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CONFLICT, INFLUENCE
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AREA

CYPRUS AND THE RENAISSANCE (1450 · 1650)

EDITED BY
BENJAMIN ARBEL
EVELIEN CHAYES
HARALD HENDRIX



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LORENZO CALVELLI

ARCHAEOLOGY IN THE SERVICE
OF THE *DOMINANTE*:
GIOVANNI MATTEO BEMBO
AND THE ANTIQUITIES OF CYPRUS*

When this gentleman [Giovanni Matteo Bembo] was captain of the kingdom of Cyprus, being of great intelligence, an enemy of idleness and extremely cautious in all his actions, he considered how the seat of the governors of that kingdom and island in Famagusta did not suit their high status well. Therefore, in the year 1548, he sent out people to look diligently for ancient marbles in several places in order to make that place worthy of its dignity. On this occasion they found underground the sepulchre of the goddess Venus, carved out of beautiful marble, which is known through the letters that are carved in it and have not been worn out by time. This find caused great pleasure to that rare gentleman, who had it brought to the middle of the square in Famagusta and put in an eminent place between two columns, a great embellishment for that city both in terms of the beauty and of the antiquity of the sepulchre.¹

* I am grateful to Donal Cooper (University of Warwick), Harald Hendrix (Universiteit Utrecht), Paschalis Kitromilides (National Hellenic Research Foundation), Michalis Olympios (University of Cyprus), Tassos Papacostas (King's College London), Marc Schachter (University of Oregon), Ege Uluca Tümer (İstanbul Kültür Üniversitesi), and Michael Walsh (Nanyang Technological University Singapore) for their generous help. I am also indebted to two anonymous referees for their valuable comments.

¹ MARCO GUAZZO, *Cronica*, Venezia, Francesco Bindoni, 1553, f. 413^v: «Essendo questo gentilhuomo capitano del regno di Cipro et essendo di elevato ingegno, nemico de l'ocio et in tutte le sue attioni prudentissimo, gli venne pensato che in Famagosta il ridotto che vi era de i rettori di quel regno et isola mal corrispondeva a la grandezza loro. Adunque, facendo con diligenza cercare in più luoghi marmi antichi l'anno 1548 per ridurre quel luogo uguale a la sua dignità, trovossi di marmo bellissimo et sotto terra il sopolcro de la dea Venere, conosciuto per le lettere che in quello sono intagliate et non dal tempo consumate. Cosa di gran contento

This concise account, published in Marco Guazzo's 1553 *Cronica dal principio del mondo*, illustrates what is probably the best known, yet still puzzling, episode of Cypriot archaeology in the Renaissance.² The ancient artefacts discovered by Giovanni Matteo Bembo in different sites around Cyprus and displayed in the main square of Famagusta in 1548 have not yet received specific attention from scholars. On the contrary, the most intriguing of them, the alleged tomb of Venus, has long been considered to be lost and unidentifiable. In 1899 Camille Enlart went as far as to treat this legendary object as the symbol of the ineptitude of Renaissance Venetians, "qui se piquaient d'érudition" and who had invented what he regarded as "la plus bizarre des reliques".³ One year later, Angelo Scrinzi, a professor of Classical Archaeology at Padua, tried in vain to identify the sepulchre "di marmo bellissimo" described by Guazzo.⁴ More recently, in a short article devoted to the archaeological enterprises promoted by the Venetians in Cyprus, Antoine Hermary revisited the references to this artefact and expressed the hope that some light might be shed on its history.⁵

Given this volume's focus on the political and intellectual connections between western Europe and Cyprus in the Renaissance, in this essay I will concentrate on the ancient monuments that Giovanni Matteo Bembo set up in Famagusta in the mid sixteenth century.⁶ In parallel, I will explore the links that Bembo

a questo raro gentiluomo, che lo fece portare nel mezzo de la piazza di Famagosta et in luogo eminente tra due bellissime colonne collocare, grand'ornamento di quella città, sì per bellezza, quanto per l'antichità di quel sopolcro.

² On Guazzo see GIUSEPPE GIRIMONTI GRECO, in *Dizionario biografico degli Italiani*, LX (2003), pp. 530-534, s.v. *Guazzo (Guazzi), Marco*.

³ CAMILLE ENLART, *L'art gothique et la Renaissance en Chypre*, 2 voll., Paris, Ernest Leroux, 1899, t. II, p. 637. Enlart's attitude reflected the general tendency of nineteenth-century French historiography towards the period of Venetian rule on Cyprus: see BENJAMIN ARBEL, *Entre mythe et histoire: la légende noire de la domination vénitienne à Chypre*, in «Études Balkaniques. Cahiers Pierre Belon», V (1998), *Matériaux pour une histoire de Chypre (IV^e-XX^e siècle)*, pp. 81-107 (reprint in Id., *Cyprus, the Franks and Venice, 13th-16th Centuries*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2000, art. XIV).

⁴ See ANGELO SCRINZI, *Un sarcofago arcaico antropoide della collezione Boldù*, in «Atti dell'Istituto Veneto di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti. Classe di Scienze Morali e Lettere», LIX (1899-1900), pp. 505-517.

⁵ See ANTOINE HERMARY, *Les fouilles vénitienes à Chypre au XVI^e siècle*, in «Cahiers du Centre d'Études Chypriotes», III (1985), pp. 29-32.

⁶ For a preliminary overview of this topic, see LORENZO CALVELLI, *Cipro e la memoria dell'antico fra Medioevo e Rinascimento. La percezione del passato romano dell'isola nel mondo occidentale*, Venezia, Istituto Veneto di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti,

had with Cyprus, to further understand the ideological and institutional implications of his actions on the island. As far as sources allow, I will also try to reconstruct the arrangement of Famagusta's main square at the apogee of the Venetian rule on Cyprus, concentrating on those symbols of identity that Bembo and some of his contemporaries selected to signify the government of the Serenissima in the most eastern of her overseas colonies. In conclusion, I will come back to Giovanni Matteo's attitude towards classical antiquities, as it may be gathered from the archaeological and literary sources relating to the different territories of the Venetian empire that he was sent to administer.

1. *Reshaping the urban space in the name of the Venetian Republic*

Giovanni Matteo Bembo, Cardinal Pietro's favourite nephew, was among the most authoritative and learned Venetian patricians of the mid sixteenth century.⁷ Born in Venice around 1491, he possessed the perfect qualities for a member of the ruling class of the Serenissima.⁸ Around the age of twenty he entered public life and

2009 (Memorie dell'Istituto Veneto di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti. Classe di scienze morali, lettere ed arti, 133), pp. 140-152.

⁷ Biographical data on Giovanni Matteo Bembo can be found in: GUAZZO, *Cronica*, f. 413^{r-v}; GIAMMARIA MAZZUCHELLI, *Gli scrittori d'Italia cioè notizie storiche e critiche intorno alle vite e agli scritti dei letterati italiani*, 2 voll., Brescia, Giambattista Bossini, 1760, II/2, pp. 731-733; EMMANUELE ANTONIO CICOGNA, *Delle iscrizioni veneziane*, 7 voll., Venezia, Molinari, 1824-1853 (reprint Bologna, Forni, 1983), III (1830), pp. 318-323; SCRINZI, *Un sarcofago*, pp. 513-517; SANDRA SECCHI, in *Dizionario biografico degli Italiani*, VIII (1966), pp. 124-125, s.v. *Bembo, Giovanni Matteo*; PATRICIA FORTINI BROWN, *Private Lives in Renaissance Venice*, New Haven - London, Yale University Press, 2004, pp. 94-95, 191-195, 256; EAD., *The Exemplary Life of Giulia Bembo Della Torre*, in *ΦΙΛΑΝΘΡΩΠΙΣΤΗΣ. Studi in onore di Marino Zorzi*, edd. Chryssa Maltezou, Peter Schreiner, Margherita Losacco, Venezia, Istituto Ellenico di Studi Bizantini e Postbizantini di Venezia, 2008, pp. 155-174. In his letters to his nephew, Pietro Bembo would normally address him as «figliuol caro» or «figliuol mio», referring to himself as «Bembus pater»: see PIETRO BEMBO, *Nuove lettere famigliari di m. Pietro Bembo scritte a m. Gio. Mattheo Bembo suo nipote hora senatore prestantissimo nella rep. Venetiana, nelle quali si comprende particolarmente tutta la vita dell'autore e qual fosse il suo stile nelle cose volgari in tutti i tempi*, Venezia, Francesco Rampazzetto, 1564 (reprint in PIETRO BEMBO, *Lettere di m. Pietro Bembo cardinale*, 5 voll., Milano, Società Tipografica de' Classici Italiani, 1809-1810, V (1810):).

⁸ On the role of colonial administrators in the Venetian empire, with special reference to the *Stato da mar*, see MONIQUE E. O'CONNELL, *Men of Empire. Pow-*

started serving in a series of magistracies that often required him to live far away from his home town.⁹ He began his career as an official of the wine tax (*dazio del vin*) in 1519. He was then appointed galley commander (*sopracomito*) in 1522 and member of the supreme criminal Court of the Forty (*quarantia criminal*) in 1521, 1524 and 1528. In the following years he was appointed governor of Zadar (*conte di Zara*) in 1534, Kotor (*rettore e provveditore di Cattaro*) in 1538, Koper (*podestà e capitano di Capodistria*) in 1541, Verona (*podestà di Verona*) in 1543, Famagusta (*capitano di Famagosta*) in 1546, Heraklion (*capitano di Candia*) in 1552 and Brescia (*capitano di Brescia*) in 1559. In 1561 he was elected *provveditore generale di Cipro*. Finally, in 1564 he was offered the office of duke of Crete (*duca di Candia*), but was allowed to refuse it because of his age.¹⁰

Since archival and literary sources concerning Bembo's activities as *provveditore generale di Cipro* are extremely scanty,¹¹ this study will focus in particular on his first Cypriot appointment as *capitano di Famagosta*. The exact dates of this service are recorded in the registries of the *segretario alle voci*, the office of the Venetian chan-

er and Negotiation in Venice's Maritime State, Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009.

⁹ For most of these appointments see MAZZUCHELLI, *Gli scrittori d'Italia*; SECCHI, *Bembo, Giovanni Matteo*. According to Francesco Sansovino, in his youth Bembo had also held the offices of *signor di notte*, *auditor nuovo*, and *camarlingo*: see the dedication to Giovanni Matteo Bembo of Sansovino's edition of LEONARDO BRUNI, *La historia universale de' suoi tempi di m. Lionardo Aretino*, Venezia, Francesco Sansovino, 1561, f. C^r. For the exact dates of Bembo's appointments in Zadar, Kotor, Koper and Verona see VENEZIA, Archivio di Stato (henceforth: ASV), *Segretario alle voci, Elezioni in maggior consiglio*, reg. 1, 1526-1540; ff. 145v-146r, s.v. *Comes Iadrg*, 154v-155r, s.v. *Rector et provisor Catheri*; reg. 2, 1541-1552, ff. 150v-151r, s.v. *Potestas et capitaneus Iustinopolis*, 137v-138r, s.v. *Potestas Veronae*. For his other appointments in colonial administration see *infra* footnotes 10, 11, 13, 119, 122.

¹⁰ See ASV, *Segretario alle voci, Elezioni in maggior consiglio*, reg. 4, 1562-1570, ff. 177^v-178^r, s.v. *Duca Cretae*: Bembo was elected on 9 April 1564, but on the last day of the month «fu presa la sua scussa in gran consiglio».

¹¹ Bembo was elected on 24 July 1561; the next *provveditore*, Bernardo Sagredo, was elected on 29 September 1562: see ASV, *Segretario alle voci, Elezioni in senato*, reg. 3, 1559-1567, f. 92^v, s.v. *Proveditor general et syndico nel regno de Cypro*. Cf. ANTONIO MANNO, *Politica e architettura militare: le difese di Venezia (1557-1573)*, in «Studi Veneziani», n.s., XI (1986), pp. 91-137, in partic. p. 106. See also PESARO, Biblioteca Oliveriana, ms. 455, f. 114^v, nn. 186-187, containing the copy of two documents issued by Giovanni Matteo Bembo as *provveditore generale e sindaco del regno di Cipro* on 2 November 1561 and 7 March 1563 (Cf. *Inventario dei manoscritti delle biblioteche d'Italia*, edd. Giuseppe Mazzatinti et al., Torino – Forlì – Firenze, Loescher – Bordandini – Olschki, 1887, XXXIX (1929), p. 219).

cery that was responsible for keeping track of all public administrators appointed by the Great Council (*maggior consiglio*) and the Senate (*senato* or *pregadi*).¹² He was elected (*remansit*) on 17 October 1546, took charge in Cyprus (*intravit*) on 6 May 1547 and left the island having accomplished his duties (*complevit*) after 24 months on 5 May 1549.¹³ Cardinal Pietro's last letters to Giovanni Matteo, written a few months before the former died, show that the younger Bembo had decided to wait for the 1547 sailing season before embarking for the eastern Mediterranean.¹⁴ This is also confirmed by the text of two decrees of the Senate, issued on 26 January and 26 February 1547, which establish that he was still in Venice on those dates.¹⁵ When he first arrived in Cyprus, Giovanni Matteo Bembo was at the pinnacle of a glorious military and political career. As well as being commander in peacetime of the Venetian troops residing on the island,¹⁶ he also had to deal with strategic and logistical problems, such as reinforcing the defences of Famagusta,¹⁷ providing the town with a new water-supply system,¹⁸ and reclaiming

¹² On the *segretario alle voci* see ANDREA MOZZATO, «Rulers of Venice (1332-1524)». *Alcune osservazioni sulla schedatura dei registri del Segretario alle Voci*, in «Reti Medievali Rivista», VI (2005), accessible online at: www.rm.unina.it/rivista/dwnl/Mozzato.pdf.

¹³ ASV, *Segretario alle voci, Elezioni in maggior consiglio*, reg. 2, 1541-1552, ff. 192^v-193^r, s.v. *Capitaneus Amocustae*.

¹⁴ See BEMBO, *Nuove lettere famigliari*, ff. 148^{r-v} (reprint in BEMBO, *Lettere*, V (1810), pp. 343-345). Pietro Bembo died in Rome on 18 January 1547: see CARLO DIONISOTTI, in *Dizionario biografico degli Italiani*, VIII (1966), pp. 133-151, in partic. p. 146, s.v. *Bembo, Pietro*.

¹⁵ See ASV, *Senato, Mar*, reg. 29, ff. 35^v-36^r, 45^v-46^v.

¹⁶ On the general duties of the captain of Famagusta see LOUIS DE MAS LATRIE, *Histoire de l'île de Chypre sous le règne des princes de la maison de Lusignan*, 3 voll., Paris, Imprimerie impériale, 1855-1861, III (1855), *Documents et mémoires servant de preuves à l'histoire de l'île de Chypre sous les Lusignans. Première partie. Documents, II*, pp. 849-851; BRUNO DUDAN, *Il dominio veneziano di Levante*, Bologna, Zanichelli, 1938, pp. 143-144; cfr EVANGELIA SKOUFARI, *Cipro veneziana (1473-1571). Istituzioni e culture nel regno della Serenissima*, Roma, Viella, 2011, in partic. pp. 54-64, 76-81.

¹⁷ See FRANCESCA CAVAZZANA ROMANELLI, GILLES GRIVAUD, *Cyprus 1542. The Great Map of the Island by Leonida Attar*, Lefkosia, The Bank of Cyprus Cultural Foundation, 2006, p. 28.

¹⁸ See the reference in Leonardo Donà's manuscript description of Cyprus, written in the years 1556-1558: VENEZIA, Biblioteca del Museo Correr, *Donà delle Rose*, ms. 45, f. 160^v: «Fuori di Famagosta una lega, in un luoco detto San Constantino, vi è un pozzo, l'aqua delquale, perché è in luogo alto più della città, parve a messer Zuan Matheo Bembo capitano di voler condur nella città, perlaqual cosa fu fatto gran principii e fu condotta l'aqua per due tiri d'archibuso e più. E cosi sta hozzidi, ma perché la è molto pochà non si continuò o pure per la mol-

the marshes of Costanza, located north of Famagusta, near the ancient site of Salamis.¹⁹

According to the chronicler Marco Guazzo, in 1548, during the second year of his term, Giovanni Matteo planned and realised a new ensemble of monuments for the urban heart of Famagusta. In the middle of the town's main square he erected two monumental pillars, whilst between them, "in luogo eminente", he placed the sarcophagus known as the tomb of Venus. To this day, the twin pillars are located towards the north-eastern corner of the square, in front of the building that served during the Ottoman period as the *medrese*, the local Koranic school (fig. 1).²⁰ Both shafts are grey granite monoliths and are about six metres tall. They rest on white marble bases and plinths and are topped with capitals of the same stone, which mix Doric and Tuscan elements. The northern pillar also retains a white marble square impost on top of its capital. Both pillars are mounted on tall pedestals composed of white marble bases and cornices and limestone dadoes and plinths (fig. 2).²¹ The sarcophagus, by contrast, has been moved

ta spesa. Furono appresso il pozzo fatti molti altri pozzi nella rocca, credendo di dover ritrovar qualche gran vena di aqua con le mine, ma non fu ritrovato niente»; cfr BENJAMIN ARBEL, *Supplying Water to Famagusta. New Evidence from the Venetian Period*, in *Πρακτικά του Τρίτου Διεθνούς Κυπριολογικού Συνεδρίου (Λευκωσία, 16-20 Απριλίου 1996)*, 3 voll., ed. Athanasios Papageorgiou, Lefkosia, Εταιρεία Κυπριακών Σπουδών, 2000-2001, II (2001), pp. 651-656, in partic. pp. 652-653; NASA PATAPIOU, *Leonardo Donà, Memorie per le cose di Cipro: From the City of Shoal Waters to Outermost Karpasia*, in «Sweet Land...». *Lectures on the History and Culture of Cyprus*, edd. Julian Chrysostomides, Charalambos Dendrinis, Camberley, Porphyrogenitus, 2006, pp. 209-230, in partic. pp. 219-220; CALVELLI, *Cipro e la memoria*, pp. 123-125.

¹⁹ See Sansovino's dedication of his edition of BRUNI, *La historia universale*, f. E^v: «Et avegna che Vostra Signoria con le belle fabbriche fatte per tutti i vostri go-vernì, come in Cipri, co' danari havuti in gran quantità per la vostra industria, trovasti il modo di asciugar il famoso lago di Costanza, vedendolo et considerando più d'una volta dove gli si potesse dar esito all'acqua et che vedeste che bisognava tagliar il sasso vivo del monte su la marina, cosa tanto rara et tanto nuova ch'ì popoli riputaron i re passati per poco, poi che in quella guisa liberaste Famagosta da uno aere fetido et corrotto a quel modo».

²⁰ On the Famagusta *medrese* see TÜNCER BAĞIŞKAN, *Kıbrıs'ta osmanlı-türk eserleri*, Lefkoşa, Kıbrıs Ocak, 2005, pp. 360-361 (English translation by Thomas A. Sinclair, *Ottoman, Islamic, and Islamised Monuments in Cyprus*, Lefkosia, Cyprus Turkish Education Foundation, 2009, pp. 504-505).

²¹ See GEORGE E. JEFFERY, *A Description of the Historic Monuments of Cyprus*, Lefkosia, Government Printing Office, 1918 (reprint London, Zeno, 1983), pp. 125-126; cfr RUPERT GUNNIS, *Historic Cyprus. A Guide to its Towns and Villages, Monasteries and Castles*, London, Methuen, 1936 (reprint Lefkosia, Rustem, 1973), p. 93; ALBERTO RIZZI, *I coronati leoni di Cipro*, in «Atti dell'Istituto Veneto di Scien-

several times, and is currently visible inside the area formerly occupied by the residence of the Venetian governors (the so-called *palazzo del provveditore* or, simply, the *palazzo*, as Venetian archival sources tend to call it). Its identity as the Venetian tomb of Venus has only recently been confirmed.²² It is an early-third century AD work from Asia Minor in the Attic style. It was sculpted from a block of white marble, possibly from a Phrygian quarry, and is decorated with Dionysiac masks and winged Erotes standing on consoles and holding a garland, which runs around all four sides (fig. 3).²³ Despite the fact that both the columns and the sarcophagus still lie in or close to Famagusta's main square, it is not easy to follow their history over the past four and a half centuries. My aim is to reconstruct it here using the broadest spectrum of sources that I have been able to identify.

The visual impact of Bembo's original arrangement from the late 1540s is confirmed by several pieces of evidence dating to the last decade of Venetian rule on Cyprus. In particular, travel accounts written by four Northern-European pilgrims who stopped in Famagusta on their way to the Holy Land document how the ancient artefacts located in the main square of the town played a strong symbolic role, reminding their observers of some of the main emblems of the Serenissima back in Venice. Three of these pilgrims, the citizen of Leipzig Johann Helffrich, the Swiss catholic priest Peter Villinger, and the Dutchman Adriaen de Vlaming, visited Cyprus in the summer of 1565:

In the middle of the city there is a large square or market-place, which is called St Mark's square. There stands a palace or townhall [...]. Opposite this stand two beautiful erect columns of marble, rather high and strong. Between them in the

ze, *Lettere ed Arti. Classe di Scienze Morali, Lettere ed Arti*, CLII (1993-1994), pp. 307-329, in partic. p. 319, n. 1; *Id.*, *I leoni di San Marco*, 2 voll., Venezia, Arsenale, 2001, t. II, p. 282, n. 2573.

²² See CALVELLI, *Cipro e la memoria*, pp. 140-152; cfr ALLAN LANGDALE, *At the Edge of Empire: Venetian Architecture in Famagusta, Cyprus*, in «*Viator*», XLI (2010), pp. 155-198, in partic. 171-172.

²³ See *The Swedish Cyprus Expedition. Finds and Results of the Excavations in Cyprus*, edd. Einar Gjerstad et al., 12 voll., Stockholm - Lund, The Swedish Cyprus Expedition, 1934-1972, IV/1 (1934), p. 104; CORNELIUS C. VERMEULE, *Greek and Roman Cyprus. Art from Classical through Late Antique Times*, Boston, Museum of Fine Art, 1976, p. 73.

middle is a marble grave, which, as local people say, used to be the sepulchre of the goddess Venus.²⁴

[Famagusta] has a beautiful cathedral and episcopal seat of the Latin Church in the middle of the town, before a beautiful square. There is the sepulchre of the very beautiful Helen.²⁵

In the square before the church of St Nicholas, there stands the grave of the goddess Venus, raised up high above the ground, and it was brought here from Paphos. It stands between two high pillars, each one hewn in stone, which were brought here from Salamis.²⁶

In 1569, only one year before the outbreak of the War of Cyprus, another pilgrim, the German priest Wolfgang Gebhardt, wrote one last description of the Venetian square in Famagusta:

In the square before this church [St Nicholas] there is a beautiful coffin lying between two magnificently carved stone columns, which the people in this town, when they were still faithless, made in honour of the goddess Venus.²⁷

All these accounts show how remarkable the urban landscape of central Famagusta seemed to foreign travellers who happened to visit Cyprus in the late Renaissance. There are no other sources

²⁴ SIGMUND FEYERABEND, *Reyssbuch dess heyligen Lands*, Frankfurt am Main, Sigmund Feyerabend, 1584, f. 377r: «Mitten in der Statt hat es einen grossen Platz oder Marckt, welchen sie Sanctus Marcus Platz nennen. Darauff stehet ein Palatium oder Rhathaus [...]. Gegen diesem uber stehen zwo schöne auffgerichete Marmelsteinen Seulen, fast hoch und starck. Zwischen diesen in der mitten ist ein Marmelsteinen Grab, welchs sol seyn (wie die Innwohner sagen) der Göttin Veneris Begräbnuss».

²⁵ PETER VILLINGER, *Bilgerfahrt und Beschreibung der Hierusolomitischen Reiß in das heylig Land unnd deren Provintzen Palestina*, Konstanz, Nicolao Kalt, 1604, p. 25: «Hat ein schönen Thumb und Bischöfflichen Sitz der Latinischen Kirchen mitten inn der Statt, darvor ein schöner Blatz. Da ist der vil schöne Helenae Begräbnus».

²⁶ *Verscheyde voyagiën ofte reysen*, ed. Adriaan van Nispen, Dordrecht, Vingent Caeymax, 1652, p. 83: «Voor St. Nicolaes kerck op de plaets, daer staet het graf van de Godinne Venus, seer hoogh uyt der aerde verheven, en is daer gebracht van Baffa. 't Staet tusschen twee hooge pilaren, elck uyt een steen gehouwen, welcke daer gebracht zijn van Salamina».

²⁷ *Des Pfarrers von Öttingen Wolfgang Gebhardt Reisetagebuch von 1569 und 1570*, ed. Ferdinand Khull, Graz, Styria, 1897, p. 64: «Vor dieser Kirche auf dem Platz steht ein schöne Arka zwischen zweien Säulen von Steinwerk und zierlich ausgegraben, welche sie in dieser Stadt, da sie noch ungläubig waren, der Göttin Venusin zu Ehren gebaut haben».

that refer to the local main square as being dedicated to St Mark. This public area was simply the *piazza*, the principal open space of the town in front of the Latin cathedral of St Nicholas, where the market took place. Yet, in the words of the Leipziger Johann Helffrich, this square became explicitly *Sanctus Marcus Platz*. It is likely, in my view, that this misinterpretation (or, rather, unconsciously biased impression) originated from those symbols of Venetian power that Giovanni Matteo Bembo had moved there at the time of his service in Cyprus. In particular, the twin granite pillars must certainly have reminded their viewers of the two taller columns of the same stone located in the *Piazzetta* in Venice. In fact, the international fame and emblematic role of the *Piazzetta* columns had increased notably since 1529, when Jacopo Sansovino and Doge Andrea Gritti freed them from the adjacent architectural accretions, such as latrines and butchers' stalls, which had grown around them over the course of time.²⁸

Peter Villinger is the only one to mention Helen's grave. His perception of what he actually saw may have been biased by the late-antique and medieval legend that staged Helen's abduction on the western shore of Cyprus, near the sanctuary of Aphrodite at Paphos.²⁹ Similarly, the fame of the legendary birthplace of Venus and of its ancient temple may have influenced the Dutchman Adriaen de Vlaming, in whose view the two pillars had come from the ancient site of Salamis, whereas the tomb of the goddess had been brought from the region of Paphos.³⁰ His opinion contrasts with the evidence provided by another sixteenth-century source, which will be discussed at the end of this article.

The location of the monuments set up by Bembo in the main square of Famagusta is also documented in another contemporary source: Stefano Gibellino's 1571 engraving showing the siege

²⁸ See DEBORAH HOWARD, *Jacopo Sansovino. Architecture and Patronage in Renaissance Venice*, New Haven – London, Yale University Press, 1987², pp. 11–14; PATRICIA FORTINI BROWN, *Venice and Antiquity. The Venetian Sense of the Past*, New Haven – London, Yale University Press, 1996, pp. 18–19; MANUELA MORRESI, *Jacopo Sansovino*, Milano, Electa, 2000, p. 483, nt. 89; cfr LIONELLO PUPPI, *La piazza come spazio simbolico del potere marciano e di civiche memorie*, in «50 rue de Varenne», I (1985), pp. 96–100.

²⁹ See CALVELLI, *Cipro e la memoria*, pp. 257–264.

³⁰ The existence of the temple was known throughout the Middle Ages and the Renaissance: see CALVELLI, *Cipro e la memoria*, pp. 247–328.

of the town by the Ottomans.³¹ This plan includes a miniature representation of the marble sarcophagus, located in front of the main church (fig. 4). The caption for this part of the drawing reads “St Nicholas, cathedral of the Franks, in front of which stands the coffin of Venus located between two columns”.³²

It is probably not by chance that Gibellino indicated on his plan the presence of these ancient artefacts. In fact, it was near one of the pillars that the notorious execution of Marcantonio Bragadin, the last Venetian captain of Famagusta, took place.³³ Several contemporary sources offer a narrative of this brutal episode, which dramatically marked the end of the War of Cyprus. Bragadin was flayed alive on 17 August 1571 in the presence of the Ottoman commander Lala Mustafa Paşa. Particularly detailed accounts were given by some survivors of the siege, most of whom were taken to Constantinople as slaves, before being ransomed and eventually returning to Venice and western Europe. The list of eyewitnesses to Bragadin’s execution includes, among others, Father Agostino, prior of the Augustinian convent of St Anthony in Famagusta; the Dominican Angelo Calepio; Angelo Gatto, a military officer from Orvieto; the Brescian nobleman Nestore Martinengo; and the Cypriots Alessandro Podocataro and Pietro Valderio, viscount of Famagusta.³⁴ As we shall see, by comparing their narratives it

³¹ On this plan see ENLART, *L’art gothique*, t. I, pp. 255–256, t. II, pp. 716–718; *The History of the Cartography of Cyprus*, edd. Andreas Stylianou, Judith A. Stylianou, Lefkosia, Zavallis, 1980, pp. 54, 244–245, n. 59.

³² See ENLART, *L’art gothique*, t. II, p. 717: «San Nicolò, domo di Franchi, davanti al qual gli è l’arca di Venere, posta fra due colonne».

³³ It should be stressed, however, that Gibellino’s plan was probably made while the Famagusta siege was still on. On Bragadin see ANGELO VENTURA, in *Dizionario biografico degli Italiani*, XIII (1971), pp. 686–689, s.v. *Bragadin, Marcantonio*. On the siege of Famagusta see GEORGE HILL, *A History of Cyprus*, 4 voll., Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1940–1952, III (1948), pp. 950–1040; KENNETH M. SETTON, *The Papacy and the Levant (1204–1571)*, 4 voll., Philadelphia, The American Philosophical Society, 1976–1984, IV (1984), pp. 1004–1044; VERA COSTANTINI, *Il sultano e l’isola contesa. Cipro tra eredità veneziana e potere ottomano*, Torino, UTET, 2009, in partic. pp. 43–74. A recent narrative account is given by GIGI MONELLO, *Accadde a Famagosta. L’assedio turco ad una fortezza veneziana ed il suo sconvolgente finale*, 2 voll., Cagliari, Scepri & Mattana, 2006–2007.

³⁴ On the accounts of the siege of Famagusta see HILL, *A History*, III (1948), pp. 1152–1155; SETTON, *The Papacy and the Levant*, IV (1984), p. 94, nt. 1027; JOHANN STRAUSS, *How Cyprus Came under Turkish Rule: A Conquest and the Historians*, in «Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes», LXXXII (1992), pp. 325–340; GILLES GRIVAUD, *Ὁ πνευματικὸς βίος καὶ ἡ γραμματολογία κατὰ τὴν περίοδο*

is possible to reconstruct in quite some detail the spatial arrangement of Famagusta's main square:

They led him all the way to the loggia in the square, where they told him that, if he wished to become a Turk [i.e. to convert], he would be set free from death. And the *clarissimo* spat in their face with many insults before the janissaries clubbed him on the arms from either side, breaking them both. Then they stripped off his garment of crimson red damask, and took him and put him in the pillory, turning him eastwards, and one of their holy men and a Moor began to flay him. [...] And when he was flayed, they cut off his head and raised it up the flagpole, where St Mark was. [...] And I also heard that every night those who lived by the square of the town would see candles lit over the head of the *clarissimo*, which was on top of the flagpole, as we said above.³⁵

And then that noble gentleman was led to the square with drums and trumpets and many people. They undressed him and had him shamefully sit at the pillory bar. And then they had him lie down, and thus cruelly flayed him alive.³⁶

Bragadin, that most patient gentleman, was so weak that he could not stand. However, pushing him and teasing him,

τῆς Φραγκοκρατίας, in Ἱστορία τῆς Κύπρου, 5 voll., ed. Theodoros Papadopoulos, Lefkosia, Ἴδρυμα Αρχιεπισκόπου Μακαρίου Γ', V/2 (1996), pp. 863-1207, in partic. pp. 1171-1189; ID., Entrelacs chiprois. Essai sur les lettres et la vie intellectuelle dans le royaume de Chypre 1191-1570, Lefkosia, Moufflon, 2009, pp. 272-287; Κυπριακές πηγές για την άλωση της Αμμοχώστου, ed. Paschalis M. Kitromilides, Athina, Ινστιτούτο Νεοελληνικών Ερευνών. Εθνικό Ἴδρυμα Ερευνών, 2011, in partic. pp. 11-37.

³⁵ FRA AGOSTINO DA FAMAGOSTA, *La perdita di Famagosta e la gloriosa morte di M.A. Bragadino. Relazione di fra Agostino priore degli Eremitani di quella città, testimonio oculare*, ed. N. Morosini, Venezia, Ferrari, 1891, p. 27: «L'hanno condotto fin alla lozza in piazza, dove li fu dito se volesse farse turcho se libereria dalla morte. Et esso clarissimo li spudò in la fazza con molte vilanie et li gianiceri li dette un per banda una bastonata alle brazze et li fu rotte tutte due. Poi li hanno cavato la vesta de tabì cremesin et l'hanno condotto et messo in berlina, dove lo voltorno in ver levante, et un di loro santoni et un moro cominciarono a scortarlo. [...] Et quando fu scorticato, li fu tagliata la testa et la fu tirata sopra la stendardo, dove stava San Marco. [...] Et di più ho inteso che quelli che stavano presso la piazza della città, che ogni notte vedevano candeled accese sopra la testa del clarissimo che era sopra il stendardo, come dicemo di sopra»; cfr *Κυπριακές πηγές*, pp. 110, 112.

³⁶ STEFANO LUSIGNANO, *Chorografia et brevis historia universale dell'isola de Cipro principando al tempo di Noè per in sino al 1572*, Bologna, Alessandro Benaccio, 1573, f. 119r: «Et poi fu condotto che'l nobile signor alla piazza con gli tamburi et trombe et con molta gente. Lo spogliorno et feceno sedere vittuperosamente al ferro della berlina et poi, distesolo per terra, così vivo crudelmente lo scorticorno».

beating him with a rod, they led him to Famagusta's main square, in the appointed place for justice. And they immediately took off his garments and stripped him naked and tied him to the column of the banner, which is in the middle of the square, having turned his face towards the column. And they began to flay him alive, starting from the small of his back. And while they were flaying his back, shoulders, arms and neck, from the loggia of the palace Mustapha, that deceitful betrayer, mocking him said «Become a Turk and I shall spare your life and you will be great before my lord the great emperor». [...] And when they had flayed him from head to foot, they planted his honoured and gentle head on the gallows of the square.³⁷

Then they led him to the square, stripped him naked, and chained him to the pillory bar and brutally flayed him alive.³⁸

That morning, being a Friday, their holiday, the 17th of August, the pasha mounted a horse, having the *clarissimo* hold the stirrup [...] and they set him in the pillory in the square, tying both his hands.³⁹

They led his lordship to the pillory column and, having stripped him down to the waist, they also forced him to become a Turk. [...] And, while they were flaying him, he kept

³⁷ ANGELO GATTO, *Narrazione del terribile assedio e della resa di Famagosta nell'anno 1571*, ed. Policarpo Catizzani, Orvieto, Tipografia comunale di E. Tosini, 1835, p. 103: «Il patientissimo signor Bragadino dalla debolezza non si reggeva in piedi, tuttavia urtandolo e schernendolo, dandoli del bastone, lo condussero nella piazza principale de Famagosta, nel loco deputato de giustizia e subito li trassero le vesti et lo spogliaro ignudo et lo legarno alla colonna dello stendardo, la quale è in mezzo alla piazza, havendoli volta la faccia dalla parte della colonna et lo incominciorno a scorticare vivo, cominciando dal fil della schiena e, mentre che li scorticavano la schiena, spalle, braccia e collo, dalla loggia del palazzo il perfido traditore de Mustaphà beffeggiandolo li diceva: "Fatti turco che ti salvarò la vita e sarai grande appresso al grand'imperator mio signore". [...] Et scorticatolo che l'ebbero dal capo alle piante, piantaro l'honorata e gentile testa sopra la forca della piazza».

³⁸ NESTORE MARTINENGO, *Relatione di tutto il successo di Famagosta*, Venezia, Giorgio Angelieri, 1572, f. 7r: «Et poi condotto verso piazza, fattolo spogliare, fu messo al ferro della berlina et crudelmente scorticato vivo».

³⁹ ALESSANDRO PODOCATARO, *Relatione di Alessandro Podacataro de' successi di Famagosta dell'anno 1571 ora per la prima volta pubblicata*, ed. Andrea Tessier, Venezia, Giovanni Cecchini, 1876, p. 27: «Quella mattina, che fu un venerdì, giorno di sua festa, che fu alli 17 d'agosto, montò a cavallo il bassà, facendo ch'esso clarissimo tenesse la staffa [...] et lo misero alla berlina alla piazza, legandoli tutte due le mani»; cfr *Κυπριακές πηγές*, p. 78.

saying: «*Miserere mei Deus*» with what follows and, continuously commending himself to God the Lord, he called upon Christ for help. And when they reached down his navel, since he realised that he was dying, he cried out loud: «*In manus tuas, Domine, commendo spiritum meum*». *Et cum hec dixisset expiravit*. They finished flaying him on the ground, stuffed his skin full of hay and tore his body in four pieces. [...] His head and his pluck were strung up the flagpole.⁴⁰

Another precise description comes from the mouth of one last eyewitness, an anonymous Venetian soldier who had also been enslaved after the fall of Famagusta and at the time of Bragadin's execution was imprisoned in the former residence of the Venetian governors:

I could see very well as I was inside the palace and, though wounded, I had to stand and could not lie in bed for fear of being murdered. And with great pain I saw that those inhuman Turks had chained his neck to that column and started flaying him from the back of his head and kept flaying him all the way to the middle of his back.⁴¹

All these accounts demonstrate how the new conquerors of Cyprus clearly understood the symbolism related to the monuments located in Famagusta's main square. Since in Venice death and pillory sentences were carried out between the two granite columns

⁴⁰ PIETRO VALDERIO, *La guerra di Cipro*, edd. Gilles Grivaud, Nasa Patapiou, Lefkosia, Centre de Recherches Scientifiques, 1996 (Texts and Studies in the History of Cyprus, 22), pp. 90-91: «Anno condotto dopo sua signoria clarissima alla colonna della berlina et, avendolo spoliato ivi sino alla cintura, lo astringevano pure a farsi turco. [...] Et loro andavano dietro a scorticandolo et lui diceva sempre "Miserere mei Deus" con quello che segue et, sempre raccomandandosi al Signor Iddio, chiamava Cristo che lo aiutasse. Et, venuti sino all'ombelico, vedendosi mancare, gridò ad alta voce "In manus tuas, Domine, commendo spiritum meum". *Et cum hec dixisset expiravit*. Lo compirono di scorticare in terra, li empirno la pelle piena di paglia et lo corpo lo divisero in quattro parti. [...] La testa et coratela sua fu posta sopra le corde del stendardo».

⁴¹ ASTORRE BAGLIONI, *I Baglioni*, Prato, La Tipografica Pavese, 1964, pp. 428-429: «Io vedevo benissimo perché ero in palazzo e, se bene io ero ferito, però bisognava star su, né star in letto con tremor di essere ammazzato, e vidi con mio molto dolore che detti inumani Turchi posero al collo il ferro di detta colonna e lo cominciarono a scorticare dalla testa nella parte di dietro e andorno scorticandolo fino a mezo la schiena». Cfr GÉRAUD POUMARÈDE, *Pour en finir avec la Croisade. Mythes et réalités de la lutte contre les Turcs aux XVI^e et XVII^e siècles*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 2004, pp. 55-56.

of the *Piazzetta*,⁴² the Ottomans similarly decided to stage Bragadin's execution in the main square, by a column, which had already been used by the Venetians as a pillory (*colonna della berlina*, as many written sources call it). This was probably one of the two granite pillars erected by Bembo in the middle of the square. A similar use of a Roman *spolium* as a pillory column is attested in Venetian Zadar, where it is still visible in the former *Piazza delle erbe*, topped by the mutilated statue of a winged lion or, rather, of a gryphon.⁴³

Finally, although largely fictitious, a representation of the site of Bragadin's execution appears in the fresco painted on top of his funerary monument in the church of Santi Giovanni e Paolo in Venice (fig. 5). This monochrome painting was executed right after the completion of the monument in 1596. The painter, most likely Paolo Piazza (also known as Father Cosimo da Castelfranco), seems to have had at least indirect knowledge of the place where Bragadin's death occurred.⁴⁴

Some additional information on the ancient monuments discovered by Giovanni Matteo Bembo comes from sources dating to the Ottoman period. In early 1582 the French pilgrim Jean Palerne spent more than a month in Cyprus. Before leaving the island, his boat sailed past Paphos, the celebrated homeland of Venus. While describing this part of his trip, Palerne decided to include in his travel diary a reference to the tomb of the goddess, which he had learned about in Venice:

At evening time we sailed past Paphos, where there is just a small castle on the plain, but the village is two miles from there, near a small hill, where it is believed that Venus was wor-

⁴² See most recently FABIO BARRY, *Disiecta membra. Ranieri Zeno, the Imitation of Constantinople, the Spolia Style, and Justice at San Marco*, in *San Marco, Byzantium, and the Myths of Venice*, edd. Henry Maguire, Robert S. Nelson, Washington DC, Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2010, pp. 7-62, in partic. pp. 41-55.

⁴³ See LUIGI HAUSER, FRANCESCO BULIĆ, *Il tempio di San Donato in Zara*, Zara, Spiridione Artale, 1884, p. 5; GIUSEPPE SABALICH, *Guida archeologica di Zara con illustrazioni araldiche*, Zara, Tipografia di Leone Woditzka, 1897 (reprint Bologna, Forni, 1978), pp. 124-125; cfr ALBERTO RIZZI, *Guida della Dalmazia. Arte, storia, portolano*, 2 voll., Trieste, Edizioni Italo Svevo, 2007-2010, I (2007), pp. 365-366.

⁴⁴ On Piazza see Paolo Piazza, *Pittore cappuccino nell'età della Controriforma tra conventi e corti d'Europa*, edd. Sergio Marinelli, Angelo Mazza, Verona, Banca Popolare di Verona e Novara, 2002, in partic. pp. 40-41, 44, fig. 43, for the painting in the Bragadin monument.

shipped and that around it by diabolical illusion it never rained. Before I started my sea-voyage, there was a Venetian gentleman who told me that, at the time when the Venetian lordship held the island, he was there with the *potestà* and they found the sepulchre of Venus, where there was some lettering, which was later deciphered. And [he told me] that it was not at all, as people think, a fake thing, but that she had been in reality a great courtesan, who in the end was worshipped as a goddess for her beauty. She used to be buried there, for he told me that they had found her head there, which was brought to Venice, where that magnificent gentleman guards it very dearly.⁴⁵

Palerne's account demonstrates that more than ten years after the Ottoman conquest of Cyprus, the memory of the archaeological activities conducted by the Venetians on the island was still alive. The *potestà* referred to by the unknown gentleman that the pilgrim had met in Venice must have been none other than Giovanni Matteo Bembo himself, who had died some time after 1570.⁴⁶ Palerne's anonymous witness also confirmed that the alleged tomb of Venus bore an inscription, which had somehow sustained the object's interpretation as the goddess's sepulchre.

Along with this well-known relic, another artefact, identified as the goddess's head and kept at Bembo's house in Venice had also come to light. In the absence of further evidence, it remains difficult to make out what this object was. A suitable candidate could be an anthropoid sarcophagus, dating to the early fifth century

⁴⁵ *Pérégrinations du sieur Jean Palerne, foresien, secrétaire de François de Valois, duc d'Anjou et d'Alençon etc.*, Lyon, Jean Pillehotte, 1606, p. 337: «Sur le soir passasmes devant Baffé ou Paphos, où il n'y a qu'un petit chasteau sur la plaine, mais à deux mil delà est le village prez d'une petite colline, où l'on tient qu'estoit adorée Venus et qu'à l'entour d'icelle par illusion diabolique ne pleuvoit jamais. Il y eut un gentilhomme venitien qui me dict avant mon embarquement que, du temps que la Seigneurie de Venise tenoit l'isle, il y fut avec le potesta et trouverent la sepulture de Venus, où il y avoit quelques caracteres, qui avoyent depuis esté interpretez et que ce n'estoit point une chose feincte, comme l'on pense, mais que veritablement c'estoit une grande courtesane et laquelle en fin pour sa beauté fut adorée comme deesse. Elle y souloit estre ensepulturée, car il me dict qu'ils y avoyent trouvé la teste, qui fut portée à Venise, laquelle ce magnifique garde bien cherement». On Palerne's visit to Cyprus see GILLES GRIVAUD, *Le voyage à Chypre de Jean Palerne, forezien (26 janvier – 29 février 1582)*, in «Επετηρίς του Κέντρου Επιστημονικών Ερευνών», XI (1981-1982), pp. 415-426.

⁴⁶ See Giovanni Matteo's will, dated 22 March 1570: ASV, *Notarile, Notaio Ziliol*, filza 1259, testamento 507; cfr SECCHI, *Bembo, Giovanni Matteo*, p. 125; BROWN, *Private Lives*, pp. 191-195.

BC, that actually comes from the Ca' Bembo, Giovanni Matteo's residence on the Campiello Santa Maria Nova in Venice.⁴⁷ Until the late nineteenth century this artefact was embedded on the inner wall of an open-air courtyard above a door leading to the Rio di San Giovanni Grisostomo. Around 1890 Count Roberto Boldù (who owned the Ca' Bembo at the time) removed it from its original location and placed it under a staircase, where it was seen and described by Angelo Scrinzi.⁴⁸ Eventually, this sarcophagus entered the collection of the Correr Museum in Venice, which ceded it in deposit to the nearby National Archaeological Museum, where it is currently kept and exhibited (fig. 6).⁴⁹

After the War of Cyprus the Ottoman authorities decided not to allow Christians to stay overnight in Famagusta.⁵⁰ Access to the town became extremely difficult for foreigners until the first decades of the eighteenth century. Even then (and well into the nineteenth century), no western European could enter the city walls on horseback.⁵¹ One of the first descriptions of the square in Ottoman times is that written by the Anglican priest Richard Pococke, who visited Famagusta in the autumn of 1738:

The antient piazza seems to have been very handsome. The house of the governor with a portico before it and some ground buildings within was on one side. On the other is the west end of the church of St Sophia, a most beautifull Goth-

⁴⁷ On the Ca' Bembo see BROWN, *Private Lives*, pp. 188-195.

⁴⁸ See SCRINZI, *Un sarcofago*, p. 505.

⁴⁹ VENEZIA, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, inv. 82 Correr (Correr Museum inventory: classe XXV, n. 1015). See EDRICH KUKAHN, *Anthropoide Sarkophage in Beyrouth und die Geschichte dieser sidonischen Sarkophagkunst*, Berlin, Mann, 1955, p. 82, n. 1, fig. 18/1; ANTOINE HERMARY, *Un nouveau chapiteau hatorique trouvé à Amathonte*, in «Bulletin de correspondance hellénique», CIX (1985), pp. 657-699, in part. pp. 697-698.

⁵⁰ Cfr *Pérégrinations du sieur Jean Palerne*, p. 333: «Il y a un petit chateau, qui est assez fort et a son regard sur la mer, pour la garde duquel y a ordinairement cent cinquante Turcs et cinquante genissaires et quelques cinquante autres officiers, lesquels ne permettent que la nuit aucun chretien dorme et demeure dans ladite ville, craignans quelque surprinse».

⁵¹ See for instance GIOVANNI MARITI, *Viaggi per l'isola di Cipro e per la Soria e Palestina*, 9 voll., Lucca, Jacopo Giusti, 1769-1776, I (1769), p. 150: «Fu tale lo sdegno che concepirono i Turchi contro gli Europei di Famagosta, vedendo il danno che avevano ricevuto da soli quattromila uomini, che proibirono ad ogni europeo di entrarvi e di uscirne a cavallo. E perciò, quando si è alla porta, anche oggi bisogna mettere il piede in terra».

ick building, now converted into a mosque, and about three years ago two thirds of it was thrown down by an earthquake and the greatest part of the city of Famagosta. On a black stone which might be on the pedestal of a statue is the following inscription:

NEPOYAN TPAIANON KAISAPA
N ΓEPMANIKON YION ΘEOY
ΣΕΒΑΣΤΟΥ Η ΠΟΛΙΣ ΛΓ

Near the north-west corner of the church are two pillars which probably had on them the Venetian ensigns. Near these is such another sarcophagus as I saw at Telabaiese, of white marble adorned with Lyons' heads and festoons held by Cupids.⁵²

This passage comes from the handwritten register of letters that Pococke sent to his uncle Thomas Milles, bishop of Waterford and Lismore. A slightly shorter version of it was included in the second volume of his *Description of the East and Some Other Countries*, first published in 1745,⁵³ whereas the text of the Greek inscription was first reproduced in print in his *Inscriptionum antiquarum Graecarum et Latinarum liber*, issued in 1752.⁵⁴

Despite his admiration for the marble sarcophagus that he had seen in Famagusta, Pococke evidently was unaware of its earlier interpretation as being the tomb of Venus. The Greek epigraph that he saw and transcribed in the vicinity of the former cathedral of St Nicholas could also belong to the group of antiquities that the Venetians had discovered in the late Renaissance. Although there is no record of it before the eighteenth century, it may well have been brought to Famagusta's main square by Giovanni Matteo Bembo or by another Venetian governor of the island before

⁵² LONDON, British Library, Add. Mss. 15779, ff. 39^v-40^r. On the earthquake that hit Cyprus in 1735 see ANNA POURADIER DUTEIL-LOIZIDOU, *Un tremblement de terre destructeur survenu à Chypre le 21 avril 1735*, in «Επετηρίδα του Κέντρου Επιστημονικών Ερευνών», XXXIV (2008), pp. 285-296.

⁵³ RICHARD POCOCKE, *A Description of the East and Some Other Countries*, 2 voll., London, William Bowyer, 1743-1745, II/1 (1745), p. 215. Pococke's description of Cyprus can also be found in CLAUDE DELAVAL COBHAM, *Excerpta Cypria*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1908², pp. 251-270, in partic. p. 255.

⁵⁴ RICHARD POCOCKE, *Inscriptionum antiquarum Graecarum et Latinarum liber*, London, s.e., 1752, p. 42, n. 3.

the Ottoman conquest. The text of the inscription can be transcribed and supplemented as follows:

[Αὐτοκράτορ]α Νέρουαν Τραιανὸν Καίσαρα
[Σεβαστὸ]ν Γερμανικόν, υἱὸν θεοῦ
[Νέρουα Σε]βαστοῦ, ἡ πόλις. (Ἔτους) γ'

It is a dedication from an unknown Greek-speaking town (most likely Salamis), made to emperor Trajan during the third year of his reign (100 AD), written on a block of grey-blue marble with white streaks (fig. 7), which should still be conserved at the Famagusta District Archaeological Museum (sadly inaccessible since 1974).⁵⁵ According to Pococke, the inscription lay “before” the former cathedral of St Nicholas. This is also confirmed by the narratives of two other travellers: the Swedish orientalist Johan David Åkerblad, who visited Famagusta in 1788 and said that it was *devant la porte de la grande Mosqué*,⁵⁶ and the British diplomat William Turner, who came to Cyprus in 1815 and reported that he had seen it “at the door” of the church.⁵⁷

Another eighteenth century witness to the monuments that were visible in Famagusta’s main square was Alexander Drummond, who visited Cyprus for the first time in spring-summer 1745, while serving as British consul to Aleppo:

In the front of this church [St Nicholas], upon the right, are two granite pillars, detached from it, with capitals and bases of white marble; and between them stands a sarcophagus, adorned with festoons, but altogether uninscribed, which is a very extraordinary circumstance. Why should such expence

⁵⁵ See *Corpus inscriptionum Graecarum*, 4 voll., ed. August Böckh, Berlin, Officina Academica, 1828–1856, II (1843), n. 2634; *Testimonia Salamina, II, Corpus épigraphique*, edd. Jean Pouilloux, Paul Roesch, Jean Marcillet-Jaubert, Paris, De Boccard, 1987 (Salamine de Chypre, 13), p. 62, n. 139.

⁵⁶ See PAUL ÅSTRÖM, *Two Swedish Visitors to Cyprus, Truls Kähre and Johan David Åkerblad*, in «Κυπριακά σπουδαία», XXV (1961), pp. 75–80, in partic. p. 79. Cf. RITA C. SEVERIS, *The Swedes in Cyprus*, Lefkosia, Cyprus Research Centre, 2008 (Texts and Studies in the History of Cyprus, 58).

⁵⁷ See WILLIAM TURNER, *Journal of a Tour in the Levant*, 3 voll., London, John Murray, 1820, t. II, p. 537. Turner’s description of Cyprus is also in COBHAM, *Excursion Cyprus*, pp. 424–450, in partic. p. 434. The Trajanic inscription is recorded in the Famagusta District Archaeological Museum in Varosha at least since July 1961: see ÅSTRÖM, *Two Swedish Visitors*, p. 80.

be laid out on a burying place, when nobody knows to whom it belongs?⁵⁸

Like Pococke a few years before him, Drummond too was impressed by the twin pillars and the ornamented sarcophagus. He also remarked upon the presence of white marble capitals and bases at the top and bottom of the granite shafts. Both authors agreed on the location of the pillars: according to the former they stood “near the north-west corner” of St Nicholas, while in the latter’s words they were “in the front of this church, upon the right” (Drummond evidently adopted the building’s point of view). It is quite likely that these directions correspond to the current location of the two granite shafts. Drummond however made no reference to the Greek inscription previously transcribed by Pococke. What struck him most was the fact that the marble sarcophagus, which still lay “between” the two pillars, bore no epigraphic indication of the person that had been buried inside it. Most noticeably, Drummond’s puzzlement (“Why should such expence be laid out on a burying place, when nobody knows to whom it belongs?”) explicitly contrasts with Marco Guazzo’s account cited at the beginning of this chapter, according to which the alleged tomb of Venus had been identified “per le lettere che in quello sono intagliate et non dal tempo consumate”.

A new piece of visual evidence on the main square in Famagusta is offered by an etching made after a drawing by Louis-François Cassas, a French painter who visited Cyprus in 1785 (fig. 8).⁵⁹ In this representation the granite pillars clearly stand in front of the western façade of the Ottoman *medrese*. This is the first unmistakable reference to the two shafts being in their current location,

⁵⁸ ALEXANDER DRUMMOND, *Travels through Different Cities of Germany, Italy, Greece and Several Parts of Asia*, London, William Strahan, 1754, p. 139. Drummond’s description of Cyprus is also in COBHAM, *Excerpta Cypria*, pp. 271–305, in partic. p. 274.

⁵⁹ LOUIS-FRANÇOIS CASSAS, *Voyage pittoresque de la Syrie, de la Phoenicie, de la Palaestine et de la Basse Aegypte*, 3 voll., Paris, Imprimerie de la République, 1798, t. III, fig. 101. See ANNIE GILET, *Chypre. Zypern*, in *Louis-François Cassas (1756-1827): dessinateur – voyageur*, ed. Annie Gilet, Mainz am Rhein, Philipp von Zabern, 1994, pp. 141–144; RITA C. SEVERIS, *Travelling Artists in Cyprus, 1700-1960*, London, Philip Wilson, 2000, pp. 39–48; ANNIE GILET, *Chypre au XVIII^e siècle. Témoignages écrits et iconographiques de quelques voyageurs européens*, in «Cahiers du Centre d’Études Chypriotes», XXXV (2005), pp. 137–168, in partic. pp. 144–148.

even though, as indicated above, it is very likely that Pococke and Drummond too saw them in the same spot. As for the sarcophagus, Cassas did not appreciate its artistic value, noting in a preparatory drawing: “tout trop long et les ornements tres saillants” (fig. 9).⁶⁰ Notwithstanding this negative opinion, in the etching he probably decided not to reproduce it in its actual location, i.e. between the two pillars, but to place it in the foreground, so that it could be better observed.

In the subsequent decades of the nineteenth century the ancient monuments that adorned the main square in Famagusta apparently fell into oblivion, while the former parvis of the cathedral became the place of a Muslim cemetery.⁶¹ Only with the beginning of British rule on Cyprus did the by-then neglected tomb of Venus become the object of a quite remarkable form of reuse. When captain James Argyll Spalding Inglis, first British Commissioner of Famagusta, died on 1 April 1883, his wife asked permission to use the marble sarcophagus as his tomb.⁶² The artefact was consequently removed and brought to a garden by the church of the Holy Cross (Άγιος Σταυρός) in Varosha, the modern suburb to the south of Famagusta.⁶³ By the 1930s this small cemetery had been abandoned and Charles Close could sadly comment upon it: “The spot is now used as a privy”.⁶⁴ Photographs from the Theophilus Mogabgab Archive “taken during the war” [World War II] still show the sarcophagus “at Stavros”, surrounded by plants in a rather overgrown location.⁶⁵ At some point, however, possibly in the 1960s, the ancient tomb made its way back inside the walls of Fa-

⁶⁰ GILET, *Chypre au XVIII^e siècle*, pp. 149, 153, fig. 4b.

⁶¹ See GUNNIS, *Historic Cyprus*, p. 455: «During the Moslem period it [the sarcophagus] was covered with a medieval tomb slab torn up from the floor of the cathedral and used as a bier for the bodies of dead Turks».

⁶² On Inglis's appointments in Cyprus see ALAN G. HARFIELD, *British Military Presence in Cyprus in the 19th Century*, in «Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research», LVI (1978), pp. 160–170, in partic. p. 162.

⁶³ For the story of what came to be known as the Inglis sarcophagus see JEFFERY, *A Description*, pp. 126–127, 226; GUNNIS, *Historic Cyprus*, p. 455; HARRY LUKE, *Cyprus. A Portrait and an Appreciation*, London, George G. Harrap, 1965², p. 70; MARINA A. SACOPOULOU, *Chypre d'aujourd'hui*, Paris, Maisonneuve & Larose, 1966, pp. 139–140, 145–146.

⁶⁴ CHARLES CLOSE, *Visit to Cyprus*, in «Palestine Exploration Fund. Quarterly Statement», LXVI (1934), pp. 113–119, in partic. p. 115.

⁶⁵ FAMAGUSTA, Theophilus Mogabgab Archive, Box 1, Sheet 54, Images 11682–11684.

magusta. It was first brought to the yard of a girls' middle school,⁶⁶ and was then relocated by the main square of the town, in the area formerly occupied by the Venetian *palaz-zo*, where it still lies today.

2. *A new arrangement for the main square in Famagusta*

In a recent overview of the main surviving architectural elements of Renaissance Famagusta, Allan Langdale has pointed out that the precise location of the monuments set up by the Venetians in the main square of the town is not easy to identify.⁶⁷ However, the diverse evidence that we have examined so far does allow us to reconstruct partially the history of these artefacts. First of all, there seems to be no doubt that the alleged tomb of Venus was placed between the two granite pillars in both the Venetian and early Ottoman periods (Guazzo: “tra due bellissime colonne”; Helffrich: “zwischen diesen in der mitten”; de Vlaming: “tusschen twee hooge pilaren”; Gebhardt: “zwischen zweien Säulen”; Gibellino: “posta fra due colonne”; Drummond: “between them stands a sarcophagus”). As for the pillars themselves, according to Gibellino’s map they stood halfway between St Nicholas Cathedral and the *palazzo*. In fact, as attested by several eyewitnesses to Bragadin’s execution, they were clearly observable from the *palazzo*’s subsequently destroyed upper storey. This is also confirmed by three of the aforementioned northern pilgrims who visited Cyprus before 1570. Johann Helffrich said that the two “Marmelsteinen Seulen” stood against the “Palatium oder Rhathaus”,⁶⁸ while according to Adriaen de Vlaming and Wolfgang Gebhardt they were placed on the square before the cathedral (“voor St. Nicolaes kerck op de plaets”; “vor dieser Kirche auf dem Platz”).⁶⁹

Despite these indications, it is not entirely clear whether the current location of the pillars corresponds to their original setting or if, at some point after the Ottoman conquest, they were slightly relocated and set against the western front of the *medrese*. As Langdale observes, if they stood in front of the façade of St Nicholas, “they could have acted as outdoor portals for processions ei-

⁶⁶ See VERMEULE, *Greek and Roman Cyprus*, p. 73.

⁶⁷ LANGDALE, *At the Edge of Empire*, p. 170.

⁶⁸ FEYERABEND, *Reyssbuch*, f. 377r.

⁶⁹ *Verscheyde voyagien*, p. 83; *Des Pfarrers*, p. 64.

ther sacred or secular”.⁷⁰ However, an alternative hypothesis, also suggested by Langdale, seems to be far more convincing: the pillars may have stood in their current location ever since Bembo’s arrangement of the *piazza*.⁷¹ This conclusion accords better with the results of excavations carried out by Theophilus Mogabgab, Antiquities Officer and Curator of the Famagusta District Museum during the last decades of British rule on Cyprus.⁷² In a short account published in 1939, Mogabgab reported having excavated “the space before the two Venetian pillars at the north-west corner of the Mosque enclosure [...], laying bare the base of a marble fountain and traces of Roman paving brought over, presumably, during Venetian days, from Salamis”.⁷³ A second report published in 1947 refers to an area identified as “a Venetian market-place”, which possibly coincides with the same portion of the square between the pillars and the *palazzo*.⁷⁴ Some photographs, showing the results of these excavations before they were covered over, demonstrate that the current setting of the granite pillars, with their marble bases and capitals, is contemporary to the other remains discovered by Mogabgab.⁷⁵ These included a tessellated pavement formed of hexagonal tiles and some kind of elevated platform or podium, both located between the two pillars, as well as the base of an octagonal fountain, which lay in front of the pillars towards the western side of the square.

It seems highly plausible to date this whole ensemble, as Mogabgab did, to the period of Venetian rule on Cyprus. In fact, even though further archaeological investigation remains a major desi-

⁷⁰ LANGDALE, *At the Edge of Empire*, p. 170.

⁷¹ LANGDALE, *At the Edge of Empire*, p. 170.

⁷² On Mogabgab’s works in Famagusta see EGE ULUCA TÜMER, *Evaluation of Conservation and Restoration Works Carried out by T.A.H. Mogabgab in Famagusta Inner-City between 1935 and 1960 through Contemporary Conservation Approaches*, in *Meditrriology 2. Coastal Settlements, Culture, and Conservation in the Mediterranean Basin, Proceedings of the Second International Gazimağusa Symposium (8-10 October 2007)*, Famagusta, Eastern Mediterranean University Press, 2007, pp. 405-412.

⁷³ THEOPHILUS MOGABGAB, *Excavations and Improvements in Famagusta*, in «Report of the Department of Antiquities, Cyprus», 1936, p. 105.

⁷⁴ CHARLES BRADFORD WELLES, *Archaeological News*, in «American Journal of Archaeology», LII (1948), p. 533.

⁷⁵ FAMAGUSTA, Theophilus Mogabgab Archive, Box 10, Sheet 812, Image 10842; Box 10, Sheet 817, Image 10008; Box 10, Sheet 824, Images 10421-10426; Box 10, Sheet 825, Images 9959-9962, 10007, 10009; Box 11, Sheet 236, Images 9963-9966, 10010-10011; Box 11, Sheet 237, Images 9868-9870, 9908-9910.

deratum, it is clear that this part of the square played an important role during the central decades of the sixteenth century. In particular, the octagonal base discovered by Mogabgab must be that of a marble fountain built in 1557 by the Venetian captain of Famagusta Piero Navagero, which is first mentioned in a handwritten report sent to the Venetian Senate on 3 January 1558.⁷⁶ In this document, first brought to light by Benjamin Arbel,⁷⁷ Navagero refers to “una bellissima fontana de finissimi marmi”, which he had erected “in mezzo la piazza [...] per ornamento della città et commodità de tutti, così terrieri, come soldati”. I suggest that Navagero’s fountain should be visually identified with a small round object that appears on Gibellino’s plan of Famagusta, halfway between the two pillars and the *palazzo* (fig. 4).

It should be stressed, however, that Mogabgab’s report and the photographs in his archive only refer to the discovery of “the base of a marble fountain”, whereas Navagero explicitly claimed to have accomplished the construction of his “bellissima fontana”.⁷⁸ The only such monument that now survives in Cyprus is the octagonal basin set under a domed stone canopy in the courtyard of the monastery of Hagia Napa, about 15 km to the south of Famagusta.⁷⁹ This fountain basin, of white limestone, is crudely decorated on its exterior sides with garlands, animal figures and human masks, all executed in high relief (fig. 10). Recently Tassos Papacostas has tentatively suggested the decoration of the alleged

⁷⁶ ASV, *Senato, Mar*, filza 19. Navagero held the office of captain of Famagusta from 6 June 1557 to 5 June 1559: see ASV, *Segretario alle voci, Elezioni in maggior consiglio*, reg. 3, 1553–1562, ff. 174^v–175^r, s.v. *Capitaneus Amocustae*.

⁷⁷ See ARBEL, *Supplying Water*, in partic. pp. 653–654.

⁷⁸ This is also confirmed by Lorenzo Bembo in his final report as captain of Famagusta: see *infra* footnote 84. The presence of several fountains in Famagusta is also recorded by the Jewish traveller Elijah of Pesaro, who probably settled in the town in 1565: see MOÏSE SCHWAB, *Voyage ethnographique de Venise à Chypre. Lettre d’Élie de Pesaro datée de Famagouste, 18 octobre 1566*, in «Revue de géographie», 1879, pp. 206–228, in partic. pp. 222–223: «Devant le palais royal il y a une grande place fort jolie et à tous les coins de rues on trouve des fontaines d’eau vive».

⁷⁹ On the Hagia Napa monastery see ENLART, *L’art gothique*, t. I, pp. 414–416, t. II, pp. 516–517, 661–665; JEFFERY, *A Description*, pp. 227–228; GUNNIS, *Historic Cyprus*, pp. 189–192; KOSTAS P. KYRRIS, *Η μονή Αγίας Νάπας ιδίως επί Τουρκοκρατίας*, in «Κυπριακάί Σπουδαί», XXXII (1968), pp. 235–263; SOPHOCLES HADJISAVVAS, *New Light on the History of the Ayia Napa Region*, in «Report of the Department of Antiquities, Cyprus», 1983, pp. 315–318; TASSOS PAPANOSTAS, *Echoes of the Renaissance in the Eastern Confines of the Stato da Mar: Architectural Evidence from Venetian Cyprus*, in «Acta Byzantina Fennica», III (2010), pp. 136–172, in partic. pp. 150–156.

tomb of Venus as the inspiration for the Hagia Napa basin.⁸⁰ Papacostas also observed that, since the sarcophagus was discovered by Giovanni Matteo Bembo in 1548, this date could provide a *terminus post quem* for the carving of the fountain. If this assumption is correct, as seems likely, we may even go one step further and conjecture that the fountain at Hagia Napa is actually the fountain that Navagero had built for Famagusta. In fact, several eyewitnesses, who visited and described the monastery of Hagia Napa in the decades before the War of Cyprus, do not refer to the fountain.⁸¹ The first mention of the basin in its current location dates from 1625, when the Roman traveller Pietro della Valle explicitly reported that the domed canopy above it had recently been built “all’orientale” under the Ottomans, while the fountain itself appeared to him to be made “al nostro modo”, i.e. in the Italian Renaissance style.⁸²

It thus seems at least possible that the fountain at Hagia Napa was brought there from Famagusta.⁸³ This could have happened in the first decades after the Ottoman conquest of Cyprus, but perhaps even before the outbreak of the 1570–1571 war. In fact, the Famagusta water-supply system with its beautiful marble fountain had two clear disadvantages. Firstly, in the event of a siege, the enemy could locate the pipes that led the water into town and break them, thus interrupting the water flow. Secondly, the profusion of running water brought through an aqueduct could induce the inhabitants of Famagusta to neglect the maintenance of the nu-

⁸⁰ PAPANICOLAOU, *Echoes of the Renaissance*, p. 151.

⁸¹ Among the western pilgrims who visited Hagia Napa in the mid 16th century were the Czech mathematician Oldřich Prefát in 1546 (see ANDROS PAVLIDES, *H Κύπρος ανά τους αιώνες μέσα από τα κείμενα ζώντων επισκεπτών της*, 3 voll., Lefkosia, Φιλόκυπρος, 1993–1995, I (1993), p. 302), the Swabian knight Johann von Hirnheim (*Des Ritters Hans von Hirnheim Reisetagebuch aus dem Jahre 1569*, ed. Ferdinand Khull, Graz, Styria, 1897, p. 29) and Wolfgang Gebhardt (*Des Pfarrers*, p. 64), both in 1569.

⁸² PIETRO DELLA VALLE, *Viaggi di Pietro della Valle il pellegrino, descritti da lui medesimo in lettere familiari all'erudito suo amico Mario Schipano*, 3 voll., Venezia, Paolo Baglioni, 1667, t. III, p. 539: «In mezzo al cortile vi è una fontana d'acqua viva, non mal fatta, al nostro modo, di marmo, sopra la quale avevano fabbricato non molto innanzi una gran cupola sopra quattro pilastri con seditoi all'intorno, all'orientale, o poggiuoli larghi da potervi stare all'ombra ed al fresco».

⁸³ As far as it may be gathered from Mogabgab's pictures, the diameter of the base at Famagusta and that of the plinth of the Hagia Napa fountain (the latter approximately 3.5 metres wide) roughly correspond.

merous wells located inside the town. Lorenzo Bembo, Giovanni Matteo's son, who also served as captain of Famagusta from 1565 to 1567, very sensibly referred to both these problems in his final report, which he wrote at the end of his term in Cyprus:

This seems to me a topic worthy of being recalled to Your Excellency's attention. Even though there is fresh water, that springs out in the place of St George, by the gardens approximately half a mile out of town, and is led through aqueducts to the square of that town in a beautiful fountain, which in general serves the whole town, work worthy of the *clarissimo* sir Piero Navagero, which in peace-time offers the town great benefit, nonetheless in war-time, since the source of that water would be occupied by the enemies, the town would consequently be without water. It would thus be necessary to use the wells, many of which, being in different places and with good water, would be enough to meet the need. But, because of the benefit that people currently receive from the aforementioned water from the fountain in the square, it seems that the quality of the water in some wells has been neglected, since they are not in use and, in particular, that big one of Andruzzi, which never fails. Thus Your Excellency with your high prudence will decide what seems to you more appropriate.⁸⁴

It is possible therefore that the water-supply system built by Navagero was dismantled by the Venetians themselves before the siege of Famagusta. At any rate, if the fountain at Hagia Napa came from

⁸⁴ ASV, *Collegio, Relazioni*, busta 84, f. 70^{r-v}: «Mi pare degna materia di ricordar a Vostra Sublimità come, se bene vi sia quell'acqua sortiva, che nasce al luogo di San Zorzi alli giardini fuor della città circa mezzo miglio, la qual per via d'aquedutti è condotta su la piazza di quella città in una bella fontana, che serve generalmente a tutta la città, per opera degna del clarissimo messer Piero Navager, sì che in tempo di pace la città gode grandissimo beneficio, nondimeno in tempo di guerra, perché sarebbe da' nemici occupata la radice di detta acqua, saria per consequente priva la città, onde bisognaria adoperar li pozzi, delli quali essendone molti in diversi lochi di buone acque, sarebbero bastanti a servire, ma per il beneficio c'hora si sente dell'acqua predetta della fontana di piazza, par che alcuni pozzi sian lassati mancar della perfettion dell'acqua, non venendo esercitati et massime quel grande dell'Andruzzi, qual mai non manca. Però Vostra Sublimità con la Sua molta prudentia deliberarà quanto di ciò Le parerà meglio convenirci» (report written on 21 November 1567); cfr ARBEL, *Supplying Water*, p. 655. On Lorenzo Bembo's appointment in Famagusta see ASV, *Segretario alle voci, Elezioni in maggior consiglio*, reg. 4, 1562-1570, ff. 184^v-185^r, s.v. *Capitaneus Amocustae*: he was elected on 14 January 1565, arrived in Cyprus on 15 August of that year and left on 14 August 1567.

Famagusta, this would also explain why its probable dating (after 1548) does not match with the only precise evidence of works carried out at the monastery during the Venetian period, which a now-lost dedicatory inscription assigned to 1530.⁸⁵

While the identification of the Famagusta fountain with that at Hagia Napa may be just a hypothesis, what is indisputable is the interest that the Venetian authorities manifested towards civil architecture in Famagusta in the late 1540s and during the 1550s. Giovanni Matteo Bembo was the first promoter of the reorganization of public spaces in central Famagusta. According to Marco Guazzo, Bembo's purpose was to renovate the "ridotto che vi era de i rettori di quel regno et isola".⁸⁶ His interest lay therefore not only in the main square of the town, where he assembled the monumental centrepiece comprising the two granite pillars and the alleged tomb of Venus, but also in the *palazzo* itself, the headquarters of the Venetian authorities.⁸⁷ If we trust Guazzo's chronology, it could make sense to attribute the project of a new façade for the *palazzo* (with a triple gateway and a *loggia* behind it) to Giangiolamo Sanmicheli, rather than to his 'uncle' (actually his second cousin) Michele, as George Jeffery first suggested in 1929.⁸⁸ In fact, Giangiolamo was in Cyprus from spring to autumn

⁸⁵ The inscription was copied by Alexander Drummond in 1745: see DRUMMOND, *Travels*, p. 275; cfr BRUNEHILDE IMHAUS, *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*, 2 voll., Lefkosia, Département des Antiquités, 2004, t. I, p. 390, n. 727. The text can be partially expanded and emended as follows: «F(---) M(---). Hie(ronimus) S(alaseris). A(---) P(---). / Hoc opus fieri fecer / ru[n]t gubernator[es] / fraternitatis S(anc)te / Nape, du[m] es[s]et pro(vincialis) / Hieronimus de Sa / laseris Creme(n)sis / civ(is) [Fama]gustanus / ad h[on]or[em] Baete / Virginis. MDXXX». A member of the Salaseri family is recorded as a carpenter (*marangone*) in Crema in the late 15th century: see WINIFRED TERNI DE GREGORY, *Pittura artigiana lombarda del Rinascimento*, Milano, Vallardi, 1981, p. 156. According to Oldřich Prefát, in 1546 the Catholic part of the Hagia Napa monastery was inhabited by Augustinian friars: see *supra* footnote 81.

⁸⁶ GUAZZO, *Cronica*, f. 413^v.

⁸⁷ On the *palazzo* see ENLART, *L'art gothique*, t. II, pp. 637–648; JEFFERY, *A Description*, pp. 158–159; GUNNIS, *Historic Cyprus*, p. 95; LANGDALE, *At the Edge of Empire*, pp. 173–176; PAPACOSTAS, *Echoes of the Renaissance*, pp. 159–164.

⁸⁸ Jeffery only attributed to Giangiolamo the mere execution of Michele's original design: see GEORGE JEFFERY, *The Improvements in the Centre of Famagusta and the Unearthing of a Loggia, the Design of Michael Sanmicheli, 1555*, in «Annual Report of the Curator of Ancient Monuments», 1929, pp. 3–8. The whole project of the *loggia* was credited to Giangiolamo by ERIC LANGENSKIÖLD, *Michele*

1548, exactly in the same year when Bembo decided to renovate the “ridotto [...] de i rettori”.⁸⁹ The so-called *loggia* could actually be the *ridotto* itself, as the two words had a very similar meaning in Renaissance Venice.⁹⁰ Furthermore, it is likely that Giangirolamo’s presence in Famagusta had been solicited by Bembo himself, who had probably already met him in Cattaro in 1538,⁹¹ and had long requested in his correspondence with the central government in Venice the dispatch of an *ingegnere* to look after Famagusta’s fortifications.⁹² It should also be stressed that the four granite

Sanmicheli, the Architect of Verona. His Life and Works, Uppsala, Almqvist & Wiksells, 1938, pp. 169–170; cfr HILL, *A History*, III (1948), pp. 859, 1135.

⁸⁹ On the dates of Sanmicheli’s appointment see CICOGLIA, *Delle iscrizioni veneziane*, V (1842), pp. 542–543; ANTONIO BERTOLDI, *Michele Sanmicheli al servizio della repubblica veneta. Documenti tratti dal R. Archivio generale di Venezia*, Verona, Premiata tipografia di Gaetano Franchini, 1874, pp. 93–98; GIUSEPPE GEROLA, *Monumenti veneti nell’isola di Creta*, 4 voll., Venezia, R. Istituto Veneto di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti, 1905–1932, I/2 (1906), pp. 652, 657; CAVAZZANA ROMANELLI, GRIVAUD, *Cyprus 1542*, pp. 28, 131–132; cfr LANGENSKIÖLD, *Michele Sanmicheli*, pp. 20, 166–170; HILL, *A History*, III (1948), pp. 858–860; LIONELLO PUPPI, *Giangirolamo Sanmicheli (1510–1559)*, in *L’architettura a Verona nell’età della Serenissima (sec. XV – sec. XVIII)*, 2 voll., edd. Pierpaolo Brugnoli, Arturo Sandrini, Verona, Banca Popolare di Verona, 1988, t. II, pp. 200–204, in partic. pp. 202–203. Giangirolamo came back to Cyprus in 1558 and died there on 23 January 1559: see ASV, *Senato, Dispacci, Cipro*, filza 1 (letter from the lieutenant Giovanni Renier written in Nicotia on 15 February 1559); cfr MANNO, *Politica e architettura militare*, pp. 101–104. His corpse was buried in the cathedral of St Nicholas at Famagusta: see GIORGIO VASARI, *Vita di Michele Sanmichele*, in ID., *Le vite*, ed. Gaetano Milanese, 9 voll., Firenze, Sansoni, 1878–1885, VI (1881), pp. 362–363; cfr TOMMASO TEMANZA, *Vite dei più celebri architetti e scultori veneziani che fiorirono nel secolo decimosesto*, Venezia, Carlo Palese, 1778, pp. 190–191.

⁹⁰ See for instance FRANCESCO SANSOVINO, *Venetia, città nobilissima et singolare, descritta in XIII libri*, Venezia, Iacomo Sansovino, 1581, f. 112r: «Serviva la predetta loggia [the loggetta of St Mark’s bell tower in Venice] ne gli anni andati per ridotto de’ nobili, i quali ne’ tempi così di verno, come di state, vi passavano il tempo in ragionamenti».

⁹¹ See PUPPI, *Giangirolamo Sanmicheli*, p. 201.

⁹² See the beginning of the decree of the Venetian Senate, through which Giangirolamo Sanmicheli was sent from Corfu to Cyprus to survey and draw the fortifications of Famagusta and Kyrenia (issued on 9 March 1548): «Importando grandemente la fortificatione della città di Famagosta, è necessario mandar de li uno ingegnere sufficiente et perito, sì come per più mano di lettere ha rechiesto il capitano del regno di Cipro» (ASV, *Senato, Mar*, reg. 29, f. 157r; cfr CAVAZZANA ROMANELLI, GRIVAUD, *Cyprus 1542*, p. 131). Before the decision was made, the *collegio* fiercely discussed whether to appoint Giangirolamo or Giovanni Tommaso Scala; in the end Alessandro Contarini’s proposition prevailed and Sanmicheli was selected: see CICOGLIA, *Delle iscrizioni veneziane*, V (1842), pp. 542–543; BERTOLDI, *Michele Sanmicheli*, pp. 24–25, 27, 48. The Sanmichelis had patronage links both with the Bembos and Alessandro Contarini: see PAUL DAVIES, DAVID HEM-

pillars that mark the surviving ground floor of the *palazzo* façade are similar to the twin pillars that Bembo set in the middle of the square.⁹³ Their four bases and Tuscan capitals also resemble those of the two opposite pillars. It makes sense therefore to think of a single co-ordinated and coeval project.

If the date of its initial construction remains unclear, the new *loggia* façade of the *palazzo* was certainly brought to completion by Giovanni Renier, Bembo's second successor as captain of Famagusta from 1552 to 1554.⁹⁴ This is confirmed first of all by Renier's coat of arms, which is still visible on the keystone of the central archway of the façade (fig. 11).⁹⁵ Domenico Trevisan, captain of Famagusta from 1559 to 1561, also refers to works on the *palazzo* and its adjacent warehouses led by his predecessor Renier in an unpublished report sent on 25 August 1560⁹⁶. Another little known archival document, a copy of the Cypriot budget for the year 1559, mentions an annual salary of 140 besants for the *zardinier del palazo* and an annual salary of 240 besants for the *governador dell'orologio*.⁹⁷ In addition, according to the eighteenth-century

SOLL, *Michele Sanmicheli*, Milano, Mondadori Electa, 2004, pp. 40–42, 47–49, with further bibliography.

⁹³ See JEFFERY, *A Description*, p. 158: «This frontispiece of the palace is well preserved but for the loss of part of its cornice; the monoliths of grey granite with which it is decorated evidently form part of a series with others which lie scattered in different parts of the city, and which must all have come from some important temple at Salamis, possibly the Roman Zeus Temple».

⁹⁴ The exact dates of Renier's appointment are recorded in the *segretario alle voci* registries: ASV, *Segretario alle voci, Elezioni in maggior consiglio*, reg. 2, 1541–1552, ff. 192^v–193^r, s.v. *Capitaneus Amocustae* (Renier was elected on 20 November 1552, arrived in Cyprus on 22 May 1553 and stayed there until 21 May 1555).

⁹⁵ See JEFFERY, *A Description*, p. 158; HILL, *A History*, III (1948), p. 859, nt. 1; JEAN-BERNARD DE VAIVRE, *Le décor héraldique sur les monuments médiévaux*, in *L'art gothique en Chypre*, edd. Jean-Bernard de Vaivre, Philippe Plagnieux, Paris, De Boccard, 2006, pp. 425–472, in partic. pp. 449–450.

⁹⁶ See ASV, *Collegio, Relazioni*, busta 84, f. 117^{r-v}: «Sopra li qual dui magazeni et sopra gli altri dui contigui, fabricati già in tempo del quondam clarissimo capitano messer Zuan Rhenier, è fabricata una sala di lunghezza di passa 22 et di larghezza di passa 5 et un piede, la qual è coperta et serrata verso il palazzo, ma dalla parte a dietro non è serrata, perché ha da seguirsi la fabrica in un'altra sala, che volta sopra dui altri magazeni novi afferrati con li altri, alliquali dui magazeni sono già alzati li muri fino al primo travamento, sichè ad essa fabrica vi manca la minor parte». Domenico Trevisan held the office of captain of Famagusta from 20 August 1559 to 4 July 1561: see ASV, *Segretario alle voci, Elezioni in maggior consiglio*, reg. 3, 1553–1562, ff. 174^v–175^r, s.v. *Capitaneus Amocustae*.

⁹⁷ See VENEZIA, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, ms. It. VI, 80 (5767), ff. 179^r–186^r: *Intrada et insida della camera real de Cypro per l'anno 1559*, in partic. f. 182^v. On

Tuscan traveller Giovanni Mariti, as late as the 1760s the façade of the *palazzo* still bore the emblem of the Venetian Republic (possibly a stone-relief of a winged lion of St Mark), as well as several armorial shields of Venetian and Genoese families, whose members had governed Famagusta before the Ottoman conquest of the island.⁹⁸

3. *Monuments of Venetian identity*

The urban heart of Famagusta was the site on Cyprus where the Venetians expended the maximum effort to characterize a public space through colonial signs. The *piazza* and the *palazzo* were subjected to a series of monumental interventions, which included the erection of the two granite pillars, the display of the alleged tomb of Venus, the construction of a new façade on the eastern front of the *palazzo*, and the creation of a water-supply system connected to a beautiful marble fountain located in the middle of the square. Next to these monuments also stood a flagpole (“pilo di gonfalone” or «pilo di stendardo”), whose existence is confirmed both by the accounts of Bragadin’s execution (fra Agostino: “li fu tagliata la testa et la fu tirata sopra il stendardo, dove stava San Marco; [...] ogni notte vedevano candele accese sopra la testa del clarissimo che era sopra il stendardo”; Valderio: “la testa et coratela sua fu posta sopra le corde del stendardo”),⁹⁹ and by a plan of Famagusta printed by Giacomo Franco in 1597 (fig. 12).¹⁰⁰

this document see LUCIANO PEZZOLO, *L'oro dello Stato. Società, finanza e fisco nella Repubblica veneta del secondo '500*, Venezia, Il Cardo, 1990, p. 27; GILLES GRIVAUD, *Un état des comptes du royaume de Chypre en 1412-1413*, in «Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique», CXXII (1998), pp. 377-401, in partic. p. 389, nt. 41.

⁹⁸ See MARITI, *Viaggi per l'isola di Cipro*, I (1769), pp. 151-152: «Dirimpetto alla chiesa, sopra la piazza, vi sono tre arcate sostenute da diverse colonne di granitello orientale, avendo nel mezzo l'arme della repubblica di Venezia. Il rimanente del muro è tutto pieno di armi di famiglie veneziane e genovesi, che avevano avuto il comando della città. Dietro ai suddetti archi rimane un'altra parte della piazza, in fondo alla quale sono le rovine del palazzo, che fu già de i comandanti di Famagosta»; cfr LOUIS DE MAS LATRIE, *Notes d'un voyage archéologique en Orient. Extraits de rapports adressés à M. le ministre de l'Instruction publique*, in «Bibliothèque de l'École des Chartes», VII (1846), pp. 489-544, in partic. pp. 538-539.

⁹⁹ FRA AGOSTINO, *La perdita di Famagosta*, p. 27; VALDERIO, *La guerra di Cipro*, p. 91; cfr POUMARÈDE, *Pour en finir*, p. 55.

¹⁰⁰ *Descrizione geografica delle isole, città e fortezze principali che si trovano in mare nel viaggio da Venetia a Costantinopoli*, Venezia, Giacomo Franco, 1597, f. 42^r; cfr *The His-*

As Richard Pococke already suggested in 1738, it is also likely that the twin pillars bore on the upper side of their impostes “the Venetian ensigns”.¹⁰¹ This has recently been confirmed by Allan Langdale, who inspected the tops of the two shafts and noted the presence of “gouges which in their patterns seem to indicate metal footings for statues”.¹⁰² A sketchy representation of the two emblems also appears on Gibellino’s plan (fig. 4). Langdale suggested that, as in Venice, these were statues of St Mark’s lion and of St Theodore. One should remark, however, that in the few attested cases of twin columns topped by emblems erected by the Venetians outside Venice, the second sculpture is never that of St Theodore, but rather that of a local patron saint (St Apollinaris in Ravenna; St Bassianus in Bassano del Grappa) or of Christ (the Redeemer in Vicenza) or of a specific virtue (Justice in Udine).¹⁰³ In Famagusta, taking for granted the presence of a Venetian lion above one of the pillars (possibly the northern one, which occupied a higher position in heraldic terms), we could guess that the other one (possibly the southern one, being closer to the Cathedral) was topped by a statue of St Nicholas, although that of a personified virtue, perhaps Justice, would also be plausible. The latter sculpture seems to have perished, leaving no trace in the extant documentation. As for the lion, both Richard Pococke and George Jeffery thought that it could be identified with an ancient statue, now visible within the area of the *palazzo*, that once stood inside the Sea Gate, next to a much larger one that still lies *in situ*.¹⁰⁴ This opinion could be correct, but it implies that these two li-

tory of the Cartography, p. 77. The same plan appears also in an anonymous booklet with no place or date of publication, but possibly printed in the 1590s (if not earlier) in Venice (*Raccolta de’ disegni di tutte le città et fortezze di mare che sono nel viaggio da Venetia a Costantinopoli*): see *The History of the Cartography*, pp. 77, 284, n. 89.

¹⁰¹ LONDON, British Library, Add. Mss. 15779, f. 40^r (cf. POCOCKE, *A Description*, p. 215).

¹⁰² LANGDALE, *At the Edge of Empire*, p. 169, nt. 57.

¹⁰³ See RIZZI, *I leoni di San Marco*, t. I, p. 69.

¹⁰⁴ LONDON, British Library, Add. Mss. 15779, f. 39^v: «By the gate is a very large statue of a lyon and a lesser, which were probably set up on some pillars in the principal parts of the city after the Venetian manner» (cf. POCOCKE, *A Description*, p. 215: «Near the gate there are two statues of lyons, one of which is very large. They were probably set up on some pillars in the principal parts of the city after the Venetian manner»); JEFFERY, *A Description*, p. 125: «These two columns, still stand erect, but the insignia of the Republic which they were intended to support have been removed. It is not improbable that the small much mu-

ons, which once stood together in the southern necropolis of Salamis, were first separated when brought to Famagusta by the Venetians, and then reunited by the Ottomans before Pococke saw them in the eighteenth century.¹⁰⁵ It is however more likely that they stood together until the smaller one was moved in the middle of the twentieth century.

No matter what stood on top of them, the most outstanding feature of the two Famagusta pillars is that they were raised at the same time (in 1548) and by the same person (Giovanni Matteo Bembo). Such circumstance clearly contrasts with those registered in the aforementioned examples of Bassano, Vicenza, and Udine, where the second column was erected respectively 164, 176 and 70 years after the first one.¹⁰⁶ The only other surviving case of contemporary twin Venetian columns (except the *Piazzetta* ones, of course, both erected in the 1260s)¹⁰⁷ is that of Ravenna, where a pair of granite shafts was raised in 1483 on top of polygonal bases sculpted by Pietro Lombardo, after the initiative of Bernardo Bembo, then *podestà* of the town (under Venetian rule from 1441 till 1509).¹⁰⁸ Bernardo was of course Pietro Bembo's father and Giovanni Matteo's great-uncle.¹⁰⁹ This can hardly be regarded as a coincidence. In fact, we can probably infer that the

tilated stone figure of a lion sejant, which lies near the Sea Gate, may have been one of these emblems».

¹⁰⁵ See LORENZO CALVELLI, *Spolia ruggenti e miracolosi: i leoni antichi di Salamina e Famagosta*, in *La Serenissima a Cipro, 1473-1571. Atti dell'Incontro scientifico; Padova, 2 dicembre 2010*, ed. Evangelia Skoufari, Roma, Viella, forthcoming.

¹⁰⁶ See RIZZI, *I leoni di San Marco*, t. I, p. 69.

¹⁰⁷ On the Piazzetta columns see BROWN, *Venice and Antiquity*, pp. 18-19; GUIDO TIGLER, *Intorno alle colonne di Piazza San Marco*, in «Atti dell'Istituto Veneto di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti. Classe di Scienze Morali, Lettere ed Arti», CLVIII (1999-2000), pp. 1-46; BARRY, *Disiecta membra*, in partic. pp. 10-13.

¹⁰⁸ See GIORDANO VIROLI, *Le due colonne di Piazza del Popolo a Ravenna*, in *Il monumento di Barbara Manfredi e la scultura del Rinascimento in Romagna*, edd. Anna Colombi Ferretti, Luciana Prati, Bologna, Nuova Alfa, 1989, pp. 115-117; RIZZI, *I leoni di San Marco*, t. II, p. 221, n. 2080; cfr. RAIMONDO CALLEGARI, *Bernardo Bembo and Pietro Lombardo. News from the 'Nonianum'*, in «The Burlington Magazine», CXXXIX (1997), pp. 862-866; ID., *Scritti sull'arte padovana nel Rinascimento*, Udine, Forum Editrice, 1998, pp. 273-274; DEBRA PINCUS, *La tomba di Dante a Ravenna: le epigrafi e la loro storia*, in *I Lombardo. Architettura e scultura a Venezia tra '400 e '500*, edd. Andrea Guerra, Manuela Morresi, Richard V. Schofield, Venezia, Marsilio, 2006, pp. 121-135. I am grateful to Harald Hendrix for first pointing out to me the case of the Ravenna twin columns.

¹⁰⁹ On Bernardo Bembo see NELLA GIANNETTO, *Bernardo Bembo: umanista e politico veneziano*, Firenze, Olschki, 1985.

latter intentionally followed his ancestor's example, when he decided to adorn Famagusta's square with the ancient monuments described by Marco Guazzo.

It should also be stressed that, possibly right after Giovanni Matteo's initiative in Famagusta, his colleague Salvatore Michiel, who held the parallel post of lieutenant of Cyprus from 1548 to 1550,¹¹⁰ also decided to erect a single granite pillar in the capital of the island, Nicosia.¹¹¹ This column once stood before the local residence of the Venetian authorities (the former palace of the last Lusignans), later referred to as the Seraglio or *Konak* by the Ottomans, and eventually pulled down by the British administrators of Cyprus in 1904.¹¹² One of the earliest descriptions of this pillar dates to 1631.¹¹³ The Austrian Archduke Ludwig Salvator drew a sketch of it in December 1872 – January 1873.¹¹⁴ George Jeffery supported its transfer and re-erection in its current position between 1914 and 1915 (fig. 13).¹¹⁵ If the exact original location of the Nicosia pillar cannot be determined, it is nonetheless certain that, like its Famagustan counterparts, it also played a symbolic role: its top almost certainly bore the sculpture of a winged lion, while its base was decorated with the armorial shields of five Venetian families and an inscribed motto celebrating the incorruptible faith of the Cypriots towards the government of the Serenissima.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁰ ASV, *Segretario alle voci, Elezioni in maggior consiglio*, reg. 2, 1541-1552, ff. 190^v-191^r, s.v. *Locumtenens Cyprî*: Michiel was elected on 9 October 1547, arrived in Cyprus on 16 June 1548 and left on 19 April 1550.

¹¹¹ See JEFFERY, *A Description*, pp. 59-60; RIZZI, *I coronati leoni*, p. 323, n. 21; ID., *I leoni di San Marco*, t. II, p. 284, n. 2593.

¹¹² See ENLART, *L'art gothique*, t. II, pp. 533-538; JEFFERY, *A Description*, pp. 26, 58.

¹¹³ See *Voyage du Sieur de Stochove fait es années 1630, 1631, 1632, 1633*, Bruxelles, Hubert Anthoine Velpius, 1643, p. 267: «Le palais, autrefois demeure des roys de Cypre est grand et beau. [...] Au devant il y a une grande et belle place, ayant au milieu une pyramide ou obelisque, semblable a celles qu'on void à Rome».

¹¹⁴ See LUDWIG SALVATOR, *Levkosia. Die Hauptstadt von Cypren*, Prag, Heinrich Mercy, 1873, pp. 35-36, fig. facing p. 36 (English translation *Levkosia. The Capital of Cyprus*, London, C. Kegan Paul & Co., 1881, p. 28, fig. facing p. 30).

¹¹⁵ See *George Jeffery: His Diaries and the Ancient Monuments of Cyprus*, ed. Despina Pilides, 2 voll., Lefkosia, Department of Antiquities, 2009, t. I, pp. 100, 153-158.

¹¹⁶ The inscription reads: «Fides incorrupta, non pulchritudo, non huius ubertas specetur incolar(um)». See IMHAUS, *Lacrimae Cypriae*, t. I, p. 366, n. 702; MIA GAIA TARENTIN, *Latin Commemorative Epigraphs in Venetian Cyprus*, in *Postgraduate Cypriote Archaeology (Brussels, 27-29 November 2008)*, forthcoming.

4. *A passion for antiquity*

Michiel's and Bembo's conduct in Cyprus reflected a widespread attitude among Venetian provincial magistrates after the *Renovatio urbis* of the first decades of the sixteenth century.¹¹⁷ This helps to explain why Bembo's plans for Famagusta (the *palazzo* refurbishment and the water-supply system) were continued and completed by his successors Giovanni Renier and Pietro Navagero. As was customary within the oligarchy of the Serenissima, individual initiatives often merged together into collective efforts that consolidated the shared sense of Venetian identity. Against this general background, the figure of Giovanni Matteo Bembo stands out for his family ties, his intellectual capacities and his patent love for beauty and classical antiquity.¹¹⁸ This last attitude in particular is confirmed by Giovanni Matteo's behaviour in Crete, where he was sent as *capitano di Candia* in the years 1552–1554.¹¹⁹ On that occasion, he was responsible for building the famous Bembo fountain, still extant in the Plateia Kornarou in Heraklion (fig. 14). This monument combines ancient and modern elements, the former coming from the site of Hierapetra in south-eastern Crete. The fountain is composed of an architrave supported by two square pilasters on the outside and two columns on the inside. These elements define three panels, which are covered with slabs of grey marble. In the central panel stands a headless statue of a Roman togate, located on top of an ornamented relief with floral motives, from which the water falls into a sarcophagus. On two side-panels of the monument are the Bembo family coats-of-arms.¹²⁰

¹¹⁷ See PUPPI, *La piazza come spazio simbolico*; O'CONNELL, *Men of Empire*, pp. 39–56.

¹¹⁸ See BROWN, *Venice and Antiquity*, pp. 285–286.

¹¹⁹ On the dates of Bembo's appointment in Heraklion see ASV, *Segretario alle voci, Elezioni in maggior consiglio*, reg. 2, ff. 185^v–186^r, s.v. *Capitaneus Cretae* (Bembo was elected on 20 March 1552, arrived in Crete on 29 August of that year and left the island on 28 August 1554).

¹²⁰ On the Bembo fountain see GEROLA, *Monumenti veneti*, IV (1932), pp. 11, 42; LUIGI BESCHI, *Antichità cretesi a Venezia*, in «Annuario della Scuola Archeologica di Atene e delle Missioni Italiane in Oriente», L–LI (1972–1973), pp. 479–502, in partic. pp. 485–487, fig. 4; ID., *Collezioni d'antichità a Venezia ai tempi di Tiziano*, in «Aquilaia Nostra», XLVII (1976), coll. 1–44, in partic. coll. 18–19; DONATELLA CALABI, *Città e insediamenti pubblici. XVI–XVII secolo*, in *Venezia e Creta. Atti del convegno internazionale di studi; Iraklion, Chania, 30 settembre – 5 ottobre 1997*, ed. Gherardo Ortalli, Venezia, Istituto Veneto di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti, 1998, pp. 261–281, in partic. pp. 277–278, fig. 13; BROWN, *Private Lives*, p. 191, fig. 213. See

The function of this eccentric piece of architecture can be better understood thanks to a handwritten notation, which appears in a copy of the 1564 edition of the correspondence exchanged between Giovanni Matteo and Pietro Bembo, now in the Marciana Library in Venice. The eighteenth-century owner of this volume, Apostolo Zeno, transcribed in it a passage from the much celebrated and long-since lost *Description of Crete* by Onorio Belli:

«In front of the church of San Salvatore in the city of Candia is a fountain, which Giovanni Matteo Bembo erected when he was captain of Candia, and here is a beautiful ancient statue without a hand. This is the stone where public announcements are made. It was a most beautiful ancient octagonal altar of white marble.» Onorio Belli in the *Description of Crete*.¹²¹

Like the two columns and the tomb of Venus in Famagusta, the Bembo fountain in Heraklion did not just play a purely ornamental function. In fact it also served as the place where official proclamations issued by the Venetian authorities were read to the public, thus reminding its viewers of the political supremacy of the Serenissima in her overseas territories.

In a letter written when he was almost seventy, Bembo himself described (and almost theorized) what his attitude towards public spaces had been throughout his long and celebrated political career. The letter contains a series of thoughts that Bembo addressed to Girolamo Faleti on 1 June 1560, when he had recently been appointed to the office of *capitano* in Brescia.¹²²

I came to this town certainly with the worst disposition, given my age, which is no longer apt for these public offices and dealings. I had devoted to them all my previous years serving my homeland and I thus deemed it was reasonable that my age should receive some respect. But anyway, since that was my lot,

also Francesco Barozzi's late 16th-century description of the fountain in FRANCESCO BAROZZI, *Descrittione dell'isola di Creta (Περιγραφή της Κρήτης) (1577/1578)*. *Μια γεωγραφική και αρχαιολογική περιγραφή της Κρήτης στα χρόνια της Αναγέννησης*, ed. Stephanos Kaklamanes, Heraklion, Βικελαία Δημοτική Βιβλιοθήκη, 2004, pp. 192-193.

¹²¹ BEMBO, *Nuove lettere famigliari*, page preceding the frontispiece of the Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana copy shelfmarked 7.D.264. On Onorio Belli see ONORIO BELLI, *Scritti di antiquaria e botanica, 1586-1602*, ed. Luigi Beschi, Roma, Viella, 2000.

¹²² See ASV, *Segretario alle voci, Elezioni in maggior consiglio*, reg. 3, 1553-1562, ff. 126^v-127^r, s.v. *Capitaneus Brixiae*: Bembo was elected on 30 July 1559, took charge in Brescia on 5 November 1559 and left on 1 March 1561.

I made (as they say) a virtue out of a necessity. I came here, then, and for entertainment, but also prompted by a certain natural proclivity that I have always had to embellish and refurbish certain places, whenever and wherever I thought it was needed, as I did elsewhere, I decided to enlarge the square, which is in front of the palace where I reside. In this way not only did that part of the town increase its beauty and ornament, according to my desire, but the place also became capable of hosting a parade of people walking and horse-riding, of being the set for the representation of a battle and of welcoming a proper number of soldiers, in all circumstances and in all respects.¹²³

In perfect Renaissance style, Bembo's own words show how conscious he was of combining a distinguished sense of public utility with a more general disposition towards beauty and entertainment.¹²⁴ This attitude merged with a specific love for antiquity, as attested by the inscription bearing his personal *impresa* and the various sculptural elements that surround it, all inserted in the façade of his house in Venice.¹²⁵

¹²³ *Lettere di principi, le quali o si scrivono da principi o a principi o ragionan di principi*, 2 voll., ed. Girolamo Ruscelli, Venezia, Giordano Ziletti al segno de la Stella, 1562-1575, I (1562), f. 196v: «Io venni in questa città et certo malissimo volentieri, perché, considerata l'età mia, non più atta a quegli officii et maneggi pubblici, ne' quali per servizio della mia patria mi sono adoperato tutti gli anni adietro, mi pareva che ragionevolmente omai le si dovesse haver qualche rispetto. Ma pure, vedendo esser tale la sorte mia, io feci (come si dice) di necessità virtù. Venutoci adunque, et per cagione di trattenimento, et invitato ancora da una certa mia naturale inclinatione che ho sempre havuta di abbellire et accomodar alcuni luoghi, dove et quando ne ho veduto il bisogno, come ho già fatto altrove, mi disposi di voler aggrandire la piazza, che è davanti al palazzo della mia stanza. Col qual effetto si veniva non solamente ad accrescere ornamento et vaghezza in questa parte alla città, secondo il mio desiderio, ma si rendeva anche il luogo atto et capace da potervisi far una mostra di gente da cavallo et da piedi et da rappresentarvi una battaglia et mantenervi un convenevole numero di soldati, in ogni occorrenza et per ogni rispetto».

¹²⁴ A similar opinion is expressed by Francesco Sansovino in the dedication to Giovanni Matteo Bembo of his 1564 edition of Plutarch's *Lives (Vite parallele di Plutarco tradotte da Francesco Sansovino)*, 2 voll., Venezia, Vincenzo Valgrisi, 1564, t. I, f. 2v: «Et, per dire il vero, qual città? Qual provincia? Qual luogo di questa repubblica immortale non ha in sé qualche illustre memoria della Sua amorevolezza et grandezza? Quante honorate cose ha Ella ordinate et fatte in Verona, essendovi podestà? Quante in Brescia, essendovi capitano? Quante nella Dalmatia, essendovi rettore? Quante in Candia, essendovi capitano? Et quante ultimamente nell'isola di Cipri essendovi capitano di Famagosta et poi general proveditore per questo senato? Ella con le fatiche ha fatti i palazzi, le piazze et i luoghi pubblici molto più belli ne predetti regni che prima».

¹²⁵ See PAOLO GIOVIO, *Ragionamento di mons. Paolo Giovio sopra i motti et disegni d'arme et d'amore, che comunemente chiamano imprese*, ed. Girolamo Ruscel-

Giovanni Matteo's antiquarian passion was once more confirmed at the end of his appointment in Brescia in 1561. When he returned to Venice, he brought back home a heavily restored statue of a togate man, which he had allegedly found in the ancient forum of the Lombard town (fig. 15).¹²⁶ Just as in Famagusta a few years before, the 'added value' of this work of art was provided by the discovery of an epigraphic document, which presumably attested that the statue represented *Marcus Nonius Macrinus Junior*, a member of the *gens Nonia*, the most outstanding senatorial family of *Brixia* in Roman imperial times.¹²⁷ In reality this inscription has long been known to be false,¹²⁸ while *Marcus Nonius Macrinus Junior* is a non-existent character.¹²⁹

Whether a counterfeit or just a learned joke, conceived to highlight the antiquity of a classical settlement, the story of Bembo's Brescian statue closely resembles that of the sarcophagus that he had discovered in Cyprus in 1548. This parallel becomes even more evident in the light of some as yet unpublished information, offered by Giovanni Daniele Caprileo, a learned historian and possibly a notary from Udine, who was in Cyprus in 1561

li, Venezia, Giordano Ziletti all'insegna della Stella, 1556, pp. 103-112; CICOGLIA, *Delle iscrizioni veneziane*, III (1830), pp. 318-323; BROWN, *Venice and Antiquity*, pp. 285-286; CALVELLI, *Cipro e la memoria*, pp. 151-152.

¹²⁶ See OTTAVIO ROSSI, *Le memorie bresciane, opera istorica et simbolica*, Brescia, Bartolomeo Fontana, 1616, pp. 45-48: «Ma nella piazza de gli Arrii, oltre a' tanti marmi, vi fu ritrovata ancora la statua di Marco Nonio Macrino il più giovine, vestito con la pretesta et ornato con parte di quelle insegne ch'attribuivano al genio della città di Brescia; la qual statua fu poi portata a Vinetia nell'anno mille e cinquecento sessanta uno dal signor Gian Matteo Bembo, già nostro capitano»; cfr IRENE FAVARETTO, *Arte antica e cultura antiquaria nelle collezioni venete al tempo della Serenissima*, Roma, «L'Erma» di Bretschneider, 1990, pp. 177-178. The importance of Giovanni Matteo's antiquarian collection is briefly mentioned in FRANCESCO SANSOVINO, *Delle cose notabili che sono in Venetia*, Venezia, Comin da Trino di Monferrato, 1561, f. 19: «Sono anco alcune belle cose appresso messer Gian Matteo Bembo, senator illustrissimo e chiaro».

¹²⁷ See ROSSI, *Le memorie*, p. 50: «M(arcus) Nonius M(arcus) f(ilius) / Macrinus / Iunior / spes maxima / Brixianorum».

¹²⁸ See *Corpus inscriptionum Latinarum*, 17 voll., edd. Theodor Mommsen et al., Berlin, Georg Reimer - Walter de Gruyter, 1862-V/1 (1872), p. 50*, n. 550*.

¹²⁹ See *Prosopographia imperii Romani saec. I II III*, 3 voll., ed. Hermann Dessau, Berlin, Georg Reimer, 1897-1898, II (1897), p. 412, n. 108: «Nullus fuit M. Nonius Macrinus Iunior». On the *gens Nonia* from *Brixia* see ALBINO GARZETTI, *I Nonii di Brescia*, in «Athenaeum», n.s. LV (1977), pp. 175-185; GIAN LUCA GREGORI, *Marco Nonio Macrino. Trovato a Roma il sepolcro di un 'grande' Bresciano*, in «Soprintendenza per i Beni Archeologici della Lombardia. Notiziario», 2007, pp. 273-280.

and most likely served as chancellor to Giovanni Matteo Bembo during the latter's appointment as *provveditore generale di Cipro*.¹³⁰ While in Famagusta, Caprileo saw the ancient monuments that Bembo had previously brought to the main square of the town. His interest was caught in particular by the marble sarcophagus, as he had the chance to learn from Giovanni Matteo himself the fictitious story of the alleged tomb of Venus:

A fraud like that made in 1548 in Cyprus by the *clarissimo* Gianmatteo Bembo, captain of that kingdom. Having found a sepulchre underground among the ruins of Salamis, he had it inscribed around the base in Arabic characters, which he called Phoenician, "sepulchre of Venus of Cyprus". And he placed the sepulchre on the square in Famagusta in front of the church of St Nicholas, so that it could be seen by everyone. And ser Daniello Caprileo from Udine, a learned and outstanding historian, saw it in the year 1561. And the aforementioned *clarissimo* told him, laughing, this mockery.¹³¹

Caprileo's anecdote figures in a handwritten treatise on the antiquities of Friuli, titled *Nemesi ovvero Storietta del Friuli*, composed by another sixteenth-century learned Udinese, the Camaldolese monk Germano Vecchi.¹³² The latter quoted Caprileo's testimony to give an example of frauds relating to false antiquities. Caprileo's first-hand information confirms Guazzo's dating of the discovery of the alleged tomb of Venus in 1548. By saying that the

¹³⁰ See CICOGLIA, *Delle iscrizioni veneziane*, III (1830), pp. 502-503; GIAN GIUSEPPE LIRUTI, *Notizie delle vite ed opere scritte da' letterati del Friuli*, 4 voll., Venezia, Modesto Fenzo, 1760-1830, IV (1830), pp. 360-361.

¹³¹ UDINE, Biblioteca Bartoliniana, ms. 51, p. 308: «Un'impostura, siccome fu quella che fece in Cipro l'anno 1548 il clarissimo signor Gianmatteo Bembo, capitano di quel regno, il quale, essendosi trovato sotto terra nelle ruine di Salamina una sepoltura, fece scrivere in lettere arabe, che esso diceva esser fenicie, attorno la base = sepoltura di Venere di Cipro = et fece ponere la sepoltura in Famagosta sopra la piazza avanti la chiesa di San Niccolò, perché fosse veduta da tutti. E il signor Daniello Caprileo da Udine, dotto ed eccellente istorico, la vidde l'anno 1561, al quale detto clarissimo disse ridendo questa burla».

¹³² On Germano Vecchi see CICOGLIA, *Delle iscrizioni veneziane*, IV (1834), p. 85. Germano Vecchi's treatise on the ancient *Forum Iulii* (dated 1583) incorporates a similar work written in 1580 by Francesco Sansovino, where Caprileo is referred to as a historian: see FRANCESCO SANSOVINO, *Discorso di m. Francesco Sansovino a d. Germano Vecchi intorno l'antico Foro Iulio tratto dai manoscritti della Biblioteca Vescovile di Udine*, ed. Giovanni Pietro Negri, in *Nelle nobilissime nozze Melilupi-Piovene*, Vicenza, Tipografia Tremeschin, 1835.

sarcophagus was found in Salamis, it disagrees however with the evidence provided by the Dutch pilgrim Adriaen de Vlaming, who remarked that it had been found in Paphos.¹³³ While the latter's opinion may have been biased by the reputation of Paphos as the birthplace of Venus, it should also be mentioned that in March 2000 a similar late-second-century AD marble sarcophagus decorated with Erotes and garlands was found in a tomb in the Nea Paphos area.¹³⁴ Like the tomb of Venus, this artefact also belongs to the category of Attic sarcophagi, which is extremely rare in Cyprus: indeed, these and the so-called Bellapais sarcophagus are the only three examples yet found on the island.¹³⁵ The question of the exact provenance of the tomb of Venus therefore cannot be conclusively answered, even though Salamis seems the more likely possibility, given its proximity to Famagusta.

Above all other aspects, Caprileo's account also sheds new light on a question that has so far remained unsolved: why did Marco Guazzo and the French pilgrim Jean Palerne state that the tomb of Venus had been recognised through the letters which were inscribed on it, while in reality the sarcophagus bears no funerary inscription nor any obvious ancient epigraphic text? The unexpected answer to this puzzle can be found by putting the white surface of the ancient marble coffin under closer scrutiny. In fact, on all four sides of the artefact are incised some non-alphabetic signs, which are hardly detectable at first sight (fig. 16). Louis-François Cassas had already noticed them in 1785, since they appear in his preparatory drawing (fig. 9). These symbols are not Phoenician characters, as Bembo wished them to be identified, nor Arabic ones, as Caprileo suggested. In reality, they are probably ciphers, like those used by Venetian provincial governors and ambassadors to transmit secret messages to the metropole.¹³⁶ Decoding these symbols is taking time, but their ideal significance is already clear: they were meant to stress in a visual way the antiquity of the object discovered by Giovanni Matteo and to support its alleged interpretation as the tomb of Venus.

¹³³ See *Versheyde voyagien*, p. 83; Guazzo himself referred that Bembo had sent his men to look for ancient marbles «in più luoghi» (GUAZZO, *Cronica*, 1553, f. 413^v).

¹³⁴ See EUSTATHIOS RAPTOU, *Sarcophage attique trouvée à Paphos*, in «Report of the Department of Antiquities, Cyprus», 2009, pp. 209-236.

¹³⁵ See VERMEULE, *Greek and Roman Cyprus*, p. 73.

¹³⁶ See PAOLO PRETO, *I servizi segreti di Venezia. Spionaggio e controspionaggio: ciferari, intercettazioni, delazioni, tra mito e realtà*, Milano, Il Saggiatore, 1994, pp. 268-279.

In the ideological discourse constructed in Venice in the mid sixteenth century, Venus and Jupiter were the two classical deities who had first received the regalia of Cyprus and Crete, the only two territories under Venetian rule that enjoyed the official status of kingdom.¹³⁷ It was thanks to these overseas dominions that the Doge, a duke in the heraldic hierarchy, was entitled to wear two royal crowns.¹³⁸ Numerous archival, literary, monumental and artistic sources testify to the great symbolic significance of Cyprus and Crete for the *Dominante*, even after their loss to the Ottomans in 1571 and 1669 respectively.¹³⁹ If the Venetians insisted on showing off the physical traces of Venus in Famagusta, it was not because of their credulity (as Enlart suggested in the late nineteenth century), but rather because, as I hope to demonstrate elsewhere, it was in their interests to emphasize the historicity of the realm of Cyprus: Venus, a deified woman, had been the first queen of that island; Venice, the queen of the seas, was her legitimate and most obvious heir.¹⁴⁰ As Luigi Groto put it on the occasion of Sebastiano Venier's election as Doge in 1577, "I would say that Venice and Venus, both celestial, both mothers and nurses of the most holy love, were sisters, born of the same womb of the sea, generated by the same semen of the sky".¹⁴¹

¹³⁷ See DAVID ROSAND, *Venezia e gli dei*, in *Renovatio urbis. Venezia nell'età di Andrea Gritti (1523-1538)*, ed. Manfredo Tafuri, Roma, Officina, 1984, pp. 201-215; CALVELLI, *Cipro e la memoria*, pp. 149-150.

¹³⁸ See GIORGIO DENORES, *A Discourse on the Island of Cyprus and on the Reasons for the True Succession in that Kingdom*, ed. Paschalis M. Kitromilides, Venezia, Istituto Ellenico di Studi Bizantini e Postbizantini di Venezia, 2006, pp. 21-38.

¹³⁹ The best known example are of course Jacopo Sansovino's *loggetta* reliefs at the base of St Mark's bell tower in Venice: see HOWARD, *Jacopo Sansovino*, pp. 28-35; ROSAND, *Venezia e gli dei*; BRUCE BOUCHER, *The Sculpture of Jacopo Sansovino*, 2 voll., New Haven – London, Yale University Press, 1991, t. I, pp. 73-88, in particular pp. 83-84; MASSIMILIANO ROSSI, *La poesia scolpita. Danese Cataneo nella Venezia del Cinquecento*, Lucca, Maria Pacini Fazzi Editore, 1995, pp. 9-38; BROWN, *Venice and Antiquity*, pp. 279-281; MORRESI, *Jacopo Sansovino*, pp. 213-227; CALVELLI, *Cipro e la memoria*, pp. 148-149.

¹⁴⁰ See LORENZO CALVELLI, «Queste diremo che sian come luoghi della memoria»: *Cipro e Candia nell'ideologia politica della Venezia rinascimentale*, in *La culture du locus. De l'espace géographique à l'espace utopique (1200-1650)*, edd. Raffaella Anconetani, Evelien Chayes, Sonia Gentili, Angel Konnari, forthcoming.

¹⁴¹ LUIGI GROTO, *Orationi volgari*, Venezia, Appresso li Zoppini, 1593, f. 108r: «Direi che Vinègia e Venere, ambe celesti, ambe madri e nodrici di santissimo amore, fossero sorelle, nate da uno stesso ventre del mare, prodotte da uno stesso seme del cielo».



FIG. 1. Twin Venetian pillars. Famagusta, Main square.



FIG. 2. Southern Venetian pillar, pedestal. Famagusta, Main square.



FIG. 3. Tomb of Venus. Famagusta, Area within the former Venetian *palazzo*.



FIG. 4. Stefano Gibellino, *Il vero ritratto della città di Famagosta*, detail.



FIG. 5. Paolo Piazza, *Martirio di Marcantonio Bragadin*. Venezia, Santi Giovanni e Paolo, southern wall.



FIG. 6. Anthropoid sarcophagus. Venezia, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Depositi Civici Musei Veneziani, inv. 82.



FIG. 7. Marble block with dedication to Trajan.Varosha,
Famagusta District Archaeological Museum.



FIG. 8. Louis-François Cassas, *Vue d'une mosquée de Famagouste en Cypre.*

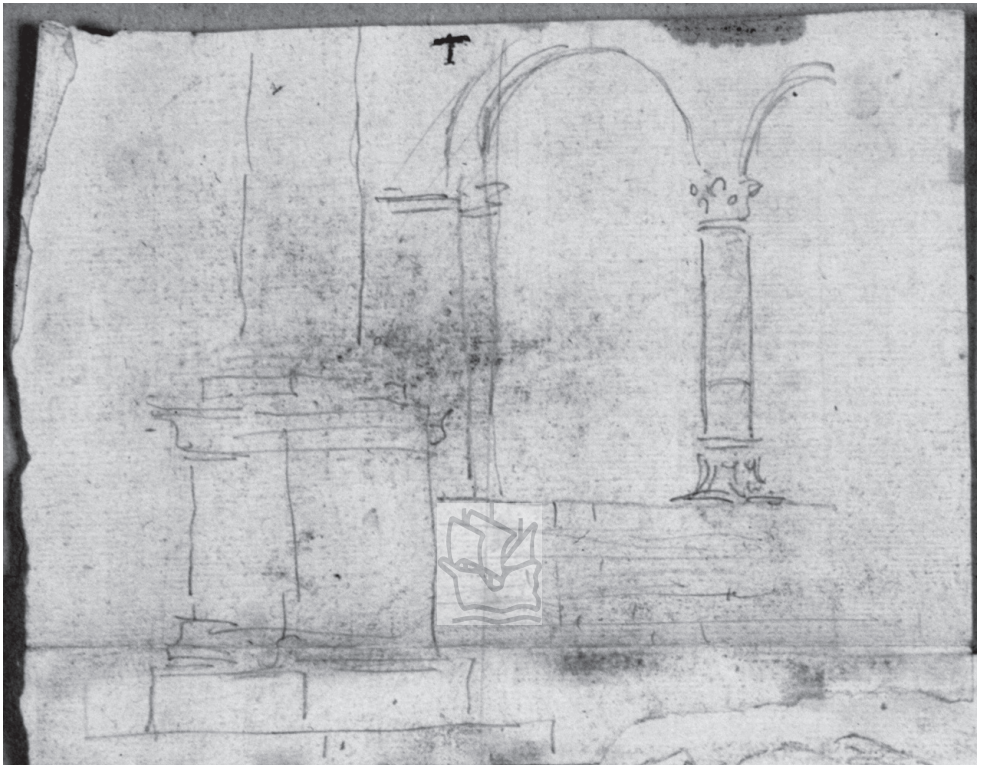
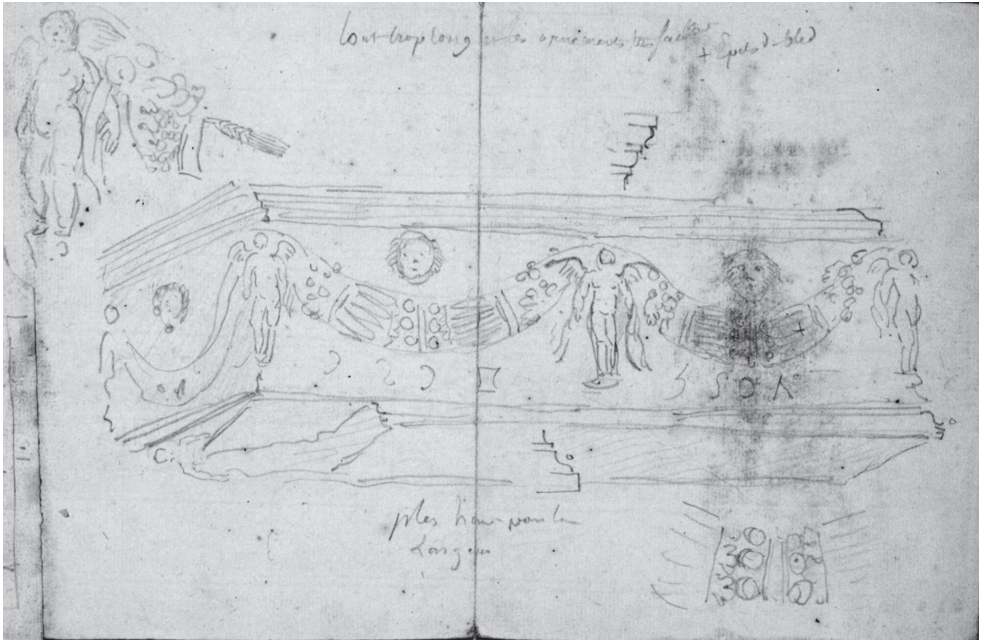


FIG. 9. Louis-François Cassas, Étude du sarcophage de Famagouste.



FIG. 10. Octagonal fountain basin. Hagia Napa, Monastery.



FIG. 11. Giovanni Renier's coat of arms. Famagusta, Venetian *palazzo*.



FIG. 12. Giacomo Franco, *Famagosta*.





FIG. 13. Venetian column. Nicosia, Atatürk Square.

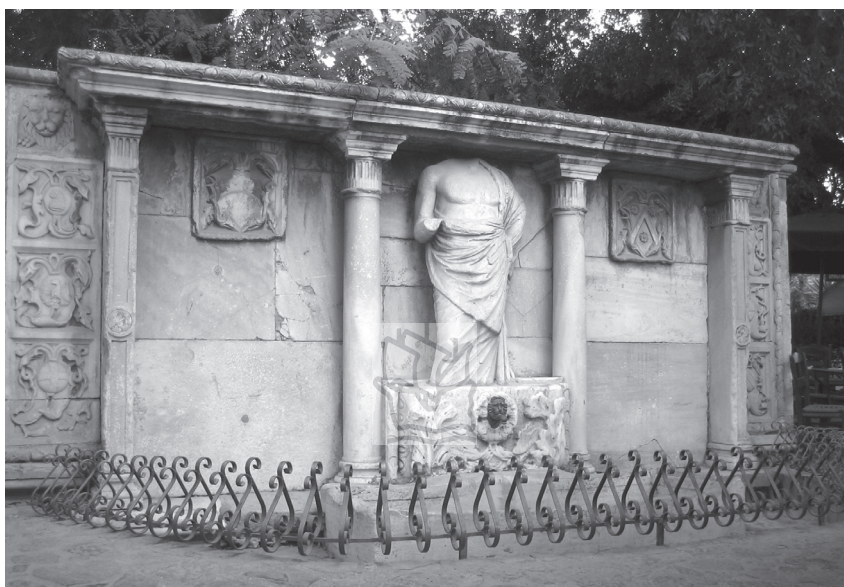


FIG. 14. Bembo fountain. Heraklion, Plateia Kornarou.



FIG. 15. Statue and inscription mentioning *Marcus Nonius Macrinus Junior*.



FIG. 16. Tomb of Venus, detail showing Bembo's 'Phoenician inscription'. Famagusta, Area within the former Venetian *palazzo*.