

A miraculous icon of Virgin Hodegetria with twelve Great Feast scenes (third quarter of the fourteenth century) from Nessebur, Bulgaria

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In this article a miraculous icon of the Virgin Hodegetria with twelve Great Feast (Dodekaorton) scenes (third quarter of the fourteenth c.) in the church of the Dormition of the Virgin in Nessebur (Mesembria) in Bulgaria is presented. The icon, which belongs to the category of inlaid icons, bears a silver re-vestment (eighteenth–nineteenth c.). The iconography, as well as the style and the technique of painting, seems closely related to the Palaeologan icons of the second and mainly the third quarter of the fourteenth century. This allows us to suppose that the main icon, as well as the framing icon, are works of anonymous painters, probably from a painting workshop of Constantinople or a local one, influenced or formed in the Byzantine capital.

Keywords: icon, fourteenth century, Virgin Hodegetria, Great Feast scenes, Nessebur, Black Sea

A miraculous icon of the Virgin Hodegetria with twelve Great Feast (Dodekaorton) scenes (third quarter of the fourteenth c.),¹ exhibited in the church of the Dormition of the Virgin in Nessebur, Bulgaria, is presented in this article (fig. 1, 10).

Nessebur (Μεσημβρία / Mesembria or Mesimvria), one of the oldest centers of Christianity on the Black Sea coast, was a seat of the same name of the Metropolis of Mesembria of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople. The town was known for its many churches and monasteries, most of which date from the Byzantine period.² There are also numerous ones from

the Post-Byzantine period,³ which have preserved valuable treasures of ecclesiastical art.

The church of the Dormition of the Virgin,⁴ initially called the Virgin Chrysomagouriotissa (Χρυσομαγκουριώτισσα),⁵ is the only still active church in Nessebur. It was built in 1855 on the site of a destroyed older church. Its construction started in 1856, in the time of the metropolitan of Mesembria Nicephorus (1846–1867),⁶ and was funded by the Greek merchant and banker Alexandros Koumbaris (†1861),⁷ who was born in Mesembria,

³ A. Vasiliev, *Ťsŭrkvi ot po-novo vreme v Nesebŭr i Sozopol*, *Izvestiia na Narodniia muzei – Burgas* 1 (1950) 53–63; G. Gerov, *Klasifitsirashto napravlenie v balkanskoto izkustvo ot XVI vek. Stenopisite ot Novata mitropoliiia v Nesebŭr*, *PI* 2 (1991) 21–31; idem, *Novi dannii za tsŭrkvata „Sv. Stefan“ (Novata mitropoliiia) v Nesebŭr*, in: *Bŭlgariia v svetovnoto kulturno nasledstvo*, ed. M. M. Stancheva, Shumen 2014, 701–727.

⁴ For general information about the church of the Dormition of the Virgin in Nessebur v. Κωνσταντινίδης, *Η Μεσημβρία*, 151; K. Irechek, *Pŭtuvaniia po Bŭlgariia*, Sofia 1974, 865; F. Kanits, *Dunavska Bŭlgariia i Balkanŭt. Istorichsko-geografsko-etnografski pŭtepisni prouchvaniia ot 1860 do 1879 g.* III, Sofia 1998, 167; S. Raichevski, *Kraibrezhna Stara planina. Toponimi i khidronimi*, Sofia 2007, 476–477; Radoinova, *Gŭrtsite*, 157; I. Vanev, N. Ťsvetkova, *Ot tsŭrkvata do muzeia. Po pŭtia na nesebŭrskite ikoni*, *PI* 2 (2011) 21.

⁵ For general information about the church of the Virgin Chrysomagouriotissa in Mesembria v. Κωνσταντινίδης, *Η Μεσημβρία*, 151; K. A. Βακαλόπουλος, *Ιστορία του βορείου Ελληνισμού. Θράκη, Θεσσαλονίκη* 2000, 471.

⁶ Κωνσταντινίδης, *Η Μεσημβρία*, 141; Αρχιμ. Θ. Φιλίππαιος, *Εκκλησίας Κωνσταντινουπόλεως. Επισκοπαί και επίσκοποι (1833–1960)*, *Θεολογία* 32/1 (Αθήνα 1961) 78.

⁷ Κωνσταντινίδης, *op. cit.*, 151. Alexandros Koumbaris (†1861) was born to Dimitrios Koumbaris and Sultana, and had two brothers – Kyriakos (1760–1836) and Stamatios (†1857). V. *Ibid.*, 154, 160. Afterwards, together with his brothers, he settled in Odessa, where Alexandros Koumbaris became one of the wealthiest merchants. He traded in dried salted fish, fresh dates and the different currencies of the Ottoman Empire. Cf. V. V. Morozan, *Krupneishie torgovo-bankirskie doma Odessy XIX veka. Ekonomicheskaia istoriia: Ezhegodnik* (Moskva 2007) 142–143; E. Sifneos, *Preparing the Greek revolution in Odessa in the 1820s: tastes, markets, and political liberalism*, *The Historical Review* 11 (Athens 2014) 149. He also established a printing house in Odessa in 1818 (V. Kardasis, *Diaspora merchants in the Black Sea. The Greeks in southern Russia, 1775–1861*, Lanham, Md. 2001, 56). He was one of the members and an ephor of the secret revolutionary organization *Filiki Etaireia* (Φιλική

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¹ For the miraculous icon of the Virgin v. M. Κωνσταντινίδης, *Η Μεσημβρία του Ευξείνου Ι. Ιστορία*, ed. Γ. Α. Μέγας, Αθήνα 1945, 151; D. Aleksiev, *Naŭ-izvestnite chudotvorni ikoni v Bŭlgariia*, Sofia 2008, 13; D. Radoinova, *Gŭrtsite po bŭlgarskoto Chernomorje. Istoriia i kultura*, Burgas 2010, 160–166; I. Gergova, *Chudesata na Presveta Bogoroditsa v kulturata na bŭlgarskoto Vŭzrazhdane*, Sofia 2012, 176–178. The researchers do not deal with the dating of the icon, which, in our opinion, based on the style of painting, seems to belong to the end of the fourteenth – beginning of the fifteenth century. For this dating, as well as color photographs v. A. Trifonova, *Chudotvorni ikoni i sveti moshti na Balkanite / Miraculous Icons and Holy Relics in the Balkans*, Sofia 2022, 40–41, fig. 16–17, 74.

² V. Giuzelev, *Nesebŭrskata arkhiepiskopiia – mitropoliiia i neinite tsŭrкви i manastiri*, *PI* 1 (2004) 29–35.



Fig. 1. Icon of the Virgin Hodegetria with twelve Great Feast scenes (third quarter of the fourteenth c.), church of the Dormition of the Virgin in Nessebar, Bulgaria

Εταιρεία), founded in Odessa in 1814, whose main purpose was the liberation of Greeks and Christians from Ottoman rule and the establishment of an independent Greek state. Alexandros Koumbaris is known for his large donations to the *Filiki Etaireia*. Cf. Κ. Γ. Αυγητίδης, *Οι Έλληνες της Οδησσοῦ και η επανάσταση του 1821. Αφιέρωμα στα 200 χρόνια από την ίδρυση της Οδησσοῦ (1794–1994)*, Αθήνα 1994, 114. He also donated large amounts for his hometown of Mesembria, mainly for the building and maintenance of the Greek School (1818), to which he also gave a lot of books. Some of them are now kept in the National Library “Sts Cyril and Methodius” in Sofia, Bulgaria, and bear the following donor’s inscription: *Αφιέρωμα Αλεξάνδρου Δημητρίου Κουμπάρη τῆ ἐν Μεσημβρίᾳ σχολῆ 1818 Μαρτίου 22* (Donation of Alexandros Dimitriou Koumbaris for the Mesembria’s school, 22 March 1818). Cf. M. Stoianov, *Nesebŭrskata sbirka ot grŭtski staropechatni knigi v Narodnata biblioteka Kiril i Metodi, Izvestiia na Narodnata Biblioteka Kiril i Metodi i na Bibliotekata na Sofiiskia universitet Kliment Okhridski 7* (1967) 256. In 1856 Alexandros Koumbaris gave a large donation for the building of the Dormition of the Vir-

gin’s church in Mesembria, where the icon is kept (V. Tonev, *Bŭlgarskoto Chernomorje prez Vŭzrazhdaneto*, Sofiia 1995, 161; *Οι Έλληνες της Βουλγαρίας. Ένα ιστορικό τμήμα του περιφερειακού ελληνισμού*, ed. Ξ. Κοτζαγεώργη, Θεσσαλονίκη 1999, 271).

The church is a large, three-apsed, domed basilica, with a wooden roof covered in tiles. The building is made of regularly arranged stones, with rows of bricks and

⁸ Κωνσταντινίδης, *Η Μεσημβρία*, 141; Φιλιππίος, *Εκκλησίας Κωνσταντινουπόλεως*, 78.



Fig. 2. *Virgin Hodegetria with the infant Christ (detail)*

spolia of older destroyed churches in Mesembria, such as St Sophia (the old Metropolitan Church),⁹ Christ Akropolites¹⁰ and St Andrew the First-Called (Protocletus).¹¹

⁹ Κωνσταντινίδης, *op. cit.*, 151.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 119.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

The iconostasis, which is wood-carved and two-rowed, consists of new icons, and the interior of the church is painted with contemporary murals (twenty-first c.). In the right part of the nave there is a woodcarved proskynetarion on which the miracle-working icon of the Virgin Hodegetria with twelve Great Feast (Dodekaorton) scenes (third quarter of fourteenth c.) is perched. In the



Fig. 3. *Virgin Hodegetria* (detail)

central panel is the Virgin Hodegetria, whereas the four frames that surround it contain depictions of the twelve Great Feasts (figs. 1–2, 10).

The Virgin (fig. 3), slightly inclined to the right, supports the infant Christ with her left hand, whereas her right rests on her breast. Christ (fig. 4), slightly sloped to the left, blesses with the right hand and holds a closed scroll in his left. The twelve festal scenes, which surround the main depiction of the Virgin Hodegetria, mostly follow the chronological sequence of the Gospel. In the upper horizontal field, from left to right, the following scenes are shown: 1. The Annunciation 2. The Nativity of Christ 3. The Presentation of Christ in the Temple (Hypapante) 4. The Baptism of Christ; in the right vertical field, from top to bottom, follow the scenes of: 5. The Transfiguration 6. The Raising of Lazarus 7. The Entry into Jerusalem; in the left vertical field, from top to bottom, are depicted the scenes: 8. The Crucifixion 9. The Descent into Hell (Anastasis) 10. The Ascension; in the horizontal field below, there are two severely damaged scenes, which most likely represent: 11. The Pentecost and 12. The Dormition of the Virgin (Koimises).

As the icon is supposed to be miraculous, the main depiction of the Virgin Hodegetria, as well as the frame of the icon, has a silver revetment (eighteenth–nineteenth c.). The nimbuses of the Virgin and Christ are decorated with violet and red-orange gems, and the silver frame that surrounds them with green, blue and lilac stones. The exterior frame of the icon is covered with a revetment made

of silver plaques, on which busts of saints and decorative elements are engraved, and only the lower central part of the scene of the Dormition of the Virgin is covered in silver-gilt.

Three thin strings, which go through the upper and lower part of the icon, bear many votive offerings and dedications to the Virgin – mainly jewelry, such as gold and silver necklaces with precious stones, watches, earrings, bracelets, rings, and coins.¹²

The condition of the icon is not good enough, although it was restored ca. 1985 by the painter-restorer nun Magdalena Načeva of the Intercession of the Virgin Monastery in Kniaževo of Sofia, Bulgaria.¹³ The faces of the main depictions of the Virgin Hodegetria and Christ are darkened. The Feast scenes on the frame are damaged, mainly by woodworm, as well as their inscriptions in red. The painted surface of the lower part of the icon has been lost, and there are five cracks running vertically all the way through the wood, except on the main depiction with the Virgin Hodegetria. This shows that the frame of the icon and the central icon were executed on separate panels of wood, which indicates that the icon consists of two parts. The examined icon belongs among the so-called rare inlaid icons,¹⁴ which are seen mainly during the Palaeologan period of the fourteenth century.¹⁵ The insertion

¹² According to the caretaker of the church (August 2020), most of the offerings on the icon were placed in 2011 when the icon was displayed for proskynesis in the village of Nea Mesimvria near Thessaloniki in Greece. It is interesting to note that this village was established by the Greeks of Mesembria of the Black Sea Coast after 1906, when they moved there due to the anti-Greek movement in Bulgaria in that period. The insignia of the Greek Police, which bears the inscription: *ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΑΣΤΥΝΟΜΙΑ*, was left as a votive offering by the policeman who guarded the icon during its stay in Greek territory.

¹³ Raichevski, *Kraïbrezhna Stara planina*, 477.

¹⁴ For general data about inlaid icons v. P. L. Vocotopoulos, *Composite icons*, in: *Greek icons. Proceedings of the symposium of memory of Manolis Chatzidakis*, ed. E. Hausteijn-Bartsch, N. Chatzidakis, Athens–Recklinghausen 1998, 5–10; idem, *Σύνθετες εικόνες. Μια πρώτη καταγραφή*, in: *Σήμα Μενέλαου Παρλαμά*, ed. Α. Τζεδάκη, Ηράκλειο 2002, 299–319.

¹⁵ For example, the following icons: for the icon of Sts George and Demetrios on horseback with vita scenes (fourteenth c., late fifteenth – sixteenth c.) from the church of the Virgin in Sozopol on the Black Sea coast in Bulgaria, now in the Ecclesiastical Museum in Sofia, Bulgaria v. G. Gerov, *An icon of St George and St Demetrius*, in: *Treasures of Christian art in Bulgaria*, ed. V. Pace, Sofia 2001, 228–229, cat. no. 88; R. Lozanova, *Sv. Georgii i Sv. Dimitrii s zhitiinym stsenami*, in: *Khristianskoe iskusstvo Bolgarii. Vystavka*, ed. R. Lozanova, Sofia 2003, 32, cat. no. 16; for the two-sided icon with Christ Pantokrator (fourteenth c.) and Great Feast (Dodekaorton) scenes (fourteenth c.) with its missing central icon, of unknown provenance, kept the National Historical Museum of Sofia, Bulgaria v. T. Matakieva-Lilkova, *Christian art in Bulgaria*, Sofia 2001, 40–43; R. Lozanova, *Icone bilatérale. A. Les fêtes. B. Le Crist Pantocrator*, in: *Icones et manuscrits bulgares. Catalogue d'exposition*, ed. R. Lozanova et al., Gand–Bruxelles 2003, 35, cat. no. 5; R. Rousseva, *Double-sided icon of Feasts and Christ Pantokrator*, in: *National Museum of History. Catalogue*, ed. R. Rousseva, Sofia 2006, 133, cat. no. 111; for the two-sided icon with Christ, archangels and saints and an inlaid icon (mid fourteenth c. – end of the fifteenth c.) and the Crucifixion (mid fourteenth c.) in the Vlatadon Monastery in Thessaloniki, Greece v. A. Tourta, *Two-sided icon with a small inlaid icon*, in: *Byzantium: faith and power (1261–1557)*, ed. H. C. Evans, New York – New Haven – London 2004, 160–161, cat. no. 82; eadem, *Two-sided icon with inset small bi-zonal icon*, in: *Το ημετέρον κάλλος. Βυζαντινές*

of a smaller icon into the center of a bigger one suggests that the smaller icon was obviously especially venerated. Such a practice seems to have existed during the Palaeologan period: the most venerated icons were placed in the center of a bigger one in order to be protected and continue to be venerated.

Concerning the general iconographical scheme of the icon, it should be noted that icons of the Virgin with Great Feasts (Dodekaorton) scenes on the frame are especially rare, as opposed to the icons of the Virgin with vita scenes¹⁶ or scenes of the Akathist hymn.¹⁷ Only several icons of the Virgin with the Great Feasts scenes have been known, which date from the Palaeologan period of the fourteenth century. Among them are the icons of the Virgin Hodegetria with ten (twelve?) Great Feast scenes on a silver revetment (revetment – beginning fourteenth c.)¹⁸ in the Monastery of Vatopedi on Mount Athos, Greece, the Virgin Eleousa with ten Great Feasts scenes and saints (mid-fourteenth c.)¹⁹ in the Benaki Museum in Athens, Greece,

εικόνες από την Θεσσαλονίκη, ed. Φ. Καραγιάννη, Γ. Φουστέρης, Θεσσαλονίκη 2018, 206–211, cat. no. 14; for the two-sided icon with the inlaid icon of the Virgin Hodegetria (second quarter thirteenth c.) and Feast scenes (last quarter fourteenth c.) in the Sacristy of the Vlatadon Monastery in Thessaloniki, Greece v. A. Tourta, *Two-sided icon with inset icon of the Panaghia Hodegetria*, in: *To ημέτερον κάλλος*, 180–185, cat. no. 9; for the inlaid mosaic icon with saints and the Deisis and seven saints and their relics in the frame (fourteenth c.) in the Hermitage Museum in St Peterburg, Russia v. Y. Piatnitsky, *Portable icon with saints John Chrysostom, Basil the Great, Nicolas the miracle worker, and Gregory the Theologian in frame with the Deisis and seven saints and their holy relics*, in: *Byzantium: faith and power (1261–1557)*, ed. H. C. Evans, New York – New Haven – London 2004, 225–227, cat. no. 134, and other icons.

¹⁶ For the miracle-working icon of the Virgin Vimatarissa (end of the twelfth c.) in the Monastery of Vatopedi on Mount Athos, Greece v. E. N. Τσιγαρίδας, Κ. Λοβέρδου-Τσιγαρίδα, *Ιερά Μεγίστη Μονή Βατοπαιδίου. Βυζαντινές εικόνες και επενδύσεις*, Άγιον Όρος 2006, 292–305; for the icon of the Virgin Hodegetria (1342) from Mesembria, today in the National Archaeological Museum in Sofia, Bulgaria v. G. Gerov, *An icon featuring the Virgin Eleusa*, in: *Treasures of Christian art in Bulgaria*, ed. V. Pace, Sofia 2001, 224–225, cat. no. 86; Zh. Chimbuleva, V. Giuzelev, *Ikoni ot Nesebur*, Sofia 2003, 29; for the icon of the Virgin Hodegetria with vita scenes (fourteenth c.) in the Kremlin Museum, Russia v. E. C. Ryder, *Icon with the Virgin Hodegetria*, in: *Byzantium: faith and power (1261–1557)*, ed. H. C. Evans, New York – New Haven – London 2004, 253–254, cat. no. 151; for the two-sided icon of the Virgin with vita scenes (end of the fourteenth – first half of the fifteenth c.) and the Deposition from the Cross in the Byzantine Museum in Kastoria, Greece v. A. Trifonova, *Ikona na Bogoroditsa Pantanasa s zhitii ni i niakoi drugi stseni i izobrazheniia ot Vizantiiskii muzei v Kostur, Gŭrŭsiia*, *Godishnik na Sofiiskii universitet „Sv. Kliment Okhridski“*, Tsentŭr za slaviano-vizantiiski prouchvaniia „Ivan Duichev“ 96 (15) (2011) 690, fig. 1; E. N. Τσιγαρίδας, *Εικόνες του Βυζαντινού μουσείου και ναών της Καστοριάς (12^{ος}–16^{ος} αιώνας)*, Αθήνα 2018, 275–281, fig. 144.

¹⁷ For example, for the icon of Virgin Glykophilousa with scenes of the Akathist hymn (1700) in the Monastery of Sision in Cephalonia island, Greece v. A. Κατσελάκη, *Εικόνα Παναγίας Γλυκοφιλούσας από την Κεφαλονιά στο Βυζαντινό Μουσείο*, ΔΧΑΕ 20 (1999) 379, εικ. 4.

¹⁸ J. Durand, *Precious-metal icon revetments*, in: *Byzantium: faith and power (1261–1557)*, ed. H. C. Evans, New York – New Haven – London 2004, 248, fig. 8.8. More specifically, for the revetment of the icon, which is the work of a Thessalonian workshop and a donation of the archontissa Papadopoulina v. Τσιγαρίδας, Λοβέρδου-Τσιγαρίδα, *Ιερά Μεγίστη Μονή Βατοπαιδίου*, 306–319, εικ. 234–249.

¹⁹ For the icon with inv. № 2972 of probable Venetian provenance v. X. Μπαλτογιάννη, *Εικόνες Μήτηρ Θεού*, Αθήνα 1994, 86, αριθμ. 20, 94–95, πίν. 39–40; Μ. Βασιλάκη, *Παναγία Γλυκοφιλούσα*,



Fig. 4. *Christ Child (detail)*

the double-sided icon of the Virgin Hodegetria with twelve Great Feast scenes (second half fourteenth c.)²⁰ and the Hetoimasia (Preparation of the Throne) in the Byzantine and Christian Museum in Athens, Greece, the double-sided icon of the Virgin Glykophilousa η Παύσον λύπης with ten Great Feast scenes (second half fourteenth c.)²¹ and the Crucifixion in the collection

με σκηνές Δωδεκαόρτου και αγίους, in: *Οι Πύλες του Μυστηρίου. Θησαυροί της Ορθοδοξίας από την Ελλάδα*, ed. Μ. Μπορμπουδάκης, Αθήνα 1994, 222, cat. no. 43; M. Vaklinova, *Icon of the Virgin Eleousa with Dodekaorton scenes and saints*, in: *Byzantium: faith and power (1261–1557)*, ed. H. C. Evans, New York – New Haven – London 2004, 502–503, cat. no. 305; M. Vassilaki, *Icon with the Virgin and Child, church feasts and saints*, in: *Byzantium 330–1453*, ed. R. Cormack, M. Vassilaki, London 2008, 291, 444, fig. 251; eadem, *Icon of the Virgin and child, church feasts and saints*, in: *Heaven & earth. Art of Byzantium from Greek collections*, ed. A. Drandaki, D. Papanikola-Bakirtzi, A. Tourta, Athens 2013, 318–319, cat. no. 167.

²⁰ For the icon with inv. № T 177 measuring 107 x 93 cm, which originates from Messina in Sicily, Italy v. M. Αχειμάστου-Ποταμιάνου, *Αμφιπρόσωπη εικόνα. Α'. Παναγία Οδηγήτρια με σκηνές Δωδεκαόρτου. Β'. Ετοίμασία του Θρόνου*, in: *Μήτηρ Θεού. Απεικονίσεις της Παναγίας στη βυζαντινή τέχνη*, ed. Μ. Βασιλάκη, Μιλάνο–Αθήνα 2000, 410–413, cat. no. 64; *Ο κόσμος του Βυζαντινού Μουσείου*, ed. Δ. Κωνσταντίνος, Αθήνα 2004, 144–145, εικ. 115.

²¹ A. Weyl Carr, *Two-sided icon with the Virgin Pafsolype and feast scenes and the Crucifixion and prophets*, in: *Byzantium: faith and power (1261–1557)*, ed. H. C. Evans, New York – New Haven – London 2004, 167–169, cat. no. 90.



Fig. 5. *Annunciation and Nativity of Christ*

of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Istanbul, Turkey, the double-sided icon of the Virgin Hodegetria with two Great Feast scenes, angels and the Hetoimasia (Preparation of the Throne) (second quarter thirteenth c., the central frame – last quarter fourteenth c.)²² and the Virgin Hodegetria in the Treasury of the monastery of Vlatadon in Thessaloniki, Greece. It is also interesting to note an icon of the Virgin Hodegetria with sixteen scenes (fourteenth c.)²³ in the Virgin Palouriotissa church in Nicosia of Cyprus, which, besides depictions of the Great Feasts, also includes her vita scenes, as well as an icon of the enthroned Virgin with two angels and Great Feast scenes and saints (second half fifteenth c.)²⁴ in the Benaki Museum in Athens, Greece.

The examples cited above suggest that on the icons of the Virgin with Great Feast (Dodekaorton) scenes, among which two-sided icons are common, the Virgin appears in different iconographical types, with the prevalence of the Hodegetria, which is found four times,²⁵

²² A. Tourta, *Αμφίγραπτη εικόνα με ένθετο εικονίδιο Παναγίας Οδηγήτριας*, in: *Το ημέτερον κάλλος. Βυζαντινές εικόνες από την Θεσσαλονίκη*, ed. Φ. Καραγιάννη, Γ. Φουστέρης, Θεσσαλονίκη 2018, 180–185, cat. no. 9.

²³ The icon is situated in the Monastery of Virgin Palouriotissa in Nicosia, Cyprus. V. <http://panagiapalouriotissa.com/enoria/ieros-naos-panagias>.

²⁴ Μ. Χατζηδάκης, Ε. Δρακοπούλου, *Έλληνες ζωγράφοι μετά την Άλωση (1450–1830) II*, Αθήνα 1997, 332, πίν. 233; Μπαλτογιάννη, *Εικόνες Μήτηρ Θεού*, 382, εικ. 132.

²⁵ Such are the icons: 1. Virgin Hodegetria with ten (twelve?) Great Feast scenes (beginning of the fourteenth c.) in the Monastery of Vatopedi on Mount Athos; 2. Two-sided icon: Virgin Hodegetria with twelve Great Feast scenes (second half of the fourteenth c.) in the Byzantine and Christian Museum in Athens, Greece; 3. Two-sided icon: Virgin Hodegetria with two Great Feasts scenes, angels and the Hetoimasia (Preparation of the Throne) (second quarter of the thirteenth c., main frame – last quarter of the fourteenth c.) in the Monastery of Vlatadon in Thessaloniki, Greece; 4. Virgin Hodegetria with sixteen Great Feast and vita scenes (fourteenth c.) in the Virgin Palouriotissa church in Nicosia of Cyprus.

whereas the types of Eleousa,²⁶ Glykophilousa²⁷ and the enthroned²⁸ are found only once.

It is interesting to note that there are also icons with other central themes, such as Christ Pantokrator,²⁹ the Deisis³⁰ and the Crucifixion,³¹ which are surrounded by the Great Feast (Dodekaorton) scenes in frames, as well as icons where the central theme is missing because it was represented on a now lost inlaid icon.³²

The Virgin on the presented icon, of the Hodegetria iconographical type,³³ follows the usual iconography,

²⁶ The icon of the Virgin Eleousa with Great Feast scenes and saints (mid-fourteenth c.) in the Byzantine and Christian Museum in Athens, Greece.

²⁷ The two-sided icon of Virgin Glykophilousa η Παύσον λύπης with ten Great Feast scenes (second half of the fourteenth c.) in the Collection of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Istanbul, Turkey.

²⁸ For example, the icon of the Virgin enthroned with angels and Great Feast scenes (second half of the fifteenth c.) in the Benaki Museum in Athens, Greece.

²⁹ The steatite diptych with Christ Pantokrator surrounded by ten Great Feast scenes and Virgin Hodegetria, flanked by ten life scenes (fourteenth c.), the work of a Byzantine artist in the State Museum in Berlin, Germany. Cf. A. Effenberger, *Two panels with Christ Pantokrator and Theotokos Hodegetria, surrounded by scenes from the lives of Christ and the Virgin*, in: *Byzantium: faith and power (1261–1557)*, ed. H. C. Evans, New York – New Haven – London 2004, 233–234, cat. no. 140.

³⁰ For the Deisis with the Great Feast scenes (end of the fourteenth c. – beginning of the fifteenth c.) in the Byzantine and Christian Museum in Athens, Greece v. *Ο κόσμος του Βυζαντινού Μουσείου*, 232, εικ. 196.

³¹ The Crucifixion with Great Feast scenes on the revetment (revetment – second half of the fourteenth c.) in the Monastery of Vatopedi on Mount Athos, Greece. V. Τσιγαρίδας, Λοβέρδου-Τσιγαρίδα, *Ιερά Μεγίστη Μονή Βατοπαιδίου*, 328–335, εικ. 264–276.

³² For the two-sided icon with Christ Pantokrator (fourteenth c.) and Great Feast scenes (fourteenth c.) with its central icon missing in the National Historical Museum of Sofia, Bulgaria v. Matakieva-Lilkova, *Christian art*, 40–43; Lozanova, *Icone bilatérale*, 35, cat. no. 5; Rousseva, *Double-sided icon*, 133, cat. no. 111.

³³ For the iconographical type of the Virgin Hodegetria v. A. Grabar, *L'Hodigitria et l'Eléousa*, ZLUMS 10 (1974) 3–14; D.



Fig. 6. Presentation of Christ in the Temple

which is known to have been used on icons since the twelfth century³⁴ and was widespread during the Palaeologan period.³⁵

Concerning the Great Feast (Dodekaorton) scenes, only the following can be seen relatively well: the Annunciation, the Nativity of Christ, the Presentation of Christ in the Temple, the Transfiguration, the Raising of Lazarus, the Entry into Jerusalem, the Crucifixion and the Descent into Hell (Anastasis).

Mouriki, *Variants of the Hodegetria on two thirteenth-century Sinai icons*, CA 39 (1991) 153–182; Μπαλτογιάννη, *Εικόνες Μήτηρ Θεού*, 211–237; X. Αγγελίδη, Τ. Παπαμαστοράκης, *Η μονή των Οδηγών και η λατρεία της Θεοτόκου Οδηγήτριας*, in: *Μήτηρ Θεού. Απεικονίσεις της Παναγίας στη βυζαντινή τέχνη*, ed. Μ. Βασιλάκη, Μιλάνο–Αθήνα 2000, 373–387.

³⁴ For example, for the icon of the Virgin Hodegetria Episkopiani (twelfth c., overpainted in 1657) in the Museum for Post-Byzantine Art in Zakynthos island of Greece v. Μ. Αχεμάστου-Ποταμιάνου, *Εικόνα Παναγίας Επισκοπιανής*, in: *Μήτηρ Θεού. Απεικονίσεις της Παναγίας στη βυζαντινή τέχνη*, ed. Μ. Βασιλάκη, Μιλάνο–Αθήνα 2000, 344–345, cat. no. 34.

³⁵ As for the icons of the Virgin Hodegetria (end of the thirteenth – beginning of the fourteenth c.) in the Monastery of Vatopedi on Mount Athos, Greece v. Ε. Ν. Τσιγαρίδας, *Φορητές εικόνες*, in: *Ιερά Μεγίστη Μονή Βατοπαιδίου. Παράδοση–Ιστορία–Τέχνη II*, ed. Ι. Παπάγγελος, Άγιον Όρος 1996, fig. 317; for the Virgin Hodegetria (first half of the fourteenth c.) in the Museum of Macedonia in Skopje, North Macedonia v. V. Popovska-Korobar, *Ikoni od Muzejot na Makedonija*, Skopje 2004, 209, fig. 1; for the Virgin Hodegetria Episkopsis (fourteenth c.) in the Icon Gallery of Ohrid, North Macedonia v. Μ. Georgievski, *Icon gallery – Ohrid*, Ohrid 1999, 21, 58–59.

The scene of the *Annunciation*³⁶ (fig. 5) takes place in front of a wall with a purple scarf above it. The archangel Gabriel is to the left, taking a step with his left leg and raising his right hand in a blessing gesture addressed to the Virgin to inform her of the good news. The Virgin stands to the right on a pedestal in front of a backless throne with a red pillar on it, turned toward the archangel.

The general iconographical scheme of the Annunciation scene is usual. A noteworthy secondary iconographical detail is the representation of the Virgin, who is shown as a standing full-length figure and not enthroned,³⁷ which is found on icons from the Palaeolo-

³⁶ For the iconography of the Annunciation v. Διονυσίου τοῦ ἐκ Φουρνᾶ, *Ἑρμηνεία τῆς ζωγραφικῆς τέχνης καὶ αἱ κύρια αὐτῆς ἀνέκδοτοι πηγαί, ἐκδιδομένη μετὰ Προλόγου νῦν τὸ πρῶτον πλήρης κατὰ τὸ πρωτότυπον αὐτῆς κείμενον*, ed. Α. Παπαδοπούλου-Κεραμέως, Ἐν Πετρούπολῃ 1909, 85; G. Millet, *Recherches sur l'iconographie de l'évangile aux XIV^e, XV^e et XVI^e siècles d'après les monuments de Mistra, de la Macédoine et du Mont-Athos*, Paris 1916, 67–92; Κ. Καλοκύρης, *Η Θεοτόκος εἰς τὴν εἰκονογραφίαν Ανατολῆς καὶ Δύσεως*, Θεσσαλονίκη 1972, 115–120; L. Mavrodinova, *Ikonoграфия na dvanadesette golemi tsürkovni praznika v srednovekovnata stenna zhivopis v Bŭlgariia (IX–XIV v.)*, Sofiia 2005, 9–22.

³⁷ For the Virgin in the scene of the Annunciation in the St George tou Vounou church (last quarter of the fourteenth c.) in Kastoria v. Α. Trifonova, *Οι τοιχογραφίες του Αγίου Γεωργίου του Βουνού στην Καστοριά. Συμβολή στην μελέτη της ζωγραφικῆς του δευτέρου μισοῦ του 14^{ου} αἰῶνα στην ευρύτερη περιοχή της Μακεδονίας*, Θεσσαλονίκη 2010, 89–94 (διδακτορική διατριβή, Ἀριστοτέλειο Πανεπιστήμιο Θεσσαλονίκης); for the Virgin in the icon of Deisis with Great Feast scenes (end of the fourteenth – beginning of the fifteenth



Fig. 7. Baptism of Christ

gan period in the fourteenth century and later. Such examples are the two-sided icon with the Annunciation, the Nativity, the Baptism and the Transfiguration (ca. 1310–1320)³⁸ in the British Museum in London, England, in a mosaic diptych with the Great Feast scenes (1330–1350)³⁹ from Constantinople, today in the Opera di Santa Maria del Fiore in Florence, Italy, in the two-sided icon of the Virgin Hodegetria with Great Feast scenes (second half of the fourteenth c.)⁴⁰ in the Byzantine and Christian Museum in Athens, Greece.

In the center of the Nativity⁴¹ (fig. 5), there is a cave with a manger, where the Christ Child is lying, adored

c.) in the Byzantine and Christian Museum in Athens, Greece v. *Ο κόσμος του Βυζαντινού Μουσείου*, 232, εικ. 196, and others.

³⁸ R. Cormack, *Icons*, London 2007, 52–53, 56–61, fig. 30, 33, 35; J. Robinson, *Masterpieces. Medieval art*, London 2008, 18. V. https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/H_1852-0102-1.

³⁹ A. Effenberger, *Mosaic diptych with cycle of feast days*, in: *Byzantium: faith and power (1261–1557)*, ed. H. C. Evans, New York – New Haven – London 2004, 219–220, cat. no. 129.

⁴⁰ Αχειμάστου-Ποταμιάνου, *Αμφιπρόσωπη εικόνα*, 410–413, cat. no. 64; *Ο κόσμος του Βυζαντινού Μουσείου*, 144–145, εικ. 115.

⁴¹ For the iconography of the Nativity v. Διονυσίου τοῦ ἐκ Φουρνᾶ, *Ἑρμηνεία*, 86; Κ. Καλοκύρης, *Ἡ Γέννησις του Χριστοῦ εἰς τὴν βυζαντινὴν τέχνην τῆς Ἑλλάδος*, Αθήναι 1956, passim (διδασκατορικὴ διατριβή, Εθνικὸ καὶ Καποδιστριακὸ Πανεπιστήμιον Ἀθηνῶν); Millet, *Recherches*, 93–169; L. Réau, *Iconographie de l'art chrétien II/2. Iconographie de la Bible. Nouveau Testament*, Paris 1957, 213–255; G. Ristow, *Die Geburt Christi in der frühchristlichen und byzantinisch-ostkirchlichen Kunst*, Recklinghausen 1963, passim; J. Lafon-

by an ox and an ass and blessed by an angel on the left. In front of the cave, Joseph is seated on the left, whereas on the right the Virgin reclines on a purple bed. She is watching over the circular basin with water, where Christ is bathed for the first time by a servant girl, sitting to the right. The background of the scene is golden.

The iconographical scheme of the Nativity scene is simplified, with only the main characters and the bathing of Christ shown. The usual iconographical details, like the three magi and the shepherds who come to worship the infant Christ and the children who are playing the flute,⁴² are omitted, probably due to spatial constraints. A similar iconographical scheme of the Nativity, limited to the main characters and the depiction of the Virgin reclining in front of the cave, turned to the right towards the infant in the basin, appears in the scene of the Nativity on icons from the Palaeologan period from the middle of the fourteenth century and on. Such examples include a mosaic diptych with the Great Feast cycle (ca. 1330–1350)⁴³ from Constantinople, now in the Opera di Santa Maria del Fiore in Florence, Italy, the two-sided icon of the Virgin Hodegetria with Great Feast scenes (second half fourteenth c.)⁴⁴ and Deisis icon with Great Feast scenes (end fourteenth – beginning fifteenth c.)⁴⁵ in the Byzantine and Christian Museum in Athens, Greece, and others.

Concerning the iconographical detail of the bathing of Christ, shown in the basin and not in the hands of the midwife bathing him,⁴⁶ is an iconographical element found during the Palaeologan period in the fourteenth and the beginning of the fifteenth century. It is seen in the mosaic diptych with the Great Feast cycle (ca. 1330–1350)⁴⁷ in the Opera di Santa Maria del Fiore in Florence, Italy, in the Deisis icon with Great Feast scenes (end of the fourteenth – beginning of the fifteenth c.)⁴⁸ in the Byzantine and Christian Museum in Athens, Greece, in the icon of Nativity (ca. 1400)⁴⁹ in the Byzantine Museum in Kastoria, Greece, and elsewhere.

taine-Dosogne, *Les représentations de la Nativité du Christ dans l'art de l'Orient chrétien*, in: *Miscellanea Codicologica F. Masai Dicata I*, ed. P. Cockshaw, M. C. Garand, P. Jodogne, Ghent 1979, 11–21; Mavrodinova, *Ikonografiā*, 25–32;

⁴² See the scene of the Nativity in two icons of the Byzantine and Christian Museum in Athens, Greece: for the two-sided icon with the Virgin Hodegetria and Great Feast scenes (second half of the fourteenth c.) and the Hetoimasia/Preparation of the Throne v. Αχειμάστου-Ποταμιάνου, *Αμφιπρόσωπη εικόνα*, 410–413, cat. no. 64; for the icon of the Nativity (first half of the fifteenth c.) v. M. Αχειμάστου-Ποταμιάνου, *Εικόνες του Βυζαντινού Μουσείου Ἀθηνῶν*, Αθήνα 1998, 96–97, αριθμ. 26; and others.

⁴³ Effenberger, *Mosaic diptych*, 219–220, cat. no. 129.

⁴⁴ Αχειμάστου-Ποταμιάνου, *Αμφιπρόσωπη εικόνα*, 410–413, cat. no. 64; *Ο κόσμος του Βυζαντινού Μουσείου*, 144–145, εικ. 115.

⁴⁵ *Ο κόσμος του Βυζαντινού Μουσείου*, 232, εικ. 196.

⁴⁶ For example, two icons of the Nativity, the one (mid-fourteenth c.) in the Monastery of St Catherine at Sinai, Egypt v. X. Μπαλτογιάννη, *Εικόνες Ἰησοῦς Χριστός*, Αθήνα 2003, 166, εικ. 47, and the other (first half of the fifteenth c.) in the Byzantine and Christian Museum in Athens, Greece v. Αχειμάστου-Ποταμιάνου, *Εικόνες*, 96–97, αριθμ. 26; and others.

⁴⁷ Effenberger, *Mosaic diptych*, 219–220, cat. no. 129.

⁴⁸ *Ο κόσμος του Βυζαντινού Μουσείου*, 232, εικ. 196.

⁴⁹ Τσιγαρίδας, *Εικόνες*, 244, fig. 121 and others.

The scene of the *Presentation of Christ in the Temple* (*Hypapante*)⁵⁰ (fig. 6) takes place behind a wall with two crenels in the interior of the Temple of Jerusalem. Around the holy altar table two symmetrical groups are presented – on the left the Virgin with the infant Christ and Joseph, who is holding a pair of sacrificial doves, and on the right the high priest Symeon the God-receiver (*Theodochos*) and Anna the prophetess, who is praising and pointing to the infant Christ.

The iconographical scheme of the scene, where the Virgin holds the infant Christ and not the high priest Symeon, follows numerous depictions of the scene during the Palaeologan period, mainly in the fourteenth century, such as in the mosaic diptych with Great Feast scenes (ca. 1330–1350)⁵¹ from Constantinople, now in Opera di Santa Maria dell Fiore in Florence, Italy, the icon of the Deisis with Great Feast scenes (end of the fourteenth – beginning of the fifteenth c.)⁵² in the Byzantine and Christian Museum in Athens, Greece, the icon of the Presentation of Christ in the Temple (ca. 1400)⁵³ in the Byzantine Museum in Kastoria in Greece and elsewhere.

In the center of the *Baptism of Christ*⁵⁴ (fig. 7), painted on a green background, Christ is shown as a standing figure in the waters of the Jordan River. On the left bank St John the Baptist baptizes him with his right hand, whereas on the right bank two angels, their hands covered in veils, venerate Christ.

The composition follows a well-established scheme, though St John the Baptist isn't placed on a rock on a higher level than Christ, as usual,⁵⁵ but is depicted on almost the same level as him. St John the Baptist is represented similarly, nearly on the same level as Christ, in icons of the Palaeologan period of the fourteenth century, like in the identical scene on the icon of the Virgin Hodegetria with Great Feast scenes on a silver gilded revetment (beginning of the fourteenth c.)⁵⁶ in the Monastery of Vatopedi on Mount Athos, Greece.

⁵⁰ For the iconography of the Presentation of Christ in the Temple v. Διονυσίου τοῦ ἐκ Φουρνᾶ, *Ἑρμηνεία*, 87; A. Ευγγόπουλος, *Υπαπαντή*, ΕΕΒΣ 6 (1929) 328–339; C. D. Shorr, *The iconographic development of the Presentation in the temple*, ArtB 28/1 (1946) 17–32; Καλοκύρης, *Η Θεοτόκος*, 154–155; I. Sinkevič, *Changes in the composition of the Presentation of Christ in the temple in Palaeologan times*, KN 28–29 (2002–2003) 33–38; Mavrodinova, *Ikonografiā*, 33–37.

⁵¹ Effenberger, *Mosaic diptych*, 219–220, cat. no. 129.

⁵² *Ο κόσμος του Βυζαντινού Μουσείου*, 232, εικ. 196.

⁵³ Τσιγαρίδας, *Εικόνες*, 245, fig. 122.

⁵⁴ For the iconography of the Baptism of Christ v. Διονυσίου τοῦ ἐκ Φουρνᾶ, *Ἑρμηνεία*, 88–89; Millet, *Recherches*, 170–215; Mavrodinova, *Ikonografiā*, 55–65.

⁵⁵ St John the Baptist is represented in this way in the scene of the Baptism of Christ on two icons from the Byzantine and Christian Museum in Athens, Greece: the two-sided icon of the Virgin Hodegetria with Great Feast scenes – second half of the fourteenth c. (Αχειμάστου-Ποταμιάνου, *Αμφιπρόσωπη εικόνα*, 410–413, cat. no. 64) and the icon of the Deisis with Great Feast scenes – end of the fourteenth–beginning of the fifteenth c. (*Ο κόσμος του Βυζαντινού Μουσείου*, 232, εικ. 196).

⁵⁶ Τσιγαρίδας, *Λοβέρδου-Τσιγαρίδα, Ιερά Μεγίστη Μονή Βατοπαιδίου*, 311, εικ. 241.



Fig. 8. *Raising of Lazarus*

In the scene of *Transfiguration*,⁵⁷ set on a gold background, the center is occupied by Mount Tabor. On its peak stands Christ, dressed in a white himation, blessing with his right hand, enclosed in a dark blue oval mandorla with white rays. On the rocks on either side of him stand two prophets – on the left the prophet Elijah and on the right the prophet Moses. At the foot of the mountain are three apostles – on the left Peter kneeling, in the center Jacob and on the right st John, who lying

⁵⁷ For the iconography of the Transfiguration v. Διονυσίου τοῦ ἐκ Φουρνᾶ, *Ἑρμηνεία*, 97; Millet, *Recherches*, 216–231; S. Dufrenne, *La manifestation divine dans l'icographie byzantine de la Transfiguration*, in: *Nicée II. 787–1987. Douze siècles d'images religieuses*, ed. F. Boespflug, N. Lossky, Paris 1987, 185–206; Mavrodinova, *Ikonografiā*, 47–55.



Fig. 9. *Descent into Hell (Anastasis)*

prostrate with their faces to the ground as they witness the Theophany.

The scene follows a well-established iconography, very common of the Palaeologan period, for which close parallels can be found in the Transfiguration depicted on the revetment of the icon of the Virgin Hodegetria with Great Feast scenes (beginning of the fourteenth c.)⁵⁸ in the Vatopedi Monastery on Mount Athos. It seems that the apostles Jacob and John are depicted fallen down with their face to the ground, and not falling down⁵⁹ or lying on the ground and looking at Christ,⁶⁰ as is frequently the case.

⁵⁸ Τσιγαρίδας, Λοβέρδου-Τσιγαρίδα, *Ιερά Μεγίστη Μονή Βατοπαιδίου*, 313, εικ. 243.

⁵⁹ The two apostles are depicted in this way in the Transfiguration in the two-sided icon of Virgin Hodegetria with Feast scenes (second half of the fourteenth c.) and the Preparation of the Throne in the Byzantine and Christian Museum in Athens. Cf. Αχειμάστου-Ποταμιάνου, *Αμφιπρόσωπη εικόνα*, 410–413, cat. no. 64; *Ο κόσμος του Βυζαντινού Μουσείου*, 144–145, εικ. 115.

⁶⁰ In this way they are depicted in the icon of Deisis with Great Feast scenes (end of the fourteenth – beginning of the fifteenth c.) in the Byzantine and Christian Museum in Athens. V. *Ο κόσμος του Βυζαντινού Μουσείου*, 232, εικ. 196.

The *Raising of Lazarus*⁶¹ (fig. 8) is depicted on golden background, where a rock is perched in front of the city walls of Bethany. On the right side of the rock is Lazarus, wrapped in a white burial shroud, standing in a vertically positioned sarcophagus at the entrance to his tomb. On the left side is Christ, blessing him, whereas Martha, the sister of Lazarus, kneels in front of Christ.

The scene follows a simplified iconographic scheme, where only the main figures are depicted. The group with the holy apostles usually included in the scene,⁶² is omitted, most likely because of limited space.

It is worth noting that, unlike in the usual iconography of the scene, Lazarus is depicted in a vertically and not horizontally placed sarcophagus. A similar representation of Lazarus in the scene of the Raising of Lazarus is seen on the revetment of the icon of the Virgin Hodegetria with Great Feast scenes (beginning of the fourteenth c.)⁶³ in the Vatopedi Monastery on Mount Athos, Greece, in the Deisis with Great Feast scenes (end of the fourteenth – beginning of the fifteenth c.)⁶⁴ in the Byzantine and Christian Museum in Athens, in the Raising of Lazarus (ca. 1400)⁶⁵ in the Byzantine Museum of Kastoria and elsewhere.

The background of the composition of the *Crucifixion*⁶⁶ is the walls of Jerusalem, where the Golgotha hill with the Cross is, on which Jesus Christ is crucified. He wears a perizoma (loincloth), and is bleeding from his wounds, as the blood flows over the skull of Adam, shown at the foot of the Cross. On the left is the Virgin, dressed in a purple maphorion, with her covered hands in Deisis to her son, whereas on the right is St John the Theologian, in a blue chiton and red himation, who sorrowfully holds his head with his right hand.

The scene follows a symmetrical iconographical composition with the main figures, which is frequently found during the Palaeologan period, mainly in the second half of the fourteenth century.⁶⁷ The iconographical

⁶¹ For the iconography of the Raising of Lazarus v. Διονυσίου τοῦ ἐκ Φουρνᾶ, *Ἑρμηνεία*, 101; Millet, *Recherches*, 232–254; R. Darmstädter, *Die Auferweckung des Lazarus in der altchristlichen und byzantinischen Kunst*, Bern 1955, passim; Mavrodinova, *Ikonografiā*, 56–64.

⁶² For the group of the apostles in the scene of Raising of Lazarus in the two icons from the Byzantine and Christian Museum in Athens, Greece – the two-sided icon of the Virgin Hodegetria with Great Feast scenes (second half of the fourteenth c.) and the Preparation of the Throne v. Αχειμάστου-Ποταμιάνου, *Αμφιπρόσωπη εικόνα*, 410–413, cat. no. 64; *Ο κόσμος του Βυζαντινού Μουσείου*, 144–145, εικ. 115, and for the Deisis with Great Feast scenes (end of the fourteenth c. – beginning of the fifteenth c.) v. *ibid.*, 232, εικ. 196.

⁶³ Τσιγαρίδας, Λοβέρδου-Τσιγαρίδα, *Ιερά Μεγίστη Μονή Βατοπαιδίου*, 313, εικ. 244.

⁶⁴ *Ο κόσμος του Βυζαντινού Μουσείου*, 232, εικ. 196.

⁶⁵ Τσιγαρίδας, *Εικόνες*, 249, εικ. 124.

⁶⁶ For the iconography of the Crucifixion v. Διονυσίου τοῦ ἐκ Φουρνᾶ, *Ἑρμηνεία*, 107–108; Millet, *Recherches*, 396–460; L. H. Grondijns, *L'icographie byzantine du Crucifié mort sur la croix*, Bruxelles 1940, passim; K. Wessel, *Die Kreuzigung*, Recklinghausen 1966, passim; S. Ferber, *Crucifixion iconography in a group of Carolingian ivory plaques*, ArtB 48/3–4 (1966) 323–334; A. Stavropoulou-Makri, *La création d'une nouvelle formule de la Crucifixion et sa diffusion dans les Balkans*, in: *Ελληνικές ανακοινώσεις στο Ε' Διεθνές Συνέδριο Σπουδών Νοτιοανατολικής Ευρώπης*, Αθήνα 1985, 241–257; Mavrodinova, *Ikonografiā*, 74–86.

⁶⁷ For example, for the scene of the Crucifixion in the two-sided icon of the Virgin Hodegetria with Great Feast scenes (second

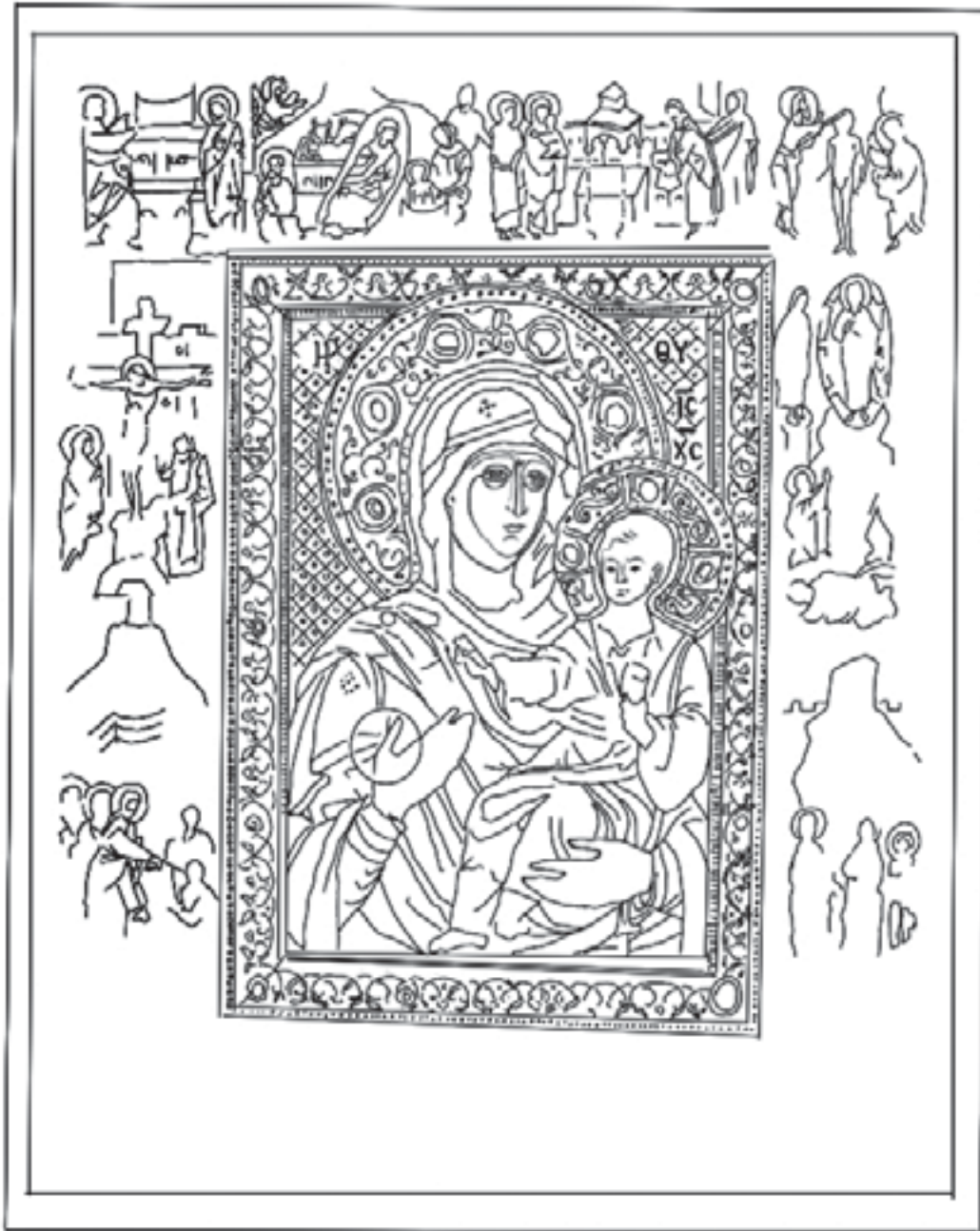


Fig. 10. Icon of the Virgin Hodegetria with twelve Great Feast scenes from Nessebar (drawing)

detail of the Virgin in a gesture of *Deisis*, her hands covered by her maphorion hands, is not customary, though it is also found in the same scene of the *Deisis* icon with the Great Feast scenes (end of the fourteenth c. – beginning of the fifteenth c.)⁶⁸ in the Byzantine and Christian Museum in Athens, Greece.

In the center of the *Descent into Hell (Anastasis)* (fig. 9),⁶⁹ set on a golden background, there is a high cave

with a pick and a huge hole in the center. On the left is Christ in white garments, followed by a group of men, most likely the prophets. Christ is stepping forward to the right toward the kneeling figure of Adam, taking him by the hand. Behind Adam is the figure of Eve and a group of sinners.

The composition, with only the main figures depicted, follows the customary iconography. However, there

half fourteenth c.) and the Preparation of the Throne in the Byzantine and Christian Museum in Athens, Greece v. Αχειμάστου-Ποταμιάνου, *Αμφιπρόσωπη εικόνα*, 410–413, cat. no. 64; *Ο κόσμος του Βυζαντινού Μουσείου*, 144–145, fig. 115.

⁶⁸ *Ο κόσμος του Βυζαντινού Μουσείου*, 232, εικ. 196.

⁶⁹ For the iconography of the *Descent into Hell (Anastasis)* v. Διονυσίου τοῦ ἐκ Φουρνᾶ, *Ἑρμηνεία*, 110; Α. Ξυγγόπουλος, *Ο υμνολογικός εικονογραφικός τύπος της εἰς τὸν Ἄδην καθόδου τοῦ Ἰησοῦ*, *ΕΕΒΣ* 17 (1941) 113–129; Réau, *Iconographie de l'art chrétien* II/2, 531; Α. Παλιούρας, *Η δυτικὸν τύπου Ἀνάσταση τοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ ο χρόνος εἰσαγωγῆς της στὴν ὀρθόδοξη τέχνη*, *Δωδώνη* 7 (Ἰωάννινα 1978) 385–408; Α. Grabar, *Essai sur les plus anciennes représentations*

de la «Résurrection du Christ», *Monuments et mémoires de la Fondation Eugène Piot* 63 (Paris 1980) 105–141; Ε. Δεληγιάννη-Δωρή, *Παλαιολόγεια εικονογραφία. Ο „σύνθετος“ εικονογραφικός τύπος της Ἀνάστασης*, in: *Αντίφωνον. Αφιέρωμα στὸν καθηγητὴ Ν. Β. Δρανδάκη*, ed. Β. Κατσαρός, Θεσσαλονίκη 1994, 399–435; Αρχιμ. Σ. Κουκιάρης, *Οι ανεπίγραφτοι ανιστάμενοι στὴν εἰς Ἄδου Κάθοδον*, *ΔΧΑΕ* 19 (1996–1997) 305–317; Α. Semoglou, *Les dons et le pardon: les équivoques dans l'iconographie monastique de la descente du Christ aux enfers en Grèce du Nord-ouest au XVI^e siècle*, *Εγνατία* 5 (Θεσσαλονίκη 1995–2000) 103–116; Mavrodinova, *Ikonoграфија*, 93–103; Ε. Smirnova, *More about the rare iconography of the Descent into Hell*, *ΔΧΑΕ* 26 (2005) 303–310.

are some unusual iconographical details. Among them is Christ not flanked by a mandorla as usual,⁷⁰ which is also the case in the scene of the mosaic diptych with Great Feast scenes (ca. 1330–1350)⁷¹ from Constantinople, now in Opera di Santa Maria del Fiore in Florence, Italy. Another interesting detail is the depiction of Christ in white garments, as the Gospels describe, whereas in the representations of the scene he is usually shown in golden garments. Christ also appears in white garments in the same scene in the icon of Deisis with the Great Feast scenes (end of the fourteenth c. – beginning of the fifteenth c.)⁷² in the Byzantine and Christian Museum in Athens, Greece. Also, another unusual feature is the representation of the rocky cavern with only one peak, and not two for visual symmetry, as is frequently the case.⁷³

The general iconographical scheme of the Great Feast scenes in the examined icon, as well as some secondary iconographical details and particularities, show the influence of Palaeologan art and close parallels with masterpieces of the middle and second half of the fourteenth century.

The style of painting yields almost now information because the surface is destroyed in many spots. The damage is seen mainly on the surface with the Great Feast scenes, although the icon was conserved ca. 1985.⁷⁴ The faces of the Virgin and Christ in the central composition can be seen comparatively well, although the tuned painting on the faces does not permit a satisfactory examination.

From the prosopographical point of view, the Virgin is shown with big expressive almond-shaped eyes, a melancholic look, tiny long nose and small mouth with stiff fleshy red lips. The painting technique, with gentle passages on the dark carnation with slight light accents of olive green and dark ochre, warmed with red spots on the cheeks, with white light accents over the eyebrows, on the forehead, below the eyes, over the upper lip and on the chin and outlines of the face with a thin red line is consistent with Palaeologan painting of the fourteenth century. A similar technique of painting is seen on the visage of the Virgin in the icon of the Virgin Hodegetria (middle of the fourteenth c.)⁷⁵ in the St John the Forerunner Monastery near Serres, Greece.

⁷⁰ See this iconographical detail in the scene of the Descent into Hell (Anastasis) in the following two icons from the Byzantine and Christian Museum in Athens, Greece: for the two-sided icon of the Virgin Hodegetria with Great Feast scenes (second half of the fourteenth c.) and the Preparation of the Throne v. Αχειμάστου-Ποταμιάνου, *Αμφιπρόσωπη εικόνα*, 410–413, cat. no. 64; *Ο κόσμος του Βυζαντινού Μουσείου*, 144–145, εικ. 115, and for the icon of the Deisis with Great Feast scenes (end of the fourteenth – beginning of the fifteenth c.) v. *ibid.*, 232, εικ. 196.

⁷¹ Effenberger, *Mosaic diptych*, 219–220, cat. no. 129.

⁷² *Ο κόσμος του Βυζαντινού Μουσείου*, 232, εικ. 196.

⁷³ For the scene of the Descent into Hell (Anastasis) in the two icons of the Byzantine and Christian Museum in Athens, Greece – the two-sided icon of the Virgin Hodegetria with Great Feast scenes (second half of the fourteenth c.) and the Preparation of the Throne v. Αχειμάστου-Ποταμιάνου, *Αμφιπρόσωπη εικόνα*, 410–413, cat. no. 64; *Ο κόσμος του Βυζαντινού Μουσείου*, 144–145, εικ. 115, and for the icon of the Deisis with Great Feast scenes (end of the fourteenth – beginning of the fifteenth c.) v. *ibid.*, 232, εικ. 196.

⁷⁴ Raïchevski, *Kraibrezhna Stara planina*, 477.

⁷⁵ Α. Στρατή, *Οι εικόνες του Χριστού Παντοκράτορος και της Παναγίας Οδηγήτριας στο καθολικό της Ι. Μ. Τιμίου Προδρόμου*

The infant Christ has an innocent look, high forehead, small nose, and a small mouth with stiff fleshy lips. This way of painting the face, built on the dark carnation, lightened with pale olive-green and ochre and outlines in brownish red, recalls works of the Palaeologan period of the fourteenth century, seen similarly in the image of Christ on the icon of the Virgin Hodegetria *Ελπής των απελπισμένων* (second quarter of the fourteenth c.)⁷⁶ in the church of the Virgin Acheiropoietos in Thessaloniki, Greece, as well as in the two-sided icon of the Virgin Hodegetria (third quarter of the fourteenth c.)⁷⁷ and St Nicholas, of Constantinopolitan provenance, now in Castello of Rhodes, Greece.

The typical characteristics of the faces of the Virgin and Christ on the main icon, as well as the way and style of painting, finds close parallels with Palaeologan works of the second and third quarter of the fourteenth century.

From the above it follows that the general iconographical scheme of the Great Feast scenes in the frame of the icon, as well as the secondary iconographical details, show influence of Palaeologan art and close parallels with masterpieces of the middle and second half of the fourteenth century. Judging by the Virgin and Christ on the main inlaid icon, it seems closely related to Palaeologan works of the second and third quarter of the fourteenth century.

There are several possibilities for the provenance of the miraculous icon of the Virgin Hodegetria with Great feast (Dodekaorton) scenes in Mesembria.⁷⁸ The dominant one claims that the icon flew to Mesembria and landed on an acacia tree, where the local Christians built the church of the Dormition of the Virgin⁷⁹ and where the icon is still kept. However, this version is not completely consistent with the historical data, according to which the church of the Dormition of the Virgin, originally called Virgin Chrysomagouriotissa (Χρυσομαγκουριώτισσα),⁸⁰ was built not on a tree, but on the remains of an older church. The available legends do not report from where the miraculous icon in Mesembria came, but its stylistic characteristics suggest a link with an artistic workshop of

Σερρών, ΔΧΑΕ 18 (1995) 125, fig. 6, who dates the icon to the second quarter of the fourteenth century; Ν. Δ. Σιώμοκος, *Βυζαντινές εικόνες της Θεσσαλονίκης (12^{ος}–15^{ος} αιώνας)*, in: *Το ημέτερον κάλλος. Βυζαντινές εικόνες από την Θεσσαλονίκη*, ed. Φ. Καραγιάννη, Γ. Φουστέρης, Θεσσαλονίκη 2018, 119–120, εικ. 18, who dates it to the middle of the fourteenth century.

⁷⁶ E. Kousoula, A. Ph. Trifonova, *A Paleologean icon of Virgin „Ελπής των απελπισμένων” from Thessaloniki*, Niš i Vizantija 17 (2009) 311, 314, fig. 3, 5; Αικ. Κούσουλα, Α. Ph. Trifonova, *Παναγία Οδηγήτρια «η Ελπής των απελπισμένων»*, in: *Το ημέτερον κάλλος. Βυζαντινές εικόνες από την Θεσσαλονίκη*, ed. Φ. Καραγιάννη, Γ. Φουστέρης, Θεσσαλονίκη 2018, 171, cat. no. 7.

⁷⁷ Α. Κατσιώτη, *Αμφιπρόσωπη εικόνα. Α' Παναγία Οδηγήτρια. Β'. Άγιος Νικόλαος*, in: *Μήτηρ Θεού. Απεικονίσεις της Παναγίας στη βυζαντινή τέχνη*, ed. Μ. Βασιλάκη, Μιλάνο–Αθήνα 2000, 418–421, cat. no. 66.

⁷⁸ For these versions v. E. Atanasova, *Mitút za letiashite ikoni*, in: *Bregút – moreto – Evropa. Modeli na interkulturalna komunikatsiia*, ed. M. Santova, I. Stanoeva, M. Ivanova, Sofia 2006, 157–158; Radoïnova, *Gürtsite*, 161–162; Gergova, *Chudesata*, 176–178.

⁷⁹ Radoïnova, *Gürtsite*, 161.

⁸⁰ Κωνσταντινίδης, *Η Μεσημβρία*, 151.

Constantinople, most likely from the second half or third quarter of the fourteenth century.

Each year, on the 15th of August, the Dormition of the Virgin and the feast day of the church, where the miraculous icon is kept, the icon is taken out for a public procession called a litany (Λιτανεία) around the old town of Nessebar.⁸¹ The icon is believed to cure different diseases, mainly psychological disorders,⁸² and that is why one of its names among the Bulgarians is “Crazy Maria” („Лудата Мария“).⁸³ Another name under which the icon is known is the “Black Virgin” (“Черната Богородица”),⁸⁴ an epithet commonly used for various icons of Virgin, most likely because of the dark patina that the painting has accumulated through the ages,⁸⁵ although it has recently been restored. Among the Greeks of Mesembria,⁸⁶ settled there since ancient times, mainly after the Fall of Constantinople to the Ottomans (1453), the icon is known as the Virgin Megariotissa (Μεγαριώτισσα), probably due to the fact that ancient Mesembria was founded as a colony of the Greek polis Megara in the sixth century BC. We can also suggest that the icon was probably called Virgin Chrysomagouriotissa (Χρυσομαγκουριώτισσα),⁸⁷ after the original name of the church of Mesembria where the icon arrived alone and which was replaced by the church of the Dormition of Virgin. It is interesting to note the existence of an icon with that rare and similar appellation – the icon of the Virgin Chrysomangouriotissa with saints (beginning of the nineteenth c.)⁸⁸ in the Archaeological Museum of Sofia, Bulgaria. The provenance of the icon is unknown, but it is assumed to be the relict of a forgotten cult of a miraculous icon of the Virgin from Sozopol on the Black Sea coast, as there is a parekklesion of the Virgin Chrysmagritotissa. We could also suppose that this icon could be related to the miraculous icon of the Virgin Hodegetria with Great Feast (Dodekaorton) scenes from Mesembria, if the epithet Chrysomagouriotissa is inscribed under the revetment, which cannot be either confirmed or discarded at this stage of research.

In conclusion, the general iconographical scheme of the examined icon of the Virgin Hodegetria with twelve

⁸¹ Gergova, *Chudesata*, 178.

⁸² Κωνσταντινίδης, *Η Μεσημβρία*, 151.

⁸³ Gergova, *Chudesata*, 176.

⁸⁴ Raichevski, *Kraibrezhna Stara planina*, 476; Radoïnova, *Gürtsite*, 160.

⁸⁵ According to another tradition, the icon was carried into battle, where the men died and the women covered their hair with black headscarves. Cf. Radoïnova, *Gürtsite*, 160.

⁸⁶ The Greek inhabitants of Mesembria, who after the anti-Greek movement in Bulgaria from 1906 and later gradually left the town till 1925, resettled in Greece, near Thessaloniki, where they established a settlement named Nea Mesimvria after their old hometown of Mesembria. There they built a church of the Virgin Megariotissa and painted a copy of the miracle-working icon from Nessebar, known as the Virgin Megariotissa (private note).

⁸⁷ This is only a hypothesis, as the appellation of the Virgin, which could have been inscribed under the silver revetment of the icon, is not known.

⁸⁸ For this icon v. I. Gergova, *Ikonata na Bogoroditsa Khrysmangurtiotisa*, PI 1 (2008) 11–16.

Great Feast (Dodekaorton) scenes from Nessebar brings to mind the works of the Palaeologan period, from the second half of the fourteenth century. The Great Feasts scenes, which surround the main depiction of the Virgin Hodegetria, show similarity with works mainly from the middle and the third quarter of the fourteenth century. The Virgin Hodegetria, which is an inlaid icon in the center of the bigger main icon, belongs to a widely spread iconographical type, seen also during the second and third quarter of the fourteenth century.

Concerning the prosopographical characteristics of the faces of the Virgin and Christ, as well as the style and the technique of painting, they show close relation with Palaeologan works of the second and third quarter of the fourteenth century.

The above mentioned allows us to suggest that the examined icon, which is believed to be miracle-working, can be included among the works of two anonymous painters from a Constantinopolitan painting workshop of Constantinople or a local one influenced or formed in the Byzantine capital. This seems logical not only because of the high quality of painting, but also due to the direct or indirect cultural and artistic influence of Constantinople in Mesembria,⁸⁹ which, during the second half of the fourteenth century (1367–1396)⁹⁰, was a part of the Byzantine Empire and a famous commercial center with a strategic port. Mesembria was located only 200 km away from the capital of Byzantium, and its trade, mainly on the Black Sea,⁹¹ no doubt helped the transfer of works of art.⁹²

⁸⁹ Numerous churches and icons of that period show that at this time Nessebar was experiencing a rise and cultural flourishing. The influence of Constantinople is seen in ecclesiastical architecture – there are numerous churches, which are similar to those of Constantinople in their structure and decoration. On this subject v. Π. Λ. Βοκοτόπουλος, *Η εκκλησιαστική αρχιτεκτονική στις Θρακικές ακτές του Εύξεινου Πόντου*, in: *Εικόνες από τις Θρακικές ακτές του Εύξεινου Πόντου*, ed. Α. Τούρτα, Αθήνα 2001, 33–34. The influence of Constantinople is also seen in ecclesiastical art – numerous icons of the high academic style were painted, with one notable example being the double-sided icon of the Crucifixion (second half of the fourteenth c.) from the church of Christ Akropolis in Nessebar. Cf. G. Gerov, *Une icône inconnue de l'époque des Paléologues avec la représentation de la Crucifixion*, in: *Μίλτος Γιαρίδης (1926–1996). Αφιέρωμα I*, ed. Α. Παλιούρας, Ιωάννινα 2003, εκ. 3–7; Α. Trifonova, *Παλαιολόγια εικόνα της Σταύρωσης στο Μουσείο της Βάρνας*, ΔΧΑΕ 31 (2010) 97, εκ. 9; eadem, *Paleologova ikona s Razpīatie Hristovo ot Arkheologicheskīia muzei – Varna*, Godishnik na Sofiiskīia universitet „Sv. Kliment Okhridski“, Tsentūr za slavīano-vizantiiski prouchvaniīa „Ivan Duichev“ 97 (16) (2011) 505, fig. 9; for the double-sided icon of the Virgin Hodegetria and the Crucifixion (second half of the fourteenth c.) in the Archaeological Museum of Nessebar, Bulgaria v. Chimbuleva, Giūzelev, *Ikonī ot Nesebūr*, 30–31, fig. 3; Trifonova, *Παλαιολόγια εικόνα*, 98, εκ. 10; eadem, *Paleologova ikona*, 505, fig. 10; for the icon of the Crucifixion (second half of the fourteenth c.) from the region of Nessebar, today in the Archaeological Museum of Varna, Bulgaria v. eadem, *Παλαιολόγια εικόνα*, 92, εκ. 1; eadem, *Paleologova ikona*, 499, fig. 1; for the two-sided icon with Christ Pantokrator (second half of the fourteenth c.) from Mesembria, today in the National Historical Museum of Sofia, Bulgaria v. eadem, *Παλαιολόγιες εικόνες στη Βουλγαρία*, ΔΧΑΕ 40 (2019) 288, εκ. 8.

⁹⁰ Giūzelev, *Nesebūrskata arkhiepiskopiīa*, 30.

⁹¹ Α. Λαΐου, *Η Θεσσαλονίκη, η ενδοχώρα της και ο οικονομικός της χώρος στην εποχή των Παλαιολόγων*, in: *Βυζαντινή Μακεδονία 324–1430 μ. Χ.*, Θεσσαλονίκη 1995, 193.

⁹² Trifonova, *Παλαιολόγιες εικόνες στη Βουλγαρία*, 297.

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Чудотворна икона Богородице Одигитрије са сценама дванаест Великих празника (трећа четвртина XIV века) из Несебара, Бугарска

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У чланку је представљена чудотворна икона Богородице Одигитрије са дванаест Великих празника (трећа четвртина XIV века) из цркве Успења Богородичиног у Несебару (Месемврија) у Бугарској.

У средишњем пољу иконе представљена је Богородица Одигитрија, док су на четири стране оквира тог поља насликане сцене дванаест Великих празника (сл. 1–2): 1. Благовести, 2. Рођење Христово, 3. Срећење и 4. Крштење Христово, на горњем делу оквира; 5. Преображење, 6. Васкрсење Лазарево и 7. Улазак у Јерусалим, на десној страни оквира; 8. Распеће, 9. Силазак у ад и 10. Вазнесење, на левој страни; 11. Силазак Светог Духа на апостоле и 12. Успење Богородице, на доњем делу оквира. Икона, за коју се верује да је чудотворна, припада по свему судећи категорији уметнутих (компаративних) икона и носи сребрни оков (XVIII–XIX век), као и многобројне вотивне дарове Богородици.

Општа иконографска схема иконе подсећа на дела палеологовског периода из друге половине XIV века. Представа Богородице Одигитрије, која је

насликана на икони уметнутој у средиште веће иконе, припада широко распрострањеном типу, који се често среће током друге и треће четвртине XIV века. Што се тиче сцена Великих празника, које окружују главну представу Богородице Одигитрије, оне показују иконографску и стилску сличност са делима, углавном палеолошким иконама, из средине и треће четвртине XIV века.

Главна икона и представе на оквиру остварења су анонимних сликара треће четвртине XIV века, који су вероватно дошли из неке уметничке радионице Константинопоља. Могуће је, такође, да су били припадници неке локалне тајфе која је стварала под утицајем уметности византијске престонице или је у њој образована. Та претпоставка о вези са Цариградом заснована је на чињеници да је реч о сликарским остварењима веома високог квалитета и да је константинопољски утицај у Месемврији, која је током друге половине XIV века (1367–1396) припадала византијском царству, био веома изражен у културном и уметничком погледу.

