Damned in Hell

in the frescoes of Venetian-dominated Crete (13th-17th centuries)

1

The Leverhulme Trust

The core of this Leverhulme International Networks project is the depiction of Hell. Specifically, it examines Hell as shown in the fresco decoration of Byzantine churches on the island of Crete from the period of Venetian domination (1211-1669). In addition, the project incorporates a comparative study of Hell frescoes in churches in Cyprus, Cappadocia, the Balkans as well as representations of Hell in Western Europe, particularly Italy. Finally, the project analyses the historic, social and theological parameters of Hell and its sinful population as found on Venetian Crete.

Over 750 Orthodox churches were built and decorated during the period of Venetian rule on Crete; of these 106 include depictions of hell in their iconographic programmes. This cluster provides the time frame for the majority of the material examined - thirteenth to seventeenth centuries. The material collected on Crete will be made available to the public by the end of 2018 via a password-protected database and will include:

- **General views of the churches**
- **Detailed photographs of frescoes of Hell and its sinful inhabitants**
- **Detailed records of the iconographic programmes of the churches**
- **Detailed plans of the churches and of the location of the Hell scenes**

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The database, built by Prof. Mathieu d'Aquin and the Knowledge Media Institute (KMi) on the basis of Open Linked Data, will present the scholarly community with an invaluable research tool, making monuments that are difficult to access readily available for close examination. Furthermore, the database will enable the identification of potential patterns in the material, for instance in the location of Hell scenes within the Cretan churches, or in the depictions of Hell and dedication of churches to specific patron saints. It will also allow for geographical and chronological mapping of data, for example of 'popular' sins.

The database will be accompanied by a two-volume publication, which will place the results derived from research on Cretan Hell scenes in the context of the wider Mediterranean, identifying similarities and differences in relevant examples from Cyprus, Cappadocia, the Peloponnese and the Balkans and discussing the significance of such comparisons.

Material from Italy will also be considered in order to establish the extent of western influences on Cretan Orthodox religious iconography. Finally the project will explore the concept of Hell in the wider Byzantine and western religious traditions and its adaptation within the Cretan hybrid and cross-cultural society.

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This project is brought to you by the generous funding of The Leverhulme Trust and the team work of an international group of ten academics, managed by:
- **Dr Angeliki Lymberopoulou, The Open University, U.K. (Project PI, co-manager, co-developer of the database, co-editor of the publication; responsible for the Cretan material)**
- **Prof. Dr Vasiliki Tsamakda, Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz, Germany (project co-manager, co-editor of the publication; responsible for the Cretan material)**

Project Team Members
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- **Dr Dionysios Stathakopoulos, King's College London, U.K. (the religious and historic tradition of Hell and its adaptation on Venetian Crete)**
- **Prof. Dr Rainer Warland, University of Freiburg, Germany (Cappadocia)**
- **Prof. Annemarie Weyl-Carr, Southern Methodist University, U.S.A. (Cyprus)**

Project Facilitator
- **Dr Diana Newall, The Open University, U.K. (co-ordinator of the project activities and production of the database)**

For the publication only
- **Prof. Sharon Gerstel, UCLA, U.S.A. (the Peloponnese)**

Watch this space: ledaproject.org.uk

1. Punishment of sinners in Hell, Church of St Paraskevi, 1372/73, Kitiros, Chania (western Crete)
2. Punishments of sinners in Hell, Church of Saint John the Evangelist, 1411, Selli, Retymnon (central-western Crete)
3. Angels pushing sinners into Hell, Church of Christ the Saviour, after 1375, Potamies, Herakleion (central-eastern Crete)
4. Satan riding a beast (Vithyos Drakon), Judas in his arms, Church of Saint George, fourteenth century, Kavousi, Lasithi (eastern Crete)

Design: Rembrandt Duits

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