

**Marietta Horster,
Doria Nicolaou,
Sabine Rogge (eds.)**



Church Building in Cyprus (Fourth to Seventh Centuries)

**A Mirror of Intercultural Contacts
in the Eastern Mediterranean**

WAXMANN

Schriften des Instituts für Interdisziplinäre Zypern-Studien

volume 12



edited by

Institut für Interdisziplinäre Zypern-Studien
Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster

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Waxmann 2018
Münster • New York

For the generous support we would like to thank



WissenschaftsCampus Mainz
**Byzanz zwischen
Orient und Okzident**

Pictures on page 21: by D. Nicolaou (Salamis, bath building of the Campanopetra complex); on page 71: after D. S. Neal, *The Basilica at Soli, Cyprus: A Survey of the Buildings and Mosaics* (ca. 2009), figure 'DiaconE_1_01.jpg' on the CD accompanying the book (Soli, basilica of Saint Auxibius); on page 117: by S. Rogge (Karpasia, basilica of Agios Philon); on page 245: by D. Nicolaou (Salamis, bath building of the Campanopetra complex)

Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek

The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available in the Internet at <http://dnb.d-nb.de>

Print-ISBN 978-3-8309-3791-3

Ebook-ISBN 978-3-8309-8791-8

© Waxmann Verlag GmbH, 2018
Münster, Germany

www.waxmann.com
info@waxmann.com

Cover Design: Pleßmann Design, Ascheberg

Cover Picture: by S. Rogge (Salamis, bath building of the Campanopetra complex)

Typesetting: Visuelles Design – Christine Sennewald, Dexheim

Print: CPI Books GmbH, Leck

Printed on age-resistant paper,
acid-free according to ISO 9706



Printed in Germany

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Acknowledgements

Many excellent scholars were invited to participate in our workshop 'Church Building in Cyprus (Fourth to Seventh Centuries)' held at the *Römisch-Germanisches Zentralmuseum* in Mainz (RGZM) in June 2016: Georgios Deligiannakis, Stephanos Efthymiadis, Cäcilia Fluck, Fryni Hadjichristofi, Chrysovalantis Kyriacou, Tomas Lehmann, Demetrios Michaelides, Rania Michail, Doria Nicolaou, Giorgios Papantoniou, Eleni Procopiou, Athanasios Vionis, Rainer Warland and Stephan Westphalen. Most of the papers presented at that workshop are included in this volume, and Ina Eichner was so kind as to add a further paper. We are most grateful that she helped to 'round off' this volume by contributing a paper on the important international–intercultural aspect of our present book.

We would like to thank all speakers at the workshop for their stimulating presentations and the critical comments with which they helped us all to become more focused on and more sensitive to the many facets of the subject. We are greatly indebted to them and to the students and colleagues from Mainz and abroad present at the three-day workshop, who by their thought-provoking questions also contributed to its success.

The workshop organised by the Department of History (*Abteilung für Alte Geschichte*) of the University of Mainz (M. Horster), the *Leibniz-WissenschaftsCampus Mainz* (D. Nicolaou) and the *Institut für Interdisziplinäre Zypern-Studien* of the University of Münster (S. Rogge) was hosted by the *Römisch-Germanisches Zentralmuseum – Leibniz-Forschungsinstitut für Archäologie* in Mainz, and we were all invited and warmly welcomed by Falko Daim, Benjamin Furlas and Jörg Drauschke.

The workshop and the publication of the volume were financially supported by the centres *ZIS (Zentrum für interkulturelle Studien)* and *HKW (Historische Kulturwissenschaften)* of the *Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz* and the *WissenschaftsCampus Mainz* with its focus on Byzantium between Orient and Occident (*Byzanz zwischen Orient und Okzident*), which was founded in 2011 by the *Leibniz-Gemeinschaft*. The *WissenschaftsCampus* is the backbone of our research on late antique/early Byzantine intercultural contacts in the Eastern Mediterranean,

with its focus on Cyprus, and we are very grateful for the stimulating discussions with our colleagues at that institution.

Over many hours our editorial duties were supported by the students Jonas Breßler and Michael Rapp. Jonas Breßler's and Orla Mulholland's thoughtful language editing of most of the English texts in this volume has improved its readability. And without Christine Sennewald's expertise in visual design it would not have been possible to realise this book in its present form; she very diligently and patiently carried out all our 'very last' corrections and finally put the whole book together.

This book is dedicated to the beautiful island of Cyprus!

Marietta Horster, Doria Nicolaou & Sabine Rogge
Mainz/Münster, January 2018

Introduction: Church and Religion in Cyprus

by Marietta Horster and Doria Nicolaou

‘Transformations and Intercultural Contacts between East and West: Church and Religion in Cyprus’ – this is the title of one of the many projects of the Leibniz-WissenschaftsCampus Mainz *Byzanz zwischen Orient und Okzident* (‘Byzantium between Orient and Occident’).¹ This interdisciplinary research initiative enables a large group of scholars to study and analyse the multifaceted contacts and discourses within Christianity in the late antique and Byzantine period. Diplomatic activities by the different patriarchates, intensifying controversies over theological, jurisdictional and liturgical issues, and the lively artistic exchange between East and West, North and South, are just some of the aspects discussed in the many studies assembled under the umbrella of the Leibniz-WissenschaftsCampus Mainz. Our subject area of transformations and interculturalism directs our attention towards interdisciplinary, comparative examinations of the forms, practices and discourses of exchange between Byzantium and the Eastern part of the Mediterranean, but also between Byzantium (and/or the Eastern Mediterranean) and the Latin and Slavic worlds. Further, our focus is on the church as an institution. The international networks and interactions had a concrete effect on the development of the Church of Cyprus. The history of the bishops and bishoprics, the liturgical traditions and rituals, the circulation of relics and the cult of the saints, were all part of this dynamic development which had connections to various contexts beyond Cyprus itself. The island was an intellectual centre and a site of theological debates, an aspect that was promoted, for example, by contacts made through travel and correspondence with Egypt, Palestine, Constantinople and Rome. The churches and their episcopal sees exerted considerable influence in religious, political, social, cultural and artistic fields and so they assumed a particular position within the intercultural contact. The textual sources attest and highlight the island’s importance as a key link between the patriarchs of Constantinople, Antioch, Jerusalem, Alexandria and Rome.

1 www.byzanz-mainz.de; the head of the Cyprus project is Marietta Horster, the investigator is Doria Nicolaou

In the first century AD the apostles Paul and Barnabas founded the first Christian communities in the Aegean world, including in the important civic centres of Salamis and Nea Paphos on Cyprus. Despite the early Christianisation of the population of the island during the apostolic era (long before it happened in Athens, Rome, Alexandria or Byzantium/Constantinople), it was only in the fourth century that the island acquired the institutional apparatus of Christianity, with several prominent bishops. A well-organised church system was established on Christianised Cyprus at the beginning of the fourth century as a result of the participation of the Cypriot bishops in the ecumenical and local synods. The devastating earthquakes of the mid-fourth century, the imperial euergetism of the Constantinian dynasty and the leading figure of Epiphanius all favoured the rebuilding of the cities with a more explicit Christian orientation.

The first monumental edifices of Christian cult on the island were built *ex novo* by the end of the same century. The great seven-aisled cathedrals of Salamis/Constantia and Nea Paphos (both still unpublished) are dated to the end of the fourth century. The huge cathedral of Saint Epiphanius in Salamis/Constantia seems to have become an architectural and artistic model for church building on Cyprus. A rare, and stylised literary account of the construction works is part of the *Vita Epiphanii*.² Although miracle healing and other hagiographic elements dominate this biography, it also gives an insight into the collaboration between civil administration, church authorities and benefactors, and not only as concerns church building. The five-aisled basilica of Acheiropoietos at Lambousa is plausibly dated to the end of the fourth century too, though no systematic research has ever been carried out on it. The mosaic floor with the inscription unearthed within the church of Saint Spyridon in Tremithous has been dated to the same period, based mainly on stylistic criteria.³ Most probably the city of Soloi too was already equipped with a Christian cult building by the end of the fourth century, even if this early *martyrion* dedicated probably to Saint Auxilius did not assume the canonical basilica-style form at this early date.⁴

Promoted by the political stability, economic prosperity and religious importance of Cyprus in these times, the construction of religious buildings continued during the fifth to seventh centuries. In 431 the Cypriot church gained autonomy from the see of Antioch at the Council of Ephe-

2 Rapp 1993.

3 Michaelides in his contribution to the present volume dates this mosaic floor to the fifth century.

4 Neal 2009; Nicolaou 2017.

so. Cyprus thus became the first church in Christendom to be granted autocephaly.⁵ Its connection with the Aegean, Constantinople, Rome and the pilgrimage centres of the Holy Land further favoured its cultural development. The Church of Cyprus' era of greatest splendour extends from the second half of the sixth to the first half of the seventh century. In a period of tremendous instability and threat due to the Persian and Arab invasions, Cyprus, it seems, took on a key naval, commercial and religious role in the region but experienced demographic changes and changing settlement patterns as well.⁶ The religious architecture of these decades is marked by some major interventions on existing cult buildings and by the construction of new basilicas in both rural areas and urban centres.

In 1966 Athanasios Papageorghiou noted thirty-eight early Christian basilicas on Cyprus;⁷ by 1985 that number was more than fifty-six.⁸ Since then the number of known early Christian basilicas has increased thanks to new archaeological evidence and specialised studies.⁹ The title of the 112nd volume of the journal *Le monde de la Bible* in 1998, 'Chypre. L'île aux cent basiliques' did not exaggerate at all. Despite the abundance of architectural evidence attesting around a hundred basilicas, the published record of the remains is uneven and inconsistent. However, scholarship on early Christian archaeology on the island is increasing and it is characterised by careful stratigraphic analyses, proposing accurate reconstructions of the chronological sequences and the archaeological contexts. Nevertheless, the study of early Christian architecture needs further elaboration and a published corpus of the early Christian ecclesiastical monuments of Cyprus remains a *desideratum*.¹⁰ To date, the only sites that are well known, thanks to diligent publications, are the pilgrimage complex of Campanopetra (Salamis/Constantia), the basilica of Soloi, the episcopal and the coastal basilicas of Kourion, the basilicas at Arsinoe, the basilica of Agios Kononas at the Akamas peninsula and the churches of rural settlements such as those at *Kopetra*

5 Rapp 2014, 33.

6 Papacostas 2001; Rautman 2001, 256; Metcalf 2009, 571–573. For the rural and urban settlement patterns of the seventh and eighth centuries cf. Zavagno 2017, 113–154 (with references).

7 Papageorghiou 1966, 155–156.

8 Papageorghiou 1985, 300.

9 For updated inventory lists see: Papacostas 1999; Stewart 2008; Maguire 2012; Nicolaou 2015.

10 Cf. the standards developed by G. Brogiolo and M. Jurković for such a corpus for the late antique and early medieval/Byzantine world: Brogiolo – Jurković 2012.

and *Sirmata* in Kalavassos, at Maroni, at Kofinou and at Alassa.¹¹ They provide the basis for several of the papers in this volume. Other such monuments are mentioned briefly in synthetic articles or have received only rather short excavation reports. As mentioned above, even the two larger episcopal complexes of Salamis/Constantia and Nea Paphos have not yet received final publication.

Most of the scholars in the present volume are currently engaged in early Christian archaeology on the island. The ‘explosion’ of studies on late antiquity and on the early Byzantine period has not passed Cyprus by.¹² These hundred early Christian churches attested on Cyprus date from the fourth to seventh centuries. Especially those with architectural features preserved in the ground and even more those still standing (whether more or less rebuilt or altered) have contributed to shaping the Cypriot landscape. The peculiar evolution of the features of the Cypriot church – and not only the architectural ones – has given rise to a scientific discussion on how to evaluate these developments.¹³ In the last ten years individual contributions as well as a series of conferences and workshops dedicated to late antiquity and the early Byzantine period have contributed to a new approach and a new impulse in the study of this period in Cyprus.¹⁴ However, the quantity and quality of scholarship on late antique and early Byzantine Cyprus still does not replace a publication of the church buildings that would take into consideration all the relevant parameters reflected in the architectural planning, such as structural knowledge and innovations, cultic behaviours, liturgical traditions, economic capacities and social and political aspirations. Our volume addresses many of these parameters. Based on current trends in research, new findings in Cyprus and of course our own focus, we have organised the volume into four different sections.

11 Roux 1998 (Campanopetra); Tinh 1985 and Neal 2009 (Soloï); Megaw 2007 (Kourion, episcopal basilica); Christou 2013 (Kourion, coastal basilica); Papalexandrou – Caraher 2012, 267–276 (Arsinoë); Fejfer – Mathiesen 1995 (Akamas, Agios Kononas); Rautman 2003 (Kalavassos-*Kopetra/Sirmata*); Manning *et al.* 2002 (Maroni); Dimitriou – Procopiou 2014 and Procopiou 2014 (Kofinou); Flourentzos 1996 (Alassa).

12 Cameron 2016, 27; cf. e.g. Flusin 2012, Hadjichristofi 2012.

13 E.g. Delvoye 1972; Megaw 1974; Delvoye 1978; Papageorghiou 1986; Krautheimer 1986, 471, n. 11. For their position and the rather harsh discussion on the subject, see Stewart 2014, 107–111. For disputed arguments mainly based on the architectural features of the churches, see Ruggieri 1991; Ćurčić 2000; Chotzakoglou 2005.

14 Zanini – Pergola – Michaelides 2013; Michaelides – Parani 2013; Johnson 2013 (with a similar approach for the western part); Davis – Stewart – Carr 2014; Jacobs 2015 (with eastern examples including Cyprus); Vionis forthcoming; and see the individual bibliographies at the end of the papers in the present volume.

1. Building the Christian Cityscape and Landscape

Georgios Deligiannakis and Athanasios Vionis have developed new methodological approaches to this topic.

Deligiannakis attempts to recompose the fragmented information in order to create a comprehensive picture of the transition from paganism to Christianity on the island. He examines both the negative and positive evidence on this subject by offering new readings of the available material. He approaches the transitional period from poly- to monotheism (Christianity) using evidence from epigraphy, the archaeology of church building in relation to public paganism, conciliar lists, prosopography and the interpretation of the mythological mosaic floors of Nea Paphos.

Vionis' exploration of sacred and economic landscapes in early Byzantine Cyprus demonstrates that churches, the most important element of Christian urban topography in the late antique/early Byzantine period, played an equally vital role in expressing and confirming identities in peri-urban and rural environments. He proves through the application of advanced field methodologies and techniques that basilicas were part of a network of sacred spaces in towns and the countryside. They defined properties, agricultural zones and economies and were an integral part of settlements and estates. Vionis, as well as other authors in this volume, addresses the role of the bishops in the creation of a Christian landscape in a less 'pragmatic' way, interrogating their impact as individual *exempla* and religious leaders in the cities and over larger areas of Cyprus.¹⁵

2. Christian Communities and Church Building, Fourth to Seventh Centuries

The churches of the early Christian communities of Cyprus had wooden roofs, they usually integrated imported marbles and quite often presented beautiful mosaic or *opus sectile* floors. They developed characteristic local features well into the sixth (and even the seventh) century, even though some iconographic influence (e.g. in the mosaic tradition) from Syria and Palestine is detectable.¹⁶

After twenty-five years of service at the Department of Antiquities of Cyprus, Eleni Procopiou presents the new discoveries in Amathus, Kofinou, Menogeia, Chirokoitia, Dali-Agridia and Akrotiri, shedding more

15 But see also Lehmann 2005; Rapp 2014.

16 Michaelides 1993; *idem* in this volume.

light on the structural phases of these monuments. She has proved that many of these churches, which probably date to the middle Byzantine period, were built on foundations of the sixth and seventh centuries, demonstrating uninterrupted continuity during the period of the Arab domination. The unique pilgrimage complex of Akrotiri-Katalymata ton Plakoton is presented through the spectrum of liturgy and the circulation of relics in the Mediterranean basin.

Stephanos Efthymiadis treats church building through the lenses of hagiography and epigraphy. The cult of saints on the island was in fact the cult of local bishops. This is also reflected in the dedications of the churches. In addition he illustrates three hagiographical accounts that refer to church building and venerated tombs, though the more 'authentic' testimonia to the veneration of saints in Cyprus in connection with cult buildings come from the epigraphic monuments.

3. Interior Arrangement and Theological Concepts

This subject is addressed in most of the contributions, but Doria Nicolaou, Rania Michail, Chrysovalantis Kyriacou, Fryni Hadjichristofi and Demetrios Michaelides treat the subject from different perspectives.

Nicolaou examines the development of the sanctuary area, which was directly related to liturgical practices, exploring spatial perceptions in an evolving chronological pattern from the fourth to the seventh century. Taking into consideration the very uncertain question of liturgical influences and traditions during the pre-iconoclastic period, she points out the possibility that the autocephalous Church of Cyprus, like the other patriarchates of the East (Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem), maintained its own liturgical tradition, influenced by Constantinople (but only after the sixth century) and by the other patriarchates of the East.

Michail discusses the typology of and the developments in the baptisteries on Cyprus. In her conclusion she states that the Cypriot examples follow a processional type, but in a specific 'Cypriot' manner that is strongly associated with the baptismal liturgy: first with the Syrian-Antiochene liturgical tradition and then the Jerusalemite one.

Based on Pierre Bourdieu's theory of 'habitus' and rooted in the Christian theological notion of *hexis*, Kyriacou focuses on aspects of spirituality in the basilicas of early Byzantine Cyprus. His examination of hagiographical, liturgical and archaeological sources through the prism of the Christian 'habitus' attempts to show how the basilica was per-

ceived by Cypriot Christians as the *locus* of spiritual transformation and human encounter with God.

Hadjichristofi presents some very recent discoveries of mosaic floors decorating early Christian basilicas of Cyprus. During the last ten years archaeological excavations conducted mainly by the Department of Antiquities of Cyprus have brought to light new evidence at Tamasos/Politiko (under the *katholikon* of Saint Herakleidios and at plot 487), at Akrotiri-Katalymata ton Plakoton, at Tymbou-Agioi Saranta, at Geroskipou-Agioi Pente and at Kourion (coastal basilica).

The contribution of Michaelides gives an iconographic panorama of the mosaic floor decoration of secular and ecclesiastical buildings dating from the second/third century until the end of antiquity, posing the question of the continuity or interruption of mosaic production after the seventh century. Based on the surviving evidence of the fifth and sixth centuries, he identifies the work of specific workshops through the repeated use of particular geometric and decorative motifs in a practically identical fashion. Finally, he emphasises that the mosaics of early Christian Cyprus belong to the Eastern Mediterranean world, with several of the island's floors being essentially indistinguishable from those of the Levantine coast.

4. 'International Byzantine Style'? Local Traditions and Adaptations In- and Outside Cyprus

This section connects Cyprus with the wider *Orbis Christianus Antiquus*. Two regions are highlighted by chapters, in order to compare the interior design and development in Cypriot Churches: Egypt and Cilicia.

Cäcilia Fluck looks into the interesting subject of textile decoration within the basilicas, based on material found in Egypt. Even though research into the original function of these textiles is still in progress, Fluck discusses how these textiles may have been used inside the church, e.g. as altar cloths, curtains and hangings. For the decoration of these textiles various techniques were applied, of which two major types can be distinguished, namely painted decoration and woven decoration.

Ina Eichner traces the building traditions of the region around Seleucia on the Calycadnus in Rough Cilicia through a comparative study of residential and ecclesiastical architecture. Individual structural features are taken into consideration, e. g. the transverse arches, the imposts on which the transverse arches rest, the window forms, the roof forms and

the porches and entrance canopies. In addition Eichner analyses the width of entrances and other architectural features with an influence on liturgical practices and rituals.¹⁷

In a period that began in the settled and stable Romano-Christian world, when Cyprus was a prospering island with international contacts, and which ended in the mid-seventh century with the Arab raids, the role of the Cypriot church is multidimensional. The period of the Arab raids definitely had an impact on all fields of cultural and religious life, including the breakdown of some of the intercultural contacts, but, on the other hand, it prompted the creation of new forms of continuity.¹⁸

The island's early Christian basilicas and other monuments/objects of religious character are analysed within this book, as is the political and economic position of the early Cypriot church – of its bishops and its communities. The close look at local traditions and at the influences resulting from intercultural contacts with the Eastern Mediterranean world will – we hope – stimulate further discussion.

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17 Megaw 1997 for architectural and iconographic influences from the Aegean.

18 Zavagno 2017; Vionis forthcoming.

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SECTION I

BUILDING THE CHRISTIAN CITYSCAPE AND LANDSCAPE

The Last Pagans of Cyprus: Prolegomena to a History of Transition from Polytheism to Christianity

In his recent study of the period 390–430 entitled *The Last Pagans of Rome*, Alan Cameron sets out to prove that the so-called pagan revival among the senatorial circles of the late fourth and early fifth centuries is a myth and their agenda had nothing to do with paganism:¹ these were not real pagans, but Christian classicists, whose Christianity was compatible with classical culture. Macrobius, the author of the *Saturnalia*, was also a Christian and his motives as an editor of classical texts were purely antiquarian. Moreover, pagan themes in art of the same period are to be dissociated from pagan religion, as it was mostly Christians with traditional tastes who were commissioning these works. Finally, there had been no such a thing as a (religiously motivated) pagan revival of classical texts and forms in the closing decades of the fourth century in Rome.

Despite Cameron's revisions of the evidence for the strength of paganism in the West, his argument that a wide repertoire of mythological themes – due to their familiarity and ubiquity in the late antique society – represented 'common ground' among Christians, pagans, and Jews, being often literary and antiquarian rather than devotional, is not new and is reflected in the written and material evidence from the period. The extent to which an interest in classical culture also contained a personal statement of belief or should be perceived as what we would today call 'secular' will always be open to discussion. In Cyprus, the latter alternative is unequivocally reflected in the epigrams of Eustolios and has also been postulated for the mythological mosaics of Nea Paphos.²

1 Cameron 2011.

2 It probably presents a bath-cum-reception-hall-complex that, according to the building inscription, the local Christian grandee Eustolios offered to the city of Kourion. In one of the texts, the Christian Eustolios is juxtaposed with Apollo, the older pro-

Furthermore, both mosaic groups have been used as a barometer for the survival of paganism and its relations to the other religious communities of late antique Cyprus (see below).

In any case, counting the number of pagans, Christians, and Jews in late antique Cyprus is a nearly impossible task, since, apart from a few passing references of mostly antiquarian character, our written evidence is basically Christian in both subject and perspective. How could we then decipher the sound of silence regarding late paganism in Cyprus?

The transition from polytheism to Christianity on Cyprus has never been systematically treated, the only specific study being a paper by Marcus Rautman (2003). Among various views expressed on this issue, some scholars take the Christian sources too literally, minimizing the fact that they often give – almost always in hindsight – a one-sided picture of a more complex and diverse reality. The lack of clear evidence, for example, about fits of violence among pagans, Christians, and Jews in our sources is often taken as an indication of a peaceful cohabitation throughout the period, while Epiphanius of Salamis' idiosyncratic silence regarding the current affairs of his see in his voluminous works gives the impression that the conversion of the island into Christianity was by the late fourth century a *fait accompli*.

In this paper I will examine both the negative and positive evidence on this subject by offering some new readings to the available material. They should be treated only as preliminary to a more systematic study that is forthcoming on the transition from polytheism to Christianity on Cyprus.

In view of the dearth of evidence that makes pagans in Cyprus after the late third century almost invisible (a phenomenon in no way particular to Cyprus), the paper will signpost important landmarks in the transition process from paganism to Christianity during the fourth and fifth centuries, also making use of negative arguments about the dominance of Christianity in the public sphere. Only the following categories of evidence will be focused on: epigraphy, the archaeology of church-building vis-à-vis public paganism, conciliar lists, prosopography, and the interpretation of the mythological mosaic floors of Nea Paphos.

tector of the city. The dating of the late antique phase of the building is debatable; it ranges between 370 and 435. For the mosaics of 'Eustolios' house' and their historical significance: Mavrogiannis forthcoming; Hauben 2004; Nicolaou 2001; Voskos 1997, 126–127, no. E52. In a wider comparative context, see Deligiannakis 2015a, 191–192. Paphos mosaics: see below.

I. Literary and epigraphic evidence

Looking at the history of pagan temples and sanctuaries in Cyprus, we face a lack of evidence after the Severans. It is generally assumed that the temples of Aphrodite at Palaipaphos, Apollo Hylates at Kourion, Aphrodite at Amathus, and Zeus Olympios at Salamis were abandoned as a result of earthquakes in the mid to late fourth century, if not earlier during the third century. Yet no clear archaeological documentation regarding the end of the use of each of these sites is offered due to the lack of published stratified data. The decline in numbers of inscriptions as a consequence of the changes of epigraphical habit in the same period further aggravates the problem.³

While Theophanes and later sources give 331/2 and 341/2 as the years that earthquakes struck Salamis, his modern translators Cyril Mango and Roger Scott note that the second reference, 342, whose source is otherwise unknown, may be a doublet of that of 331/2.⁴ Moreover, the exact dating of the fourth-century earthquakes that hit the southern cities of Kourion and Paphos is still subject to discussion, although a *terminus post quem* of 365 based on stratigraphical material seems now to be valid at least for this part of the island.⁵

It is certain that for Cyprus, as for other places in the eastern Mediterranean, these earthquakes, less than a decade apart, were a catalyst for the decline of the infrastructure of public paganism.⁶ Still, however valid this observation may be, it tells us nothing about the role that local Christians or the imperial authorities may have played in suppressing local paganism. Imperial laws ordering the ban of public worship and

3 Rautman 2003. – Kourion: Soren 1987, 42–33, 52 (some re-flooring in the West Complex ‘during the 330s’ is recorded; cf. Mitford 1990, 2185; *idem*, no. 113; see also a fourth-century statuette of mythical ‘Hippomenes’ found in the South East building of the sanctuary: Fuchs 1994, 61–63. – Amathous: it is reported that the staircase to the acropolis was damaged in the third century and never repaired so implying the abandonment of the temple of Aphrodite on the acropolis of Amathous. However, note that the building activity both in these shrines and the Agora display a similar picture often described as ‘stagnation’: Aupert 2009, 41–42. – Kition: Artemis Paralia: Mitford 1990, 2187 (‘Severan’); Apollo Barbaros: *SEG*, vol. 54 (2004) 1539 (194 AD); Mitford 1990, 2188. – Aphrodite at Palaipaphos: Maier admits that the time and the circumstances of the end of the sanctuary remain unknown, although ancient authors continue to refer to Aphrodite of Paphos and the city of Old Paphos continues to prosper in late antiquity: Maier 1984, 24–25, 27; Maier – Karageorghis 1984, 280 and 284.

4 AM 5824 (transl. Mango – Scott 1997); *Mich. Syr.* i. 259; [Hypoth. Arian] 10. AM 5834.

5 Lichočka – Meyza 2001; Davis 2013, 105, 106, 110; Buell – Mavromatis – Parks 2001, 264.

6 The same has been suggested for the end of public paganism in the temples of the southern Transjordan: Ward 2016.

the confiscation of temple assets from the reigns of Constantine onwards would not have allowed the surviving pagan community to repair and keep up these sanctuaries. With the suppression of public paganism being a piecemeal and long process, pagans had probably enough time to adjust to the new situation, turning to more humble or private forms of devotion.⁷ In any case, the lack of evidence for repaired or new pagan buildings, priesthoods, and devotees from these sites should not be equated with the massive conversion of the population by that time, despite what our Christian sources triumphantly propagate. It is therefore right to stress that the archaeology of pagan temples does not tell the whole story and it should not be used as an indicator of religious change.

A few more thoughts regarding the late history of the major public cults of the island are called for. We know that Constantine had targeted the cult of Oriental Aphrodite in particular, even razing three important temples of the goddess in the vicinity of Cyprus, on the site of Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem and at Aphaca as well as Heliopolis-Baalbek in Lebanon, where sacred prostitution was said to have taken place.⁸ In chapter 10 of his polemical treatise, *The Error of the Profane Religions*, the Christian writer Firmicus Maternus, takes the licentious Paphian Aphrodite as a paradigm for Venus. Written in 345/6, this work ends (ch. 29) with a request to the emperors Constantius II and Constans to wipe out idolatry and demolish its profane temples. It is difficult to tell whether this general hortatory address indicates that her cult was at that time still flourishing or whether the previous references to the cult of the Paphian Aphrodite was simply antiquarian in character and hence of no contemporary significance.⁹ Direct references to pagan communities or surviving cults on the island in the fourth century are indeed lacking due to the general dearth of epigraphic evidence after the third century. However, Ammianus Marcellinus (14.8.14), who among our written sources knows the region best, still refers to the temple of Venus in Paphos and that of Zeus in Salamis as famous and characteristic of these cities.¹⁰

Jerome, who had also visited the island himself, blames in his *Vita Hilarionis* the successive earthquakes (*frequenter terrae motu*) for

7 McLynn 2009, 577–580; Deligiannakis 2015b, 185–188.

8 Eusebius, *VC* 3.26.2–6; 3.55, 58; Eusebius' claims should be treated with caution, cf. Cameron – Hall 1999, 146–147; Lenski 2016, 234–239.

9 For the date: Turcan 2002, 24–27. Firmicus' references for the chapter seem to derive from Clement of Alexandria (2.13.4, 3.45.4) and Arnobius (4.25, 5.19, 6.6); but also Lactantius *Div. inst.* 1.17.10.

10 He was probably writing his *Res Gestae* in the late 380s and early 390s in Rome; his last stay near Cyprus is reported to have been Antioch in 372.

destroying the pagan temples in Paphos. He was writing around 390/2 at Bethlehem, while his account is placed at the time of the arrival of Saint Hilarion in Paphos at about 364. Saint Hilarion took up his retreat close to the ruins of an old temple, Jerome tells us, where he confronted the voices of countless demons.¹¹

Regarding the sanctuary of Zeus Olympios at Salamis, beside Ammianus, the emperor Julian apparently also refers to it. While in Antioch in 362, he writes about a particular local ritual in which the priests of Cyprus set up common altars to Zeus and Helios.¹² Furthermore, the only attested public statue dedicated to Julian from Cyprus is found in Salamis. It may be connected to a particular favour done by him to the local sanctuary and/or the city, while he was still residing in Antioch.¹³ The available evidence seems therefore to imply that the sanctuary of Zeus Olympios could have still been functioning or respected as a sacred ground in the 360s, which undermines the theory that Salamis was by and large a Christian city already before Epiphanius.¹⁴ The latter notion is born out of a hindsight and a highly biased source, that is, the later hagiographical text of the *Vita* of Epiphanius (written in mid/late fifth or in the sixth century), and a conjectural reconstruction of a public inscription from the Gymnasium of Salamis, which, according to its first editors, showed that the bishop of Salamis, a predecessor of the famous Epiphanius, was Constantius II's agent in rebuilding the ruined city around 346.¹⁵ Although Jean Pouilloux rightly dissociated this text from both Constantius II and the city's bishop, the by then established view was never fully refuted and thus continued to inform most accounts of the history of Salamis.¹⁶ I would suggest that there is no solid evidence for a major Christian presence in Salamis in terms of either demography

11 *Vita Hilarionis* 42–43. The description of Hilarion's retreat outside Paphos is to a large extent fictional, yet the proximity with the pagan temple can be genuine, as Jerome may have visited the empty tomb of the saint near Paphos himself: Weingarten 2005, 96–97.

12 *Hymn to King Helios* 135D and 143D (Wright [Loeb] 369, 391).

13 Pouilloux *et al.* 1987, p. 69, no. 157.

14 Callot's theory (1985; 1998) that a *martyrium* of Saint Epiphanius was built over the podium of the temple by the end of the fourth century is fully hypothetical. It was certainly an elaborate repair but the function of this structure remains unclear. It is equally possible that it was a secular building or even a transitional pagan cult installation. Moreover, the fact that the *Vita* does not point to such an ostentatious case of appropriation is compelling.

15 Mitford – Nicolaou 1974, nos. 41 and 42.

16 Pouilloux *et al.* 1987, 68–99, no. 153: He made a case to associate these fragments with public honours in the theatre and the gymnasium of Salamis by a known earlier *praeses* of Cyprus, Antistius Sabinus, to the tetrarchs Diocletian, Galerius, Maximian and Constantius Chlorus (293–305). If so, what the governor Antistius Sabinus

or public architecture before the end of the fourth century, while many aspects of the material culture of the late antique city warrant closer and further examination.

A conservative estimate based on literary and epigraphical sources would therefore place the end of public paganism in Paphos, Kourion, and Salamis in the late 360s at the earliest. Regarding Salamis, the story of the *Vita* (ch. 94) in which Epiphanius appropriates the treasure of the abandoned temple of Zeus, reminds us of several other contemporary accounts of bishops taking over the treasures and the lands of disused temples, usually after approval by the imperial authorities.¹⁷ In the case of Aphrodite of Amathus, however centred in the lower city and not on the acropolis, it may be also the case that the traditional cult also survived the third century.¹⁸ This is nevertheless certain for the sanctuary of Sarapis, Isis, Osiris and Eros/Harpocrates at the site of Cholades at Soloi, the systematic excavation of which has already shown that its last phase of renovations and repairs occurred in the early fourth century.¹⁹ Besides, recent small-scale archaeological surveys and a few late epigraphic texts seem to suggest that a number of rural pagan cults also survived in late antiquity: the sanctuary of Paphian Aphrodite's consort at Rantidi in Paphos, Zeus Labranios at the mountainous hinterland of Amathus (Phasoula and/or Chandria) and Apollo (Opaon) Melanthios.²⁰ These rural sites together with the evidence about the cult of Theos Hypsistos, to which I come next, present an important aspect of late paganism of the island.

By combining the epigraphic evidence about the so-called Hypsistarians on Cyprus and elsewhere, one can argue that their cult was rigorously monotheistic and aniconic in character, consisting of small and unpretentious votives (i.e., altars and plaques), and probably took place in open-air rural sanctuaries or in private houses. So far 35 dedications

wanted to commemorate with his public honours was in fact his approval of the anti-Christian policy of the first tetrarchs.

See also: <http://laststatues.classics.ox.ac.uk>, nos. LSA-865-67; 2017; 2019–2020.

17 Metzler 1981; Fowden 1978.

18 Aupert 2009, 38–39. In the *Acta Barnabae* (20.7) the focus of the civic cult is located 'ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ ἐν τῷ ὄρει' (the acropolis?).

19 Westholm 1936; Kleibl 2007.

20 Masson 1994; Mitford 1990, 2183 (Opaon/Apollo Melanthios, Amargeti); Young 2005; Prokopiou 1999; Hermary 1992; Mitford 1946, 25–39. The dating of a series of votive statuettes from the shrine of Zeus Labranios is disputable (ranging from the late second to the fifth century); the coins of Diocletian and Julian in Phasoula nonetheless provide a strong indication that the latest phase of the site can be placed in the fourth century (Procopiou). Phasoula is also named as the setting of the martyrdom of Saint Reginos and Orestes: Aupert 1984, 23, no. 46.

(*cippi*, altars and plaques) to Theos Hypsistos have been reported on Cyprus, mainly from the Limassol district and a few examples from Larnaca and Paphos.²¹ According to the current approximate dating, their inscribed traces cease to be visible with the sharp decline of epigraphical evidence in the late third century.²² Several accounts in Epiphanius and other Christian writers testify to their presence in nearby Phoenicia and Palestine in the late fourth and fifth centuries and we can assume that Hypsistarians' conversion to Christianity would have taken some time. As the above regions were in close interrelation with Cyprus, this kind of information, though confusing it may be, cannot be ignored. Irrespective of how the cult of Theos Hypsistos, mostly attested through the epigraphic data, is understood, one can see in it an interesting facet of the last pagans of Cyprus. One should expect mutations in the beliefs and practices of the Hypsistarians between the first and the fifth century, that is, from being part of a predominately pagan landscape to a Christianized one, after the collapse of public paganism and the gradual radicalization of religious identities. Being viewed as either heretical Christians, or Judaizing pagans, or even paganizing and/or Judaizing Christians (for the last two notions, see Epiphanius), the Hypsistarians may have been not only the result of cross-fertilization between pagans and Jews, but they may have also represented a strategy of survival through dissimulation, an element that was evident in a variety of contemporary texts, both pagan and Christian.²³

21 Flourentzos 2015; Mitchell 1999, 101, 106, 144–145; *idem* 2010, 205–206; Mitford 1990, 2206–2207. Domestic cult(?): Mitchell 2003, 151–155. Recent additions: Flourentzos 2015. A few more in the Limassol district are still unpublished. Whether the acclamation to Theos Hypsistos was associated with the various prominent local cults of master gods such as Zeus, Apollo or Helios in Cyprus, is not epigraphically proven, but it cannot be ruled out.

22 The whole island is almost totally deficient in sepulchral inscriptions after the third century (see Nicolaou 2013, 247–248), thus depriving the modern researcher of a useful tool of evaluating the pace of Christianisation across the population.

23 For the literary evidence, see Mitchell 1999, 92–97. Epiphanius in *Panarion* (3.80) refers to the Hypsistarians as Massaliani or Euphemitai. He nevertheless makes (as usual) no mention of their presence in Cyprus. He also reports that at the time of the emperor Constantius a Christian group of Massaliani or Euphemitai was born out of the pagan one, at the time when the pagan Euphemitai were prosecuted in Phoenicia.

II. The Churches

Church building is a major point of departure in studies of Christianisation, though haphazard and debatable in terms of chronology. Apart from the major problem caused by the lack of fully published reports, it must be remembered that before the transformation of Christian architecture around the time of Constantine, the layout of a church did not differ from that of domestic housing, thus making its identification in the archaeological record very difficult. Loose adaptation of existing buildings to a rudimentary basilical plan in the early stages of post-Constantinian Christian architecture must have been also common.²⁴ Apart from a few exceptions, these fourth-century churches were usually built at the outskirts of the cities, were modest, and, as a matter of fact, underrepresented in the archaeological record.²⁵

The evidence for early Christian basilicas and *martyria* on Cyprus that can be roughly dated to the second half of the fourth/early fifth century are Agios Spyridon at Tremithous, Agios Herakleidios at Tamassos, Agios Auxibios at Soloi, the Toumballos and Chrysopolitissa basilicas at Paphos, Acheiropoietos at Lambousa, the Limeniotissa and Nymphaeum basilicas at Kourion, and Agios Tychonas at Amathus.²⁶ One should note that this group of Christian monumental architecture for an eastern province of low importance is remarkable, both in terms of chronology and monumentality, even though it does not belong to the first generation of Christian churches. These were usually built as imperial endowments in various important cities in both East and West, such as Jerusalem, Alexandria, Nicomedia, Antioch, Rome, Constantinople, Ostia, Milan, Trier, and elsewhere.²⁷

The *Vita Epiphanii* (ch. 72) refers to a preexisting church in Salamis that God instructed Epiphanius to replace with a larger building, probably in a different location. We know that the new seven-aisled basilica was not completed before his death in 403. The earlier church was probably a humble building; Epiphanius in his own writings makes no mention of it. He does, however, mention the church that Constantius II had built in Alexandria.²⁸ And although Epiphanius would have had good reasons to eradicate the memory of this 'heretical' emperor as the

24 This may be the case in Soloi, where the earliest phase of the ecclesiastical complex seems to go back to the early fourth century: Nicolaou 2017; Neal 2009.

25 A recent survey and bibliography with regard to Asia Minor: Niewöhner 2016.

26 Maguire 2012.

27 Church building of Constantine: Johnson 2006; of Constantius II: Henck 2001.

28 *Pan.* 3.153. The general silence in Epiphanius' voluminous works about his see and its people (including his absence from the signatories of the Church councils) poses