

THE ARCHITECTURE, CONSERVATION HISTORY, AND FUTURE OF THE ARMENIAN CHURCH OF FAMAGUSTA, CYPRUS

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The medieval Armenian church of Famagusta, Cyprus, lying in the northwestern or Syrian quarter of the city (Fig. 1), provides a case study through which to raise issues concerning the historical conservation of Famagusta's cultural heritage.² This article surveys aspects of the building's history, its conservation record, and proposes how it might play a role in any future plans to vitalize the historical centre of the city. The structure may, if utilized in concert with the other historical structures of Famagusta, function to contribute to the rejuvenation of this medieval walled town (Doratli *et al.* 2007:65-88).

Though not very well known today Famagusta has an extremely rich history and was once renowned in Europe and the Levant. Cyprus came under the control of a European crusader dynasty, the Lusignans, after Muslim victories in the Holy Land expelled the crusaders from the region. Guy de Lusignan had been the King of Jerusalem before losing his kingdom to Saladin's forces in 1190. Instead of retreating to the Lusignan ancestral homelands in France, Guy purchased Cyprus from King Richard of England, who had recently conquered it. Thus began the 300 year rule of the Lusignans on Cyprus, which lasted until the

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² Known as the "Surb Astuacacin" in Armenian. This attribution has been made by Dickran Kouymjian, Haig & Isabel Berberian Professor and Director of Armenian Studies, California State University, Fresno. This designation is echoed in: Plagnieux P. and Soulard T., *L'Art Gothique en Chypre*, 2006.

Venetians took control in 1489. The fate of Famagusta, at first a minor port, was intimately tied to these events. Its importance grew steadily through the first two centuries of Lusignan rule, reaching its apogee around 1350-65.



Fig. 1: The Armenian Church in the Syrian Quarter of Famagusta, Cyprus
(Photo Allan Langdale)

Numerous travellers from the medieval and renaissance periods visited cosmopolitan Famagusta and recorded their impressions. It was a city where, in the words of the 14th century German traveller Ludolph von Suchen, 'from the rising of the sun to its setting...the tongues of every nation are heard and read and talked'. He noted that the city was 'directly opposite Armenia, Turkey and Acre', and was 'the richest of all cities, and her citizens [were] the richest of men' (von Suchen 1336 in Jeffery 1983:102). For Emmanuel Piloti, who visited in 1411, commerce and belief lived harmoniously in a 'city [which] has a long merchant street with nine arcades representing all the Christian nations of the West' (Piloti 1411 in Marangou 2002:101). The Cathedral of St. Nicholas, the coronation church for the crusader kings

of Jerusalem after the fall of Jerusalem, was, and still is, the most memorable sight in the city. Travellers could be forgiven for momentarily believing they were in one of the great medieval cities of northern France rather than on an island in the eastern Mediterranean. From Famagusta's bustling port ships sailed to such cities as Alexandria, Antioch, Rhodes, Constantinople, Candia (Crete), Venice, Valetta (Malta), Naples, Pisa, Barcelona, Bruges, and even London. Stupendous wealth resulted from these maritime associations and the highly profitable exchanges that were made on Famagusta's exotic Levantine merchandise.

Yet the meteoric rise of Famagusta, which by the mid-fourteenth century was considered amongst the world's richest cities, was followed in the late 14th and 15th centuries by a slow decline. Earlier prosperity brought neither peace nor security to Cyprus or to Famagusta in the later middle ages.³ When the Genoese seized Famagusta in 1373 (the remainder of Cyprus remained under Lusignan control) Philippe de Mézières, a contemporary chronicler, concluded that 'The tyrannical oppression and the inhuman avarice of the Genoese' impoverished the whole kingdom of Cyprus (Goopland 1969:295). Similarly, the Cypriot chronicler Leontios Makhairas lamented that 'a malignant devil has become jealous of Famagusta,' as he watched the city begin a terminal decline (Makhairas in Dawkins 1932:101). Its fate, he felt, was sealed 'after the coronation of the younger Peter, the son of King Peter, because of the quarrel which arose with the Genoese: [and] the trade went to Syria' (Makhairas in Dawkins 1932:91). The Venetians regarded Famagusta in 1476 as 'the key and heart of Cyprus' (Jeffery 1983:112) and they gained control of the city, and all of Cyprus, in 1489. The Venetians began a campaign to repopulate the island with financial incentives to their subjects in Corfu and the Morea (Arbel 2000:184) and by the end of the Venetian period (1571) the population of Famagusta had risen from 4,500 to 10,000.

Fearing an Ottoman attack, especially in the second half of the 16th century, the Venetians refurbished Famagusta's city walls and bastions to contemporary standards of renaissance military

³ Dante, for example, wrote disparagingly when he alluded to the disastrous rule of the Lusignan King of Cyprus Henry II (the period in which the Armenian church was built). The complete section from Canto XIX 145-148, in *The Divine Comedy*, reads: "In proof of this let everyone pay heed / to Nicosia's and Famagusta's lot / whose own beast makes them wail and shriek as he / keeps pace with all the others in this pack."

engineering. But in the end these modifications were to no avail as Famagusta fell to Ottoman forces in 1571. The role of the Armenians in Famagusta is unknown, but Gunnis notes that in the siege of Nicosia the Armenians actually supported the Ottoman forces against their hated Latin overlords (Gunnis 1936:40).

Three centuries of neglect followed which, combined with earthquakes and plagues, left a mere ghost of a city by the time the British arrived in 1878. A Scottish photographer, John Thomson, who visited in that same year, called Famagusta ‘a place of ruins, a city of the dead, in which the traveller is surprised to encounter a living tenant’ (Thompson 1985:49). Frenchman Camille Enlart, the principal historian of gothic and renaissance architecture on Cyprus, took magnificent photographs in the 1890s which captured both the triumph and the tragedy of the decaying buildings (Enlart 1985). Further despoliation of the monuments was permitted during the construction of the Suez Canal and Port Said whereby, in their earnest need for vast amounts of cut stone, the British allowed merchants to treat the ancient buildings as convenient quarries, inspiring a lament from an Englishman who responded in defence of the historical architecture of the city, especially the city’s walls:

“Famagusta is one of the most precious specimens of medieval fortification left in the world. It can never be reproduced or reborn, since the time that bred it is dead. Now in our enlightened age, when they know the value of such relics, are the remains of the old city to be wantonly destroyed before our eyes?” (Haggard 153)

The British administered Department of Antiquities of the Famagusta region, under Theophilus Mogabgab, eventually embarked on a concerted campaign of revitalisation, stabilisation and restoration of Famagusta’s key monuments, including the Armenian church. But the struggle for ENOSIS through the 1950s, and the demands placed on the British elsewhere led to their departure and the creation of the Republic of Cyprus in 1960. Strife between Greek and Turkish Cypriots on the island followed. The Armenian church, like many of the other historic monuments of Famagusta, was used as a makeshift shelter for Turkish Cypriot families seeking refuge in the walled city. Much mural art was obliterated in those days by smoke from encampment fires in

the church interior. The Turkish military intervened in 1974, dividing the island into two distinct ethnic and political regions. At this time the Armenian church was fenced off within a military zone (just recently released to civilian access), while the self-declared Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus was isolated diplomatically and economically from the rest of the world. None of this served the city of Famagusta well and soon another period of neglect descended upon this and other churches.

The historical value of Famagusta is recognized by many scholars who also acknowledge the precarious position in which Famagusta now finds itself. In 2006, 32 years after the division of the island, Peter Edbury, the foremost authority on Medieval and Crusader Cyprus, wrote:

“It seems to me that, like the old city at Akko (Israel), Famagusta ought to be a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and I suspect that it is largely the fact that since 1974 Famagusta has been in the control of a regime that has been almost universally denied diplomatic recognition that has prevented moves in that direction.”⁴

Though there seems to be a revival of academic interest, especially since the opening of the borders between north and south in 2003, the continued absence of international cooperation on a practical level ensures that the question of Famagusta’s cultural welfare remains a problematic issue.⁵ The case of the Armenian church amply highlights these facts.

⁴ Peter Edbury to Michael Walsh. Personal communication. Professor Nicola Coldstream, noted for her publications on Gothic architecture in Cyprus, wrote ‘All the medieval buildings, however, urgently need conservation. The stonework will soon be past saving, so time is on no one’s side.’ Nicola Coldstream to Michael Walsh. Personal Communication.

⁵ For many years studies of the city and its architecture were based on Camille Enlart’s pioneering *Gothic Art and the Renaissance in Cyprus* (1899), and the later surveys of George Jeffery (1918) and Rupert Gunnis (1936). In the 1980s Enlart’s work was translated into English, with a foreword by Nicola Coldstream. In 2006 the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres published *L’art Gothique en Chypre*, eds. Jean-Bernard de Vaire and Philippe Plagnieux, containing comprehensive essays by numerous French scholars at the forefront of work on Famagusta’s architecture. In 2007 the World Monument Fund placed the entire walled city on their Endangered Sites list, and in 2008 a documentary film, *The Stones of Famagusta: the Story of a Forgotten City*, was completed by filmmakers Allan Langdale and Dan Frodsham. In 2008 two conferences are planned to invigorate research on the city and to plan for its future.

The Armenian Church of Famagusta

The walled historic zone of Famagusta is shaped like a large trapezoid with walls facing more or less north, south, east and west, each of the four sections roughly 800 meters in length (Fig. 2). The east walls run along the sea shore where the port, currently closed to the public, has numerous facilities. The northeast corner of the fortifications includes the city's castle, which was situated to protect the entrance to the harbour, and which had its own moat, once filled with sea-water. A dozen bastions, mostly towering demi-lunes, and a spectacular ravelin at the southwest corner of the walls, are just some components of Famagusta's impressive military architecture. The Martinengo Bastion, an imposing renaissance period angled bastion built by the Venetians in preparation for an Ottoman siege, dominates the northeast corner of these fortifications. The Armenian church lies just inside the Martinengo bastion and is one of a quintet of lovely medieval churches including the Church of St. Mary of Carmel, the Jacobite church (the 'Tanner's Mosque'), the Church of St. Anne, which was converted to a Maronite church early in its history, and the Nestorian Church. All five are found in what was the city's Syrian quarter.

A brief account of the Armenians in Famagusta and the church's conservation history will give some sense of the significance of this structure among the many more often-studied ecclesiastical and secular historical buildings which populate the winding streets of medieval Famagusta. The primary source for the 20th century restoration work is the Mogabgab archive which is housed in the office of the Department of Antiquities in Famagusta.

Although we often associate Armenia with the modern nation state of that name (and with the areas in eastern Turkey around Lake Van), an Armenian kingdom along the Cilician coast had existed through the years of conflict with the Selçuk Turks from the late 11th through the 13th centuries. Continually under pressure from Muslim forces that extended their influence into Asia Minor, Armenians had turned to Cyprus for shelter during times of crisis, even before the Latin Lusignan kingdom was created there (Coureas 2001:349-360; Grivaud 2000:44-48; Coureas 1995:33-71; Dedeyan 1995:122-131; Mutafian 1993). Strategic marriages through the middle ages linked the royal

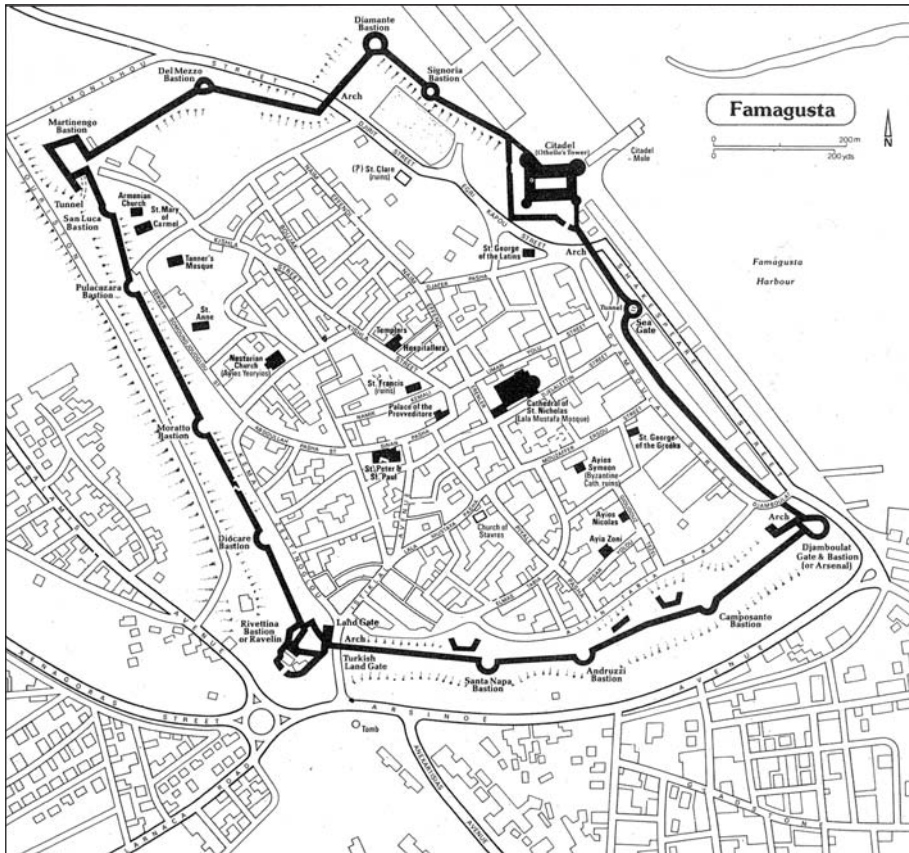


Fig. 2: Map of the medieval walled city of Famagusta showing the principal churches (from Enlart, Trigraph edition, 1987)

families of Armenia and Cyprus and by 1393 the Lusignan kings not only held the titles of kings of Cyprus and Jerusalem but of Armenia as well (Plagnieux and Soulard 2006:258). Jean Richard has suggested that Famagusta's economy flourished at least in part because of its proximity to Cilician Armenian ports and its profitable trade relations with them (Richard 1972:221-222 cited in Jacoby 1983:148). No doubt there were Armenians settled in Famagusta from very early in the middle ages. Other members of the Armenian community arrived at Famagusta in a large influx as refugees fleeing a Mameluk invasion of Cilicia. Jacopus of Verona writes a heart-wrenching account of what he saw in June of 1335 as he arrived in the port of Famagusta:

“...and that very hour that I entered the harbour several large vessels and galleys and *gripparia* from Armenia, from the city of Logaze, crowded with old men, children, woman, orphans and wards more than fifteen hundred in number, who were flying from Armenia because the Soldan (Sultan) had sent hosts, many and mighty, to destroy it, and they burnt all that plain and carried off captive more than twelve thousand persons, over and above those they had slain by the sword, and they began to destroy it, as I was told by the Venetian merchants who were there, on Ascension Day, which fell on May 25th. O Lord God, sad indeed it was to see that multitude in the square of Famagusta, children crying and moaning at their mothers' breasts, old men and starving dogs howling.” (Cobham 1908:17)

Famagusta was no stranger to receiving émigrés (such as those that flooded in after the fall of Acre in 1291) and the city seems to have been able to absorb this significant influx. Apparently this refugee community was able to get on its feet quickly in the rarefied commercial environment of 14th century Famagusta, perhaps owing to an already established Armenian presence in the city. By the second half of the 14th century, certainly, there was a substantial and prosperous Armenian community, with an Armenian Bishop and a number of important civic offices held by members of the community (Jeffery 1918:143).

Philippe Plagnieux and Thierry Soulard have identified documents referring to an Armenian church, Saint Marie-de-Vert, in

the years 1311-1317 which, if referring to this church would make it very early in the chronology of Famagusta's medieval churches (Plagnieux and Soulard 2006:258-260). Dickran Kouymjian has identified Armenian colophons that talk of manuscripts being copied at the church of the Holy Virgin of the Ganchavor monastery, between 1305-1317 (Kouymjian 1976). A monk by the name Hovhannes wrote:

“This book was written by the hand of the senseless and sinning Hovhannes, servant of God, in the year of the Armenian calendar 1317, in the island of Cyprus, at the Door of the Cathedral of the mother of God, which is a monastery and is called the caller, in the city of Maghusa.” (Mogabgab 1943:54-55 cited in Plagnieux and Soulard 2006:258)

The present church may indeed be synonymous with the edifice of St. Marie de Vert, which is also sometimes referred to as ‘the Green Monastery’. Robert Francis gives a much later date of 1346 for its construction and this makes it tempting to see the building as a votive offering, as Jeffery suggests, giving thanks for deliverance from the war to which Jacopus of Verona so eloquently alludes (Francis 1949:47; Jeffery 1918:143). Certainly a mid-fourteenth century date accords much more closely with the general mid-century acceleration in church building in Famagusta. If built between 1311 and 1317 it would make it one of Famagusta's earliest extant churches, predated perhaps only by St. George of the Latins. In short, the stylistic aspects of the church do not accord well with the historical timeline or the sparse historical archive. We have no way of being certain, at this point, whether this church that stands in Famagusta today is the church of the ‘Green Monastery’ or the ‘Holy Virgin of the Ganchavor’ monastery. Nineteenth century photographs reveal extensive ancillary structures around the church, yet no accurate plan of the monastic buildings was ever made. Only further archaeological excavation and more historical documents coming to light will help us in making a more secure designation on the church's original name and its date of construction.

The other buildings surrounding the Armenian church, including the monastery and perhaps a chapter house of some kind, were likely destroyed during the Venetian period when the immense Martinengo bastion was constructed and a *cavaliere* added to the walls nearby. Some

evidence of the Armenian church's subsidiary structures was made clear in the late 1930s and early 1940s when the Cyprus Department of Antiquities, led by Theophilus Mogabgab, both renovated the church and did minor excavations of the area immediately surrounding the edifice. When the church was visited by George Jeffery in 1917 he saw the remnants of a small sacristy attached to the apse (signs of a curving arch, cut into the northeast pier buttress, may be further evidence of this structure), and a photograph by Camille Enlart (Fig. 3), made in 1896, shows this small sacristy-like structure partially intact. Even today, one can just make out the place where it abutted the northern part of the apse. The excavations of 1937 revealed the extent of this appendage and other subsidiary buildings which Mogabgab thought to be habitations for a small convent.



Fig. 3: Photograph of the Armenian church c. 1890 by Camille Enlart (Médiathèque du Patrimoine)



Fig. 4: Drawing by Edmond Duthoit, pencil on paper, 1862 (Museum of Picardie, Amiens)

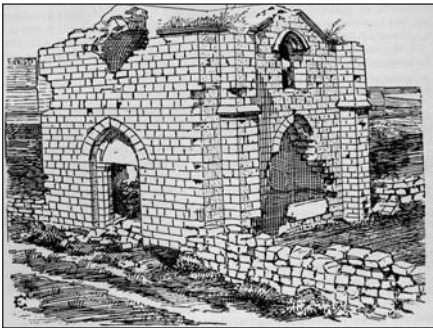


Fig. 5: Drawing by Camille Enlart, 1896 (from Enlart, Trigraph edition, 1987)



Fig. 6: Photograph by T. Mogabgab during 1930s restoration work (the Mogabgab Archive, Famagusta)

Two documents, also published by Jean-Bernard de Vaivre (de Vaivre 2000:24), serve as valuable markers of the condition of the building from the mid- to the late 19th century, a period when the church seemed to have deteriorated significantly. In 1862 Edmund Duthoit made a drawing of the Armenian Church which shows it in generally good condition except for some jamb blocks which had fallen away from around the south portal (Fig. 4). Duthoit's drawing also shows the surviving small double-arch bell tower at the crest of the west pediment. Thirty-four years later Camille Enlart made a drawing of the church from the same angle (Fig. 5). The ensuing decades seem to have taken their toll, as Enlart's image shows catastrophic failure of the south side due to the collapsing of the aforementioned jamb blocks, and partial ruin of the vaulting at both the western and southern tips of the pediments. The bell tower was completely lost in a cave-in of the western vault. In Enlart's drawing a crude stone wall has been built extending out from the west façade, likely composed of some of the Armenian church's fallen stones (and those of the Carmelite church merely twenty meters away). It indicates a function some ancient churches and monasteries in northern Cyprus still have today: a sheep fold. Rupert Gunnis noted that in 1907 the building had received some long-overdue attention to protect the paintings therein, when holes in the walls were blocked up and the west doorway fitted with a sturdy gate (Gunnis 1936:40).

The most significant campaign of restoration began in 1937 when Mogabgab commenced work which would not be completed, because of wartime delays, until 1945 (Fig. 6).⁶ His numerous photographs indicate that some work had been done on the church since Enlart's time, though no record of this exists. Perhaps maintenance was undertaken by members of the Armenian community who still lived in Famagusta.

Reconstruction and consolidation of the vaulting and roof was the most crucial aspect of the initial stages of the project. Some lower portions of the masonry had also dissolved from splashing rain (a problem still prevalent in many of Famagusta's historical structures). Several decomposing blocks were replaced. The south doorway, so damaged in Enlart's photograph, received attention from Mogabgab, as

⁶ The church had been leased to the local Armenian community who wished to use it. Apparently they provided the funds to undertake the restoration. See Megaw 1951:176.

did the north portal and west doorway, which was reconstructed. A set of semi-circular steps, still visible today, were uncovered below the south portal, and wooden doors were put on the west and south entrances. A series of pictures from April 22nd, 1945, show the Armenian community, formally dressed and gathered with their patriarch on the steps of the church for the first services in many years (Fig. 7). We are reminded that the renovation of buildings is a social event and revitalizes not only buildings but peoples' lives.



Fig. 7: Photograph by T. Mogabgab, April 22, 1945. Re-opening celebrations for the newly restored Armenian church (the Mogabgab Archive, Famagusta)

Architectural Description

The church interior has a simple, single groin-vault with a semi-circular, pointed semi-domed apse at the east end. Portals at the north, west, and south sides give access to the interior, which has an elegant *piscina* in the north wall near the apse, where liturgical instruments were stored.⁷ A typical Lusignan-style hood mould arcs over it, further emphasizing the niche's sacral importance and visually linking the interior architectural articulation with the exterior, where the windows have similar hood moulds. Tantalizing vestiges of the *piscina's* gothic tracery remains; scant remnants which indicate the splendour of the original furnishings which were augmented by colourful fresco paintings. The gothic accent, along with the pointed arches used throughout, is also evidence that the masons and architects of the church were Latins, or versed in Latin styles, working for Armenian patrons. Indeed, the masonry of the Armenian church is consistent with that of the Latin Carmelite church beside it. Like many of Famagusta's churches, the Armenian church, too, is a hybrid of architectural and decorative forms.

The church is modest in dimension, approximately 5.3 metres wide, 7.5 metres long, 8.0 metres high, and architecturally unpretentious. It is likely that the original patrons would have preferred the building to have a dome, as this would have placed it more firmly in the typology of the apse's of other small Armenian chapels which are numerous in Asia Minor. The cruciform chapels of St. Mariam at Talin (7th century), the chapel at Ashtarak (7th century), Zibini (7th century), and the more contemporaneous medieval church of the Holy Mother of God at Areni (c. 1321 C.E.) are but a few examples of relatively small Armenian churches which are dominated by central domes. Perhaps a dome was planned for the Famagusta church when funds became available.

The mouths of acoustic vases are barely visible in the much pitted masonry of the vaulting. Acoustic vases are common in the churches of Famagusta. Their use was first proposed for theatres by the ancient Roman architect Vitruvius, specifically to amplify the sound and make it reverberate. They were used in Byzantine and Orthodox churches as

⁷ An almost identical niche can be found in the apse of the west chapel on the south side of St. Nicholas Cathedral in Famagusta.

well, to make the priest's chanting more resonant, which is why they are often also called 'resonant cavities'. Similar cavities are found in the Jacobite and Carmelite churches nearby and in the pendentives of the Orthodox church of St. Nicholas in Famagusta's Greek quarter.

The sole mural articulation is a fillet moulding running around the springing of the apse's semi-dome. A rectangular niche in the wall of the south side of the apse may have held holy water or other liturgical supplies. The only other feature of note in the interior is the boss which decorates the centre of the crossing of the vaults. It has a simple foliage design but the block's overall shape is irregular, pointing perhaps to shortcuts in the construction. The irregularity of the condition of the stones of the vaulting could also suggest reconstruction campaigns of which we have no record. Here, the photographic, artistic, and historical archive is of little help to the architectural historian.

Other than the carved graffiti of pilgrim's crosses (Fig. 8) and a sun dial on one of the south pier buttresses (Fig. 9), the exterior seems to have been largely unornamented. Certainly there is no sign of sculpture and architectural articulations are few in number. A sloping drip course runs around the pier buttresses which flank the doorways of the north and south sides. The west side, the façade, seems to have had a wooden porch sheltering the entrance and this was partially supported by slender engaged columns at the ends, sections of which survive at the southwest corner. Single lancets, with slightly splayed reveals and sills, and with Lusignan-style hood moulds, are found above the south, west, and north portals, while a single slender lancet lights the apse. The peaks at the exterior ends of the cross vaults have been built up to elegant pediments which crown three of the church's sides, creating a graceful undulation of the roofline, along which a simple convex moulding runs. The triangular pediments, only partly suggested by the rise of the vault ends, are finished to resemble the peaked, pitched roofs of Armenian churches of more northerly latitudes, though here they are merely decorative. Only on the west façade is the upper section flattened evenly so as to support the now lost belfry, visible in Duthoit's drawing (Fig. 4). At the peak of the east pediment, above the apse, is evidence of a flagstaff holder, another common feature of Famagusta's medieval churches. The hole is still there, and one can make out the repaired section below where the footing for the flagpole would have protruded. The north and south portals are distinguished by very large lintels with pointed relieving arches above. It seems,

through the survival of some plaster and pigment, that there was some form of frescoed tympanum decoration, though not enough of it survives to make any conclusions about its subject matter.



Fig. 8: Latin crosses inscribed on the south face of the Armenian church, Famagusta
(Photo Allan Langdale)

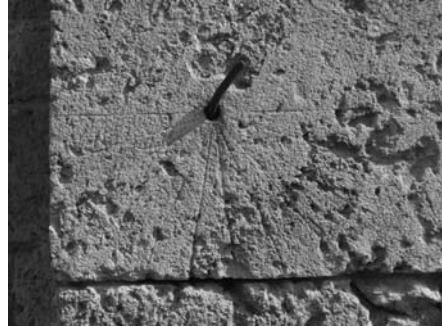


Fig. 9: Remains of a sun-dial on a south pier of the Armenian church, Famagusta
(Photo Allan Langdale)

Interior Decorations

The interior of the Armenia church is in an advanced state of disrepair. Its once extensive fresco decorations endure, though in precarious condition (Fig. 10). Many of the frescoes have been whitewashed over, with only the upper registers still visible, though these have suffered from smoke and other damage. Thankfully, some descriptions and photographs offer tantalizing glimpses of what might yet be revealed by professional restorers. Many of what Enlart referred to as ‘important remains,’ dating to the late 14th century, may lie intact under the layers of whitewash and soot. Enlart’s late 19th century list of frescoed scenes included: the Apostles (with Armenian inscriptions), the Patriarchs of the Eastern church, a Resurrection, a Baptism of Christ, an Annunciation, a bust of Christ, a Nativity, a Flagellation, Christ Carrying the Cross, a Crucifixion, the Descent from the Cross, the Virgin and St. Helena (with Armenian inscription), St. George (with Armenian inscription), St. John the Baptist (with 16 associated scenes), and, finally, the Dormition of the Virgin.

The smoke damaged upper registers, like those whitewashed below, may also be salvageable as reports from 1937 and 1938 note that



Fig. 10: Interior of the Armenian church, Famagusta. View of the north wall with whitewashed lower areas. Note the gothic piscina to the right
(Photo Wilbert “Skip” Norman)

Mrs. Bardswell treated the frescoes with a protective coating of wax (Megaw 1951:178). It is possible that if this veneer was professionally removed, the soot and grime might also be removed with it, thus revealing the vivid colours of the frescos underneath. In the summer of 2006, when some test squares of fresco in the church of St. George of the Greeks were professionally treated, the colours were clearer and more vibrant after the removal of some organic residues (a build-up of dried olive oil, which was often applied to frescoes to brighten up the colours). Some paintings, however, are irretrievably lost such as the kneeling figure before the Madonna situated over the altar in the semi-dome of the apse, which George Jeffery described in 1918. Only the bare stones remain where once the painted plaster was.

Another debt to the aforementioned Mrs. Bardswell is her 1937 bequest to the Conway Library of the Courtauld Institute of three photographs of the Armenian church frescoes. These are a useful source for determining what remains under the whitewash. The scene of the Flagellation of Christ is, for example, quite clear even today. Both the figure of Christ and that of his torturer are legible though

extensively chipped (Fig. 11). Architectural and anatomical forms are consistent in both the Conway image and one taken in 2007 (Fig. 12). There is no reason to believe that this image could not be restored to its former glory. The panel depicting the Nativity is covered in whitewash (Fig. 11, lower register). If restored, it could yield vital information through Armenian inscriptions or reveal stylistic links with Cilician Armenian manuscript illuminations.⁸ Tucked away in the lower left hand corner of the Conway archive image is a fresco depicting the Virgin Mary and St. Helena. Perhaps they, too, can re-emerge with expert restoration. Caught in the background of a photograph from 1930 is a fresco of St. George on his horse (Fig. 13). Mrs Bardswell's 1937 image of the saint is even more revealing (Fig. 14). Today only the ghostly sgraffito incisions of the halo emerge from behind the white paint.

On the south wall were sixteen scenes which surrounded the life-size image of St. John the Baptist. Like the St. George fresco it is covered with whitewash. Above the piscina on the north wall, the photograph from the 1930s shows the remains of a Resurrection (a 'Man of Sorrows' image, which Enlart believed to be in Italian fifteenth century style), an inscription 'IC', and a Baptism of Christ scene with two angels and a St. John (Fig. 15). Today, the colours remain fairly clear, especially the folds in the drapery, while anatomy, facial features and movement are still relatively easy to identify, despite the smoke damage (Fig. 16). At the top of the panel is the faint but unmistakable outline of the Virgin Mary, who appears in a vibrant blue mantle (Fig. 17). Also legible is the head of an angel with wings and a bright yellow halo (Fig. 18).

One other ancillary legacy is inscribed on the frescos in the form of graffiti, which provides an impressive catalogue of visitors and their nationalities (Fig. 19). George Jeffery speculated that, as some of the graffiti inside dated to the mid-16th century (as had been noted by Enlart), it could very well be that the church had already been abandoned by that time. Today, the whitewash coat, though covering the painted images, does not mask the scratched surface, which yields the names 'Bernard', 'Lazare', 'Chretein de...', 'Olivier', 'Stefano', some Ottoman numbers, and, in Armenian, 'Little Church'. Elsewhere we

⁸ The comparison of these frescoes with similar ones in Mistra, Greece, copied by Monsieur Ypermann in 1896, and mentioned by Camille Enlart, p. 288, remains conjectural.



Fig. 11: North wall of the Armenian church, Famagusta, c. 1937, showing the Flagellation (top) and Nativity (bottom) (Conway Archive Photograph)



Fig. 12: The scene of the Flagellation on the north wall of the Armenian church, Famagusta, 2007 (Photo Wilbert "Skip" Norman)



Fig. 13: Image of 1930s restoration work in the interior of the Armenian church, Famagusta. Note left hand side for image of St. George on his horse (Mogabgab Archive, Famagusta)



Fig. 14: St. George and the Dragon fresco on the west interior wall of the Armenian church, Famagusta, c. 1937. Currently covered in whitewash (Conway Archive Photograph)

find names such as 'Vincenzo' (probably dating to the 19th century) and, on the south wall, 'Andranik' (in Armenian letters). The 1937 Conway Library image of St. George and the Dragon also demonstrates that the image had been vandalized with the date '1785' standing out clearly and the name 'Matteo' at the base.



Fig. 15: Frescoes on the north wall of the interior of the Armenian church in Famagusta, c. 1937. The Baptism of Christ is at the lower left and a Man of Sorrows image is above the piscina on the lower right (Conway Archive Photograph)

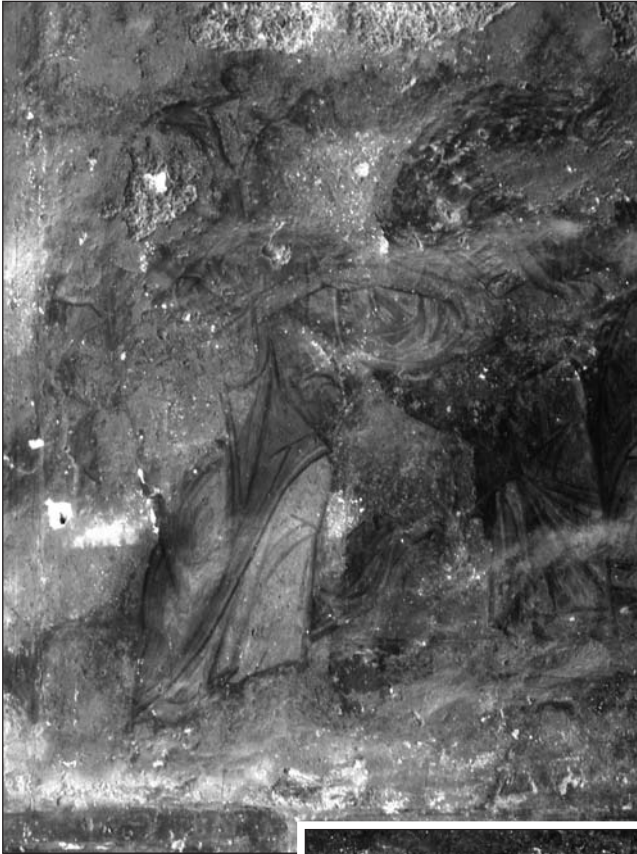


Fig. 16: Detail from the upper register of the wall shown in Fig. 15, 2007 (Photo by Wilbert "Skip" Norman)



Fig. 17: Fresco of the Virgin Mary on the north wall of the Armenian church, Famagusta, 2007 (Photo Wilbert "Skip" Norman)

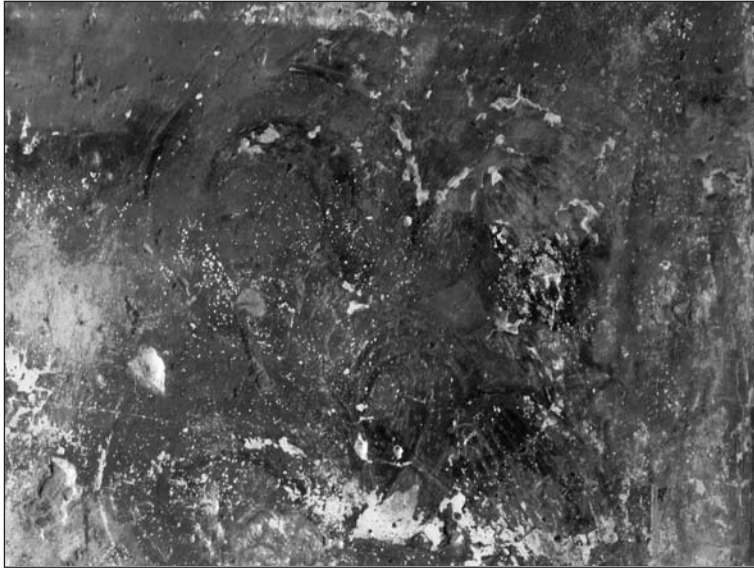


Fig. 18: Remains of a fresco angel on the north wall of the Armenian Church, Famagusta, 2007
(Photo Wilbert "Skip" Norman)



Fig. 19: Graffiti on the south wall of the Armenian church, Famagusta, 2007.
Traces of French, Greek, Armenian, and Ottoman inscriptions
(Photo Wilbert "Skip" Norman)

Planning for the Future

Revitalization is desperately needed for the present day Syrian quarter of Famagusta where the Armenian and other churches are situated. Until recently almost the entire quarter had been controlled by the military since the 1974 partition of Cyprus. While the buildings have suffered neglect, the recent opening of this area offers significant opportunities for the entire walled city. One positive side effect of the military presence is that the army limited development in this quarter, so that much of it has been left open and free of the unsightly concrete structures which densely populate other sectors of the city (Doratli *et al.* 2007:65-88). In the past, the city's historical organization included a Jewish quarter in the south-western corner (at the city's main entrance or 'Limassol Gate')⁹, a Greek quarter in the south-eastern corner (now an area of light industry), the Latin quarter, which included the town's centre and northeast corner (including the cathedral, palace, and castle), and the Syrian quarter in the northwest quadrant. The former Greek quarter is, along with the Syrian quarter, the least developed in the city. Thus there is ample opportunity to develop these sectors in harmony with the historical architecture which survives in both areas. Because the two areas are also diagonally opposite one another, a corridor crossing the city from the southeast to northwest would bring pedestrians right through the heart of the main historical district, thus linking the centre with the historical peripheries. Presently, a pedestrian street runs from the Land Gate entrance towards the church of Saints Peter and Paul, through the palace ruins, and to the city's main square where one can find the cathedral of St. Nicholas (the Lala Mustafa Pasha Cami), the Franciscan church, an Ottoman *medrese*, an Ottoman hamam, and other historical monuments. Continuing along the north flank of the cathedral takes one to the Sea Gate, an immense Venetian bastion which guards the centre of the sea walls, and thence on to the castle in the northeast corner. This route, with its impressive list of monuments, could be bisected by a secondary route extending from the churches of the Greek quarter in the southeast (St. George of the Greeks, St. Simeon, St. Nicholas, and Agia Zoni), through the centre and on to the Syrian quarter churches of the Nestorians, St. Anne, the

⁹ For a discussion of this quarter and of the Jewish population in Famagusta see Arbel 1979.

Jacobite Church, the Carmelite and Armenian churches and the Martinengo bastion. The impressive ruins of the 17th century Ottoman Kertikli Hamam could be included in such an itinerary. Furthermore, this dynamic path could be made even more compelling if access was given to the public through the Martinengo bastion to the moat, which should be made into a city park. Developing a Moat Park from the Martinengo bastion to the Ravelin and Land Gate entrance would create a zone of circulation which would bring pedestrians to virtually all of the significant monuments of the city along an attractive and enjoyable route. Cafes and places to rest in the shade and take refreshment could be worked into the plans. The crowning element and pendant to this Moat Park would be the abolishment of most of the of the port facilities so that the public could pass through the Sea Gate to enjoy an open esplanade along the seaside and marina. If this could be accomplished, Famagusta could realize its indubitable potential and take its place among the world's great historic towns.

The Armenian church currently stands somewhat neglected in a lonely and detached part of the town. One rarely encounters anyone there, even during the height of tourist season. Its destiny, along with the fates of the other churches and historical monuments of Famagusta, hangs in the balance. Yet incredible potential for renovation and revitalization exists. The return of scholarship is a positive development which may well lead to other improvements in terms of restoration, conservation, urban development, and a renewed sense of internationally shared cultural values.

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