



COLOURS OF MEDIEVAL CYPRUS

THERE IS LITTLE DOUBT THAT THE medieval period, from 1191 until 1571, was the most colourful era in the long and tumultuous history of the island of Cyprus.

It began with the arrival of King Richard the Lionheart of England during the 3rd Crusade. Richard diverted his journey to the Holy Land to rescue his sister and fiancée. The two ladies, travelling separately from Richard, had been shipwrecked off the coast of Lemesos and were being held hostage by the self-proclaimed Byzantine ruler of the island, Isaac Comnenus. Richard came, he conquered, married his bride and, after less than a month, he left. But in those few short weeks he managed to change the course of the island's history forever.

A few months later, Richard sold his rights in the island to the Templars. They didn't last long. In April 1192, an uprising by the local populace against them, forced the



Templars to hand back the rights of the island to Richard, who

developed into important urban centres, with economic and political stability and a thriving industry in arts and crafts. The Great War of Cyprus, fought between the Venetians and the invading Ottomans, lasted for thirteen months. The siege of Lefkosia followed by the siege and heroic fall of Famagusta marked the end of the medieval and renaissance periods of Cyprus. The loss of the island to the Ottomans badly affected the economy of Venice and effectively closed Europe's gate to the Middle East and eastern Mediterranean.

Colours of Medieval Cyprus – Aspects of daily Life 1191-1571, is being hosted during May 2004 at the Hellenic Centre in central London, on the historic occasion of the accession of Cyprus to the European Union.

The exhibition cleverly presents characteristic elements of medieval Cyprus through the impressive glazed ceramic collection and other medieval pieces from The Leventis Municipal Museum of Lefkosia.

Cypriot glazed pottery, with its motifs and decorations, is a valuable source of information on the daily life of the period. Falconers and their falcons, wedding scenes, dancers and knights, together with birds and animals, bring the period to life offering us a unique glimpse into the intriguing medieval world of Cyprus.

The exhibition, which takes place at the Hellenic Centre, London, from 4th – 30th May, is organised by The Leventis Municipal Museum of Nicosia with the sponsorship and support of the Cyprus Ministry of Education and Culture and the A.G. Leventis Foundation. ■

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immediately sold it again to the ousted King of Jerusalem, Guy de Lusignan. Two years later, Guy's brother and successor established the Kingdom of Cyprus and his descendents ruled as kings of the island until 1489, when it came into the possession and administration of the Republic of Venice.

During the following 82 years of Venetian rule, Cyprus prospered. Its cities, especially Lefkosia and Famagusta