

THE FLYING *HODEGETRIA* THE MIRACULOUS ICON AS BEARER OF SACRED SPACE

by Alexei Lidov

Even now, in contemporary Orthodox churches, one may notice a significant phenomenon at the special services in front of the miraculous icons. An icon defines the structure of a particular sacred space. Modern icons as well as their Byzantine prototypes are inseparable from the spatial context established around the image. It seems important to make a clear statement that the miracle happens not inside a venerated panel but in front of the image. The icon is working as mediator, or channel of the divine energy. And the entire miracle-working process might be described as the radiation of the holy power concentrated in a selected icon and emanating through it into a particular sacred environment, which has been shaped by different means. The various arts and activities – whether architectural setting, iconic decoration, pictorial devices, chanting, dramaturgy of lighting, burning of incense, and numerous liturgical rituals – should be considered as individual elements subordinated to the creation of a sacred space. All together, including the miraculous image itself, form a unique spatial *milieu*. It is noteworthy that this particular sacred space is relevant not merely to the church environment but also to any urban or natural milieu which could be temporarily made sacred through religious processions, special performances and liturgical rites.

I have argued elsewhere that the making of sacred space might be examined as a special form of human creativity and a new subject of historical reconstruction and interpretation. This field of research, challenging our traditional approaches and requiring an innovative methodology, has been named *Hierotopy* or studies in the making of sacred space. In the present paper, keeping in mind the concept of *hierotopy*, I will attempt to examine an example of the translation of sacred space through the transfer of the miraculous icons or their replicas. I will argue that medieval people perceived as “miraculous” not just the material objects (images, relics) but the particular spatial structures which appeared around them. They in turn could be considered as the iconic patterns and influential models to be reproduced in other religious environments. Byzantine culture provides a number of examples in which the miraculous icon was functioning as

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bearer of sacred space. In the present paper, I have deliberately selected the most representative case of the *Hodegetria* of Constantinople and its Tuesday miraculous rite, which defined several basic features of the traditions of miraculous images in the East and in the West. From this point of view it might be interpreted as the most important paradigm in the the Christian miraculous realm.

The Tuesday rite with the Hodegetria of Constantinople

Among several rituals with miraculous icons in the capital of the Byzantine Empire the most important and the best known was undoubtedly the Tuesday rite with the *Hodegetria* of Constantinople.¹ It was a performance with a famous icon of the Mother of God, holding on her left hand the Christ Child. This Constantinopolitan icon was called the *Hodegetria* (in Greek: "pointing the way"). According to Byzantine tradition, the icon was painted by St. Luke the Evangelist himself and in the fifth century it was sent to Constantinople from Jerusalem as a major Christian relic.² It played a role of a palladium of the empire and was perceived as a pattern-image of the Virgin in the entire Christian world. It could be a single substitute for all other icons as one may see on the late fourteenth-century icon of "The Triumph of Orthodoxy" from the British Museum symbolically representing the victory over iconoclasm (Fig. 1).³

This most venerated *Hodegetria* icon performed a regular miracle, which happened every Tuesday on the square in front of the Hodegon monastery in the centre of the Byzantine capital, not far from the Great Palace and Hagia Sophia.⁴ Pilgrims and travellers of the eleventh to fifteenth century from various countries have informed us in detail about this miraculous performance. They have left their written records about the Tuesday rite in

¹ The historical testimonies about the *Hodegetria* of Constantinople were collected in Raymond Janin, *La géographie ecclésiastique de l'empire byzantin: Première partie, Le siège de Constantinople et le patriarcat oecuménique. Tome III, Les églises et les monastères.* (Paris, 1953), 212-214; Robert L. Wolff, "Footnote to an Incident of the Latin Occupation of Constantinople: the Church and Icon of the Hodigitria," *Traditio* 6 (1948): 319-328. For a recent discussion of the icon with references to all the main sources, see: Christina Angelidi and Titos Papamastorakis, "The Veneration of the Virgin Hodegetria and the Hodegon Monastery," in *Mother of God. Representations of the Virgin in Byzantine Art*, ed. M. Vassilaki (Athens, 2000), 373-387, esp. 378-379.

² On the authenticity of this legend, see Christopher Walter, "Iconographical Considerations," in *The Letter of the Three Patriarchs to Emperor Theophilus and Related Texts*, ed. J.A. Munitiz et al. (Camberley, 1997), lv-lvi.

³ Robin Cormack, "Icon of the Triumph of Orthodoxy," in D. Buckton, ed., *Byzantium. Treasures of Byzantine Art and Culture from British Collections*, ed. D. Buckton (London, 1994), 129-131. For a new publication with previous bibliography, see Robin Cormack, "Icon of the Triumph of Orthodoxy," in *Mother of God*, 340.

⁴ On the location of the Hodegon monastery and its probable archaeological remains, see Robert Demangel and Ernest Mamboury, *Le quartier des Manganes et la premier region de Constantinople* (Paris, 1939), 75-111.



Fig. 1. The icon of the Triumph of Orthodoxy. The British Museum, late 14th century.

Greek, Latin, Old Russian, Old Spanish, presenting different perception of the same event.⁵

There are some significant visual sources. The Tuesday miracle was depicted as one of the scenes of the Akathistos cycle, illustrating the verses of the most popular Byzantine hymn in praise of the Mother of God. From the late thirteenth century onwards the Akathistos cycle was inserted in the iconographic programs of Byzantine murals, icons and manuscripts.⁶ A characteristic example of the Akaphistos scene is provided by the icon "The Praise of the Virgin with the Akathistos cycle" from the Moscow Kremlin (Figs. 2-3), which was painted in Moscow by an outstanding Greek artist in the second half of the fourteenth century, provides a characteristic example of the im-

⁵ See the references in Angelidi and Papamastorakis, "Veneration of the Virgin Hodegetria," 373-387.

⁶ Alexandra Pätzold, *Der Akathistos-Hymnos. Die Bilderzyklen in der byzantinischen Wandmalerei des 14. Jahrhunderts* (Stuttgart, 1989). For the earliest extant example in the wall-paintings (1289-1303), see Efthalia Constantinides, *The Wall-Paintings of the Panagia Olympiotissa at Elasson in Northern Thessaly* (Athens, 1992), I: 134-177. See also, Nancy Patterson Ševčenko, "Icons in the Liturgy," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 45 (1991): 48-50.



Fig. 2. The icon of the Praise of the Virgin with the Akathistos cycle. The Dormition Cathedral of the Moscow Kremlin, second half of the 14th century.

age of the Tuesday rite.⁷ The central composition with the Virgin enthroned is framed by the scenes illustrating the Akathistos hymns. Two of them represent the procession with the *Hodegetria* in Constantinople and the Tuesday rite. Displayed symmetrically to both sides of the main image of the Virgin

⁷ *Byzantium. Balkans. Rus'. Icons of the 13th to 15th century* (exhib. cat), ed. L. Lifshits (Moscow, 1991), no 36, 223; Angelidi and Papamastorakis, "Veneration of the Virgin Hodegetria," 381.



Fig. 3. Detail. The Procession with the Hodegetria of Constantinople. A scene from the Akathistos cycle (*prooimion* II).

enthroned, they illustrate the first and the last *kontakion* of the Akathistos.⁸ The scene with the Tuesday rite (Fig. 4) to the right represents in the centre of the composition a man in red garment, bearing over his shoulders an icon of the *Hodegetria* under an umbrella. The bearer, stretching out his hands, is surrounded by clerics and lay people, male and female, raising their hands in a gesture of supplication to the icon of the Virgin.

Many more details, informing us of the peculiarities of the Tuesday rite, one may find in an individual picture of the same period – a late thirteenth-century fresco from the Blachernai monastery near Arta (Mainland Greece). This unique scene, represented on the narthex wall, is badly damaged, but a lot of

⁸ The procession scene to the left illustrates *kontakion* I (*prooimion* II), addressed to the Virgin “To you, our leader in the battle and defender...,” the Tuesday rite to the right is connected with the *kontakion* XIII (*oikos* XXIV), praising the Virgin by words “O Mother hymned by all...” For the textual tradition of the hymn, see Egon Wellesz, “The Akathistos. A Study in Byzantine Hymnography,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 9-10 (1956): 143ff.



Fig. 4. Detail. The Tuesday rite with the Hodegetria of Constantinople. A scene from the Akathistos cycle (*oikos XXIV*).

important details can be reconstructed (Fig. 5).⁹ At the core of the composition one may see the same iconographic pattern repeated in other examples. In the centre there is a figure of a person in the red vestment, who is stretching out his arms and, as it seems, bearing a huge, richly decorated *Hodegetria* icon, depicted in the air above. To the left and right of this servant of the icon a dense crowd of people is represented in the attitude of adoration. Two men in a kind of uniform walk at the head of each side of the procession. Two male figures on the left wear the same red vestment and a wide embroidered band diagonally set on the chest, similar to the decorative band of the bearer of the icon. The women following the men dominate in the scene, and some of them are holding special containers of unusual form. Two women in the fore-

⁹ Myrtali Achimastou-Potamianou, "The Byzantine Wall Paintings of Vlacherna Monastery (area of Arta)," in *Actes du XV^e Congrès international d'études byzantines, Athènes 1976* (Athens, 1981), 2: 4-14.

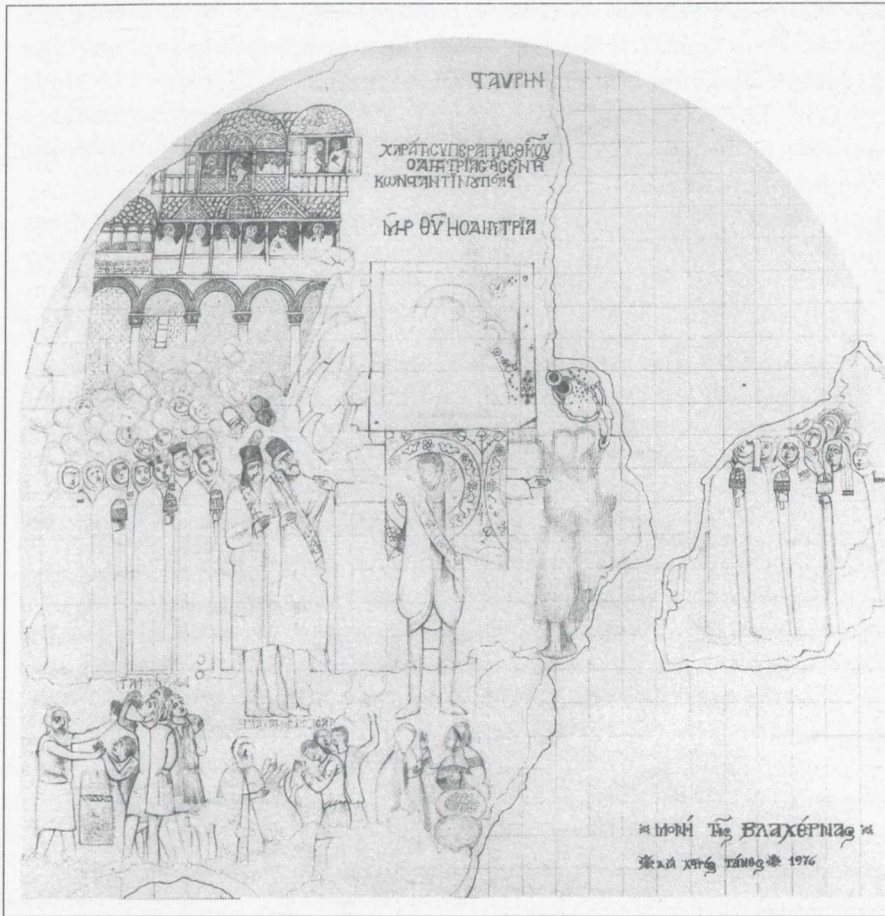


Fig. 5. The Tuesday rite with the Hodegetria of Constantinople. A reconstruction of the late 13th century fresco from the Blachernai monastery near Arta (Mainland Greece).

ground on the left side, who are wearing luxurious garments, have been identified as historical portraits of ladies belonging to the ruling family of Arta – they are, probably, participating in a particular Tuesday rite in the Byzantine capital.¹⁰ In the upper left part of the scene there is a big palace with two-storied galleries, from which numerous ladies are watching the *Hodegetria* performance. In the lower part a unique set of five market scenes have survived. They show merchants, men and women, displaying their goods in baskets and on benches. There are also men who walk, drink and talk together. Some

¹⁰ Respectively as being Anna Palaiologina, Basilisa of Arta, the cousin of the Emperor Andronikos II and wife of the Despot of Epiros, the second as being Anna's mother Eirene-Eulogia, sister of the late Emperor Michael VIII. See Myrtali Achimastou-Potamianou, "The Basilisa Anna Palaiologina of Arta and the Monastery of Vlacherna," in *Women and Byzantine Monasticism* (Athens, 1991), 43ff, figs. 9-14.

episodes are identified by concrete inscriptions indicating the character of a particular merchandise.¹¹ The whole Arta fresco is inscribed in Greek as “The Joy (*Hara*) of the most holy Virgin in Constantinople,” and below “The Mother of God. The *Hodegetria*.”¹² The solemn inscription suggests not merely a historical scene but a very important iconic image, representing the major rite of the Byzantine Empire.

In scholarly literature, some attention has been paid to the Tuesday rite with the *Hodegetria* of Constantinople.¹³ Yet a number of questions require further study. It seems essential to provide an explanation of this most important ritual of the Byzantine capital and to establish its principal symbolical meaning. One may begin with the historical reconstruction.

First of all, it should be noted that the Tuesday rite consisted of two different events. One of them was a procession through the city stopping at different churches depending on the particular day.¹⁴ According to some late Byzantine sources, the *Hodegetria* shrine and the procession with the miraculous icon on Tuesdays were established by the Empress Pulcheria in the fifth century. In the fourteenth century the tradition was already widely accepted and included in the official ecclesiastical history.¹⁵ Yet there are no historical testimonies to confirm this tradition. More probably, the procession with the *Hodegetria* appeared after the victory over iconoclasm in 843, if we are to believe the Story of Maria Romaia about a miraculous icon returned to Constantinople from Rome:

After this, the procession of the Virgin of the Hodegon having been instituted on Tuesdays, the more zealous of the Orthodox community estab-

¹¹ For the details and Greek terms, see Achimastou-Potamianou, “Byzantine Wall Paintings,” 12-13.

¹² The word *Hara* is a probable indication of the miraculous character of the event.

¹³ George Majeska, *Russian Travellers to Constantinople in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries* (Washington, 1984), 362-366; Nancy Patterson Ševčenko, “Servants of the Holy Icon,” in *Byzantine East, Latin West. Art-historical studies in honor of Kurt Weitzmann* (Princeton, 1995), 547-550. Recently Irina Shalina connected this rite with the Jerusalem procession to the Olive Mount with the celebration there on Tuesdays and a commemoration of the earthquake, possibly stopped by the St. Luke’s icon in 438-439; Irina Shalina, “Vtornichnye shestvia s ikonoi Bogomater’ Odigitria v Konstantinopole (The Tuesday processions with the Hodegetria Icon in Constantinople),” in *Vizantia i Khristianskii Vostok. Material from the Conference in Memory of Alice Bank* (St. Petersburg, 1999), 58-62; idem, “Chudotvornaia ikona Boromater’ Odigitria i ee vtornichnye khozhdenia po Konstantinopoliiu,” in *Iskusstvo khristianskogo mira* 7 (2003): 51-74.

¹⁴ Bissera V. Pentcheva, “The Activated Icon: The Hodegetria Procession and Mary’s *Eisodos*,” in *Images of the Mother of God. Perceptions of the Theotokos in Byzantium*, ed. M. Vassilaki (London, 2004) (forthcoming).

¹⁵ Nikephoros Kallistos Xanthopoulos, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, XV, 14, in *Patrologia Graeca*, ed. J. P. Migne (Paris 1844-1864), 147: 44. The historian informs us about the night service (*pannyhida*), which happened on Tuesdays at the Hodegon monastery in his time (early 14th century). An extant version of this legend one may find in the Sermon on the Hodegon monastery (14th-15th cent.); Christine Angelidi, “Un texte patriographique et édifiant: le ‘Discours narrative’ sur les Hodègoi,” *Revue des études byzantines* 52 (1994): 121, 140-141.

lished a service (*diakonia*) of brothers, and they took up this [icon with the Virgin of Rome] from the church of God, and deciding that it was right to carry it in procession along with the *Hodegetria*, in that godly and most sacred *litaneia* which takes place once a week, as was stated, they arranged for it to make the rounds of the pious churches of the saints, just as ancient tradition has determined up till now.¹⁶

According to the tenth-century *Vita* of St. Thomas of Lesbos, the icon of “the holy church of Hodegoi (which is now called the *Hodegetria*)” was “carried in procession every Tuesday very early in the morning, revered and venerated by all according to the custom.”¹⁷ A reference to a custom indirectly confirms the previous testimony of the “*Maria Romaia*” story, suggesting an early date for the *Hodegetria* procession. The rite was described in detail by Latin pilgrims of the last quarter of the eleventh century.¹⁸ Anonymous Mercati records briefly:

And with the image of the Mother of God they make procession on every Tuesday through the whole city with great honor and singing of psalms and of hymns. And indeed many of the people walk with it, men going before and women behind.¹⁹

Another rite, before the procession, took place on the market square in front of the Hodegon Monastery and is first mentioned in the twelfth-century Danish description of the *Hodegetria* rite.²⁰ Similar pilgrims’ accounts at different times indicate the strict repetition of one and the same carefully elaborated ritual of the Tuesday miracle.²¹

I think it is time to quote a written description of the Tuesday rite. Among a number of texts for this paper, I have selected the description of Pero Tafur, a Spanish traveller, who visited Constantinople in 1437. So we will

¹⁶ Patterson Ševčenko, “Servants of the Holy Icon,” 549; Ernst von Dobschütz, “*Maria Romaia*: Zwei unbekannte Texte,” *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 12 (1903): 202: 3-10; 212. The text survived in the 11th century manuscript (Paris, Bibl. Nat. gr.1474), describing the events of the 9th century

¹⁷ Paul Halsall, “Life of Thomas of Lesbos,” in *Holy Women in Byzantium. Ten Saints’ Lives in English Translation*, ed. A.-M. Talbot (Washington D.C., 1996), 311, 291-292 (on the date of the *Vita*).

¹⁸ It concerns two late 11th century Latin descriptions of Constantinople, the so-called “Anonymous Mercati” and “Anonymous Tarragonensis,” both based on unknown Greek guide-books; Krijnie Ciggaar, “Une Description de Constantinople traduite par un pelerin anglais,” *Revue des études byzantines* 34 (1976): 211-267, 249; Krijnie Ciggaar, “Une Description de Constantinople dans le Tarragonensis 55,” *Revue des études byzantines* 53 (1995): 117-140, 127.

¹⁹ Ciggaar, “Description de Constantinople,” 249.

²⁰ *De projectione Danorum in Terram Sanctam* (ch. XXVI), in *Scriptores minores historiae Danicae mediæ ævi*, ed. M. C. Gertz (Copenhagen, 1918-1920), 2: 490-491. The Danish pilgrims could visit Constantinople on the way back from Jerusalem, see Krijnie Ciggaar, *Western Travellers to Constantinople* (Leiden-New York-Köln, 1996), 113.

²¹ The whole event was perceived as a miracle. The 15th century Russian pilgrim Zosima indicates briefly: “Nearby St Sophia is the Hodegetria Monastery where the all-pure Mother of God performs a miracle every Tuesday”; Majeska, *Russian Travellers*, 182-183.

be able to see the Tuesday rite through the eyes of a lay representative of the Western world in the Renaissance period. In chapter 17 of his travels, Tafur writes about the miraculous performance with the *Hodegetria* icon:

The next day I went to the church of St. Mary, where the body of Constantine is buried. In this church is a picture of Our Lady the Virgin, made by St. Luke, and on the other side is Our Lord crucified. It is painted on stone, and with the frame and stand it weighs, they say, several hundredweight. So heavy is it as a whole that six men cannot lift it. Every Tuesday some twenty men come there, clad in long red linen draperies which cover the head like a stalking-dress. These men come of a special lineage, and by them alone can that office be filled. There is a great procession, and the men who are so clad go one by one to the picture, and he whom it is pleased with takes it up as easily as if it weighed only an ounce. The bearer then places it [the icon] on his shoulder, and they go singing out of the church to a great square, where he who carries the picture walks with it from one end to the other, and fifty times round the square. By fixing one's eyes upon the picture, it appears to be raised high above the ground and completely transfigured. When it is set down again, another comes and takes it up and puts it likewise on his shoulder, and then another, and in that manner some four or five of them pass the day. There is a market in the square on that day, and a great crowd assembles, and the clergy take cotton-wool and touch the picture and distribute it among the people who are there, and then, still in procession, they take it back to its place. While I was at Constantinople I did not miss a single day when this picture was exhibited, since it is certainly a great marvel.²²

Another detailed testimony comes to us in the mid-fourteenth-century Russian "Pilgrim Book" of Stephan of Novgorod. In all principal features it coincides with the Tafur's evidence. It seems an interesting topic to compare the perception of the same miraculous event by the representatives of two different worlds. However, this is a separate subject beyond the scope of the present paper. We may just notice here that this experienced Orthodox pilgrim emphasized the liturgical elements of the rite and its iconic imagery. He records:

The icon is very large and highly ornamented, and they sing a very beautiful chant in front of it, while all the people cry out with tears: Kyrie eleison

²² Marcos Jimenez de la Espada, *Andances e viajes de Pero Tafur por diversas partes del mundo avidos (1435-1439)* (Madrid, 1874), 174-175; Pero Tafur, *Andanças e viagens por diversas partes del mundo avidos*, ed. G. Bellini (Rome, 1986), 174-175; idem, *Travels and Adventures*, trans. M. Letts (London, 1926), 141-142. Another important Old Spanish testimony to the Tuesday rite and the view of the icon comes from Ruis Gonzáles de Clavijo, *Embajada a Tamorlán*, ed. F. Estrada (Madrid, 1943), 54; Ruis Gonzáles de Clavijo, *Embassy to Tamerlan 1403-1406*, trans. G. Le Strange (London, 1928), 84. For a better translation, see Patterson Ševčenko, "Servants of the Holy Icon," 548: "The picture is painted on the wooden board, square in shape and six palms high by the like across. The board stand support by two feet, and the painting itself is now covered over by a silver plate in which are encased numerous emeralds, sapphires, turquoises and great pearls with other precious stones. The picture is preserved in an iron chest."

[Lord have mercy]. They place [the icon] on the shoulders of one man who is standing upright, and he stretches out his arms as if [being] crucified, and then they bind up his eyes. It is terrible to see how it [the icon] pushes him this way and that around the monastery enclosure, and how forcefully it turns him about, for he does not understand where the icon is taking him. Then another takes over the same way, and then a third and fourth take over that way, and they sing a long chant with the canonarchs while the people cry with tears, "Lord have mercy." Two deacons carry the flabella in front of the icon, and others the canopy. A marvellous sight: [it takes] seven or eight people to lay [the icon] on the shoulders of one man, and by God's will he walks as if unburdened.²³

From this and other records we learn that the focal point of the rite was the reproduction each week of the miracle. It consisted of the carrying of the extremely heavy icon of the *Hodegetria*, which was placed by several people on the shoulders of one man who, then, showed himself able to carry it effortlessly. These icon-bearers in uniform red vestments were members of a special family of servants of the *Hodegetria*.²⁴ Most probably they were represented on the thirteenth-century miniature of the Hamilton Psalter (Fig. 6).²⁵ According to one source they belonged to "the tribe of Luke," in other words, they were taken as the relatives of the author of the *Hodegetria* icon – St. Luke the Evangelist.²⁶ The highest status of these icon servants was emphasized by the iconographic detail in the icon "The Triumph of Orthodoxy" mentioned above (Fig. 1): the *Hodegetria* bearers in specific red vestments with white bands have wings representing the angels.

These servants "in red" carried the icon round the market square several times, probably thereby carving out a sacred space within the square. The commercial environment, mentioned by Tafur ("there is a market in the square on that day, and a great crowd assembles") and depicted in detail in the Arta fresco, was an integral part of the "miraculous" project by the inclu-

²³ Majeska, *Russian Travellers*, 36.

²⁴ Patterson Ševčenko, "Servants of the Holy Icon," 547-550. Clavijo stressed the special status of this group: "They (the Greeks) say that to no others is it possible thus alone to lift and carry it save to this particular man (and his brothers). But this man is of a family any of whom can do so, for it pleased God to vouchsafe this power to them one and all"; *ibid.*, 548.

²⁵ Berlin, Staatliche Museen, Kupfersichkabinett, 78. A. 9 (Hamilton 119), fol. 39v. The recent discussion with the previous bibliography can be found in Nancy Patterson Ševčenko, "Miniature of the Veneration of the Virgin Hodegetria," in *Mother of God*, 388-389 (no. 54). See also Christine Havice, "The Hamilton Psalter in Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett 78. A. 9" (Ph.D. Diss., The Pennsylvania State University, 1978), 120-135.

²⁶ "Sluzhit plemia Lutsino do sego dnia (the tribe of Luke serves [the icon] to this day)." This unique testimony, most probably based on an unknown Byzantine source, may be found in the Russian chronicles of the first half of the 15th century, among them, the *Sophiiskaya I* chronicle *Polnoie Sobranie Russikh Letopisei (The Complete Collection of Russian Chronicles)* (Leningrad 1925), 5: 189-190. See also Alexei Lidov, "Miracle-Working Icons of the Mother of God," in *Mother of God*, 47-57, 53.



Fig. 6. The miniature of the Veneration of the Virgin Hodegetria in her shrine. Berlin, Staatliche Museen, Kupferstichkabinett, 78 a 9 (Hamilton 119), fol. 39v. Late 13th century.

sion of the merchants in the left-hand corner of the picture. The choice seems deliberate, the most profane place of a market square having been transformed into the most sacred.²⁷ As we remember from the Russian and Old Spanish descriptions, it has become a space of collective supplication, penitence and liturgical acclamation. From other accounts we learn that miraculous healings regularly occurred during the rite, and participants received special blessings – the clergy took small pieces of cotton-wool and touched the picture, most probably to obtain the holy oil exuded by the icon.²⁸

²⁷ The Constantinopolitan officials could easily remove the market to another square.

²⁸ Most probably the same holy oil pilgrims could get inside the shrine, as Ignatius of Smolensk mentions: "... we venerated and kissed the Hodegetria icon. We received anointing with chrisam (*pomirisimo*), and gladly were we anointed" (Majeska, *Russian Travellers*, 94-95).

However, a crucial moment of the miraculous performance was the effect of the icon “flying” in the air and moving its bearer in a circle. The extraordinary mystical character of the rite was clearly emphasized in the earliest known Latin description of the late twelfth century:

On the third day of every week the icon was moved in a circle with angelic power in full view of the crowd, as though snatched up by some kind of whirlwind. And it carried about its bearer with its own circular movement, so that because of its surprising speed it almost seemed to deceive the eyes of the spectators. Meanwhile everyone, according to their tradition, beat their breasts and cried out “Kyrie eleison, Christe eleison” [“Lord have mercy, Christ have mercy”].²⁹

How can we describe the phenomenon in general terms? In our view, the Tuesday rite of the *Hodegetria* icon might be regarded as a liturgical performance representing a miraculous appearance of the Mother of God in the actual urban space of Constantinople. It seems a very important example of Byzantine *Hierotopy*, or the making of sacred space and, in my view, could be interpreted as a kind of iconic image created in space.

The rite was considered of prime importance in Constantinople. But there is still no clear answer to the question of the central symbolic idea behind this rite. Furthermore, it is not known why the rite took place on Tuesday.³⁰ What did the people participating in this performance try to present?

In this paper I will argue that the Tuesday rite was a liturgical and iconic re-enactment of the siege of Constantinople in 626.³¹ In this year, the city was, according to tradition, saved by the intercession of the Virgin and her miracle-working icon.³² In Middle and Late Byzantine periods people regarded this siege and the miraculous deliverance of the capital by the Mother of God as a key event of great symbolic significance and a kind of pattern to be reproduced in other cases. It influenced various fields of Byzantine culture. Characteristically, it was connected with the creation of the Akathistos hymn. As the Byzantine story of the Akathistos records, after the liberation of Constantinople in 626, Patriarch Sergius conducted a ceremony of thanksgiving at the Blachernai. To the old hymn of the Virgin, usually sung at the feast of the Annunciation, he added preliminary verses with a reference to the recent events:

To you our leader in battle and defender, O Theotokos, I, your city, delivered from sufferings, ascribe hymns of victory and thanksgiving. Since you are invincible in power, free me from all kinds of dangers, that I may cry to you: Hail, Bride unwedded.³³

²⁹ *De projectione Danorum in Terram Sanctam*, ed. Gertz, 490-491.

³⁰ A regular day for the Virgin's commemoration in Byzantium was the Saturday service, beginning on the Friday vespers.

³¹ Lidov, “Miracle-Working Icons,” 50-51.

³² Jean Louis van Dieten, *Geschichte der Patriarchen von Sergios I. bis Johannes VI* (Amsterdam, 1972), 174-178.

³³ Leena Mari Peltomaa, *The Image of the Virgin Mary in the Akathistos Hymn* (Leiden-Boston-Cologne, 2001), 2-3 (Greek original and English translation), 21.

This text (*prooimion* 2) became a regular part of the Akathistos hymn. In this context one may notice that the appearance of the scene of the Tuesday miracle in the Akathistos cycle indicates that the liturgical performance and the siege of 626 were symbolically connected in Byzantine perception.

As we remember, the principal element of the Tuesday rite was the repetitive circular movement of the bearer of the *Hodegetria* icon around the market square. This finds a clear parallel in the central episode of the siege story, in which a procession went around the walls of Constantinople with a miraculous image. An icon of the Virgin was carried around the walls in subsequent sieges, and in later times this icon was identified with the *Hodegetria* of Constantinople, to whom the miraculous salvation of the city was specifically attributed.³⁴

The choice of a Tuesday for the *Hodegetria* rite could be also explained by one of the oldest accounts of the siege of 626. In the sermon of Theodore Synkellos, delivered at the first celebration in 627,³⁵ we find this important testimony of a contemporary of the event: "Like an invincible arm, he [the patriarch] bore this [icon] on all the city walls; that was on Tuesday."³⁶ Thus, Tuesday became a day for the historical commemoration of the real event and its cosmic and iconic reproduction with the *Hodegetria* rite, mystically guarding and protecting the city through the Divine strength of the icon.

One more strange and evidently very significant element of the Tuesday rite may be also connected with the earliest sermon of Theodore Synkellos.³⁷ According to written accounts and in all the depictions of the scene the icon-bearer reproduced the same specific gesture. Stephan of Novgorod informs us: "They place [the icon] on the shoulders of one man who is standing upright, and he stretches out his arms as if [being] crucified."³⁸ Thus, the scene implicitly presents an image of Crucifixion, which was depicted on the reverse of the *Hodegetria* panel, as we know from the pilgrims' accounts and from a number of copies of the *Hodegetria* icon, which had the image of Crucifixion or Christ the Man of Sorrow on the back.³⁹ An early example is the

³⁴ On this process see Bissera V. Pentcheva, "The supernatural protector of Constantinople: the Virgin and her icons in the tradition of the Avar siege," in *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 26 (2002): 2-41, esp. 22-27, 34-38. The tradition attributing the victory of 626 to the *Hodegetria* icon already existed in the 11th century.

³⁵ Ferenc Makk, *Traduction et commentaire de l'homelie ecrite probablement par Theodore le Syncelle sur le siege de Constantinople en 626*, in *Acta Universitatis de Attila Jozsef nominata, Acta antiqua et archeologica* 19, *Opuscula byz.* 3 (Szeged, 1975), 9-47, 74-96. For the English translation of some parts of this sermon, see Hans Belting, *Likeness and Presence. A History of the Image before the Era of Art* (Chicago, 1994), 495-496; Pentcheva, "Supernatural protector," 9-10 (with a reference to some new studies of the text).

³⁶ Makk, "Traduction et commentaire," 81.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ Majeska, *Russian Travellers*, 36-37.

³⁹ In 1437 Pero Tafur described the icon as follows: "In this church is a picture of Our Lady the Virgin, made by St. Luke, and on the other side is Our Lord crucified" (see supra note 18). An Armenian pilgrim (before 1434) also informs: "There is an icon painted by Luke the Evangelist,

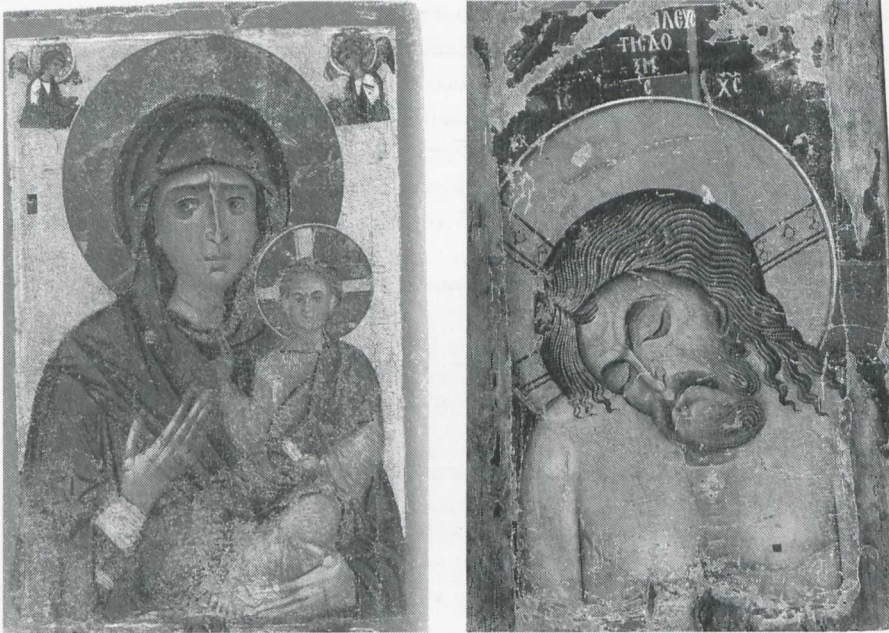


Fig. 7. The double-sided icon of the Hodegetria and of Christ as the Man of Sorrow on the back. Archaeological Museum, Kastoria (Greece), late 12th century.

late twelfth-century icon from Kastoria in Greece (Fig. 7).⁴⁰ From the thirteenth century onwards we know several double-sided icons with the Crucifixion on the back.⁴¹ Two images of the double-sided icon had to be perceived simultaneously in the dynamic liturgical context. This effect of co-ex-

on one side of which is the Mother of God, and the Saviour in her arms, and on the other side is another Christ on the cross on the right, and the Mother of God on the left"; Sebastian Brock, "A Medieval Armenian Pilgrim Description of Constantinople," in *Revue des études arméniennes* 4 (1967): 86. Greek evidence is to be found in the 15th century Gregory the Monk's "Description of the Kykkos monastery" (ca. 1422). 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"; Michele Bacci, "The Legacy of the Hodegetria: Holy Icons and Legends between East and West," in *Images of the Mother of God. Perceptions of the Theotokos in Byzantium*, ed. M. Vassilaki (London, 2004) (forthcoming).

⁴⁰ Euthymios Tsigaridas, "Two-sided icon: A. The Virgin Hodegetria. B. The Man of Sorrows," *Mother of God*, 484-485 (no. 83).

⁴¹ There are a number of icons of the Virgin with the Crucifixion on the back, dated between the 13th and 15th century. The mid-13th century double-sided icon from Sinai provides an early example, see *Sinai. The Treasures of the Monastery of Saint Catherine*, ed. K. Manafis (Athens, 1990), 119-120, figs. 58-59. The 14th century double-sided replica of the *Hodegetria* from the Achieropoietos basilica in Thessaloniki is venerated as a miraculous icon to the present day. Some icons of this type are in the collection of the Byzantine Museum in Athens, see Myrtili Acheimastou-Potamianou, *Icons of the Byzantine Museum of Athens* (Athens, 1998), 44-47 (no. 10). For a catalogue of double-sided icons, see Dimitrios Pallas, *Passion und Bestattung Christi in Byzanz. Der Ritus – das Bild*, *Miscellanea Byzantina Monacensia* 2 (Munich, 1965), 308-332.

istence of two images was particularly significant in conjunction with the character of the Tuesday miracle itself. The icon was flying and whirling in the air, so the image in front of the beholders' eyes was changing every moment and actually could be perceived as a single one.

Through the image of the Crucifixion performed by the icon bearer and depicted on the icon reverse we are able to understand the meaning of the weightlessness of the icon. Theodore Synkellos' sermon stated:

And our Moses [the patriarch] having raised in his pure hands the image [*typos*] of the only-begotten God at which the demons tremble (which, they say, is not made by human hands), – for he [the patriarch] did not need someone to support him, having crucified himself to the world [Gal. 6:14], according to the Gospel of Christ the Lord.⁴²

The Crucifixion of Christ is declared as a principal condition of the miracle, mystically presented on the walls of Constantinople during the ancient siege and later in the Tuesday rite, when a selected bearer needed no physical support in miraculously carrying a huge and extremely heavy icon of the *Hodegetria*, which is said to have moved its bearer in a circle. The images of the Virgin with Child and crucified Saviour on both sides of the icon marked the invisible borders of the mystical space, reminiscent of the major historical miracles of Christianity – the Incarnation and the Redemptive sacrifice.

The weekly Tuesday rite may well have functioned as an important supplication by the city for salvation and protection, reproducing through ritual a mystical link, continually renewed, between the townspeople and their main intercessor. The Mother of God confirmed her supernatural presence in the city's main palladium, the icon of the *Hodegetria*, with the help of a regular weekly miracle. The rite created a kind of spatial icon, or an iconic image in space, embracing the miraculous event, liturgical procession, special rituals of veneration, with the common people in attendance and the icon of the *Hodegetria* itself, representing the actual iconographic program on both sides of the panel.

The Tuesday rite, which took place in the early morning in front of the Hodegon monastery (the house of the Virgin's major icon), was intended to transfigure the profane environment of the market into an ideal image of the Divine city under the exclusive protection of the Mother of God.⁴³ With this rite the urban procession started.⁴⁴ It traversed the entire city, most probably ending up at the Blachernai church in the North-West corner of

⁴² Makk, *Traduction et commentaire*, 81; Pentcheva, "Supernatural protector," 9-10.

⁴³ For the tradition of the Virgin as the major protectress of Constantinople, see Vasiliki Limberis, *Divine Heiress. The Virgin Mary and the Creation of Christian Constantinople* (London-New York, 1994).

⁴⁴ It was one of numerous processions which regularly happened in medieval Constantinople. For a list of them, see Raymond Janin, "Les processions religieuses à Byzance," *Revue des études byzantines* 1 (1966): 69-88, 71. On the tradition, see John F. Baldovin, *The Urban Character of Christian Worship. The Origins, Development, and Meaning of Stational Liturgy* (Roma, 1987), 167-226.

Constantinople.⁴⁵ The major Byzantine church of the Virgin was located in that place with its most famous protective relic of the Virgin's Robe.⁴⁶ Along the way other miraculous icons and relics from many Constantinopolitan churches joined the procession, which probably became an enormous religious demonstration, engaging a considerable part of the Byzantine capital's population. Anonymous Tarragonensis, a late eleventh-century Latin pilgrim in Constantinople, records:

This is regarded with such great veneration in the city of Constantinople that throughout the year on every third day of the week [on Tuesdays] it is carried most respectfully through the city by priests, preceded and followed by a very great number of men and women singing the praises of the Mother of God and holding burning candles in their hands. You could observe in this procession the things which, as I have said, happen at all times on every third day of the week, the greatly varied dress of the people, and you could hear the many sweet-sounding voices not only of the clergy but also of the laity, and also that which you would find more wonderful and pleasing, women dressed in silk clothing, singing sacred songs behind the icon of the Mother of God as though they were servants following their mistress. And nearby, the voice of the psalmist, youths and maidens, the old with the young, praise the name of our Master who, born of Mary, took on flesh for our sake. And the greatest possible number of other images, holy and gilded, from other churches proceed this celebrated image of the Mother of God, as though servants attending their mistress. The icon itself follows behind the others just like their mistress and is recognized by her merciful face and gesture. Furthermore in the church in which on that day its station is kept, a festival is celebrated by the people. A gathering of the people is held there, and the glorious image is carried with honour to the church in which it keeps its station on that day and thus a mass is celebrated; when all rites have been properly performed, it is then carried back with great honour to its resting place.⁴⁷

The urban procession was a prolongation, a kind of second act, of the miraculous performance at the Hodegon square. The same servants clad in red

⁴⁵ In the year 1200 Anthony of Novgorod mentioned the procession with the *Hodegetria* to the Blachernai, see Kniga Palomnik, "Skazaniya mest svyatykh vo Tsaregrade Antonia archiepiskopa Novgorodskogo v 1200 godu," *Pravoslavny Palestinsky Sbornik* 51 (1899): 21. In a later period the *Hodegetria* was deposited in the Blachernai on the seventh week of the Lent and remained there until Easter Sunday; Angelidi and Papamastorakis, "Veneration of the Virgin Hodegetria," 385.

⁴⁶ For recent studies of the Blachernai shrine and its relics, including all the main references, see Cyril Mango, "The Origins of the Blachernai Shrine at Constantinople," in *Acta XIII Congressus Internationalis archaeologiae christianae. Split-Porec 1994. Pars II* (Vatican City, 1998), 61-76; Annemarie Weyl Carr, "Threads of Authority: the Virgin Mary's Veil in the Middle Ages," in *Robes and Honor. The Medieval World of Investiture*, ed. S. Gordon (New York, 2001), 59-93.

⁴⁷ See Ciggaar, "Description de Constantinople dans le Tarragonensis 55," 127. Bissera Pentcheva has found visual evidence of this procession in the Byzantine iconography of the Virgin's Presentation in the Temple, which was established in the 10th century – a period in which the processions with the Virgin's icons appeared in Byzantium; Pentcheva, "The Activated Icon," (forthcoming).

had the exclusive right to carry the *Hodegetria* icon through the city, as we may learn from the twelfth-century Danish account, describing both the rite and the procession:

On certain days, moreover, as they assert, it is carried from one part of the city to another, accompanied by a great crowd of both sexes carrying incense, so that the smoke of the burning incense seems to fly up high into the sky. On account of its holiness and because of reverence mixed with fear, no one who values his own life presumes to touch it with his hands, but in truth religious men, leading a solitary life, are led out of their cells so that they might carry it.⁴⁸

A visual parallel to this written testimony may be found in the fourteenth-century iconographic program of the Moscow Kremlin's icon "the Praise of the Virgin with the Akathistos cycle," which was discussed above. Two scenes of the *Hodegetria* performance, with the rite and with the procession, are framing the Akathistos cycle (the first and the last *kontakion*) as well as the central image of the Virgin enthroned (Figs. 2-4). The concept clearly reflects the inseparable symbolic unity of the *Hodegetria* performance presented by different rituals and iconic images.

In both acts of the performance the *Hodegetria* was perceived as a living being, an animated icon (in Greek: "empsychos graphe"), which was able to work miracles.⁴⁹ According to the eleventh-century testimony, at a particular moment of the Tuesday procession the image of the Virgin turned by itself to an image of Christ, aiming at the special veneration of the Son and the Lord.⁵⁰ The iconic space that was established at the Hodegon square had been transformed into a new one covering much bigger territory. Through the procession the miraculous power emanating from the *Hodegetria* icon of the Mother of God spread through the entire city, making it an enormous icon in space and bringing to the fore its status as earthly embodiment of the Heavenly Jerusalem.

⁴⁸ *De profectione Danorum in Terram Sanctam*, ed. Gertz, 490-491.

⁴⁹ For the Byzantine phenomenon of the *empsychos graphe*, see Bissera V. Pentcheva, "Rhetorical images of the Virgin. The icon of the 'usual miracle' at the Blachernai," *Res. Anthropology and Aesthetics* 38 (2000): 41-43.

⁵⁰ "I have heard, however, the tale of a certain miracle concerning that same holy image placed in the city described above. While the aforementioned image of the blessed Mother of God was being carried through the city and passed near the basilica of the Holy Savior, in the entrance of which Jesus himself is admirably depicted, the holy Mother of God, as though of her own volition, turned herself toward her son, though he who carried her image made no such effort, and the image of his mother turned herself as though she wished to see the face of her son, and wished to honour her son who made her queen of angels. Indeed I did not observe this myself, but while I stayed there I heard of it"; Ciggaar, "Description de Constantinople dans le *Taragonensis* 55," 127. The image of Christ might be identified with another most venerated miraculous icon of the Chalke Christ above the main entrance to the imperial Great Palace.

Translations of the spatial image of the Tuesday miracle

It is interesting that the Constantinopolitan rituals themselves have the status of iconographic patterns to be reproduced in other cities and regions of the Christian world. An important evidence of this practice survived in the early fourteenth-century Italian source:

The Greeks do not eat meat on Tuesdays up to now, as well as always on Tuesdays they carry that Dimitria [the *Hodegetria*] through Constantinople with a procession and great rejoicing; in honour of the Virgin Mary, icons are carried everywhere in the Greek Empire, in towns, castles and villages.⁵¹

This general statement can be confirmed by some particular examples. In the twelfth century a miraculous replica of the *Hodegetria* was venerated in Thessalonike, the second city of the Empire.⁵² According to Symeon of Thessalonike (ca. 1400), it was housed in a chapel adjacent to St. Sophia in Thessalonike. It was daily transferred for both the matins and vespers services and was placed in the centre of the church before the ambo.⁵³ As well as its prototype in Constantinople the *Hodegetria* of Thessalonike had solemn processions weekly (on Tuesdays?). Eustaphios of Thessalonike described one of these processions that took place in 1185 during the Norman siege:

For in the course of a procession, on the day when it is ordained that this beautiful ceremony should take place, she had traveled around to those places in the city which the brotherhood desired that she should visit.⁵⁴

There are no details concerning the character of this weekly rite except the mentioning of a beautiful ceremony and of the participation of a special

⁵¹ "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"; Berlin, Staatsbibliothek Preussischer Kulturbesitz, ms. lat. fol. 480, fols. 34v-35r. The text appeared in the lectionary of the Benedictine abbey of Santa Giustina in Padua, which had boasted the ownership of St. Luke's relics since the 12th century, among them the so-called "Constantinopolitan Madonna" – the 13th century icon of the Virgin and Child, which, according to tradition, had been brought to Padua from Constantinople as an original item of St. Luke. A story of the *Hodegetria* is included in the liturgical lecture for St. Luke's feast on October 18 (Berlin, Staatsbibliothek Preussischer Kulturbesitz, ms. lat. fol. 480, ff. 34^v-35^r). For an important discussion of this data, see Michele Bacci, "La 'Madonna Costantinopolitana' nell'abbazia di Santa Giustina di Padova," in *Luca Evangelista. Parola e immagine tra Oriente e Occidente*, ed. G. Mariani Canova (Padua, 2000), 405-407; idem, "The Legacy of the Hodegetria: Holy Icons and Legends between East and West," in *Images of the Mother of God* (forthcoming).

⁵² Raymond Janin, *Les églises et monastères des grandes centres byzantines* (Paris, 1975), 382-383.

⁵³ Jean Darrouzès, "Sainte-Sophie de Thessalonique d'après un rituel," *Revue des études byzantines* 14 (1976): 52-53, 58-59, 62-63, 70-72; Dimitrios Pallas, "Le ciborium hexagonal de Saint-Démétrios de Thessalonique. Essai d'interprétation," *Zograf* 10 (1979): 50-51.

⁵⁴ Eustaphios of Thessalonike, *The Capture of Thessaloniki*, trans. J. R. Melville Jones (Canberra, 1988), 142-143 (Greek text with the English translation).

brotherhood. Eustaphios of Thessalonike informs us of a particular prophetic miracle, foretelling the capture of the city by the Normans that happened very soon. At the end of the procession the *Hodegetria* icon refused to return to its shrine, stopping the bearer at the doorway of the chapel. The icon became extremely heavy and nobody could move the panel. And only after the supplication of all participants, who had received the sign, "the bearer of the sacred image was able without straining and without hindrance to bring it to its appointed place."⁵⁵ This evidence provides some indirect references to the Tuesday performance. The miracle presents a kind of inversion of a regular Constantinopolitan event when the icon became weightless. The miraculous change of the weight could be a positive or negative sign, probably, connected with the ancient topos of the weighing of sins. Of great significance seems the first reaction of some attendants to the Thessalonike miracle, which was especially indicated by the archbishop of the city: "In the beginning it was suspected that the bearer of the image had devised this on his own initiative, this being the sort of charlatantry in which many engage."⁵⁶ One may assume that Eustaphios of Thessalonike, describing the local event of 1185, kept in mind the Tuesday performance, which could take place in Thessalonike as well.

It seems significant that in Byzantine minds the *Hodegetria* rites were associated with actual and imaginary sieges, and the round procession on the city walls. The fourteenth-century *Synopsis* of John Lazaropoulos records the Turkish siege of Trebizond and the protecting procession with the *Hodegetria* Chrysokephalos – the city palladium and a miraculous replica of the Constantinopolitan prototype:

He [the emperor] entreated the Mother of God under tears and called on St. Eugenios. He worked around the walls of the city through the battlements, crying out to God and begging for his help. The archbishop of the city, clad in a bishop's holy vestment, himself carried the undefiled image of the pure Mother of God, the *Hodegetria* who guides the virtuous, carrying our lord Jesus Christ in her bosom. The abbot of the monastery carried the all-venerable head of the great Eugenios. All the priests and the outstanding among the clergy, accompanying them under prayer, cried out: "arise, O Lord, to help us! Come to deliver us and scatter our enemies, then they will melt as wax and utterly vanish from the land!"⁵⁷

The text does not make direct reference to the Constantinopolitan rite, yet it reveals the iconic imagery of the Tuesday performance that could be actualized in the real events of another city mystically associated with the sacred capital.

A clear intention to establish such links one may find in early Russian history. The Russian princess St. Euphrosinia of Polotsk, as we learn in her

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 142-143.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 142-143.

⁵⁷ Jan Olof Rosenqvist, *The Hagiographic Dossier of St Eugenios of Trebizond in Codex Athous Dionysiou 154* (Uppsala, 1996), 320-323, 432-433, 450.



Fig. 8. The icon of the Virgin of Toropets (a replica of the Virgin of Polotsk). State Russian museum, Saint Petersburg, 14th century.

twelfth-century *Vita*, introduced in Polotsk a regular Tuesday procession with a miracle-working icon of the Virgin, replicating the *Hodegetria* procession in Constantinople.⁵⁸ The icon in question was the Virgin of Ephesos, sent to the princess from Constantinople by the Emperor Manuel Komnenos and the Patriarch Luke Chrysoberges. The *Vita* of the holy princess informs us that by order of the Emperor the miraculous icon was brought from Ephesos to Constantinople, where in Hagia Sophia Patriarch Luke with the Synod of bishops blessed the icon and gave it to the Russian envoy. The historical event, unknown in other sources, could have taken place around 1159. Most probably, St. Euphrosinia received a specially consecrated twelfth-century copy of the ancient icon. The icon of the Virgin of Ephesos was regarded in Polotsk as one of the three icons originally painted by St. Luke himself, preserved in Jerusalem, Constantinople and Ephesos.

It is noteworthy that through the establishing of the Tuesday procession in Polotsk the Ephesos icon was identified with the icon of the *Hodegetria* of Constantinople, the best known of the three. In the State Russian Museum there is a fourteenth-century replica of this revered icon (Fig. 8). Stylistic

⁵⁸ Irina Shalina, "Bogomater' Efesskaia-Polotskaia-Korsunskaja-Toropetskaia: istoricheskie imena i arkhetyp chudotvornoi ikony" ("Our Lady of Ephesus, Polotsk, Chersones and Toropets. Historical Names and the Archetype of a Miracle-working Icon"), in *Chudotvornaja ikona v Vizantii i Drevnei Rusi* (*The Miracle-working Icon in Byzantium and Old Rus'*), ed. A. Lidov (Moscow, 1996), 200-209, 543.

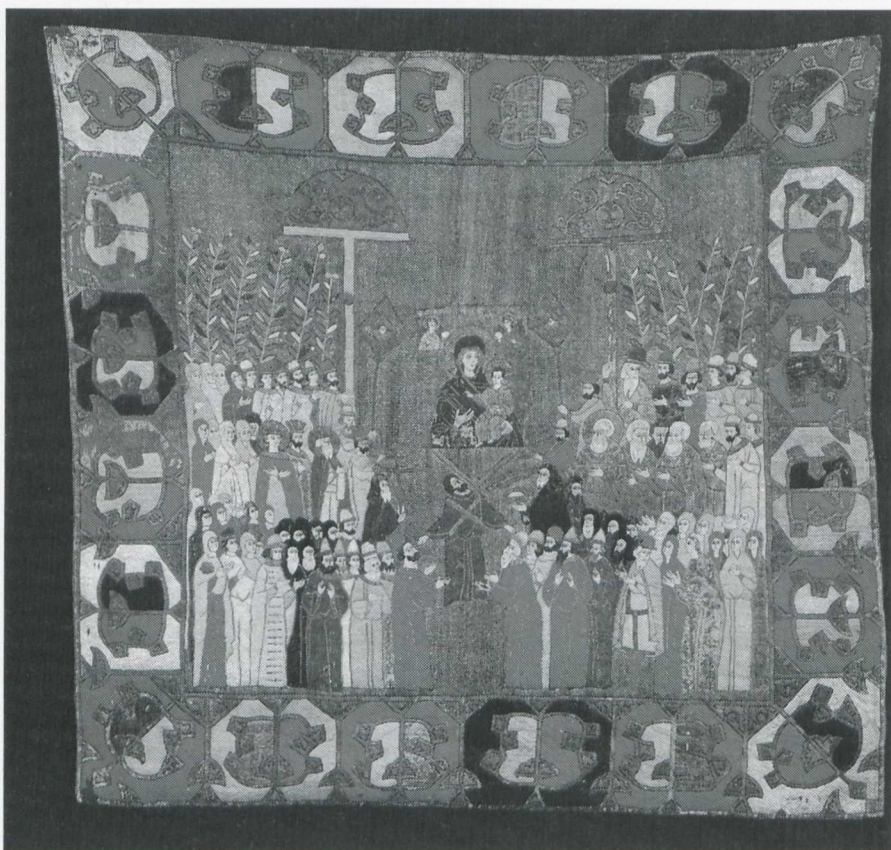


Fig. 9. The embroidered icon (*podea*) with the Tuesday rite of the *Hodegetria*. State History Museum, Moscow, 1498.

analysis of the image allows us to see preserved in its multi-layered structure some traces of the twelfth-century Byzantine icon sent to Polotsk and an even older prototype from Ephesos. The reproduction of the liturgical performance of the Constantinopolitan icon had extremely important implications. With the help of the procession with the miraculous icon, the urban environment of Polotsk was likened to the sacred space of the Byzantine capital. The mediaeval Russian town became a mystical replication of the sacral model, acquiring the features of the iconic image of Constantinople as the second Rome and New Jerusalem. It seems quite likely that not only the Tuesday procession, but also the weekly miracle were recreated. Confirmation of this assumption can be found in a representation on a Moscow embroidered icon of 1498 (Fig. 9).⁵⁹ It is the so-called *podea* in Greek, or *podvesnaia pelena* in Old Russian (cloth-hanging beneath the icon), which, most probably, was created in the Kremlin workshop of the grand princess

⁵⁹ *Medieval Pictorial Embroidery. Byzantium, Balkans, Russia* (exhib. cat.) (Moscow, 1991), 60-61, no 17.

Helena Voloshanka.⁶⁰ It shows not merely a procession but the Tuesday miraculous performance of the *Hodegetria* icon. In the centre, as in all other depictions of this miracle, there is the most significant image of the icon bearer, stretching out his hands and carrying the icon effortlessly. Some servants in the red garments appear around the bearer. The rite is taking place, however, not in Constantinople, already captured by the Turks by that date, but in Moscow in the presence of recognizable members of the princely family and of the Russian Church. The three men in the crown-shaped caps have been identified with the Grand Prince Ivan the Third, his son Vassili and his young grandson Dimitri.⁶¹ However, only two, Prince Ivan and his grandson, are depicted with a nimbus – a sign of royal dignity. This peculiar detail and the remarkable authenticity in the depiction of the Moscow scene has made possible a fairly accurate dating of the textile.⁶² The iconography suggests not merely a Moscovite practice of the Tuesday rite, but also an important historical event associated with it (according to a new interpretation it could be the ceremony of the coronation of the grandson Dimitri in 1498).⁶³

This embroidery was most likely made for the icon of the *Hodegetria* in the Moscow Kremlin, a miracle-working copy of that from Constantinople (Fig. 10).⁶⁴ It was one of two precise and, probably, specifically consecrated copies, which were sent by the bishop Dionisi of Suzdal to Rus' from the Byzantine capital in 1381 – a fact recorded as a great event by Russian chronicles.⁶⁵ That fourteenth-century miraculous replica was badly damaged in the conflagration of 1482, as the chronicle relates:

The icon of *Hodegetria* burnt in Moscow in the stone Church of the Ascension of Our Lord, a miracle-working image of Our Lady of Greek painting. It was made in the same dimensions as the miraculous icon in Constantino-

⁶⁰ On the function of *podea*, see Anatole Frolow, "La Podea: un tissu decoratif de l'église Byzantine," *Byzantion* 13 (1938): 461-504. Helena Voloshanka was a daughter of the ruler of Moldavia; her background, explains the Balkan characteristics of the embroidery.

⁶¹ Maria V. Schepkina, "Izobrazhenie russkikh istoricheskikh liz v shit'e XV veka" ("The images of Russian historical personalities in the 15th century embroidery"), in *Trudy Gosudarstvennogo Istoricheskogo Museia (The papers of the State History Museum)* 12 (Moscow, 1954). Schepkina identified some female figures participating in the rite, among them the wife of Ivan the Third – the Byzantine princess Sophia.

⁶² In 1498 the coronation of the grandson Dimitry took place while the son Vassili was put aside.

⁶³ Lilia Evseeva, "Broderie du 1498 et la ceremonie de couronnement," in *Drevnerusskoie iskusstvo. Vizantia i Rus'. K stoletiu A. N. Grabara* (St. Petersburg, 1999), 430-438.

⁶⁴ Engelina Smirnova, *Moscow Icons of 14th to 17th Century* (Leningrad, 1988), 287-288, fig. 134; *The Miraculous Image. The Icons of Our Lady in the Tretyakov Gallery*, ed. A. Lidov, G. Sidorenko (Moscow, 1999); *Christian Relics in the Moscow Kremlin*, ed. A. Lidov (Moscow 2000), cat. no. 86, 260, 267. It was a processional double-sided icon with an image on the back, which did not survive.

⁶⁵ Mikhail Priselkov, *Troitskaia letopis'. Rekonstruktsia teksta* (Moscow, 1950), 421-422. Two replicas were ordered for the cathedrals in Suzdal and in Nizhni Novgorod. The bishop Dionisi had a special mission in Constantinople supported by the Patriarch Nilos he was collecting the most important relics for his principdom.



Fig. 10. The precise replica of the *Hodegetria* of Constantinople. The Byzantine panel of the 14th century, repainted by the icon painter Dionisi in 1482. State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.

ple which did leave its abode for the sea side on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. The fire destroyed the painting and the case alone, while the board survived, and on this board Dionysi the icon-painter had recreated the same image.⁶⁶

This panel has survived to present day in the collection of the Tretyakov Gallery at Moscow, which houses the best documented miraculous replica of the *Hodegetria* of Constantinople, while the original icon had been demolished at the capture of Constantinople in 1453.⁶⁷ The replica was venerated as an “original” real *Hodegetria* in the Ascension Convent of the Moscow Kremlin. The icon led the liturgical processions on June 23, August 26, May 21 and October 22 in which the patriarchs and the Russian tsars took place.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ *Polnoie Sobranie Russikh Letopisei (The Complete Collection of Russian Chronicles)*, 6: 235. An addition “on Wednesdays” remains unclear, without support from any other sources.

⁶⁷ There is a precise testimony of a contemporary Byzantine historian Doukas confirming that the janissaries “broke the icon in four parts”: Doukas, ed. I. Bekker (Bonn, 1834), 272, 288.

⁶⁸ There is a detailed description of these processions, called “bolshoi krestnyi khod,” in the “Story of actual rituals” of 1622 (see reference below). At the beginning of the procession, in front of the Ascension convent, the patriarch censed the *Hodegetria* icon and the tsar venerated it by kissing. The status of the *Hodegetria* was comparable with the Virgin of Vladimir, a palladium of

Most probably, the miraculous replica appeared in Moscow in the early fifteenth century. In my opinion, the image of the Tuesday rite represented in the embroidered icon, hanging beneath the miraculous copy of the *Hodegetria*, suggests that the most important Constantinopolitan performance could be reproduced in Moscow, claiming its exclusive right for the Byzantine heritage at that time.

It made particular sense after the fall of Constantinople in 1453, when the destruction of the major Orthodox icon and of its protective rite certainly bothered the minds of the Eastern Christian world. Unfortunately, there is no written testimony to the Tuesday performance in Moscow. Possibly, it did exist for a short time in the second half of the fifteenth century. One may notice in this connection that the Byzantine *hierotopic* models were very powerful in Russia after the collapse of the Empire in 1453. The highly developed forms of the "liturgical performances" constituted a very important characteristic of Russian cultural milieu in the sixteenth and seventeenth century, when we find a carefully elaborated system of urban processions and other rituals with various miracle-working icons and relics. The seventeenth-century icon of "The Meeting of the Virgin of Vladimir" gives us a visual testimony of these liturgical performances (Fig. 13).⁶⁹ Against the fabulous background of the Moscow Kremlin a vast procession comes out of the city gate to meet the miraculous icon coming from Vladimir (in the occasion of Tamerlane's siege of 1395). It is carrying a processional cross and the icon with the Kremlin *Hodegetria*. A comparison with Byzantine images, for instance the fourteenth-century fresco of "The Veneration of the *Hodegetria*" from the Markov monastery in Macedonia (Fig. 12), demonstrates the presence in the Moscow scene of a well-established model as well as numerous original features borrowed from the local tradition. Some of them were described in detail in the so-called *chinovniki*, or the ceremonials of the Russian cathedrals.⁷⁰ Analysing the "iconographic" structure of these rites, one may find both ancient Byzantine prototypes and important innovations defined by the Russian environment and particular historical circumstances.

The seventeenth-century Russian icon with a liturgical procession points to the great role of the *podea* hanging under the central icon with the Virgin of Vladimir. An additional argument, elucidating the true relationship of the embroidery of 1498 to the Tuesday performance can be found in the reconstruction of an original view of the Kremlin *Hodegetria*. An early twentieth-century photograph of another Russian miraculous icon gives us an idea of

the country, which played a great role in the same processions. Another important celebration of the Moscow *Hodegetria* happened on the first Sunday of the Lent at the feast of the Triumph of the Orthodoxy; Liudmila Schennikova, "The Miracle-Working Icons of the Moscow Kremlin," in *Christian Relics in the Moscow Kremlin*, 240-241, 264-265 (with the main references to the sources).

⁶⁹ *The Miraculous Image. The Icons of Our Lady in the Tretyakov Gallery*, no 18, pp. 40-41.

⁷⁰ Alexander P. Golubtsov, *Chinovniki moskovskogo Uspenskogo sobora i vykhody patriarkha Nikona (The Ceremonials of the Dormition Cathedral in Moscow)* (Moscow, 1908).



Fig. 11. The complete set of the original decoration of the miraculous icon "The Virgin of Georgia" from Suzdal, 16th century. A photo of early 20th century.

the original view of the Kremlin *Hodegetria* (Fig. 11).⁷¹ The image of the Virgin on the panel, covered by several veils and precious decoration, is almost invisible.⁷² It means that for the viewer the image of the Tuesday rite in the embroidery, hanging beneath the icon, became the principal pictorial device. It was a message indicating the role of the icon in the making of sacred space. This is one more proof that the spatial environment around the icon has been perceived as an inseparable part of the miraculous image more important than its actual iconographic device.

The *Hodegetria* project in Moscow was intended to actualize and visualize

⁷¹ It is the 16th century icon of the Virgin of Georgia from the Pokrov monastery in Suzdal. A complete set of the icon decoration, commissioned by the queen Maria Temriukovna, the wife of Ivan the Terrible, was still extant at the beginning of the last century. At the present time none of the Old Russian icons survived the original ornamentation *in situ*. After the revolution all the elements either disappeared or were dispersed in various museum collections of applied arts.

⁷² For the Byzantine tradition of the icon veils, see Valerie Nunn, "The Encheirion as adjunct to the Icon in the Middle Byzantine Period," *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 10 (1986): 73-102. The author has published some Byzantine epigrams in English translation, concerning the upper veils (*encheiria*), donated to the *Hodegetria* of Constantinople, *ibid.*, 91, 96, 99-101. The system of precious decoration of early medieval Russian icons has been recently analysed by Irina Sterligova, *Dragotsennyi ubor drevnerusskikh ikon XI-XIV vekov/The Precious Decorations of Old Russian Icons from the 11th to 14th Centuries* (Moscow, 2000).

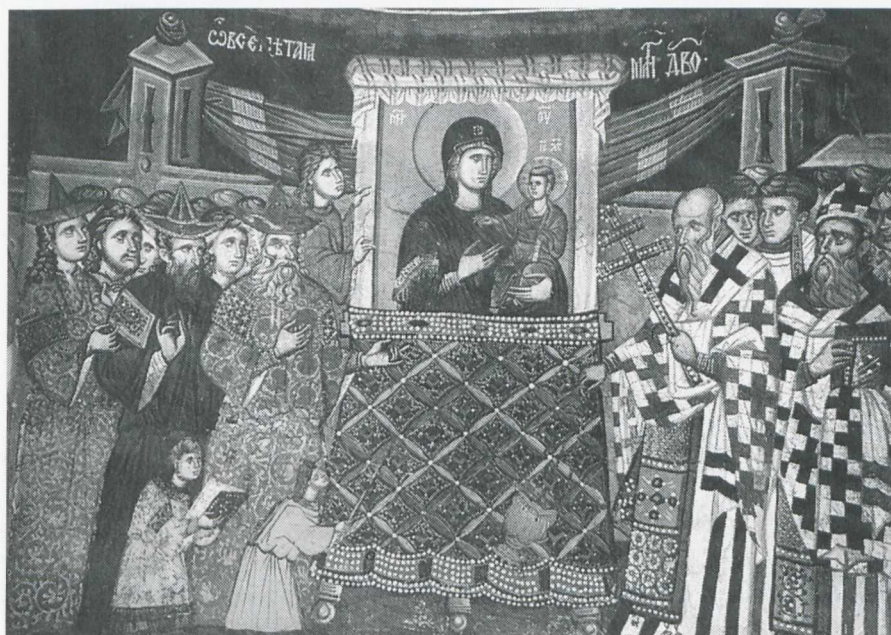


Fig. 12. The Veneration of the Hodegetria. A fresco of the Markov monastery, Macedonia, 14th century.

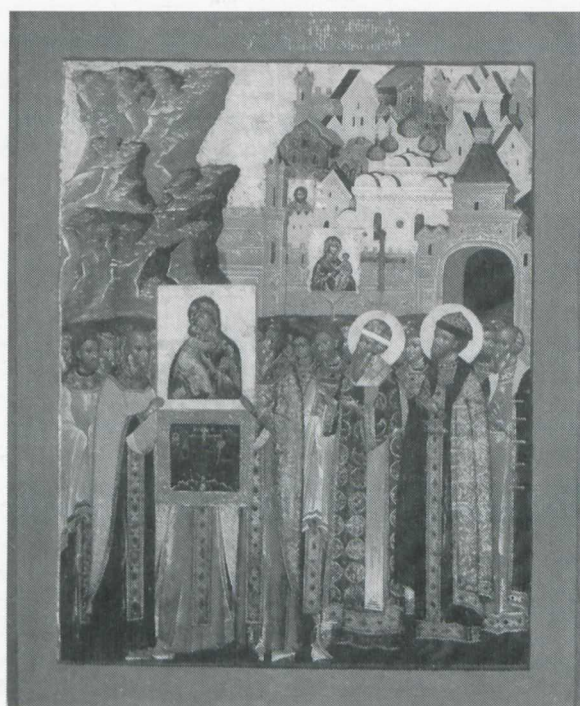


Fig. 13. The Meeting of the Virgin of Vladimir. A Russian icon, 17th century. State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.

the Virgin's growing protection in space and time of the new Orthodox capital, seeking the glory and highest spiritual status of Constantinople as the lost Second Rome and the earthly embodiment of the Heavenly Jerusalem. The miraculous "icon in space" was one of very few forms adequate to realize this ambitious concept in any proper way.

A separate topic is a reflection of the Tuesday performance in medieval and Renaissance Italy. The cult of the *Hodegetria* of Constantinople was known in Italy as early as in the eleventh century, in the same period when we have the proper evidence from the Byzantine capital itself.⁷³ One of the miraculous replicas was the image venerated in the monastery of Santa Maria del Patir near Rossano in Calabria, founded by the Italo-Greek monk Bartholomew of Simeri, who received a copy of the *Hodegetria* from the Emperor Alexios Komnenos.⁷⁴ The early twelfth-century documents mention it as the Rossano *Odigitria*, or *Neodigitria* (the New *Hodegetria*). The Neodigitria was, probably, an exact copy of its Constantinopolitan archetype, as one may judge from the extant fifteenth-century copy.⁷⁵ It was a double-sided icon with the Crucifixion on the back – a fact clearly indicating the processional usage of the Rossano icon.

The Tuesday performance was well known in medieval Italy. One may find an interesting account in the early fourteenth-century Lectionary of the Benedictine abbey of Santa Giustina in Padua, which, among other relics of St. Luke, housed a miraculous replica of the *Hodegetria*, the so-called "Madonna di Costantinopoli." A story, included in the liturgical lecture of St. Luke's feast on October 18th, gives us a unique legend about the origin of the Tuesday performance.⁷⁶ It is quite clear from the text that the Tuesday rite of Constantinople was already widely known at that time and was perceived as a kind of pattern to be reproduced everywhere.

The cult of the *Hodegetria* grew up after the fall of Constantinople in 1453. The numerous replicas, often named *Madonna dell'Itria* (from the *Hodegetria*) or *Madonna di Costantinopoli*, appeared in various regions of Italy in the fif-

⁷³ For the *Hodegetria* cult in Italy, see the stimulating studies by Michele Bacci, "La Panayia Hodigitria e la Madonna di Costantinopoli," *Arte Cristiana* 84 (1996): 3-12. See also the chapter "L'eredità della Hodegetria: la Madonna di Costantinopoli nel Meridione d'Italia," in idem, *Il pennello dell'evangelista. Storia della immagini sacre attribuite a san Luca* (Pisa, 1998), 403-420.

⁷⁴ Walther Holtzmann, "Die älteste Urkunden des Klosters S. Maria del Patir," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 26 (1926): 238-330.

⁷⁵ See Bacci, "The Legacy of the *Hodegetria*" (forthcoming).

⁷⁶ The story is as follows: 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. One day, which was a Tuesday, the Emperor Julian the Apostate ordered to burn all the icons in Constantinople, but one of them, displaying the Mother of God, miraculously jumped out of the fire and ran away over the sea waves. The people of Constantinople was astonished at seeing that Julian's soldiers could not reach and strike it; then a pious woman, speaking on behalf of all the believers, promised that they would have abstained from meat every Tuesday if God would save that holy *Dimitria*. Such a vow was immediately fulfilled: the icon jumped into the woman's arms and that miracle was subsequently celebrated, in Constantinople and in the whole Empire, by means of a solemn procession on Tuesdays; *ibid.* See note 51.

teenth and sixteenth century, especially in the South.⁷⁷ According to a widespread legend, the *Hodegetria* of Constantinople had been miraculously saved and then transferred from the captured Constantinople to a particular place in Italy. Several towns claimed to have an authentic item.⁷⁸ An important role in this process was played by the refugee communities from the Balkans. For example, a group of refugees from Albania in a little village of Molise – Portocannone since 1468 venerated there “Our Lady of Constantinople” and celebrated her feast on Tuesdays after Pentecost.⁷⁹ The lay confraternities of the *Madonna di Costantinopoli* in Campania and Apulia, Calabria and Sicilia developed the tradition of celebrating their patron image on Tuesdays after Easter.⁸⁰

There is some evidence of the imitation of the procession with the *Hodegetria*, which was sometimes inherited from the Greek refugees. In the nineteenth century a solemn rite was still performed on Tuesdays after Easter in Palazzolo Acreide, Sicily, where two men dressed as Greek monks used to carry on their shoulders a case with the *Madonna dell'Itria*, replicating on the streets of this village a great rite of the Byzantine capital.⁸¹ In Naples a special convent was founded in 1603 in order to “venerate the sacred image on Tuesdays according to the rules established by St. Pulcheria in Constantinople.”⁸² In the modern period one of the most famous replicas of the *Hodegetria* was the *Madonna di Costantinopoli* in Bari, a cult rooted in the eleventh century when the *Hodegetria* image appeared on the seals of the Bari bishops.⁸³ A modern apocrypha on the Translation of the *Hodegetria* to Bari, based on various medieval sources, records that the monks who brought the *Hodegetria* received permission of the bishop of Bari to sing the hymns in praise of the Virgin every Tuesday, as they did previously in Constantinople.⁸⁴ It is noteworthy in this context, that some Italian images reflected the iconography of the Tues-

⁷⁷ Wolfgang von Rintelen, *Kultgeographische Studien in der Italia Byzantina. Untersuchungen über die Kulte des Erzengels Michael und der Madonna di Costantinopoli in Süditalien* (Meisenheim am Glan, 1968).

⁷⁸ Bacci, “La Panayia Hodigitria e la Madonna di Costantinopoli,” 8.

⁷⁹ M. Flocco, *Studio su Portocannone e gli Albanesi in Italia* (Foggia, 1985), 108-109.

⁸⁰ Bacci, *Il pennello dell'Evangelista*, 406.

⁸¹ Giuseppe Pitrè, *Spettacoli e feste popolari siciliane* (Palermo, 1881), 63-66: “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 “St. Go” [*Santo Va*] and “St. 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 (...).” See also, Bacci, “The Legacy of the *Hodegetria*,” (forthcoming).

⁸² *Ibid.* See also Cesare d’Engenio Caracciolo, *Napoli Sacra* (Napoli, 1624), 218-220; D. Sinigalliesi, “L’iconografia della Madonna di Costantinopoli,” in *Angelo e Francesco Solimena. Due culture a confronto*, ed. V. Martini and A. Braca (Naples, 1994), 63-67.

⁸³ *L’Odegitria della cattedrale. Storia, arte, culto*, ed. N. Bux (Bari, 1995), 11-23.

⁸⁴ Michele Garruba, *Eoniade della translazione della miracolosa immagine di Maria SS. Di Costantinopoli nella città di Bari celebrata in questa Cattedrale nel primo martedì di marzo dell’anno 1836* (Bari, 1846), 67.

day performance. In San Benedetto Ullano in Cosenza one may find a relief representation of a man carrying the *Hodegetria* icon according to the renowned Constantinopolitan rite of the circle movement on the square.⁸⁵

The Italian accounts convincingly demonstrate not merely a good knowledge of the Tuesday rite but a deliberate maintenance of the Byzantine tradition of the *Hodegetria* supported by some “historical” references. I have mentioned just a few examples; the topic deserves much more detailed studies by scholars of the medieval, Renaissance and modern Italy.⁸⁶ Yet, in our context it is very important to make a clear statement that the Tuesday performance and some elements of Constantinopolitan *Hierotopy* were adopted in the Italian “miraculous” realm, as also happened in medieval Russia and other parts of the Orthodox world.

Conclusion

In this paper I have tried to argue that the miraculous image was not merely a panel or any kind of material picture but the bearer of sacred space. The spatial imagery which appeared around a miracle-working item could be transferred to other environments as happened with the holy objects. In this way a mystical link between geographically distant areas was established, they were included in the Christian iconic whole and the hierarchy of sacred spaces rooted in the Holy Land and Constantinople perceived as the New Jerusalem – a venerated place of the Second Coming.⁸⁷ The “spatial icons” played the roles of vehicles of divine energy radiating from the most sacred centres. I attempted to present a historical reconstruction of a very powerful but up to recently almost neglected “spatial icon” – the Tuesday miraculous performance with the *Hodegetria* of Constantinople.⁸⁸ This sophisticated project was, probably, created in the twelfth century by unknown genius authors who could use, as a kind of scenario, the Sermon of Theodoros Synkellos on the miraculous deliverance of Constantinople at the siege of 626. The creators of the Tuesday performance did not mean to present a historical drama reconstructing a particular event, but they used the paradigm story of 626 to make an iconic re-enactment of the Virgin’s appearance and miraculous protection over the city. This cosmic image of salvation included different layers of time which interacted in the single whole: the eternal presence of the heavenly beings, the

⁸⁵ E. Tavoloso, *San Benedetto Ullano* (Grottaferrata, 1956), 38-42.

⁸⁶ In this connection I would like to draw attention to an important study by Gervase Rosser and Jane Garnett, “A miracle-working Orthodox icon in Italy: comparative image cults in East and West,” in *Eastern Christian Relics*, ed. A. Lidov (Moscow, 2003), 351-357.

⁸⁷ Some intriguing aspects of the topic have been recently discussed by Gerhard Wolf, “The Holy Face and the Holy Feet: preliminary reflections before the Novgorod Mandylion,” in *Eastern Christian Relics*, ed. Lidov, 281-288.

⁸⁸ To the best of my knowledge, this most important phenomenon, which considerably influenced the spiritual life of Constantinople, has been never included in the general histories of Byzantium, or in any surveys of Byzantine culture and art.

evangelic history, the model event of 626 as well as the actual time of the Tuesday performance whenever it happened in Constantinople from the twelfth to the fifteenth century, or later in other parts of the Christian world.

The Tuesday rite and procession were part of an elaborate system of rituals with miracle-working icons in Constantinople itself and other East Christian cities. What we have here is a special type of Byzantine creativity, that I term *Hierotopy*. Like image making and other cultural forms, it underwent historical changes and should be analysed as a kind of cultural and art-historical document, long neglected. The network of ritual with images in space needs to be considered as a separate topic of research. We may suppose that for the Byzantines it was one of the most important forms of their spiritual life, when the most sacred values were open to everyone, and divine energy consecrated everyday life and the usually profane urban environment.

The Tuesday miraculous performance with the *Hodegetria* of Constantinople is just one characteristic example among several different models of Byzantine *Hierotopy*.⁸⁹ I have attempted to demonstrate not merely theoretical statements but an opportunity to use the *Hierotopic* vision and approach for concrete studies in Byzantine art and cultural history. All together these studies may reveal a new layer of subjects never discussed before in the history of Byzantine art and elucidated quite recently in conjunction with the concept of *Hierotopy*. It concerns the iconic images created in space, or in more traditional art-historical terms, one may speak about the "iconography" beyond the pictorial schemes. The combination of some images in the church, or one image in the ritual context, could create another iconic image, which was not depicted but represented in a given sacred space between or around actual pictures. It is connected with an important and challenging statement: in Byzantine minds the icon was not merely an object and a flat picture on panel or wall but a spatial vision emanating from the depiction into the environment in front of it.

So the images in space could be perceived by the medieval beholder as legitimate and recognizable icons though they were performed beyond the material objects. This spatial imagery could not be formalized as a kind of illustration of any particular text, at the same time it included a range of symbolic connotations which co-existed in the changing dynamic context of the sacred performance in space. The traditional methodology of iconographic studies, based on the principle of "text-illustration," has not taken account of this spatial imagery.⁹⁰ However, in the realm of Byzantine culture, these "spa-

⁸⁹ Some other models have been recently studied by Alexei Lidov, "The Miracle of Reproduction. The Mandylion and Keramion as a paradigm of sacred space," in *Immagine di Cristo da Van Eyck a Bernini*, ed. C. Frommel, G. Morello and G. Wolf (Rome, 2004) (forthcoming); idem, "Leo the Wise and the miraculous icons in Hagia Sophia," in *Heroes of Orthodoxy: New Saints of the Eighth to Sixteenth Centuries*, ed. K. Crysohoidis and E. Kountoura (Athens, 2004) (forthcoming).

⁹⁰ On this methodological issue, see Alexei Lidov, "Heavenly Jerusalem. The Byzantine Approach," in *The Real and Ideal Jerusalem in Jewish, Christian and Islamic Art*, ed. B. Kuehnel (Jerusalem, 1998), 341-353, esp. 353.

tial icons" played a crucial role and often determined both the general structure of symbolic and artistic projects as well as a great deal of concrete pictorial details. So we may get a very important and unexplored source of historical information. The development of this approach requires new methods and terminology that should be elaborated in the research field of *Hierotopy*. From this point of view, the present paper may be regarded as an attempt to establish a bridge between contemporary art history and future studies in the making of sacred space.