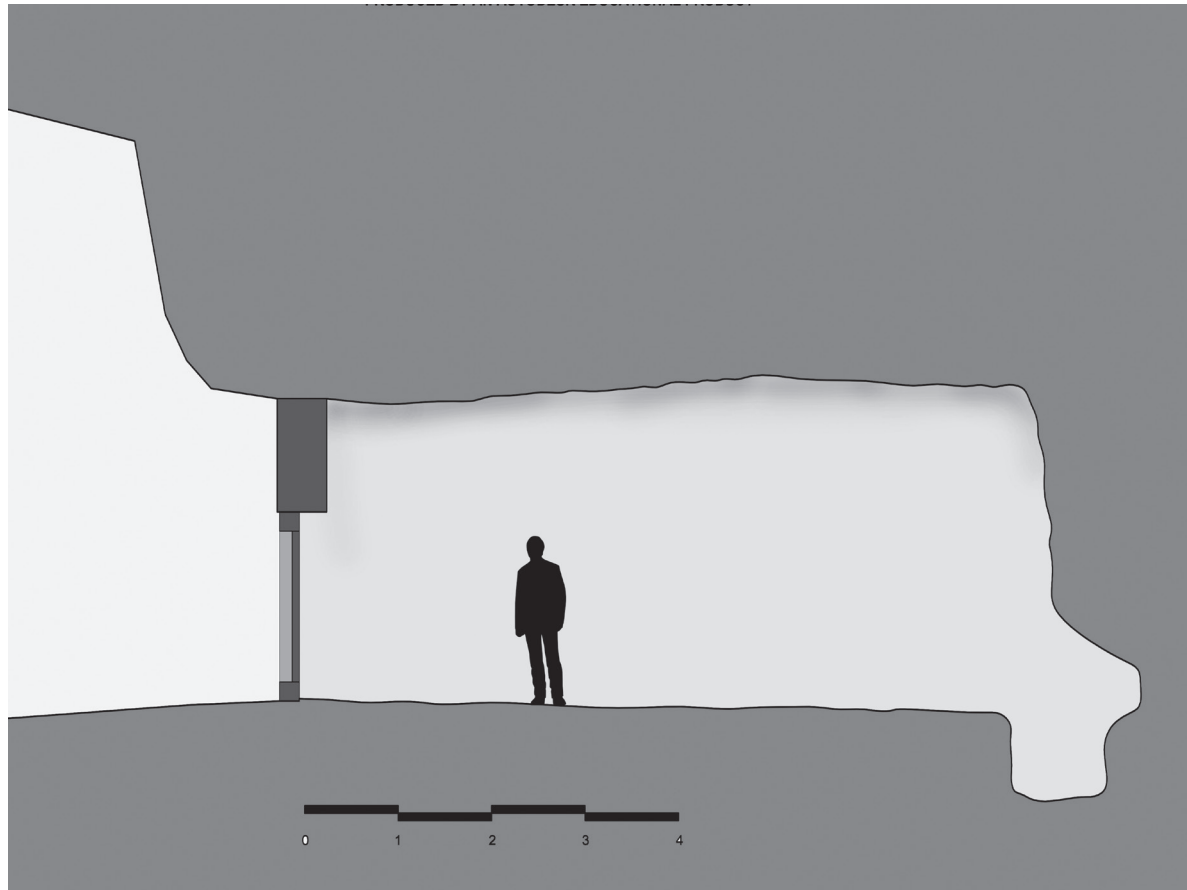


Fig. 4. Longitudinal section, Hermitage of Saint Sozomenos, Agios Sozomenos (Plan: Danai Konstantinidou, after Papageorgiou, 'Λαξευτὰ ἀσκητήρια', pl. 20, with corrections).

water fountain).<sup>24</sup> Today it is dry and filled with rubble. Carved niches above and around the tomb suggest their use as shelves or to accommodate icons, candles, lamps, and vessels.

The northern end of the eastern side extending to the northeastern corner of the cave accommodates a small sanctuary featuring a shallow apse carved within the eastern wall. The space of the sanctuary is separated today from the rest of the cave by means of wooden screens. A carved altar topped with a flat stone slab rises in the middle of the apse at almost 1 m from the cave's floor. The southern part of Sozomenos's cave seems to have been enlarged at a later period, presumably after the hermitage's transformation into a burial chapel that served the needs of pilgrims venerating the saint. As attested by an inscribed date over the lintel of the bivalve wooden door to the chapel, the southern side of the cavernous space was closed with a built wall in 1912, when the Greek Cypriot inhabitants of the village protested the use of the cave as a stable for animals and acquired a court decree assigning them the care of the chapel.<sup>25</sup>

The cave chapel preserves remains of wall-paintings which once fully decorated its interior.<sup>26</sup> Most of the frescoes remaining today are preserved in the inner, northern part of the cave, as they were away from the open southern side and thus less exposed to weather conditions. A total of three

<sup>24</sup> Papageorgiou, 'Λαξευτὰ ἀσκητήρια', 48.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid. 49–52, pls 21–27; Lécuyer et al., 'Potamia-Agios Sozoménois 2001', 125–26; Nicolaidès and Vanderheyde,

'Topographie cultuelle', 252–54. Also, see, Perdiki, 'L'iconographie des saints locaux', 460–71.

layers of painting have been observed in the eastern part of the north side of the chapel, suggesting that the earliest decoration of the cavern concentrated around the saint's tomb. The last layer appears to have covered the entirety of the cavernous space.

Only two painted fragments from the earliest layer survive, both on the north wall of the cave chapel; they are tentatively dated to the tenth century.<sup>27</sup> The first, originally over the saint's tomb and now kept in the Byzantine Museum of the Archbishop Makarios III Foundation in Nicosia, features the frontal representation of six standing monastic saints. The first from the left is Saint Sozomenos followed by Saints Jason, Galaktion, Agapios, an unidentifiable saint, and the last one preserved, Saint Ariston. The second fragment is located at the eastern end of the north wall and shows part of the burial of the saint, a theme directly associated with the physical existence of the saint's tomb. It is overlaid by remains of two more fresco layers with the more recent representing the same theme. The theme of the second layer cannot be deciphered. However, based on the fact that the earliest and latest layers of painting feature the same theme, we can assume the same for the intermediary layer, which unfortunately cannot be dated until further evidence becomes available.

The latest and best-preserved layer of frescoes dates from the thirteenth to the fourteenth century.<sup>28</sup> It features wall-paintings of high quality and execution, with animated pictorial narratives that resonate with developments in Palaiologan art. In the sanctuary space, the figure of the Theotokos Platytera dominates the carved apse.<sup>29</sup> She is represented frontally from the waist up, with her open hands raised in prayer, and is flanked by the Archangels Michael and Gabriel to her right and left respectively. The archangels, smaller in size than the Virgin, are depicted full-length, turned and slightly bowing towards the Theotokos; with their left hand, they are acknowledging her presence, while with their right hand they are each swinging a censer in her direction. The faces of the Theotokos and the archangels, as well as almost all the faces of figures in the chapel have been vandalized and forcefully destroyed. Lower in the apse are the standing figures of four Church Fathers holding open scrolls and divided in two pairs, turned towards the center of the apse facing each other: Saints Spyridon and John Chrysostom to the left and Saints Basil and Triphylios to the right. Immediately to the south of the apse are the partial remains of two panels painted one over the other featuring standing deacon saints. Further along the eastern wall of the chapel is a large *Deësis* composition with Christ enthroned flanked by the Theotokos and John the Baptist. On the north side of the apse, next to the depiction of the Theotokos, is the standing figure of a deacon saint holding an incense box and a censer, and below lies, the bust representation of Christ Emmanuel within a carved arched niche, possibly related to the *prothesis* of the small chapel.

The lower zone of the cave chapel's north and west walls preserves the representations of monastic saints. On the north wall, and below the two panels visually narrating Sozomenos's miracles, is the fresco depiction of four standing monastic saints.<sup>30</sup> The remains of inscriptions allow the identification of the second and third from the left as Saints Galaktion and Jason respectively. Below them, painted on the recessed surface of the niche containing Sozomenos's tomb are the depictions of five more monastic fathers, Saints Agapios, Ariston, Galaktion, Sozomenos, and Jason, represented from the waist up. On the northern end of the west wall is the full-length representation of Saint Paul of Thebes and, to his right, the partly preserved depiction of Saint Theodosius Cenobiarch (Fig. 5).<sup>31</sup> Further along the west wall towards the south side of the cave are the painted remains of the feet of four more monastic saints.

The absence of any evidence of frescoes of the Christological cycle scenes customarily represented in Byzantine churches is intriguing. The presence of frescoes depicting scenes from the

<sup>27</sup> Papageorgiou, 'Λαξευτὰ ἀσκητήρια', 48–49, pls 21–22.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 52; Nicolaïdès and Vanderheyde, 'Topographie culturelle', 253.

<sup>29</sup> Papageorgiou, 'Λαξευτὰ ἀσκητήρια', 49–50.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 51.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 52, pl. 27.





Fig. 5. Saint Paul of Thebes and Saint Theodosius Cenobiarch. Fresco, west wall, north end, Hermitage of Saint Sozomenos, Agios Sozomenos (Photo: author).

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life of Saint Sozomenos suggest a funerary and pilgrimage-related function of the cavern focused on the veneration of the saint. Representations of various episodes from the life of the miracle-working saint occupied the surfaces of the sides and ceiling of the chapel.<sup>32</sup> A total of eight painted scenes survive: three on the ceiling and five on the north and west walls of the cave. The partly preserved inscription in the upper edge of the eastern wall, above the aforementioned *Deësis*, could signal the presence of one more scene from the life of the saint. These scenes visually narrate the life of the local saint, emphasize his healing attributes, and thus enhance the cavern's function as a site of cult and pilgrimage. At the same time, the descriptive details of these representations help connect this hermitage-turned-funerary-chapel with its immediate surroundings and to establish the topography of a cultural landscape.

On the northwestern corner of the ceiling, a partially preserved fresco depicts a young Sozomenos, dressed in a white robe over an inner blue tunic and with his head wrapped with a white head cover, conversing with the bishop of Kition according to the partially preserved inscription.<sup>33</sup> The latter is presented seated on a throne under a ciborium and accompanied by a deacon standing behind him. It is worth noting that the young Sozomenos does not bear a halo, while the bishop and the deacon do. A domed church building is represented behind the bishop and the deacon, helping to locate the event presumably in Kition. A partially preserved unidentifiable depiction of a building can be observed behind the standing figure of Sozomenos. Adjacent to the south side of this panel are the scanty remains of one more scene probably featuring young Sozomenos as it can be ascertained from the preserved lower part of his white robe and blue tunic.

Immediately to the east on the ceiling of the cave is one more scene from the life of the young saint.<sup>34</sup> He is represented standing and dressed as in the previous scene as he welcomes, slightly lowering his head, the bishop of Kition accompanied by a large group of haloed deacons and monks. The setting of the event is barely traceable due to the bad preservation of the fresco. Sozomenos is depicted in front of an arched entryway set in what appears to be the outline of an abstract mountainous formation. Furthermore, with his right hand the saint points behind him – a gesture of invitation to his hermitage. Directly to the south of this scene, the preserved haloed heads of a group of figures, including the bearded head of a man, and a partially preserved inscription mentioning a bishop are the only remains of one more scene possibly involving the same main actors, Sozomenos and the bishop of Kition.<sup>35</sup>

While the painted scenes occupying the ceiling of the cave were dedicated to the life of young Sozomenos and his establishment as a celebrated ascetic monk, the upper zone of the vertical surfaces

<sup>32</sup> On the representation of healing miracles in Byzantine art, see Nancy Patterson Ševčenko, 'Healing Miracles of Christ and the Saints', in *Life is Short, Art Long: The Art of Healing in Byzantium*, ed. Brigitte Pitarakis (Istanbul: Suna and İnan Kiraç Foundation, Pera Museum, 2015), 26–40.

<sup>33</sup> Papageorgiou, 'Ααξευτὰ ἀσκητήρια', 50, pl. 25. The inscription reads in Greek: '[O] ΑΓΘΟΣ ΔΙΑΛΕΓΟΜΕΝΟΣ ΤΟΝ ΕΠΙΣΚΟΠΙΟ ΤΩΝ ΚΙΤΕΩΝ' (the saint conversing with the bishop of Kition). References to the inscriptions describing the represented scenes follow their reading and publication by Athanasios Papageorgiou. Contrary to Papageorgiou's identification of the white-robe figure conversing with the Kition bishop as young Sozomenos (the same figure appears in two more painted scenes), Pari Kalamara suggested that the represented figure, lacking a halo, is a female pointing to the similarities of her vestments with those of Anastasia

Saramalina in the narthex of the church of the Virgin Asinou near Nikitari, see Pari Kalamara, 'Le vêtement byzantin ou syrien d'après les pierres tombales', 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. Bruneilde Imhaus, 2 vols (Nicosia: Cyprus Department of Antiquities, 2004), 2:107–35, at 120. Perdiki, 'L'iconographie des saints locaux', 470–71, discusses the matter corroborating Papageorgiou's suggestion for the representation of young Sozomenos. This is the most probable identification based on the central position of the white-robed figure in the iconographic composition of the particular scenes as well as due to the fact that the preserved inscription mentions a male conversant (διαλεγόμενος) of the bishop of Kition.

<sup>34</sup> Papageorgiou, 'Ααξευτὰ ἀσκητήρια', 50.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 50.





Fig. 6. *Saint Sozomenos healing the lame man*. Fresco, west wall, upper register, north, Hermitage of Saint Sozomenos, Agios Sozomenos (Photo: author).

of at least the western and northern walls of the cave accommodated scenes from the later life of Saint Sozomenos and in particular his miracles. Beginning with the northern of the two preserved frescoes on the west wall of the cave, the saint to the left bears a halo and is depicted older with white hair and beard (Fig. 6). He holds a walking stick and is dressed as a monk with a dark brown and gray mantle over a tan *chiton* (tunic). In this specific scene, he extends his right hand in a healing gesture towards the right leg, stretched on a stool, of a bearded man supporting himself with a crutch. An inscription over the head of the saint reads: ‘the Saint healing him (a man) with an amputated leg’.<sup>36</sup> The saint is depicted in front of a building with a lean-to tiled roof while behind the sick man is the representation of a church with a pitched tiled roof and a clearly outlined apse, also covered with red tiles, projecting from its eastern end. This chapel is represented as having a door in its west side and a second one, with a blind arch over the door’s lintel, in its south side. The exact same building is depicted in the adjacent scene to the south. In this partly preserved fresco and related inscription, Saint Sozomenos blesses a

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 51, pl. 26. The inscription in Greek reads: ‘ΑΓΙΟΣ ΣΩΖΟΜΕΝΟΣ ΗΘΕΛΕΝ ΤΟΝ ΠΟΔΑΝ ΕΧΟΝΤΑ ΕΓΤΟΜΕΝΟΝ’.





Fig. 7. *Saint Sozomenos healing the man with the hunched back*, detail: depiction of church. Fresco, west wall, upper register, south, Hermitage of Saint Sozomenos, Agios Sozomenos (Photo: author).

man who is depicted bending and is unable to stand straight.<sup>37</sup> The church is clearly depicted behind the man in the upper right corner of the panel (Fig. 7).

At the western end of the north wall, the standing figure of Saint Sozomenos is represented holding a cane with his left hand and blessing with his right hand a group of kneeling men in *proskynesis*, who extend their arms towards him (Fig. 8). Once again, the architectural setting is the same. The building with the lean-to roof rises behind the men, while Sozomenos, to the left, is depicted in front of the abovementioned church. An inscription commemorates the miraculous healing of the

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 50. The inscription in Greek reads: 'Ο ΑΓΙΟΣ ΣΩΖΟΜΕΝΟΣ ΑΝΟΡΘΟΙ ΤΩΝ ΕΠΙ ΓΗΣ

ΣΗΝΓΓΙΠΤΩΝΤΑ' (Saint Sozomenos restores to health the man bowed to the ground).





Fig. 8. *Saint Sozomenos healing the sick*. Fresco, north wall, west, Hermitage of Saint Sozomenos, Agios Sozomenos hermitage (Photo: author).

sick ('the Saint heals the sick'), while a second inscription provides a glimpse into the healing process mentioning that the 'sick lie down at the feet of the Saint'.<sup>38</sup> This is a direct reference to the healing powers of the saint, and hence an allusion to the significance of his tomb as a pilgrimage site.<sup>39</sup>

A final miracle scene lies adjacent to the aforementioned one, towards the east. On the right side of the fresco composition, the standing saint, with the same church behind him, blesses the leader

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 51. The inscriptions in Greek read: 'Ο ΑΓΙΟΣ ΣΩΖΟΜΕΝΟΣ ΤΟΥΣ ΝΟΖΟΥΝΤΑΣ ΗΑΤΕ' and 'Η ΕΝ ΝΟΣΩ ΚΑΤΑΚΟΙΝΤΕ ΤΗΣ ΠΟΣΗΝ ΤΟΥ ΑΓΙΟΥ'.

<sup>39</sup> The reference to the sick lying down could also allude to the pilgrims spending the night in the cavern in preparation for their healing ritual, which possibly involved drinking the holy water from the well inside the cavern. On methods of healing in pilgrimage sites and churches, including incubation (*ἐγκοίμησις*) and drinking holy water, see Alice-Mary Talbot, 'Pilgrimage to Healing Shrines: The Evidence of Miracle Accounts', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 56 (2002):

153–73, at 159–61; also, Vincent Déroche, 'Dream Healing: From Asklepios to the Physician Saints', in *Life is Short, Art Long*, 12–24. On the practice of incubation in churches, specifically in the basilica of Saint Demetrios in Thessaloniki, see Charalambos Bakirtzis, 'Ο Ξενών του Αγίου Δημητρίου: εικονογραφικά ζητήματα', in *Medicine and Healing in the Ancient Mediterranean World*, ed. Demetrios Michaelides (Oxford – Philadelphia: Oxbow, 2014), 308–19. Also, more recently, Stéphanos Efthymiadis, 'L'incubation à l'époque mésobyzantine: problèmes de survivance historique et de représentation littéraire (VIII<sup>e</sup>–XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle)', in *Le saint, le moine et le*



of a group of eight men occupying the left part of the panel and standing in front of the tiled-roof building. An inscription celebrates the healing of men suffering from fever.<sup>40</sup> Lower, on the east part of the north wall is the representation of the burial of the saint.<sup>41</sup> The poorly preserved fresco features the representation of an elderly bearded haloed monk leaning over the body of the deceased saint. Behind the two figures is the outline of the entrance to a cave, presumably the hermitage of the saint, which provides the topographical setting for the event.

Without doubt the most important aspect of the hermitage's decoration is the cycle of painted scenes from the life of Saint Sozomenos. These images were part of the effort to establish the chapel as a cult center through the documentation of the saint's 'credentials' for sainthood. At the same time they emphasized the cave chapel's function as a pilgrimage site anchored around the saint's tomb and his legacy as a healer.<sup>42</sup> What is particularly intriguing is the artist's attention to the descriptive accuracy of the architectural and topographical setting of the represented scenes. There is an obvious effort to locate the presented events and to provide the viewer with specific and therefore recognizable details. The representation of the saint's cavernous hermitage in the scenes depicting the young Sozomenos meeting the bishop of Kition and his burial offer a direct reference to the actual cave chapel thus linking the physical tomb with the visual narrative of Sozomenos's life.

Even more interesting is the repeated depiction of the small church in all the healing miracle scenes of the older Sozomenos. The presence of the tiled-roof building juxtaposed with the church provides additional evidence of the artist's effort to represent a particular setting for the saint's miracles; a locale only a few meters away from Sozomenos's hermitage.

Below and to the south of the cave chapel extend the ruins of the abandoned village of Agios Sozomenos. Approximately at its center are two ecclesiastical buildings, which offer additional evidence of the locality's medieval topography (Fig. 9). The most impressive is the three-aisle vaulted church of Saint Mamas, whose eclectic mixture of Gothic architectural style and Renaissance decorative elements has led to a range of proposed dates ranging from the fourteenth to the early sixteenth century.<sup>43</sup> Structural evidence indicates that the edifice was never completed, thus permitting



Fig. 9. Saint Mamas church with the church of the Virgin in the background, Agios Sozomenos (Photo: author).

*paysan: mélanges d'histoire byzantine offerts à Michel Kaplan*, ed. Olivier Delouis, Sophie Métivier, and Paule Pagès (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2016), 155–69.

<sup>40</sup> Papageorgiou, 'Λαξευτὰ ἀσκητήρια', 51. The inscription in Greek reads: 'Ο ΑΓΙΟΣ ΣΩΖΟΜΕΝΟΣ ΗΜΕΝΟΣ ΤΟΥΣ ΠΥΡΕΣΣΟΝΤΑΣ'. It is worth considering that this iconographic detail could be an allusion to the particular locality being an area endemic to fevers and other related contagious diseases due to

the area's proximity to the river bed and the existence of mosquitos. I want to thank Maria Parani for pointing to this aspect of the scene's iconography.

<sup>41</sup> Papageorgiou, 'Λαξευτὰ ἀσκητήρια', 51–52.

<sup>42</sup> Talbot, 'Pilgrimage to Healing Shrines', 153–73.

<sup>43</sup> Enlart, *Gothic Art*, 170–72; Jeffery, *A Description*, 206; Nicolaïdès and Vanderheyde, 'Topographie culturelle', 254–55. See also Thomas Kaffenberger's essay in this volume.



Fig. 10. Church of the Virgin, view from the southeast, Agios Sozomenos (Photo: author).

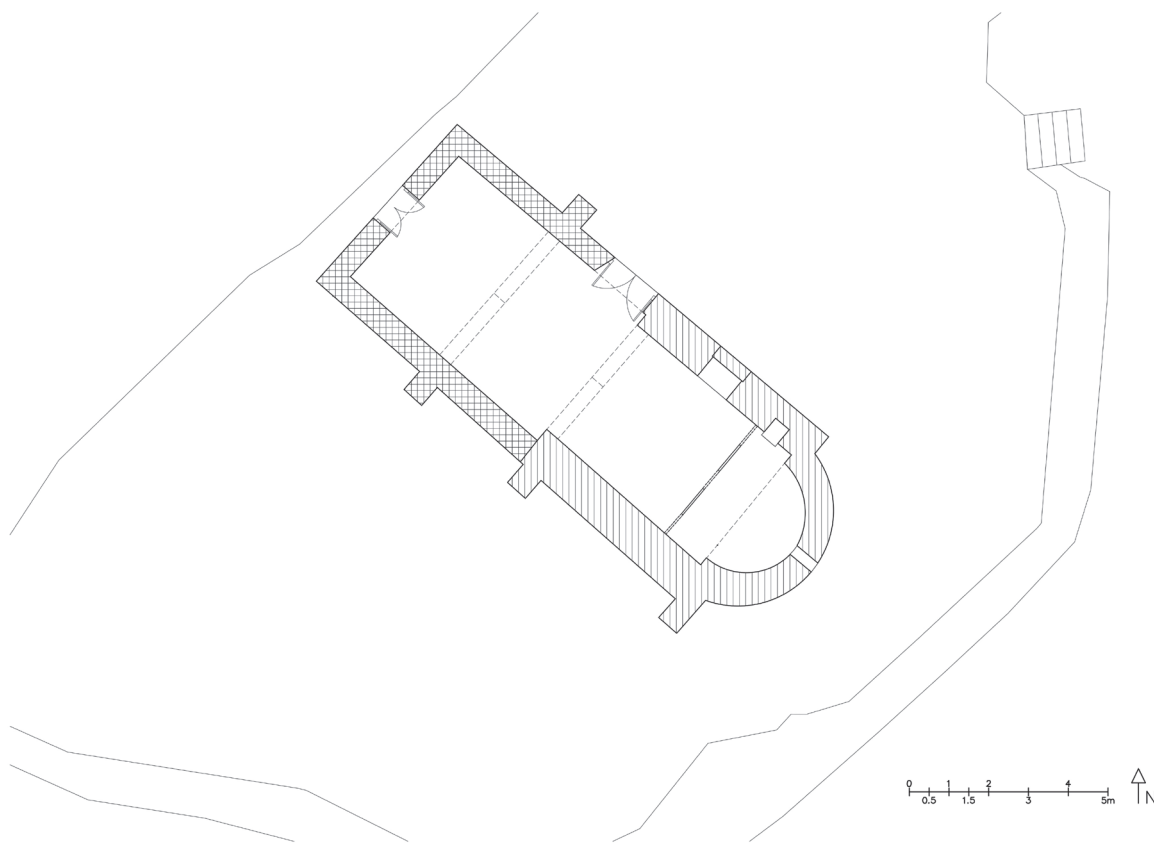


Fig. 11. Ground plan, church of the Virgin, Agios Sozomenos (Plan: Charalambos Ioannou and Harry Varnavas).

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an array of hypotheses about its final plan and vaulting. The most probable hypothesis is that the building was covered with barrel vaults and a dome over the nave. Nevertheless, the church's architecture, typology, and decoration seem to be connected with a range of examples of ecclesiastical edifices in Cyprus dating from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Of particular interest are two finely carved and decorated arcosolia, built against the inner south wall of the church on each side of the centrally located door. They were probably intended to accommodate patrons' burials, presumably related to the nearby Potamia manor, thus indicating the planned funerary function of the building and its connection with the nearby hermitage of Saint Sozomenos.<sup>44</sup>

A few meters east of the Saint Mamas basilica is the small church of the Virgin, a building largely snubbed in descriptions of the Sozomenos locality (Fig. 10).<sup>45</sup> Indicatively, Camille Enlart dismisses the edifice as a 'small, wretched Byzantine church', while early descriptions of the hermitage and the cult of Sozomenos also deny the chapel any particular attention.<sup>46</sup> The church of the Virgin is rectangular in plan (approximately 12.30 m in length to 5.35 m in width) and carries a pitched tiled roof over a barrel vault that is internally braced by two large transverse arches (Fig. 11). A semicircular apse topped by a separate tiled roof projects from the eastern side of the chapel, which can be accessed through two doors, one in the west and one in the north side of the building. The western part of the small church is a later extension. Three buttresses against the exterior south wall and one on the north provide structural support, and appear to be related to the chapel's western extension. Two glazed ceramic bowls inserted at the apex of the barrel vault over the *naos* point to a repair of the roof in the eighteenth or early nineteenth century.

The original chapel had approximately the same width but was almost half in length (approximately 6 m) (Fig. 12). The outline of a blocked door opening is still visible on the exterior northern wall of the chapel. A blind arch over the door lintel must have accommodated a fresco depiction of the Virgin or a patron saint. West of the blocked door are the partial remains of a fading fresco featuring a military saint on horseback, possibly Saint George.<sup>47</sup> The presence of external fresco decoration could very well indicate the existence of a now lost portico or shed, extending from the north side of the church. In the interior, the eastern part of the chapel preserves limited remains of painted decoration with a proposed date in the fourteenth or fifteenth centuries. On the southern wall of the church next to the sanctuary, the figures of the Virgin Hodegetria with the Christ Child are represented within a painted arched frame imitating a colonnaded arcade. Immediately to the east, within another arched frame, is the figure of an unidentifiable monastic saint, possibly Saint Anthony. Further to the south, now inside the sanctuary space, Saint Zosimas is depicted turning west, presumably towards the missing figure of Saint Mary of Egypt. Finally, the figure of a deacon saint is preserved on the southern jamb of the sanctuary apse.

Although no historical evidence provides any concrete links between the church of the Virgin, the unfinished complex of Saint Mamas, and the cave chapel of Saint Sozomenos, their physical proximity is undeniably calling for a reconsideration of the locality's Byzantine and medieval history. Furthermore, the topographic arrangement of these three focal points of religious practice resembles the Paphos examples I discussed earlier.

In this context, the overlooked church of the Virgin holds a key role in understanding the chronological development of this topographical configuration. The original smaller chapel predates the Saint Mamas church, thus being the earliest surviving medieval building in close proximity to the

<sup>44</sup> Enlart, *Gothic Art*, 172; Nicolaïdès and Vanderheyde, 'Topographie cultuelle', 255; Gilles Grivaud, *Cyprus – Venice: Cultural Routes* (Nicosia: Cyprus Tourism Organization, 2011), 22.

<sup>45</sup> We cannot be sure of the original dedication of the church to the Virgin. Saint George has also been suggested

as the patron saint, see Nicolaïdès and Vanderheyde, 'Topographie cultuelle', 255–56.

<sup>46</sup> Enlart, *Gothic Art*, 170; Clerides, 'Ὁ Ἅγιος Σωζόμενος', 106–10.

<sup>47</sup> Nicolaïdès and Vanderheyde, 'Topographie cultuelle', 256.





Fig. 12. The eastern part of the church of the Virgin, view from the north, Agios Sozomenos (Photo: author).

Sozomenos hermitage. The iconography of the painted decoration of the cave chapel provides a link with the small church of the Virgin, which I propose is the chapel represented in the scenes from the life of the healing saint. The distinctive small chapel represented in the hermitage's frescoes resembles the church of the Virgin in its original form, that is, before its western expansion.<sup>48</sup> This identification carries significant implications in the context of Saint Sozomenos's cult as it directly connects the cave chapel containing the saint's tomb and the small church of the Virgin.

Furthermore, the representation of the church in the hermitage's frescoes suggests that the church existed at the time the cavern's interior was decorated with scenes from the saint's life, a conclusion that fits their proposed dating to the fourteenth century. There is little doubt that the artist intended to provide a recognizable visual reference for pilgrims visiting Sozomenos's hermitage and

<sup>48</sup> Representations of existing church buildings or actual architectural models were common in Byzantium, as they helped establish direct visual and ideological links between the representations of saints and patrons and their foundations. On the broader topic, see Slobodan Ćurčić, 'Architecture as Icon', in *Architecture as Icon: Perception and Representation of Architecture in Byzantine Art*, ed. Slobodan Ćurčić and Evangelia Hadjistryphonos (Princeton: Princeton University Art Museum, 2010), 3–37; Evangelia

Hadjistryphonos, 'Presentations and Representations of Architecture in Byzantium: The Thought behind the Image', in *Architecture as Icon*, 113–54. See, also, the related discussion of Late Antique examples by Maria Christina Carile, 'Memories of Buildings? Messages in Late Antique Architectural Representations', in *Images of the Byzantine World: Visions, Messages and Meanings. Studies Presented to Leslie Brubaker*, ed. Angeliki Lymberopoulou (Farnham – Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011), 15–33.

to locate the saint at the site of the church of the Virgin, thus extending the sacred realm of his healing presence.<sup>49</sup> In addition, it is worth considering that the depiction of the tiled-roof building juxtaposed with the church in the scenes of the saint's miracles was meant to indicate the presence of a settlement, therefore offering additional evidence for the existence of the Agios Sozomenos village at the time. The discovery of a hoard of medieval coins near the church of Saint Mamas has set a *terminus post quem* in the second half of the fourteenth century for the village's foundation.<sup>50</sup>

At the center of these connections was the cult of Saint Sozomenos, which developed after his death and subsequent burial inside his hermitage similar to the example of the Enkleistra of Saint Neophytos. In this context, it is time to consider the inclusion of a missing monastic component in the cultural landscape of the Sozomenos locality. As in the examples of numerous other monastic foundations, the solitary hermit attracted disciples who gathered around him forming a small lavreotic community.<sup>51</sup> A partially preserved carved cavern located a few meters east of the cave chapel of Saint Sozomenos could suggest the existence of other monks residing in caves following the example of their spiritual father. We can only hypothesize about later developments drawing from the traditions of Byzantine monasticism. After Sozomenos's death and under Latin rule, the small community of monks continued its life and, with the necessary support from local rural communities, established his hermitage shrine as the focal point of a cult that gained popularity. Dedicated caretakers, most probably monks, tended to the needs of pilgrims seeking the help of the healing saint. As explicated above, the church of the Virgin was directly linked with the healing cult and it is possibly what remains of a small monastery or settlement that developed in the more auspicious area below the hermitage's location. The aforementioned example of the 'Old Enkleistra' of Neophytos close to Souskiou and its relation to the church of Saints Constantine and Helena provides a useful comparison.

The proximity of Saint Sozomenos's hermitage to the royal manor and estate of Potamia is particularly important as it provides an instructive context for the growth of the saint's cult.<sup>52</sup> Architectural, artistic, and historical evidence leaves no doubt that the healing attributes of Saint Sozomenos attained wider renown during the Lusignan period and continued to do so and to attract pilgrims under Venetian rule.<sup>53</sup> This was possible in an area that was not isolated in a distant corner of

<sup>49</sup> An instructive discussion of the topographical connotations of pilgrimage to the Holy Land included in the painted decoration of churches and chapels is provided in Henry Maguire, 'Pilgrimage through Pictures in Medieval Byzantine Churches', in *Architecture and Pilgrimage, 1000–1500: Southern Europe and Beyond*, ed. Paul Davies, Deborah Howard, and Wendy Pullan (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), 21–37.

<sup>50</sup> Lécuyer et al., 'Potamia-Agios Sozoméno 2001', 676–77; Lécuyer, 'Marqueurs identitaires', 246. The village appears by name, along with Potamia, on the map included in *Additamentum I* of Abraham Ortelius's 1573 edition of *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum*, adopted from the work produced by Venetian engraver Giacomo Franco in 1570, see Andreas Stylianou and Judith A. Stylianou, *The History of the Cartography of Cyprus* (Nicosia: Cyprus Research Centre, 1980), 59–62.

<sup>51</sup> On the spatial development of Byzantine monasteries, Popović, 'The Byzantine Monastery', 149–85; Bakirtzis, 'Locating Byzantine Monasteries', 115–17.

<sup>52</sup> On Potamia, see Nolwenn Lécuyer, 'Le territoire de Potamia aux époques médiévale et moderne: acquis récents', *Cahiers du Centre d'Études Chypriotes* 34 (2004): 11–30; Lécuyer, 'Marqueurs identitaires', 241–56.

<sup>53</sup> Saint Sozomenos is also represented in fourteenth-century painting cycles at the church of Saint Nicholas of the Roof in Kakopetria and at the Virgin Phorbiotissa of Asinou near Nikitari, as well as in the church of the Holy Cross of Agiasmati near Platanistasa (1494), the church dedicated to him (1513) and the church of the Archangel Michael (1514) at Galata, and the church of the Virgin tou Kampou in Akapnou (middle of sixteenth century), see Perdiki, 'L'iconographie des saints locaux', 460–71; Kalopissi-Verti, 'The Murals of the Narthex', 168. On the historical context of pilgrimages for the Greeks and the Latins in Latin Cyprus, see Gilles Grivaud, 'Pèlerinages grecs et pèlerinages latins dans le royaume de Chypre (1192–1474): concurrence ou complémentarité?', in *Identités pèlerines*, ed. Catherine Vincent (Mont-Saint-Aignan: Publications de l'Université de Rouen, 2003), 67–76; Also, Tassos Papacostas, 'Decoding Cyprus from Late Antiquity to the Renaissance: Discordant Visions, Saints, and Sacred Topography', in *Cyprus and the Balance of Empires: Art and Archaeology from Justinian I to the Coeur de Lion*, ed. Charles A. Stewart, Thomas W. Davis, and Annemarie Weyl Carr (Boston: American Schools of Oriental Research, 2014), 187–201.

the Cypriot countryside but situated in a prosperous rural locality close to the capital city of Nicosia. Furthermore, the specific area of Potamia and Agios Sozomenos was directly linked to the royal court, a fact that provides a valuable insight into the supporting networks of local Orthodox cults in Cyprus under Latin rule.<sup>54</sup> At the Potamia locality, the veneration of a Byzantine saint did not pose a cultural or ideological threat to the Lusignan and Venetian rulers of the island. On the contrary, Saint Sozomenos's healing cult was an integral component of the area's cultural landscape. Beyond its local rural manifestation, it is important to highlight the broader dimension of the cult of Saint Sozomenos. Indicatively, when the patriarch of Antioch Ignatius II came to Nicosia in the middle of the fourteenth century, he commissioned a wooden cross containing the relics of forty-four saints, including Saint Sozomenos of Potamia, which was kept in a royal foundation and used for processions against disease and natural disasters such as locusts and droughts.<sup>55</sup> In this context, the construction of the basilica of Saint Mamas only a few meters west of the church of the Virgin highlights the importance of Sozomenos's cult as it came to strengthen an existing tradition, which evidently had grown in influence and repute. The possible link of the church's patronage with the Singlitico family, who since 1521 acquired and financially developed the fief of Potamia, further attests to the importance of the healing cult of Saint Sozomenos.<sup>56</sup>

The layered architectural heritage of the locality of Agios Sozomenos provides an instructive example of the historical complexity of the Cypriot landscape. At the center of it lies the cult of the hermit Sozomenos, who sought solitude inside the particular cavern overlooking the fertile valley of the Yialias and Alikos rivers. Based on the tentative dating of his hermitage's earlier fresco remains in the tenth century, and until new evidence emerges, we can only hypothesize about the time of his presence at the site. Nonetheless, the cave chapel of Saint Sozomenos belongs to the same group of Byzantine hermitages turned funerary chapels and pilgrimage sites associated with monastic communities that flourished during the period of Latin rule in Cyprus.<sup>57</sup>

The ascetic legacy of monastic fathers like Saint Sozomenos and Saint Neophytos and Euthymios, among many others, provided the basis for the establishment of monastic communities and local cults serving a key role in the religious life of rural Cypriot populations. Whether drawing on new or revived monastic traditions, their hermitages became focal points of ritual and pilgrimage that sustained the role of Orthodox monasticism during the centuries of Latin rule. Monks and rural communities relied on the cultural influence of these sites to secure resources as well as political support. Hagiographic narratives expressed in texts, decorative programs, and oral traditions enriched the cultural experience of rural localities embedding them with traditions, ritual, and cult that were shared by both Latins and Greeks.



<sup>54</sup> On religious life under the Lusignans, see Chris Schabel, 'Religion', in *Cyprus Society and Culture 1191–1374*, ed. Angel Nicolaou-Konnari and Chris Schabel, Medieval Mediterranean 58 (Leiden – Boston: Brill, 2005), 157–218, esp. 212–15.

<sup>55</sup> Makhairas, *Recital*, § 77. Also, Clerides, 'Ο Ἅγιος Σωζόμενος', 110.

<sup>56</sup> Chrysa A. Maltezou, 'Νέαι εἰδήσεις περὶ Εὐγενίου Συγκλητικοῦ ἐκ τῶν Κρατικῶν Ἀρχείων τῆς Βενετίας', in *Πεπραγμένα Α' Διεθνoῦς Κυπριολογικοῦ Συνεδρίου. Γ. Νεώτερον Τμήμα*, ed. Theodoros

Papadopoulos and Menelaos Christodoulou (Nicosia: Society of Cypriot Studies, 1972–73), 227–44; Benjamin Arbel, 'Greek Magnates in Venetian Cyprus: The Case of the Synglitico Family', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 49 (1995): 325–37; repr. in idem, *Cyprus, the Franks and Venice, 13<sup>th</sup>–16<sup>th</sup> Centuries* (Aldershot: Variorum Reprints, 2000), VII; Lécuyer, 'Marqueurs identitaires', 248–49; Grivaud, *Cyprus – Venice*, 22.

<sup>57</sup> Bakirtzis, 'Locating Byzantine Monasteries', 114–23, 131–32.