

Images of the Mother of God

Perceptions of the Theotokos in Byzantium

Edited by Maria Vassilaki



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The legacy of the Hodegetria: holy icons and legends between east and west*

Michele Bacci

The 'Mother of God' exhibition at the Benaki Museum included an entire section devoted to an exceptionally famous image, the Hodegetria of Constantinople, whose cult developments were excellently outlined in the catalogue by Christine Angelidi and Titos Papamastorakis.¹ Here, as a kind of gloss to their work, I should like to draw the reader's attention to some circumstantial evidence of the renown of that miracle-working icon in other parts of the Mediterranean world, in order to stress its striking adaptability to differing historical and geographical contexts. A photograph taken near a shrine devoted to *sa Itria* (the corrupt southern Italian version of Hodegetria) in the hills near Gavoi in inland Sardinia well illustrates this point (Fig. 26.1). This remote place, whose village festival is held yearly in July with extended feasting and drinking, does not house any ancient image; devotional practices consist exclusively of participation in fairs and public rituals and seem haunted by persistent echoes of an ancient past, as indicated by the proximity of the church building to a prehistoric menhir entitled 'Our Lady of the Good Path' (*Nostra Signora del Buon Cammino*), a rough translation of 'Hodegetria' (Fig. 26.2).² So the question is: how should we interpret the curious relationship between this genuine folkloric manifestation and its noble Constantinopolitan ancestor, the most holy Hodegetria?

As scholars have pointed out, the icon housed in the Hodegon monastery underwent several functional transformations between the ninth century, when the church was founded, and 1453, when the panel was destroyed by Mehmet II's janizaries. Originally rooted in the public worship of certain healing springs and waters, the cult centred around a painted image, which

* I should like to thank Father Stylianos of Machairas Monastery, Cyprus; Father Francesco Trolese of the Library of S. Giustina, Padua; and Prof. Giovanni Vitolo, Naples, for their helpful suggestions.

¹ Chr. Angelidi and T. Papamastorakis, 'The Veneration of the Virgin Hodegetria and the Hodegon Monastery', in Vassilaki, *Mother of God*, 373–85. Several studies have been devoted to the cult of the Hodegetria in recent years: see esp. I. Zervou Tognazzi, 'L'iconografia e la "Vita" delle miracolose icone della Theotokos Brefokratoussa: Blachernitissa e Odighitria', *BollGrott* 40 (1986), 215–87. Angelidi, 'Un texte patriographique', 113–49. G. Babić, 'Les images byzantines et leur degrés de signification: l'exemple de l'Hodegetria', in J. Durand (ed.), *Byzance et les images* (Paris, 1994), 189–222. N. P. Ševčenko, 'Servants of the Holy Icon', in C. Moss and K. Kiefer (eds), *Byzantine East, Latin West. Art-Historical Studies in Honor of Kurt Weitzmann* (Princeton, NJ, 1995), 547–53. M. Tatić-Džurić, 'L'icône de l'Odigitria au XVI^e siècle', *ibid.*, 557–68. M. Bacci, *Il pennello dell'Evangelista. Storia delle immagini sacre attribuite a san Luca* (Pisa, 1998), 114–29. B. Zeitler, 'Cults Disrupted and Memories Recaptured: Events in the Life of the Icon of the Virgin Hodegetria in Constantinople', in *Memory and Oblivion. Proceedings of the XXIXth International Congress of the History of Art, held in Amsterdam, 1–7 September 1996* (Amsterdam, 1999), 701–8. See also the paper by Ch. Angelidi and T. Papamastorakis in the present volume, 209–223.

² M. Pittau, *La Sardegna nuragica* (Sassari, 1977), 195–6, Fig. 66. On Sardinian cults of the Itria, see F. Cherchi Paba, *La Chiesa Greca in Sardegna. Cenni storici – culti – tradizioni* (Cagliari, 1962), 79. L. Neccia, 'Il convento agostiniano di N. Signora d'Itria in Illorai', *Analecta augustiniana* 61 (1998), 151–70. For local legends, see also A. Piras and A. Sanna, *Il culto della Vergine d'Itria a Villamar, dall'Oriente ai paesi di Sardegna* (Cagliari, 2001).

was gradually invested with new roles and meanings until it eventually became interpreted as the true *palladium* of Constantinople and of the Empire itself. The climax of this metamorphosis was the claim of authorship by the evangelist Luke, and the perception of the image as a true-to-life portrait of the Virgin Mary, venerated in her city shrine since the time of Empress Pulcheria, who received it as a gift from Eudokia after its fortuitous discovery in Antioch.

This reference to Antioch, St Luke's homeland, as the place of origin of the holy icon was most likely suggested by the monastery's close institutional relationship with that city; in fact, since the time of John Tzimiskes, the Hodegon buildings belonged to the jurisdiction of the Antiochene Patriarchate, and in the twelfth century were the actual see of the exiled Patriarch.³ In a curious text whose inner core dates from c. 1422,⁴ the monk Gregory of Kykkos places emphasis on this ownership: according to him, during the iconoclast controversies the Patriarch of Constantinople persuaded the Hodegon hegoumenos to commit the holy icon to the waves, which carried it to the Syrian shore near Antioch. Forewarned by an angel, the Patriarch, followed by the entire population, came to the beach, where the icon jumped out of the water straight into the prelate's arms. In this way, sheltered in the town cathedral, the Hodegetria escaped destruction at the hands of the iconoclasts; but after the final restitution of icons, when the Constantinopolitans demanded back their *palladium*, the whole of Antioch gave a firm refusal. Quarrels ensued, which were resolved only by means of a compromise: it was decided that the entire Hodegon monastery and all its properties and revenues should be ceded to the Patriarch of Antioch.

It is likely that such stories represent, in a kind of mythic form, real dissensions between the two Patriarchates over the possession of the precious image.⁵ Another late legend brings on to the scene the disagreement between the Antiochene church and the emperors, who in Palaiologan times wanted to appropriate the cult of the Hodegetria for themselves: according to this version, it was Pulcheria herself who, wishing to recover her wicked husband Marcian, sailed to Antioch and stole the image from the wise people of that town by a trick.⁶ The relationship between the monastery and the Antiochene Patriarchate was so close as to justify of itself the attribution of the Hodegetria to St Luke, one of Antioch's most illustrious citizens. In the documents available to us, however, there is no evidence for the growth of an autonomous cult of the

³ K. G. Pitsakis, 'Η έκταση της εξουσίας ενός υπερορίου πατριάρχη. Ο πατριάρχης Αντιοχείας στην Κωνσταντινούπολη τον 12ο αιώνα', in N. Oikonomides (ed.), *Byzantium in the 12th century. Canon Law, State and Society* (Athens, 1991), 119–33. O. Kresten, *Die Beziehungen zwischen den Patriarchaten von Konstantinopel und Antiocheia unter Kallistos I. und Philotheos Kokkinos im Spiegel des Patriarchatsregisters von Konstantinopel* (Stuttgart, 2000), 379–82.

⁴ The text is known from two 18th-century copies preserved in the library of the Phaneromeni church in Nicosia, Cyprus, and the Patriarchal Library in Alexandria, Egypt, as well as from an 18th-century edition by Ephraim of Athens: cf. K. Spyridakis, 'Η περιγραφή της μονής Κύκκου επί τη βάσει ανεκδότου χειρογράφου', *ΚρητΣρ* 13 (1949), 1–29, and K. Chatzipsaltis, 'Το ανέκδοτο κείμενο του αλεξανδρινού κώδικος 176 (366). Παραδόσεις και ιστορία της μονής Κύκκου', *ΚρητΣρ* 14 (1950), 39–69. For the dating to 1422, based on internal evidence provided by the text, see *ibid.*, 45–6. See also the most recent publication, K. N. Konstantinidis, *Η Διήγησις της θαυματουργής εικόνας της Θεοτόκου Ελεούσας του Κύκκου κατά τον Ελληνικό κώδικα 2313 του Βατικανού* (Nicosia, 2002).

⁵ Spyridakis, 'Η περιγραφή', 18–20. Chatzipsaltis, 'Το ανέκδοτο', 54–6.

⁶ S. Lambros, 'Τρεις παραδοξογραφικά διηγήσεις περί Πελοποννήσου, Πουλχερίας, και Θεοδοσίου του Μικρού', *NE* 4 (1907), 129–51, esp. 138–9.

Hodegetria in that city, although we know that a miracle-working icon was venerated within its cathedral in Frankish times.⁷

There can be no doubt that by the twelfth and thirteenth centuries the fame of the Constantinopolitan *palladium* was already widespread outside the capital: not only were several replicas of the icon reproduced in the decoration of churches and on painted panels, but also the rituals and the cultic life associated with it began to be imitated. The case of Thessaloniki is obviously of particular interest. In the second city of the Empire, where several liturgical practices of the capital were reproduced in the twelfth century, an icon of the Virgin entitled the Hodegetria was housed in an annexe of the great church of St Sophia. It was brought to the metropolis daily for both the morning and evening offices and was exhibited to the west of the ambo; like its archetype in Constantinople it was involved in a solemn procession on Tuesdays and was credited with oracular properties.⁸ During the terrible Norman siege in 1185, the Hodegetria showed itself unwilling to return to its chapel after the procession, using supernatural power to ward off the bearers: this was unquestionably an ill omen, as the citizens were forced to admit some days later when the city was pillaged.⁹ More than a mere cultic phenomenon, the Thessalonikan Hodegetria imitated the political role of its archetype: it was a *palladium* of the city and a collective symbol for all the citizens, especially on the eve of great calamities.

Another identical copy of the Hodegetria was described at about the same time (c. 1177) by the Greek pilgrim John Phokas in his account of the monastery of St Mary of Kalamon on the river Jordan. According to him, on the right side of the katholikon was

a tiny vaulted church, erected in the times of the Apostles (as it is said), where in the apse is painted an image of the Theotokos holding Christ the Saviour in Her arms; it displays the figure, colour and size of the most holy icon of the Hodegetria in the capital. It is said by ancient traditions that this one was painted by the hand of the Apostle and Evangelist Luke: the frequent miracles and the awe-inspiring scent coming out of the icon persuade one to believe such a renown ...¹⁰

How should we interpret such a passage? The pilgrim simply remarks that an image of the Virgin and Child adorned a church dating back to apostolic times: its striking likeness to the

⁷ Cf. Wilbrand of Oldenburg, *Journey to the Holy Land (1211–1212)*, I.14, ed. S. de Sandoli, *Itinera Hierosolymitana cruce signatorum (sec. XII–XIII)* III (Jerusalem, 1979–1984), 215.

⁸ J. Darrouzès, 'Sainte-Sophie de Thessalonique d'après un rituel', *REB* 14 (1976), 45–78, esp. 59. D. I. Pallas, 'Le ciborium hexagonal de Saint-Démétrios de Thessalonique. Essai d'interprétation', *Zograf* 10 (1979), 44–58, esp. 50–1.

⁹ Eustathius of Thessaloniki, *Συγγραφή τῆς κατ' αὐτὴν ἀλώσεως*, ed. S. Kyriakides (Palermo, 1961), 142.

¹⁰ John Phokas, *Description of the Holy Land*, PG 133, 953: 'Ἀλλὰ καὶ ἡ τοῦ Καλαμῶνος μονή, καὶ αὕτη ὑπὸ πύργων καὶ κορτίνων, ἀπὸ τετραγώνου λαξευτοῦ λίθου ἀνωκοδομηται, καὶ ὁ ναὸς μέσον αὐτῆς ἐγχόρηγος τρολλωτὸς ἴδρυται ἐν κυλινδρωτοῖς θόλοις ἐπικαθήμενος. Τοῦτου συνέζευκται ἐν τῷ δεξιῷ μέρει ναὸς ἕτερος θολωτὸς πάνυ σμικρῶτατος, ἐν τοῖς χρόνοις, ὡς λέγεται, τῶν Ἀποστόλων ἀνεργεθεῖς, οὗ ἐν τῷ μῦκι εἰκὼν τῆς Θεοτόκου ἰσθόρηται, ἐν ἀγκάλαις φερούσης τὸν Σωτῆρα Χριστόν, τὸ σχῆμα, καὶ τὸ χρῶμα, καὶ τὸ μήκος ἐμφαίνουσα τῆς ἐν τῇ Βασιλευούσῃ Ὁδηγητρίας ὑπεραγίας εἰκόνας. Λέγεται δὲ ἐκ παλαιῶν παραδόσεων, ὡς ἰσθόρηται αὕτη χειρὶ τοῦ ἀποστόλου καὶ εὐαγγελιστοῦ Λουκᾶ. Καὶ πιστεύεται τὴν φήμην πειθουσι τὰ τε συχνὰ θαύματα, καὶ ἡ φρικωδεστάτη ἐκ τῆς εἰκόνας ἐξερχομένη εὐωδία [...]'. The Russian pilgrim Daniel of Kiev had already remarked in 1108–1111 that 'up to the present day, the Holy Ghost descends to an image of the Blessed Virgin': see text in B. de Khitrowo, *Itinéraires russes en Orient* (2nd edn, Paris, 1966), 31. Cf. A. Külzer, *Peregrinatio graeca in Terram Sanctam. Studien zu Pilgerführen und Reisebeschreibungen über Syrien, Palästina und den Sinai aus byzantinischer und metabyzantinischer Zeit* (Frankfurt am

Hodegetria, that is to say to the oldest and most true-to-life portrait painted by St Luke, indicated that it was a very ancient painting, probably as ancient as its architectural surroundings. It was of course to be expected that a meticulous copy made in the Evangelist's lifetime would best convey the miracle-working powers of the archetype, and we know that at least one other icon was venerated by Palestinian Christians as a replica of Constantinople's patroness: as we learn from an *Act* issued by Pope Honorius III in 1226, an icon called the *Deitria*, which the Venetians had illicitly appropriated, was worshipped in the basilica of Bethlehem.¹¹

Although it is known that correspondence between the epithet and the iconographic theme was not universally followed – as we see in the case of the Agitria church in the Mani, where an image of the Virgin and Child in a medallion is labelled as the 'Hodegetria'¹² – the Constantinopolitan *palladium* was certainly the Byzantine icon which could boast the greatest number of meticulous copies. One of these was the image venerated in the monastery of S. Maria del Patir near Rossano in Calabria, founded by the Italo-Greek monk Bartholomew of Simeri (c. 1050–1130). As one of the most important religious establishments in Byzantine Italy, the monastery church was endowed with *vasa sacra*, icons and other adornments by Emperor Alexios Komnenos (the blessed Bartholomew himself went to Constantinople in order to obtain these gifts);¹³ a document dated 1103 refers to it as the Rossano *Odigitria*, an appellation which was already pronounced *Neodigitria*, i.e. the 'New Hodegetria', eight years later, in 1111.¹⁴ It was probably in this way that the Greek monks managed to introduce an already famous cultic manifestation from the capital to Calabrian believers in Rossano – where a famous twelfth-century preacher, Philagathos of Cerami, praised the most holy icon painted by St Luke and preserved in the 'Great Town'.¹⁵

The titular icon of the *Neodigitria* church was an exact copy of its archetype. Unfortunately this image has been lost, but we can obtain an idea of it by looking at the seal of a hegoumenos – the so-called 'St Nilus' ring' – dating from the twelfth century, which displays a Virgin *aristerokratousa*.¹⁶ Indeed, we are even more fortunate, since an actual reproduction of the Rossano icon is displayed on a votive panel, now housed in the local museum, which was painted in the fifteenth century for Athanasios Chalkeopoulos, an Italo-Greek archimandrite and later bishop of Gerace in Calabria, who died in 1497 (Figs 26.3–26.4).¹⁷ Although its style is reminiscent of the Italian Renaissance, its iconography and composition with a Crucifixion

Main, 1994), 170. D. Pringle, *The Churches of the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem. A Corpus II* (Cambridge, 1993–1998), 197–201.

¹¹ *Acta Honorii III et Gregorii IX*, ed. A. L. Tàutu (*Pontificia Commissio ad Redigendum Codicem Iuris Canonici Orientalis. Fontes, Series III*) (Rome, 1950), III, 187–8. I should like to thank my wife Barbara Ciampi, who first drew my attention to this important document.

¹² N. V. Drandakis, *Βυζαντινές εκκλησίες της Μέσσα Μάνης* (Athens, 1995), 238, Fig. 13 and Pl. 54; an image of the Glykophilousa in the narthex bears the same epithet (*ibid.*, 252, Fig. 30).

¹³ G. Zaccagni, 'Il Βίος di san Bartolomeo da Simeri (*BHG* 235)', *RSBN* 33 (1996), 193–274, esp. 222–3.

¹⁴ See P. Batiffol, *L'abbaye de Rossano. Contribution à l'histoire de la Vaticane* (Paris, 1891), 6–7. W. Holtzmann, 'Die älteste Urkunden des Klosters S. Maria del Patir', *BZ* 26 (1926), 238–330.

¹⁵ Philagathos of Cerami, *Homilies*, 20, *PG* 132, 440.

¹⁶ M. P. di Dario Guida, *Icone di Calabria e altre icone meridionali* (Soveria Mannelli, 1992), 36, Fig. 12.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 166–7, Figs 100–1. The image of the Virgin and Child is labelled as ἡ Νέα Ὁδηγήτρια; an inscription on the lower edge reads: 'Ἀθανάσιος Φιλίππου Χαλκεόπουλος ἀρχιμανδρίτης τῆ μητρὶ τοῦ Θεοῦ σωτηρίας τῶν προσερχομένων χάριν'. On Chalkeopoulos see M. Laurent and A. Guillou, *Le 'Liber Visitationis' d'Athanasie Chalkeopoulos (1457–1458). Contribution à l'histoire du monachisme grec en Italie méridionale* (Vatican City, 1960).

on the reverse reproduce the features of the earlier icon and can even be regarded as indirect evidence for the appearance of the archetype. This association of the Virgin and Child with an image of Christ's sacrifice, so widespread in Middle Byzantine piety and religious art, was also to be noted in the icon of the Hodegon monastery. A late eyewitness, the often-quoted Catalan traveller Pero Tafur, who was in Constantinople in 1437, wrote that

there [i.e. in the Hodegon monastery] is an image of Our Lady the Virgin Mary, made by St Luke, and on the opposite side is Our Lord Crucified, painted on stone and bearing a silver revetment on the borders and the background.¹⁸

The icon was large enough to be carried by a man with outstretched arms and was also fairly heavy – this is the explanation, in my opinion, for the term *losa*, 'stone', which is employed elsewhere by Tafur to describe another large holy icon, that of the Saviour in the Roman *sancta sanctorum*.¹⁹ As it was involved in a weekly procession through the city streets, the image anyway needed to be a two-sided one. Further evidence is provided by the Cypriot monk Gregory's *Description of the Kykkos monastery*: according to him, St Luke, inspired by the archangel Gabriel,

painted the purest image of the Hodegetria, and Christ Crucified on the opposite side of the icon, as well as, on both sides, Gabriel and Michael censuring Jesus.²⁰

Gabriel, who had also provided Luke with a panel 'not cut by human hands' (*ἀχειρότητος*), had explicitly asked to be represented in the image; such a request can be explained as a corollary of the frequent inclusion of angels in the iconographic type of the Hodegetria in the Middle and Late Byzantine era, exactly as with the Crucifixion scene.

Elsewhere in Italy the imitation of the Constantinopolitan icon and its ritual life seems to have occurred at an early date. It was natural to expect that even after the end of imperial domination in 1071, Apulia would be greatly affected by Byzantine devotional practices: processions involving a Marian icon are recorded in Otranto as early as the eleventh century,²¹ and we find a sculpted copy of the Hodegetria, commissioned by the local *turmarches* Delterios in the 1030s or 1040s, inside a church in Trani.²² In that town the cathedral was dedicated to both the Virgin Mary and St Nicholas the Pilgrim, a monk from Hosios Loukas who died there in the eleventh century, and whose public cult was in competition with that of Nicholas of Myra in Bari; since we know that this saint's icon has long been displayed in the crypt, we can assume that this could also have been the location for a titular image of the Theotokos, who was

¹⁸ Pero Tafur, *Andanças é viajes por diversas partes del mundo avidos*, tr. and ed. G. Bellini (Rome, 1986), 174–5.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 29.

²⁰ Spyridakis, 'Ἡ περιγραφή', 16; Chatzipsaltis, 'Το ανέκδοτο', 51–2: 'καὶ ἰστόρησε δὲ τὴν ἄκραντον εἰκόνα τῆς Ὁδηγητρίας, ὅπισθεν δὲ τῆς εἰκόνοσ τὸν Ἰησοῦν ἐσταυρωμένον, ἔνθεν [δὲ] καὶ ἔνθεν τὸν Γαβριὴλ καὶ Μιχαὴλ θυμιάζοντας τὸν Ἰησοῦν'.

²¹ *De vita S. Nicolai in Graecia*, III.19, ed. AASS, Iunii, I.237–43, esp. 241: 'Erat autem consuetudo civibus Hydruntinis Virginis gloriosae imaginem, cum processione psalmis et hymnis, de ecclesia in ecclesiam transportare, pro peccatis ipsorum et omnium indulgentiam postulantes'.

²² P. Belli d'Elia (ed.), *Alle sorgenti del Romanico. Puglia XI secolo*, exh. cat. (Bari, 1975), no. 84, 71. R. Lange, *Die byzantinische Reliefikone* (Recklinghausen, 1964), no. 10, 56. The inscription reads: 'Κ(ύρι)ε β(οί)θη τὸν δοῦλο(ν) σου Δελτέριον το(υ)ρμάρχη'.

Nicholas' pendant in the bishop's seals from the late twelfth century.²³ Indications of a deep-rooted veneration of the Hodegetria in Trani are provided by its reproduction on Barisano of Trani's twelfth-century bronze doors and on a thirteenth-century panel from the church of San Giovanni della Penna; moreover, a fifteenth-century pilgrim's account informs us of the veneration in the town cathedral of an autograph work by the evangelist Luke and adds:

In fact St Luke painted thirteen images of Our Lady, each one of which can be called a *decatría*, being one of thirteen. We have seen many of these here and there in various places.²⁴

In my opinion²⁵ this passage records a popular etymology of the term Hodegetria, spelled *decàtria* with aphaeresis of the initial 'O': we should bear in mind that in the dialect of the Italo-Greek communities in the Salento area (the so-called *griko*), as in native Greek, *decatría* – with accented iota – is the neuter form of the cardinal number thirteen (*decatrì*), which cannot be other than plural.²⁶

Southern Italy was a cross-cultural area, and it is only natural that it should be one of the main gateways for the introduction of the Hodegetria cult into the West. Other vehicles were the accounts of travellers to Constantinople, translations of Byzantine religious literature (such as those by John of Amalfi in the eleventh century²⁷), and especially the collections of Marian miracles, which were widely circulated throughout Europe in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Here the Hodegetria, often confused with the icon of the Blachernai church, was mainly celebrated as the patron of Constantinople during a terrible siege by the 'Saracens'; the story naturally drew on the narration in the final strophes of the Akathistos Hymn (referring to the Avar–Persian attack in 626), and that of the August *Menaia* concerning the Arab raid in 717. A thirteenth-century Norwegian poem, the *Mariu Saga*, related that the Virgin *Odiguria* had rescued the city at the time of the *keisar* Leo, i.e. Leo III the Isaurian.²⁸ Vincent of Beauvais, writing his *Speculum historiale* in the same century, added further details, such as the location of the monastery 'close to the Palace, next to the sea', St Luke's authorship, and the custom of performing weekly processions on Tuesdays, as well as a correct etymology of the term *Odigitria* as 'deductrix', i.e. 'guide', because of the miracle of the two blind men. On the occasion of the Arab siege, the Constantinopolitans, acting as if in a northern European ritual of *humiliatio sanctorum*, threatened the Virgin Mary that they would throw her image into the sea

²³ Cf. M. Falla Castelfranchi, 'Riflessioni su una mostra: *Icone di Puglia e Basilicata dal Medioevo al Settecento*, Bari, Pinacoteca Provinciale, 9 ottobre 1988 – 7 gennaio 1989', *Arte Medievale* 2 (1991), 203–7. Generally on icon veneration in 11th- to 13th-c. Apulia, cf. P. Belli d'Elia, 'Fra tradizione e rinnovamento. Le icone dall'XI al XIV secolo', in *Icone di Puglia e Basilicata dal Medioevo al Settecento*, exh. cat., Bari, Pinacoteca Provinciale, 9 October 1988 – 7 January 1989 (Milan, 1988), 19–30. Id., 'L'icona nella cattedrale tra XI e XIII secolo: ipotesi a confronto nel contesto pugliese', in N. Bux (ed.), *L'Odegirria della cattedrale. Storia, arte, culto* (Bari, 1995), 11–23.

²⁴ J. Heers and G. de Groër (eds), *Itinéraire d'Anselme Adorno en Terre Sainte* (Paris, 1978), 394: '[...] Sanctus enim Lucas tredecim ymages Nostre Domine pinxit, quarum unaqueque quasi una ex tredecim decatria appellari potest. De hiis multas hinc inde diversis in locis vidimus.'

²⁵ Bacci, *Il pennello*, 286–7.

²⁶ M. Cassoni, *Vocabolario griko-italiano*, ed. S. Sicuro and G. Schilardi (Lecce, 1999), 157.

²⁷ John of Amalfi, *Liber de miraculis* (Heidelberg, 1913).

²⁸ C. R. Unger, *Mariu Saga. Legender om jomfru Maria og hendes Jertegn* (Christiania, 1871), 1033–4.

if she would not consent to drive away their enemies; and when they began to dip the Hodegetria into the water, the entire navy was destroyed.²⁹

Nourished by the *contaminatio* of various Byzantine legends, the cult of Constantinople's *palladium* developed in late mediaeval Italy. According to the seventeenth-century historian Giuseppe Richa, the dedication of a Florentine church to *Santa Maria Edigitria* or *Odigitria* was evidenced by now lost twelfth-century archive documents.³⁰ In Naples, an ancient chapel overlooking the entrance to the poet Virgil's tomb – which was to become the famous church of the *Madonna di Piedigrotta* – is recorded as *Santa Maria dell'Itria* in certain documents of the 1310s and 1320s, and there are some grounds for supposing that this originated when people began worshipping a copy of the Constantinopolitan icon there.³¹ In southern Italian dialects, *Itria* is the standard abbreviated form of *Hodegetria*; in the very same years (1308–1310) this term is also evidenced in the name of a church in the neighbourhood of Catania (*Ecclesia Sancte Marie de Idria Eupli*).³² In the second half of the fourteenth century, such dedications seem to have been increasingly popular in Sicily: a Benedictine monastery of the Itria in Sciacca was founded by Queen Eleanor of Aragon in 1370, and in the 1390s both a hospital and a chapel were dedicated to her in Palermo, the capital of the island.³³

An even more interesting indication is provided by the so-called 'Constantinopolitan Madonna' of Padua, whose public veneration developed from the fourteenth century onwards.³⁴ The local Benedictine abbey of S. Giustina had boasted ownership of St Luke's relics since the twelfth century; gradually a thirteenth-century icon of the Virgin and Child exhibited near the Evangelist's tomb began to be venerated as a work by his hand (Fig. 26.5). A late legend claimed that the image had been transferred to Padua from the Constantinopolitan church of the Holy Apostles during the reign of Julian the Apostate or Leo the Isaurian; nonetheless a text dating from the early fourteenth century, the Abbey lectionary, now in Berlin, bears witness to an earlier stage of development which focused on the commemoration of the Byzantine Hodegetria itself. An odd story is included in the liturgical reading for the feast of St Luke on 18 October: the canonical text is expanded with a narration set in the time of Julian the Apostate, who is portrayed as a cruel iconoclast and leipsanoclast. One day – a Tuesday – the Emperor gave orders to burn all the icons in Constantinople, but one of them, representing the Mother of God, miraculously jumped out of the flames and ran away across the waves. The people of Constantinople were

²⁹ Vincent of Beauvais, *Speculum historiale* (Douai, 1624), 950.

³⁰ G. Richa, *Notizie storiche delle chiese fiorentine divise ne' suoi Quartieri VII* (Florence, 1758), 319–20. The epithet was another title of the church of S. Maria in Capitolio.

³¹ *Cronache de la Inclita Città di Napoli emendatissime. Con li Regni de Puzolo* (Naples, 1526), fol. 111r: '[Virgilio] fo portato in Napoli e fo sepolito in quello locho, dove se chiama sancta Maria dellitria, al presente Santa Maria de pedigrotta'. Cf. F. Lo Parco, 'Dell'antico titolo 'Dell'Itria o Idria' attribuito alla Madonna di Piedigrotta. Nuove indagini e deduzioni storico-filologiche', *Atti della Accademia Pontaniana* 53 (1923), 32–60. The custom of performing votive masses in honour of *Sancta Maria de ill'Itria* is evidenced by a testamentary bequest of the lady Sichelgaita Orimina dated 4 March 1316: see R. Bevere, 'Suffragi, espiazioni postume, riti e cerimonie funebri dei secoli XII, XIII e XIV nelle province napoletane', *Archivio Storico per le province napoletane* 21 (1896), 119–32, esp. 119.

³² P. Sella (ed.), *Rationes Decimarum Italiae nei secoli XIII e XIV. Sicilia* (Vatican City, 1944), no. 945, 73.

³³ G. Bresc Baudier, *Artistes, patriciens et confréries. Production et consommation de l'oeuvre d'art à Palerme et en Sicile occidentale (1348–1460)* (Rome, 1979), 73–4.

³⁴ Cf. M. Bacci, 'La 'Madonna Costantinopolitana' nell'abbazia di Santa Giustina di Padova', in G. Mariani Canova (ed.), *Luca Evangelista. Parola e immagine tra Oriente e Occidente*, exh. cat. (Padua, 2000), 405–7.

astonished at seeing Julian's soldiers totally powerless to reach and strike it; then a pious woman, speaking as the *coryphaeus* of all the believers, promised that they would abstain from meat every Tuesday if God would rescue this holy *Dimitria*. This vow was immediately fulfilled: the icon jumped into the woman's arms and the miracle was subsequently celebrated in Constantinople and the whole of the Empire by means of a solemn procession on Tuesdays:

That is why the Greeks do not eat meat on Tuesdays right up to today, and on Tuesdays they always carry that *Dimitria* through Constantinople with a procession and great rejoicing; in honour of holy Mary icons are carried everywhere in the Greek Empire, in towns, castles and villages.³⁵

These words suggest a deep fascination with Byzantine devotional customs and a sound knowledge of the world of eastern Christianity; the allusion to minor centres imitating the weekly procession of the icon is of special interest, since there is good reason to suppose that the rituals of refugee communities from Turkish-occupied lands in the Balkans gave new life to the already extant cult of the Hodegetria, most often named *Madonna dell'Itria* or *Madonna di Costantinopoli*, in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century southern Italy. Some of these groups took with them their own *palladia* and set up 'national' shrines in their new homeland: refugees from mainland Albania, settling in a small village in Molise, Portocannone, in 1468, began to venerate there 'Our Lady of Constantinople', whose feast falls even today on the Tuesday after Pentecost;³⁶ refugees from Koroni in Messenia after its conquest by the Ottomans in 1533 took with them their icons of the Hodegetria; an Albano-Greek group took up residence in Barile, Calabria, and erected a shrine in honour of its own *Madonna di Costantinopoli*;³⁷ certain Greek notables arrived in Messina, where they collected around the church of S. Niccolò dei Greci and, as stated in a Latin inscription, placed in it a replica of the Hodegetria archetype in Constantinople, which was 'the only consolation' for that unfortunate people;³⁸ and finally,

³⁵ Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Preußischer Kulturbesitz, MS. lat. fol. 480, fols 34v–35r (I include here the full text from the woman's prayer to the final remarks): 'Fortissime Deus spirituum universe carnis demitte hanc noxam nobis et, si voluntas tua est ut sacre picture remaneant in ecclesia iugiter, fac nos habere per tuam misericordiam hanc sanctam Dimitriam, ita quod omnia que hodie deleta sunt per nos restaurentur et insuper pro hoc delicto causa penitentiae nunquam in die martis carnes comederemus. Cumque omnis populus clamasset: "Fiat, fiat!", statim cucurrit in brachio illius sancte mulieris et illa cum universo populo cum laudibus et hymnis et canticis et magno gaudio tulerunt eam in civitatem. Quapropter Greci non comedunt carnes in die martis usque hodie et, semper in die martis, portant illam Dimitriam cum processione et magno gaudio per Constantinopolim. Et pro reverentia sancte Marie per totum regnum Grecorum et per civitates et castella sive villulas portantur singule ancone.' Cf. the text edited by E. Necchi, 'Reliquie orientali e culto di martiri a Santa Giustina di Padova', *ItMedUm* 42 (2001), 91–118, esp. 112–13. See also F. G. B. Trolese, 'Un antico lezionario trecentesco del monastero di Santa Giustina in Padova', *ibid.*, 63–89. This scene was also included in Giovanni Storlato's frescoed decoration of St Luke's chapel in S. Giustina (1436–1441): cf. A. de Nicolò Salmazo, 'Le reliquie di san Luca e l'abbazia di Santa Giustina a Padova', in Mariani Canova, *Luca Evangelista*, 155–86, esp. 173–4.

³⁶ M. Flocco, *Studio su Portocannone e gli Albanesi in Italia* (Foggia, 1985), 108–9.

³⁷ C. Korolevskij, 'Le vicende ecclesiastiche dei paesi italo-albanesi della Basilicata e della Calabria, I. Barile', *Archivio Storico per la Calabria e la Lucania* 1 (1931), 43–68, esp. 54–5 and 62. M. Camaj (ed.), *Racconti popolari di Greci (Katundi) in provincia di Avellino e di Barile (Barili) in provincia di Potenza* (Rome, 1972), xix. It is significant that the cult of the *Madonna di Costantinopoli* developed in the area inhabited by immigrants from Koroni and was unconnected with the Catholic Albanians from Scutari who had been settled in the same village since the late 15th c.

³⁸ P. Samperi, *Iconologia della Madre di Dio, protettrice di Messina* (Messina, 1644), 536. C. Guarna Logoteta, *Ricerche storiche sul titolo d'Itria dato a Maria SS. e il culto a Lei prestato nel Regno di Napoli* (Reggio Calabria,

Thomas, the son of the last despot of Mistra, Demetrios Asan Palaiologos, sought refuge in Naples, where, by 1523, he had founded a votive chapel in the church of S. Giovanni Maggiore dedicated to St Luke's most famous icon.³⁹

From the first half of the sixteenth century onwards the *Madonna d'Itria* also enjoyed a wide popularity among Latin believers throughout the whole viceroyalty of Naples and elsewhere in Italy.⁴⁰ Shrines spread everywhere: the Sicilians invoked the Virgin Hodegetria as their own *palladium* and in 1595 dedicated to her their national church in Rome;⁴¹ Naples chose her as a patron against natural disasters, and a convent was founded in 1603 to 'honour the sacred image on Tuesdays according to the rules established by St Pulcheria in Constantinople';⁴² lay confraternities were dedicated to the *Madonna di Costantinopoli* in Campania and Apulia, and the Calabrians and Sicilians took up the custom of celebrating her on Tuesdays, especially on the Tuesday after Easter, by renouncing the eating of meat, as in the usages described in the Paduan lectionary.⁴³

Above all, the Hodegetria had become an ideological model, because of its role as the supernatural defender of the imperial city. Gradually the *Itria* was transformed into one of the several *Madonnas* of post-Tridentine devotion, performing the specific role of protecting towns against various kinds of calamities, such as sieges, droughts, plagues and volcanic eruptions; it was this very precise function that brought about its popularity and which, outside Sicily and Calabria, finally became much more important than any historical reminiscence of its Byzantine origins. After the *Madonna d'Itria's* help was invoked in Naples during the famous pestilence of 1630, chapels dedicated to her were erected everywhere from Campania to the Marches near the burial place of the plague victims; elsewhere, the pastoral concerns of the Reformed clergy made use of the epithet to provide a local, paganistic cult manifestation with an official Roman Catholic stamp – as probably happened in the Sardinian shrine of *sa Itria*.

At the same time, no canonical iconography was worked out during these centuries, nor did all painters remain loyal to the ancient *aristerokratousa* type. In this respect, a curious

1845), 30, quoting the inscription: 'Virgini Odigitriae ex archetypo Constantinopolitano divi Lucae effectae olim Corone cultae demum ab eius optimatibus Messanam anno MDXXXIII. Non sine gratiarum foenore adsportatae, unico suae coloniae solatio Coronei cives'.

³⁹ D. Ambrasi, 'In margine all'immigrazione greca nell'Italia meridionale nei secoli XV e XVI. La Comunità greca di Napoli e la sua Chiesa', *Asprenas* 8 (1961), 156–85.

⁴⁰ On this point, cf. B. Cappelli, 'Iconografie bizantine della Madonna in Calabria', *BollGrott* 6 (1952), 185–206, esp. 190–5. W. von Rintelen, *Kultgeographische Studien in der Italia Byzantina. Untersuchungen über die Kulte des Erzengels Michael und der Madonna di Costantinopoli in Südtalien* (Meisenheim am Glan, 1968). C. Gelao, 'L'iconografia della Madonna di Costantinopoli in Terra di Bari. Culto confraternale e devozione', in L. Bertoldi Lenoci (ed.), *Le confraternite pugliesi in età moderna* (Fasano di Puglia, 1990), 63–90. M. Bacci, 'La Panayia Hodigitria e la Madonna di Costantinopoli', *Arte Cristiana* 84.772 (1996), 3–12. Id., *Il pennello*, 403–20.

⁴¹ G. M. Croce, *L'Arciconfraternità di S. Maria Odigitria dei Siciliani in Roma, Profilo storico (1593–1970)* (Rome, 1994).

⁴² C. d'Engenio Caracciolo, *Napoli Sacra* (Naples, 1623), 218–20. Guarna Logoteta, *Ricerche*, 34. G. Galasso, 'Napoli nel vicereame spagnolo dal 1648 al 1696', in *Storia di Napoli* III (Naples, 1976), 273–661, esp. 312. D. Sinigalliesi, 'L'iconografia della Madonna di Costantinopoli', in V. Martini and A. Braca (eds), *Angelo e Francesco Solimena. Due culture a confronto* (Naples, 1994), 63–7.

⁴³ Bacci, *Il pennello*, 406.

composition deserves to be noticed, which probably originated in the cultural contacts between the Greek and Latin communities and provides further evidence of the westerners' fascination with Byzantine traditions. Usually it depicts the half-length Virgin Mary either in an Italianate variant of the Hodegetria or in the orans pose with the Child upright; in any event, she is always shown inside a case held by two men in religious dress. Such a type is first evidenced in a late-fourteenth-century fresco in Agrigento cathedral, Sicily (Fig. 26.6), probably commissioned by a private donor, who is represented in the middle of the scene next to the Cross.⁴⁴ In the image the Virgin Mary stands erect with upheld arms and with the Child in a medallion, and she is carried by two bearded men wearing caps and odd liturgical dress, a kind of chasuble and stole. We may wonder if this latter detail was meant to suggest vaguely the appearance of Greek priests or others who served the holy icon in Constantinople; certainly similarly shaped caps are known from representations of members of the confraternity of the Hodegetria (the so-called *hodegoi*).⁴⁵

We do not know if the same design was used for the *Madonna d'Itria* painted on the external wall of the church of S. Margherita in Palermo, which the painter Tommaso de Vigilia was commissioned to copy in 1457.⁴⁶ In any case, no other examples are known from before c. 1530, when we find it again in two twin panels now in Polistena, Calabria (Plate 22, Fig. 26.7) and the Musei di Capodimonte, Naples.⁴⁷ This new image is more western in character and displays the Child upright and two old men dressed as Italo-Greek (or 'Basilian') monks, against the background of a seashore. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries this type, exported to other regions of the Neapolitan state and to the Papal territories, enjoyed widespread popularity and was often adapted to local circumstances, e.g. by substituting for the monks (the so-called *calogeri*) representatives of the Franciscan or Augustinian orders (Fig. 26.8); it is significant, however, that the original iconography was more carefully preserved in Calabria and Sicily (Fig. 26.9).

But what is the exact meaning of this iconography? The question is highly controversial, but nobody will fail to notice that the type of the Virgin orans with the Child upright is a revised Italianate variant of that with Christ in a medallion, found in Byzantine portable icons from the eighth/ninth centuries onwards and reproduced in the Agrigento fresco.⁴⁸ We may suppose that an image of this kind, brought to southern Italy by refugee communities from Greece, began to be venerated and exhibited inside a pictorial frame, as often happened in churches of the early modern era. A reminiscence of this archetype was preserved by the now lost *Madonna d'Itria*, once housed in the church of the same name in Messina, which was formerly in the hands of Greek clergy before being handed over to a Latin confraternity in 1578. As we learn from a seventeenth-century engraving (Fig. 26.10), the image showed a genuine icon with the

⁴⁴ P. Santucci, 'La produzione figurativa in Sicilia dalla fine del XII secolo alla metà del XV', in *Storia della Sicilia V* (Naples, 1981), 139–230, esp. 162–3 and Fig. 19. Santucci's dating of the fresco to the early 14th c. seems rather odd; stylistic affinities to certain scenes by the 'Master of Solomon's Judgement' in the Steri Palace, Palermo, may indicate execution in the last decades of the 14th c.

⁴⁵ See Angelidi and Papamastorakis, 'The Veneration of the Virgin Hodegetria', 379 and Pl. 213 (14th-century icon in the State Museum of the Moscow Kremlin).

⁴⁶ M. C. di Natale, *Tommaso de Vigilia* (Palermo, 1974), 20.

⁴⁷ Di Dario Guida, *Icone di Calabria*, 201.

⁴⁸ Ch. Baltoyanni, 'The Mother of God in Portable Icons', in Vassilaki, *Mother of God*, 139–53, esp. 139–41.

initials of Μήτηρ Θεοῦ being carried by two *calogeri* in a case.⁴⁹ In this way the painters managed to illustrate the association of the type with processional customs, imitating the procession of the Hodegetria which the islanders had inherited from Greek refugees: the nineteenth-century scholar Giuseppe Pitrè was still able to see and describe a solemn feast being performed on the Tuesday after Easter in Palazzolo Acreide, Sicily, when two men dressed as Greek monks carried a case containing the *Madonna d'Itria* image through the streets of the village.⁵⁰

As at Palazzolo, many local feasts of the *Madonna d'Itria* fell on the Tuesday after Easter, corresponding to the Tuesday τῆς Διακαινησίμου of the Orthodox Church. Probably this date had already played a role in Byzantine ritual life: it fell during a very solemn week, and we know that in Palaiologan times the normal weekly processions were restored only on that day, since during the previous fortnight, from Tuesday before Palm Sunday to Monday after Easter, the Hodegetria was kept inside the Imperial Palace of Blachernai.⁵¹ A new cycle in the ritual life of the icon started when it returned to its ordinary location; unequivocal evidence of such a custom is provided by one of the manuscripts with Gregory of Kykkos' text, where it is stated that the icon was to be venerated in every town and village on Tuesdays from the Διακαινησίμος week onwards.⁵² In this respect, the southern Italian celebrations of the 'Constantinopolitan Virgin' may be reminiscent of a particular annual ritual in honour of the most holy Hodegetria.

⁴⁹ T. Pugliatti, 'La "Vergine Odigitria" di Alessandro Allori. Vicenda critica e iconologia', in *Scritti in onore di Vittorio Di Paola* (Messina, 1985), 283–308. See also the revised version of this article in M. A. Pavone (ed.), *Modelli di lettura iconografica. Il panorama meridionale* (Naples, 1999), 159–76.

⁵⁰ G. Pitrè, *Spettacoli e feste popolari siciliane* (Palermo, 1881), 63–6: 'The case where the sacred image stands upright is that usually represented in every image of the Hodegetria, carried on the shoulders by two *calogeri*: the former with long beard, bald head, and an ascetically severe look, the latter with short beard, lively eyes and a passionate and gentle look. They are unknown *calogeri*; nonetheless, in Palazzolo they are nicknamed "St Sufficient" [*San Bastante*] and "St Assistant" [*Sant'Aiutante*] and in the Contea they go by the peculiar name of "Saint Go" [*Santo Va*] and "Saint Come" [*Santo Vieni*]. The entire night was devoted to a sacred merrymaking, since the procession was interspersed with lights, bonfires, rides, masquerades of both men and women and, even worse, of priests [...].'

⁵¹ Pseudo-Kodinos, *Traité des Offices*, ed. J. Verpaux (Paris, 1966), 231. Cf. Zervou Tognazzi, 'L'iconografia', 245.

⁵² Spyridakis, 'Η περιγραφή', 16: 'Οἱ ἅγιοι πατέρες, πῶς ἐστάλη ὁ ἄγγελος Κυρίου ἐν ἡμέρᾳ Τρίτῃ κομίζων τὰς ἀχειροτμήτους εἰκόνας, ἔταξαν λιτανεύειν καθ' ἑκάστην Τρίτην τὴν εἰκόνα τῆς Θεομήτορος εἰς ἴασιν τῶν Χριστιανῶν ἀπὸ τὴν Τρίτην τῆς Διακαινησίμου ἕως τῆς ἐνδεκάτης τοῦ Νοεμβρίου μηνὸς ἐν ταῖς ὁδοῖς καὶ πλατείαις τῶν πόλεων' ('As indicated by the Lord's angel who had brought the icons not cut by human hand on Tuesday, the holy Fathers prescribed for the cure of Christians the celebration of the icon of the Mother of God in the streets and squares of towns on Tuesdays from that in *Diakainesimos* week to 11 November'). The liturgical association of Tuesdays after Easter with the Holy Virgin is already evidenced in some ancient typika (11th–12th c.): cf. A. Dmitrievskii, *Opisanie liturgicheskikh rukopisei I* (Kiev, 1895), 175, 362. In present-day practice, a *theotokion* is said at vespers: see *Πεντηκοστάριον* (Rome, 1883), 30. Another important Marian feast falls on the Friday after Easter, when the Zoodochos Pege is celebrated, cf. N. Nilles, *Kalendarium Manuale utriusque Ecclesiae Orientalis et Occidentalis* (Innsbruck, 1897), 335–6. In Cyprus, a very solemn office is held on Tuesdays after Easter in honour of the miraculous icon of Machairas Monastery.



26.1 Sardinia, Gavoi, the hill of *sa Itria*.
The annual feast day (31 July).
Photograph taken in 1994 (source: author)

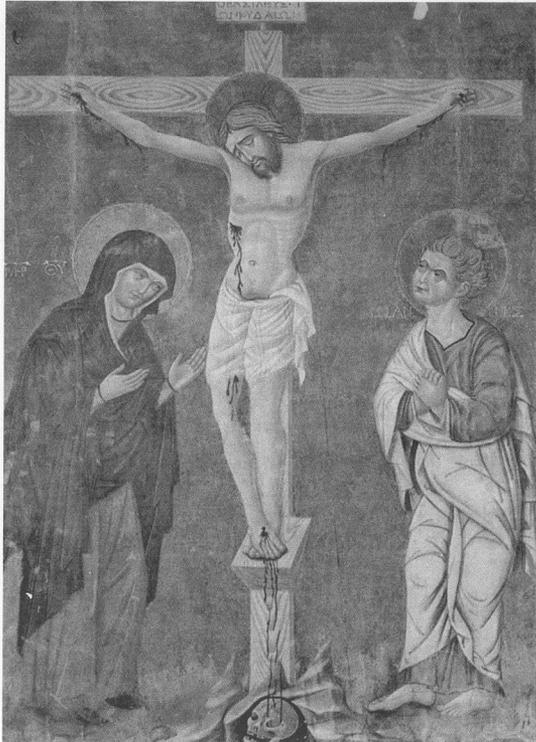


26.2 Sardinia, Gavoi, the hill of *sa Itria*.
Prehistoric menhir known as
Nostra Signora del Buon Cammino
(source: Pittau, *La Sardegna nuragica*, Fig. 66)

26.3 Rossano Calabro,
 Museo Diocesano.
 Two-sided icon of *Our
 Lady the Neodigitria*.
 The Virgin and Child
 (obverse, late 15th c.)
 (source: author)



26.4 Rossano Calabro,
 Museo Diocesano.
 Two-sided icon of *Our
 Lady the Neodigitria*.
 The Crucifixion
 (reverse) (source: author)





26.5 Padua,
Benedictine Abbey
of S. Giustina.
Icon of the *Madonna
Costantinopolitana*
(late 13th c.)
(source: after *Luca
Evangelista*, 407)



26.6 Agrigento,
Cathedral.
Fresco of the
Madonna dell'Itria
(late 14th c.)
(source: author)

26.7 Calabria,
Polistena, parish church.
Panel of the *Madonna
dell'Itria* (c. 1530)
(source: author)



26.8 Umbria,
Bugian Piccolo, parish church.
Panel of the *Madonna di
Costantinopoli*
(early 17th c.)
(source: author).





26.9 Messina, church of S. Caterina di Valverde (from the church of Santissima Trinità).
A. Riccio, *Madonna di Costantinopoli*, oil on canvas (c. 1570) (source: author)



26.10 Engraving with the icon of the *Madonna d'Itria* church in Messina (17th c.)
(source: Samperi, *Iconologia della Madre di Dio*, pl. between 491–2)