

Borderland: Christian Identities and Cultures in Early Modern Cyprus and Beyond



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International Virtual Conference

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Bank of Cyprus Cultural Foundation

Borderland:

Christian Identities and Cultures in Early Modern Cyprus and Beyond

The fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries witnessed the emergence of new confessional identities throughout Europe as well as the re-negotiation and adaptation of earlier confessional self-perceptions. Over the past four decades, medieval and early modern Cyprus has attracted the attention of the international scholarly community as a geographically distinct zone of religious diversity. So far, research in the field covers aspects of identity formation, religious contention and conviviality as well as the construction of institutional, social and economic structures. Less attention has been paid, however, to the dynamics and mechanisms of Christian co-existence and strife in relation to religious culture. Equally important, yet largely unexplored, is the impact on Cypriot Christian self-perceptions and religious culture of major and broader developments in Europe (e.g., the Renaissance, Reformation and Counter-Reformation) and the Levant, at the time of the Ottoman expansion and the transformation of the post-Byzantine “Commonwealth”.

Since Fredrik Barth’s work on the development, maintenance and negotiation of group boundaries (1969), scholars have been focusing on the relationship between identity and boundary construction, especially in multi-confessional and multi-ethnic societies. Although hardly impenetrable, boundaries —physical/territorial and imaginary/psychological/spiritual— diachronically function as visible, audible, tangible and performed markers of religious and cultural perception and self-perception. The aim of our conference is to address the status of Cyprus as a “borderland” or “frontier-zone”, already noted but not adequately investigated and analysed in historiography. In what ways were religious and cultural borders defined, constructed, negotiated, performed, and crossed in Cyprus between ca. 1500 and 1600? How can borders help us better understand Cypriot Christian identities (Orthodox, Latin, Maronite, Armenian, among others) and forms of cultural expression? Scholars from Britain, Cyprus, Germany, Ireland, Italy and the United States of America, who work on early modern multi-confessionalism and Cyprus from different disciplines and perspectives, and employ different sources, approaches and methodologies, will present papers and offer views and ideas on key themes related to the island’s religious geography and cultural physiognomy in this critical period. These include, but are not restricted to, the following:

- Borders and confessional relationships: communal inclusivism and exclusivism, shared beliefs, perceptions and practices
- Cyprus and broader perceptions of the border (e.g., insularity, connectivities and fragmentation) in relation to identities
- Cypriot diasporic communities and their borders in Western European societies
- Boundaries (or lack of) in secular and sacred space between Christianity and Islam
- Ritual as border performing and crossing: liturgy and theology, marriage, processions, and political choreographies
- Literature, visual culture and multi-confessionalism: borders imagined and represented
- Colonial, anti-colonial, de-colonial and post-colonial readings of the multi-confessional past: the making and un-making of borders (e.g., instrumentalisation of confessional identities —inclusions and exclusions— in historiography and literature)

Programme

Friday, 6 May 2022

16:00 (Cyprus) / 14:00 (Britain)

Welcome by Dr Ioanna Hadjicosti, Director of the Bank of Cyprus Cultural Foundation

Opening remarks by Dr Chrysovalantis Kyriacou

KEYNOTE ADDRESS 16:10-16:40 (Cyprus) / 14:10-14:40 (Britain):

Professor Graeme Murdock (Trinity College, Dublin)

The place of Orthodoxy in multi-confessional borderlands in comparative and historiographical contexts

In 1914 the New England poet Robert Frost wondered about the conventional wisdom that “good fences make good neighbours”. Frost’s query continues to challenge historians as they seek to understand the social meaning and impact of walls, borders, and frontiers of different kinds. Borders in early modern societies were often porous. City walls marked out distinct legal and social environments, but urban and rural communities remained mutually dependent and closely connected. Some state frontiers followed clear geographic features, but many were opaque, shifted over time, and were best understood by local people. The porosity of borders shaped the character of borderlands of all kinds that had long existed in the hinterlands of towns and in different regions and territories. Some of these borderlands included different religious communities, who had long lived alongside one another with varying degrees of social integration. One of the most long-standing and important cultural borderlands was a product of the fuzzy border between Latin and Orthodox communities. However, in many areas the changes to religious life of the sixteenth century added new elements to the complexity of borderland societies. From the perspective of governing elites, the management of such borderlands posed serious challenges to the capacity of early modern institutions. Conflicts (in which religious identities played a part) could break out at times in borderlands, but the same areas could also provide spaces of pacific cultural and social exchange as local people learned how to negotiate between the ideal of sacral community and the reality of pluralism. Some borderlands became liminal spaces in which similarities developed among communities that made them distinctive from the cultures of heartlands. This paper focuses on particular borderland regions of Latin and Orthodox churches that were then impacted by the further religious divisions and changes of the Reformation. We consider case studies on how these borderlands operated as multi-confessional environments in historiographical context, reflecting on the idea of multi-confessional societies and multi-confessionalism and how this term has been deployed, and consider the place of Orthodoxy in “multi-confessional borderlands”.

20’ DISCUSSION: 16:40-17:00 (Cyprus) / 14:40-15:00 (Britain)

SESSION 1: PERCEIVING AND DEFINING BORDERS

Chair: Dr Charalambos Dendrinis (The Hellenic Institute, Royal Holloway, University of London)

17:00-17:30 (Cyprus) / 15:00-15:30 (Britain)

Dr Anastasia Christophopoulou (The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge)

Between borderlands and islandscapes: looking at insularity and contested space diachronically

The paper explores diachronically the notion of shared, contested, and appropriated space within large Mediterranean islands, in particular Cyprus, Sardinia, and Crete, the islands that form the focus of the Fitzwilliam Museum’s research project [“Being an Islander: Art and Identity](#)

[of the Large Mediterranean Islands](#)". In ancient times, Cyprus, Sardinia, and Crete have been loci of repeated space appropriation and interaction with their surrounding continents, or other neighbouring islands. In early modern and contemporary times, this phenomenon persisted. For example, in Cyprus, post-colonial conflict resulted in the division of the island, while in the case of Sardinia and Crete, modern, or post 19th-century debates about the islands' identity and relationship with the 'mother states' have also shaped archaeological narratives and debates about the islands' cultural histories. Through targeted museum displays stemming from our project, we are keen to explore the notion of *permanent temporality* and its effect on shaping and influencing the built environment and on understanding notions of identity, citizenship and belonging within conflicted and contested areas in the islands' past and present. The framework of contested landscapes and the project's general axis on mobility also brings to the fore the topic of migration, another, divisive subject in archaeology and history. With this exhibition (and research project that precedes it) we take the opportunity to challenge traditional culture historical approaches to migration, which employed the phenomenon as a straightforward explanation for cultural change, (e.g., the arrival of new cultural traits, explained by the arrival of new populations). Ultimately, we hope to shed light into the relationship between mobility/migration and regionality, and eventually speak of *mobility of people and not objects*. This last goal is particularly important in the context of a museum project: for a long time within museum practice, we focused far more on the movement of objects, practices, styles, which are the archaeologically visible traces of interaction. This project and paper presents the opportunity to go beyond the object and challenge this perception, thus addressing the topic of circulation of *both* people and objects as evidence of mobility and migration.

17:30-18:00 (Cyprus) / 15:30-16:00 (Britain)

Federico Zuliani (Università degli Studi di Torino)

An Italian Protestant looks at 16th-century Cypriot religious life: Giacomo Castelvetro's marginalia to the Errori di certe nationi christiane

Thanks to Chrysovalantis Kyriacou, attention has been drawn on Cypriot social and religious history as reflected in the Venetian *relatione* preserved in the Bank of Cyprus Cultural Foundation Codex B-030. This text has emerged as an invaluable source in our study of *Venetokratia* in Cyprus. The paper examines another, so far unknown, testimony of the same work. This copy belonged to the Italian Humanist and Protestant exile Giacomo Castelvetro (nephew of the notorious Ludovico), who planned to have it published together with several other *relationi* taken from the collections of Christian Barnekow, a Danish nobleman and diplomat, who had been a student in Padua. A comparison of the two testimonies, however, shows that they are not identical. Leaving aside usual scribal differences, Castelvetro's copy stands out by virtue of being heavily glossed. Such *marginalia*, when properly studied, are important for two main reasons. On the one hand, they show what was known and understood about Eastern Mediterranean social and religious history by non-Venetian Italians (Castelvetro himself coming from Mantua), who had no direct, or specific, knowledge of the Levant. On the other hand, these marginal notes show the way Italian Protestants interpreted Greek Orthodox (and to a lesser degree Coptic and Armenian) theology and ecclesiology. In Castelvetro's eyes, the usual confessional borders are altered, with Orthodox Christianity and the Reformation standing together on the right side of the fence (due to their apostolicity), against Roman Catholicism.

18:00-18:30 (Cyprus) / 16:00-16:30 (Britain)

Dr Maria Hadjipolycarpou (University of Illinois)

Faith, Class, Nation, and the Venetian Imagination in Costas Montis' Ο αφέντης Μπατίστας και τ' άλλα (1980)

In his *Ο αφέντης Μπατίστας και τ' άλλα (Afentis Batistas and Other Things)* published in 1980, Costas Montis (Cyprus, 1914-2004) explores aspects of his family history alongside Cypriot folklore stories and histories of Venetian rule in Cyprus and the Mediterranean. Montis' life-story is presented in conjunction with stories his grandmother tells him about her connection to a Venetian ancestor. Landlord Afentis Batistas resided in Cyprus during the years of the Venetian rule and his son, Antonellos, continues to own their property during and after Ottoman rule. For purposes of sustaining control of the land, Antonellos converts to Islam, while at the same time practicing Christian ritual. This paper brings Montis' life-story, which is also an auto-ethnography, in conversation with earlier literary iterations of Cypriot identity and shows ways in which Montis internalizes a Western (Latin) model for distinguishing his noble origins not only in relation to Muslims, most of whom were converts from Christianity during the Ottoman period, but also Orthodox Christians. In this way, Montis expresses a social class aspect that is part and parcel of national identity.

30' DISCUSSION: 18:30-19:00 (Cyprus) / 16:30-17:00 (Britain)

Saturday, 7 May 2022

SESSION 2: BORDERS AND THEIR CULTURAL LEGACIES

Chair: Professor Graeme Murdock (Trinity College, Dublin)

16:00-16:30 (Cyprus) / 14:00-14:30 (Britain)

Dr Miriam Salzmann (Johannes Gutenberg Universität Mainz)

Married Latin, Buried Orthodox: Religious Borders, Conversion and Fifteenth-Century Cypriot Elites

In the mid-fifteenth century, Cyprus had been under the rule of the Lusignan Crusader dynasty for 250 years. Despite the strong social and ethno-religious boundaries imposed by Crusader rule, this period was marked by increasing social mobility among Greek and Syrian (Melkite, Maronite, Syrian Orthodox and Nestorian) merchants and state officials, some of whom managed to attain highest offices and wealth. Religious identities were highly important in this dynamic environment, since adhering to the Latin faith had been a traditional identity marker distinguishing the nobility from other population groups. The paper investigates how Greek/Syrian social climbers and established Latin nobles re-negotiated confessional boundaries in the context of Cypriot and broader European church politics. This phenomenon becomes visible in marriage and death, namely crucial moments for the manifestation of the hybrid religious identities of social climbers. The paper examines, among others, the case of the Greek magnate Hugo Podocataro, who married according to the Latin rite but wished to be buried in an Orthodox monastery.

16:30-17:00 (Cyprus) / 14:30-15:00 (Britain)

Revd Socrates Andreou (Theological School of the Church of Cyprus, Nicosia)

Doctrine and identity in Latin-ruled Cyprus (15th-16th c.): the Filioque controversy as doctrinal boundary between Orthodox and Latins

The Ferrara-Florence Council (1438-39) and the subsequent theological developments did not succeed in bringing unity between East and West in matters of faith, yet it undoubtedly gave fresh impetus to theological debate. Although sharing the Scriptures and patristic theology as a common point of departure, unionist and anti-unionist theologians did not reach a consensus on the crucial doctrinal issues of the day. Focusing on Cypriot theological texts, the paper examines what was probably the most important doctrinal question in the 15th and

16th centuries, namely the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father alone, according to the Orthodox position, or from the Father *and the Son (Filioque)*, as the Latin theologians taught. The paper concentrates on two main aspects: (a) the Orthodox teaching on the Holy Spirit, as expressed by Mark Eugenikos and Gennadios Scholarios; and (b) the Latin teaching in support of the *Filioque* doctrine. The Cypriot sources discussed in this paper include the letter of the unionist Isaiah the Cypriot to Nikolaos Sklengias (mid-15th c.?) and the doctrinal references in the Bank of Cyprus Cultural Foundation Codex B-030. Overall, the paper brings to our attention the dialectic relationship between the Orthodox and Latin divergent theological traditions on the procession of the Holy Spirit, showing how theology could create boundaries of faith, shaping the identities of Orthodox and Latins, both unionists and anti-unionists.

17:00-17:30 (Cyprus) / 15:00-15:30 (Britain)

Dr Chrysovalantis Kyriacou (Bank of Cyprus Cultural Foundation, Nicosia / The Hellenic Institute, Royal Holloway, University of London)

Early modern historiography as borderland and the legacies of Cypriot multi-confessionalism

Cypriot historians of the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries interpreted the co-existence of Cypriot Christian communities in different ways. For Steffano Lusignano, a Dominican of Frankish royal descent writing in Bologna as a refugee after 1571, Cypriot Christian groups maintained their different rites, while being united in faith with Rome. In his *Chorograffia*, published in Bologna in 1573, Lusignano emphasised the glorious past of Cyprus as a Frankish kingdom, with the expectation to persuade the Catholic princes of France to recover Cyprus from the Ottomans. In the 1600s, Logizos Skevophylax, the Orthodox Cypriot translator of the *Chorograffia*, revised Lusignano's text, stressing the Orthodox identity of Cyprus and excluding references to other communities. The same task was undertaken by a scholar of the Cypriot diaspora, Archimandrite Kyprianos, whose *Chronological History of the Island of Cyprus* was published in Venice in 1788. Although Kyprianos based his account on the *Chorograffia*, acknowledging the historical presence of a variety of Christian groups, he refuted Lusignano's views, presenting Cyprus as an Orthodox island, thus echoing local and broader ideological and ecclesiastical developments in the Ottoman-ruled Orthodox world. The different legacies of multi-confessionalism in the early modern historiography of Cyprus, actually reveal a plurality of borders and boundaries related to faith, ritual and culture, creating a more complex image of Cypriot society and identities.

30' DISCUSSION: 17:30-18:00 (Cyprus) / 15:30-16:00 (Britain)

Closing remarks by Dr Chrysovalantis Kyriacou

Notes on Contributors

REVD SOCRATES ANDREOU is Teaching Associate at the Theological School of the Church of Cyprus. His area of expertise is Patristic, Dogmatic and Pastoral Theology, particularly Saint Maximus the Confessor, Saint Cassian the Roman, and the Early Byzantine ascetic collections.

ANASTASIA CHRISTOPHILOPOULOU is Senior Assistant Keeper (Curator of Greece, Rome and Cyprus) at Department of Antiquities of the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge. She is currently leading the research project project "[Being an Islander: Art and Identity of the Large Mediterranean Islands](#)". Her research interests cover the Archaeology of the Mediterranean and of the Mediterranean islands, with emphasis on the cultures of the Aegean and Cyprus. She is particularly engaged with questions of island identity, mobility and migration.

VERONICA DELLA DORA is Professor of Human Geography and Co-Director of the Centre for GeoHumanities at Royal Holloway, University of London. Her research spans historical and cultural geography, the history of cartography and Byzantine studies, with a specific focus on sacred space and the geographical imagination.

CHARALAMBOS DENDRINOS is Senior Lecturer in Byzantine Literature and Greek Palaeography, and Director of the Hellenic Institute at Royal Holloway, University of London. His research interests cover holiness and the sacred in different religions and traditions, and editions of unpublished texts by Byzantine authors.

IOANNA HADJICOSTI is Director of the Bank of Cyprus Cultural Foundation and a member of the Intangible Cultural Heritage Committee of the Cyprus National Commission for UNESCO. Her research interests include classical literature, theatre studies, Cypriot history and archaeology, and cultural management and sustainability.

ACHILLEAS HADJIKYRIACOU is Senior Manager at the Hellenic Institute and Director of the Centre for Greek Diaspora Studies at Royal Holloway, University of London. His main area of research is contemporary Greek history and culture, including the history, identity and culture of Greek and Cypriot diasporas around the world.

MARIA HADJIPOLYCARPOU is Lecturer in Modern Greek Studies at the Department of Classics of the University of Illinois. Her primary areas of research include: native auto-ethnographies during periods of transformation; identity, language and ethnicity in the Eastern Mediterranean; nationalism; re-inventions of literary traditions; colonialism and de-colonisation; women and gender studies; islands and island imagination; religion, secularism and the state; storytelling; trauma and healing.

CHRYSOVALANTIS KYRIACOU is Post-Doctoral Researcher at the Bank of Cyprus Cultural Foundation and Research Associate of the Hellenic Institute at Royal Holloway, University of London. His research interests cover the history and culture of Orthodox Christianity in the Eastern Mediterranean from Late Antiquity to the post-Byzantine period.

GRAEME MURDOCK is Associate Professor in European History at the Department of History of Trinity College, Dublin. His research interests focus on Calvinist religious life in early modern Europe. He has worked on a range of themes concerning both Hungarian-speaking and French-speaking Reformed Churches. His research also covers relations between religious communities in pluralist contexts.

MIRIAM SALZMANN is Academic Assistant at the Chair of Byzantine History of the Johannes Gutenberg Universität Mainz. Her research focuses on cultural contacts between Late Byzantium and the Latin world, the social and cultural history of medieval Cyprus, and late medieval translations and linguistics.

FEDERICO ZULIANI is Doctoral Student at the Department of Historical Studies of the Università degli Studi di Torino, exploring the Italian-speaking Protestant community of the Grisons (ca. 1540 - 1620). His broader area of expertise covers early modern religious history and religious minorities, including the involvement of Greeks in Italian Reformation.

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To join the Conference please use the following links:

6 May

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86911562623?pwd=dll3RjZ6cmJwN0hsK3FFSHJZZmUxdz09>

7 May

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81087491414?pwd=TmlqZnFia0hXUTNSU0x1UHNBUy90QT09>

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