

## Shrines in a Fluid Space

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# Shrines in a Fluid Space

*The Shaping of New Holy Sites in the  
Ionian Islands, the Peloponnese and Crete under  
Venetian Rule (14th–16th Centuries)*

By

Argyri Dermitzaki



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# Introduction

This book is the outcome of research carried out within the project ‘From Venice to the Holy Land: *Mise-en-scène* and Forms of Perception of Holy Sites along the Sea Routes to Palestine (1300–1550)’, funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation and supervised by Professor Michele Bacci at the University of Fribourg. The project’s research focus is a particular geographic space that was shaped by the Late Medieval sea routes leading from Venice to the Holy Land. This space is especially distinctive, given that it does not correspond to any linguistic or ethnic boundaries, yet it was perceived as an autonomous, homogeneous ‘holy topography’. The project explores the historical, geographical, social and cultural dynamics that led to the shaping of a sacred topography along this sea route.

Navigating along the coasts of Dalmatia, Albania, Corfu, northern Greece, the Peloponnese, Crete, Rhodes and Cyprus, the galleys carrying the pilgrims to Jerusalem regularly stopped in each of the major ports, and the travellers then had a chance to see local relics, mementoes of saints and other religious attractions. Pilgrims tended to project their wish to experience and appropriate the holiness attributed to the Jerusalem *loca sancta* onto the much less famous holy and sacred sites they were able to discover and appreciate along the sea route; as a result, several otherwise peripheral or secondary cult locations obtained a much larger audience and were invested with new meanings.<sup>1</sup> The goal of the project is to understand the ways in which such sites came to be perceived as being imbued with exceptional qualities and the specific artistic strategies which were worked out to communicate their special status to Western and local visitors alike.<sup>2</sup>

Within the framework of the project, a database encompassing the surviving pilgrims’ travelogues from a period spanning between the 14th and the 16th centuries was created. These texts, written in almost all Western European languages, are for the first time treated as essential sources in relation to the sacred places outside Palestine.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, the pilgrims’ narratives offer

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1 On the distinction between holy and sacred, see Turner and Turner 1978; Turner 1979; Smith 1987; Stoddard and Morinis 1997.

2 The theoretical approach to the subject is described here as analysed in the outline of the project ‘Von Venedig zum Heiligen Land. Ausstattung und Wahrnehmung von Pilgerorten an der Mittelmeerküste (1300–1550)’ by Michele Bacci, who has worked extensively on these ideas. See Bacci 2004b; Bacci 2012; Bacci 2013a; Bacci 2031b; Bacci 2014; Bacci 2017a; Bacci 2018.

3 Concerning the sources of the pilgrims’ travelogues of the Late Antique and Early Medieval periods, several collections and translations of the texts have been published: Geyer 1965;

numerous subjective, individual interpretations of a historical and religious context, which describe in detail the cult sites on the sea route from Venice to the Holy Land. In fact, in some cases of churches, relics or cults that are no longer extant, these travelogues are the only sources attesting to their existence. The pilgrims who described their experiences in their travel books have played an active role in the construction of the 'holy topography' of this sea route. Focussing on the main ports of call on the way of the galleys travelling to Jerusalem, the studied geographic area has been divided and examined separately by the participants of the project, although always within the structure of the larger network.<sup>4</sup>

The present survey deals with the part of the pilgrims' itinerary through the Ionian Sea and towards the island of Crete. Following their journey within this geographical area, the shaping of its sacred topography is observed and analysed. The galleys regularly docked at the Venetian-controlled ports of Kassiope, Corfu, the Strophades, Modon (present-day Methoni) and Candia (present-day Heraklion), and their passengers were introduced to the local cults of the Virgin of Kassiope on Corfu and the Virgin Thalassomachousa ('the sea fighter') at Strophades (both important maritime shrines worshipped by the sailors); the patron saints of Modon and Candia, the pilgrim saint, St Leo, and St Titus, the disciple of the Apostle Paul, respectively; and the impressive collection of relics of the Franciscans of Candia and the sites connected to the apostle's visit to Crete. As former parts of the Byzantine Empire in Greece, the studied towns were inhabited by a population of Greeks and Latins, presenting a culturally and religiously mixed society, very interesting and peculiar to Western visitors. Indeed, all of the major studied cultic sites, with the exception of the Franciscan monastery of St Francis of Candia, are related to pre-existing local Orthodox cults that were appropriated by the Venetians after their arrival and venerated by Greeks and Latins alike.

The Greek realm within the Mediterranean Latin-ruled context was a strategic geographical area lying between East and West, where different confessional and linguistic communities coexisted, merged and left their imprint on the entire Mediterranean basin. Lying on the main sea route leading from

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Wilkinson 1977; De Sandoli 1979–1984; Wilkinson, Hill and Ryan 1988; Huygens 1994. However, the later pilgrims' reports from the 14th and 15th centuries are scattered in old publications. A few of them can be found online ([www.digiberichte.de](http://www.digiberichte.de)), while Reinhold Röhrich provides the most complete bibliography: Röhrich 1890. The most recent works are: Ganz-Blättler 1990; Paravicini 1995; Gomez-Géraud 1999.

4 More specifically, Angela Schiffauer studied the city of Venice, Vesna Scepanovic the Dalmatian coast, Gianvito Campobasso the Albanian coast and Sofia Zoitou the island of Rhodes.



the West to the East and vice versa, the territories of the Byzantine Empire in Greece have been throughout their history a bone of contention between the prevailing rival political powers and, following the Fourth Crusade and the occupation of Constantinople in 1204, fell under the Latins. Over time, some of the newly founded principalities of the Latin Empire changed hands, some returning to the Byzantines before or after the recapture of Constantinople by Michael VIII Palaiologos in 1261 and others remaining under Latin rule for centuries to come. Belonging to the latter group, the studied ports of Corfu, the Strophades, Modon and Crete all share a long period of Latin occupation that left deep traces on their political, cultural and religious history. Inhabited since the prehistoric period, the treated areas also share the rich history of ancient Greece, the Roman Empire and Orthodox Byzantium.

During the studied period, all the ports and towns under consideration were subject to *La Serenissima Repubblica di San Marco* – annexed in different periods and under varying circumstances – and remained under Latin rule well after the end of the 16th century (with the exception of Modon, which was occupied by the Ottomans in 1500 to be recaptured by the Venetians in 1686).<sup>5</sup> The coexistence of Latins with a Greek Orthodox population spawned societies with very particular characteristics that lay between East and West. Indeed, all the Latin-ruled territories of Greece share common elements inherited by the Venetians that are primarily apparent in such big commercial port towns as Corfu, Modon and Candia. Political and religious practices and ceremonies, architecture and Western mentality found a breeding ground and, combined with the rich local culture, religion and customs, formed societies whose Byzantine-Levantine character is still apparent.

On the other hand, the monastery of Strophades constitutes an exception. In the case of this small cenobitic monastery, inhabited only by monks, the interaction and merging of cultures could not take place, at least not to such an extent. Due to its geographic isolation and because of its importance as a safe stopping point, regardless of the political instability in the area, the monastic community that lived on and defended the island seems to have remained for the major part of its history, at least from the early 15th century onwards,

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5 The Venetian period of Corfu and the Strophades lasted until the fall of the Republic in 1797. Modon was taken over by the Ottomans in 1500, reoccupied by the Venetians in 1686 and occupied again by the Ottomans in 1715. Crete was occupied by the Ottomans in 1669. About the period of the Venetian occupation, see for Corfu: Miller 1903; Papageorgiou 1920; Tsougarakis and Lock 2014; Asonitis 1999; Asonitis 2003; Asonitis 2007; Hirst and Sammon 2014 / Strophades: Mousouras 2003; Tsougarakis 2012; Merkouri 2020 / Modon: Thiriet 1959; Bon 1969; Hodgetts 1974; Penna 2010; Foutakis 2017 / Crete: Thiriet 1959; Miller 1908; Maltezou 1988; Tsougarakis 1988; Detorakis 1990.

Greek Orthodox.<sup>6</sup> Notwithstanding, over the course of time and irrespective of the prevailing political power in the area or the rite of the monks living at the monastery, Venice and the pope appear to have actively intervened in matters concerning it, usually by providing financial support.<sup>7</sup> So, the Latin occupation did leave its traces in this case also, but undeniably less apparent than in the other major ports of call, where the protracted coexistence of the populations led to the formation of new societies.

As in all Latin-ruled Greek territories, the intention of the *Serenissima* was to maintain the delicate equilibrium between governors and governed. This is why strict orders were issued to all officials to respect the rights of the natives. The latter were also granted the privilege of being able to take their issues and complaints directly to Venice, a right they often exercised, usually through their clergy.<sup>8</sup> In the context of ratifying their authority, as well as achieving a level of homogeneity in society, Venetians introduced into political and religious life a rich ritual that found a ready acceptance, since most of it emanated from Byzantine ceremonials and was familiar to the locals.<sup>9</sup>

Deriving from the above, Venetian religious policy appeared in broad lines quite lenient towards Orthodox subjects, although this was not always the case. The organisation of the Orthodox churches of the *Serenissima's* acquisitions was not based on a common plan, but rather depended on the period and the way in which each area was annexed to the Venetian state.<sup>10</sup> During

6 About the ecclesiastical status quo of the monastery, see p. 105, n. 36 herein.

7 Mousouras 2003, 37, 46–47; Tsougarakis 2012, 86–88.

8 About the right of the locals of Corfu and Modon to address their issues directly to Venice, see Leontsini 2014, 39; Miller 1903, 209–211; Chondrogiannis 2010, 20; Voskopoulou 2005, 29–36; Nikiforou 2014, 143; Gasparis 1993b, 123–139; Karapidakis 1998, 179–190; Asonitis 2003, 49–68; Mihailaris 2004, 468–477; Hodgetts 1974, 75; Foutakis 2017, 269. Also, the monks of the monastery of Strophades, which was throughout its history supported financially by Venice, often acknowledged and at times invoked the right, if not the ‘obligation’ of Venice to intervene in the monastery’s affairs. See pp. 95–96 below and Sanuto 1903, col. 266.

9 Concerning public secular and religious ceremonies on Corfu, see Nikiforou 2014; and for Crete, see Papadaki 1995. In the case of Modon there are no surviving official documents attesting to such ceremonies, but it could be safely assumed that also in that case, just as on Corfu and Crete and in other Venetian-ruled Greek territories, Latins and Orthodox participated in common liturgies and processions, most probably related to the town’s cathedral and its venerated relics. Nevertheless, sources of the period do not provide sufficient information, and there is no evidence testifying to the existence of such a rich spectrum of political and religious rituals including members of both rites, as on the aforementioned islands.

10 Spanakis 1959, 243–244; Maltezou 1988, 131–132; Panopoulou 1993, 288–292; Karydis 2010, 296; Andrianakis and Giapitsoglou 2012, 41–42.

the 13th century Venice appears to have been more aggressive towards the Orthodox, abolishing in most cases the existing Orthodox bishoprics.<sup>11</sup> The cathedrals of Corfu, Modon and Candia, along with the relics kept in them, were seized by each town's Latin rulers, but the locals maintained the right to venerate them in the Latin cathedral. Nevertheless, following the motto *prima Veneziani e poi Christiani* and trying to keep both parts of the two prevailing rites satisfied, Venice made serious efforts to avoid tensions between its Orthodox subjects and the Catholic Church. Hence, the local populations of all the studied towns held on to their Orthodox faith.

Following a policy of independence from both major religious centres, Venice attenuated the involvement of Rome in matters concerning the Orthodox population under its rule, while it tried to limit Orthodox reliance on the Ecumenical Patriarchate, thus forming what could be described as a 'Venetian Orthodox Church', with very specific characteristics. The two rites coexisted (not without occasional tensions) in all aspects of religious life, in light of the general interest and the mutual recognition of the sacred mysteries of them both. However, the official and decisive unification act, the performing of a common liturgy of the Eucharist from a single chalice, was never attempted.<sup>12</sup> Overall, and aside from the fact that the Latin Church had all the preconditions for developing and prevailing over the Orthodox (legal and official ascendancy, financial resources and the favour of the *Serenissima*), this was never achieved. On the contrary, the Orthodox Church seems to have gained power and independence over the years and in some cases, such as the towns of Corfu and Candia, appears to have been unequivocally prevalent.<sup>13</sup>

11 About the history and organisation of the local Orthodox churches, see for Corfu: Miller 1903; Papageorgiou 1920; Tsitsas 1969; Karydis 2010; Mihailaris 2004; Asonitis 2009; Karydis 2011; Pitsakis 2004, 481–510 / Strophades: Mousouras 2003; Merkouri 2020 / Modon: Tsougarakis and Lock 2014; Panopoulou 1993; Karydis 2010; Anagnostakis 2010a, 201; Hodgetts 1974 / Crete: Tsougarakis 1988; Detorakis 1990; Spanakis 1959; Maltezos 1988, 131–132; Panopoulou 1993; Karydis 2010.

12 Pitsakis 2004, 487. About the religious policy of Venice for its acquisitions in Greece, see Gasparis 1993b, 123–139; Panopoulou 1993, 281–313; Karydis 2010, 295–305.

13 On Corfu, Orthodoxy gradually gained so much ground that 20 years before the end of the Venetian occupation only two noble families retained the Catholic faith, while, according to a document of 1406, the Augustinian monastery of the Annunziata was at the time the only Latin religious centre on the island. In the 16th century two of the nine Latin churches of the town appear to have been abandoned, and, overall, the penetration of Catholicism was significantly limited. On Crete, the centuries of coexistence of the Latins of the island with the Greek Orthodox, the prevalence of the latter's linguistic, religious and cultural identity, the resilience of the Venetian authorities towards the local culture and the mixed marriages attested already from the late 13th century led to the significant decrease of Catholics on the island. Several documents attest to the gradual assimilation

The lengthy Latin presence in Greece defined the political as well as the cultural history of the occupied towns. The coexistence of Latins and Greeks spawned idiosyncratic societies and cultures that managed to arrive at a cultural conjunction between the Orthodox and the Catholic worlds. These phenomena, mainly in regard to artistic and cultural production, have been studied by archaeologists and art historians focussing on the Mediterranean as an area of encounter and interaction.<sup>14</sup> Thus, all of the cult sites included in this survey have been more or less extensively studied. However, pilgrims' testimonies have been used only sparsely, while the monuments and cult objects have not been treated as pilgrimage sites, parts of the network of holy and sacred sites dotting the sea route from Venice to Jerusalem.<sup>15</sup>

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- of the Latins: according to a report of the papal nuncio Alberto Bolognetti (1578–1581), out of the 200,000 inhabitants of Crete, only 2000 were Catholics, while as reported by the Latin archbishop of Crete in 1659, the Catholics on the island were only 500. Miller 1908, 218; Tsitsas 1969, 58–60; Skoufari 2014, 268; Karapidakis 1998, 144; Maltezou 1988, 152.
- 14 The period of the Venetian occupation in Greece has been extensively studied by historians and archaeologists. See indicatively Miller 1903; Miller 1908; Kitsiki-Panagopoulos 1979; Kitsiki-Panagopoulos 1981; Maltezou 1999; Karydis 2010; Karydis 2011; Tsougarakis and Lock 2014; Tsougarakis 2012; Leontsini 2014. About the port and castle of Kassiopi, see indicatively Stamatopoulos 1993; Fachetta 2001; Livieratos 2001. About the icon of the Virgin, see Tsitsas 1968; Vokotopoulos 1990; Bacci 2004b; Bacci 2012; Bacci *et al.* 2017. About the town of Corfu, its history and monuments, see indicatively Stamatopoulos 1993; Karydis 2007a; Asonitis 2009; Nikiforou 1998; Nikiforou 2014; Agoropoulou 1976; Agoropoulou-Birbili 1982; Agoropoulou 2004. About art and architecture on the Ionian Islands, see indicatively Tsitsas 1969; Agoropoulou 1976; Hiera Metropolis Kerkyras 1994; Vokotopoulos 1970; Karydis 2004–2006; Zivas 1991; Skoufari 2014. About the Strophades islands and the monastery of the Virgin, see Mousouras 2003; Poulimenos and Stoufi-Poulimenou 1998; Theodoropoulou 2006. About the icon of the Virgin Thalassomachousa of Strophades, see Konomos 1988, 46; Konomos 1969; Acheimastou-Potamianou 1997, 46–49; Acheimastou-Potamianou 1999; Acheimastou-Potamianou 2000; Baltoyanni 2000. About the town and port of Modon, see indicatively Hodgetts 1974; Gertwagen 2000b; Kontogiannis and Aggelopoulou 2006; Nanetti 2001; Nanetti 2007; Nanetti 2012; Malliaris 2012; Foutakis 2017. About the cult of St Leo, see Follieri 1971; Bouras 1989; Pallas 1963; Kappas 2010. About Candia and its port, see indicatively Maltezou 1988; Tsougarakis 1988; Detorakis 1990; Gertwagen 1988; Gertwagen 2000; Georgopoulou 1994; Georgopoulou 1995; Jacoby 2010. About the town's patron saint, St Titus, see indicatively Xanthoudides 1914; Detorakis 1970; Halkin 1961; Georgopoulou 1995. About the other relics and icons of the town and their use in religious and secular public ceremonies, see Georgopoulou 1995; Papadaki 1995. About the churches and monasteries of the town, see indicatively Gerola 1903; Gerola 1908; Gerola 1918; Georgopoulou 1994; Georgopoulou 2010; Andrianakis and Giapitsoglou 2012; Starida 2016. About art and architecture on Crete, see indicatively Andrianakis and Giapitsoglou 2012; Starida 2016; Gratziou 2010; Georgopoulou 1995; Chatzidakis 1974a; Chatzidakis 1974b; Kazanaki-Lappa 1998; Paliouras 1973; Vassilaki 2010; Lymberopoulou 2010; Newall 2010.
- 15 As mentioned above, pilgrims' narratives have been used only sparsely in studies concerning the studied areas. However, it is worth citing the work of *Démocratie*

As far as the general theoretical background is concerned, the religious monuments' function as sacred spaces from a geographical, archaeological, historical and sociological point of view has also been addressed.<sup>16</sup> The significance of 'holy sites' has gradually been acknowledged by art historical research. This category may include land, stones or elements of the urban or natural landscape that became cult objects of their own, in the sense that they recall the religious figures and constitutive events of the Christian tradition.<sup>17</sup> The interdisciplinary approach of the *loca sancta* in Palestine could play an exemplary role in research on the 'holy topographies'. Nevertheless, art history has primarily been devoted to the interpretation of the mimetic replicas of Jerusalem buildings, while it has not allowed a systematic distinction among the imitation of external forms of architecture, the symbolic visualisation and the material transmission of the sanctity associated with Jerusalem.<sup>18</sup> The issue of spatial arrangement, liturgical furnishings and the different forms of perception of Christian buildings have been discussed in various new research approaches.<sup>19</sup> Only in recent years has the role of architecture and art as pictorial and spatial strategies been emphasised, whereby the medieval cult of saints, as well as early- and late-modern image worship, could be staged and promoted.<sup>20</sup>

Using the above-mentioned studies as valuable tools, and moving one step forward, this survey attempts to trace the formation of the pilgrims' sacred topography and to approach the medieval art and culture of the studied towns and ports in relation to the different functions and characteristics of the cult sites. The goal is to observe the dynamics that led to the elevation of regional cults into international pilgrimages, inserting them into the existing network of sites dotting the sea route from Venice to Jerusalem. In addition to social, cultural and religious aspects, this approach fosters an analysis of the material – architectural and pictorial – context in which not only images but many kinds of material objects were sanctified and perceived, as well as an examination of the ways and strategies (forms of visual interaction with the

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Hemmerdinger-Iliadou, who collected 60 excerpts of pilgrim travelogues concerning Crete for the period spanning between 1323 and 1680. See Hemmerdinger-Iliadou 1967. In addition, in his book about the town of Modon published in 2017, Panagiotis Foutakis gathered a significant number of mentions to the town from several sources, including a large quantity of travelogues. See Foutakis 2017.

- 16 See indicatively Park 1994; Tilley 1994; Bradley 1998; Bradley 2000; Vauchez 2000; Dammacco and Otranto 2004.
- 17 Halbwachs 1941; Hoffmann and Wolf 2012.
- 18 Krautheimer 1942; Bresc-Bautier 1974; Ousterhout 1990; Kühnel 1997–1998; Morris 2005; Wharton 2006.
- 19 Bock *et al.* 2002; Altripp and Nauerth 2006; Palazzo 2008; Lidov 2009.
- 20 Yasin 2009; Crook 2000; Hahn 1997; Bacci 2017a.

natural environment, framing devices of the main cultic foci, forms of lighting, use of textiles, barriers, tabernacles, ciboria, lamps, candles, ex-votos, etc.) that were employed in order to frame and promote the cultic attractions.<sup>21</sup>

Pilgrims' travelogues are treated as primary sources in relation to the studied monuments and cults. The five ports of call are viewed through the eyes of the travellers, and the main cultic attractions are primarily approached through their narratives. The number of references to a site in the travelogues could be used as an attestation of its importance and thus its inclusion in the pilgrims' holy itinerary, while the descriptions that eloquently express the individual experiences of sacred buildings and cult objects provide important information about the monuments. Focussing on the period defined by the overall project, that is, between 1300 and 1550, and by scrutinising the travelogues, the devotional experiences of the Western religious travellers within the studied area are reconstructed, and the various forms of the cultic sites' evolution and their perception as nodes of a wider network of the pilgrims' 'holy topography' are traced. Given that many of the sites appearing in the narratives concern cults and monuments about which little information has survived, while they have not been extensively studied and/or are no longer extant, pilgrims' descriptions prove to be a valuable source of information (as in the cases of small churches or of the mendicant monasteries of Corfu and Modon). Hence, even though some of these did not attract particular attention on the part of the pious visitors and are thus poorly documented in the texts, they are presented and analysed in the present study as constructive elements of the wider context of the religious experience of Western European pilgrims sailing within the Greek realm of the Venetian *Stato da Mar* towards Jerusalem.

21 Bacci 2017a; Walker Bynum 2011; Rambelli 2007.

## Entering the Ionian: The Island of Corfu

[...] entering the straits of Corfu we saw a big ruined city, called Cassopo, which is said to have been destroyed by a dragon [...]<sup>1</sup>

[...] we arrived at the port of Corfu. This is a city built on an island, presently dominated by the Signoria, and, according to what we read in all the cosmographies, it was named Corcyra and inhabited by the Phaiacs [...]<sup>2</sup>



### 1 The Port of Kassiopi

The small natural harbour of Kassiopi is located in the north-east of Corfu (Fig. 1). The area has been inhabited since the 4th or the 2nd century BC and it was a thriving city during the Roman period.<sup>3</sup> The castle, which still lies in ruins on top of the hill above the port, was built on the debris of a Roman one in the Byzantine era, most probably during the 12th century, and was destroyed by the Venetians in 1386, when they occupied the port of Kassiopi.<sup>4</sup> From the Early Christian period the church of the Virgin Kassopitra stood near the harbour, on a spot visible from the ships passing by (Fig. 2).

The port and the church of the Virgin in Kassiopi are examined separately from the town of Corfu, not only because they are treated this way by the travellers and pilgrims, but also because of their importance in the pilgrims' holy itinerary. Located 37 km away, and hardly accessible by land, and 18 nautical

1 Santo Brasca (1480): '[...] intrando nel canale de Corfo trovassemo una terra grande, ma destruta, chiamata Casoppo, la quale se dice esser desfacta da uno dracone [...]'. Momigliano Lepschy 1966, 59. All translations are my own unless otherwise stated.

2 Antonio da Crema (1486): '[...] nel porto di Corfù si ritrovassimo giunti. Questa è cità in insula edificata, al presente dominiata per la Signoria, e, per quanto se lege in tutti li gosmographi, fu nominata Corcyra et habitata da li Pheaci [...]'. Nori 1996, 45.

3 Voyadjis and Raptaki 2007, 29; Dakararis 1989, 9.

4 Linardos 1976, 15, 20; Agoropoulou-Birbili 1982, 222; Voyadjis and Raptaki 2007, 29; Asonitis 1999, 122; Matton 1960, 73.

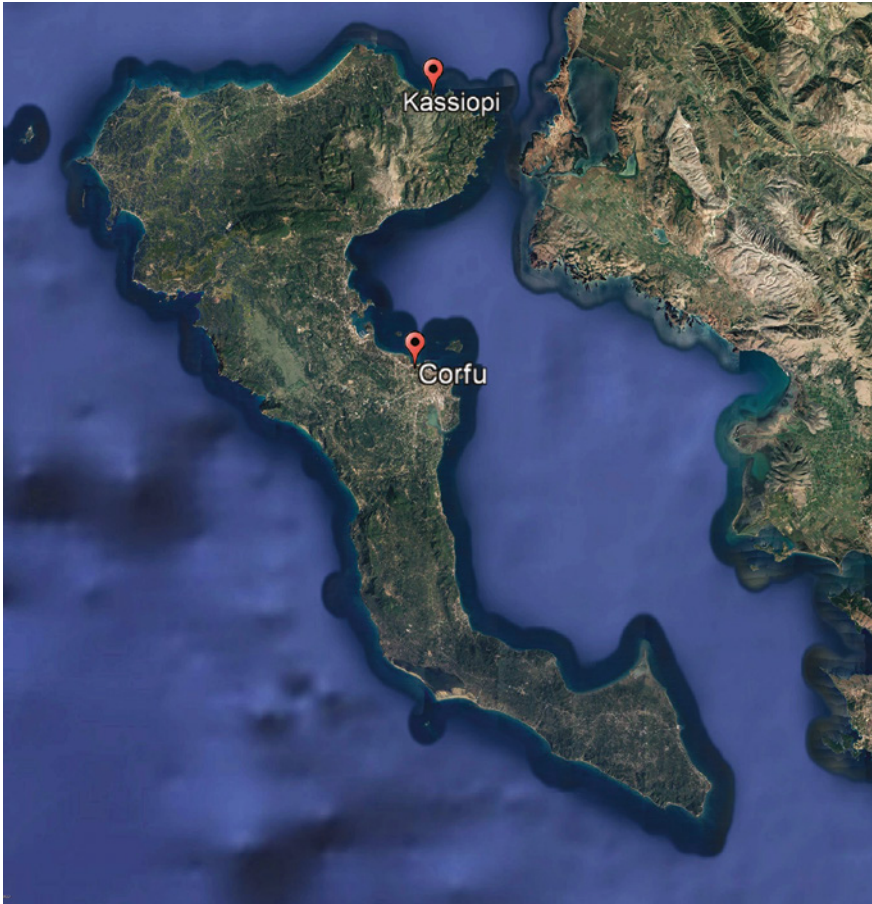


FIGURE 1 Map of the island of Corfu, indicating the locations of Kassiopi and the city of Corfu

miles by sea from the town of Corfu, Kassiopi is perceived as an autonomous site, completely separated from the port and town of the capital city of the island. Kassiopi is the first site on Corfu, and by extension Greece, that is mentioned in the travelogues. It is a liminal place both in geographical as well as in cultural terms, since it was the first stop of the galleys as they left Latin Europe and entered the former Byzantine territory of Greece.

The veneration of the Virgin of Kassiopi as a protector of ships and sailors existed long prior to the arrival of the Venetians, but it was mainly, if not only, associated with the seafarers sailing through the area. It was after the 14th century that the cult surpassed its regional character and was integrated into the





FIGURE 2 The church of the Virgin Kassopitra, Corfu, as seen from the port

holy topography of the pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem.<sup>5</sup> The initial grounds for the insertion of the site into this network of worship-worthy shrines were strictly practical and connected to the marine experience of the pilgrims and the legends that many of them attest, as conveyed to them by the seafarers.

Sailing through the Adriatic, right before entering the Ionian Sea and the territory of Greece, pilgrims' galleys would have to pass through the perilous straits between the island of Corfu and the mainland. Located at the north end of these straits, Kassiope, a natural harbour well known to sailors as a safe anchorage, is referred to by most of the pilgrims, always in connection with the church of the Virgin situated a 'stone's throw away from the sea'.<sup>6</sup>

The straits the galleys had to pass through near the coast of Corfu, as narrow as 1.3 nautical miles at some points, have a shallow and sandy area dotted with

5 The church of the Virgin in Kassiope was also part of a sub-network in the framework of the larger network of the sacred sites along the sea route from Venice to the Holy Land, one of Marian cult related sites that dot the navigation route. About the sacred sites on the sea route from Venice to the Holy Land, see Bacci 2004b; Bacci 2012. About the Marian cult sites on the same route, see Bacci *et al.* 2017.

6 Nicola de Martoni (1394–1395): 'Est prope mare per jactum lapidis.' Piccirillo 2003, 164.

clusters of rocks, called the Serpa.<sup>7</sup> The pilgrim Georges Lengherand (1485–1486), mayor of Mons, describes the straits and the difficulty of sailing through them: ‘On Wednesday, the 28th day of June, because of the poor wind we could not sail to a distance and we found ourselves between the rocks and mountains of the coasts of Turkey and many rocks surrounded by the sea towards the opposite coast [of Corfu].’<sup>8</sup> The Serpa, depending on the currents, either emerges or sinks, being thus visible or not.<sup>9</sup> The crossing was equally difficult near the coast of Albania and Butrint. Bearing in mind that during the studied period nautical instruments and charts were of questionable usefulness, the sailors thus tried to navigate along the coast relying on their empirical visual memory and, of course, on the wind, so one can imagine the dangers of sailing through the straits.

The perilous navigation of these narrow straits is emphasised in the portolan charts and the *isolarii* of the time, and the port of Kassiope is suggested as a safe anchorage, while most of them also mention the church of the Virgin.<sup>10</sup> The port also had springs of fresh water, vital for the galleys and their passengers; thus the evocation of the site in the *Santa Parola*, a seafarer’s prayer sung in times of danger and evoking saints and sites on the sea route leading from the West to the East, seems to come as a natural consequence.<sup>11</sup> Very often, if the winds were not favourable, the galleys were obliged to stay in or even return to the port of Kassiope and wait for the wind to turn ‘in a state of ennui and melancholy’.<sup>12</sup> Many pilgrims mention this dangerous passage: Bernhard

7 The word ‘Serpa’ is considered to derive either from the Latin word *serpo*, to crawl, or the Albanian word *sarp*, stone. Bounias 1954, 218; Tsitsas 1973, 64–65.

8 ‘Le mercredy, xxviii<sup>e</sup> jour dudit mois de juing, à cause que le vent nous fut petit, ne peusmes faire ce jour ghaïres de chemin, mais nous retrouvâmes arrière les roches et montaignes du costé de la Turquie et mesmes plusieurs roches enclavées en playnne mer de l’autre costé [...]’ Méniglaise 1861, 94.

9 Marieni 1830, 472.

10 Portolan of Gratius Benincasa (1435–1445): ‘El porto de Chasopoli sie sotto ala terra e la terra sie lontana dala marina meza balestrata e in questo porto a madona santa maria.’ Kretschmer 1909, 418.

11 Anonymous, *Lo itinerario de andare in Hierusalem* (1469): ‘Qua piliamo di l’aqua dolce, che certo in galea no n’era di bona.’ Longo 2007, 153. About the *Santa Parola* litany, see Bacci 2004b, 223–248; Bacci 2013b; Kretschmer 1909, 320, 516, 418; Bayer 2007, 8; Falchetta 2001, 13; Selmi 2001, 18; Livieratos 2001, 29–30, 34.

12 Georges Lengherand of Mons (1485–1486): ‘Nous n’eusmes pas cheminé demie mille quand le vent tourna tout contraire, et à ceste cause failly avaller le voile et ancrer de rechief, car nous estions avironnez de roches: et demourâmes en cest estat, obstant que c’estoit dommage à nostre patron pour la despence, jusques à environ une heure après midy que lors feymes voile [...]’ Méniglaise 1861, 94; Philippe de Voisins: ‘Et quand feurent allés et navigués en la mer cinquante mille avant, feurent constraintz retourner

von Breydenbach (1483–1484) wrote that, ‘If we had not had a good wind in this channel, we would have had to face great fears and worries. Because this channel has a greedy, unfathomable throat, which from time to time attracts the ships and devours them [...]’; while some pilgrims faced turbulent sea and bad weather in the area, and the fear for their life is vividly reflected in their travelogues.<sup>13</sup> Alessandro di Filippo Rinuccini, travelling in 1474, describes the pilgrims’ fear as they were trying to protect themselves during a storm by praying and comforting each other.<sup>14</sup>

Consequently, the straits between Corfu and the mainland and the harbour of Kassiope are closely linked together by an opposition: the danger of the passage and the safety (both earthly and divine) of the port. This antithesis is reflected in the legend narrated by the seafarers – and reproduced by most of the travelogues – about the dragon or sea monster that destroyed the ancient town of Kassiope to punish the sinful inhabitants for their ‘sin of sodomy’, sparing only the lives of the people of the church.<sup>15</sup> The dragon supposedly lived in the sea near the town, under what is referred to as *Scopulus Serpenti*, the Dragon’s Rock, which could possibly be identified as the area of the so-called Serpa, dotted with clusters of rocks that emerge from the sea and sink back again. Even the name Serpa could, for the Western pilgrims, bring to mind the word serpent, one that seafarers claimed still lived in the area, and some alleged to have seen.<sup>16</sup> Other narratives mention that the dragon lived in the

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- ariere a cause de la tourmente jusques a Nostre-Dame de Gasopie en ladicte isle de Torffo, ou demurarent iij jours en grand enuy et melencolie.’ Tamizey de Larroque 1883, 39–40.
- 13 ‘Hätten wir in diesem Kanal keinen guten Wind gehabt, dann hätten wir große Ängste und Sorgen ausgestanden. Denn dieser Kanal besitzt einen gierigen, unergründlichen Schlund, der die Schiffe anzieht und von Zeit zu Zeit verschlingt.’ Mozer 2010, 649.
- 14 ‘I pellegrini, la magior parte, stavan sotto coverta, non a dormire ma a raccomandarsi a Iddio e a sancta Cecilia che piacesse di liberarne da tal fortuna et chi diceva l’uficio matutinale, altri dicevano psalmi, altri orationi divote, chi invocava uno sancto et chi j<sup>o</sup> altro, chi confortava l’uno l’altro a stare di buon animo et non temere, sperando in Dio che.cci farebbe misericordia; altri, vinti dal travaglio del mare, stavano smarriti et mezzi balordi.’ Calamai 1993, 85. The German Dominican friar Felix Fabri (1480, 1483–1484) also writes: ‘Mansit autem tempestas haec per totam noctem, et in magnis angustiis stetimus.’ Hassler 1843–1849, vol. 3, 352.
- 15 Ulrich Brunner (1470): ‘[...] dobey hat ein stat gelegenn, dye meure sten noch, die do verstoret ist worden von einem trachen propter peccatum sodomiticum, und etliche frumme leut, die in der selben stat gewest sein, habenn unser frawen angeruffen, und als der trach ausz dem durckischen gepirg kumen ist, do ist ein wint kommen und hat den trachen zu trumern an ein fels geslagen, und an der selben stat ist die obgenant kirche in der ere unser liebenn frawen gebawet [...]’. Röhricht 1906, 21. Also Felix Fabri and Paul Walther Guglingen: Hassler 1843–1849, vol. 3, 352; Sollweck 1892, 77.
- 16 Botho zu Stolberg (1493–1494): ‘[...] vnd dasz selbige thier haben dy schiffluthe noch inwendigk vunff Jarn adder nehri gesehin also sy ons vnderrichten’. Jacobs 1868, 195–196.

mountains of the opposite shore, possibly hinting at the dangerous currents near the Strait of Butrint.<sup>17</sup> Almost a century after the destruction of the castle by the Venetians in 1386, the legend of a dragon with burning breath appeared, probably mirroring the impression provoked in the defenders of the castle by the use of cannon and gunpowder: 'In this small town near the sea, there was a castle and a rock where a dragon lived. The dragon flew every day over the town and with his fiery breath polluted the air, and the inhabitants died. Those who survived left the town, which remained desolated.'<sup>18</sup>

### 1.1 *The Church of the Virgin Kassopitra*

As far as the celebrated church of the Virgin Kassopitra is concerned, its actual date of construction is uncertain. It was probably built in the Early Christian period as a three-aisled basilica on the site of the pre-existing temple of Cassios Zeus.<sup>19</sup> There were two side chapels attached to the main building, one to the north, dedicated to St George, and one to the south, dedicated to St Sophia. The chapel of St Sophia was completely destroyed, probably in 1537 during the first Ottoman siege of Corfu, while the chapel of St George lay in ruins up to some point in the 19th century, when it was torn down in order to create space for the cemetery to the north of the church.<sup>20</sup> During the medieval period the church probably had the form of a small single-aisled basilica, either wooden-roofed or covered with a barrel vault belonging to the type conventionally known as 'Heptanesian'.<sup>21</sup> There is no further information about its architecture, form or decoration, since it was destroyed by Ottoman pirates in 1537, probably restored and then destroyed again in 1571.<sup>22</sup>

As mentioned above, the church of the Virgin in Kassiope was located very near to the port and was visible from the sea (Fig. 3). Many of the pilgrims who conveyed the legends and the miracles concerning the church saw it only from the ship and never actually disembarked. Even in circumstances of vows that had to be completed, it was not uncommon for the crew to send just one or

17 Count Alexander von Pfalz-Zweibrücken and Johann Ludwig von Nassau-Saarbrücken (1495–1496), '[...] die ganz zerbrochen ist durch einen Lindwurm oder Drachen, der da war in einem hohen Berg gegenüber der Stadt'. Karbach 1997, 55.

18 Hans Werli (1483–1484): 'Denn für der Statt in dem Meer ist ein grosser Schroff und Felß. In dem ist gelegen ein grosser Trach der floge alle tage ob der Statt und bey der Statt herumb und bließ funcken von ihm und mit seinem feuwrigen Athem vergiffet er den Luft daß die Leut in der Statt sturben [...]'. Feyerabend 1584a, 185v. About the destruction of 1386, see Matton 1960, 73; Voyadjis and Raptaki 2007, 32.

19 Stamatoopoulos 1993, 254; Landos 1896, 6.

20 Stamatoopoulos 1993, 254; Landos 1896, 7.

21 Triantaphyllopoulos 1994, 32.

22 Asonitis 2009, 438–439; Bacci 2004b, 235; Karydis 1999, 297.

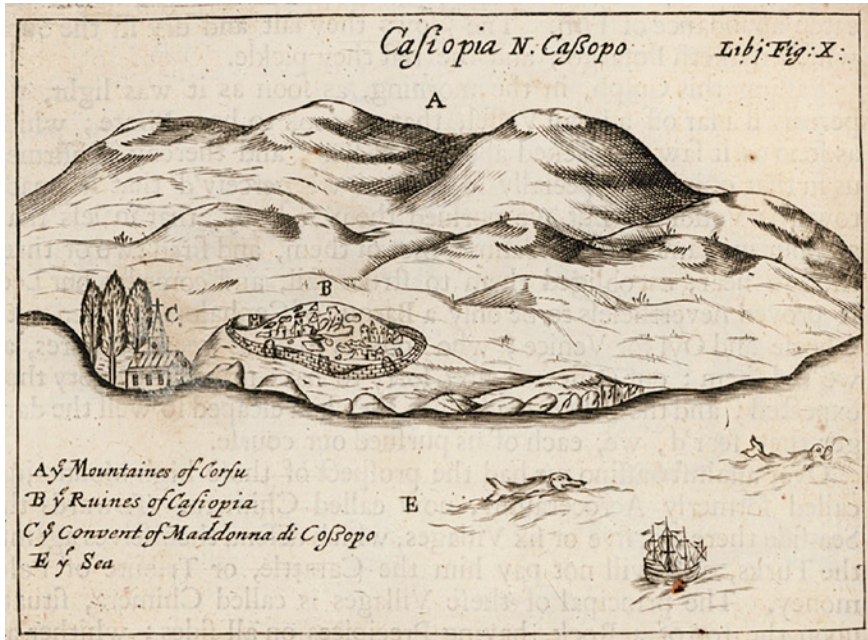


FIGURE 3 The church of the Virgin Kassopitra and the castle of Kassiope, Corfu, 1682, engraving

a few pilgrims to make their offerings to the Virgin, as in the case of the ship carrying Alessandro di Filippo Rinuccini in 1474: as he recounts, when caught in a storm the pilgrims sent one of their group to prostrate to the Virgin at the church and then continued their journey.<sup>23</sup>

Even though many of the pilgrims simply reproduce narrations of the seafarers, because of the complete destruction and reconstruction of the church in the 16th century their reports remain the main source of information about it, its interior decoration and the cult practices associated with it. The quantity of pilgrims' references to the church of the Virgin is extremely high, especially when compared to those about the churches of the town of Corfu. As a matter of fact, the church of the Virgin Kassopitra is the site mentioned more times than any other within the area under consideration in this study. The site

23 '[...] facemo j° pellegrino a mandare a Sancta Maria di Casopoli et andovi poi a comune spese il cappellano di nave ser Thommaso'. Calamai 1993, 85. An analogous experience is described by Santo Brasca (1480): 'Vedendo questo lo patrono fece che tuti insieme votassemo de fare uno peregrino a Sancta Maria de Casoppo, et cosi facta la ricolta de li dinari, cum primum giongessimo in terra fu mandato via dicto peregrino'. Momigliano Lepschy 1966, 124.

was, to quote the late 15th-century pilgrim Pierre Barbatre, a ‘place of devotion’, while already in 1394 it was referred to as a renowned pilgrimage site.<sup>24</sup> In his description of the island of Corfu in 1630, the Corfiot nobleman Stefanos Mastrakas mentions that besides the fact that there were two other anchorages to the north, as well as to the south of Kassiopi, ‘[...] because of the devotion to the church of the miraculous Virgin lying on that shore, all the warships and especially the galleys choose to visit it.’<sup>25</sup> Indeed, both commercial and pilgrim galleys, as well as warships, used to salute the Virgin with cannon fire when passing by the port. The French pilgrim Nicholas le Huen (1487) writes: ‘[...] there is an island that the Turks call Casapolis: that is the great house of heavens: there is the sacred dignified mother of Jesus, highly revered for her virtue, who is saluted with trumpets and cannon, and each one of us said their prayers.’<sup>26</sup> The French merchant Antoine Regnault (1549) also describes the custom of saluting the Virgin as follows: ‘Near Corfu, about six miles, we sailed before a church called Sancta Maria de Casopo. Our captain, along with all the gentlemen and officers kneeled, saluted the said church, while the bombardiers paid their respects with cannon shots, both when sailing towards Jerusalem and when sailing back.’<sup>27</sup>

Combining the descriptions of the pilgrims and travellers with the few surviving archival documents allows for an assessment of both the topographical setting, a factor that plays an important role in the experience of a pious religious visitor, and the *mise-en-scène* of the interior of the church. As mentioned above, the church was visible from passing ships and definitely recognisable by the seafarers. The area was uninhabited at least during the 14th century and the beginning of the 15th, so around the church there were no buildings, besides the one that housed the ‘kalogeri’ (Greek priests or monks), who appear already from 1413 to have been officiating and acting as caretakers of the increasingly famous church, obviously living off the revenues deriving

24 Pierre Barbatre (1480) characterises it as a *liez de devotion*, while Ogier VIII d'Anglure (1395) describes it as a *moult grant pelerinage*. Pinzuti and Tucoo-Chala 1972–1973, 118; Bonnardot 1878, 7.

25 Tsitsas 1974, 72.

26 ‘Et entremy des deux y a une isle que les turcs nomment Casapolis: cest adire la grant maison du ciel: en laquelle fust la tres sacree digne mere a Jyjus anuncte de grant vertuz: & fust saluee des trompettes & des canons: et chescun de nous dist ses oroisons.’ Huen 1488, n.p.

27 ‘Au deca de Corfou enuiron six milles passames pres vne Chapelle appellée Sancta Maria de Casopo. Nostre patron, auee tous les Gentilhommes, & officiers se misrent à genoux, saluant ladicte Chapelle, ensemble les Bombardiers, auec leur artillerie luy recommandant nostre naue, tant au aller, qu'à venir.’ Regnault 1573, 19.



FIGURE 4 The castle of Kassiope, Corfu, as seen from the port

from the donations of the pious visitors.<sup>28</sup> The surrounding landscape was particularly imposing, since on top of the hill above the church stood the ruins of the castle that according to the legend was destroyed by a dragon (Fig. 4).<sup>29</sup>

28 Many pilgrims mention the abandoned, uninhabited town: Jacob Kreyneck and Deryck Vogel (1479): '[...] een stad die volledig verwoest [...]': Phillips 1982, 7. Jan Aerts (1481–1484): '[...] leydt een haven, met een verwoeste ende bedorve stadt, daer niemant woonachtigh en is [...]': Van Nispen 1652, 147. Pierre Mesenge [Charles de la Rivière] (1507): 'Et passames par devant une ville nommee cassopo, a present inhabitee [...]'. Pouge 1975, 27. Luchino del Campo was the first to mention 'uno calogiero che sta li', in 1413. Brandoli 2011, 43. In 1470 the German pilgrim Ulrich Brunner mentions again only one Greek priest living near the church. Röhrich 1906, 21. The number of priests or monks in Kassiope rose after 1477, when Wilhelm Tzewers writes that 'Grecus circa capellam moratur sacerdos'; and from 1479–1480, when Hans Tucher visited the site, pilgrims begin to refer to *ein pruderhauß*, hinting that the number of priests or monks had risen significantly. Hartmann 2004, 98; Herz 2002, 357.

29 Almost all of the pilgrims mentioning Kassiope refer to the ancient ruins on the hill above the church; Bernhard von Breydenbach (1483–1484): 'Ansonsten wohnt niemand in der genannten Stadt oder in ihrer Nähe, obwohl es hier noch unbeschädigte Mauern, Türme und Häuser gibt'. Mozer 2010, 91. Georges Lengherand of Mons (1485–1486): '[...] n'y a apparence que d'aucunnes viezes murailles [...]'. Ménilglaise 1861, 94. Felix Fabri (1480, 1483–1484): '[...] unde hodie stant muri civitatis, turris et domus, sed sine omni habitatore'. Hassler 1843–1849, vol. 3, 352.

When disembarking, the pilgrims approached the 'beautiful Greek church', where the famous miraculous icon of the Virgin Kassopitra was kept.<sup>30</sup> In front of the icon there was a perpetual lamp, which 'always burns and is full of oil, without ever being refilled', and there was at least one other lamp embedded in the back wall, as well as a tooth and a rib of the dragon that according to the legend destroyed the castle.<sup>31</sup> According to another legend, also initially transmitted by the sailors and reproduced in almost all the travelogues, the oil of the lamp burning in front of the miraculous icon of the Virgin became a powerful medicine against fevers when a piece of the bark of a fig tree found outside the chapel was dipped in it, while it also offered protection from stormy weather, remedies of great importance for sea travellers. The French pilgrim Ogier VIII d'Anglure (1395) writes: 'In the church, in front of the icon, there is a lamp full of oil; and there is a fig tree in front of the church, whose wood, when dipped in the oil of this lamp, cures the fever.'<sup>32</sup>

Until the destruction and reconstruction of the church in the 16th century, the pilgrims' site-related experience could be re-enacted as follows. Already from the galley, and obviously after hearing the narrations of the crew, the pilgrims saw a small church in the port, above which stood the ruins of an imposing castle. Approaching, as Hans Lochner (1435) attested, they could see from outside the light of the lamp that was burning in front of the icon.<sup>33</sup> Going inside the church would have been a remarkable experience for Western pilgrims, since the small Greek/Orthodox church would have been adorned with frescoes and decorated and structured in a way completely different to what they would have been accustomed.<sup>34</sup> The miraculous icon of the Virgin

30 Mariano da Siena (1431): '[...] bella chiesa di greci [...]'. Pirillo 1991, 126.

31 Luchino del Campo (1413): '[...] la quale sempre arde e sempre sta piena di olio, ni mai se ne mette guzzo di olio'. Brandoli 2007, 43. The same information is also transmitted by among others: Wilhelm Tzewers, the anonymous author of *Lo itinerario de andare in Hierusalem* and Georges Lengherand of Mons. Hartmann 2004, 48; Longo 2007, 152; Ménéglaise 1861, 95; see also Bacci 2004b, 234.

32 'En laquelle chappelle, devant l'ymage, a une lampe plaine d'uille; et y a un figuier devant ladite chappelle dont le bois, quand il est mouillés en l'uille d'icelle lampe, guarist de fievers.' Bonnardot 1878, 7. Most of the pilgrims who mention the church refer to the miraculous powers of the oil of the lamp.

33 'Von aussen sieht man ein kleines Lemplein, das Brenet ausswendig vorm Bild tag und nacht.' Geisheim 1858, 212.

34 The effect of the Greek-Byzantine churches to the eyes of a Western traveller is vividly expressed by the French pilgrim Nicolas Loupvent, in his description of Candia: 'Au reste se sont toutes esglises grecz, que sont en nombre plus de centz, mais ce nest pas grant chose a dire, voir au regart des esglises latines; mais a mon semblant, comme celuy qui a esté présent, ne sont point moïn décorée tant en dévotion comme en cérémonie.' Bonnin 1976, 56.



would have been surrounded by votive offerings.<sup>35</sup> The veneration of the icon as described in the narratives was in keeping with Late Medieval practices of image worship: the pious visitors would offer candles, make donations, celebrate mass and of course make sure to take a piece of the fig tree bark dipped in the lamp oil with them. An anonymous Dutch pilgrim, who visited the church in the mid-14th century, attested to the habit of the pilgrims to take oil from the perpetual lamp with them, as well as pieces from the bark of the tree standing outside the chapel.<sup>36</sup>

The church of the Virgin Kassopitra was of *juspatronato publico*. That means it belonged to the local community and was under the jurisdiction of the Latin archbishopric. Despite the fact that it appears to have been an important pilgrimage site already from the 14th century, it was neglected by the Venetian ecclesiastical authorities, as attested by two documents of 1413 and 1423, when the local community complained that the building was in a very bad condition (*pessimo stato*), forcing the Venetian Senate to order its reconstruction using the money of the alms (*elemosine*) and other offerings to the church, which had been unlawfully kept by the archbishop.<sup>37</sup> These documents, combined with the pilgrims' narratives about the priests living near the church, demonstrate that the Virgin Kassopitra must have had a notable income, enough to support one and later on more priests, as well as to cover the expenses of the restoration of the building.<sup>38</sup> In addition, archival documents attest that already in 1414 a flea market took place at Kassiopi and it was in fact the largest one on the north side of the island.<sup>39</sup> This may indicate that, at least during the first phases of the site's progression from a regional to an international place of worship, it was the local community actors who became aware of the change and made efforts to elevate it to suit the needs of Western pilgrims. A fascinating passage from the narration of the pilgrim Wilhelm Tzewers (1477–1478) reveals that the Greek priests who were officiating at the church, obviously responding to the increasing number of pilgrims visiting it, not only allowed them to carry out their liturgies in it, but actually provided a different chalice

35 About the references to the votive offerings, see Johann Markgrafen and Albrecht von Brandenburg-Ansbach [Hans Lochner], Geisheim 1858; also Bacci 2004b, 235.

36 'Et omnes peregrini venientes ad hanc ecclesiam baculos in lampadem tingebant oleum sic haurientes. Nec ex hoc lampas defecit oleo cernitur enim lampas adhuc hodie. Item ibidem est eciam ficus quedam, cuius lignum optime valet contra febres.' Conrady 1882b, 48.

37 The documents are dated 31 August 1413 and 30 March 1423 and both mention the poor condition of the building, as well as the fact that the income of the church was kept by the Latin archbishop. Fedalto 1978, 180; Sathas 1880–1883, vol. 1, 30.

38 About pilgrims' offerings to the church, see n. 23 above.

39 Asonitis 1999, 439; Sathas 1880–1883, vol. 1, 85.

for the use of the Latins, so that the pious of both rites would be able to perform their mass while avoiding the use of the same liturgical vessels.<sup>40</sup> Indeed, a number of pilgrims report celebrating mass inside the church of the Virgin.<sup>41</sup>

The church that the first pilgrims saw was destroyed in 1537 by the notorious Ottoman corsair and admiral Hayreddin Barbarossa and then again in the 1570s by the Ottoman fleet, either during the siege of 1571 or the one of 1573.<sup>42</sup> Two surviving traveller accounts, one after each of the destructions of the church, provide valuable information about the state of the building and hints of the whereabouts of the icon, which seems to have been either destroyed or relocated in the mid-16th century.

In 1537 Jean (Jehan) de la Vega, an eminent jurist from Marseille, travelled as a member of the French fleet, under the command of Bertrand d'Ornesan, Baron of Saint-Blancard, who collaborated with the Ottomans at the siege of Corfu as part of the alliance of Francis I with Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent.<sup>43</sup> De la Vega was appointed by the French king to write the narration of the expedition, during which the church of the Virgin Kassopitra was destroyed.<sup>44</sup> He visited Kassiope right after the passing of the Ottoman fleet and attested to the almost complete destruction of the church:

The 13th day of September, the baron, along with the whole army, went to prostrate at the extremity of the said island of Corfu, at the Virgin of Casoppe, but we found the church destroyed, without a roof, filled with animal excrement, the monastery looted and ruined and two or three corpses in front of it that smelled awful.

However, we entered the church, the paintings [icons?] were all disgracefully covered with filth, except the icon of the Virgin that was to the right of the vault of the altar, from which a Turk tried to detach a small silver icon that according to the local custom the pilgrims offer and attach

40 'Grecus circa capellam moratur sacerdos, qui habet calicem pro se et pro Latinis. Putant violatum suum, si nos cum eo communicamus.' Hartmann 2004, 98.

41 Luchino del Campo, recording the journey of the Italian marquis Nicolo d'Este (1413), attests: 'E smontato il Signore in terra, fece celebrare la messa nella chiesa di Nostra Donna [...]'. Brandoli 2011, 43. The pilgrims Count Alexander von Pfalz-Zweibrücken and Johann Ludwig von Nassau-Saarbrücken (1495–1496): '[...] der meiste Teil der Pilgrim ans Land gefahren zu einer Kirche, da unsere liebe Frau fast gnädig ist, genannt St. Maria de Gasapo, da Messe gehört und das Opfer, davon ich vor geschrieben habe, getragen'. Karbach 1997, 99. Francesco Grassetto da Lonigo (1511), '[...] et a l'aurora zongem a santa Maria de Casopo, et quivi fu cantata una messa [...]'. Ceruti 1886, 14.

42 Giotopoulou-Sisilianou 1997, 67–70.

43 Garnier 2008, 127–145.

44 Garnier 2008, 134. The work of Jehan de la Vega was published after 1538 under the title *Le voyage du Baron de Saint Blancard en Turquie l'an 1537*.

to the said icon, when suddenly he lost his sight, and because of that no other Turk dared to touch or profane the said icon, in front of which the baron placed an altar table and performed a mass [...].<sup>45</sup>

Much important information can be drawn from the jurist's narration. It seems clear that the French were aware of the fame of the Virgin of Kassiopi and they decided to visit it. The extent of the destruction of the church is vividly described and, most importantly, it is clearly stated that the icon of the Virgin was not damaged because of divine intervention. The narration also provides information about the cultic practices of the pilgrims in regard to the site, that is, the placement of votive offerings, such as small silver icons, 'according to the local custom'.<sup>46</sup> Finally, before leaving the site, the French troops performed a Latin mass in front of the icon, inside the Orthodox chapel their Ottoman allies had destroyed.

In 1579, after the second destruction of the church by the Ottoman fleet, the French pilgrim Carlier de Pinon gave details about the site. He mentions the previous destruction by Barbarossa, while he describes: 'Below the said mountain, on the seaside, there is a small church, called Madonna di Casopo, which is very renowned, even though it lies in ruins.'<sup>47</sup> It is clear from the excerpt that Carlier de Pinon was also aware of the fame of the church and seems to be surprised by the fact that such an important pilgrimage site was lying in ruins. In his narration he makes no mention of the icon, while he affirms the habit of the seafarers to salute the Virgin with cannon fire.<sup>48</sup>

The destruction of 1537 is, as expected, reflected in pilgrims' narratives: in 1542 Jodocus von Meggen refers to the destruction by the Ottomans, but also reports seeing the church standing and the lamp inside it, adding that it

45 The full text reads: 'Le xme jour de septembre le dict baron et toute larmee alames au coing de la dicte isle de Corfou a une devotion de Nostre-Dame de Casoppe, trouvasmes l'eglise detruicte descouverte plaine dimmundices des entrailles de bestial, le couvent rompu et desfait, deux ou trois corps morts la au devant que tout donnoit grande puanteur. Ce nonobstant entrasmes dans leglise, les ymages estoient tous vituperez dimmundice et ordue, fors limage notre dame qui estoit au coste dextre de la voulte de lautel, auquel un Turc voulut arracher ung petit image dargent, que selon les coustumes du pays les pelerins y apportent, et font afficer au dict image, subitement devant aveugle qui fut cause que nul autre Turcs ossat toucher ne oultraiger le dict ymaige, devant lequel le baron fect dresser une table pour autel et chanter une messe [...].' Foucault 1868, 477.

46 See n. 45 above.

47 'Au bas de ladicte Montaigne sur le bord de la mere est une petite esglise, nommee Madonna di Casopo, qui est fort renommee, encores qu'il n'y ait rien que ruines.' Blochet 1920, 40.

48 'Le 19, ayants fait voile, noz mariniers tirent quelques coups de cannon en l'honneur de Madonna di Casopo.' Blochet 1920, 40.

still 'attracts attention'.<sup>49</sup> Five years later, another pilgrim, the French Antoine Regnault, mentions the destruction of 1537, but he also saw the church and describes in detail the custom of the mariners' salute to the Virgin.<sup>50</sup> While it is clear from eye-witness testimonies that the church of the Virgin Kassopitra was severely damaged, if not destroyed, in 1537 as well as in the 1570s, in the interim it must have been restored and was still functioning, since, besides the aforementioned travelogues, archival documents attest that in 1554 there was a hieromonk performing services there.<sup>51</sup>

Following its second destruction, the church was rebuilt on a smaller scale by the Venetian Commander of the Triremes, Pietro Francesco Malipiero. Later on, it was enlarged by the Commander of the Adriatic Sea, Filippo Pasqualigo, and in 1590 by the Proveditor of the Fleet, Admiral Francesco Suriano, as indicated by an inscription on a marble plaque embedded on the wall above the entrance (Figs 5a, 5b).<sup>52</sup> Based on architectural elements of the new building (in particular two side altars and the apses of another four), some scholars support that after the last restoration the church was converted into a Roman Catholic building.<sup>53</sup> Besides the fact that such features should not necessarily appear out of place in a late 16th-century Greek rite church, one should consider the very strict Venetian religious policy regarding Orthodox churches, plus the indubitable reaction an act such as that would provoke in the Greek clergy and flock, which would definitely be recorded in archival documents of the period. A travelogue from 1600 corroborates the fact that the church of the Virgin remained Orthodox, as only ten years after its renovation the pilgrim Henry Castela stated that the church was officiated by 'Caloyers' (Greek monks).<sup>54</sup>

The fact that the Ottoman fleet devoted time and effort in order to destroy a small church located at a place of no specific military advantage is quite

49 *Tbi quodes inter eundum vidimus oppidum dictum Casopum, vbi praeter oppidi moenia nil fererelictum à Turcis est. Habet et templum D. virgini sacrum, ubi semper lumen ardens, illis oleum suppeditantibus, conspici aiunt.* Von Meggen 1580, 49.

50 About the salute to the Virgin, see n. 27 above. Concerning the destruction of the church, Antoine Regnault writes: 'Le patron & officiers nous dirent, qu'autres fois l'armée du Turc fit descende en a ville, & isle dudicte Corfou, bruslerent, & saccagerent tout, resté le Chasteau & ladicte Chapelle.' Regnault 1573, 19.

51 Karydis 1999, 297.

52 Bacci 2004b, 235; Stamatopoulos 1993, 254–255; Tsitsas 1968, 2–3. The inscription was published in Rusconi 1952, 461.

53 Tsitsas 1968, 5; Stamatopoulos 1993, 254. About the debate on the conviction that Greek churches were always served by one single altar and the hypothesis that additional aisles, apses and altars within Greek churches attest to its use by Latins and Greeks, see Olympos 2013, 326–328, esp. 327 and nn. 21–22.

54 '[...] est seruie par des Caloyers Grecs [...]'. Castela 1603, 490.



FIGURE 5a The church of the Virgin Kassopitra, Corfu, west entrance

peculiar and could be interpreted as an attestation of the fame of the church of the Virgin Kassopitra and its importance as a maritime shrine.<sup>55</sup> At this

55 M. Bacci, Center for Early Medieval Studies [www Document], 2017. YouTube. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C7Bzygv\\_Cwc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C7Bzygv_Cwc) (accessed 28 April 2021).



FIGURE 5b The inscription of 1590 at the church of the Virgin Kassopitra, Corfu, with the names of the church's Venetian renovators

point, it needs to be stressed that, while the tactical importance of the port of Kassiope is undeniable, the area did not have a specific military function, and, in any case, its significance as a maritime shrine went hand in hand with its strategic position. So, when the Ottoman fleet was tearing down the church of the Virgin, they most probably believed that in this way they were depriving Corfu and the Venetian fleet of its divine protection. The restoration of an Orthodox church by Venetian officials could be considered equally strange. A reason for that could be the international fame it acquired over time, but, taking it one step further and considering the fact that all three of the aforementioned officials were occupying offices directly related to the sea and the fleet, their action could be seen as underlining the significance of the site for seafarers.

While reading the above, one should bear in mind that Corfu had been an extremely important acquisition for the political, military and commercial interests of Venice. It is because of its strategic geographical location that

Corfu has been the bone of contention between rivalling powers throughout its history and from the 16th century onwards under the constant threat of the Ottomans. Being an island, its main defenders were the sailors of the Venetian fleet, who for centuries had a close connection to the Virgin of Kassiopi. So, the attention given to the church by the Venetian officials served not only the needs and desires of the pilgrims, but was also an expression of their deep respect, faith and devotion to their protectress.

The importance of this maritime shrine for the members of the Venetian fleet is clearly attested in the events of the naval battle of Kassiopi in 1716 that led to the lifting of the siege of Corfu and the end of the seventh Ottoman–Venetian War. On the evening of Wednesday, 8 July 1716, the Venetian flagship, under the command of Andrea Corner, was sailing through the straits to join the rest of the fleet, under the command of Andrea Pisani, in order to combine forces and prepare for the upcoming battle. It was then that the flagship *Madonna della Salute* passed right in front of the church of Kassopitra and fired three cannon shots to salute the Virgin, according to the custom, followed by all the ships sailing behind it. The cannon, which were heard all the way to the town of Corfu, did of course give away their position to the enemy and led to a battle, depriving the Venetian fleet of valuable time to sail through the straits and deploy. Written testimonies of the period attest to this: ‘The first cannon shots were fired in honour of the Holy Church of the Blessed Virgin of Kassiopi to presage the battle and the defeat of the enemy.’<sup>56</sup> Andrea Corner himself was later on accused of recklessness and apologised in writing to the doge.<sup>57</sup> Corner’s decision to pay respects to the Virgin is indicative of the power of the cult upon the mariners. It would be impossible for the appointed commander of the flagship not to understand that this action was completely against common sense, but, on the other hand, he probably feared that, if he did not comply with the custom, he would be accused for that in case of a defeat. Besides being a clear corroboration of the cult’s persistence up to the 18th century, this action makes the Ottomans’ decision to destroy the church of the Virgin back in the 16th century more understandable, since it renders obvious that the Venetians actually did consider the Virgin Kassopitra to be their protectress in battle.

56 Excerpt from the manuscript of an anonymous Italian, under the title *Relazione, o sia trattato di quanto e successo tra l’Armi Venete, e l’Ottomane l’anno 1716*, located in the Biblioteca Marciana of Venice and published in Athanasainas 2001, 151.

57 Corner’s letter is published in Zoumbos 2018.

The restoration of 1590 was the last major intervention to the church building. At some point towards the end of the 17th century, the wooden roof was replaced by a lower barrel vault, and a few minor modifications were made, leading to its present form.<sup>58</sup> At the beginning of the 19th century it came under the jurisdiction of the Greek state and the municipality of Kassiopi. In 1842 it was looted once again and was abandoned for at least two years.<sup>59</sup> Today, priests appointed by the Archbishopric of Corfu officiate there on a regular basis, while the monument is open to visitors and, even though it does not enjoy its former fame, still attracts attention (Figs 6a, 6b).



FIGURE 6a The church of the Virgin Kassopitra, Corfu, view from the west

- 58 Triantaphylopoulos 1980, 650. Fragments of the 17th-century decoration survive inside the church. St Nicholas and an archangel are depicted on the south wall and the Virgin Mary and St Panteleimon on the north. The iconostasis is built on masonry, but bears no icons of distinction. During conservation works fragments of frescoes dated to earlier periods (probably to the 14th century) came to light, attesting to the fact that the restoration of 1590 incorporated parts of the medieval church. Stone arches of a previous building phase survive on the south wall, as well as some architectural parts scattered in the forecourt. Stamatopoulos 1993, 255; Triantaphylopoulos 1980, 650; 21st Byzantine Ephorate, Corfu.
- 59 Landos 1896, 19.





FIGURE 6b The church of the Virgin Kassopitra, Corfu, view from the north

### 1.1.1 The Icon of the Virgin Kassopitra

The sacred and most venerated effigy of the church of Kassiope was the miraculous icon of the Virgin, known as the *Panagia Kassopitra*, in front of which the perpetual lamp burnt. Since it was housed and worshipped in an Orthodox church of the Early Christian period and later on was attributed to the Evangelist Luke, it would be plausible to deduce that the icon was painted in the Byzantine style and was probably of Byzantine origin.

A substantial number of pilgrims mention the icon, but there is also a large portion of them that make no reference to it.<sup>60</sup> It is not an uncommon phenomenon for seafarers and travellers to evoke a site instead of a specific icon, relic or saint. Likewise, icons do not necessarily have to be the pilgrims' goal,

<sup>60</sup> This phenomenon of pilgrims not referring to an otherwise highly venerated icon at Marian cult sites they visit on their way to the Holy Land within the area of this study is not limited to the case of Kassiope. Actually, the icon of the Virgin Kassopitra is the one that amasses the largest number of references, when compared to the famous icon of the Virgin *Thalassomachousa* of the Strophades monastery, which is not directly mentioned, or the palladium of the city of Candia, the icon of the Virgin *Mesopanditissa*, both attributed to the hand of the Evangelist Luke.

and this does not in any case diminish their value, since they are still the 'material concretion' of the sanctity attributed to a place.<sup>61</sup>

The first to mention the miraculous icon of the Virgin Kassopitra is the Italian notary Nicola de Martoni, who visited Kassiopi in 1395: 'There is an image of the highly venerated blessed Virgin that every day performs miracles.'<sup>62</sup> Thereafter many pilgrims refer to it, although without providing a description. So the style, type and form of the icon, as well as its exact location in the church, cannot be determined with certainty. The French traveller Jean de la Vega, who disembarked at the small port after the Ottoman siege in 1537, stated that the icon was located at the time 'to the right of the vault of the altar'.<sup>63</sup> Being the only surviving attestation of the icon's location, in a church whose size and architectural type is also unknown, de la Vega's rather vague description offers only hints of its position. According to him, the icon could have been placed inside the apse, to the right above the altar table, or on the wall right next to the vault of the altar. Given that the church was probably a single-nave building, would that mean that it was placed on the north wall or was there an altar screen where the icon was placed to the right of the central opening? Whatever the case, the icon has an uninterrupted presence in pilgrims' travelogues until the end of the 15th century.

At some point during the 15th century the venerated icon of the Virgin was attributed to the Evangelist Luke. Following this attribution, the perception of the site was elevated, mainly from the pilgrims' point of view, since it acquired apostolic connotations. The tendency of investing the ports of call with cultic meanings and attractions which anticipated the religious experience pilgrims were expecting to have in Jerusalem was a common phenomenon concerning the whole maritime route to the Holy Land. Travellers sought and, in this case, were actually given the opportunity to evoke the cultic attractions they expected to see in Jerusalem in a synecdochical way with the venerated Marian icon that was deemed to be an authentic portrait of the Virgin painted by Luke.<sup>64</sup> Thus, the cultic object, besides being the sanctifying actor of the site, translates in a way a portion of the materiality of the Holy Land to the small port of Kassiopi.<sup>65</sup>

61 Carr 2000, 327. The notion, as well as the expression of icons being the 'material concretion' of sanctity, was introduced by Gerhard Wolf. See Wolf 2000.

62 The text reads: 'Est ibi quedam figura beate Marie Virginis devota multum que omni die facit miracula.' Piccirillo 2003, 164.

63 See n. 45 above.

64 About Lucan icons, see Bacci 1998, Bacci 2004a.

65 M. Bacci: Center for Early Medieval Studies [www Document], 2017. YouTube. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C7Bzygv\\_Cwc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C7Bzygv_Cwc) (accessed 28 April 2021).

Oddly enough, the attribution of the icon to the hand of Luke is mentioned by just one pilgrim and survives only in oral tradition. Nevertheless, this was the factor that attached apostolic connotations to the icon and allowed its elevation on the already existing network of Marian cult sites on the route to Jerusalem.<sup>66</sup> In this context, the attribution to Luke allowed it to be perceived as one of the evagelic memorials that pilgrims were eager to approach.<sup>67</sup> The questions that arise from this are: who were the actors that propagated this attribution to the Evangelist and what needs or desires did they intend to meet?

The obvious assumption would be that the attribution to Luke was a response to a need of the pilgrims, who sought objects or relics that could link them with their final destination, rather than to a need of the local population, since, despite the fact that the legend of its attribution to Luke was certainly circulating around the island already in 1530, the image is not referred to as a Lucan icon by local chroniclers of the time. On the other hand, given that already from the 15th century St Spyridon's relic has been translated to Corfu and his cult was rapidly growing, an elevation of the cult of the Virgin could only benefit the church and the community of Kassiope. While this question remains to be answered, what could be quite safely assumed is that both locals and pilgrims would desire, in different ways and for different purposes, a miraculous Lucan icon, and the community of Kassiope would definitely benefit from its presence.

As far as the actual effigy is concerned, Athanasios Tsitsas, who thoroughly studied the churches of Corfu, presented two hypotheses. In his first assertion, he goes as far as to hint that the miraculous icon did not exist, a supposition that had been proposed by Michael Landos in 1896.<sup>68</sup> According to it, the venerated Virgin Kassopitra was a fresco, like the ones commonly adorning Byzantine churches, which during the 16th century was replaced with the one existing today.<sup>69</sup> Despite the lack of solid material evidence that could disprove it, this hypothesis does not seem probable, since it goes against the popular notion of miraculous icons, deeply rooted in the Greek Orthodox mentality and widespread throughout the area of this study.<sup>70</sup> In addition, as attested by the German pilgrim Wilhelm Tzewers (1477–1478), the icon had already been attributed to the Evangelist Luke at the end of the 15th century, something that

66 See n. 5 above.

67 Bacci 2012, 148.

68 Landos 1896, 8.

69 Tsitsas 1968, 6.

70 Lidov 2000, 47–57. About the Marian cult sites and the miraculous icons of the Virgin along the sea route from Venice to the Holy Land, see Bacci *et al.* 2017.

would not be possible in the case of a fresco: 'Near Corfu, around 20 miles, there is a church dedicated to the Blessed Virgin. They call it Caseopolis. It is miracle-working. They say that the icon was made by Luke, and there is also a lamp that is refilled with oil only four times a year, but always burns.'<sup>71</sup> Pilgrims' testimonies could be used to support the existence of an icon, but since they often use the same words to describe icons, frescoes or even statues, this cannot be evaluated with certainty.<sup>72</sup>

According to Athanasios Tsitsas's second hypothesis, also supported by other scholars, the icon did exist, but was either destroyed and replaced, probably in the 16th century, or removed from the church in order to be protected from pirate and Ottoman raids after the destruction of 1537.<sup>73</sup> If one accepts this assertion and consequently the existence of the miraculous icon, it could plausibly be assumed that the 16th-century fresco in the nave of the church reproduces the actual cultic object (Fig. 7).<sup>74</sup> Iconographic similarities to this fresco can also be traced in the enthroned Virgin depicted in the icon given as an ex-voto by the famous Cretan painter Theodoros Poulakis in 1670 and dedicated to the church in memory of his salvation from a shipwreck (Figs 8a, 8b), as well as a second votive icon of Eustathios Kouvaras, probably a mariner who survived a naval battle, dating from the 17th century (Fig. 9).<sup>75</sup> If this is the case, the original icon could be replicated as depicting the Virgin Mary in a frontal position, perhaps enthroned, holding the Christ Child, who is administering a blessing. As mentioned, the oldest reference to this icon dates back to 1394, providing a *terminus ante quem* for its dating (that is, the last decade of the 14th century). As indicated by Michele Bacci and assuming that the 16th-century fresco reproduces the original effigy, the icon the first pilgrims saw in the church bears significant resemblance to the palladium of Venice, the Byzantine icon of the Virgin Nicopeia.<sup>76</sup> This means that even though the architecture, setting, decoration or devotional practices followed at the church

71 'Circa Curfum ad xx miliaria est capella beate virginis. Dicitur Caseopolis. Claret multis miraculis. Dicunt beatum Lucam imaginem fecisse et esse ibi lampadem, que non impletur oleo, nisi quater in anno, semper tamen ardens.' Hartmann 2004, 98.

72 Ogier VIII d'Anglure uses the word *ymage*, Ulrich Brunner the word *bilde* and Nicola de Martoni, Michele da Figline and Paul Walther Guglingen the word *immagine*, while the Italian pilgrims Luchino del Campo, Mariano da Siena and the anonymous author of *Lo itinerario de andare in Hierusalem* use the word *figura*. Bonnardot 1878, 7; Röhrich 1906, 21; Brandoli 2011, 43; Piccirillo 2003, 165; Montesano 2010, 58; Sollweck 1892, 77; Pirillo 1991, 126; Longo 2007, 152.

73 Stamatopoulos 1993, 256; Bacci 2012, 185; Landos 1896, 8; Tsitsas 1968, 6.

74 Bacci 2012, 185.

75 Vokotopoulos 1990, 127–128, pls 239–240, 155, pl. 294; Stamatopoulos 1993, 255.

76 Bacci 2012, 185.



FIGURE 7 The Virgin Kassopitra in the church of the Virgin Kassopitra, Corfu, late 16th century, fresco

of the Virgin in Kassiope might have been alien to a Western Catholic, the type of icon was familiar to them, since they would have seen the highly venerated icon of the Virgin Nicopeia in the basilica of San Marco in Venice (Fig. 10).<sup>77</sup>

The fame of the icon of the Virgin Kassopitra was enhanced even further during the decade of the 1530s, when it was associated with the miraculous

77 Westerners regularly criticised certain Orthodox customs, but they always acknowledged the cultic worthiness of churches and even of the liturgy. To get an idea of the way in which Western pilgrims perceived the Orthodox, it is interesting to cite the words of Greffin Affagart: '[...] et y demeurent des religieux grecs de Saint-Basille; ilz les appellent Caloys, fort dévotz, mais toutesfois ilz sont scismatiques, séparéz de l'église roumaine, et aussi tous les grecs.' Chavanon 1902, 31.



FIGURE 8a Theodoros Poulakis, votive icon of the Virgin Kassopitra, 1670



FIGURE 8b The church of the Virgin Kassopitra and the castle of Kassiope. Detail of Fig. 8a

healing of Stefanos, a young Greek peasant falsely accused and sentenced to have his eyes put out.<sup>78</sup> The news of the divine intervention of the Virgin spread very quickly around the island, as well as to the neighbouring coasts of Epirus and Albania, leading to the foundation of several churches dedicated to the Virgin Kassopitra.<sup>79</sup> The extent of the diffusion and effect of the miracle

78 According to the narration of the miracle, Stefanos was falsely accused of stealing and was sentenced by the bailiff of Corfu to have his eyes put out. After the public implementation of the punishment and because of the general condemnation, his mother decided to move him away from the town and took him to the church of the Virgin in Kassiope. Having asked permission from the monk, Stefanos and his mother slept inside the church, under the miraculous icon, where the young man had a vision of the Virgin and regained his sight. The next day, when the monk saw the result of the miracle, he rushed to the town of Corfu and announced it to the bailiff, who visited the church in person in order to verify the healing and to bow down before the miraculous icon. Stamatopoulos 1978, 256; Landos 1896, 8–17; Mustoxidis 1865, 15; Tsitsas 1968, 8–10.

79 A number of churches dedicated to the Virgin Kassopitra were founded from the 16th century onwards, among which the convent at Stratia and the church at Chlomotiana on Corfu, as well as the church of the Virgin Kassopitra at Arta. Tsitsas 1968, 8; Papageorgiou 1920, 236.



FIGURE 9 Eustathios Kouvaras, votive icon of the Virgin Kassopitra, 17th century

is reflected in the votive icon of Theodoros Poulakis, who chose to depict the healing of blind Stefanos instead of his own salvation, in memory of which he dedicated the icon to the church.<sup>80</sup> The miracle performed by the Virgin in

<sup>80</sup> Vokotopoulos 1990, 127–128, pls 239–240.





FIGURE 10 Icon of the Virgin Nicopeia, San Marco, Venice

Kassiopi is celebrated today on 8 May with a procession of the icon, but such a practice cannot be confirmed during the period of this study.

Interestingly enough, the broad diffusion and effect of the miracle on a regional level is not reflected in the pilgrims' travelogues. In fact, it seems to go completely unnoticed, since there is not a single reference to it in any of the travellers' narratives. It would be quite improbable that the crews of the galleys sailing through the area were unaware of the miracle, but for some reason pilgrims do not refer to it. In fact, they also cease to mention the actual effigy, the miraculous icon, already from the end of the 15th century, while they continue

regularly to refer to the church, the lamp and the fig tree, as well as the power of the Virgin Kassopitra to protect the ships and the travellers, who carry on paying their respects to the holy Marian site.<sup>81</sup>

The timing of the miracle and the extent of its diffusion on Corfu, as well as the coasts opposite, could allow the assertion that it was propagated by local actors in order to intensify the fame of the already international holy site on a regional level. One should not forget that the community of Kassiopi, under whose jurisdiction the church of the Virgin fell, profitted from the donations of the pious, and the prospect of a larger income could not be but welcomed. Indeed, after the miraculous healing of Stefanos, the Virgin Kassopitra became a potential protectress of the whole island, thus expanding her influence – almost exclusively related to the sea and mariners – on land as well. It is important to note that, already from the 15th century, St Spyridon's relic has been translated to Corfu, and his cult was rapidly growing, elevating him to the throne of the absolute protector of the island. In this view, a reminder of the miraculous power of the Virgin Kassopitra could only benefit the church and the community of Kassiopi. Moreover, the miracle occurred at a time when the Corfiots, both Greek and Latin, really needed a morale booster, a divine power to turn to for support and protection from the growing Ottoman threat.

Aside from the reasons why the miracle was so widely diffused, its surviving narrations can be sources of valuable information about the church, icon and cult practices at Kassiopi. Fortunately, it was recorded already in the 16th century by two Corfiot scholars, Nikander Nucius, who claims he was an eye witness, and Pachomios Rousanos.<sup>82</sup> Consequently, and leaving aside the features of the miraculous divine intervention, it could be quite safe to consider the data mentioned in these chronicles as genuine. The narration of Nikander Nucius is very short and lacks details, but Pachomios Rousanos's account testifies to what the pilgrims continuously mention, the fact that a Greek monk(s) lived in Kassiopi and most importantly that during the decade of the 1530s an icon was actually housed and venerated in the church of the Virgin.<sup>83</sup> This last

81 The last reference to the icon was made by Michele da Figline in 1489–1490, Montesano 2010, 58. From then onwards and up until 1549, many travellers mention the church and its importance as a maritime shrine with no hint of an icon.

82 The description of the miracle by Nikander Nucius was published by Andreas Mustoxidis in 1865, while the narration of Pachomios Rousanos was published by Michael Landos in 1896. Mustoxidis 1865, 15; Landos 1896, 8–17.

83 The exact date of the miracle did not survive in the early manuscripts. Athanasios Tsitsas supported that the dating to 1530 is a misconception of the date in the first surviving narrations. Since the name of the bailiff at the time of the miracle is known, and consulting the official catalogue of the bailiffs of Corfu, he was able to date the miracle to the

piece of information, when combined with the testimony of Jean de la Vega, who clearly states that the icon survived the destruction of 1537, could be used to support the assertion that it was moved after the Ottoman attack to the town of Corfu.<sup>84</sup> It is also worth mentioning that neither Nucius nor Rousanos, even though they both characterise the icon as miraculous, attributed it to Luke.

If we accept what seems to be the most plausible hypothesis – the existence of an icon and its subsequent destruction or removal from the site – we are confronted with an inconsistency. According to scholars supporting the aforementioned interpretation, the icon of the Virgin that performed the miracle in the 1530s was removed by the Venetians from Kassiope for protection after the destruction of 1537. It was transferred to the town of Corfu and placed in the Roman Catholic church of the Virgin of Tenedos. In 1797, during the first French occupation of the island, it was handed back to the Orthodox, who housed it in the church of Taxiarchis Michael, until that building was destroyed by Italian bombings in 1940 and the icon was moved to the town's metropolis. Kassiope's most venerated effigy was returned to the church of the Virgin Kassopitra with great pomp on 13 April 1967.<sup>85</sup> However, the surviving icon, the one that came back to Kassiope in 1967, is roughly dated to the 16th century (Fig. 11). It is true that, due to a lack of descriptions or other archival or archaeological evidence, the style and dating of the original icon cannot be ascertained. However, the first reference to the icon in 1394 and its attribution to Luke, as well as its probable reproduction in the 16th-century fresco, make the assertion of the existence of a Byzantine icon very plausible. Within this scope and given that the last pilgrim's reference to the icon is dated to 1489, the destruction of the original effigy and its later replacement could be supported. Taking into consideration the 40-year gap between the last reference to the icon and the time of the miracle, it is probable that the icon to which the healing was attributed was a 16th-century production.

What is more important, in the end, is that the documented absence of the icon after 1537, if not already from 1489, did not affect in any way the importance of the site, mainly for pilgrims and seafarers who continued to evoke the Virgin Kassopitra and pay their respects by saluting it with cannon fire. The cult of the Virgin Kassopitra continued at least up until the 17th and 18th centuries, but the cult practices, as well as the cultic object, changed over the

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incumbency of Bailiff Symeon Leonis, that is, between the years 1534–1536, right before the destruction of 1537. Tsitsas 1968, 18–20.

84 According to some scholars, the miraculous icon of the Virgin was removed from the church after the destruction of 1537 to be kept safe in the town of Corfu. Stamatopoulos 1993, 257; Tsitsas 1968, 6.

85 Stamatopoulos 1993, 256–258; Tsitsas 1968, 6.



FIGURE 11 The icon of the Virgin Kassopitra, 16th century, in the church of the Virgin Kassopitra, Corfu

course of time. In the description of his visit to the church in 1686, George Wheler, an English clergyman and travel writer, makes no mention of an icon, lamp or fig tree. At his time, the cultic object was a 'shiny and polished' fresco on the wall.<sup>86</sup> He also points out the economic aspect of the Virgin Kassopitra's

86 'Cette image est peinte sur la muraille, & fort polie & luisante.' Wheler 1686, 43.

cult, as he explains that the pious used to place coins on the fresco to see if they would stick on it or fall down, thus determining if the person they had in mind was alive or dead. Following that practice, which the Englishman characterises as a ridiculous fraud, the Greek monks collected all the coins.<sup>87</sup> In the mid-18th century, a quite unexpected source provides information about the cultic practices in the church of the Virgin: Giacomo Casanova, who fled the town of Corfu after an affair with the wife of a Venetian admiral to hide at what was at the time the small village of Kassiopi, describes in detail a ritual during which the Greek priest 'transmits the Holy Virgin's oracle' to a pious Greek travelling from Cephalonia to Venice. The Italian adventurer and author also points out that the man 'gives the impostor [the Greek priest] more money', affirming that the practice of the pilgrims to make offerings to the Virgin continued.<sup>88</sup> There is again no reference to an icon or a lamp in the church, but apparently its fame as miracle worker still carried on.

At the beginning of the 19th century the church came under the jurisdiction of the Greek state and the municipality of Kassiopi. In 1967 the icon that according to the legend healed young Stefanos in the 1530s was moved back from the town of Corfu to be housed and venerated in the church. It remains there to this day, along with the votive icon of Theodoros Poulakis.

## 2 The Town of Corfu

After stopping at or saluting from afar the church of the Virgin at Kassiopi, pilgrims' galleys would enter the port of the capital city of the island, the town of Corfu. The walled part of the city was strongly fortified, very densely built and guarded by two towers on top of two protruding rocks at its east and west sides (Fig. 12). Those two rocks, markedly imposing as seen from the sea, are the first element of the town to be mentioned by almost all of the travellers. The first impression of the naturally fortified small medieval town, the *città* or *terra*, seems to be more or less common for the pilgrims, and one of its more vivid descriptions, combining almost all of the facts mentioned in most of the travelogues, is provided by the Italian pilgrim Pietro Casola (1494):

87 '[...] une tromperie ridicule'. Wheler 1686, 43. An analogous practice that survives to this day can be seen in the church of St George in Omorphokklisia in Kastoria, where coins are placed on a 13th-century wooden repoussé icon of St George.

88 Casanova 1997, 119. About the money offerings pilgrims used to make to the Virgin, see n. 23 above.

The town of Corfu is built on a hill and has a large *borgo* on the plain; as I said, it has two strong castles, situated very close one to the other. [...] The whole city is built on the rock; the aforementioned castles have very few inhabitants, who notably rule the city and the *borgo*. [...] The city is full of buildings, so close together that the roof of the one touches the roof of the other, thus the sun does not really annoy the people. [...] The city, along with the *borgo*, used to be like a small island; now the Signoria separated them with a very thick wall made of square blocks [...].<sup>89</sup>

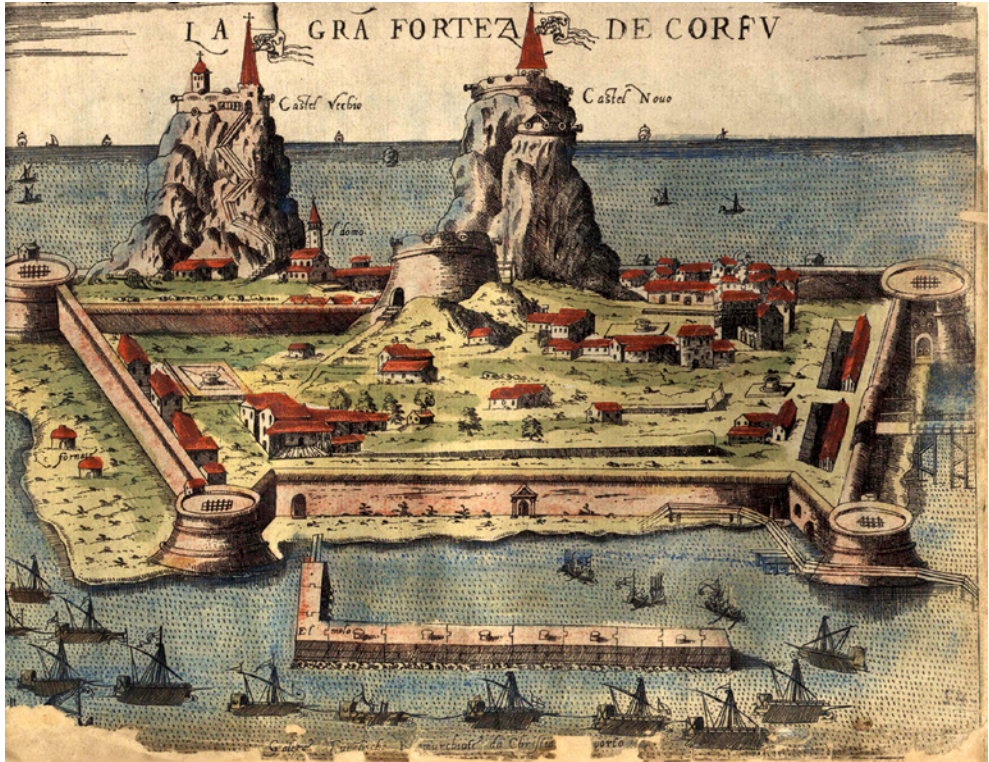


FIGURE 12 View of Corfu, 1573, engraving

89 'Questa città de Corfù è posta in monte et ha uno grande borgo in piano; como ho dicto, ha dui castella fortissimi, vicini l'uno a l'altro. [...] Benché tuta la città è posta sopra saxo, dicti castella hano poca abitazione e signorezano la città e lo borgo molto notabilmente. [...] È dicta citade molto spessa de edifitii, ita che l'uno tecto tuca l'altro et el sole non li da tropo noglia. [...] Dicta citade soleva, era a modo de una insuleta insemma con lo borgo; ora la Signoria l'ha separata dal borgo, con uno muro grossissimo, facto de saxi quadri [...].'  
Paoletti 2001, 136–137. See also the English translation of Casola's pilgrimage in Newett 1907, 185–186.

Another noteworthy fact concerning the first mentions of pilgrims in regard to Corfu is the awareness that they were entering the territory of Greece and the land of the former Byzantine Empire.<sup>90</sup> In addition, most of them seem to have possessed knowledge of many historical facts concerning the island, which are mentioned in greater or lesser detail in the travelogues. With the few exceptions of (in their most part German) travellers who refer to the island's history from the ancient period, the information provided by the majority of the pilgrims is related to its Christianisation and the widespread legend of the martyrdom of Kerkyra, the young daughter of a Roman vice consul of the island, Kerkylinos, who, according to tradition, was converted to Christianity by St Jason.<sup>91</sup> A great number of them also mention the port's capacity for many galleys and the fact that usually more than two were stationed there for protection, pointing out Corfu's importance as a naval station and frontier for Venice's interests in the area.

The small fortified part of the capital, the *città* of the Venetians, retained its main characteristics until the end of the 16th century, while it was constantly evolving and shaping within its narrow boundaries. A number of pilgrims mention seeing fortification works being carried out during their visit to the island throughout the time frame of this study, that is, before the final fortification of the *borgo* at the end of the 16th century (Fig. 13).<sup>92</sup>

The depictions of Corfu in the *isolarii* of the period, as well as in some pilgrims' narratives, as abstract as they may be, provide quite an accurate idea of the form of the town with the two imposing rocks and the cathedral standing out between them (Fig. 14).<sup>93</sup> Because of the limited space within the *città*,

90 See indicatively Hans Tucher (1479–1480): 'Item Curfuu jst ein krichische stat [...]'. Herz 2002, 358. Anonymous, *Le voyage de la sainte cyté de Hiérusalem* (1480): 'Corphol est une cité et archevesché de la seigneurie de Venise et la premiere ville de Grece [...]'. Schefer 1882, 43. Pierre Barbatre (1480): 'Courfoul est une cité appartenante ou que tiennent les Veneziens et est en Grece'. Pinzuti and Tucoo-Chala 1972–1973, 118. Pietro Casola (1494): '[...] principio de la Grecia [...]'. Paoletti 2001, 135.

91 The most detailed and complete historical review is provided by the Dominican friar Felix Fabri, who underwent two pilgrimages, in 1480 and in 1483–1484. Hassler 1843–1849, vol. 1, 51–54.

92 Georges Lengherand of Mons (1485–1486) described the town and its fortification as follows: 'Au dessus d'icelle ville il y a deux haultes roches, l'une plus haulte que l'autre, et sur chascune roche ung chastel. Laquelle ville l'on a fort commenchié à le fortifier, depuis XIII ans encha, de tours et murailles qu'ilz nomment faulses brayes, car icelle muraille est au devant de la vieze nuraille; aussy ilz y ont fait une nouvelle porte. Et encoires à ceste heure y avoit grand nombre d'ouvriers y ouvrans.' Méniglaise 1861, 95.

93 Voskopoulou 2005, 42–43. As already indicated, the first feature most of the pilgrims mention about the town of Corfu are the two castles on the two rocks that guard it. Louis

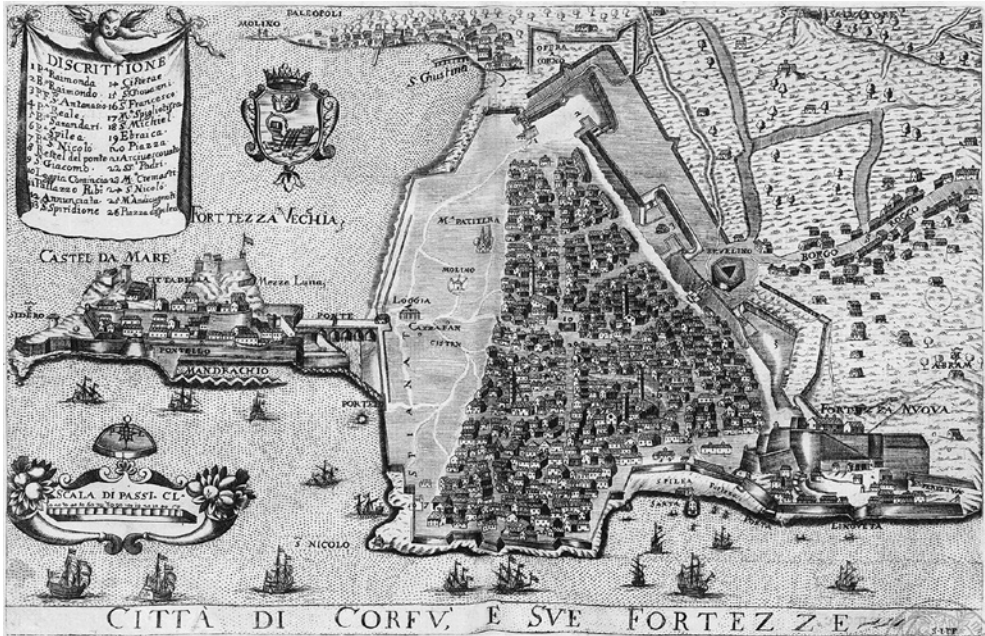


FIGURE 13 The city of Corfu and the *borgo* after the 16th-century fortification works

already from the 13th century its inhabitants started gradually moving outside the walls, where they built their houses, warehouses, commercial stores and, of course, churches and monasteries. These structures were organised around the port and the market, and soon the area's population ended up being almost seven times more than that of the city.<sup>94</sup> Maps of the 16th century characterise the city's outskirts as *il borgo* or *el bazar*, emphasising the fact that most of the commercial activities of Corfu had been moved out of the castle (Fig. 15).<sup>95</sup> During the Ottoman siege of 1537, the *borgo* suffered severe damage, if not complete destruction. It was then that new fortification works started to be carried out in and around the castle, while the *borgo* was finally fortified after

de Rochechouart in 1461 describes: 'Sunt duo castra fortissima sita super duas arces [...]' Couderc 1893, 232. Pierre Barbatre (1480): 'Le chasteau est double sur deulx roches bien fors et bien haulx avirones [*sic*] de la mer de toutes pars fors vers la ville le long d'ung tret d'arc.' Pinzuti and Tucoo-Chala 1972–1973, 118. Wolfgang Zillenhart (1495–1496): 'Item zwischen den zway schlosse ligt ain kirch [...]' Gebele 1932–1933, 81.

94 Karydis 2007a, 17–18; Voskopoulou 2005, 36–37.

95 Voskopoulou 2005, 42–43. The Italian pilgrim Pietro Casola corroborated the aforementioned: '[...] a lato al porto, egli uno grande borgo unde al tempo si fano li mercati et è cosa molto spatada; e li sono tute li ostarie e tavern [...]' Paoletti 2001, 136.





FIGURE 14 View of Corfu, c. 1487, manuscript illumination



FIGURE 15 The town of Corfu and its borgo, c. 1575, engraving

the siege of 1571, the cathedral was moved to the church of St Jacob, and the old city became a zone of administrative and military use.<sup>96</sup>

So, up until the end of the period of this study, the town of Corfu that pilgrims saw was the small walled part of the Venetian *città*. The confined and densely built city did not appeal to Western visitors. In 1485 Georges Lengherand of Mons describes a well-fortified town built on a rock, but at the same time rather unpleasant, with narrow streets and a bad smell, while in 1494 the Italian pilgrim Pietro Casola writes that it would actually have been better to remain on the galley.<sup>97</sup> Almost all of the travellers visited the *borgo*, since most of the taverns and places of accommodation were located there, as well as the two most eminent Latin religious institutions: the Augustinian monastery of St Mary of the Annunciation, or the Annunziata, and the Franciscan monastery of St Francis. The latter was the place where most of the pilgrims lodged for the period when their galleys were docked at the port of Corfu. Many of them mention that in their travelogues, and in general the Franciscan monastery amasses most of the pilgrims' references concerning the churches or religious institutions of the town.

Venetian Corfu, both the *città* and the *borgo*, had surprisingly few Latin churches in comparison to Orthodox ones. The recorded Catholic religious institutions within the time frame of this study are only nine: the cathedral of Sts Peter and Paul, which was located in the walled city, the monastery of St Justine, the churches of St Catherine, St Rocco, St Catald, Sts Jacob and Christopher and St Nicholas and the mendicant monasteries of the Augustinians and the Franciscans, all built in the *borgo*.<sup>98</sup> On the other hand, the town and the *borgo* were full of Orthodox churches. All the aforementioned appear often in the pilgrims' travelogues: in 1480 the French priest Pierre Barbatre attests that there

96 Between the years 1577 and 1588 the so-called *Nuova Fortezza* was built by eminent Venetian military engineers. About the Ottoman sieges, the fortification and the architecture of the town of Corfu, see Chytiris 1969; Agoropoulou 1976; Giotopoulou 1997; Voskopoulou 2005.

97 Georges Lengherand of Mons (1485): 'Ce fait allâmes voir la ville que est forte ville sur ung haut terte de roches, mais par dedans il y fait ort et mal plaisant, car les rues y sont estroittes et y fait ort et puant.' Ménilglaise 1861, 95. Pietro Casola (1494): '[...] in el vero era migliore stare in galea'. Paoletti 2001, 136.

98 According to archival documents, in 1583 there were 122 churches in the town of Corfu and its *borgo* and only nine of them were Latin. Papageorgiou 1920, 181, 191; Tsitsas 1969, 103, 119; Karapidakis 2011, 143; Karydis 2007a, 107–243; Karydis 2010, 313; Agoropoulou 2004, 226. See also Maltezou 1991; Karydis 2011.

were many parochial churches, all following the Greek rite, while at the cathedral the services were held in both the Greek and the Latin languages.<sup>99</sup>

The pilgrims' first encounter with an Orthodox population and its religious practices is clearly reflected in their travelogues, either with extended mentions about the common religious ceremonies of Latins and Greeks and the particularities concerning the liturgies held in the island's Catholic churches or by the absence of references to the religious institutions in general.<sup>100</sup> This same approach towards Orthodox or even Latin churches in the former Byzantine Greek territory can be observed in all the areas of interest of this study, and the towns of Corfu and Candia are the most interesting examples.

The particular *modus vivendi* that developed in Corfu – as well as in Modon and Candia – and the way it was expressed in religious life with common liturgies and processions seems to have intrigued the pilgrims, many of whom make mention of the 'peculiar' religious practices they encountered while in Greece. Gaudenz von Kirchberg, a German pilgrim who visited Corfu in 1470, describes the celebration of Corpus Domini by the Corfiots of both rites.<sup>101</sup> The *Festum Eucharistiae*, or Corpus Domini, was celebrated grandiosely in the town of Corfu with a procession and the participation of representatives of

99 'La grande eglise est audit chasteau en hault et se fait le service en l'usage de langue latine honnestement et par belle ordonnance. [...] et si il y a grant nombre d'eglises parrochiales toutes a la mode et usage grec. Ilz ne font pas le service comme les autres ne les sacremens de l'eglise.' Pinzuti and Tucoo-Chala 1972–1973, 118. In the same year the anonymous author of *Le voyage de la sainte cyté de Hiérusalem* writes: 'Il y a environ dix huyt ou vingt eglises èsquelles tout le service se dit en grec, excepté les Cordelliers qui sont latins en l'eglise cathedrale en laquelle on chante aulcunes fois grec et aulcunes foys latin.' Schefer 1882, 43–44.

100 Very few of the pilgrims who mention stopping at Corfu refer to the churches and monasteries of the town. Since it is rather improbable they did not see any of them, one can assume that the lack of references is due to the fact that they were either strange or indifferent to them. At this point, it is important to stress once again that the church of the Virgin in Kassiopi is examined separately; therefore all the statistics mentioned in this chapter concern only the town and *borgo* of Corfu.

101 'Und am Gottesleichnamsttag (21. Juni) giengen in der proceß, am ersten Kriechische priester mit den Kriechen und trueg inen ainer ain tafel vor, was an der ainen seitten daran gemalen, Unser Lieben Frawen piltnuß, die hat Unseres Lieben Herren pildung auf der schoß, und an der andern seyten sant Pauluß pilde. Dem volkten die Kriechen nach und sungen alle nichts anderst dann kirieleyson. Und man saget Unser Lieben Frawenpilde an der tafel thät grosse zaichen. Darnach giengen in der prodeß die minichen, layenpriester; und der verweser des pischoffs trug das sacramennth, und die Kriechen feyrten den thag nicht, sonders y arbaiten, wie an ainem werchtag.' Röhrich 1905, 108.



FIGURE 16a The Virgin Demosiana (obverse of Fig. 16b)



FIGURE 16b St Arsenius of Corfu (reverse of Fig. 16a)

both clergies. During the procession the Orthodox carried the icon known as the Virgin Demosiana, which, as Gaudenz von Kirchberg describes it, depicts the Virgin on one side and St Arsenius (mistakenly identified as St Paul) on the other (Figs 16a, 16b).<sup>102</sup>

The unusual attire and habits of Greek priests are also remarkable subjects for a Western visitor, discussed in many travelogues, not always without hints of discontent. In 1480 Pierre Barbatre wrote about the Greek priests wearing their ‘peculiar’ big hats and being allowed to have a spouse and children, while

<sup>102</sup> About the celebration of Corpus Domini in Corfu, see Nikiforou 2014, 68–69, 73–76; Tsitsas 1969, 141–144; Papageorgiou 1920, 76–78. The icon of the Virgin Demosiana is a 14th-century Byzantine icon, which belonged to the ‘Sacred Order’ and was kept in the church that served as the seat of the Greek *protopapas*. Vokotopoulos 1986, 351–355; Vokotopoulos 1990, 4–6; Tsitsas 1970, 108–115.

the French pilgrim Antoine Regnault (1549) described the buildings of the Orthodox churches, as well as some of the local religious rituals.<sup>103</sup>

Besides the interest shown by the pilgrims concerning the new – and strange to a Western eye – reality of a Levantine city where the Orthodox were free to express their religious sentiment following their Byzantine tradition, references to specific Orthodox churches are very few and mainly concern the church of St Nicholas dei Vecchi. In his description of the town Antoine Regnault provided some interesting information, noting the great devotion of the Greeks to the Virgin: ‘We entered the port of Corfu, where we stayed for three days, during which we visited many churches dedicated to the Virgin, far from Corfu, around three or four leagues, and which the Greeks greatly revere and honour.’<sup>104</sup>

Only two other Orthodox churches of the town are mentioned in pilgrims’ narratives: the church of St Nicholas by the Sea by Paul Walther Guglingen (1482) and the church of the Virgin Limniotissa by Felix Fabri (1480, 1483–1484).<sup>105</sup> It is important to note that neither of those two travellers visited the aforementioned churches; instead they saw them from aboard the ship while navigating into the port of Corfu.

### 2.1 *The Church of St Nicholas by the Sea*

The identification of the church seen by the Franciscan friar Paul Walther Guglingen is not an easy task. There were many churches dedicated to St Nicholas in the town of Corfu. The one that best fits the description of a

103 Pierre Barbatre (1480): ‘Les prebstres sont tous mariez et ont fame et enfans. Et nota se ilz ne leur suffit d’une fame ou qu’ilz soient prouvez adulterez, ilz sont privés de celebrer, maiz usent de toute aultre office. Les prebstres sont vestus aultrement que les gens laïz et ont tous ung grant chapel et vivent de ce que on leur donne a leur offreude ou aultres sacremens car ilz n’ont point de dismez.’ Pinzuti and Tucoo-Chala 1972–1973, 118. Antoine Regnault (1549): ‘Les Eglises ne sont guieres belles, à la porte de chacune ont vn fer epais de quatre doitz fait en façon d’arc, & quand frappent dessus, rend le son, comme une cloche, & n’ont en vsaige autre sonnerie par toutes les Eglises Grecques. Leur ceremoniee est de s’entreacoler, & baiser. Quand un Grec est trepassé, les femmes s’assemblent & vont sur la fosse, qui ne font tout le iour que lamenter, batans leur poitrine, qui est pitié de les voir plorer.[...] La remembrance des Images est faicte en plate peinture, & à les voir fort anticques, & n’ont en vsage les Images faictes abesse.’ Regnault 1573, 21.

104 ‘Nous fumes encrez au port dudict Corfou par l’espace de trois iours, pendant lequel temps visitames plusieurs Chapelles de la vierge Marie, loing de Corfou enuiron trois, ou quatre lieues, que lesdicts Grecz ont en grande reuerence, & honneur.’ Regnault 1573, 21.

105 Hassler 1843–1849, vol. 3, 349; Sollweck 1892, 77.

small church built on a rock in the sea seen by a traveller of 1482 is the church of St Nicholas ‘των πτωχών’ (of the poor). The church had been identified by Spyros Karydis as St Nicholas ‘poverello’, based mainly on the correlating denominations, but later on he doubted that identification (Figs 17a, 17b).<sup>106</sup> The date of the construction of the church is uncertain, but it is the only church of St Nicholas mentioned in archival documents around the period of its mention in Paul Walther Guglingen’s travelogue.

If the church in question is actually St Nicholas ‘poverello’, archival documents testify to its existence already in 1414; it was then that, according to the plans of the fortification of the *borgo*, the new walls would be built near it. In any case, St Nicholas ‘των πτωχών’ appears by that name in archival documents since 1502. A notarial document of 1523 mentions its owner, Nikolaos Agapitos, or Sahlikis, and from the 16th century onwards the church also appears as St Nicholas ‘Sahlikis’ or ‘on the seashore’. The church seems to have been of reverence for the seafarers, who often made donations to it. Up until the 18th century the church, like most of the churches of Corfu, was private and belonged to the Sahlikis family, until the 19th century, when it came under the jurisdiction of the community of Corfu.<sup>107</sup>



FIGURE 17a The church of St Nicholas, Corfu, view from the west

106 Karydis 1999, 281; Karydis 2007a, 162–164.

107 Karydis 1999, 281; Karydis 2007a, 162–164; Papageorgiou 1920, 206.



FIGURE 17b The church of St Nicholas, Corfu, view from the south

The monument underwent many changes during its history. Most probably it was a typical Ionian church: a small-scale, one-aisled, wooden-roofed basilica. After its destruction during World War II, it was restored in the same type, preserving some of its original elements. Due to the particularity of the

building complex on which the church is embedded, today it has neither a west entrance, nor an apse at the east, while its only entrance is on its south side. It is still officiated (although on a non-regular basis).

The church of St Nicholas is mentioned by only one pilgrim, Paul Walther Guglingen, who visited Corfu in 1482. He described it as a small church on the seashore near the city and mentions that three Greek priests resided there.<sup>108</sup>

## 2.2 *The Church of the Virgin Limniotissa*

The church of the Virgin Limniotissa appears for the first time in archival documents of 14 March 1497, so this date can be used as a *terminus ante quem* for its construction (Fig. 18). Very little information about it survives and it all comes from archival documents; one of them, dating to 1567, records that it



FIGURE 18 The church of the Virgin Limniotissa, Corfu

<sup>108</sup> Paul Walther Guglingen's full description of the church: 'Demum navigavimus versus civitatem Corffu, et prope civitatem in mare est quedam parva rupis vel petra, et in illo est edificata una parva ecclesia et domicula in honorem sancti Nicolai, et morantur etiam ibi tres greci sacerdotes.' Sollweck 1892, 77.



belonged to the guild of caulkers.<sup>109</sup> By the 18th century the church belonged to the community of Corfu and was called the Virgin 'of the Sea'.<sup>110</sup>

The church was located directly below the northern city walls and was demolished by the Venetians during the construction of the walls from 1571 to 1580, thus its architectural type is unknown, although it could be assumed that it followed the typical Ionian Islands type of the one-aisled, wooden-roofed basilica. The church was either enclosed in the new walls and demolished in a later period or demolished during the construction of the fortifications, while the altar was preserved.<sup>111</sup> Today, in its place, there is a small chapel dedicated to the Virgin Megalomata. Inside the chapel there is a 16th-century fresco of the Virgin with the inscription 'Panagia Limniotissa', which used to be the southern altar of the older church (Fig. 19).<sup>112</sup> The orientation of the chapel, as well as the level of its surrounding walls, suggest that the building was not initially constructed as a church, but was turned into one at a later date.<sup>113</sup>

The Virgin Limniotissa is mentioned by only one pilgrim, the German Dominican friar Felix Fabri. He reports that during his first pilgrimage, in 1480, the church was being constructed and was just a wooden chapel, while by the time he visited Corfu again, in 1483, its construction was completed.<sup>114</sup> He also adds that the church was built by the seafarers, which could be supported by documents attesting that, at least in the 16th century, it belonged to the guild of caulkers.<sup>115</sup> Fabri also mentions that it was a Latin church, a fact that contradicts the surviving information that the church belonged to the Orthodox rite. However, the possibility that it served for a period of time as a Latin or a double-rite church cannot be excluded.

109 Karydis 1999, 284.

110 Papageorgiou 1920, 198–199.

111 Karydis 2007a, 176.

112 Karydis 1999, 284; Karydis 2007a, 175; Papageorgiou 1920, 198–199.

113 Karydis 1999, 284; Karydis 2007a, 175.

114 'Iuxta mare est ecclesia beatae Virginis, jam quadris aedificata, ubi in prima mea peregrinatione stetit solum lignea capella, et est etiam ecclesia latina, galeotarum eleemosynis constructa.' Hassler 1843–1849, vol. 3, 349.

115 See n. 109 above.



FIGURE 19 The 16th-century fresco of the Virgin in the church of the Virgin Limniotissa, Corfu

### 2.3 *The Church of St Nicholas dei Vecchi*

The only Orthodox church pilgrims actually visited in the town of Corfu and described is the church of St Nicholas dei Vecchi, where the relics of Sts Spyridon and Theodora were kept and venerated (Fig. 20). St Nicholas dei Vecchi is one of the oldest churches in Corfu and obtained its present form at the beginning of the 16th century.<sup>116</sup> Its time of construction cannot be determined with certainty, but it is considered to have been built on a pre-existing 14th-century building.<sup>117</sup> Continuous mentions of the church in archival documents from 1487 and throughout the following century indicate that it was

<sup>116</sup> Agoropoulou 1976, 282.

<sup>117</sup> Papageorgiou 1920, 206; Gallas 1992, 220.



FIGURE 20 The church of St Nicholas dei Vecchi, Corfu, view from the south

not moved from its original place.<sup>118</sup> It probably suffered damage during the Ottoman sieges of 1537 and 1571, but obviously was restored and continued to function.<sup>119</sup>

St Nicholas is of the typical architectural type of the Ionian Islands' churches: a one-aisled, wooden-roofed basilica with an exonarthex surrounding its west, north and south sides. Due to the particularly sharp gradient of the area, there is no entrance at its west side, and the west part of the narthex is directly connected to the main aisle, without the intermediation of a wall or doors. The north and south parts of the narthex do not exist today, but traces of them are still visible. The main aisle is particularly long (23.20 × 8.40 m), while at the east it forms a tripartite sanctuary with central hexagonal and two lateral semi-circular niches (Fig. 21).<sup>120</sup>

118 The first mention of the church, under the name St Nicholas 'ton Alvaniton', is in a notary document of 22 March 1497. Already in 1560 the church was a prosperous institution, with much property in land and money. Karydis 1999, 280; Karydis 2007b, 164; Papageorgiou 1920, 206.

119 Karydis 1999, 280; Karydis 2007b, 164.

120 Agoropoulou 1976, 282.

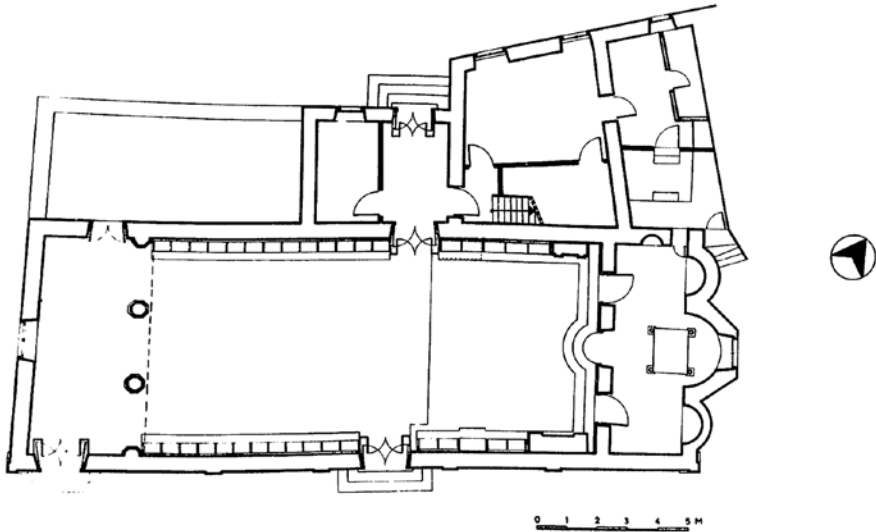


FIGURE 21 Plan of the church of St Nicholas dei Vecchi, Corfu

Inside the church there is a beautifully carved marble iconostasis of the 17th century with Corinthian columns and shell conglomerations, decorated with icons connected to the school of the famous Cretan painter Emmanouil Tzanes-Bounialis (Fig. 22).<sup>121</sup> St Nicholas dei Vecchi is one of the very few churches on the island that has a pulpit located high on the north wall and accessed through the exonarthex. According to the Corfiot custom, the members of the fraternity that owned the church were buried under the floor of the exonarthex. Some of the burial plaques are still visible today.<sup>122</sup>

The church was originally private, but in 1513 it appears as belonging to a fraternity of donors.<sup>123</sup> It served as the seat of the *protopapas*<sup>124</sup> (the head of the Orthodox clergy) of Corfu until 1712, while it was merged in 1577 with the church of St Lazarus, when the latter was demolished for the needs of the fortification of the town. Since then, it appears in the documents with both names, while the name of St Nicholas gradually prevails. From the 19th century onwards it is mentioned as St Nicholas 'the Old', while today it is known as St Nicholas dei Vecchi.<sup>125</sup>

121 Vokotopoulos 1990, 117.

122 Agoropoulou 1976, 282; Gallas 1992, 220.

123 Karydis 2007b, 165; Papageorgiou 1920, 206.

124 About the organisation of the Orthodox Church of Corfu, see p. 5, n. 11 herein.

125 Karydis 2007b, 166; Papageorgiou 1920, 206.



FIGURE 22 Iconostasis of the church of St Nicholas dei Vecchi, Corfu

According to Spyridon Papageorgiou and Athanasios Tsitsas, the relic of St Theodora, probably along with that of St Spyridon, was moved to St Nicholas from the church of St Lazarus around the third quarter of the 15th century.<sup>126</sup> Three travelogues of the late 15th century, those of Georges Lengherand of Mons (1485–1486), Konrad Grünemberg (1486) and Dietrich von Schachten (1491–1492), support this assertion. Grünemberg reports seeing the relics of Sts Spyridon and Theodora at the church of St Nicholas, although he seems to have misunderstood the name of St Spyridon: ‘In a Greek church standing high on a hill, two holy bodies are kept. One is a Greek archbishop called in Greek Spiritiam Palatin Viridus. The other is the daughter of the Emperor Constantine, called Sorora in Greek and Theodora

126 Papageorgiou 1920, 206; Tsitsas 1967, 65. It is worth mentioning that, according to other scholars, the above-mentioned relics were moved from the church of St Athanasios to the church of St Lazarus and from there to the church of Taxiarchis Michael. Nikiforou 2014, 350–357; Pieris 2007, 61–62.

in Latin.<sup>127</sup> In 1491 the German nobleman Dietrich von Schachten also makes mention of two bodies of saints kept in a Greek church in the *borgo*, but named only one of them, St Theodora.<sup>128</sup>

Georges Lengherand, who visited Corfu in 1485, provides a quite detailed description. He mentions that the body of St Spyridon was entire and actually 'during his feast day he stands upright', attesting to the first stages of the custom of putting the saint's relic in a vertical position, while he adds the information that it was brought to Corfu from Constantinople. As far as the relic of St Theodora is concerned, he mentions only that it was not preserved in its entirety. Furthermore, obviously not impressed by the reliquaries and the church building, he states that the saintly bodies were very badly kept.<sup>129</sup>

The relics kept and venerated in the church of St Nicholas, the bodies of St Theodora and St Spyridon, both had a long history before arriving on the island of Corfu. They were translated from Constantinople after its fall to the Ottomans and arrived on the island in 1456. The fact that the first mention of these relics dates back to 1485, only a short period after their appearance on Corfu, is indicative of the fame they were rapidly acquiring. They were relics brought from the lost capital city of the former Byzantine Empire, thus constituting a link with the local population's spiritual metropolis; at the same time, St Spyridon seems to have been a known and highly venerated saint, famous for his miraculous powers, and very quickly overshadowed not only St Theodora, but also the former patron saint of the island, St Arsenius, and even the *Serenissima's* protector, St Mark. The gradual culmination of the cult of St Spyridon and his elevation to the throne of the sole protector of the island took place in the century after the time frame of this study, and this could be the reason why pilgrims' references to his relic are so few.

127 'Item oben uff aim berg ligt ain kriechische kierch, dä ligend inn zwen hailgen. Ainer ist gesin ain kriechischer ertz bischoff, genempt worden in kriechischer spräch Spiritiam Palatin Viridus. Das ander ist ain tochter gesin Constandtinus des kaisers, haist in kriechischer spräch Sorora, in lattin Theodora.' Denke 2011, 335.

128 'Auch ihnn einer Griechischenn Kierchenn ihnn der Vorstadt liegenn zwene heiligenn gantz ohnversertt, dessgleichenn S. Theodora, wilche das Königreich Neapolis zum christlichenn Glaubenn brachtt hatt.' Röhricht and Meisner 1880a, 179.

129 'En laquelle ville il y a une chappelle de saint Nicolay là u avons veu deux corps saints; assavoir stts Spiridius archiepiscopus de Chipro, et est tout entier, lequel l'on dist que le jour de sa feste il se tient droit et fut apporté de la cité de Constantinoble à la prise qui par ci devant fut faicte; et l'autre s'appelle sancta Theodora, regina de Cypro, lequel n'est pas tout entier, mais ilz sont pour sains très mal révéramment mis.' Ménilglaise 1861, 95–96.

### 2.3.1 The Relic of St Spyridon

The patron saint of Corfu, St Spyridon, was born c. 270 in Cyprus. He became bishop of Trimythous around 312, and in 325 he took part in the First Ecumenical Council in Nicaea, where the heresy of Arius was condemned. During his incumbency as a bishop, he acquired great fame among his flock because of his miraculous powers. Many miracles were attributed to him during his lifetime. He died in 348 in Cyprus, where his body was kept and venerated at a church dedicated to him in Trimythous.<sup>130</sup> His relic was moved to Constantinople at the end of the 7th century, probably in 691, in order for it to be protected from Arab raids. In Constantinople it was housed in several churches: at the convent of the Theotokos Kecharitomene, the *katholikon* of the monastery of Odegon and finally at the church of the Holy Apostles, where several Russian travellers report seeing it, among whom Zosima the Deacon (1319–1322), Stefan of Novgorod (1350) and Ignatius of Smolensk (1389).<sup>131</sup> Already from the 9th and 10th centuries, St Spyridon's relic was highly venerated in Constantinople and the Greek Orthodox world.<sup>132</sup> On 12 December 1452, the day of his commemoration, St Spyridon's relic was carried in a procession held in the church of St Sophia to celebrate the union of the churches.<sup>133</sup> According to the prevailing legend, after the fall of the Byzantine capital to the Ottomans in 1453, a Corfiot priest, Georgios Kalochairetis, carried the relics of Sts Spyridon and Theodora through Epirus to the island of Corfu, where they arrived in 1456.<sup>134</sup>

The relic of St Spyridon appears in several documents soon after its translation to the island of Corfu (already in 1480), mostly concerning its ownership. After what seems to be a long dispute, St Spyridon's relic was acknowledged as the property through inheritance of Georgios Kalochairetis's sons Philipos and Loukas. Other documents, in particular two ducal letters of 1489, reveal the fact that the new legal owner of the relic, Philipos Kalochairetis, had requested permission from the Venetian Senate to transport it to Venice. In fact, St Spyridon was known to the West already from Late Antiquity, as a participant of the First

130 Tsitsas 1967, 9–19; Metallinos and Dountsi 2007, 19–21; Van den Ven 1953, 143–145; Bakalova and Lazareva 2006, 434–435.

131 Majeska 1984, 194, 94; Tsitsas 1967, 21; Pieris 2007, 62.

132 Tsitsas 1967, 32; Bakalova and Lazareva 2006, 435.

133 Tsitsas 1967, 21; Theodoridis 2007, 31.

134 The legend is doubted by some scholars, who claim that the relics were transferred to Corfu by the priest Grigoris Polyektos, who in turn entrusted them to the care of Georgios Kalochairetis. Voulgaris and Manesis 1857, 4–5; Karydis 2007b, 81; Tsitsas 1967, 21–22; Nikiforou 2014, 349–351; Leontsini 2014, 34; Bakalova and Lazareva 2006, 437.

Ecumenical Council.<sup>135</sup> The permission was granted, but St Spyridon never left the island of Corfu.<sup>136</sup> The reason why the translation of the relics to Venice never took place is unknown. According to Andrea Marmora, it was prevented by the opposition of the Corfiots.<sup>137</sup> Whatever the case may be, all of the aforementioned factors indicate that very soon after the relics' conveyance to Corfu the cult of St Spyridon was growing increasingly popular.

Since arriving on the island, the relic of St Spyridon was housed in a number of churches before eventually being accommodated in a church dedicated to him, where it remains until today (Fig. 23).<sup>138</sup> As already mentioned, the relic of St Spyridon, probably along with that of St Theodora, was moved to St Nicholas from the church of St Lazarus around the third quarter of the 15th century.<sup>139</sup> In 1614 the Italian traveller Pietro della Vale provided a detailed description of the saint's relic: 'Here, the defunct human body is preserved so perfectly, that, in the instance of one in particular, although he lived in the time of the First Council, his flesh appears yet lively and fresh; that of his leg, when touched, rising again from the pressure.'<sup>140</sup>

No specific information is given about the reliquary of St Spyridon's body during the 15th and 16th centuries. The aforementioned Georges Lengherand, who saw it in the church of St Nicholas dei Vecchi, stated that both the holy bodies of St Spyridon and St Theodora were very badly kept.<sup>141</sup> Indirect mentions of a crystal reliquary of the saint come from documents of 1489, according to which two keys to the sarcophagus were given to the town's bailiff.<sup>142</sup> In

135 Bakalova and Lazareva 2006, 451.

136 Karydis 2007b, 81–84; Tsitsas 1967, 22; Nikiforou 2014, 350–354.

137 Marmora 1672, book v, 263.

138 At the time of its arrival, in 1456, it was kept in the church of St Athanasius. Some years later it was moved to the church of St Lazarus and in 1489 to the church of Taxiarchis Michael. In 1527 Stamatellos Voulgaris, the owner of the relic at the time, erected a church dedicated to the saint's name and placed it there. In 1537, during the first Ottoman siege of Corfu, St Spyridon's relic was moved to the church of Sts Cosmas and Damian in order to be protected. It was returned to the church of St Spyridon after the end of the siege and remained there until 1577, when the church was demolished for the fortification of the *borgo*, and the relic was moved once again, this time to the church of St Nicholas 'ton Xenon'. Finally, near the end of the 16th century it was moved for the last time to a newly erected church dedicated to St Spyridon (the church was completed in 1594, but it was inaugurated in 1589). Papageorgiou 1920, 206; Tsitsas 1967, 65–67; Nikiforou 2014, 351; Pieris 2007, 61–62.

139 Papageorgiou 1920, 206; Tsitsas 1967, 65.

140 Jervis-White 1970, 127.

141 Ménilglaise 1861, 95–96.

142 Nikiforou 2014, 352; Bulgari 1669, 6.





FIGURE 23 St Spyridon's relic in the church of St Spyridon, Corfu

1605 the Cypriot Thomas Motsanega offered the saint a crystal reliquary that was made in Venice.<sup>143</sup> Today, St Spyridon's relic is kept in a crypt to the right of the sanctuary of the church of St Spyridon in a silver-plated sarcophagus with relief decoration that was made in Vienna in 1867. Inside the sarcophagus there is a smaller gold-plated reliquary with crystal parts through which the relic is visible, made and donated by Markos Cavallis in 1770.<sup>144</sup>

St Spyridon's relic is preserved entire, apart from his right arm, which was separated from the rest of the body. The date of its detachment is uncertain, but a Russian pilgrim who visited Corfu in the 17th century reports that the right arm was missing.<sup>145</sup> The noble Corfiot Stefanos Mastrakas, who wrote a 'Description of the Island of Corfu' in 1630, mentions seeing the entire body of St Spyridon, deposed at the church bearing his name, with the exception of his right arm, which was kept in Rome.<sup>146</sup> According to Nikolaos Voulgaris, a

143 Tsitsas 1967, 52; Voulgaris and Manesis 1857, 6.

144 Tsitsas 1967, 68.

145 Tsitsas 1967, 21.

146 Tsitsas 1974, 81.

member of the family who owned the relic and the author of a book concerning its history (1669), the saint's right arm was kept and venerated in Rome, but it is not certain if it arrived there from Corfu, Constantinople or Cyprus.<sup>147</sup> In 1986 it was brought to Corfu with great celebration.

The cult and the cult practices in relation to St Spyridon's relic started very soon after its translation to the island and became extremely popular. Within a few years St Spyridon had practically replaced, in the conscience of the pious, the old patron saint of Corfu, St Arsenius, whose relic was appropriated by the Latin rulers of the island, as well as St Mark's primacy as a religious point of reference that the Latins had tried hard to inaugurate. Already from the first quarter of the 16th century, miracles started to be attributed to St Spyridon, amplifying the new cult.<sup>148</sup> It is clear that, at least in its first stages, the founding of St Spyridon's cult derived directly from the faith of the population of the island and not from religious or administrative actors. The island's Venetian authorities handled the growing popularity of the newcomer saint in a way that respected the particularities of the religious equilibrium of the island. From the very beginning of the establishment of the cult, Greeks were allowed to conduct their religious practices in the Orthodox churches where the relic was kept, but very often, and with a range that mounted along with St Spyridon's popularity, the Latins participated in these religious acts. After a certain point, the saint was used by the Venetians, since he became the only non-secular authority to which the island's population in its entirety complied. Already in 1650 St Spyridon is referred to as the protector of the island, while during the 17th century the saint was invoked before the undertaking of any military operation, and his form had replaced St Mark as a figurehead on the Venetian galleys.<sup>149</sup> The saint's feast was included in the Venetian liturgical calendar as early as 1589, and his cult spread widely in Venice during the 18th century.<sup>150</sup>

The relic of St Spyridon was never kept by the Latins. Throughout its history it was the property of the descendants of the man who allegedly brought it

147 Voulgaris 1669, 7; Tsitsas 1967, 21. The saint's arm was kept in the church of Santa Maria in Vallicella, donated by Pope Clement VIII to Cardinal Cesare Baronio of the Oratory of St Philip Neri and, according to the 1806 catalogue of the sacristy, came directly from the church of the Holy Apostles of Constantinople. Tsitsas 1967, 24.

148 According to various legends, in 1524 St Spyridon saved the town from famine and in 1629 and 1673 from the plague and in 1537 and 1716 protected the island from the Ottoman attacks. Tsitsas 1967, 50–59; Theodoridis 2007, 33–34; Nikoforou 2014, 359–373.

149 Nikiforou 2014, 358.

150 D'Antiga 2009, 111–113.

from Constantinople, the families of Kalochairetis and later on of Voulgaris, and remained strictly connected to the Orthodox. It is not an uncommon phenomenon in Latin-ruled Greek cities that representatives of both rites performed common liturgies or other religious acts. What is different in this case is the fact that it was not the Latins who allowed the Orthodox to take part in a liturgy or procession related to a relic kept by them, but the other way round.<sup>151</sup> An analogous policy of the recognition of the veneration and cult of a local patron saint, deriving from the basis of the community and going beyond the religious rituals and into civic ceremonies and relations, can be seen in the appropriation of the Venetian authorities of the existing cult of Corfu's former patron saint, St Arsenius, as well as on Crete with the cult of its patron saint, St Titus.<sup>152</sup>

The cult of St Spyridon remains to today very strong on the island of Corfu. Most of the liturgical habits established during the Venetian occupation of the island are still performed in the same way.

### 2.3.1.1 *Liturgical Habits*

The treatment of the liturgical practices related to the relic of St Spyridon is beyond the interest of this study, since it flourished after the 16th century. The cultic phenomena described here are all connected to the relic of Corfu's new patron saint and not necessarily to the church that seems to have housed it for a period of time, St Nicholas dei Vecchi. In particular, the only practice that seems to have actually taken place in that church is the veneration or procession of the relic in a standing position on the day of the commemoration of the saint's death, as mentioned by the pilgrim Georges Lengherand of Mons. The rest of the processions, with the exception of the one on Holy Saturday, were established after the saint's relic had been transferred to the church bearing his name, where it is still kept today.

Since its translation from Constantinople in 1456, St Spyridon's relic became extremely popular among the Orthodox population of the island. More and more miracles started being attributed to the saint, and his cult grew rapidly. The first miracle that, according to tradition, was performed by the saint was in 1524, when he saved the town from famine. From then on, many more miracles were attributed to him, among which four stood out and occasioned the establishment of processions of the saint's relic that are carried out to this day. Needless

151 About analogous phenomena – the embracing by the Latins of a local cult in Orthodox rite churches – in Cyprus, see Olympios 2013, 329.

152 Georgopoulou 1995, 486.

to say, impromptu processions were also carried out for such exigencies as earthquakes, famine, inclement weather conditions, Ottoman threats and so on.

The four miracles performed by the saint initiated the institution of the four main annual processions of his relic. The oldest known litany was the one performed every Holy Saturday: the saint's sarcophagus was opened, and his relic displayed for public veneration for a period of four days, from Holy Saturday to Bright Tuesday. The actual date of the establishment of the Holy Saturday procession is unknown, but, according to tradition, it was distinguished as a remembrance of the rescue of the island from famine at some point before 1553.<sup>153</sup> The other three litanies of the saint's relic were instituted in the 17th and 18th centuries and are therefore outside of the time frame of this study.<sup>154</sup>

Besides the litanies, two times a year, once at Easter and once on the day of the commemoration of the saint's death, St Spyridon's relic was taken out of its reliquary and was placed for three days for public veneration in a standing position at the right-hand door of the tripartite sanctuary of the church.<sup>155</sup> The saint's body was also processed in a standing position, as is still done to this day.<sup>156</sup> This practice of carrying the saint's body in a standing position is attested to in archival documents and depictions in icons and engravings, as well as in the travelogue of the pilgrim Georges Lengherand (1485–1486), who

153 Tsitsas 1967, 53; Nikiforou 2014, 361; Theodoridis 2007, 33.

154 The second litany of the saint's relic was established by the Venetian authorities in 1630, after the attribution to St Spyridon of the miracle of saving the town from the plague in 1629. This litany, performed to this day, takes place every Palm Sunday. Another miraculous intervention of St Spyridon, again to save the island from a great epidemic in 1673, was celebrated by a procession of his relic every first Sunday of November. Maybe the most important and certainly the biggest procession of St Spyridon's relic is the one on 11 August. It was established right after the Ottoman siege of 1716, which ended favourably for the Venetians, by the supreme representative (*capitaneus*) of the island at the time, Andrea Pisani. About the litany of Palm Sunday, see Tsitsas 1967, 54; Nikiforou 2014, 360; Theodoridis 2007, 33. About the litany in November, see Tsitsas 1967, 54; Nikiforou 2014, 361–363; Theodoridis 2007, 33. About the litany in August, see Tsitsas 1967, 59–60; Nikiforou 2014, 363–366, 372; Theodoridis 2007, 33.

155 An analogous custom can also be seen in Zante (Zakynthos) in relation to the relic of the island's patron saint, St Dionysius. The saint's relic is still venerated and carried in processions in a vertical reliquary. Even before it was transferred to Zante, when it was kept in the monastery of Strophades the relic was placed in a vertical position, 'sitting at the episcopal throne' (*assiso in Trono Episcopale*). Ferrari 1723, 203; Tsitsas 1967, 27; Nikiforou 2014, 359; Theodoridis 2007, 33; Bakalova and Lazareva 2006, 439–442.

156 Until 1605 St Spyridon's body was carried in the hands of the *protopapas* and since then in a gold-plated crystal vertical reliquary made in Venice, donated by Thomas Motsanega. Tsitsas 1967, 52; Voulgaris and Manesis 1857, 6; Tsitsas 1974, 82.

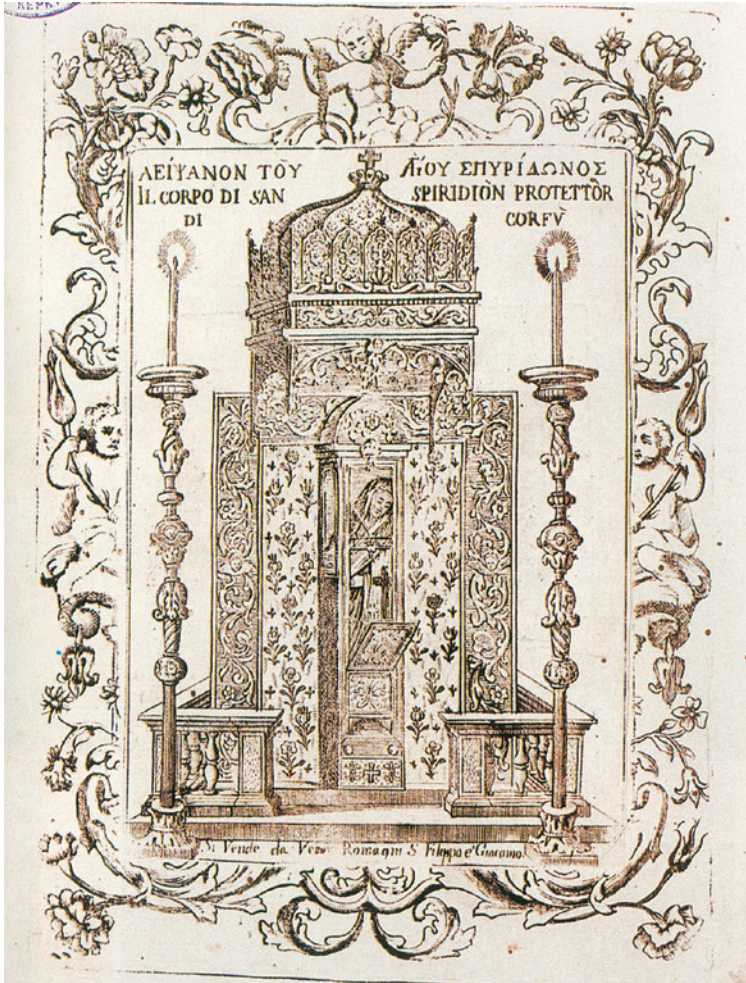


FIGURE 24 St Spyridon's relic displayed in a standing position, engraving

mentions that the body of St Spyridon is displayed standing upright on his feast day, thus indicating that the placing or carrying of the saint's relic in a vertical position was practised already from the end of the 15th century (Fig. 24).<sup>157</sup> In 1630 the local nobleman Stefanos Mastrakas verifies this custom, stating that St Spyridon 'because of his exceptional grace stands on his feet'.<sup>158</sup>

157 Bakalova and Lazareva 2006, 439–442; Bitha 1995, 151–168; Bitha 1997, 251–284; Ménéilgaïse 1861, 95.

158 Tsitsas 1974, 82.

Gradually, religious events of the regular ceremonial acts of the Orthodox Church, such as the litany of the Holy Cross or the water consecration during the feast day of the Epiphany, were performed at the church dedicated to St Spyridon. By the 17th century, almost 150 years after the translation of the saint's relic to Corfu, at least half of the annual litanies of the Orthodox took place in his church.<sup>159</sup>

### 2.3.2 The Relic of St Theodora

St Theodora was born in Ebissa in Paphlagonia in 815 and was probably of Armenian origin. After the death of her husband, the iconoclast emperor Theophilos, in 842 she ruled in his name until 856. During her reign she restored the icons at an ecclesiastical council in March of 843 with the help and support of Methodios, later Patriarch of Constantinople. She died in 867, but she was so highly venerated by later generations that she was canonised by the church for restoring Orthodoxy.<sup>160</sup>

According to the prevailing legend, St Theodora's relic was transferred to Corfu from Constantinople along with that of St Spyridon in 1456.<sup>161</sup> At the time of its arrival on the island of Corfu, St Theodora's relic was deposited at the church of St Athanasius, while some years later it was moved to the church of St Lazarus, where it remained until 1577, when the church was demolished for the *borgo* fortification works; or, according to other scholars, it was moved to the church of St Nicholas from the church of St Lazarus around the third quarter of the 15th century.<sup>162</sup> After that, in March 1725, St Theodora's relic was transferred to the church of Taxiarchis Michael and finally to the metropolitan church of the Virgin Spilaiotissa and St Blaise, where it remains to this day (Fig. 25).<sup>163</sup> The assertion that St Theodora's and St Spyridon's relics were kept for a period of time in the church of St Nicholas can be supported by the three pilgrims' reports from the late 15th century.<sup>164</sup> Another testimony of the presence of St Theodora's body in the church of St Nicholas comes from the aforementioned Stefanos Mastrakas, who states that the holy relic of St Theodora was kept and venerated in a silver sarcophagus at the church of St Nicholas.<sup>165</sup>

159 Nikiforou 2014, 371.

160 Garland 1999, 95–96.

161 Voulgaris and Manesis 1857, 4–5; Karydis 2007b, 81; Tsitsas 1967, 21–22; Nikiforou 2014, 349, 351; Leontsini 2014, 34.

162 Papageorgiou 1920, 206; Tsitsas 1967, 65; Nikiforou 2014, 350–357; Pieris 2007, 61–62.

163 Papageorgiou 1920, 201, 203, 206, 210; Tsitsas 1967, 65.

164 See pp. 55–56 herein.

165 Tsitsas 1974, 83.



FIGURE 25 St Theodora's relic in the Orthodox cathedral of the Virgin Spilaiotissa and St Blaise, Corfu

As mentioned by the pilgrim Georges Lengherand, St Theodora's relic is not entire.<sup>166</sup> The head is not preserved, and in its place there is a skull that probably does not belong to the preserved body. The rest of the saint's body is complete, with the exception of the right leg from the knee down, as well as one finger of the right hand.<sup>167</sup> Just like the relic of St Spyridon, St Theodora's one was inherited by the descendants of the family of the priest who allegedly brought it from Constantinople, Georgios Kalochairetis, and in particular by his son Markos, who in 1483 donated it to the community of Corfu.<sup>168</sup>

No information survives about the reliquary of St Theodora's body during the 15th or 16th centuries. Today, the saint's body is kept, as mentioned above, in the metropolitan church of the Virgin Spilaiotissa in an elaborate silver-plated repoussé sarcophagus of 1868.

St Theodora's cult did not develop in Corfu. From the time of the arrival of her relic on the island, she was considered of minor importance and was completely overshadowed by St Spyridon. This is probably the reason why her relic

166 See n. 129 above.

167 Papageorgiou 1920, 110.

168 Karydis 2007b, 81–84; Tsitsas 1967, 22, Nikiforou 2014, 350–354.

was not moved along with the ones of the new patron saint to a Community church, but remained instead in the small church of St Lazarus. No ceremonies or processions related to her relic are attested during the Venetian period of Corfu.

#### 2.4 *The Franciscan Monastery of St Francis*

As far as the Latin churches and monasteries of Corfu that are mentioned in the travelogues are concerned, the numbers of both religious institutions and references to them are very low. On the other hand, one should take into consideration that during the examined period only nine Latin churches and monasteries were officiating on the island. In fact, it is not absolutely certain that even these churches were all continuously officiating throughout the 14th to the 16th centuries. According to a document of 1406, the Augustinian monastery of the Annunziata was at the time the only Latin religious centre on the island, while in the 16th century two of the nine Latin churches of the town appear to have been abandoned.<sup>169</sup> In addition, the buildings of these institutions were definitely much less elaborate than the ones the pilgrims had already seen during their stay in Venice, as well as in the major cities on the Dalmatian coast, and, most importantly, none of them possessed relics that could attract pilgrims' interest and attention to act as agents of anticipation of the religious experience they were expecting to have in Jerusalem.<sup>170</sup> With that in mind, the references to the three of them mentioned in the travelogues, that is, the Franciscan and Augustinian monasteries and the Latin cathedral of Sts Peter and Paul, may be few, but provide valuable information.

The Franciscan monastery of St Francis is the religious institution that amasses the largest number of references compared to any other church or monastery in the town of Corfu (Fig. 26).<sup>171</sup> Its inauguration coincided with the rendering of Corfu to its new Venetian rulers on 20 May 1386, so it was in a way inextricably linked to the island's history and at the same time one of the oldest non-Orthodox institutions of the town. Every year, on the

169 Agoropoulou 2004, 232, 238; Sathas 1880–1883, vol. 2, 141; Karydis 2007a, 241–242; Karapidakis 1998, 144.

170 The relics of the island's patron saint, St Arsenius, which were housed in the cathedral of the island, were not of significant importance to a Western traveller. Actually, St Arsenius was most probably unknown to them, judging by the misspelling of his name in some of the few travelogues that mention him. As far as the monasteries of the Augustinians and Franciscans are concerned, neither of them seems to have possessed any relics during the examined period, as deduced from pilgrims' narratives and archival and archaeological evidence.

171 About the religious orders in Greece, see indicatively Tsougarakis 2012; and in particular about the Ionian Islands, see Tsougarakis 2012, 275–310; Pagratis 1999.



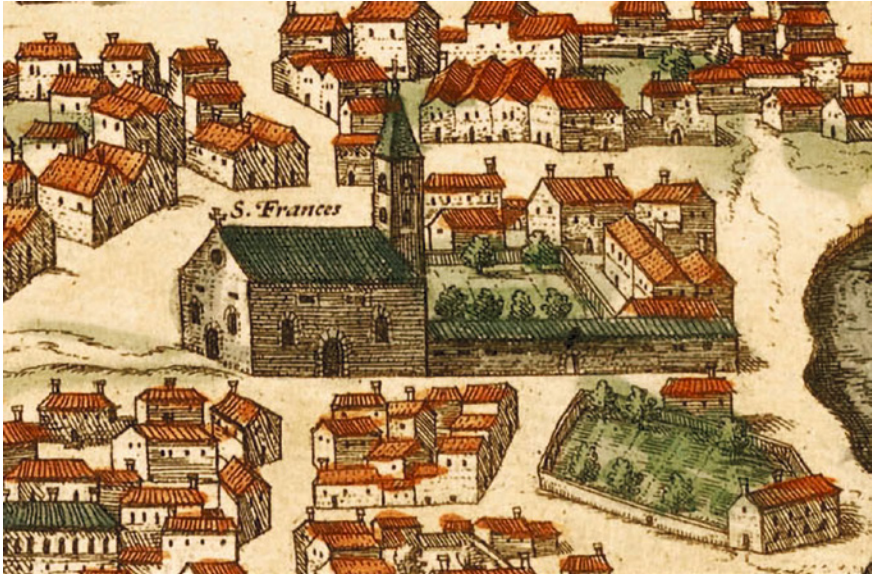


FIGURE 26 The Franciscan monastery of Corfu, c. 1575. Detail of Fig. 15

anniversary of Corfu's rendering, a date that coincided with the commemoration of St Bernardine of Siena, a ceremony was held and included a procession starting from the cathedral and leading to St Francis, with the participation of secular as well as religious representatives of both rites.<sup>172</sup>

The precise date of the monastery's construction is uncertain. In his book *Della historia di Corfu*, Andrea Marmora mentions two traditions concerning the establishment of the monastery of St Francis. According to the first, during the period when Corfu was subject to the Despotate of Epirus (1214–1251), a church dedicated to St Angelos was built and later on constituted the *katholikon* of an Orthodox convent, which was abandoned or abolished by the Angevins, who took over the island in 1267. This convent was then renovated to meet Western standards and granted to the Franciscans by Philip, Duke of Tarrant, in 1367. It was in that monastery that the ceremony of the symbolic rendering of the key of the town of Corfu to its new Venetian rulers, represented by Admiral Giovanni Miani, took place on 20 May 1386. In memory of that event an inscribed marble plaque was embedded in the façade of the building.<sup>173</sup> According to the other tradition, this ceremony took place at

172 Nikiforou 2014, 56; Tsitsas 1969, 157–158.

173 This plaque was destroyed in the 19th century. Agoropoulou 2004, 232; Gaoutsis 2001, 324; Karydis 2007a, 240–241.

the church of St Angelos, which was inaugurated on the same day.<sup>174</sup> This second tradition seems more unlikely, since the church that Marmora mentions was later on quite safely identified as the church of Taxiarchis Michael in the Campiello district.<sup>175</sup>

The date of the renaming of the monastery is also uncertain. Up until the 16th century both names appear in the documents, while the surrounding area was called 'Santangelo', 'contrada di San Francesco' or 'calle larga di San Francesco'. The name St Francis prevailed after the first half of the 16th century, but in many cases it was followed by the phrase 'olim Sant' Angelo'.<sup>176</sup>

Whatever may be the case, no traces that could justify the monastery's dating to the 13th century survive to this day. The monastery is known to have had suffered severe damage during the Ottoman siege of 1571 and obtained its final and present form after a complete renovation in 1621, when it was also consecrated by Archbishop Benedetto Bragadin.<sup>177</sup>

The conventual church followed the most popular architectural type of the churches, both Latin and Orthodox, of the Ionian Islands: a one-aisled, wooden-roofed basilica, in this case with a particularly long aisle (27.80 x 8.40 m) and entrances at the west and the south. Two tall arched windows opened on both sides of the main south entrance and two other semi-circular windows on the west wall (Fig. 27). Located between the niche of the sanctuary and the chapel to its south is a voluminous bell tower. The sanctuary is slightly elevated and tripartite. It is separated from the aisle by a marble parapet. The main altar, made of white marble, is of simple form and stands on a base elevated by three steps in the middle of the sanctuary, occupying most of its breadth. The two lateral parts of the sanctuary, separated by double arches, lead to the courtyard and the building complex of the priory and the chapel of St Anna and the bell tower, respectively. On the west side of the church there is a small portico for the organ. Near the south entrance, two small basins are embedded in the wall, one of which bears the blazon of the Franciscans and the date 1571, probably related to the restoration of the monastery after the Ottoman siege.<sup>178</sup>

Inside the church, besides the central altar dedicated to St Francis, there are four lateral ones: three dating to the 18th century, dedicated to the Virgin, St Anthony and St Barbara, and a 19th-century one, dedicated to St Rocco

174 Agoropoulou 2004, 232; Pagratis 1999, 117; Marmora 1672, book v, 232–233.

175 Papageorgiou 1920, 200–201; Agoropoulou 2004, 232; Pagratis 1999, 117.

176 Agoropoulou 2004, 232; Pagratis 1999, 118–119; Karydis 2007a, 240–241.

177 Agoropoulou 2004, 233; Gaoutsis 2001, 323; Giotopoulou 1997, 70.

178 Agoropoulou 2004, 234.

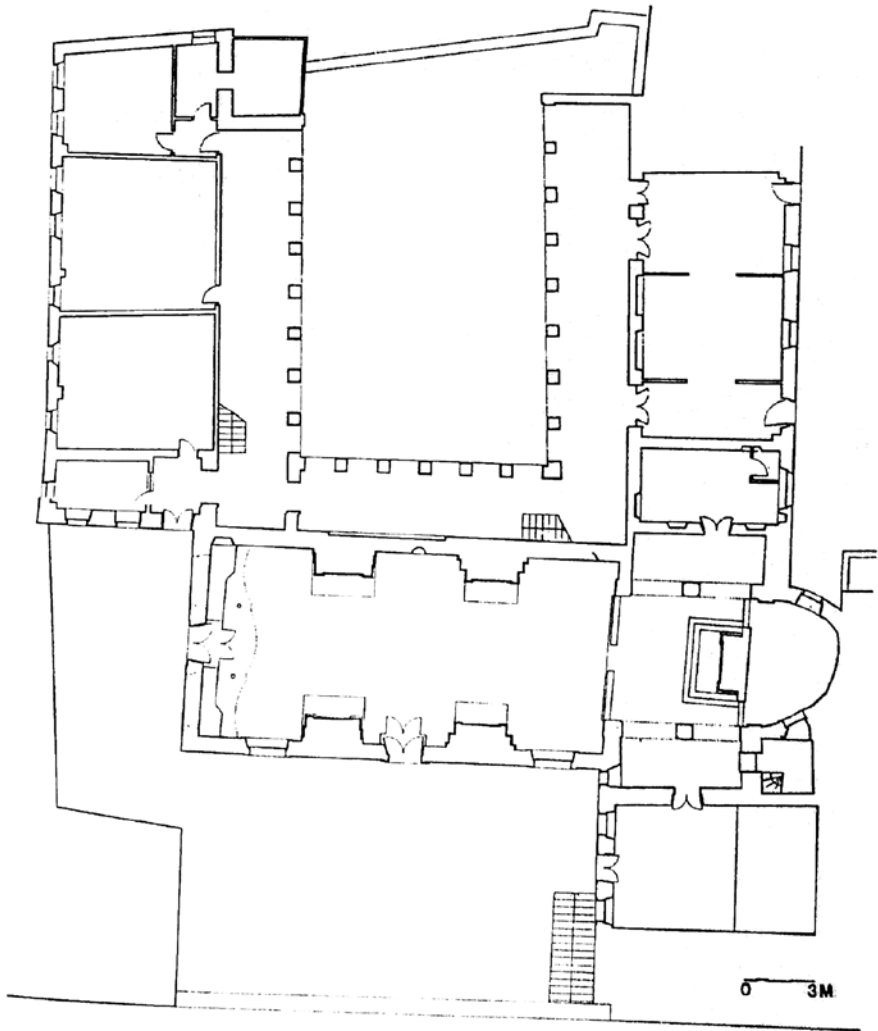


FIGURE 27 Plan of the Franciscan monastery of Corfu

(Fig. 28).<sup>179</sup> The flooring of the building has now been largely replaced with modern tiles, but some inscribed burial plaques dating to the 17th and 18th

179 The altar of St Barbara, located in the west part of the north wall, was made in 1739 of white marble and belonged to the guild of cannoneers. The icon of the saint is a work by Francesco Fontebasso, an 18th-century Italian artist known from his works in Venetian churches. The second altar, also on the north wall, dedicated to St Anthony and built in



FIGURE 28 The central altar in the church of St Francis, Corfu

centuries remain *in situ* or in second use; these mark the tombs of soldiers, noble families and members of the fraternities of Sts Jacob and Christopher.<sup>180</sup>

Adjoining the church on its south side is the chapel of St Anna (Fig. 29). It is considered to be the oldest building of the complex, and some identify it as the 13th-century church of St Angelo. It is of a simple rectangular shape and obtained its present form, which bears Gothic elements, after its restoration in 1850, when it was used by the British army.<sup>181</sup> On a level lower than the church, the building complex of the priory was built in a typical Western manner: a courtyard surrounded on its three sides by a two-storey building with a portico on the ground level.<sup>182</sup>

During the period of the Venetian occupation of Corfu, the Franciscan monastery served as the seat of the chief of the province of Romania, housing a number of postulant monks for one or more years until they obtained their monastic

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1751, is more elaborate, adorned with pillars of red marble and embedded with marble plaques on the front and statues along the top. The altar of St Rocco, patron saint of porters, located on the west part of the south wall, is the only wooden one. It was built by the guild in 1821 and is practically a wooden copy of the altar of St Barbara. Its icon, on the other hand, is very old and comes from the church of St Rocco that was destroyed in the 17th century. The fourth altar, located on the east part of the south wall, is dedicated to the Virgin. Dating from the 18th century, it has a form similar to the altar of St Anthony. Agoropoulou 2004, 233–234; Gaoutsis 2001, 324.

180 Agoropoulou 2004, 234.

181 Agoropoulou 2004, 234; Pagratis 1999, 337.

182 Agoropoulou 2004, 233–234; Gaoutsis 2001, 324.



FIGURE 29 The church of St Francis and the chapel of St Anna, Corfu

habit and were sent to their appointed seats.<sup>183</sup> Also, as in the case of all the Franciscan monasteries of the Ionian Islands, the priory hosted the preachers (*predicatori*) who visited the island before the periods of fasting for Christmas and Easter, several Italian missionaries who officiated in the Latin churches and covered the needs of the religious institutions of the town as confessors, preachers and catechists, and priests on the Venetian galleys.<sup>184</sup>

When the French occupied Corfu in 1797, the Franciscan monastery was abolished, and its property was confiscated. It then served many different purposes, including housing a school and a printing house.<sup>185</sup> During World War II it housed the relics and reliquaries of the cathedral of St Jacob, which was

183 Provinces are territorial divisions of the mendicant orders. The Franciscan Order's province of Romania (roughly corresponding to the Empire of Romania) was created in 1263 and was subsequently divided into three custodies: Negroponte (including Euboea, Crete and the Aegean islands), Thebes (including Thebes, Athens and Corinth) and Glarentza (including Achaia and the Ionian Islands). See Tsougarakis 2012, 105, nn. 3–4.

184 Pagratis 1999, 121.

185 Agoropoulou 2004, 237; Pagratis 1999, 129.



FIGURE 30 The conventual buildings of the monastery of St Francis, Corfu, accommodate an elementary school

destroyed by German bombings, and served for a while as the Latin cathedral.<sup>186</sup> Today the priory's buildings accommodate a public school (Fig. 30). The church

<sup>186</sup> The full list of relics that ended up in the church of St Francis is published in Gaoutsis 1999, 63–73.

of St Francis still stands in the city of Corfu, attracting many visitors, while liturgies are performed on quite a regular basis.

As mentioned above, the date of the monastery's construction is uncertain. The Franciscan Conventual friar Vincenzo Mutio from Bergamo, chief of the province of Romania, connects its construction with St Francis of Assisi himself, while in 1334 the monastery of Corfu appears in the catalogue of priories of the province of Romania, although this is considered to be a confusion between the towns of Corfu and Coron (present-day Koroni).<sup>187</sup> The monastery is not included in the catalogue of 1390 and neither is it mentioned in 1406, when, according to a document of that year, the only Latin religious centre of the island was the Augustinian monastery of the Annunziata.<sup>188</sup> The absence of the Franciscan priory of Corfu from the above-mentioned catalogues does not necessarily mean that it did not exist; it could be explained by the fact that the monastery was in a bad state and temporarily not open to the public. In this case, a few Franciscan friars would have been officiating at the church and probably running the guest houses that existed during that period on the island for the indigent and the travellers.<sup>189</sup> The existence of the priory of St Francis is attested with certainty in 1482, when the Conventual friar Paul Walther Guglingen visited the Latin monasteries of Corfu and reported that St Francis was in a poor condition with very few monks.<sup>190</sup>

Travelogues prove to be a valuable source of information concerning this gap in the appearance of the monastery in the catalogues, since eight pilgrims who visited Corfu during the period between 1413 and 1482 reported visiting the monastery, while some of them resided there during their stay on the island.<sup>191</sup> The first to mention the priory is the Italian pilgrim Luchino del Campo in 1413, clearly stating that at least the priory's church was functioning at the time, while just over 60 years later Wilhelm Tzewers (1477–1478) mentioned that the monastery offered accommodation, but was very poor.<sup>192</sup> The German nobleman Hans Tucher (1479–1480) characterised it as the best in town when

187 Pagratis 1999, 119; Moorman 1983, 148.

188 Agoropoulou 2004, 232; Pagratis 1999, 119; Asonitis 1988, 69.

189 Agoropoulou 2004, 232; Pagratis 1999, 119.

190 Agoropoulou 2004, 232; Pagratis 1999, 119; Moorman 1983, 148.

191 The pilgrims Luchino del Campo (1413), Wilhelm Tzewers (1477–1478), Hans Tucher (1477–1480), Pierre Barbatre (1480), Felix Fabri (1480, 1483–1484), Paul Walther Guglingen (1481–1483), Jan Aerts (1481–1484) and an anonymous pilgrim (1480) mention the Franciscan monastery of Corfu. Brandoli 2011, 43; Hartmann 2004, 97; Herz 2002, 358; 43; Pinzuti and Tucoo-Chala 1972–1973, 118; Hassler 1843–1849, vol. 3, 348; Sollweck 1892, 78; Van Nispen 1652, Cap. xxii; Schefer 1882 (1970), 43.

192 Luchino del Campo (1413): '[...] e insieme andorno alla chiesa di S. Francesco ad oddire la messa'. Brandoli 2011, 43. Wilhelm Tzewers (1477–1478): 'Hospicia dant peregrinis Augustinenses et Minores, qui sunt valde pauperes.' Hartmann 2004, 96.

it comes to accommodation, an opinion shared by other pilgrims.<sup>193</sup> Paul Walther Guglingen's description of the monastery conveys important information, being the only one to provide hints of its interior decoration:

In Corfu there are Augustinians, preachers and Minor friars, but none of their monasteries is reformed; they officiate following the Greek rite. The monastery of the Friars Minor is completely abandoned, both in the matters of the church as well as in the other domestic matters [...] we left the galley and entered the monastery; there I officiated mass, and the prince was present with his entourage [...]. In it the nobles ordinarily place their coats of arms, and there are many excellent coats of arms hanging from the walls, engraved on the seats, etc.<sup>194</sup>

In regard to the way the liturgies were performed in the church of St Francis, and unlike the attestation of the Franciscan friar, an anonymous pilgrim who visited Corfu two years before Paul Walther Guglingen, as well as the Norman nobleman Greffin Affagart, who travelled in the 16th century, testify that besides the cathedral the Franciscan monastery was the only place one could attend a Latin mass.<sup>195</sup> None of the pilgrims visiting St Francis reported seeing any relic, reliquary or cultic object in the church. The oldest attestation of a relic in the monastery is in 1678, when Marcus Antonius Barbarigo, Bishop of Corfu (1678–1688), brought with him a fragment of the relic of St Francis Xavier.<sup>196</sup>

The amount and value of the information conveyed by pilgrims' narratives concerning the Franciscan monastery of Corfu, despite the relatively small

193 '[...] der peste gemach'. Herz 2002, 358.

194 The Franciscan friar's full description is as follows: 'In Corffu sunt Augustinenses Predicatores et Minores; sed nullum monasterium eorum est reformatum; faciunt officia eorum secundum Grecos. Monasterium Minorum totaliter est desolatum, quam in rebus ecclesie quam aliis domesticis, attamen peregrini intrant cum patronis. Et mane feria tertia post Johannis [25 Juni] exivimus galeam et intravimus monasterium; ibi perfecti missam, et princeps cum suis aderat et aluit nos illo die cum ceteris pretiose. Ibi ponunt nobiles arma eorum communiter, et ibi inveniuntnr multa arma bona nobilium pendicta ad parietes, incisa ud sedilia etc.' Sollweck 1892, 78.

195 Anonymous (1480): 'Il y a environ dix huyt ou vingt eglises èsquelles tout le service se dit en grec, excepté les Cordelliers qui sont latins en l'eglise cathedrale en laquelle on chante aulcunes fois grec et aulcunes foys latin.' Schefer 1882 (1970), 43–44. Greffin Affagart (1519, 1533–1534): 'A Corphou y a bien vingt églises, mays partout l'office se fait selon la secte grecque, excepté à ung couvent des Cordeliers.' Chavanon 1902, 31.

196 Gaoutsis 1999, 67.



number and the limited length of their references, is of significant importance. They testify to the priory's existence and activity, as well as its importance among the other religious institutions in the town, throughout the 14th to the 16th centuries and especially for a period of almost 70 years (1413–1482) about which no other written testimonies survive. Carefully reading the travelogues, the active presence of the Franciscan friars on a religious as well as a social level in Corfu becomes obvious, and, at least from the pilgrims' point of view, the Franciscan monastery stands out as the most mention-worthy religious centre of the town, as well as the place where the majority of them resided during their stay: 'At Corfu there is a small monastery of the Latin Friars Minor, where we retired, and it was a great relief.'<sup>197</sup>

### 2.5 *The Augustinian Monastery of St Mary of the Annunciation*

Oddly enough, the other monastery of the mendicant orders of Corfu, the Augustinian monastery of St Mary of the Annunciation, or the Annunziata, which according to an official document of 1406 was at the time the only Latin religious centre on the island, appears sparsely in the travelogues (Fig. 31).<sup>198</sup> References to it cover a small period of just ten years, from 1477 to 1486, and the monastery of the Annunziata is always mentioned along with the Franciscan priory.

The Augustinian priory was also located in the *borgo* and was built in 1393, before its fortification.<sup>199</sup> The land where it was built, as well as the expenses of its construction, was donated by Petro Capese, a feudal lord of Corfu and one of the main negotiators of the subjection of the island to the Venetians.<sup>200</sup>

The monastery's inauguration, on 7 January 1394, turned out to be a huge public event for the island of Corfu. The document of its concession to the Augustinian friars reports that at the celebration both the Latin and Orthodox clergies participated, represented by the Latin Bishop Michael Albano and the Greek *Protopapas* Elias Monomachos, along with the town's bailiff, Venetian and Greek nobles and a large number of people.<sup>201</sup> Within the next few years the monastery became the most important Latin religious institution of the island. It had significant property, which was augmented over the years

197 Antoine Regnault (1549): 'Audict lieu de Corfou y a un petit Couent de freres mineurs Latins, où nous nous allons retirer, qui est vn soulagement.' Regnault 1573, 21.

198 Agoropoulou 2004, 232; Pagratis 1999, 119; Asonitis 1988, 69.

199 Agoropoulou 2004, 230; Giotopoulou 1997, 70.

200 Agoropoulou 2004, 238; Asonitis 1988, 68–69; Karydis 2007a, 241.

201 Asonitis 1988, 69; Tsougarakis 2012, 252–253.

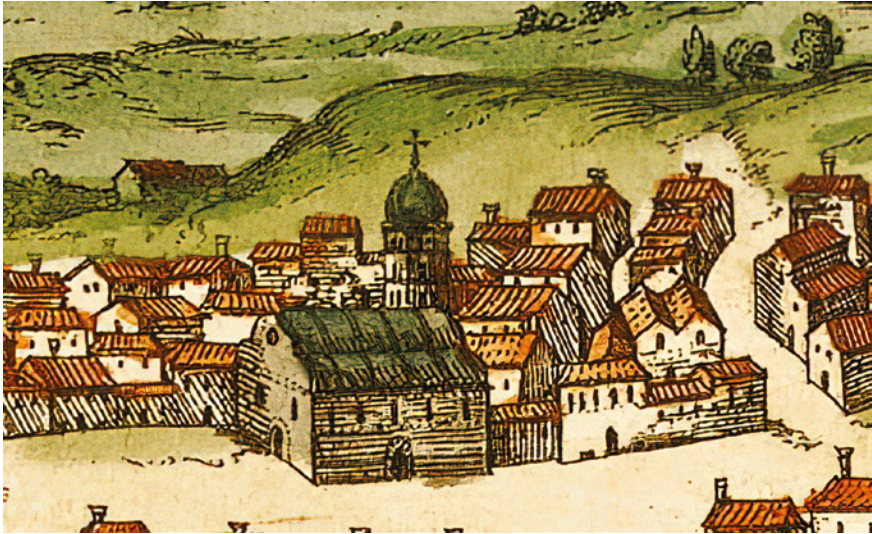


FIGURE 31 The Augustinian monastery of Corfu, c. 1575. Detail of Fig. 15

by donations from the pious.<sup>202</sup> After the fortification of the *borgo* and the expansion of the town and especially after the construction of the new Latin cathedral of St Jacob, the Annunziata became a part of the ‘heart’ of the new town, situated in the Piazza San Giacomo, near the cathedral, the bailiff’s palace and the archbishopric (*Pallazzo Pubblico* and *Pallazzo Archiepiscopale*).<sup>203</sup>

The building compound of the priory was of significant size, with a large courtyard around which the monastery complex and a cemetery were built. The 14th-century building of the conventual church of the Annunziata was a three-aisled, wooden-roofed basilica with an adjoining bell tower. It was located in the corner of the plot and was orientated in deviation from the east – west axis.<sup>204</sup> The monastery was severely damaged during the Ottoman sieges of 1537 and 1571. As a matter of fact, in 1571 its roof was completely burnt and rebuilt with wood from the defeated Ottoman galleys.<sup>205</sup> During the period between 1668 and 1670, the building was once again restored, and it was then that it acquired its present form. After these restorations, the

202 Asonitis 1988, 69; Agoropoulou 2004, 232, 238; Sathas 1880–1883, vol. 2, 141, Karydis 2007a, 241–242; Tsougarakis 2012, 253–258.

203 Voskopoulou 2006, 128.

204 Agoropoulou 2004, 238–239.

205 Agoropoulou 2004, 233; Giotopoulou 1997, 70; Asonitis 1988, 69.

church retained the type of the three-aisled, wooden-roofed basilica, as well as many of its Gothic features.<sup>206</sup> In its lateral aisles there were four elegant altars (two on the north wall and two on the south) in the Baroque style, adorned with colourful marbles.<sup>207</sup> The main altar of the church does not exist today. It was probably located in the centre of the sanctuary and was covered by a large ciborium with spiral columns of red marble. Two of these pillars were used for the construction of a ciborium in the cathedral between the years 1966 and 1970.<sup>208</sup>

The façade of the church was on its narrow west side. It was very simple in form, with a round window above the main entrance (Fig. 32). The doorframe was of red marble, framed by two windows. On the north and south walls, doors, as well as two semi-circular windows, were probably opened to provide direct access to the lateral aisles. A small marble staircase led to the main entrance, to the left of which still survives an inscribed plaque, probably mentioning the donor of the church, embedded in the wall. The inscription was destroyed by the French in the 18th century. The bell tower, the only part of the monastery that remains entire, was also built in the 14th century. Unlike the rest of the churches of Corfu, the Annunziata's bell tower was not located on the east side, but on the west, near the façade of the building. Its higher part has on each side double-arched openings, above which there is a zone decorated with a trireme, the emblem of Corfu. Two bells from the church of St Saviour in Candia were placed in this bell tower, brought to Corfu by monks fleeing the island after its occupation by the Ottomans.<sup>209</sup>

As in most of the Latin churches of the island, the floor of the Annunziata's central aisle was covered with inscribed burial plaques, marking the tombs of soldiers, noble families and members of the Guild of St Joseph.<sup>210</sup> Today, only

206 During the restoration of 1668–1670, the ceiling of the church was decorated with 18 paintings by Martino Rigoni, while the famous Cretan painter Theodoros Poulakis and his brother Christophoros painted some of the icons of the church. The decoration of the ceiling was renewed before World War II. Agoropoulou 2004, 240–241.

207 One belonged to the guild of craftsmen, carpenters and stonemasons and was dedicated to St Jacob, while the other three belonged to the fraternities of the Virgin of the Rosary, St Carlo and the Virgin of Consolation. The altar of the Virgin of the Rosary remained in the church of the Annunziata up until 1746, when the fraternity built its own church. Agoropopoulou 2004, 240–241.

208 Agoropopoulou 2004, 240–241; *Εφημερίς* 1943, 2.

209 Agoropoulou 2004, 239.

210 Rusconi 1952, 248.



FIGURE 32 The Augustinian conventual church of the Annunziata, Corfu, drawing after L. Crema

one of these plaques remains *in situ*, located at the interior side of the remaining wall of the façade, while the others have been moved to the cathedral.<sup>211</sup>

The monastery of St Mary of the Annunciation of Corfu was the last of the Augustinian monasteries to survive in Greece. In 1797, when the French occupied the island, the monastery of the Annunziata, along with the rest of the Latin religious institutions of the town, was abolished (with the exception of its conventual church), and its property was confiscated. In 1916 there seems to have been a restoration of the church and the buildings of the monastery.<sup>212</sup> During World War II, in 1939, the priory and its surrounding area suffered severe damage from German bombings. The monastery complex was later

211 Agoropoulou 2004, 241.

212 Papageorgiou 1920, 219.



FIGURE 33 The bell tower of the Annunziata and the remaining part of the Augustinian conventual church in its present state

completely demolished, and the space it occupied was converted into a public square. The only building that survives today from the large Augustinian monastery, which had been so significant for the medieval town of Corfu, is its bell tower and a part of the west wall of the church of the Annunziata (Fig. 33).

#### 2.5.1.1 *Liturgical Habits*

The Augustinian monastery was a destination of processions either beginning from or ending at the Latin cathedral. Both religious and public ceremonies of significant importance for Venice were held in the church of the Annunziata,

indicating the prominence of the priory for the Latin community of Corfu, which had chosen this monastery to promote the glory of the *Serenissima Repubblica di San Marco*.

Most of the official ceremonies performed in the monastery were not purely religious, but they fell into the category of the *processioni pubbliche*. This type diverged from the common litanies. In practice, they were a combination of a religious litany and an official glorification of the *Serenissima*.<sup>213</sup> Ceremonies of this type were held in the Augustinian monastery on 25 March, the day of the Annunciation, a date that coincided with the anniversary of the establishment of the Venetian Republic, and on 25 April, the commemoration day of St Mark.<sup>214</sup> It is clear that both these ceremonies, particularly the one commemorating Venice's protector saint, had a deeper political meaning, and the participation of the Orthodox clergy, who recited *laudi* in honour of Venice and all its representatives on a central, local, political and military level, served as an expression of the submission (*vassallaggio*) of the largest part of the island's population, the Greek Orthodox.

The only purely religious official public celebration held in the church of the Annunziata was the commemoration day of Sts Sebastian and Fabian on 20 January. A procession starting from the cathedral, with both religious and secular representatives of the Latins and the Greeks, arrived at the church, where a Latin liturgy was performed. Even though the day had no political connotations, after the liturgy the Greek *protopapas* delivered a speech eulogising the *Serenissima* and emphasising the voluntary submission and the obedience of the island and its inhabitants to the *Repubblica di San Marco*.<sup>215</sup>

The fact that these public celebrations of significant importance for Venice were held at the church of the Annunziata indicates the prominence of the Augustinian monastery for the Latin community of Corfu. This importance is certainly not reflected in the travelogues. As mentioned above, very few pilgrims mention the monastery, and all of them refer just to the existence of an Augustinian monastery in the *borgo*, not providing any further information about it. The first to mention the Augustinian priory was Wilhelm Tzewers (1477–1478), who reported that the Augustinian and Franciscan friars

213 Members of both clergies and representatives of the local government left the Latin cathedral after the end of the liturgy and went in procession to another church, in this case the Annunziata, where, after the reading of the Gospel by the Latin archbishop, they performed a ceremony in honour of the Republic. Nikiforou 2014, 43; Tsitsas 1969, 130.

214 Papageorgiou 1920, 75, 219; Nikiforou 2014, 51, 56–57, 61; Tsitsas 1969, 154.

215 Papageorgiou 1920, 154–155; Nikiforou 2014, 52–53, 56.

provided accommodation for the travellers, but that both the monasteries were very poor.<sup>216</sup>

In the narrative of both of his pilgrimages (1480, 1483–1484) the German Dominican friar Felix Fabri mentions the existence of the monastery in the *borgo*.<sup>217</sup> A similar terse reference was made by the pilgrim Georges Lengherand of Mons (1485–1486).<sup>218</sup> The Franciscan friar Paul Walther Guglingen, who visited the island in 1482, mentioned that, just like in the Franciscan monastery, the liturgies in the Augustinian priory were not held following the rituals of the Latin Church.<sup>219</sup>

The case of the Augustinian monastery is indicative of the difference of perceptions as far as the local inhabitants and pilgrims are concerned. One of the most, if not the most, eminent Latin religious institutions of Corfu seems to be of no significant importance to the pilgrims visiting the island. As in the case of St Francis, this could easily be explained by the fact that it certainly was not an imposing building complex in terms of architecture and decoration and definitely much humbler than the ones the pilgrims had already visited before arriving on the island. In addition, and most importantly, it does not seem to have possessed any cult objects, relics or icons, attractions that pilgrims were eager to see on their journey in anticipation of their final destination, Jerusalem.

## 2.6 *The Latin Cathedral of Sts Peter and Paul*

The third Latin religious destination in the town of Corfu that was mentioned in the travelogues is the Latin cathedral (Fig. 34). The church of Sts Peter and Paul, located inside the walls of the castle of Corfu, was the cathedral of the island since the Byzantine era. There are no specific indications about its date of construction, but it is considered to have existed already from the 10th century.<sup>220</sup> Inside the cathedral the Orthodox kept some of the relics of the legendary founders of the Corfiot Church, Sts Jason and Sospater, as well as the relic of St Arsenius, Bishop of Corfu.<sup>221</sup>

In 1267, when Corfu came under the rule of the Angevins, the church was converted for Catholic use and served as the cathedral of the island, used also

216 See n. 192 above.

217 'Suburbia sunt multo majora civitate, et in una sunt duo conventus fratrum, scilicet Minorum et S. Augustini [...]' Hassler 1843–1849, vol. 3, 351.

218 Ménéglaise 1861, 96.

219 See n. 194 above.

220 Leontsini 2014, 44; Petridis 1971, 432–446.

221 Nikiforou 2014, 83; Papageorgiou 1872, 16; Papageorgiou 1920, 187–189; Petridis and Emerau 1921, 442; Soustal and Koder 1981, 178; Scholz 1997, 148, 287, Karydis 2007a, 235.



FIGURE 34 The cathedral of Corfu, c. 1487. Detail of Fig. 14

by the Venetians, until 1633. The aforementioned relics continued to be kept inside the church, but the Greeks were allowed to worship them, as well as to perform liturgies for their patron saint, on a separate altar on predetermined days of the year.<sup>222</sup> St Arsenius was also venerated by the Latins of Corfu. On the day of the commemoration of his death, a liturgy in his honour, followed by a procession of his relics, was held in the cathedral with the participation of both the Latin and Orthodox clergies.<sup>223</sup>

In the 13th century Georgios Vardanis, Archbishop of Corfu, restored the church. As part of the restoration programme, the cathedral was decorated with new frescoes.<sup>224</sup> Vardanis also constructed his tomb, where he had an epigram inscribed, in the cathedral. In 1228 the active archbishop placed in the cathedral, carved on a stone, the edict (golden bull) by which the Emperor Theodore Doukas had renewed the rights and privileges of the Corfiot Church.<sup>225</sup> As part of his restoration programme, Vardanis also repaired the chapel built above the tomb of St Arsenius right next to the cathedral.<sup>226</sup> As evidenced by surviving epigrams of the archbishop, the saint's chapel was in a very poor condition, without doors and badly guarded. He therefore put new doors with stone

222 Mustoxidis 1848, 409–412; Karydis 2007a, 235; Tsitsas 1969, 147; Papageorgiou 1872, 19; Nikiforou 2014, 79.

223 Tsitsas 1969, 147; Papageorgiou 1872, 21; Nikiforou 2014, 79–87.

224 Leontsini 2014, 44; Galoni 2006, 294; Asonitis 1999, 47.

225 Galoni 2006, 294.

226 Leontsini 2014, 44; Galoni 2006, 294; Asonitis 1999, 47.





FIGURE 35 The cathedral of Corfu, 1573. Detail of Fig. 12

eaves, on which he probably also had an epigram carved, exhorting the pious to respect the place where the holy relics were kept.<sup>227</sup>

During the Venetian occupation of Corfu, the church, which continued to serve as a cathedral, but neglected by the archbishopric of the island, was almost in ruins in 1410. The city of Venice offered to undertake the restoration by binding part of the incomes of the archbishopric and the monasteries of the town.<sup>228</sup> However, no restoration works were done in the following years, resulting in the archbishop requesting the money back to repair the building in 1414.<sup>229</sup> The Italian pilgrim Pietro Casola, who visited the island in 1494, clearly mentions that the cathedral was not in a good state (Fig. 35).<sup>230</sup>

227 Galoni 2006, 294–295.

228 Karydis 2007a, 235; Sathas 1880–1883, vol. 2, 237.

229 Karydis 2007a, 235; Sathas 1880–1883, vol. 3, 51.

230 See n. 241 below.



FIGURE 36 The church of St Jacob, the Latin cathedral of Corfu since 1633

In 1633, for reasons of safety, the cathedral was moved to a newly founded church dedicated to St Jacob, built outside the castle (Fig. 36).<sup>231</sup> After that point, the church of Sts Peter and Paul was referred to as *Duomo Vecchio*, until it was finally destroyed by an explosion in the gunpowder repository on 11 November 1718.<sup>232</sup> After its destruction a much smaller church, also dedicated to Sts Peter and Paul, was built on its debris for the use of the inhabitants of the castle and the soldiers. At the same time the Orthodox built a chapel dedicated to St Arsenius near the church.<sup>233</sup> The 18th-century small church of Sts Peter and Paul continued to be used by both Latins and Orthodox until at least 1739.<sup>234</sup> Today no traces of the church or the chapel survive.

The cathedral of Sts Peter and Paul seems to have been the only Latin church in the town of Corfu to possess saintly relics, as well as, according to

<sup>231</sup> Leontsini 2014, 44; Tsitsas 1969, 148; Papageorgiou 1872, 20; Nikiforou 2014, 80; Karydis 2007a, 236; Agoropoulou 2004, 243.

<sup>232</sup> Karydis 2007a, 236.

<sup>233</sup> Karydis 2007a, 236; Leontsini 2014, 44; Papageorgiou 1872, 19.

<sup>234</sup> Nikiforou 2014, 274.

two pilgrims' reports, a piece of the True Cross.<sup>235</sup> As in the case of all the Latin churches of the town, it is referred to in very few travelogues. The first to mention it is Ulrich Brunner in 1470, stating that the relic of St Arsenius was kept in the church and that the bishop was a Dominican friar.<sup>236</sup> Felix Fabri, in the narration of his second pilgrimage (1483–1484), supports this.<sup>237</sup> In 1480 two French pilgrims, Pierre Barbatre and the anonymous author of *Le voyage de la sainte cyté de Hiérusalem*, pointed out that, at the time, the Franciscan friars were officiating at the cathedral following the Latin rite and using the Latin language, while in most of the churches of the town the service was held in Greek.<sup>238</sup>

The Franciscan friar Paul Walther Guglingen, who visited Corfu in 1482, is one of the two pilgrims who, besides the relics known to be housed in the cathedral, the body of St Arsenius and those of Sts Jason and Sospater, mentioned a piece of the True Cross.<sup>239</sup> Ten years later the pilgrim Dietrich von Schachten (1491–1492) also remarked on seeing a piece of the True Cross, placed in a small cross-shaped silver reliquary, in the cathedral.<sup>240</sup>

Returning to Paul Walther Guglingen's narrative, it is obvious that he was not at all impressed by the church building, since he described it as a 'miserable church with very few altars', an impression shared by the Italian pilgrim Pietro Casola, who visited Corfu in 1494:

I went into the cathedral, but I will not write more about it, because I did not find anything there worthy of record, for there is no single vestige of a choir in the said church, nor sign of its being a collegiate church. In the said church, as I was told, the body of Santo Arsemo [St Arsenius] reposes under the altar. I saw two bells in a window; I think that must be the bell tower, because there is no other.<sup>241</sup>

235 Paul Walther Guglingen (1481–1483), Sollweck 1892, 78; Dietrich von Schachten (1491–1492), Röhricht and Meisner 1880a, 179.

236 'Item zu Corfu im thum leynt sanctus Arsenius begraben, und ist ein bistum und der ytzundt ein bischoff do ist, der ist ein prediger münch und ist ytzündt ein weyebischoff zu Venedig [...]' Röhricht 1906, 21.

237 'In prima mea peregrinatione erat episcopus ecclesiae frater ordinis nostri sed obiit.' Felix Fabri's first pilgrimage took place in 1480. Hassler 1843–1849, vol. 3, 380.

238 See n. 99 above.

239 See n. 246 below.

240 'Item der Thumb zu Corsun ist eine schlechte Kierchenn, da zeigett mann uns ein selbernes Creutzlein, darienn bloss ist ein stücklein vonn dem heiligenn Creutze.' Röhricht and Meisner 1880a, 179.

241 Paul Walther Guglingen (1481–1483): '[...] est miserabilis ecclesia cum paucis altaribus'. Sollweck 1892, 78. Pietro Casola (1494): 'Sono stato in la sua giesia cathedraie; non ne

### 2.6.1 The Relic of St Arsenius

The patron saint of Corfu, whose relic was kept and worshipped in the cathedral, was the first archbishop of the island and consequently a very well-known and important saintly figure for the locals, both Greek and Latin. On the other hand, it is clear that for Western travellers visiting the town Arsenius was an unknown saint of minor importance. Indicative of that is the fact that half of the pilgrims who mention his relic misspell his name.

Jan Aerts, who visited the island in 1481, appears quite confused: to begin with, the Netherlandish pilgrim, maybe because of the use of the church by both Greeks and Latins, mistakenly identified the cathedral as a Greek church and St Arsenius as St Erasmus, a saint who was much more familiar to Westerners.<sup>242</sup> It is not uncommon for pilgrims visiting Greece to misunderstand the names of the saints whose relics were shown to them, given that they were probably told to them in Greek, a language with which they were not familiar. The same applies in the case of Wolfgang Zillenhart (1495–1496), who refers to a St Archerito.<sup>243</sup>

None of the pilgrims who mention St Arsenius's relic provided a description of the reliquary. According to tradition, the saint's body was enshrined in the altar of the cathedral.<sup>244</sup> It is also known that on the day of the commemoration of his death a liturgy in his honour was held in the church, followed by a procession of his relics.<sup>245</sup> What is not clear is the parts of the relic that were displayed and venerated on a permanent basis, since according to the narrations of the pilgrims they could see and prostrate to only one finger of the saint: 'In the cathedral church reposes the holy body of St Arsenius [...] And some pilgrims went in the sepulchre and saw, bare, a finger of St Arsenius and

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scriverò altro porche non gli o trovato cose degne de mandare a memoria, non trovando in dicta giesia uno solo vestigio de coro, ne de essere giesia collegiata. In dicta giesia, como me fu dicto, li repossa el corpo do santo Arsemo, in lo altare. Vidi due campanelle in una renestra; credo sii el suo campanile, per non osservi de altri.' Paoletti 2001, 137 (the translation of the extract is from Newett 1907, 186).

242 'In de Griecsche kercke, staende by een der voorschreve kasteelen, te water-waerts, worden oock sommige heylige Reliquien in grooter reverentien gehouden, onder al sagh ick daer eenen vinger van St. Erasmus, van wien in't boeck der Vaders veel beschreven staet.' Van Nispen 1652, 149.

243 'Item zwischen den zway schlosse ligt ain kirch, haist zu sant Archerito, und ist ain ertz-pistum [...].' Gebele 1932–1933, 81.

244 Papageorgiou 1872, 16; Petridis and Emerau 1921, 442; Papageorgiou 1920, 187–189; Soustal and Koder 1981, 178; Scholz 1997, 148, 287.

245 Tsitsas 1969, 147; Papageorgiou 1872, 21; Nikiforou 2014, 79–87.

a piece of the True Cross and other saintly relics [...].<sup>246</sup> It could be assumed that parts of the body had been separated and were kept in reliquaries in order to be visible to the worshippers.<sup>247</sup>

### 2.6.1.1 *Liturgical Habits*

As mentioned above, ever since the holy relics of the Greek cathedral of Corfu were seized along with the church by the Angevins, the Orthodox were given the right to venerate them and perform their own liturgies on eight predetermined days of the year.<sup>248</sup> On the day of the commemoration of St Arsenius's death, 19 January, a pompous official celebration with the participation of both clergies was held in the Latin cathedral. This celebration included a common vespers and liturgy from the clergies of both rites on the eve and the day of the saint's feast, respectively, in the presence of the Venetian authorities and the representatives of the city council. It has been suggested that the common celebration was established after the erection of the new cathedral of St Jacob, but archival documents attest to its existence before 1633.<sup>249</sup>

The rite of the common celebration of 19 January is described in the 'Ceremoniale che si osserva nelle funtioni in cui si uniscono i due riti', a manuscript dated to 1758 preserved in the Historical Archive of Corfu.<sup>250</sup> There is also a first codification of this rite dated to 1645 that differs very slightly from the subsequent codifications, allowing the assumption that the celebration was already well-established by that time.<sup>251</sup> In addition, a report of the Latin Archbishop Benedetto Bragadin to the Secretary of the Council of the *Sacra Congragazione della fede*, dated 1632, refers to the co-celebration of St Arsenius's feast as 'customary'.<sup>252</sup>

246 Paul Walther Guglingen (1481–1483): 'In summa ecclesia requiescit corpus sacrum sancti Arsenii, et sunt ibi canonici. Et aliqui peregrini fuerunt ad sepulchrum et viderunt nude unum digitum sancti Arsenii et unam partem sancte crucis, et alie reliquie sanctorum [...]': Sollweck 1892, 78. The saint's finger was also mentioned by Jan Aerts (1481–1484). Van Nispen 1652, 149.

247 Relics of St Arsenius are today kept and venerated in three churches on Corfu, the Orthodox metropolitan church, as well as two churches dedicated to St Arsenius in the villages of Lefkimmi and Valaneo. Tsitsas 1969, 150; Papageorgiou 1820, 11–19; Nikiforou 2014, 81.

248 For the exact dates, see Tsitsas 1969, 148; Papageorgiou 1872, 21.

249 Tsitsas 1969, 150; Mustoxidis 1848, 410; Nikiforou 2014, 81–82.

250 Papageorgiou 1872, 21–23.

251 Nikiforou 2014, 82, n. 71.

252 The surviving description of the rite of the celebration of St Arsenius's feast concerns the ceremony performed at the new Latin cathedral of St Jacob and includes services performed by Latins and Greeks following both rites, as well as the active participation

The co-celebration in honour of an Eastern saint by Latins and Orthodox, with a simultaneous liturgy of both rites, was not a common phenomenon. Less than two centuries after the end of the Venetian occupation, Spyridon Papageorgiou, who studied the history of the Church of Corfu, mentions that '[...] during the saint's feast the following *peculiar* practices were carried on according to the provisions of the rite [...]'.<sup>253</sup> St Arsenius was venerated on the island from the Byzantine period, and his relics were seized by the Catholics, while his cult was preserved by the Angevins and the Venetians and was incorporated into the sacred hierarchy of Venetian Corfu. This phenomenon can be understood only under the spectrum of the particularity of Venetian religious policy in the areas of its Greek acquisitions. By incorporating the patron saint of the island, the *Serenissima* was aiming to ratify its authority, while the co-celebration of the same patron saint was also intended to enhance the link between the Latins and the Orthodox, while keeping the Greek clergy satisfied by being able freely and equally to perform Orthodox liturgies in Latin churches. In general, the Venetians made serious efforts to maintain the delicate balance between their Orthodox subjects and the Catholic Church. A parallel to the appropriation of an established cult by the Venetian authorities can be seen on Crete, with the cult of St Titus in Candia, whose relic was also kept in the Latin cathedral and whose feast day was celebrated by a procession with the participation of both clergies.<sup>254</sup> Furthermore, a similar phenomenon, but to a much larger extent, emerged in Corfu after the 15th century with the translation to the island of the relic of St Spyridon.

The cathedral of Corfu was treated by the pilgrims in the same way as the rest of the churches and monasteries of the town. They were definitely not impressed by the building, while some of them clearly express their disappointment. Their attitude was similar in regard to the saintly relics held in it. The saints were unknown to them, so they evaluated their bodies as relics of minor importance, while most of them, even though they were aware of their existence, did not actually see them. As in the case of the other churches in the town, exempting maybe the Franciscan monastery, the different perspective between locals and visitors is obvious. In general, locals live and perceive the reality of each place, while for pilgrims the reality is a network of places leading to a specific destination. Natives seek the protection of saints or cult objects connected to their town or island, while travellers treat each stop on their way

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of the town's authorities and people. See Tsitsas 1969, 150–152; Papageorgiou 1872, 21–23; Nikiforou 2014, 82–85.

253 Papageorgiou 1920, 77.

254 Georgopoulou 2010, 486.

as a step that brings them closer to their goal. Therefore, the fact that the most prominent church of the town of Corfu from the point of view of the locals, where the relics of their patron saint were kept and venerated, was sparsely mentioned in the travelogues should not come as a surprise.



The church of the Virgin in Kassiopi stands out during the Middle Ages, at least as far as the pilgrims are concerned, as the most renowned church of Corfu. The area had been invested with transcendental properties ever since the ancient period, when it was protected by Cassios Zeus. The religious importance of the site, always connected to its location and inextricably linked to the needs of the sailors, was amplified in the Middle Ages, and the Virgin became its sanctifying divine power. Over the course of time, the fame of the site was enhanced as it was endowed with legends of monsters, miracles and divine power that were dispersed first and foremost by the seafarers. Kassiopi has the most intense and uninterrupted presence in the travelogues while at the same time the most long-lived cult, even though it evolved through time. The small church of the Virgin seems to address the core of the religious pilgrimage, as well as the curiosity of a traveller, combining legends of monstrous creatures, miraculous interventions and divine protection with, for a Western visitor, extraordinary architecture, decoration, customs and cultic practices, as well as an evocative interaction with its surrounding landscape. Its location, providing a safe anchorage after a particularly dangerous sea passage, was definitely a significant factor in its popularity, while the role of the seafarers in promoting the site was undeniably critical, and the local actors served in their turn in its formation. After all, the Virgin Kassopitra's cult was recognised and respected also by the Latins, and the site had been a place of devotion for different confessional groups prior to the arrival of the pilgrims. Concluding, it would be safe to say that the site owes its importance to its geographical location, its sacredness to the church of the Virgin and the icon housed in it and its fame to its association with the circumstances of navigation and the mariners who propagated it. The history of this site is reflected in written sources and oral tradition, as well as in its materiality, as expressed in architectural structures, ornaments, forms of lighting and of course the cult object. Following the evolution of these elements through the centuries, it becomes clear that, beyond the importance of the port and the church for the locals and the mariners sailing through the area, it was its frequentation by pilgrims that elevated it to an international level by turning it into an important stop on the sea route to Jerusalem.

As far as the port and town of Corfu are concerned, the pilgrims seem to have approached them more with the curiosity of a traveller, rather than as religious visitors. Having passed through the Strait of Butrint, they also crossed a linguistic and religious border from the Latin world to the Greek-Byzantine one. On Corfu they encountered for the first time a Greek Orthodox population with strong traditions and they had the opportunity to visit Orthodox churches and see the 'alternative' way to be Christian.<sup>255</sup>

The complexity of a Levantine society, as expressed in all aspects of life on Corfu, was fascinating for the travellers, who often preferred to describe this new and strange reality than the churches or monasteries of the town. The same applies to all the areas of this study, but the big towns of Corfu and Candia offered Western visitors a rich variety of new experiences. Thus, travelogues that mention Corfu offer more 'anthropological' observations than information about the religious institutions of the town, which lacked the elaborate architectural forms and decoration to which they were accustomed and were thus considered poor and unimportant. The Orthodox, on the other hand, seemed to intrigue pilgrims in every aspect. Western travellers visited and described their churches, the 'peculiar' inclination of Greeks towards the veneration of icons and their special devotion to the Virgin, as well as the way they tended to and venerated their saints' relics.

What can be deduced from the above is that the town of Corfu was not a place of importance in the 'holy itinerary' of the pilgrims. The references to its churches and monasteries are impressively low for such an important port, especially when compared with the church of the Virgin in Kassiopi, which amasses more mentions than all the religious institutions of Corfu combined. There were no impressive churches or important relics to be found in the town, and it is rather obvious that the Venetian authorities were not orientated towards making the capital of the island a pilgrims' destination. Taking into consideration Venice's religious policy of tolerance in regard to its Orthodox subjects, as well as the locals' intense opposition to the Catholic religion and its representatives, the reasons why the island's rulers chose not to promote the town as a religious destination for Western pilgrims, thus risking to compromise the fragile equilibrium between the local population and the Latins, become quite clear. It is true that the Venetian authorities of Corfu were very lenient towards the Orthodox in order not to engage in doctrinal conflicts, especially from the 16th century onwards, a period when retaining the island under their rule was of vital importance to the *Serenissima*. Hence, the agents

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255 M. Bacci: Center for Early Medieval Studies [www Document], 2017. YouTube. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C7Bzygv\\_Cwc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C7Bzygv_Cwc) (accessed 28 April 2021).



that could promote the town as a destination for religious travellers, that is, the Venetian secular as well as the religious officials, were more interested in preserving their acquisition. In the end, Corfu was in any case a very important port, both for commercial and strategic purposes, and it seems that this was enough for the island's authorities. The other agents who could have elevated the churches or cult objects of the town to holy sites, the pilgrims, did not find any interesting cultic foci to prostrate to and consequently promote, so they turned their attention to the strange and fascinating religious practices of the local Greek population. Thus it comes as no surprise that the site that overshadowed all the churches and cult objects of the island was not a Latin religious institution, nor located in the town, but was instead an Orthodox church housing a Byzantine (or of Byzantine style) icon of the Virgin, venerated by Greeks and Latins, both locals and wayfarers.

## Sailing towards the Peloponnese: The Strophades Islands

The next morning [...] we approached at our right a beautiful and fertile island called Strophaias [...] which is inhabited only by Orthodox monks in a monastery dedicated to the Virgin.<sup>1</sup>



### 1 The Island of Stamfani

Having left Corfu, and while sailing through the Ionian Sea towards the Peloponnese, most of the pilgrims' galleys would pass near the two small islets of the Strophades. Their location in the open sea on the main route connecting Venice to the Holy Land, as well as the wells of potable water that could be found at the larger one of them, made them a popular stopping point for the ships travelling through the Ionian (Fig. 37). Built on the larger island of Stamfani, the monastery of the Virgin provided an additional reason for ships carrying religious travellers to dock at its port; the Virgin of Strophades was highly venerated by the seafarers, who integrated it into their holy sailing topography, as expressed in the *Santa Parola* litany.<sup>2</sup>

The site is of a peculiar nature. It is not exactly a port, nor a town, nor even a settlement, and not exactly a monastery. It is a strong fortress housing a monastery, built on the shore of a small islet, on what can be described as a little natural docking point (Fig. 38). The fortified monastery was manned – at least during the time frame of this study – by a cenobitic community of Greek Orthodox monks. Thus, conceptually, visually and geographically, it is a liminal space, on the borders between land and sea and between the earthly and heavenly dimension.

1 Nicolas Loupvent (1531), see n. 16 below.

2 About the *Santa Parola* litany, see p. 12, n. 11 herein.



FIGURE 37 Map indicating the location of the Strophades islands

After 828 and the translation of St Mark's body to Venice, the area was invested with a miracle, thus becoming famous among Christian mariners and sea travellers: according to the legend, the Strophades were initially one island, which by divine intervention was divided in two in order to make way for the ship carrying the apostle's relics from Alexandria to Venice (Fig. 39).<sup>3</sup> The Florentine nobleman Lionardo Frescobaldi, who travelled to the Holy Land in 1384, was the first pilgrim to provide an attestation of the said wonder.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Maltezou 1999, 9–10; Merkouri 2020, 24.

<sup>4</sup> '[...] una isoletta divisa in due parti, la quale si dice si divide per sé medesima quando i Viniziani recarono dalla città d'Alessandria a Vinegia il corpo di san Marco Evangelista, facendo luogo alla nave'. Lanza 1990a, 174.



FIGURE 38 The monastery of the Virgin of Strophades

Following Frescobaldi, several other pilgrims, who either sailed near or actually stopped at the Strophades, mention the miraculous division. In 1425 an anonymous English traveller writes:

A wounde miracle there was wrought,  
When S. Marke from Alexander was broght:  
And was translattet in to Venece,  
The Galiez comen be that waiez.

And when the Galiez come zeder thoo,  
The Ile cleved even in too:  
And the Galiez token even the same waie,  
So thennez the see in to this daie.<sup>5</sup>

This miracle constituted a link that associated the two islands to Venice via its most revered patron saint. The Strophades thus became a part of the *translatio* of St Mark's relics, an essential part of Venice's national myth.<sup>6</sup> This

<sup>5</sup> Purchas 1905, 547.

<sup>6</sup> About the miracle and the connection of the monastery to Venice, see Kolyvà 2015.

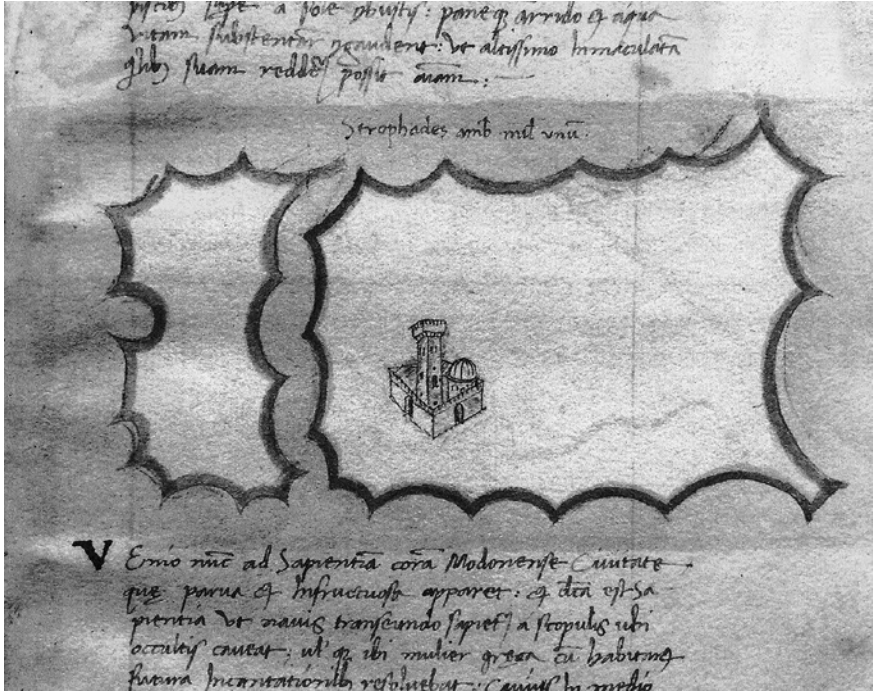


FIGURE 39 The Strophades islands and the monastery of the Virgin, c. 1420, manuscript illumination

correlation was invoked at least once by the monastery's monks, when, in 1532, they requested from Venice building materials, as well as defensive weapons, since the times were turbulent and the monastery's tower had been damaged by an earthquake.<sup>7</sup> In his epistle the abbot, Daniel, underlines the monastery's relation to Venice, proven by the mosaic 'to the right of the entrance of San Marco'.<sup>8</sup> His letter continues with a detailed description of the miracle as a confirmation of the monastery's link to Venice, also stating that ever since the

7 The letter was sent on 29 April 1532 by the monastery's abbot, Daniel. See Sanuto 1903, col. 266. The letter is published in Kolyvā 2015, 196.

8 '[...] è questo monasterio et edificio special et proprio de San Marco et alzate gli ochi quando intrate per le porte di San Marco, a dextris, vederete come è depento et scritto de mosaico inaurat'. Sanuto 1903, col. 266.



FIGURE 40 The mosaic depicting the miracle performed at the Strophades

miracle, that is, the 9th century, members of the Venetian Loredan family have been the *procuratori* of the Strophades.<sup>9</sup>

Information about the miracle, but, most importantly, about the mosaic depicting it, is conveyed by the Flemish nobleman Joos van Ghistele (1481–1485), who after describing the salvation of the ship carrying the apostle's relics, mentions that one can still admire its depiction in San Marco in Venice (Fig. 40).<sup>10</sup> The mosaic mentioned by Abbot Daniel and the Flemish pilgrim is

9 According to the relation of the miracle in the abbot's letter, as the ship carrying the saintly relic was travelling near the island, St Mark miraculously arose and took the rudder to avoid crashing onto the rocky shore. He sailed straight ahead, while the island was splitting in two to make way for the ship. When the sun rose, the passengers saw the miracle and stayed on the new island for five days. After arriving safely in Venice, they narrated their miraculous salvation and '[...] la Signoria mandò ad edificar el monasterio.' Sanuto 1903, col. 266; Kolyvà 2015, esp. 181–184, 196.

10 The full text reads: 'Ter welcker plecken eens een groot mirakel ghebuerde, als den lichame van Sente Maerc evangeliste, patroon van Venegien, uut Alexandrien ghebracht was, te wetene dat bij fortunen van grooten winde tscip daer thelich lichaem van Sente Maerc in was, groot zijnde acht hondert booten of vaten, bij fortsen de zee rumen moeste, ende de scippers gheen meester zijnde vanden scepe, quamen dweers up tvoornoemde heylandekin, ende zonder eeneghe scade den scepe te gheschiene, seylden duer tvoorsyde cleen canael of aermkin vander zee, da[t] zonder mirakel niet en hadde moghen

no longer extant, but its presence is attested to by art historians. Otto Demus published pictures of the representation, the oldest full cycle of the *translatio* of St Mark's relic, located in the chapel of St Clement, and dated it at the first quarter of the 12th century.<sup>11</sup>

As the 15th century was coming to its close and while the Ottoman threat was expanding in the area, most of the narratives focussed on the monastery's fortification and its 'warrior' monks who pushed away Ottoman pirates.<sup>12</sup> This could be the source of the creation of yet another myth in relation to the Strophades, according to which only Christian ships could pass unharmed between the two islands.<sup>13</sup>

The two small islands, the monastery of the Virgin and St Mark's miracle are mentioned in many pilgrims' narratives. Located in open sea, in a spot distant from other ports or docking points and being on the ancient sea route leading from the West to the East and vice versa, the larger of the two islands provided a much needed safe harbour, as well as fresh drinking water, so important for sea travellers. The monastery of the Virgin, on the other hand, provided the notion of divine protection and the promise of a safe and blessed journey. Thus, it comes as no surprise to see it mentioned in a significant number of travelogues. Added to the above, which would constitute reason enough for the monastery to be present in pilgrims' narratives, the monks living there became yet another. They were devout Orthodox, leading a very strict life of fasting, while at the same time they appear to have been heavily armed, protecting their small piece of land from Ottoman and pirate raids. These 'caloyeri', their way of life and especially their status as armed defenders of the monastery and, by extension, the Christian faith seem to have really intrigued the pilgrims.<sup>14</sup> Almost none of them, when mentioning the monastery, omits to refer to its 'warrior' monks.

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gheschien. Men siet als noch de pointratuere te Venegien inde keercke van Sente Marc vanden zelve mirakel.' Gaspar 1998, 391.

11 Demus 1988, 33–38; Kolyvā 2015, 191–193.

12 Paul Walther Guglingen (1481–1483): 'Et singuli habent arma omnia bellica tam sacerdotes quam laici in communitate et omnia alia requisita ad bellandum, et usque hodie semper defenderunt se a Thurcis.' Sollweck 1892, 80.

13 In 1495 Count Alexander von Pfalz-Zweibrücken referred to the legend: 'Man sagt, alle Schiffe, die fahren aus Konstantinopel, Alexandria und anderswo, die Christenleuten zugehören, müssen durch die zwei Inseln fahren. Wiewohl es zwischen den zwei Inseln fast eng und steinig ist, dennoch ist nie gehört worden, dass einig der Christen Schiff da verdorben sei, aber türkische und ungläubiger Leute Schiffe mögen durch die Inseln nicht fahren, sondern müssen umfahren bei 50 oder 60 Meilen Wegs.' Karbach 1997, 56.

14 In his travelogue Buondelmonti used the Greek word for monks: *caloyeri* / *καλόγερροι*. Bayer 2007, 13. Almost all of the pilgrims referring to the monks used similar terms: *caloyers*, *kalorier*, *kaloeri*, etc.

The first impression of the strongly fortified monastery seems to be common for most of the pilgrims. Cristoforo Buondelmonti, who travelled in 1420, describes it as a tower with a church.<sup>15</sup> One of the more vivid descriptions, combining almost all of the facts mentioned in the travelogues, is provided by the French Benedictine monk Nicolas Loupvent, who dedicates several lines to describing the small island, inhabited only by Orthodox monks, whom the neighbouring lords admire for their deep devotion and who trust them to defend their monastery against the Ottomans and the infidels.<sup>16</sup>

Located on the small port, the tower housing the monastery of Strophades and its surroundings has not changed significantly over the centuries (Fig. 41). Thus, a quite accurate re-enactment of the pilgrims' site-related experience can be attempted. As the galleys approached the island, their passengers could see from aboard the strong and tall tower that housed the monastery. The surrounding rocky landscape with low vegetation would be particularly imposing, especially if the ship was approaching at night-time. Since most of the large ships did not dock at the small port, it is highly questionable if the pious passengers actually disembarked at the island. In the case that they did, the pilgrims would enter the tower and visit the monastery's *katholikon*, located on the building's first floor. At this point, it should be stressed that up until the renovation and enlargement of the monastery in 1609, the *katholikon* was a small church built in the 13th century, which had undergone only minor renovations, presumably adorned with murals and decorated and structured in a way completely different to what a Westerner would be accustomed to. The miraculous icon of the Virgin, located on the iconostasis with a perpetual lamp burning in front of it, would have been surrounded by votive offerings. All of the above, combined with the narrations of the seafarers about the miracles connected to the island, the monastery and its icon, as well as the monks

15 '[...] turre cum ecclesia est'. Bayer 2007, 13.

16 The full text reads: 'Le landemain matin, questoit vendredy xiiii de juillet, environ x heures, vimmes a approchier a la main destre une belle jolye et fertile isle nomée Strophaias quest distant de lisle de Jante xxx mil, le tout sy fertile que rien plus, laquelle est seulement habitée dune religion et monaster de lorde de saint Basille en lhonneur de Notre Dame, tenant lusaige et lanque grec, et sont tousjours en nombre sil est possible cinquante religieus. Et est le lieu sy trèsfort quilest dict religion inexpugnable, et font foy les seigneurs voysins que jamais aincor le turc ne la peu avoir tellement ont iceulx religieus moignes résisté, et est ladite isle et pays totalement a iceulx religieus sans reprise ny recongnissance daulcuns a cause que les véniciens leurs ont quiccté pour la grande et fervant dévotion quest en eulx et ausey pour la diligente virilité quilz prainent de résister audictz turques et infidèles.' Bonnin 1976, 52.



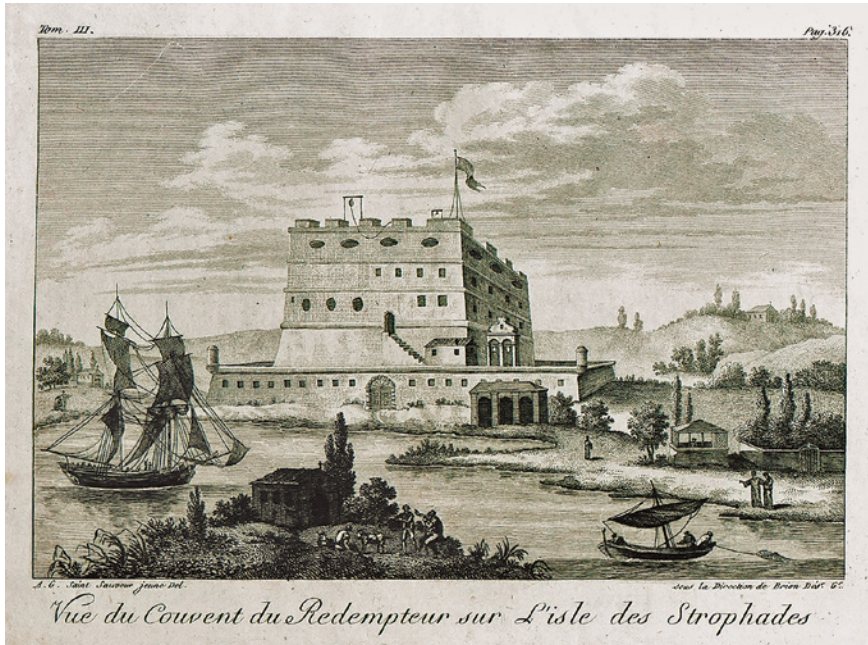


FIGURE 41 The monastery of the Virgin of Strophades, c. 1800, engraving

living in it, certainly made the pilgrims' experience of visiting the Strophades undoubtedly different, strange and interesting.

As a result, a significant number of pilgrims referred to the 'beautiful and strong monastery' on the island, but the monks living in it also attracted their attention.<sup>17</sup> Reading the travelogues, it becomes clear that the monks had acquired a certain fame among the travellers, obviously because of the incompatible nature of their two main characteristics: devout cenobitic monks, yet heavily armed and engaging in battles with pirates or Ottoman intruders. Combining information provided by pilgrims' testimonies, one can recompose a quite accurate picture of the monastery and the life of the monks residing in it.<sup>18</sup>

17 Roberto da Sanseverino (1458–1459): '[...] bello et forte monastero [...]'. Cavaglià and Rossebastiano 1999, 115.

18 In 1420 Cristoforo Buondelmonti wrote: '[...] in quibus turris cum ecclesia est, et caloyeri horis canonicis in ea conueniunt, ubi gumicius uel prior uita sanctorum patrum coram omnibus legendo declarat. igitur, quid sit uita istorum, indica, pater, quia certissime asperrima reputatur. [...] ibi carnes neglecte sunt et cum piscibus sepe a sole combustis

The cenobites, Greek Orthodox as clearly stated by all of the pilgrims mentioning them, led a very strict life, with a diet restricted to fish, bread and water, and also protected their monastery, as seen through the eyes of religious travellers: the Christian faith against the infidel Ottomans.<sup>19</sup> Women were prohibited from stepping on the island, while female animals were kept at the neighbouring small islet of Harpy:

There ben holy Monkez duellande,  
 In a Mynster of our Lady,  
 And there thei lif full honestly:  
 And nother woman, foule, ne best,  
 And thei wull agazn there lest,  
 Nis non femenynd gender,  
 Thei maie not there endure.<sup>20</sup>

Oddly enough, and while the pilgrims seem to be very interested in the fortified monastery and its monks, none of them directly mentions the monastery's most revered icon, the miraculous icon of the Virgin Thalassomachousa. It is well known from other sources of the period that this icon was kept and venerated in the monastery of Strophades. Its presence might actually have been the reason for the monastery's dedication to the Virgin.<sup>21</sup> Nevertheless, in none of the travelogues mentioning the Strophades is there a direct reference to the icon, even though the small fortified monastery of the island has an uninterrupted presence in pilgrims' travelogues throughout the 14th to the 16th centuries.

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paneque arido et aqua uitam sustentare congaudent, ut altissimo immaculatam quilibet possit reddere uitam.' Bayer 2007, 13.

- 19 Pilgrims referring to the Strophades monks, besides using variations of the Greek word *caloyeri*, also added that they are 'de lorde de saint Basille', meaning of the Orthodox rite. Roberto da Sanseverino (1458): '[...] di observantia di Sancto Basilio [...]'; Felix Fabri in 1480: '[...] monachi graeci regulae S. Basilii [...]'; Paul Walther Guglingen in 1482: '[...] ordinis et regule sancti Basilii [...]'; Jan Want in 1519: '[...] een cloester van sunte Basilio oorden ende syn Griecken [...]'. Cavaglià and Rossebastiano 1999, 115; Hassler 1843–1849, vol. 1, 164; Sollweck 1892, 80; Beurden 1896, 171.
- 20 English anonymous (1425), in Purchas 1905, 546–547. In 1495 Count Alexander von Pfalz-Zweibrücken corroborated this: 'Darinnen ist ein hübsches Kloster unseren lieben Frau, genannt Astaranalle, da ist unsere liebe Frau fast gnädig. Darinnen sind Mönche, Griechen, Eremiten oder Einsiedler. Man sagt, in der Insel will unsere liebe Frau nicht leiden kein weibliches Tier. Und liegt hart neben unserer lieben Frau eine andere Insel, da alle weiblichen Tiere innen sind.' Karbach 1997, 56.
- 21 Mousouras 2003, 29; Poulimenos and Stoufi-Poulimenou 1998, 211 and n. 8.

## 2 The Monastery of the Virgin of Strophades

The monastery of Strophades is today dedicated to the Christ Redeemer (*Παντοκράτωρ*), but it has also been known as the monastery of the Virgin (*Παναγία Πάντων Χαρά*). In fact, all of the travelogues, as well as the official documents of the studied period, refer to it as the ‘Virgin of Strophades’.<sup>22</sup> Whether the latter was the actual dedication of the monastery or an attribution because of the famous miraculous icon of the Virgin Thalassomachousa that was held in it has not yet been determined.<sup>23</sup>

The monastery’s present form is the result of years of building activity.<sup>24</sup> It underwent three main building phases: one up until 1484, one covering the years of the Venetian presence in the area (1484–1797) and one beginning after the end of the Venetian occupation. Its precise date of construction has not been determined with certainty. It is considered to have been built in the late 13th century or the early 14th.<sup>25</sup> The building has undergone several minor or major renovations during its history, since it was often damaged either by earthquakes or by enemy raids and pirates attacks. The two major renovations date to 1440 and 1609. The renovation of 1440 is attributed, according to chronicles, to John VII Palaiologos, but neither the attribution to the emperor

22 Mousouras 2003, 29; Tsougarakis and Schabel 2015, 61–62; Merkouri 2020, 25. About the icon of the Virgin Thalassomachousa kept and venerated in the monastery of Strophades, see Konomos 1988, 46; Konomos 1969; Acheimastou-Potamianou 1997, 46–49; Acheimastou-Potamianou 1999; Acheimastou-Potamianou 2000; Baltoyanni 2000.

23 Dionysios Mousouras, who has thoroughly studied the history of the monastery, suggests that its first dedication was to the Virgin, while it was renamed at some point after 1500 when it was joined to the monastery of the Redeemer in Lithakia in Zante. Mousouras 2003, 29.

24 About the architectural phases of the monastery, see Poulimenos and Stoufi-Poulimenou 1998; Theodoropoulou 2006; Merkouri 2020, 25.

25 Archaeological remains of its earlier phase have been dated to after the 13th century. According to the prevailing tradition, it was built by the emperor of Nicaea, Theodore I Laskaris, and his daughter Irene, whose names were mentioned on the (now lost) diptychs of the monastery. It should also be noted that there are testimonies stating that there was an inscription above the monastery’s entrance, no longer extant, mentioning a date of construction earlier than the 13th century, while in 1809 the British consul of the Septinsular Republic, Waller Rodwell Wright, wrote in his poem *Horæ Ionicae* that the monastery was built during the reign of Justinian, thus moving its date of construction back to the 6th century. Miller 1908, 534; Poulimenos and Stoufi-Poulimenou 1998, 212; 229; Theodoropoulou 2006, 4, 48–49; Mousouras 2003, 25; *Πανελλήνιον Λένκιωμα* 1925, 235. About the diptychs, see Zois 1955, 317, 418; Chiotis 1858, 535–536; Merkouri 2020, 25. More recently, it has been suggested that the monastery was founded after the reconquest of Constantinople in 1261 by followers of Patriarch Arsenios Autorianos. See Tsougarakis 2015, 62, esp. n. 5.

nor the exact date of the renovation can be supported sufficiently by other sources.<sup>26</sup> During the period between 1643 and 1650 large-scale construction works were also carried out at the monastery compound, and it is then that the body of the island's saint, St Dionysius, was moved from his tomb to the narthex of the katholikon.<sup>27</sup>

As far as the building complex of the monastery is concerned, during the period of this study it was actually a strong four-storey fortified tower (Fig. 42). The katholikon was located inside the tower, while there was no separate building for housing the monks, who seem to have resided in the same building, on the storeys above the church.<sup>28</sup>

During the period of the Venetian presence in the area, the katholikon, as well as the tower housing it, were enlarged. However, throughout the time frame of this study and before the 17th-century restoration, the monastery's katholikon continued to be the small church of the first phase of the building. In its present form, which retains the main characteristics of the renovation of 1609 and its extension to the east, the katholikon is divided into two parts, the narthex to the west, occupying the space of the church of the first phase of the monument, and the main church, which is accessed by three arched doors with a decorative frame, to the east (Fig. 43).<sup>29</sup> The floor of the narthex is covered with stone tiles, while it bears in the centre an omphalion adorned

26 The tradition about the renovation of 1440 by the Emperor John VII Palaiologos is mentioned in a chronicle that was published in 1854 by Nikolaos Katramis. The date, as well as the attribution of the renovation to John VII Palaiologos is not accepted by all scholars. Dionysios Mousouras, for example, maintains that the renovation most probably happened in 1428–1430, while Anna Lambropoulou suggests that the date 1440 survived in the chronicle simply because it was the date when the imperial delegation was sailing back from the Council of Ferrara-Florence. Katramis 1854, 32–33; Mousouras 2003, 56–63; Lambropoulou 1994, 296; Merkouri 2020, 26.

27 According to archival evidence, in 1643, within the framework of the building activity of the period 1643–1650, a known Cretan builder, *μάστορο-Θοδωρής Μαλόραχος* [master Thodoris Malorachos], was called to the monastery. As recorded in the same archives, repairs were made to the katholikon during the same period. Sathas 1869, 123; Poulimenos and Stoufi-Poulimenou 1998, 213. St Dionysius, who was a monk at the monastery of Strophades and later an archbishop of Aegina, was buried, at his request, on the island in 1622. His relic was soon related to miraculous interventions, and he was later canonised. In 1717 the saint's body was moved for protection to Zante, and he soon became the patron saint of the island. The life, canonisation and increasing popularity of the saint are not discussed in the chapter concerning the Strophades, since they fall beyond the time frame of this study, that is, well into the 17th century. About the life of St Dionysius, see indicatively Konomos 1969.

28 Poulimenos and Stoufi-Poulimenou 1998, 229.

29 Poulimenos and Stoufi-Poulimenou 1998, 228; Theodoropoulou 2006, 34–36; Mousouras 2003, 75.

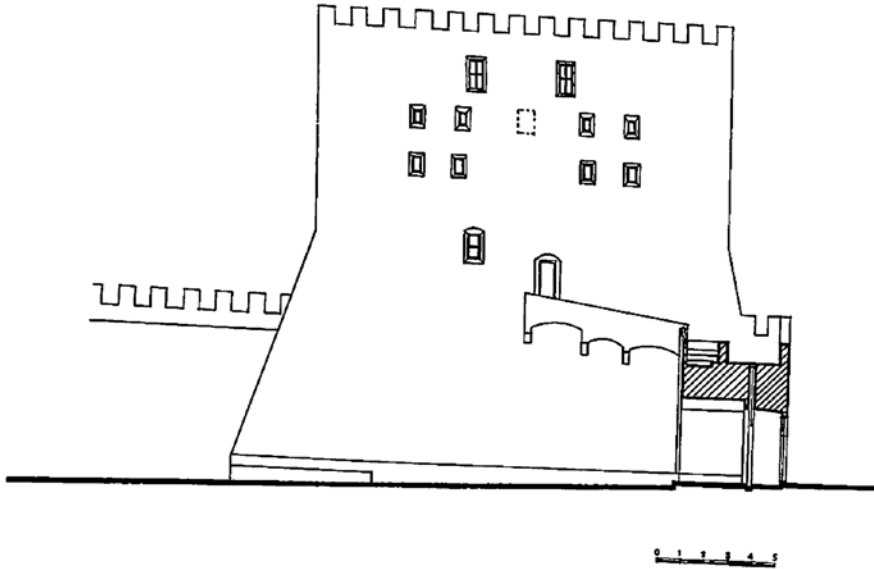


FIGURE 42 The monastery of Strophades during its first building phase (up to 1484)

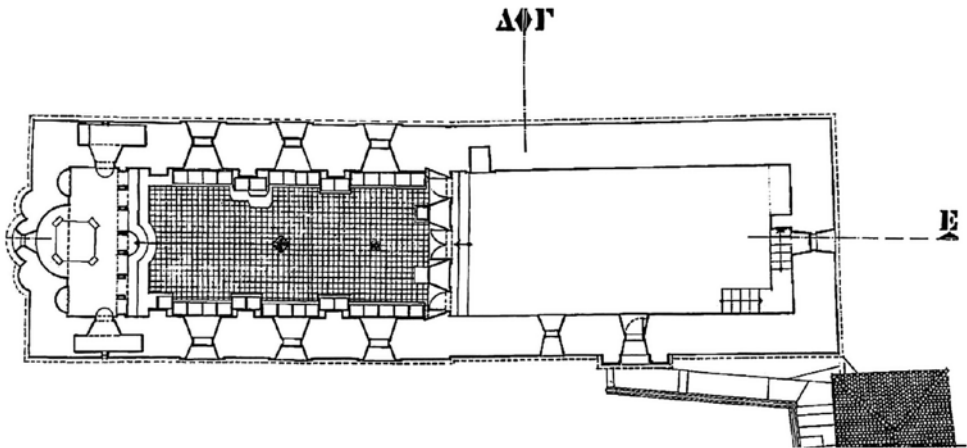


FIGURE 43 Plan of the katholikon of the monastery of Strophades, after the 1609 renovation

with the double-headed eagle. At the west end of the narthex, there are ladders leading to the upper floor, while on its south wall there is a niche decorated with a frame, where the body of St Dionysius was kept up until 1717.<sup>30</sup> The main church is of the common Heptanesian type: a single-aisled large rectangular

30 Poulimenos and Stoufi-Poulimenou 1998, 218; Theodoropoulou 2006, 48.

space elevated by three steps on its east side, forming the level for the sanctuary. There are three large arched windows on the side walls. The floor is covered with glazed tiles bearing two omphalia with the double-headed eagle, one in the middle of the church, a common Heptanesian feature, and one in front of the central door.<sup>31</sup> The roof is wooden and without decorative elements. The iconostasis is made of stone. It has pillars without capitals, decorated with series of beads and reels, while decorative borders frame the icons of the Dodekaorton. The apse of the sanctuary is shallow, and at its north and south sides there are two small vaulted rooms, today used as sacristies. The altar, located in the middle of the central apse, is covered by a wooden ciborium.<sup>32</sup>

As already mentioned, up until the end of its Venetian period the monastery did not have separate buildings for housing the monks. The two two-storey wings that exist to this day, housing the monks' cells, the refectory, mills and the church of St George, all date to after the Venetian period of the monument.<sup>33</sup>

The exterior of the tower bears rich morphoplastic elements of different periods, while the sanctuary of the katholikon is distinguished by a composition of three small apses with decorative features (Fig. 44).<sup>34</sup> The compound of the monastery was also enlarged during the Venetian period and it has been reinforced several times, along with the tower. Built following all the rules of fortification, the monastery was carefully designed in order to be impregnable, as it proved to be. Located in a strategic spot on the sea route from the West to the East and having wells of valuable fresh water, it was used both by the Byzantines and the Venetians, as well as by all the other political powers that dominated the area throughout its history, as a safe harbour and an observation post for the fleets sailing the Ionian.<sup>35</sup> Additionally, it was conceived to be a stronghold of Christianity and, for the Greeks, a bastion of Orthodoxy.

As can be deduced from written sources of the period, the monks residing at the monastery were, at least from the beginning of the 15th century, Greek

31 Theodoropoulou 2006, 36; Poulimenos and Stoufi-Poulimenou 1998, 219.

32 Poulimenos and Stoufi-Poulimenou 1998, 219; Theodoropoulou 2006, 34–36.

33 Poulimenos and Stoufi-Poulimenou 1998, 220; Theodoropoulou 2006, 31–33.

34 Poulimenos and Stoufi-Poulimenou 1998, 220; Theodoropoulou 2006, 31–33.

35 There are several indications in archival documents concerning important information in relation to ships sailing near the islands, provided by the monastery's monks to the Venetian authorities. In July 1520 the Proveditor of Zante, Sebastian Contarini, was informed that the pirate ships that had looted Reggio Calabria were seen travelling to the East. In December of the same year Contarini sent two men to the monastery as lookouts, in order to inform the Venetians located at Modon (which was at the time under Ottoman occupation) about the whereabouts of the Ottoman fleet. In 1531 the monks informed the authorities of Zante that three ships of the Hospitaller Knights docked at the island's port. See Sanuto 1899, cols 58, 464, 560; Kolyvà 2015, 182.



FIGURE 44 The east side of the tower and the apses of the katholikon of the monastery of Strophades

Orthodox.<sup>36</sup> Their strict way of everyday life and mainly their composite identity as warrior-monks seem to have really impressed the pilgrims, who, as mentioned above, convey relative information in most of their narratives when referring to Strophades. The number of monks living at the monastery varied, but, in broad lines, was significant. In 1420 Cristoforo Buondelmonti mentioned

36 The ecclesiastical status quo of the monastery during the 13th century remains obscure. If one accepts the well-rooted tradition that attaches its construction to the imperial Laskaris family, the obvious assumption would be that the monastic brotherhood that originally manned it was Greek Orthodox. However, it has been suggested in the absence of other concrete evidence that the monastery was founded not as a Greek house, but as a Latin one. Two papal letters dated 1299 and 1306 clearly attest to a Latin presence at the monastery. In fact, in the second letter the monastery is referred to as *b. Mariae de Strofaria ord. S. Ben Cephaluden*. Nonetheless, if the monks residing in the monastery were actually Benedictines, and what the exact period of their presence there was, is not known. William Miller suggested that the Benedictines governed or controlled the monastery in the 13th century, but, when the Greeks recovered Achaia, the Emperor John VI restored it. While this question remains to be answered, what can be safely deduced is that at least from the early 15th century, as attested by many travelogues, as well as other documents, the monastery was manned by Greek Orthodox monks. Mousouras 2003, 25–29, 38–43, 48–51; Tsougarakis 2012, 86–87; Bon 1969, 93; Fedalto 1978, 238; Digard *et al.* 1935, 540–541; *Registrum Clementis* 1892, 283–284; Miller 1908, 534; Tsougarakis 2015, 61–66 and *passim*.

that more than 50 monks were living at the monastery at the time of his visit, while in 1482, according to the Franciscan friar Paul Walther Guglingen, '200 Greek priests and 300 lay brothers' resided there.<sup>37</sup> The French Benedictine monk Nicolas Loupvent (1531) states that, 'The island is inhabited only by the monks residing at the monastery of the Virgin, who are Orthodox, officiating in the Greek language and following the Orthodox rite, and they are always, if this is possible, around 50 in number.'<sup>38</sup> Narrations of the 17th and 18th centuries corroborate Loupvent's assertion about the number of the cenobites: George Wheler, a 17th-century English clergyman and travel writer, attests that in 1686 the monks of the Strophades monastery were around 50 or 60.<sup>39</sup> At the end of the 18th century, according to André Grasset de Saint-Sauveur, the French state functionary who lived on Corfu for several years (1781–1798), there were around 40 monks residing on the island.<sup>40</sup> Other pilgrims mentioning the monastery may not be as specific, but they state that 'numerous Greek monks' lived on the island.<sup>41</sup>

As discussed above, the monastery often suffered pirate or enemy raids. It was severely damaged at least three times by the Ottoman fleet, in 1479, in 1530 or 1537 and in 1571, while it was almost destroyed in 1717 by the Ottoman pirate Moustis, who plundered the tower, captured 24 monks and looted almost all of its valuable possessions, among which were the arms of the highly venerated relic of St Dionysius and the miraculous icon of the Virgin Thalassomachousa.<sup>42</sup> Despite all these events, the monastery of Strophades, usually with the valuable financial aid of Venice for the liberation of captured monks, as well as for repairing the damaged buildings, survived and prospered and has been an important monastic, spiritual and cultural centre of Orthodoxy. It was active during the 18th and 19th centuries, while in recent years only one monk resided there; after his death in July 2017, the monastery's long history seems to have

37 Cristoforo Buondelmonti (1420) '[...] et ex omni progenie plus quam quinquaginta ibi coadunati reciantur'. Bayer 2007, 13. Paul Walther Guglingen (1481–1483): 'Et in illa est monasterium nomine Kalorea, in quo sunt continue ducenti presbyteri greci et trecenti fratres laici, omnes ordinis et regule sancti Basilii et dicuntur Kalorier de Striffali.' Sollweck 1892, 79.

38 See n. 16 above.

39 '[...] il y a un Convent de cinquante ou soixante Grecs, qui defend de la peur des Corsaire leurs Nôtre-dame miraculeuse, par le moyen de quelques Bastions garnis de bons Canons'. Wheler 1689, 70.

40 'La communauté forme seule toute la population. Elle est composée de plus de quarante religieux, dont sept à huit prêtres.' Grasset de Saint-Sauveur 1800, 321.

41 Louis de Rochechouart (1461) refers to 'multi monachi greci, qui lingua eorum *καλόγγροι* nuncupantur'. Couderc 1893, 232.

42 Poulimenos and Stoufi-Poulimenou 1998, 214; Mousouras 2003, 77–87.



reached its end. An earthquake on 26 October 2018 sealed the monastery's fate, causing severe damage to most of its buildings.

### 2.1 *The Icon of the Virgin Thalassomachousa*

One of the most valuable and venerated possessions of the Strophades monastery was the miraculous icon of the Virgin, known as 'Thalassomachousa' (Fig. 45).<sup>43</sup> The epithet Thalassomachousa, meaning the sea fighter, probably derived from the tradition according to which the icon arrived at Strophades, travelling by sea from Constantinople during iconoclasm, a common topos concerning the finding of miraculous icons.<sup>44</sup>

The icon of the Virgin Thalassomachousa, most probably a despotic icon in its original use, is the oldest icon of the monastery to survive to this day. It was located in the narthex of the katholikon, but, following the earthquake of 1997, which damaged the monastery's buildings, it was moved to the monastery of Strophades and St Dionysius in Zakynthos. The icon, dated to the beginning of the 13th century, is considered to be the work of a Constantinopolitan artist, an attribution that could be used as an additional argument to underline the relation of the monastery to the imperial family of Laskaris.<sup>45</sup>

In its present form, and after the removal of the Post-Byzantine overpainting, only the central figures of the Virgin holding the Christ Child, painted on a gold background, have survived from the original 13th-century icon.<sup>46</sup> The depiction is a rare variation of the Glykofilousa type.<sup>47</sup> The Virgin is holding the Christ Child with both hands, while he administers a blessing with his right hand and holds a scroll in his left. The rare variation of the Strophades Glykofilousa icon is iconographically related to an icon of the 12th or 13th century kept at the Kremlin in Moscow.<sup>48</sup> The gesture of Christ administering a blessing, unusual for the Glykofilousa type, can also be seen in an icon of the Virgin Dexiokratousa in Moscow, dated to the late 14th century

43 About the icon of the Virgin Thalassomachousa, kept and venerated in the monastery of Strophades, see Konomos 1988, 46; Konomos 1969; Acheimastou-Potamianou 1997, 46–49; Acheimastou-Potamianou 1999; Acheimastou-Potamianou 2000; Baltoyanni 2000.

44 Acheimastou-Potamianou 1997, 46; Acheimastou-Potamianou 2000, 472.

45 Acheimastou-Potamianou 1997, 48; Acheimastou-Potamianou 2000, 472.

46 The icon had several layers of overpainting that were removed in order to reveal the original depiction. Cod. 14 of the monastery refers to an *ανακαίνιση* [restoration] of the icon in 1836 by the deacon and painter Laurentios. Koutelakis 1994, 67–68; Lykogiannis 2003, 585; Acheimastou-Potamianou 1997, 48; Acheimastou-Potamianou 2000, 472.

47 Baltoyanni 1994, 155–156.

48 Acheimastou-Potamianou 1997, 48; Acheimastou-Potamianou 2000, 472; Lutsko 1992, 539, pl. 297.



FIGURE 45 The icon of the Virgin Thalassomachousa

and attributed to the famous Constantinopolitan painter Theophanis 'the Greek', as well as in a number of Cretan icons of the 15th and 16th centuries.<sup>49</sup> As already mentioned, the iconographical elements of the icon provide clear

49 Acheimastou-Potamianou 1997, 48; Acheimastou-Potamianou 2000, 472; Baltoyanni 1994, no. 48.

indications for its dating to the early 13th century and its attribution to a Constantinopolitan workshop.<sup>50</sup>

On 19 August 1717 the Strophades monastery's most venerated icon was stolen along with other precious possessions, including the arms of St Dionysius, during a pirate raid.<sup>51</sup> A narration of the raid has survived in a chronicle published by Nikolaos Katramis in 1854, while, according to another manuscript of the same chronicle that provides a more detailed version of the narration, the miraculous icon was sold by the pirates on the island of Patmos to an archpriest called Agathangelos.<sup>52</sup> The icon's presence on the island of the Apocalypse for a substantial amount of time may also be attested by a fresco in the church of St Basil, which is dated to 1722 and copies the Strophades Thalassomachousa; the icon of the Virgin is believed to have been returned to the Strophades monastery in the same year.<sup>53</sup>

Just like the icon of the Virgin Kassopitra, the Strophades Thalassomachousa was also said to have had a perpetual lamp burning before it. The oil of this lamp was dripped in the sea before embarking on a journey in order to ask for calm waters.<sup>54</sup> It was a highly venerated icon, known not only to the local inhabitants of the neighbouring islands, but to the mariners as well, since it was evoked in the *Santa Parola*.<sup>55</sup> The fame of the icon is what makes even more peculiar the fact that, unlike the monastery, it is not, at least directly, referred to in the pilgrims' travelogues.<sup>56</sup>

50 Acheimastou-Potamianou 1997, 46; Acheimastou-Potamianou 2000, 472.

51 Mousouras 2003, 78–81; Konomos 1969, 64–66.

52 According to Dionysios Mousouras, the archpriest mentioned in the chronicle became a monk at the monastery of St John the Theologian on Patmos in 1722 and he took with him, as mentioned in the monastery's archives, several relics, vestments and a Russian icon of the Virgin. This reference, when combined with his will, in which he bequeathed the Thalassomachousa icon to the consul of Zante, led Mousouras to the conclusion that Agathangelos was not the one who bought the Strophades Virgin. Regarding the Thalassomachousa icon, he conveys information from a Synaxarion, as well as the manuscripts of the monastery of St John, according to which it was bought by two Patmian brothers, Elias and Theodoros Kokkinakis. Dinos Konomos agrees that it was the two brothers who bought the icon. Katramis 1854, 32–33; Mousouras 2003, 78–81, 85, n. 199; Konomos 1969, 66.

53 The fresco is a work of the painter Stavrianos Chios and bears the inscription *Η ΑΓΙΑ ΕΙΚΩΝ ΤΗΣ ΜΟΝΗΣ ΤΩΝ ΤΡΟΦΑΔΩΝ* [the holy icon of the monastery of Strophades]. Koutelakis 1994, 67–68.

54 Acheimastou-Potamianou 1997, 46; Acheimastou-Potamianou 2000, 472.

55 'Die n'ai'e Santa Maria de le Scanfarié'. Bacci 2004b, 244.

56 As already mentioned in regard to the icon and the church of the Virgin in Kassiope, it was not an uncommon phenomenon for seafarers and travellers to evoke a site instead of a specific icon, relic or saint. See pp. 27–28 herein.

The monastery of Strophades, despite its geographical isolation and small size, is mentioned almost as many times as the cathedrals of Modon and Candia and more than all the religious institutions of Corfu combined. Given that the pilgrims convey so much information about the monastery and the monks residing in it, it would be quite improbable that they were unaware of the icon's existence. If anything, the crew of their galleys would have informed them about it, as in many other instances. Taking into consideration the confined space within the tower that also served as the *katholikon* and the very small port of the island, one could assume that most of the travellers did not actually disembark and visit the monastery, but rather saw it from aboard. This could explain to a certain extent the absence of mentions to the icon. On the other hand, it is not uncommon for pilgrims to refer to and even provide descriptions of icons, churches or relics they did not actually see. A similar phenomenon can be seen in the case of the Virgin of Kassiope: while the church and all the legends concerning it are mentioned by a large number of pilgrims, only a few of them refer to its highly revered miraculous Lucan icon of the Virgin Kassopitra.

However, and although none of the travelogues specifically refers to the icon, hints of its existence can be traced in several of them. For example, when pilgrims refer to 'our beautiful gracious Lady', one could plausibly assume that they were referring to the Thalassomachousa icon.<sup>57</sup> The Czech scholar Oldřich Prefát, who travelled to the Holy Land in 1546, mentions the monastery of the Virgin, stating that great miracles had happened there, while he adds that members of the crew salute the Virgin by singing *Salve Regina*, while the pilgrims join them.<sup>58</sup> Whether the Czech pilgrim is referring to the church or the icon, his testimony is of significant importance, since it attests that the mariners treated Strophades as a Marian cult site.<sup>59</sup> A century later, in 1686, the English clergyman George Wheler obviously refers to the icon when mentioning the monks who 'defend their miraculous Virgin' using arms and cannon.<sup>60</sup>

• • •

57 Count Alexander von Pfalz-Zweibrücken (1495–1496), see n. 20 above.

58 'v tom pak jednom větším jest klášter a kostel Panny Marye, která slove vlasky Santa Maria de Striauli, a pravil, že by veliké divy se tu stávaly. Protož skalko (to jest náš kuchmistr) uhlédav ty ostrovy, pozdravuje tu Pannu Maryji začal zpívatí Salve Regina a my s ním zpívali.' Bočková 2007, 72.

59 About the Marian cult sites on the same route, see p. 11, n. 5 herein.

60 See n. 39 above.

The monastery of the Virgin of Strophades was a significant stopping point and pilgrimage site on the way from Venice to the Holy Land. Located in open sea, the small port provided protection for the ships passing by, as well as springs of clean water, while the monastery offered the notion of divine protection for a safe journey. The uniqueness of the fortified building housing the monastery and the imposing and evocative landscape rendered it an ideal pilgrimage site. The small islands and the strongly fortified tower-monastery seem to have really intrigued the pilgrims, providing an imposing topographical and architectural framing to the sacred icon. The islands, a liminal place between sea and land, heaven and earth, were also visually extremely emotive. To the above one should add the presence of the monastery's monks who, being Greek Orthodox and thus somehow 'exotic' to the eyes of Westerners, seemed to exert a great impact on the pilgrims, which is aesthetic and visual as well. This impression was enhanced by the particularly strict way of life of the Strophades cenobites, as well as their resistance to the Ottomans, which undeniably augmented the prestige of their sacred habit among the pious travellers.<sup>61</sup> The monastery has been throughout its history supported, mostly financially, by the prevailing political actors of the area and mainly the Venetians, who for a time became its overlords. However, this was a clear political act, aimed at the use of the island's port, and does not seem to have had anything to do with the cult of the Virgin Thalassomachousa. There does not appear to have been an organised promotion of the cult or of the site as a pilgrims' destination by any political or religious actor. So, while it was the pilgrims who inserted it in their sacred topography and made it known to a wider audience, the role of the seafarers in the promotion of the site was undeniably critical. In the end, just as in the case of the Virgin of Kassiopi, the Strophades monastery's inclusion in the sacred topography of the sea route to Jerusalem is inextricably linked to the circumstances of navigation as perceived and experienced by the mariners, who had already included it in their 'holy topography of sailing', and the pilgrims, who elevated it to an international level.

61 Miller 1908, 534–535.

## Sailing towards Crete: The Port of Modon

Farther on, we had very high mountains to the left and the Great Sea to the right, as we passed through spacious places to Navarino and as far as Methone, a city of the Venetians.<sup>1</sup>



### 1 Sapienza

After sailing through the Ionian Islands, pilgrims' galleys arrived at Modon, one of Venice's *oculi capitales* and one of the most important trading centres of the Ionian Sea (Fig. 46). Before entering the port of Modon, galleys would often stop at Sapienza, the biggest of a group of small islands located south of the town, protecting it from the open sea (Fig. 47). In the 14th century the Venetians established a lookout post on this island, from which flag or fire signals informed the city of approaching ships.<sup>2</sup> Many pilgrims mention stopping at Sapienza and remaining there for hours or days when opposing winds prevented them from entering the port.<sup>3</sup> Some of them refer to a church on a hill, as well as to hermits living on the island. The French *Nompar de Caumont* (1418) was the first to refer to the deserted island where hermits resided at a church dedicated to the Virgin.<sup>4</sup> In 1470 the German nobleman Gaudenz von

1 English anonymous (1344–1345), in Hoade 1970, 56.

2 Hodgetts 1974, 41. The importance of the island of Sapienza for the safety of Modon's port was not overlooked by auspicious conquerors of the town. In 1529 Antonio Bosio, one of the commanders of the Hospitaller Knights, who a year later would attempt to occupy the town, had planned the building of another castle on the small island and its connection with the town by a pier. Foutakis 2017, 117.

3 In 1422 Felice Brancacci writes: 'A di 10, innazi giorno, ci partimo da Modone, e col nome di Dio seguimo nostro viaggio, e circa a terza avemo vento contrario, e tornamo indietro a Modone; e non potendo entrare in porto, tornamo a Sapienza, e quivi stemo tutto di e tutta notte.' Catellacci 1881, 185.

4 '[...] une petite ylle déserte où il ne abite riens fors que hermitens que demeurent près de la mer au pié de la montaigne, en une église que l'on appelle Sainte Marie de Sapience'. La Grange 1858, 88.



FIGURE 46 View of Modon, 1486, woodcut

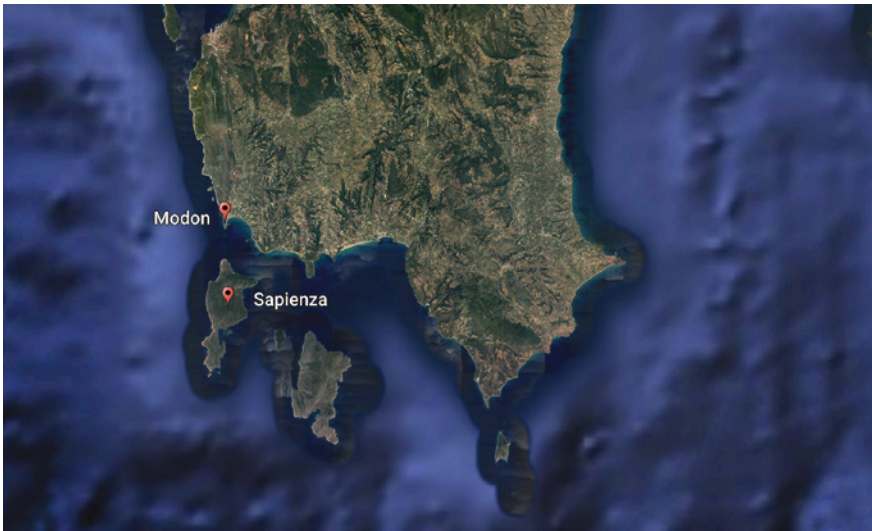


FIGURE 47 Map indicating the location of the island of Sapienza and the port of Modon

Kirchberg also mentions the church, but not the hermits.<sup>5</sup> The final reference to the church of the Virgin at Sapienza within the time frame of this study is in 1532 by Denis Possot.<sup>6</sup> The ruins of a church on the island remain to this day. Its date of construction and its dedication have not been determined with

5 'Item nōben Madon über ligt ain intztl genanntt Sapienncia. Darauf ligt ain closter.' Röhricht 1905, III.

6 'Du costé du nord et au devant, il y a une plage et une eglise.' Schefer 1890, 282.

certainty, but it is believed to have been built during the ecclesiastical building activity of the 11th or 12th century.<sup>7</sup>

The Florentine pilgrim Lionardo Frescobaldi, who visited Modon in September 1384, describes the island of Sapienza most eloquently.<sup>8</sup> In his description he includes all of the information provided by other pilgrims about the small safe harbour of the uninhabited island, the lookout post and the hermits residing in the church, attesting to what is also known from archaeological and archival evidence. What differentiates his narration is the fact that he places the as yet unidentified church of St Leo, Modon's most venerated saint, on Sapienza. Although the location of St Leo's church has not been determined, according to all the evidence it should have been situated close to the town of Modon, most probably near the sea, where the saint's body was found. Frescobaldi's fellow traveller, Simone Sigoli, places this church halfway up a hill, outside the town.<sup>9</sup>

## 2 The Town of Modon

The town's port was usually the pilgrims' first stop in the Peloponnese and provided a safe harbour; it had the capacity to supply ships and travellers, as well as markets in both the town and the *borgo*, where traders and crew could carry out their commercial transactions.<sup>10</sup> The Italian traveller Gabriele Capodilista (1458) eloquently expresses the way Modon was perceived at the time: the most famous town of the Peloponnese (the 'Morea'), where all the ships travelling to Venice docked.<sup>11</sup>

7 Anagnostakis 2010b, 116.

8 'Dirimpetto al porto di Modona si è un grandissimo poggio, il quale si chiama il Poggio della Sapienza; nel qual poggio anticamente solevano andare i filosofi e i poeti a fare loro arti. E in questo grandissimo monte, alla sommità di esso, si è una certa torre imbertescata di legname in su che stanno certe guardie; e come veggono apparire vele per mare, fanno cenni con certi panni lini bianchi in su mazze, secondo da che parte vengono, avendo dati i segni quanto è di mestieri a difesa e offesa, per modo che 'l porto, che è tra questi due monti, cioè tra quello di Modona e quello della Sapienza, è sicurissimo così da' corsali come da' venti. Ha nel Poggio della Sapienza molti eremiti a fare penitenza de' lor peccati. Quasi a mezzo la costa del poggio si è la chiesa dov'è il corpo di santo Leo; e in quello paese sono molti pedoti, cioè conoscitori dove sono gli scogli del mare coperti dalle acque.' Lanza 1990a, 174.

9 '[...] a capo a questo Modone in su d'una montagna a mezza spiaggia [...]'. Lanza 1990b, 220.

10 Hodgetts 1974, 368–368; Gertwagen 200, 147.

11 'Questa città di Modone è de le più famose città de la Morea, dove sempre capitano tuti i navilij che veneno de Levante per andar a Vinezia, et è situata in piano nel litto del mare, sotoposta a la prefata illustrissima Signoria.' Momigliano Lepschy 1966, 174.



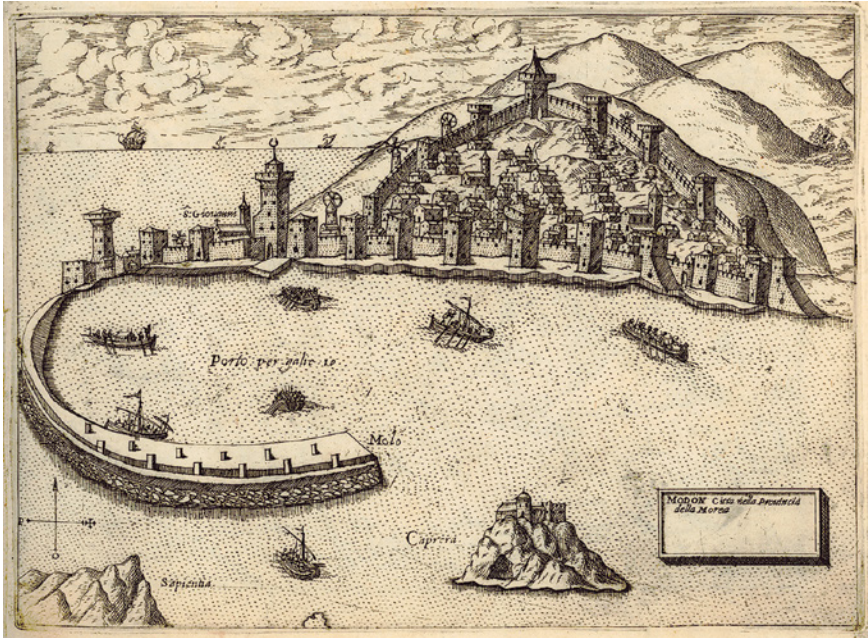


FIGURE 48 View of Modon, c. 1574, engraving

The first impression of the strongly fortified small town seems to be common for most of the pilgrims, who almost never omit to emphasise the safety of the harbour, so important for sea travellers (Fig. 48).<sup>12</sup> The Spanish voyager Pero Tafur, who visited Modon in 1436, provides one of its most concise descriptions, referring not only to the capacity of the port to provide safe harbour and supplies for the galleys, but also to its commercial importance. He also gives detailed information about the town, its inhabitants and its products.<sup>13</sup>

When disembarking at Modon, as in the case of Corfu, pilgrims were completely aware that they were visiting a town in the former territory of

12 Roberto da Sanseverino (1458–1459) writes: ‘Et parsegli molto bene esser vero quello che avevano inteso del dicto Modone, cioè ch’el havesse lo mazore et migliore porto et sorzodore cha locho fusse in Levante, perché tra la dicta terra et lo soprascripto schoglio, nominato Sapiencia, è dicto porto et sorzodore, ove stariano securissime quante nave, galee et altri naviglij sono suso quello mare.’ Cavaglià and Rossebastiano 1999, 239.

13 ‘Este mesmo día llegamos al puerto de Modón, que es entre la dicha villa et la isla Sapiencia, e allí surgimos, e decendimos en tierra por algunos refrescamientos para el navío, e aun por algunos negoçios que el patrón e algunos de la galea tenían en el lugar, por quanto ellos eran venecianos, e el lugar del señorío suyo. Este es lugar de dos mill vecinos, la mar lo cerca de dos partes, bien murado e asaz fuerte, aunque llano, muchas huertas de todas frutas e tierra muy abastada a modo del Andalucía; buenas posadas; la lengua griega, el regimiento de Veneza.’ Pérez Priego 2006, 241.

Byzantium. Their references concerning the local community attest to the fact that Modon remained, in respect of its population and prevailing culture, a Greek city.<sup>14</sup> Another interesting piece of information conveyed in most of the travelogues, probably related to the relief of reaching the middle of a difficult and dangerous journey, is the fact that Modon was located halfway between Venice and Jerusalem.<sup>15</sup>

The medieval town of Modon was a multicultural city with a mixed population of Greeks and Latins who resided in the walled *castro*, as well as Albanians, Jews and Gypsies living in the *borgo* (Fig. 49). It was not uncommon for travellers to meet fellow countrymen in Modon who often offered them accommodation during their stay, as in the case of the Flemish Joos van Ghistele.<sup>16</sup> In the town's port one could find travellers from all over the world, while in the *borgo* pilgrims were intrigued by their acquaintance with Gypsies.<sup>17</sup> Nevertheless, what stands out more in the pilgrims' descriptions is the city's strong fortification and the constant Ottoman threat.

As far as the actual town is concerned, pilgrims described it as small in size, with wide streets and wooden houses built very close to one another.<sup>18</sup> As a major commercial port, Modon offered facilities to travellers, traders and crew of the various ships frequenting it. Pilgrims were accommodated at the mendicant monasteries of the town, while German travellers usually resided at the 'House of the Teutonic Lords' (*domun dominorum teutonicorum, Teutschen Herrn Hauß, tutsches ordenß*), most probably a house run by the Order of

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- 14 Wilhelm Tzewers (1477–1478): '[...] Greci sunt [...]'. Wiesbaden 2004, 48; in 1480 the anonymous author of *Le voyage de la sainte cyté de Hiérusalem* writes: 'Tous ceulx de la ville sont Grecz [...] Les escolles et eglises sont quasi toutes grecques [...]'. Schefer 1882, 46; the German pilgrim Bernhard von Breydenbach, who visited Modon in 1483, reports: 'Do selbet ist kriechsche sprach in gebruch vnd synt die menschen gemeynlichen synt Pauls glauben habent genant die cristen vom gurtel'. Mozer 2010, 94; in 1492–1493 Peter Fassbender writes: '[...] und die stat stoetz sych an Griecken und dae beghynt Griecckssche sprach'. Röhrich and Meisner 1880c, 251.
- 15 Stephan III of Gumpenberg (1419): '[...] ligt auff halben Weg von Venedig und dem heyiligen Land'. Feyerabend 1584b, 237v.
- 16 'Dus daer commen zijnde, zo logierden de voorseyde up maerct ten house van eenen barber, gheboren van Biervliet, daer ghehuwet an eene vrouwe van dien lande [...]'. Gaspar 1998, 357.
- 17 French anonymous (1480): '[...] il y en a de toutes nations de gens qui parlent chascun divers languaiges'. Schefer 1882, 46. Pierre Barbatre, who visited Modon in 1480, mentions that: '[...] arriverent IIII grosses naves de Venize, lesquelles sont envoyés en Cypre pour certaines causes. En icelles naves sont gens de plusieurs nacions entre lesquieulx je en ay trouvé de Paris, de Tournay, de Bourges, de Lyon et aultres lieulx ausquieulx j'ay enquis des nouvelles'. Pinzuti and Tucoo-Chala 1972–1973, 164.
- 18 Pietro Casola (1494): 'Io non li sapi vedere caxe ne palazi degni de descriptione; per quella che ella è, è spessa de caxe'. Paoletti 2001, 144.



FIGURE 49 The town of Modon, late 15th century, engraving

Brothers of the German House of St Mary in Jerusalem or, according to other scholars, an establishment such as the Fondaco dei Tedeschi in Venice.<sup>19</sup> The general impression of the town was quite positive for most of the pilgrims, but, as the 15th century drew to an end, the effect of the Ottoman attacks had become apparent. As a result of the constant Ottoman threat, the town had diminished in population and was, according to Pietro Casola, ‘very badly kept in every way’.<sup>20</sup> The depictions of Modon in the *isolarii* of the period, as well as in some pilgrims’ narratives, as abstract as they may be, provide a quite accurate idea of the port and the town, with its impressive fortifications, windmills and the cathedral being visible from the ship.

Because of the limited space within the *castro*, a large number of houses, warehouses, commercial stores and, of course, churches and monasteries were built in the *borgo*, and almost all of the pilgrims visited them. The Flemish trader Jean de Tournai visited Modon in 1488 and informs future travellers about the town’s markets and abundance of products offered at good prices, while the German Felix Fabri (1480, 1483–1484) eloquently conveys the contrast between the lively *borgo* and the walled town.<sup>21</sup>

19 Hassler 1843–1849, vol. 1, 180; Feyerabend 1584a, 125r; Denke 2011, 39. The Order of Brothers of the German House of St Mary in Jerusalem, commonly the Teutonic Order (*Deutscher Orden*, *Deutschherrenorden* or *Deutschritterorden*), is a Catholic religious order founded c. 1190 in Acre as a military order to aid Christians on their pilgrimages to the Holy Land and to establish hospitals. See Boas 2006, esp. 6. About the Teutonic Order in the Peloponnese, see Opshal 1994, esp. 55–67. The Fondaco dei Tedeschi, founded in the early 13th century, was a landing point for goods transported by German merchants who stored them there. German-speaking populations who had a dedication agreement with the *Serenissima* operated there for their trade. See Browning Lemann 2006; Denke 2011, 339, n. 450; Gertwagen 2000b, 147.

20 ‘[...] molto male in ordine de ogni cosa’. Paoletti 2001, 144.

21 Jean de Tournai (1488): ‘La ville de Méthoni est une très forte ville, un très bon port, bon pays avec toutes sortes de vivres à bon marché. Et si vous n’avez pas fait provision de

Due to the severe destruction that followed the second Ottoman occupation, the number of churches and monasteries, both Latin and Orthodox, existing in the town and the *borgo* of Modon cannot be determined. It could be safely assumed that there would have been a large number of churches dating from the time before the Venetian occupation, and some of them would have been seized by the town's new rulers, thus converted for use by the Latins. Nevertheless, only the cathedral, dedicated to St John, can be identified in the ruins of a building located at the north-east end of the castle. Aside from the cathedral, very little information exists in regard to the churches in Modon. Archival documents attest to the existence of two other Latin churches, St Anne and St Mark, as well as to two mendicant monasteries, the Dominican one in the *castro* and the Franciscan one outside the city walls.<sup>22</sup> Also outside the town was the church of St Mary, characterised as *de extra, ala splaza* or *valverde*. The first two epithets indicate its location beyond the walls and near the sea, but the third one, according to Ann Christine Hodgetts, may suggest an attempt to establish a *scuola* as a daughter foundation of Santa Maria Valverde of Venice.<sup>23</sup> In the 15th century a commercial fair was held around the church on 8 September, the day of the Nativity of the Virgin, lasting for three days.<sup>24</sup> Undoubtedly there would have been a number of Orthodox churches as well, in and around Modon. Their names and locations are unknown, but several travelogues refer to their existence.<sup>25</sup>

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vivres jusque-là ce ne serait pas grand mal car vous en auriez à bien meilleur marché ici que nous n'avions eu à Venise.' Péricard-Méa and Blanchet-Broekaert 2012, 163. Felix Fabri (1480, 1483–1484): 'Ab extra est suburbium, et ad partem suburbii ad clivum montis sunt multae domunculae parvae et tuguriola stupa et calamis et sarmentis factae et luto compactae, et est quasi villula, inhabitantque illam Zigari illi, qui per orbem vagantur, de quibus supra Fol. 80 dictum est. Et omne forum equorum, porcorum, et quidquid tumultuosum est, agitur in illo loco extra urbem, et in urbe est quies et pax, et negotiationes quietae in ea tractantur.' Hassler 1843–1849, vol. 3, 338.

- 22 The church of St Anne appears in a will of 1375 by which Menegetus Servidius of Modon ordered that the money of which he had defrauded the churches of St John and St Anne should be returned. This church might have been in the town or it could be identified as the church of St Anne located outside the town, the lands of which were ascribed to the bishop of Modon. The church of St Mark appears in a document of 1343, in which the castellans requested that building supplies for it should be sent without tax, indicating that it was under the protection of the government. Hodgetts 1974, 389.
- 23 Hodgetts 1974, 379–380, 389.
- 24 Georgopoulou 2013, 136; Hodgetts 1974, 389.
- 25 Pierre Barbatre (1480): 'En la cité sont plusieurs eglises de Grecz [...]'. Pinzuti and Tucoo-Chala 1972–1973, 121. Felix Fabri (1483) also states that: 'De ecclesiis Graecorum, quae etiam ibi sunt, non curavimus.' Hassler 1843–1849, vol. 3, 334.

As for the encounter with an Orthodox population and its religious practices that appeared to intrigue the pilgrims on Corfu, this no longer seems to surprise them; having sailed through the Ionian Sea, by the time they arrived at Modon they were probably accustomed to them to a certain extent. Of course, they are still interested in this different reality: in 1482 the Franciscan friar Paul Walther Guglingen mentions that several of his fellow travellers entered a Greek church 'out of curiosity' to witness the way in which the Orthodox mass is performed, while one can still find in the travelogues descriptions of the 'peculiar' attire and habits of the Greek priests.<sup>26</sup>

In any event, in the case of Modon references of this type are not frequent. Modon did not offer the rich variety of experiences pilgrims encountered on Corfu and would later encounter in Candia. The social and, to a certain extent, religious homogeneity that was achieved on Corfu and was expressed in a spectrum of rituals, both religious and secular, that attracted the attention of and impressed the travellers does not seem to apply in the case of Modon. Undoubtedly, as in all Venetian-ruled Greek territories, the Latins and the Orthodox participated in common political and ecclesiastical ceremonies, but it seems that they were held less often, and, when they occurred, they were less complicated and less elaborate than on Corfu. In addition, and unlike the town of Corfu, Modon had what seems to have been a quite important relic – the body of a pilgrim saint, St Leo – thus providing a strong cultic focus that could potentially overshadow other 'religious attractions'. Whatever the situation was, the vast majority of pilgrims' narratives do not provide any information concerning other churches, neither Latin nor Orthodox, besides the cathedral and the two monasteries of the Dominicans and the Franciscans.

In regard to the Orthodox churches mentioned by the pilgrims, none of them exist today. They were all located outside the city walls and were visited by few pilgrims, whose testimonies are thus valuable sources of information.

### 2.1 *The Church of St Nicholas*

The Orthodox church of St Nicholas is no longer extant. Its presence is attested only in written sources, while no archaeological remains have survived to indicate its location. It is mentioned in two travelogues dating to 1487 and 1494 and was identified by Ann Christine Hodgetts as *St Nicolai Motonensis extra portum*, which had been attested already from 1207.<sup>27</sup> In that year the

26 Ibidem intraverunt ecclesiam Grecorum quidam peregrini de nostris ex curiositate et audierunt eorum missam [...]: Sollweck 1892, 81.

27 Pilgrims Nicholas le Huen (1487) and Pietro Casola (1494). Huen 1488, n.p.; Paoletti 2001, 143. About its identification, see Hodgetts 1974, 391–392.

pope had confirmed an annual grant made to the chaplain by William de Champlitte in memory of Henry Rondeth.<sup>28</sup> It is quite possible that the Venetians allowed it to continue in the Greek rite, even more so since it was located outside the town, where the Greek bishop was compelled to reside. Pietro Casola (1494) states that the church was restored from the offerings of the mariners.<sup>29</sup> Both pilgrims referring to the church of St Nicholas had visited it and mention making offerings to the saint, the traditional protector of sailors: 'And outside [the town] there is a charming and beautiful church of St Nicholas, where we offered to our great relief candles devoted to him to avoid the turbulent sea.'<sup>30</sup>

### 2.2 *The Church of St George*

The church of St George was also destroyed, and all information about it derives from written sources. According to pilgrims' travelogues, it was located outside the town, near a well from which travellers got their water supplies. The first mention of this church was made in 1418 by the French pilgrim Nompar de Caumont, while in 1480 the anonymous author of *Le voyage de la sainte cyté de Hiérusalem* testifies that, 'In the town there is no fresh water, so we had to refill our barrels near St George outside the town.'<sup>31</sup> It has been supported that St Leo's relic could possibly have been kept in the church of St George before ending up permanently in the town's cathedral.<sup>32</sup>

### 2.3 *The Church of St Leo*

The church of St Leo, Modon's most famous and revered saint, is mentioned by three pilgrims in 1384 and 1418. There has been much discussion concerning the building's actual location, and in the early 1960s a ruined monumental structure, situated 3 km north-east of the castle of Modon, was identified as the church of St Leo (Fig. 50).<sup>33</sup> This building is today in ruins and covered by dense vegetation, while only its south and west surrounding walls are still

28 Bon 1969, 92; Hodgetts 1974, 392; Kappas 2010, 197.

29 '[...] si fa de novo de elemosine de marinari.' Paoletti 2001, 143.

30 Nicholas le Huen (1487): 'Et au dehors a une chappelle gracieuse & belle de saint Nicholas: ou portasmes par grant soulas des cierges: deuotes a luy pour eviter lennuy de la mer passee.' Huen 1488, n.p.

31 Nompar de Caumont (1418): 'Et retournay par ung autre chemin, où il ha ung lotgiz ouvert que s'apelle Saint George de les Tribulleye, ou il ha une chapelle de monseigneur Saint George que les Grexs tiennent [...]'. La Grange 1858, 91. French anonymous (1480): 'En la ville, il n'y a point d'eaue douce que de pluye et nous faillut envoyer remplir nostre baril au puy saint Georges qui est en une lieue dehors de la ville et cousta deux marquetz.' Schefer 1882, 47.

32 Follieri 1971, 390–392; Steiris 2009–2010, 419.

33 Demodos 1958, 140–141; Pallas 1963, 104–105; Pallas 1971, 87–94; Steiris 2009–2010, 420.



FIGURE 50 Map indicating the location of Agioleos, north-east of Modon



FIGURE 51 The building of Agioleos in its present state

preserved and visible (Fig. 51). It has never been thoroughly studied, although it was cleared and partly excavated in 1969 by Dimitrios Pallas.<sup>34</sup> The identification of this building with the church of St Leo was mainly based on its local toponym, Agioleos (St Leo). It is worth mentioning that this toponym appears

34 Pallas 1971, 87–94; Michaud 1970, 996, 1000.

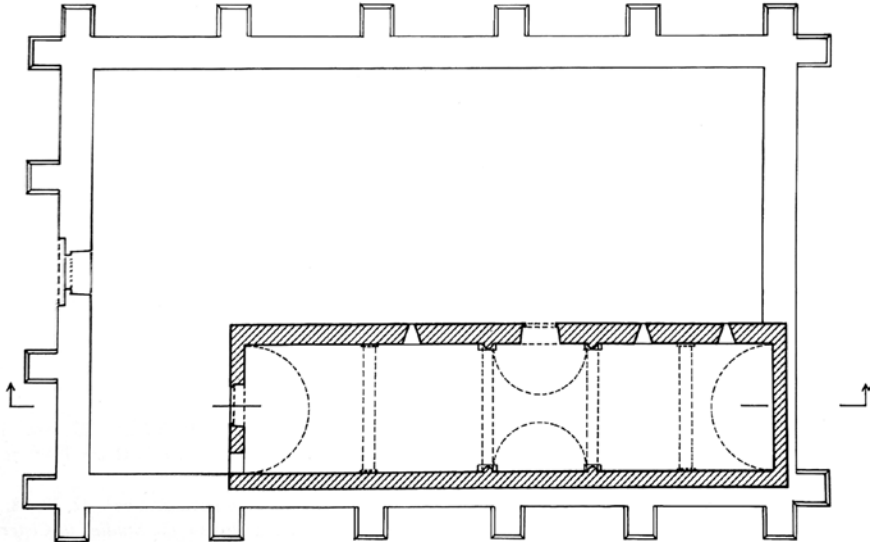


FIGURE 52 Plan of the church of 'St Leo', Modon, 15th century

for the first time in the 1930s, while the travelogues of the 19th century refer to the building simply as a church in the area of Palio Methoni.<sup>35</sup>

The first excavator of the site, Dimitrios Pallas, characterised the building as a cross-shaped church belonging to the Latin doctrine, enclosed by a monumental compound and combining both Gothic and local Greek architectural features (Fig. 52). He dated the whole construction to the late 15th century.<sup>36</sup> Twenty years later, Charalambos Bouras re-examined the site, conducting yet another partial excavation.<sup>37</sup> Bouras's findings were much different than those of Pallas. He saw at least two construction phases: an underlying large three-aisled church, typical of Frankish architecture, with elements of the French Gothic style of the first half of the 13th century, and a late 15th-century one-aisled, crossed-shaped church (Fig. 53).<sup>38</sup> Going further, Bouras identified the 13th-century building with the Cistercian monastery of Santa Maria de Verge of Modon, which was known to exist outside the city walls.<sup>39</sup> As far as

35 Valmin 1930, 153; Bouras 1989, 302; Gell 1823, 49; Aldenhoven 1841, 164.

36 Pallas 1971, 87–94.

37 Bouras 1989, 302–322.

38 Georgios Papathanasopoulos also dated the building to the 13th century. Papathanasopoulos 1965, 94; Bouras 1989, 303–315, esp. 307.

39 This identification was based both on architectural and constructional elements, as well as on written evidence. The simple and austere construction, the absence of a transept,



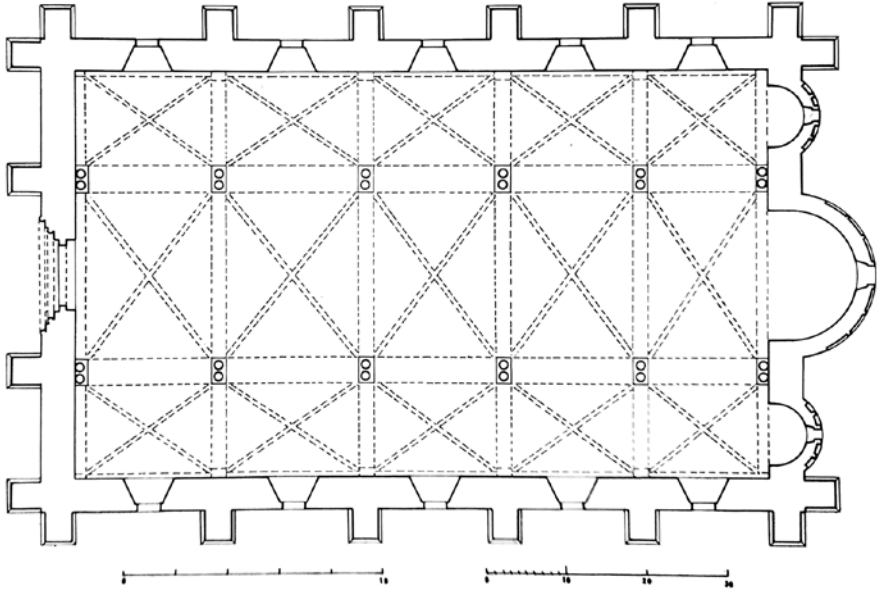


FIGURE 53 Plan of the church of 'St Leo', Modon, during the monument's first phase, 13th century

the 15th-century building is concerned, unlike Pallas, Bouras disagreed with its attribution to St Leo's church.<sup>40</sup> Based on travelogue references, as well as the saint's *vitae*, the church of St Leo was erected over his tomb, where his body was found, that is, on a shore near the city of Modon.

semi-columns or pilasters on the walls of the lateral aisles and the similarity of this church to the katholikon of the monastery of Zarakas in Stymphalia led Charalambos Bouras to assume that the building belonged to the then powerful Cistercian Order. Two papal epistles, one of Pope Clement IV in 1267 and one of Pope Gregory X in 1271, refer to a group of nuns of the Cistercian Order, who arrived in 1267 in Brindisi asking for protection after having been violently dislodged by the Greeks, who destroyed their convent in Modon. There are also mentions of two abbesses, Demeta Palaiologina and Isabella. After the destruction of their convent in Modon, the nuns settled in the area of Conversano in Italy. It is known that after the reoccupation of Constantinople by the Greeks in 1261 and the surrender of Monemvasia, Mystras and the Mani to the Byzantines in 1262, Greeks in the Peloponnese became particularly violent, destroying Latin monasteries located outside cities walls. These facts explain perfectly the brief history of the convent, while a big earthquake in 1303 completed its destruction. Bouras 1989, 311, 319–320; Brown 1958, 94; Orlandos 1955, 17; Unghelli 1721, 706–709; Zakythinos 1932, 32, 85; Miller 1908, 113–114.

40 Bouras 1989, 315–319.

Only four pilgrims mention seeing St Leo's relic in the church dedicated to his name instead of the town's cathedral. Lionardo Frescobaldi, who visited Modon in 1384, places St Leo's church 'halfway up a hill', but on the islet of Sapienza, while his fellow traveller Simone Sigoli places it 'outside Modon, halfway up a hill near the shore'.<sup>41</sup> The most detailed report concerning the church is given by Nompar de Caumont, who travelled to the Holy Land in 1418. He places the church 'a mile and a half outside the city of Modon, near the sea', while he also dates its erection: 80 years before his visit, that is, in 1338, adding that it was Greek Orthodox.<sup>42</sup> The fourth traveller mentioning St Leo's church, the German nobleman Arnold von Harff (1497), places it inside the city walls and characterises it as a *Mutterkirche*.<sup>43</sup> At the date of von Harff's travels, in the late 15th century, all the other surviving sources place St Leo's relic in the cathedral of St John. Most probably the German pilgrim misunderstood the dedication of the church, possibly due to the fame of the relic held in it. At this point, it is worth mentioning that according to the 15th-century Synaxarion containing St Leo's *vita*, the saint's body was buried at the seashore of an area near Modon called 'Ρῶσον χῶμα'.<sup>44</sup> So, assuming that there is a hint of truth to the legend and St Leo's church was erected above his tomb, it should have been near the sea.

Concluding, two of the travelogues (Frescobaldi's and Nompar de Caumont's), as well as the Synaxarion of St Leo, place the saint's church near the sea. In addition, Nompar de Caumont gives a date of the erection of the building, 1338, which does not correspond to the Palio Methoni church that is quite safely dated to the 13th century. Simone Sigoli's description does not allow an identification of the place where the church was, while von Harff's mention that the church was a *Mutterkirche* inside the city walls, in a period when all the other travelogues place the relic in the town's cathedral, is most probably a misunderstanding. In any case, neither the descriptions provided in the travelogues, nor the archaeological evidence allows a safe identification of the church in Palio Methoni with St Leo's church (Fig. 54).<sup>45</sup>

41 Lionardo Frescobaldi (1384), see n. 8 above. Simone Sigoli (1384): 'A capo a questo Modone in su d'una montagna a mezza spiaggia ha una chiesa, nella quale è il corpo di santo Leo.' Lanza 1990b, 220.

42 La Grange 1858, 90. See n. 71 below.

43 Brall-Tuchel and Reichert 2007, 98.

44 Enrica Follieri identified 'Ρῶσον χῶμα' with an area between Modon and Coron called 'Αχρῖτοχῶρι', while Elias Anagnostakis identifies it with 'Κοκκινιά', an area east of Modon. Follieri 1971, 407; Anagnostakis 2010b, 142.

45 Bouras 1989, 315–319; Kappas 2010, 241.



FIGURE 54 Remains of the church of 'St Leo', Modon

What can be quite safely assumed is that at some point between 1418 and 1469 St Leo's relic was moved and then kept permanently in the cathedral of Modon. Charalambos Bouras's explanation of the misunderstanding that led locals to name the church of Palio Methoni as St Leo is the assumption that the legend of the miraculous relic survived the Ottoman occupation of 1500 and the town's destruction and was in a much later period erroneously related to the ruined building outside the city.<sup>46</sup> This explanation could be supported by pilgrims' narratives dated after 1500, which mention that, at this time, it was said that St Leo was still alive in the mountains around Modon.<sup>47</sup> According to that, it seems quite improbable that Palio Methoni's church was the one erected in honour of St Leo, but there are still reservations, since the monument has not yet been fully excavated and studied.

46 Bouras 1989, 318.

47 Barthélemy de Salignac (1522): 'His locis audiui non sine admiratione agitari quaestionem de corpore sancti Leonis, aliquibus astringentibus, corpus dicti sancti in illa ciuitate requiescere, aliis vero contradicentibus, ipsum sanctum adhuc viuere, & in vicinis monticulis latitare.' Kirchner 1593, n.p. Two other pilgrims, Denis Possot and Charles Philippe, who travelled in 1532, also mention that: 'Aulcuns disent que le corps saint Leon est en icelle cité, les aultres disent qu'il est encoires vivant.' Schefer 1890, 126.

#### 2.4 *The Latin Cathedral of St John*

Regarding the Latin churches and monasteries of Modon, it is the town's cathedral that amasses the largest number of references in the travelogues. Apart from the cathedral of St John, pilgrims also refer to the Franciscan and Dominican monasteries. It is clear from their descriptions that none of these impressed or even pleased the eyes of the pilgrims, since they characterise the cathedral as a 'sad and badly kept building' and the Dominican monastery as 'being in a very bad state', while the Franciscan priory is described as so poor that the Conventual friar Paul Walther Guglingen refuses to officiate in it.<sup>48</sup> So, just as in Corfu, pilgrims visiting Modon were not impressed by its churches and monasteries, and this does not come as a surprise: the town was under the constant threat of the Ottomans, and its buildings had suffered damage on several occasions. Additionally, pilgrims had already seen the magnificent churches of Venice, as well as the ones in the major cities on the Dalmatian coast, and certainly the religious buildings of a town such as Modon could not compare in terms of architecture, decoration and wealth to those.

The cathedral of St John is, as already mentioned, the one that amasses the largest number of references compared to any other church or monastery in the town of Modon (Fig. 55). Dedicated to St John the Theologian, the church was located at the north-east end of the castle of Modon, almost next to the breakwater. In most of the depictions of Modon of the period, the cathedral stands out above the city walls. The actual date of its construction is uncertain. It was presumably built on the debris of a pre-existing Byzantine church.<sup>49</sup> In its present state, traces of its surrounding walls are still visible, but no excavation has been carried out yet.

Based on the few remaining architectural elements, as well as two drawings of the church made by members of the *Expédition scientifique de Morée* in 1828, archaeologists deduce that St John was a three-aisled basilica of large proportions with Gothic style features and large pointed arched windows. The walls were reinforced with closely placed buttresses, while it had pitched roofs covering the central and lateral aisles (Fig. 56).<sup>50</sup>

After the fall of Modon to the Ottomans in 1500, the cathedral was burnt and later on restored and converted into a mosque. A minaret was added at its south-west corner; its large rectangular base is built of limestone voussoirs

48 Pietro Casola (1494): '[...] triste, molto male in ordine de ogni cosa [...]'. Paoletti 2001, 144. Alessandro di Filippo Rinuccini (1474): '[...] assai impedito [...]'. Calamai 1993, 53. Paul Walther Guglingen (1481–1483), see n. 107 below.

49 Kappas 2010, 244.

50 Blouet 1831, 12; Kappas 2010, 244.

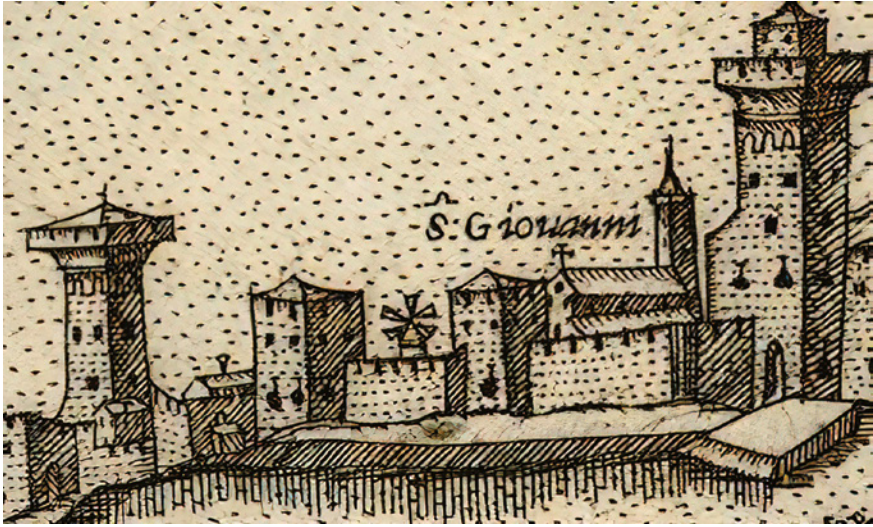


FIGURE 55 The cathedral of Modon, c. 1574, engraving. Detail of Fig. 48

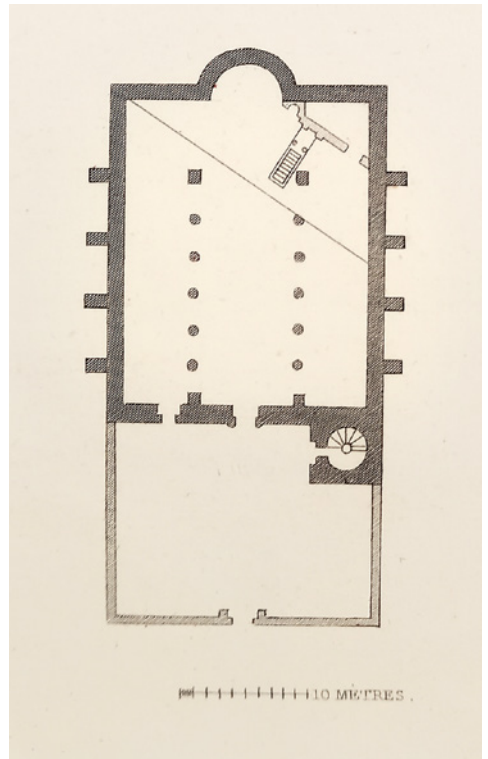


FIGURE 56 Drawing and plan of the Latin Cathedral of St John, Modon, 19th century

in second use, taken from the main building of the church of St John.<sup>51</sup> Guillaume-Abel Blouet, a French architect who visited Modon in 1829, provided some further details about the building's architectural form and its interior, describing a large three-aisled basilica with marble columns and a minaret standing at one of its corners, indicating that it served as a mosque.<sup>52</sup>

Modon has been a diocese since the beginning of the 13th century. After its occupation by the Venetians in 1205, a Latin bishop was appointed to the town, with full jurisdiction over the property of the former Orthodox bishop. It must have been at this time that the Orthodox cathedral was seized by the Latins, along with the holy relic held in it at the time, the head of St Athanasius, Bishop of Modon.<sup>53</sup> The church as it was seen by medieval travellers was probably built in 1209 on the remains of the preceding cathedral, which was destroyed during the hostilities between the Venetians and the Franks two years earlier.<sup>54</sup>

The first official mention of the church of St John as a Latin cathedral dates back to 1438, when the Orthodox delegation with the Patriarch of Constantinople Joseph 11 stopped at Modon on their way to the Council of Ferrara-Florence;<sup>55</sup> on 23 and 24 November respectively, the Latin and Orthodox bishops officiated at the cathedral of St John.<sup>56</sup> Over a century earlier, in 1318, the Latin cathedral of the town was mentioned in a will, followed by quite a few others who left money to the church, as well as requests of pious citizens to be buried there.<sup>57</sup>

Pilgrims' narratives very often mention the cathedral of Modon, but always in connection to the relics of St Leo and St Athanasius that were kept in it, thus neglecting to give a description of the building. The first mention of the church of St John in the travelogues dates back to 1469, when an anonymous pilgrim

51 Kappas 2010, 244.

52 '[...] à l'extrémité du bazar est une grande église à l'angle de laquelle un minaret indique qu'elle a servi de mosquée; son intérieur [...] est disposé comme les basiliques d'Italie, et divisé par deux rangées de colonnes en marbre, de dimensions et de nature diverses.' Blouet 1831, 11–12.

53 Tsougarakis and Lock 2014, 153; Hodgetts 1974, 390–391; Panopoulou 1993, 289–290; Karydis 2010, 304; Kappas 2010, 197.

54 Kappas 2010, 244.

55 Anagnostakis 2010a, 278; Follieri 1971, 386.

56 Follieri 1971, 386; Lampros 1926, 362; Lampros 1910, 156–157; Anagnostakis 2010a, 275–281.

57 Hodgetts 1974, 388.

attested celebrating mass along with his fellow travellers and seeing the precious relics held in Modon cathedral.<sup>58</sup>

References to the church of St John continue uninterrupted until 1500, when the town was occupied by the Ottomans, while some travellers mention it even after the occupation. The only pilgrim who provides information about the building is the Italian Pietro Casola in 1494: 'The town's cathedral, an episcopal church, could join the other miserable churches, sad and badly kept in every way.'<sup>59</sup> It could be assumed that the state of the church was not always the one described by Casola; what the pilgrim saw and reported could have been a result of the ongoing skirmishes with the Ottomans that led to the fall of Modon just six years after his visit.

As mentioned above, in 1500 the church was burnt during the invasion of the Ottomans and was later restored and turned into a mosque.<sup>60</sup> As would be expected, after the occupation of Modon pilgrims' ships avoided stopping at its port, and references to the former Latin cathedral cease, with very few exceptions, mainly during the brief period of its second Venetian occupation (1686–1715). In 1825 the building was burnt once again during a battle between the Ottomans and the Greek rebels and was finally destroyed in the years following 1828, when the French troops under the command of General Nicolas-Joseph Maison used its remaining building material in the construction of a city outside the walls in an attempt to relocate the inhabitants of Modon.<sup>61</sup>

From the 10th century the church of St John housed the head of St Athanasius, Bishop of Modon, and, from some point in the 15th century onwards, the town's most venerated relic, the body of St Leo. All of the pilgrims referring to the church mention these relics, with a particular emphasis on the relic of St Leo, a 12th-century pilgrim saint, a saint with whom they shared the common experience of pilgrimage.<sup>62</sup>

58 'Era il sabato infra la octava dil corpo de Christo e avegna già fosse cercha nona, però che giorni molti no avevamo celebrato, afamati et sitibondi de cosse spirituale, molti pelegriani volseno celebrare ne la eclexia catedrale di Modono. En la festa de Anastaxio, il quale fece il credo se canta ne la mesa e foy homo di quella città. Ancora il corpo di uno beato Leone qualle continue fa de grandi miracoli.' Longo 2007, 154.

59 'La sua giesia cathedrale, che è episcopale, pò stare de brigata con le altre: triste, molto male in ordine de ogni cosa.' Paoletti 2001, 144.

60 Follieri 1971, 380; Kappas 2010, 244.

61 Kappas 2010, 244, Follieri 1971, 382.

62 An analogous phenomenon can be seen in Cyprus, where the relic of St Jean de Montfort was worshipped. Jean de Montfort was a French noble and a crusader in the Holy Land, who died in 1248 in Cyprus. He was buried at the church of Beaulieu Abbey in Nicosia and was highly venerated by locals, as well as by foreign visitors. Many travelogues refer to his

### 2.4.1 The Relic of St Leo

Modon's most venerated relic, the body of St Leo, appeared in the city in the 12th century. Information about its history is drawn from pilgrims' travelogues, as well as from two liturgical texts and a Synaxarion, dated to the 14th and 15th centuries.<sup>63</sup> According to these texts, Leo was a pious pilgrim who lived in the 12th century and died on the ship while either returning from or heading to the Holy Land.<sup>64</sup> His body, according to the Synaxarion, was buried at the seashore near Modon or, according to some pilgrims' narratives, thrown into the sea.<sup>65</sup> St Leo then appeared in a dream of the Greek bishop of Modon, who retrieved his relic, which was indicated by the miraculous appearance of wisps in the sky, carried it and buried it in a place chosen by the saint himself.<sup>66</sup> Later on, a church dedicated to his name was erected above his tomb.<sup>67</sup> More details are given in the 14th-century Synaxarion, which clearly states the name of the bishop who found the body, Nikolaos, and St Leo's first burial place, *Ῥῶσον Χῶμα*, as well as his birthplace, Calabria.<sup>68</sup>

In broad lines, combining the information concerning the saint's life, death and canonisation provided by the written sources, the legend of St Leo and the establishment of his cult in Modon can be summarised as follows: a man's body was found at the seashore near the town, probably in the first half of the 12th century. The body was retrieved at that time by Nikolaos (died c. 1165), Bishop of Modon, and was buried with all Christian honours, under the name Leo, on the hills outside the town, either in a pre-existing church or in a newly founded one. St Leo's relics were soon associated with miraculous healings and gained great fame. Following these events, Bishop Nikolaos composed hymns to the new saint and was the one who established and promoted the new cult.<sup>69</sup>

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relic, which was preserved entire and was 'le plus beau mort qu'onques fut veu dessus la terre'; Nicholas le Huen (1487), Huen 1488, n.p. Pilgrims treated Jean de Montfort as one of their own, since they shared the experience of visiting the Holy Land, and the saint enjoyed much fame among religious travellers during the Middle Ages. About St Jean de Monfort, see Hackett 1901, 428–429; Delehay 1907, 250–251; and the recent works of Michalis Olympios, Olympios 2012, 41–43; Olympios 2013, 334–340.

63 Follieri 1971, 402–403, 430–435; the aforementioned texts have been published by Enrica Follieri in Follieri 1971, 441–451.

64 According to the legend as conveyed by Nompars de Caumont, St Leo died 'au retour', while Antonio da Crema mentions that the saint died 'andando al sanctissimo loco di Terra Santa'. La Grange 1858, 90; Nori 1996, 140.

65 Follieri 1971, 404; Nompars de Caumont (1418–1419), La Grange 1858, 90; Martin Ketzels (1476), Rhenanus 1832, 36.

66 Follieri 1971, 405; Nompars de Caumont (1418–1419), La Grange 1858, 90.

67 Nompars de Caumont (1418–1419), La Grange 1858, 90.

68 Follieri 1971, 404–405. See also note 44 above.

69 Follieri 1971, 428; Steiris 2009–2010, 418–422.



The first reference to St Leo's relic in pilgrim narratives is in 1384 by the Italian Simone Sigoli, and thereafter references to the miraculous relic continue uninterrupted until 1500.<sup>70</sup> The French pilgrim Nompars de Caumont (1418–1419) shows great interest in the relic and conveys a detailed version of the saint-related legend, as well as important information concerning the first church that housed his body:

There, they told me that there was a church in which there was the body of St Leo, who during his lifetime was a shoemaker. [...] Near the town, they could not move forward, and they decided to place the body there and erect a church. As they say, he resides there since 80 years ago and performs great miracles by the grace of our Lord. When the town is at war, the inhabitants, knowing that misfortune will come and fearing to lose him, come to carry him inside the town. They do not take any action before moving him. I went to that church to see the saint's relic, which is kept by the Greeks behind the grand central altar of the church. I saw it in a closed case, entire, in way that would please him.<sup>71</sup>

So, according to the French traveller, St Leo's church was built in 1338, a year that does not correspond to the time of the retrieval of his relic, that is, in the

70 Lanza 1990b, 220.

71 The full text reads: 'Et là moy fut dit que à une mille et demye, en une église anoye un corps saint, qui s'appelle saint Lion, qui fut sabatier au temps qu'il estoit en vie, et venoit du saint Sépulcre; et au retour, maledie luy pris en le nef de laquelle morut et fut geté en le mer dans une caisse; et la mer le alla porter à terre près de ledite cipté de Modon, et aucunes gens le trouvèrent, si se merveilloient que c'estoit, et cogneirent que c'estoit ung home, et vont le enterrer en une fosse que ly firent; si que chacune nuyt, dessus ycelle foce où il estoit enterré, l'on veoit trois brandons de feu alumés par miracle de Dieu; et sy avint une nuyt eu à vizon al évesque de leditte cipté, que en ceul lieu avoye une corps saint et qu'il alasse par della, et le fit desenterrer et tenir en celle honneur, comme il apertenoyt d'un corps saint et qu'il estoit. Lors lendemeyn, quand ledit évesque fut levé, il révéla le chouse; et firent ordonnance d'aller part della et menèrent évesques et plusieurs chapel-lens et autres gens ans grandes processions; et tantost là, où ils comensèrent et le mirent sur une charrue tiré aux buefs et ainsi le portèrent. Et quant ilz furent près le cipté, au lieu où à présent est, cuydant le porter dedens, ilz ne purent onquez passer plus avant, et convint que illéques le leissatent. Et fut là fette une église où ils demeure depuys ens se que l'on dit, a bien .lxxx. ans, et là fet de grans miracles par la vertz de Nostre Seigneur.

'Et quand il est temps de guerre en cell pays, ou ils ayent en la cipté ausqunes savance que malleur leur doye venir, pour dobtance de le perdre, ilz le vont querre et le porter en la cipté susditte. Mes se il n'est voir, ilz n'on puissance pour riens qu'ilz facent, de le movoir de son lieu. Et en ycelle église je fuy pour veoir ledit corps saint, lequell tiennent les Grexs, au derrier le grant autel du cuer de leditte église, en une caisse ferrée où je le vi tout entier, se luy plest.' La Grange 1858, 90–91. See also the translation in Dansette 1997b, 1101.

12th century. It could be suggested that the relic was found at a later period and that the identification of the town's bishop at the time with Nikolaos of Modon, who died around 1165, is erroneous. On the other hand, and given that the attribution of the saint's Synaxarion to Nikolaos can be sufficiently supported, it could be assumed that the holy relic was housed for some years in an already existing church until a church dedicated to his name was built. Nompar de Caumont mentions seeing the saint's body, at the time kept behind the altar of the choir, in a closed case, while he attests to the performance of a procession of the relic during troubled times, brought into the city in order to provide protection to the citizens, as well as to safeguard the relic from the enemy. As far as the saint's legend is concerned, it is of note that the usually very well-informed Felix Fabri, when referring to him near the end of the 15th century and probably influenced by the growing Ottoman threat, stated that St Leo was a German pilgrim killed by the Ottomans.<sup>72</sup>

There is no information provided in the Late Medieval travelogues or other sources about the reliquary, besides the aforementioned Nompar de Caumont and the Italian Pietro Casola. Both of them mentioned seeing the body of St Leo, entire, in a wooden chest.<sup>73</sup> The lack of further descriptions allows the presumption that the saint's sarcophagus was not very elaborate, but it must have been adorned somehow, because Caumont mentions that the saint's body was kept 'in a way that would please him'.<sup>74</sup> The state of the reliquary when Casola saw and described it as a badly kept wooden case could be the result of neglect due to the Ottoman threat that was at its peak at the time of his visit.

What is important to note, since it seems to augment the significance of the relic, is the fact that it was preserved entire, thus worshippers could see and venerate the saint's whole body. Jean de Tournai, a Flemish merchant who visited Modon in 1488, attests to the fact that the body was exhibited entire: 'In this town, in the church of St John there is the body of St Lyon the confessor. The body is preserved entire. This saint died at Methoni, while returning from the Holy Voyage. The day I saw him he was wearing wooden shoes.'<sup>75</sup>

72 '[...] corpus S. Leonis, cujusdam peregrini teutonici. Poto autem illum fuisse peregrinum, qui inter Turcos mortuus non paucis claruit apud eos miraculis et postea ad Metonam per Christianos fuit translates.' Hassler, 1843–1849, vol. 3, 333.

73 Nompar de Caumont (1418–1419), see n. 71 above. In 1494 Pietro Casola reports that: 'dicto corpo m tenuto in una cassa de Ugno assai desutile'. Paoletti 2001, 145.

74 See n. 71 above.

75 'Dans la ville, en l'église Saint-Jean est le corps de saint Lyon confesseur. Il y est tout entier; ce saint est mort à Méthoni en revenant du Saint Voyage. Le jour où je le vis, il avait aux pieds des souliers de bois.' Péricard-Méa and Blanchet-Broekaert 2012, 164.

At some point, sometime around the end of the 15th century, the relic appears to be permanently housed in the cathedral of Modon, the Latin church of St John.<sup>76</sup> There are no mentions in the texts about the place where the relic was kept in the town's cathedral. Given its popularity among locals, as well as pilgrims and visitors, it could be assumed that it was in a prominent location or at least easily accessible. After a certain point it must have been moved, probably for protection from the growing threat of the Ottomans. In 1494, only six years before Modon's occupation, the Italian pilgrim Pietro Casola mentions that in order to see the relics he and his fellow travellers had to ask the 'caretaker' to escort them. On top of that, again obviously because of the ongoing war with the Ottomans, the church appears to have been in a very bad state, while the saint's body was kept in a simple wooden case and was shown to them under very poor lighting.<sup>77</sup>

After the fall of Modon to the Ottomans in August 1500, a few mentions of the relic of St Leo indicate that his cult survived at least until the following century. Ottheinrich von der Pfalz, in 1521, states that the holy body was buried in the town, while Barthélemy de Salignac in 1522 and Denis Possot in 1532 mention that, 'Some say that the body of St Leo is in this town, while others say that he is still alive.'<sup>78</sup> Nevertheless, there are no traces of the relic after 1500, and it is quite safe to assume that it was destroyed by the Ottomans along with the cathedral housing it.

Although there are no written testimonies, it can be deduced that the veneration of St Leo's relic would have been in keeping with Late Medieval practices: the pious would offer candles, make donations and, most importantly, touch the body, either with their clothes or with paternosters, in order to carry the saint's blessing with them. The surviving liturgical texts concerning St Leo also mention the popular notion that being close to or touching his reliquary could heal and bless the devout.<sup>79</sup>

The cult of St Leo emerged at a time when Modon was once again destroyed by enemy raids. Bishop Nikolaos himself, in 1147, after the attack of Roger II,

76 Follieri 1971, 399; Hodgetts 1974, 389.

77 'Alcuni de li peregrini feceno instantia per vedere le loro reliquie, dico de la giesia pre-nominata. Comenzando al custode che me pariva calzolaro, benché havesse una grande chierica, e poi el resto, me parse vedere una cosa molto trista. Tandem ne forono monstrate le reliquie con una lume ben trista.' Paoletti 2001, 144.

78 Reichert 2005, 162. Barthélemy de Salignac (1522) and Denis Possot (1532), see n. 47 above.

79 "Ἡ θήκη ἔνθα κείται σου τό πανάγιον σώμα ἰάται τά νοσήματα τῶν πιστῶς προσιόντων ταύτην." [The case where your holy body lies heals the maladies of those who come to you with faith.] and '[...] ἀγιάζεις τῇ ψαύσει τῆς λάρνακος σοῦ' [(...) you bless by the touch of your reliquary]. From the saint's *exaposteliarion* and canon, as published by Enrica Follieri in Follieri 1971, 427, 446.

described Modon as an '[...] abandoned town, a town without citizens, walls and the security the walls provide'.<sup>80</sup> So, the appearance of a miraculous relic that had the power to heal and protect the town was a much-needed morale and faith booster for the locals. At the same time, the legend that followed the new saint and, most importantly, his identification as a pilgrim made him extremely popular among the religious travellers who frequented Modon. Thus, St Leo's status both among the locals and the pilgrims comes as no surprise. For the inhabitants of the town, he was their protector, while for the pilgrims, the ones who circulated his fame to a much wider, international audience, St Leo was one of them. Who would be more appropriate to turn to during their journey than a man who shared their experience and attained saintliness? Last but not least, one should keep in mind the fact that Modon's St Leo was evoked in the *Santa Parola*, and, undeniably, this would have played a major role in the diffusion and elevation of the saint's cult.<sup>81</sup>

Therefore, the dissemination of St Leo's cult was to a great extent a result of his status as a pilgrim. The question that arises from this is: was the promotion of the worship of a Holy Land pilgrim organised and established with the aim of attracting religious travellers, or was it the pilgrims' desire that created and promoted this cult phenomenon? When the new saint was introduced to the inhabitants of Modon by their bishop in the 12th century, the fact that he was a pilgrim was to explain his appearance in the town rather than to attach importance to his relic. What Nikolaos of Modon needed at the time was a morale and faith booster for his flock, who had suffered a series of enemy raids. On the other hand, given the fact that since the Byzantine period Modon had been a stopping point for travellers to the Holy Land, a movement growing especially from the 13th century onwards, one cannot exclude the possibility that the promotion of the cult of a pilgrim saint aimed to attract a particular target group.<sup>82</sup> Furthermore, given that the cult of St Leo was introduced in the 12th century and was quickly established in the area, it would be relatively safe to

80 '[...] ἔρημόπολις, ἔρημη πολιτῶν, ἔρημη τειχῶν καί τῆς ἀπὸ τειχῶν ασφαλείας'. Steiris 2009–2010, 410; Foutakis 2017, 98.

81 Bacci 2004b, 223–248, esp. 244.

82 During the entire period of its Byzantine history, Modon functioned as an important port of call on the marine route leading from the West to the Eastern Mediterranean, Constantinople and the Holy Land. It was during the Early Byzantine period that the town appeared for the first time as a stop for Christian pilgrims on their way to the Holy Land. In the autumn of 385 the Roman patrician Paula and her daughter Eustochia disembarked at the port of Modon, where they stayed for a few days to rest after sailing through the Adriatic. References to Modon as a port of call for pilgrims travelling to and from Jerusalem became more frequent in the following centuries, but it was after its occupation by the Venetians that the town was established as an important stop on the way from

say that pilgrims were not the ones to create this cult. Nevertheless, they were undeniably the protagonists in its promotion, its wide diffusion and its elevation to an international pilgrimage by including the church housing the saint's body in their sacred topography of the sea route to Jerusalem.

#### 2.4.1.1 *Liturgical Habits*

Given the popularity of the relic among pilgrims and travellers, as well as its importance for the inhabitants of Modon, and taking into consideration the religious practices of the period, it would be quite safe to presume that St Leo's body was carried in processions through the streets of the town on several occasions. Despite the fact that there is no evidence testifying to predetermined dates on which a procession involving Modon's most revered relic was held, one could assume that there would have been some sort of litany involving the relic at least on the saint's feast day, 12 May, as well as in times of peril. Furthermore, just like on Corfu, Crete and other Venetian-ruled Greek territories, Latins and Orthodox would participate in common liturgies and processions carried out during the most important religious feasts and they would most probably be related to the town's cathedral and its holy relics, which were commonly used by the government as agents to promote unity among the inhabitants of different rites. Nevertheless, sources of the period do not provide sufficient information, and there is no evidence attesting to the existence of such a rich spectrum of political and religious rituals as on the aforementioned islands.

However, pilgrims' travelogues indicate what could be considered as a common practice of the city's inhabitants, dating to at least as early as 1418: the procession of St Leo's relic in times of peril. As mentioned above, Nompar de Caumont (1418–1419) attests to the transportation of the relic inside the walled town when enemies approached.<sup>83</sup> It would be quite safe to assume that it was carried out in the form of a procession. Several years later, in 1470, the pilgrim Gaudenz von Kirchberg mentions a procession of St Leo's relic around the streets of Modon in order for the saint to protect them from an Ottoman attack.<sup>84</sup> This testimony, especially when combined with Caumont's writings, indicates not only the importance of the relic for the town, but probably also

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Venice to the Holy Land. Penna 2010, 32; Foutakis 2017, 95; Follieri 1971, 384; Avramea 1997, 43–44; Gertwagen 2000b, 147.

83 See n. 71 above.

84 The full text reads: 'Es ist in derselben statt in den tumb ain heiliger genant Leon, den hat man ob dem auß der Morea von den Dürckhen hineingeflöcht und gepracht; denselbn heiligen trugen vier in ainer par mitsampt andern hailtumben am suntag in der pecesi in ale gass der stat zu Madon und volgten in proceß nach die herschafft und das volckh

an established ritual. Even though no other sources corroborate this, pilgrims' testimonies undeniably reflect a common religious practice of carrying relics or miraculous icons in processions, attested since the Byzantine period.

At this point, it is worth mentioning that Modon, and most probably its cathedral, housed for quite a while, possibly during the 11th century, the relic of another St Leo: St Leo of Samos. Bishop of an unknown bishopric, he died on the island of Samos, and his relic, which was also considered to be miraculous, was transferred to Venice, stopping for a long period of time in Modon.<sup>85</sup> This is why he was falsely identified as the bishop of Modon. This notion seems to have survived through time, as in 1481 the pilgrim Joos van Ghistele refers to St Leo as *bisscops Leonis*.<sup>86</sup> So, Nikolaos, the Bishop of Modon, by introducing the cult of St Leo in the 12th century was offering the town another St Leo to replace the one that went to Venice. This could explain the attribution of the epithet *νέος* (new) to the pilgrim saint in the Synaxarion composed by Nikolaos, the 'old' being St Leo of Samos, who was venerated in Modon for a long period of time.<sup>87</sup>

#### 2.4.2 The Relic of St Athanasius, Bishop of Modon

Another holy relic that was venerated in the cathedral of St John was the head of St Athanasius, Bishop of Modon. The first mention of this relic was made by an anonymous pilgrim in 1469, who wrote about 'Anastaxio, who composed the hymn chanted in mass and who was a man of this town'.<sup>88</sup> Thereafter, references to it continue uninterrupted until the end of the 15th century. St Athanasius's relic appears to have been kept in the church of St John until the Ottoman occupation of the city in 1500. There is no specific information about the date when the head of St Athanasius was transferred to the cathedral of the town, but most probably this happened right after his canonisation in the 9th century or the early 10th.

According to his *vita*, St Athanasius lived in the 9th century. He was born in Catania, Sicily, but fled with his family when he was ten years old to escape

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von der stat und giengen die Krüechen am erstn in der proceßy; geschach wider die Dürckhen.' Röhricht 1905, 109.

85 The relic of St Leo of Samos was later transferred to Zakynthos, from where it was moved to Malamocco in 1105 and later on to Venice, in 1109. It was initially kept in the monastery of San Servolo and, since 1615, in the church of Santa Maria dell'Umiltà, until its traces were lost. Bianco 1742, 186; Follieri 1971, 398; Steiris 2009–2010, 422–423; Agathangelos, Maltezou and Morini 2005, 212.

86 Gaspar 1998, 61.

87 Follieri 1971, 398; Steiris 2009–2010, 422–423.

88 See n. 58 above.

the Arabs. He came to Patras in the Peloponnese, where he became a monk, a hermit and later on an abbot, until he was appointed bishop of Modon, an office he kept until his death, presumably around 880. After his burial in the city of Modon, his grave became a source of miraculous healings and led to his canonisation and the translation of his holy relic to the town's cathedral.<sup>89</sup> The only known written reference to St Athanasius of Modon is a funerary lamentation composed by St Peter of Argos in the 9th century.<sup>90</sup>

Ever since the first mention of the relic of St Athanasius of Modon in the cathedral, there appears to be a misunderstanding about the identification of the bishop of Modon with St Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria and alleged author of the then well-known Athanasian Creed, or *Quicumque vult salvus esse*.<sup>91</sup> This attribution may have been an honest mistake because of the same names of the two bishops, but at the same time reflects the common phenomenon of the 'promotion' of a relic from an unknown or less important one to one of greater prestige.<sup>92</sup>

Other than that misunderstanding, there seems to be a huge confusion about the name of the person whose relic was venerated. Almost all of the pilgrims refer to him using a different name, in most cases a variation of the name Anastasius, while only four of the pilgrims use the name Athanasius, but attribute the relic to the bishop of Alexandria.<sup>93</sup> One of these four, the Italian Antonio da Crema, conveys important information about the saintly relic: '[...] the head of St Atanasio, Bishop of Alexandria, which was found in a well and is at the cathedral church, with a golden circlet spliced at the forehead with these engraved letters: "Caput Anastasii alexandrini episcopi"'.<sup>94</sup>

According to the testimony of the Italian pilgrim, the saint's head was decorated with a golden circlet bearing an inscription identifying it as the

89 Follieri 1971, 401; Da Costa-Louillet 1961, 313–315.

90 Follieri 1971, 400; Da Costa-Louillet 1961, 313–315; *BHG*, 72.

91 Waterland 1870, 4–18.

92 The case of St Athanasius of Modon is similar to the one of St Arsenius in Corfu, who was mistakenly identified as St Erasmus, much more familiar to a Western person; see p. 86 herein. In his travelogue of 1527 Noè Bianco reported seeing St Athanasius of Alexandria's relics in the church of Santa Croce in Venice. Bianco 1742, 186.

93 The anonymous pilgrim of 1469 refers to an 'Anastaxio'. Longo 2007, 154. Most French-writing travellers use the name 'Anastaise'. Schefer 1890, 47; Pinzuti and Tucoo-Chala 1972–1973, 121. Joos van Ghistele: 'Anastacius helegghen bisscop'. Gaspar 1998, 389. Felix Fabri: 'caput Anastasii, episcopi Alexandrini'. Hassler, 1843–1849, vol. 3, 333.

94 '[...] la testa di sancto Atanasio episcopo di Alexandria, quala fu ritrovata in uno pozo, qual è in lo corpo di la ecclesia catedrale, cum uno circhio di oro cinta e impiombata ne l'ossa di la fronte cum queste lettere intaglate: "Caput Anastasii alexandrini episcopi"'. Nori 1996, 140.

Alexandrian bishop. In addition, as transcribed by da Crema, the engraved name of the bishop is not Athanasius, but Anastasius. If such an inscription actually existed, it would explain the confusion of the pilgrims between the two names and the two saints and would allow the assumption that the relic of another bishop besides Athanasius of Modon was displayed in the town's cathedral. If, however, this was not the case, one could presume that, at least at the end of the 15th century, the aforementioned 'promotion' of a relic from an unknown or less important one to one of greater prestige was tolerated, if not actually orchestrated by the local religious authorities.

There are no mentions in the texts about the specific place where the relic was kept in the church of St John. As in the case of St Leo, the head of St Athanasius could be assumed to have been kept for a long period of time in a prominent or easily accessible location. The above-cited mention by Pietro Casola, that in order to see the relics they had to ask the 'caretaker' to escort them, may imply that this relic had also been moved in order to be protected from the growing Ottoman threat.<sup>95</sup> There are no traces of St Athanasius's relic after the fall of Modon to the Ottomans in August 1500, and it is quite safe to assume that it was destroyed by the invaders, along with the cathedral.

At this point, it should be noted that the German pilgrim Felix Fabri, who visited Modon in 1480 and 1483, mentions seeing in the cathedral of St John two fingers of Sts Cosmas and Damian.<sup>96</sup> A few years later, in 1486, the Italian pilgrim Antonio da Crema also refers to these relics.<sup>97</sup> Fabri and da Crema are the only pilgrims to refer to Sts Cosmas and Damian's relics in the city of Modon, while there is no other evidence attesting to their presence in the cathedral.<sup>98</sup>

95 Paoletti 2001, 144–145.

96 Hassler 1843–1849, vol. 3, 333.

97 'Uno dido di sancto Cosma; uno dido di sancto Damiano'. Da Crema also mentions seeing the arm of St Martiniano in the church of St John: 'uno brazo di sancto Martiniano, qual fu d'i setantadiu discipuli del nostro Signore messer Iesu Christo'. Nori 1996, 140.

98 Following the traces of the relics of Sts Cosmas and Damian (or Sts Anargyroi, as they are known in the Eastern ecclesiastical tradition), one comes across a long and not very clear history of alleged transfers, uncovering a dispute between Rome and Venice. According to the *Perantiqua tabula romanae basilicae*, in the frame of the *sacra pignora* movement, Pope Gregory I seems to have transferred the relics of Sts Cosmas and Damian to Bremen during the 10th century, while in the 11th century their heads were placed by Henry II in the cathedral of Bamberg. On the other hand, according to Flaminio Cornaro and supported only by liturgical (the commemoration of the transfer celebrated on 10 May) or archaeological evidence (a *graecanico opere elaborato* reliquary), the relics seem to have arrived in Venice directly from the East in 1154. It is worth mentioning here that a number of Russian pilgrims report seeing the heads of the two saints, covered in gold, in Constantinople in a period spanning from the 14th to the 15th centuries. Van Esbroeck



The value of information conveyed by pilgrims' narratives concerning the cathedral of Modon is of significant importance. They testify to its prominence among other religious institutions in the town throughout the 14th to the 16th centuries, due to its possession of the holy relic of the body of St Leo being well known among pilgrims. Reading carefully through the travelogues, the diffusion and significance of the now forgotten cult of St Leo becomes obvious, and, at least from the pilgrims' point of view, the cathedral housing his relic stood out as the most mention-worthy church and the major cultic focus of the town.

### 2.5 *The Franciscan Monastery*

The Franciscan monastery is the second most mentioned religious institution of Modon. It is not extant, and its presence is attested only by written sources, while no archaeological remains have survived to indicate its location.<sup>99</sup>

The Franciscans were active in the Peloponnese and had established a house in Coron already from the mid-13th century.<sup>100</sup> The Franciscan monastery of Modon, on the other hand, seems to have been established in a later period, since it does not appear in the lists of Franciscan houses of the 14th century.<sup>101</sup> It has been suggested that the founding of a monastery in Modon was already being planned in 1321, according to a decision of the Venetian Senate stating that the castellans of Modon and Coron had reached an agreement with the Franciscans of the province of Romania about the foundation of two new houses.<sup>102</sup> In 1366, when Amadeus VI, Count of Savoy, visited Modon, the Franciscan monastery was already built.<sup>103</sup> The next surviving mention of the monastery dates to 1446, almost a century after the first one, when the pope confirmed Marcus of Modon as guardian of the monastery.<sup>104</sup>

Pilgrims' testimonies come to provide additional information about the Franciscans' presence in Modon, as well as to corroborate the fact that the monastery was active in the city until the end of the 15th century. Unfortunately, very few travelogues mention the Franciscan house of Modon, covering a narrow period of 16 years, between 1480 and 1496. Pierre Barbatre in 1480 and Felix Fabri in 1483 both indicate that the Franciscan monastery was located

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1981, 61–77; Agathangelos, Maltezou and Morini 2005, 91; Corner 1749, VIII, 128; Majeska 1984, 45, 151, 163, 333.

99 Tsougarakis 2012, 137; Nanetti 2001, 348–349.

100 Nanetti 2001, 348–349; Hodgetts 1976, 390.

101 Moorman 1983, 306; Tsougarakis 2012, 137.

102 Tsougarakis 2012, 137.

103 Golubovich 1927, 120.

104 Tsougarakis 2012, 137.

outside the city walls and that it was small and poor.<sup>105</sup> Barbatre adds that at the time of his visit the Bishop of Modon was a Franciscan friar.<sup>106</sup> In 1482 the Franciscan Conventual friar Paul Walther Guglingen visited the monastery and conveyed a graphic description:

In the same city, there are preachers and Minors, not reformed. The monastery of the Minors, the most miserable I have ever seen; they perform the divine office according to the Latins and the order of the Roman curia; [...] and I did not want to perform [mass] at the Minors due to the excessive misery, and there were no friars besides a young novice and a decrepit old man, who has scabies on the jaw, which has devoured his face up to the teeth.<sup>107</sup>

The Franciscan friar was obviously very disappointed by the monastery of Modon, which, at the time of his visit, was housing only two friars. Pietro Casola, the Italian pilgrim who visited Modon in 1494, shared the Franciscan's disappointment.<sup>108</sup>

In August 1500 the Ottomans occupied the town and that signalled the end of its Franciscan monastery.<sup>109</sup> Just over 20 years after the city's fall to the Ottomans, in 1521 the German nobleman Ottheinrich von der Pfalz attested to the monastery's destruction by the invaders.<sup>110</sup>

In sum, very little is known about the Franciscan monastery of Modon. According to documents of the period, it seems that the Dominicans operated

105 Pierre Barbatre (1480): '[...] les Cordeliers sont hors la cité; toutes povres églises [...]'. Pinzuti and Tucuo-Chala 1972–1973, 122. Felix Fabri (1480, 1483–1484): 'Transivimus etiam extra urbem, ubi fratres Minores parvum conventum (habent) [...]'. Hassler 1843–1849, vol. 3, 333–334.

106 '[...] l'evsque est a Modon et est Cordelier.' Pinzuti and Tucuo-Chala 1972–1973, 122.

107 'In eadem civitate sunt Predicatores et Minores, heu non reformati. Monasterium Minorum miserabilis, quam unquam vidi; ipsi faciunt divinum officium secundum Latinos et ordinem curie romane; [...] et nolui dicere ad Minores propter nimiam miseriam, et non erant fratres dempto uno parvulo novitio et uno valde decrepito, qui habuit morpheam in maxillis, que devoravit faciem suam usque ad dentes.' Sollweck 1892, 81.

108 '[...] benché in vero mon se li trovasse poi troppo concio de alloggiamenti per peregrini, comenzando al Venerabile Patre chi usciti de galea, andando al convento de Santo Francesco; et io el sequitai, cedendo de megliorare conditione, ma li fu de fare asai.' Paoletti 2001, 143.

109 Tsougarakis 2012, 137; Nanetti 2001, 349.

110 'Aber ein schone kirch Barfüsser ordens des rechten christlichen glaubens der heiligen christlichen kirchen zu Rom hat der Türk zerbrochen ein bolwerck oder mächtig vest darauf gemacht unndt die statt uffs aller vestes gebauwen.' Reichert 2005, 162.

mainly in Modon and the Franciscans in Coron.<sup>111</sup> The Franciscan monastery is sparsely mentioned in the travelogues. However, given the almost complete lack of information about it, the references to the monastery, albeit few in number, become valuable sources concerning the Franciscan presence in the town.

## 2.6 *The Dominican Monastery of St Mary*

The third Latin religious institution of Modon that was mentioned in the travelogues is the Dominican monastery of St Mary. The number and length of pilgrims' references to the Dominican monastery, in comparison to the ones concerning the cathedral of the town, are significantly smaller. Nevertheless, and given the fact that it is no longer extant and few documents regarding it have survived, the information provided by the pilgrims can be particularly useful in reconstructing a part of its history.

The Dominicans became active in Modon around the end of the 13th century, according to the oldest testimonies of the monasteries of the province of Greece in 1277.<sup>112</sup> It has been suggested that the monastery of St Mary of Modon was founded after the permission given by the General Chapter of Trier in 1249 for the establishment of two new monasteries in the province.<sup>113</sup> In 1303 it appears for the first time in a listing of the order's establishments.<sup>114</sup> In 1323 and 1327 the Commune made donations of grain and money to the monastery, while another decision of the same period, by which the friars were granted a quantity of wood for their construction work, testifies that they were either expanding or repairing their monastery.<sup>115</sup> The church of the Dominican monastery, dedicated to St Mary, was a popular burial place for the locals. This church is referred to in two wills, dating to 1339 and 1358, as *ecclesia et conventus sancte Mariae de ordine Fratrum Predicatorum*, located within the walls of the town.<sup>116</sup> By the 15th century it seems to have resolved its financial problems, since it appears to have been contributing to the expenses of the province in 1487 and 1491.<sup>117</sup>

111 Hodgetts 1974, 390.

112 Hodgetts 1976, 390; Nanetti 2001, 347; Tsougarakis 2012, 174. The Dominican Order's province of Greece was founded by the first General Chapter of the Dominicans, held in Paris in 1228. In fact, the General Chapter of the Dominicans, more than those of any other order, concerned themselves with the province of Greece. See Tsougarakis 2012, 169, nn. 1–2.

113 Tsougarakis 2012, 174; Nanetti 2001, 348.

114 Nanetti 2001, 348.

115 Tsougarakis 2012, 174–175; Hodgetts 1976, 391.

116 Tsougarakis 2012, 174; Hodgetts 1976, 391; Nanetti 2001, 348.

117 Tsougarakis 2012, 175.

Ever since their settlement in Modon, the Dominican friars became a principle organ of charitable activities. They most probably organised and ran a hostel and a hospital in the city, since in 1323 they requested and received from the government a subsidy to cover the great expense of accommodating travellers.<sup>118</sup>

In August 1500 the Ottomans occupied the town and that marked the end of the monastery.<sup>119</sup> No traces of it have survived, so its architecture, size and even its exact location in the town cannot be determined. What can be deduced from written testimonies is that the monastery was built inside the city walls and was a relatively small complex, obviously because of the constricted space in the walled part of Modon.<sup>120</sup> As attested by two travellers who visited it in 1470 and 1474, the monastery suffered damage after an Ottoman attack before 1470.<sup>121</sup>

In 1384 the Florentine nobleman Lionardo Frescobaldi visited Modon and witnessed the burial of a priest fellow traveller at the church of the monastery: 'And here our priest from Casentino died, who, as we disembarked and put him on the ground, left this life [...] We buried him at the said castle in a church of the order of St Dominic which is there.'<sup>122</sup>

The German pilgrim Gaudenz von Kirchberg, who visited the monastery in 1470, provided some further information: according to his description, there were no more than four friars living at the monastery at the time of his visit, while its buildings were in a very bad condition due to an Ottoman attack. Other than that, which was commonly conveyed by most of the pilgrims, he refers to an 'icon of the Virgin holding the Christ Child painted by the Evangelist Luke, very beautiful to look at'.<sup>123</sup> There is no other attestation to the existence of

118 Hodgetts 1976, 379–380.

119 Tsougarakis 2012, 175; Nanetti 2001, 348.

120 Tsougarakis 2012, 174; Hodgetts 1976, 391; Nanetti 2001, 348. About the architecture of the churches of the mendicant orders, see Kitsiki-Panagopoulos 1979, 64–127.

121 Gaudenz von Kirchberg (1470) and Alessandro di Filippo Rinuccini (1474). Röhricht 1905, 109; Calami 1993, 53.

122 'E quivi morì il nostro prete di Casentino, il quale, come avemmo tratto di mare e posto in terra in sur uno stramazzo, passò di questa vita, che prima era stato parecchi di quasi in fine di morte. Facemolo seppellire nel detto castello a una chiesa dell'ordine di san Domenico, la quale v'è.' Lanza 1990a, 174.

123 'Also fueren wier von der galee und giengen in die stat, in sant Dominigencloster. Da pat wier herweg, die uns durch die minickh vergunt wart. Und warn die zeitt nit mer dan vier minickh in dem closter, wenn die Tirkhen dem closter seine zinß, rent und nutz gantz genomen haben und verhört höten, daz sich dieselben minichen mit dem almuesen hör-tighlichen betragen muesten. So kumbt es auch, das sich nit wol zwen minich in dem closter nören khinden. Und in demselben closter ist ain dafel, daran ist Unser Lieben

such an icon in Modon; thus his mention, if one accepts its accuracy, becomes of significant importance.

In 1474 Alessandro di Filippo Rinuccini was even more descriptive: as stated by the Italian traveller, four years after Gaudenz von Kirchberg's visit, the monastery was still in a dilapidated state and facing obvious financial problems. In addition, it seems that the Ottoman threat was growing and that the friars had been preparing for a possible siege, since they had turned the second cloister into a cistern, while the refectory was used as a granary.<sup>124</sup> After Rinuccini, five other pilgrims mention the Dominican house of Modon, in a period spanning from 1481 to 1495.

The last mention of the monastery, by Wolfgang Zillenhart (1495) just five years before its probable destruction by the Ottomans, contains very important information in regard to the monastery's status in the town. The German traveller mentions that the Virgin was highly venerated by the friars in the monastery. He also refers to a procession that was carried out by the monastery's friars during an outbreak of the plague, when the Virgin saved the town.<sup>125</sup> This information, while not clearly mentioning an icon, when combined with the testimony of Gaudenz von Kirchberg (1470) about a Lucan icon kept and venerated in the monastery could imply not only the icon's existence, but also its procession in the town and its fame among the inhabitants, since it was considered to have saved them from the plague.

Oddly enough, the Lucan icon mentioned by Gaudenz von Kirchberg does not appear in other travelogues or documents of the period. It could be assumed that the said icon was housed in the priory for a period of time, maybe on its way to Venice or another town of the West. On the other hand, his attestation could be indicative of the existence of a Marian cult in Modon that has been forgotten or overlooked since the priory's destruction.

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Frawen pildnus gemald, das hat Unser Herren pildnus in der schoß, die hat sant Lucaß gemald und ist aus der massen lieblich anzusehen.' Röhricht 1905, 109.

124 '[...] andai alla chiesa di Sancta Maria dove è il convento de'frati nostri, dai quali fui ricevuto con charità, secondo il modo de' conventuali et secondo la povertà del convento, il quale, oltre a non essere molto grande in circuito, anchora quello che è era assai impedito, imperoché dove già soleva essere il secondo chiostro de' frati, oggi discoperto tutto intorno s'è ridotto a essere citera, la quale è murata in mezzo et è molto grande et si tiene serrata a chiave pel comune per munitione a tempo di sospetto. Il refectorio è ridotto a essere granaio et ripieno di grano sta serrato con due chiavi di comune, riservandolo per munitione a tempo di sospetto.' Calamai 1993, 53.

125 '[...] das ander ligt in der statt, und ist brediger orden, haist zu unser frawen, und ist unser fraw gnedig da, wann sy hatt die statt ain mal von der pestilentz geledigget, gieng man mit ainer procession, da hort sy von stund auff, auch hett sy zecher auss den agen lasen fliesen, daß es ieder mann gesechen hett.' Gebele 1932–1933, 82.

The question that arises from the aforementioned is why would the existence of such an important effigy as a Lucan icon, mentioned in only one travelogue, not be propagated by such agents as the town's clergy or authorities? It could be suggested that Gaudenz von Kirchberg, as a pilgrim seeking objects or relics that could constitute a link with his final destination, Jerusalem, invested an icon with properties corresponding to his own desires or expectations. On the other hand, and given that so few documents concerning the Dominican monastery have survived, his attestation could be conveying a popular notion of the period that was forgotten through the course of time. Anyhow, Zillenhart's testimony a quarter of a century later seems to corroborate Gaudenz von Kirchberg's writings, although not directly mentioning a Lucan icon. Of course, this does not explain the silence of other pilgrims concerning it, but one should bear in mind the subjectivity of a narrative (the attribution of the famous icon of the Virgin Kassopitra to St Luke is also attested by only one pilgrim), as well as the fact that the town's cathedral kept and venerated the relic of a pilgrim saint, whose fame had surpassed its regional character and was included in the *Santa Parola*, thus attracting most of the pilgrims' attention. As far as the other agents who could have promoted the existence of a Marian effigy are concerned, neither was the cult of the town's most celebrated relic of St Leo promulgated by anyone other than the pilgrims. While this question remains to be answered, Gaudenz von Kirchberg's testimony could allow the insertion of the town's Dominican monastery into the network of Marian cult sites on the route to Jerusalem and at the same time points to the importance of pilgrims' narratives in raising aspects of religious life that would have otherwise gone unnoticed.

The amount and value of information conveyed by pilgrims' narratives concerning the Dominican monastery of Modon, despite the relatively small number and the limited length of their references to it, is of significant importance. They provide details about its buildings and the friars living in them in different periods and they attest to the fact that it was active in the city up until the end of the 15th century, while they constitute the only written testimony of the possible existence and veneration of a Lucan icon in the town.

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Overall, Modon, as reflected in the travelogues, stands out as an important port of call on the sea route to the Holy Land, offering a safe harbour and amenities for the travellers, as well as markets both in the town and in the *borgo*, where traders and crew could carry out their commercial transactions. Nevertheless, and beyond the importance of the port for all those practical reasons, the

town offered the religious travellers the opportunity to prostrate to and ask the protection of St Leo, a pious figure who, albeit unimportant in the saintly hierarchy, was closely connected to them through their shared experience of pilgrimage. So, despite the fact that it lacked impressive and elaborate churches and monasteries – a fact pointed out in many travelogues – Modon appears to have been fully integrated into the pilgrim's sacred topography as the town housing the body of a pilgrim saint.

St Leo's relic was obviously known to travellers from their marine experience, also being described in the *Santa Parola* litany, but, undeniably, the fame and extent of the diffusion of his cult among the religious travellers was due to their common experience, pilgrimage. It was the pilgrims who frequented Modon's port who propagated its fame and elevated it to an international level. As far as the other agents who could promote the cult and would benefit from its propagation, that is, the town's authorities, both religious and secular, they do not seem to have put much effort into it. In the end, Modon was in any case an important port, for commercial as well as strategic purposes, thus it was a stopping point for most of the ships travelling from the West to the East and vice versa. In a town that was under the constant threat of the Ottomans, retaining the port under their control, as well as not compromising the fragile social equilibrium, was vital for the local authorities, who appear to have remained orientated towards those goals. On the other hand, the saint's status as a pilgrim seems to have ascribed significant validity to his cult and seems to have been enough of a reason for it to be integrated into the pilgrims' itinerary to the Holy Land, rendering the town an important destination for religious travellers.

The case of Modon is indicative of the value of the information conveyed in pilgrims' narratives. If it had not been for the number of mentions to the saint's relic in the travelogues, the importance of the cult of St Leo would have not been perceived to its actual extent. The town's cathedral and the relic of St Leo could serve as an example of the way in which pilgrims actually contributed to the making of a sacred site by their persistence in visiting and referring to it continuously over two centuries, while their narratives, hundreds of years later, bring to light a long forgotten cult that was obviously very strong in its day.

## The Island of Crete and the Town of Candia

[...] leaving behind us the Ionian Sea, we sail through the Aegean. To our right, we see the island of Crete, towards which our ship is travelling, directed to the town of Candia, which we can discern from afar.<sup>1</sup>



### 1 Fraskia

Having sailed through the Ionian and along the coasts of the Peloponnese, pilgrims' galleys arrived at the island of Crete and the town of Candia. Although it was one of the most important trading centres in the Mediterranean and a necessary stop on the route leading to the East, the port of Candia, an artificial harbour built by the Venetians, was not always easy to enter. Quite often, mainly because of opposing winds, the ships heading towards the town docked at the safe anchorage of the neighbouring Bay of Fraskia or at the island of Dia (Standia) (Fig. 57).<sup>2</sup>

The Bay of Fraskia, a natural harbour west of Candia, was quite often used by the ships travelling to the city. It is mentioned as a *portus*, a natural haven, in 1217, while it is characterised as a safe anchorage in nautical charts and portolans.<sup>3</sup> The site must have been an important navigational landmark,

1 Louis de Rochechouart (1461): '[...] relicto mari Jovio, navigamus per pelagus Egenum. Ad dextram, vidimus de prope insulam Cretam, ad quam recto calle direximus navem ad civitatem Candidam, vulgariter Candie, que a longe apparet.' Couderc 1893, 233.

2 As can be deduced from the travelogues, many ships docked primarily at Standia; thus the small island appears in the pilgrims' narratives more often than the harbour of Fraskia. Milliaduse d'Este (1440–1441) refers to the small island: 'Et ad ore 24 fossimo sopra la Standia, la quale è una isoletta che è dreto Candia, et è luntana da Candia miglia 12, e via al nostro camino, passiamo Candia [...].' Rossebastiano and Fenoglio 2005, 60. In 1492 Giovanni di Antonio da Uzzano mentions docking at Standia: '[...] Santo Eirini alla Città di Candia, ch' è nell' isola di Creti, à 80 miglia per mezzo giorno verso scilocco, e in quèlla via troverai presso una isola, che à nome Estandia, ed è presso di Candia a 10 miglia per tramontana; e qui ha porto dalla faccia di verso mezzo giorno.' Pagnini dal Ventura 1765–1766, 239.

3 Gertwagen 2000a, 195; Georgopoulou 2013, 137–138.





FIGURE 57 The Bay of Carteros and the island of Standia, 1618, manuscript map after F. Basilicata

providing a safe docking point, as well as guarding the approach to Candia. In the 16th century the fort of Palaiokastro was built on the spot (Fig. 58).<sup>4</sup> In the same bay, at an inlet in the peninsula, stood a Greek monastery and its church dedicated to the Virgin, Santa Maria della Fraskia.<sup>5</sup> The site's importance for the ships travelling in the area and their crew is also attested by its integration into the holy topography of sailing, the 'holy portolano' described in the *Santa Parola* litany: *Die n'ai'e Santa Maria della Fraschea di Candia*.<sup>6</sup>

A number of pilgrims mention stopping at Fraskia before conditions allowed them to enter the port of Candia.<sup>7</sup> References to this church appear

4 Georgopoulou 2013, 138.

5 Bacci 2004b, 233, n. 20; Georgopoulou 2013, 137–138. Count Alexander von Pfalz-Zweibrücken (1495–1496) writes: 'Achtzehn Meilen Wegs von Candia ist ein Kloster, genannt Unsere Liebe Fru von Fraskia, vongriechischen Mönchen, da unsereliebe Frau fast gnädig ist.' Karbach 1997, 58.

6 About the seafarers' prayer, the *Santa Parola*, see p. 12, n. 11 herein.

7 André Thevet (1549–1552): 'Le dixhuitieme de Iuillet nous arriuames en Fresque, qui est un port loin dix miles ou enuiron, de Candie. La nous prinmes terre pour prendre air, & recreation, laquelle nous estoit fort agreable & necessaire, pourautat que l'esprit apres tel



FIGURE 58 The Bay of Fraskia and the fort of Palaiokastro, 1618, manuscript map after F. Basilicata

in very few travelogues, as in the one of the German Count Alexander von Pfalz-Zweibrücken (1495–1496) and the narrative of the Italian Francesco Grassetto da Lonigo (1511).<sup>8</sup>

Along with Santa Maria della Fraskia, another church also marking a docking point on the western approach to Candia's harbour is evoked in the seafarers' prayer: Santa Vereconda di Candia.<sup>9</sup> The church has been identified as Santa Veneranda (Agia Paraskevi), a foundation on the Bay of Dermata that was likewise used as an anchorage for small ships, but it does

refreschissement est beaucoup plus esueille, mesme les vertuy naturelles estre refocilees par intermission moderee, sont plusfortes au labeur, quau parauant.' Thevet 1556, 34.

8 Count Alexander von Pfalz-Zweibrücken (1495–1496): 'Achtzehn Meilen Wegs von Candia ist ein Kloster, genannt Unsere Liebe Frau von Fraskia, von griechischen Mönchen, da unsere liebe Frau fast gnädig ist.' Karbach 1997, 58. Francesco Grassetto da Lonigo (1511): 'A hore x de notte da Retimo dipartimo, et a una hora ritrovamosi per mezzo Milopotimo, et a duo hore ala ponta de Tali, et a III a sancta Pelagia over Panagia apresso la Fraschia, dala quale vedevamo la famosa Creta, in porto de la qual al muolo sorti et ligati, scala in terra damo a hore xx.' Ceruti 1886, 19.

9 Bacci 2004b, 243.



FIGURE 59 The Bay of Dermata, 1618, manuscript map after F. Basilicata

not appear in any of the travelogues (Fig. 59).<sup>10</sup> Maria Georgopoulou has suggested that these two religious foundations could have had lights burning to indicate their location to approaching ships, functioning as ad hoc lighthouses.<sup>11</sup> The idea of a church in a small harbour functioning as a 'religious lighthouse' for ships sailing by brings to mind the church of the Virgin in Kassiopi and its perpetual oil lamp, the light of which was visible from outside as one approached.<sup>12</sup>

However, unlike the case of the church in Kassiopi, the churches of the Virgin in Fraskia and St Veneranda, the only two sites on the island of Crete evoked in the *Santa Parola*, rarely appear in the pilgrims' narratives. In fact, out of the five sites included in the *Santa Parola* within the geographical limits of this study (the aforementioned three, the Virgin of Strophades and St Leo of Modon), the two Cretan churches are the only ones that are practically omitted

10 Bacci 2004b, 233, n. 19; Georgopoulou 2013, 138–139.

11 Georgopoulou 2013, 139, n. 21.

12 'Von aussen sieht man ein kleines Lemplein, das Brenet ausswendig vorm Bild tag und nacht.' Geisheim 1858, 212.

in the travelogues. It is clear that all of the above were of particular significance to the sailors. However, the Cretan churches are both located *extra urbem*, at sites where few of the pilgrims could actually visit. In addition, unlike the other three sites, they were not invested with legends, nor had miraculous effigies to show. Thus, the pilgrims, anticipating their disembarkation at Candia, a celebrated city with a patron saint who was a disciple of the Apostle Paul, almost ignore them. The churches of the Virgin of Fraskia and St Veneranda obviously belong to the *peregrinagia maritima*, visited almost exclusively by mariners.<sup>13</sup> The reason for their initial insertion into the holy topography of sailors is quite obvious: they functioned as orientation points for navigation, leading the ships to a safe harbour protected from weather conditions. It is exactly this reason, inextricably connected to sailing, that could possibly explain their omission from the travelogues: while these sites had particular relevance to the sailors, the pilgrims sought and saw different things.<sup>14</sup>

## 2 The Town of Candia

Candia was inserted into the trading network of the Eastern Mediterranean after the arrival of the Venetians in 1211. Before that time, commercial ships used other ports of the Aegean islands, while docking at Crete was considered to be a deviation. However, during the time frame of this study, Candia was one of the most important Venetian commercial ports of the Mediterranean and a necessary stop for galleys travelling from the West to the East and vice versa, hence most of the pilgrims' galleys usually docked and remained for several days in the town.<sup>15</sup> The capital city of the island and its port were strongly fortified, and the first impression of it as seen from aboard seems to be more or less common for the pilgrims (Fig. 60). Jacques Le Saige, who visited Crete in 1518, expresses most eloquently what the majority of the voyagers thought about the town: 'On the ninth day of July, around dinner time, we arrived in

13 Such *peregrinaria maritima* looked mostly at rather anonymous chapels, small churches and hermitages that were invested with a special meaning only for those who saw them from the sea, because of their locations in eminent points along the coastline. Bacci 2017a, 133.

14 A theory expressed by Maria Georgopoulou, who continues: 'This observation confirms the existence of two distinct types of travellers: the sailors, crew and traders who took this voyage often and the pilgrims for whom, like for modern tourists, the voyage was a novelty and a religious experience that was often recorded.' Georgopoulou 2013, 134.

15 About the port of Candia, see indicatively Gertwagen 1988; Gertwagen 2000a; Georgopoulou 2013, esp. 135–139.



FIGURE 60 View of Candia, 1486, woodcut

Candia. The town seemed beautiful from afar; and there were people saying that it could be one of the beautiful and strong cities of France.<sup>16</sup>

Most of the pilgrims visiting Candia mention its beauty and its strong fortification walls. Already at the beginning of the 14th century, the Irish Franciscan monk Symon Semeonis describes the strongly fortified beautiful town and its surrounding strong walls, adorned with towers.<sup>17</sup> Similar mentions to the town were made by the majority of the Western travellers visiting it.<sup>18</sup> The depictions of Candia in the *isolarii* of the period, as well as in some pilgrims' narratives, perhaps provide a quite accurate idea of the port and the town, with its impressive fortifications, the Franciscan and Dominican monasteries and the cathedral being visible from the ship (Fig. 61).

As in all the towns where the pilgrims stopped within the geographical frame of this survey, the awareness that they were visiting a Greek city of the former Byzantine Empire is obvious in their writings. The rich history of Candia from prehistoric times (known for its one hundred cities, King Minos, the labyrinth and the cave of Zeus) to its Christian past and relation to the Apostle Paul, as

16 'Ce neuvième jour de juillet ainssy que au disner arrivasmes audit Candie. Che nous sambloit merveille par dehors; et en y avoit qui volloient gaigier que c'estoit une des belles villes de France et forte.' Duthill 1851, 80.

17 '[...] civitatem muro fortissimo circumcinctam, turribus atque aliis bellicis apparatus decoratam [...] Que quamvis sit in aspectu navigantibus pulcra, karerias tamen habet vilas [...]': Esposito 1960, 42.

18 Giacomo da Verona (1335): '[...] civitas pulchra est et amena et omnibus deliciis plena.' Röhricht 1895, 175. Louis de Rochechouart (1461): '[...] Est pulcherima, bene murata; altissime domus et omnes lepide sunt. Ibi ecclesie multe Grecorum et Latinorum.' Couderc 1893, 234. French anonymous (1480): 'La cité est belle' et forte et non pas tant de beaucoup que Raguze. On la fortifie continuellement et est bien artillée.' Schefer 1882, 49. Felix Fabri (1480, 1483–1484): 'Civitas haec est magna et populosa et negotiatoribus plena de omni gente congregatis. Dependet autem ad clivum contra mare estque optime munita moenibus, turribus et muris et fossatis.' Hassler 1843–1849, vol. 3, 281.



FIGURE 61 View of Candia, c. 1487, manuscript illumination

well as the more recent events of the Venetians' arrival and even the resistance of the locals, are all recorded in detail in many of the travelogues.

Upon entering the port of Candia 'the most beautiful and well-fortified town',<sup>19</sup> voyagers came across a crowd of many ethnicities, commercial galleys, shops and warehouses and disembarked while the crew of their ships was already unloading merchandise. As some of the pilgrims describe, the arrival of their galleys in the port was occasionally greeted by the residents of Candia.<sup>20</sup>

Reaching the town, the pilgrims' first impression often shifted, as in the case of Jacques Le Saige (1518), who, after saying that the town looked beautiful from afar, adds that when entering it he realised that his first perception

19 Anonymous, *Le voyage de la sainte cyté de Hiérusalem* (1480): '[...] qui est le plus beau et mieulx fermé que je veis oneques'. Schefer 1882 (1970), 49.

20 Pietro Casola (1494): 'Non obstante fosse per tempo, erano tante persone de ogni fatione, sopra la ripa del porto, chi per vedere la galea, la qual era ornata de diverse bandere, chi per dare adiuto, che era una maraviglia de vedere.' Paoletti 2001, 148. An analogous reception of the galley he was travelling on is described by Jean Thenaud (1512), Schefer 1884, 164.

was erroneous.<sup>21</sup> Continuing, he describes a town devastated by an earthquake that left behind 7000 dead.<sup>22</sup> In fact, quite often in the narratives the town is described as ruined by earthquakes or infested by plague.<sup>23</sup>

The medieval town of Candia was a multicultural city, with a mixed population of Greeks and Latins, as well as a large community of Jews, who resided in the walled 'old town' and the *borgo*.<sup>24</sup> As a major commercial harbour and a necessary stop for galleys travelling to the East or the West, the town was large and wealthy, inhabited and frequented by people of many different ethnicities.<sup>25</sup>

According to the travelogues, Candia was beautiful and rich, very big in size, with wide streets and beautiful houses, although built in the 'Eastern way', with flat roofs.<sup>26</sup> Being a major commercial port, Candia offered facilities to travellers, traders and the crews of the various ships frequenting it. Provision was made for the accommodation of the pilgrims, who could reside at the mendicant monasteries of the town and the hospice of St Anthony.<sup>27</sup>

As the town was expanding outside the limits of the 'old' fortified city, a large number of houses, warehouses, commercial stores and, of course, churches and monasteries were built in the *borgo*. It was there that most of the pilgrims resided, where they could find taverns and where large markets were held.

21 '[...] mais quant fusmes dedens veismes bien le contraire'. Duthill 1851, 80.

22 Duthill 1851, 80.

23 Among others, the two French pilgrims Louis de Rochechouart (1461) and the anonymous writer of *Le voyage de la saincte cyté de Hiérusalem* (1480) mention the plague. Couderc 1893, 234; Schefer 1882, 49. Jean Thenaud (1512), Jacques Le Saige (1518), Nicolas Loupvent (1531) and Jodocus von Meggen (1580) describe the town as recovering from an earthquake. Schefer 1884, 165; Duthill 1851, 80; Bonnin 1976, 56; von Meggen 1580, 54.

24 Symon Semeonis (1322–1324): 'Inhabitatur enim Latinis, Grecis et Judeis perfidis, quibus preest dux civitatis qui Duci inclito Venetiarum subjacent.' Esposito 1960, 42.

25 Felix Fabri (1480, 1483–1484): '[...] magna et populosa et negotiatoribus plena de omni gente congregatis'. Hassler 1843–1849, vol. 3, 281.

26 Anonymous, *Le voyage de la saincte cyté de Hiérusalem* (1480): 'Toutes les maisons, tant de la ville, faulxbourgs que villaiges d'entour, sont haultes et de fortes pierres et sont toutes plates dessus comme une belle salle.' Schefer 1882 (1970), 50.

27 Wilhelm Tzewers (1477–1478): 'In Candia, ut patebi infra, hospitale hospicium peregrinorum est in bono alto situ et ameneo.' Hartmann 2004, 80. The Dominican friar Felix Fabri, despite the fact that during his first visit to Candia (1480) he did not find a lodging to his liking and ended up residing in a brothel run by Germans, refers to the hospice of St Anthony: 'In eodem suburbio est hospitale magnum S. Antonii, quod habet dormitorium cum multis cellis pro collocacione peregrinorum de Jerus alem venientium, in quo etiam aliquando hospitatus fui.' Hassler 1843–1849, vol. 3, 282. About the accommodation of pilgrims in Candia, see Georgopoulou 2013, 150–151.

Almost all of the Western travellers who visited Candia refer to its abundance of products, such as fruits, vegetables, cheese and its famous Malvasian wine.<sup>28</sup> Besides the wine and agricultural products, there seems to have been a market that specifically targeted the pilgrims; there one could find religious mementoes, such as images of the Virgin of various sizes, paternosters and small wooden crosses: 'In the town there are many carpenters who make cypress chests, small boxes to put corporals, rosaries and small crosses of cypress wood that the pilgrims buy.'<sup>29</sup>

As in the cases of the other Venetian-ruled towns within the former Greek-Byzantine territory, Candia remained in most of its aspects a Greek/Levantine city. As clearly stated in the travelogues, despite the fact that the Latins ruled the island, its inhabitants continued living and praising God in their own 'Greek way'.

In the late 15th century the Flemish diplomat Anselmo Adorno (1470–1471) reports that the island's population is mainly Greek.<sup>30</sup> At the beginning of the 17th century the French pilgrim Henry Castela attests to what was the norm, according to the Venetian policy towards its subjects in all the areas of the former Greek/Byzantine territories: 'The inhabitants of this island live the "Greek way"; in any case, the Venetians, who are its rulers, allow them to live freely.'<sup>31</sup>

The pilgrims, who were surprised and fascinated by their first encounter with an Orthodox population in the town of Corfu, now appear accustomed to it to a certain extent. By the time the galleys arrived in Candia, the different expressions of several aspects of religious life as conveyed in common ceremonies and litanies or even in religious buildings themselves – as in the

28 The French traveller Louis de Rochechouart (1461) writes: '[...] in multis commendatur hec civitas et primum in vina, et vix cum aqua pre nimia fortitudine temperantur. Veniunt mercatores a multis partibus mundi pro hiis vinis amendis.' Couderc 1893, 234.

29 Jean de Tournai (1488–1489): 'Dans la ville sont de nombreux menuisiers qui font des coffres de cyprès, des petites boîtes à mettre des corporaux, des chapelets et des petites croix de cyprès que les pèlerins achètent.' Péricard-Méa and Blanchet-Broekaert 2012, 167. See also Jacques Le Saige (1518): '[...] et il se fait aussy a ladite ville largement de belles ymaiges de nostre dame encloses de tableaux de Chipres, et des tables et des coffres grants et petits, et des fuseaux, des pater nostre et mesmes de bateaux, et nostre nave y avoit esté faite, qui estoit tout de chipres.' Duthill 1851, 82. A market targeting pilgrims is also attested by other pilgrims, for example Pietro Casola and Felix Fabri. About the icons produced and sold on Crete, see Vassilaki 2010; Newall 2016, esp. 129–132.

30 Anselmo Adorno (1470–1471): '[...] bene populata est, quorum major pars Greci sunt [...]. Heers and Groer 1978, 158.

31 'Les habitans de ceste isle vivent presque tous à la façon des Grecs; toutesfois les Venitiens, qui en sont Seigneurs, les laissent vivre en leur liberté.' Castela 1603, 478.



cases of double-rite churches – was not something entirely new to the eyes of Western travellers. However, this different reality continued to attract their attention; thus, descriptions of majestic ceremonies with the participation of both clergies, impromptu processions and ritual habits of the Orthodox still appear regularly in the travelogues. At the beginning of the 16th century the pilgrim Georg von Gaming (1507–1508) was amazed by the Good Friday procession. This litany took place every year with the participation of Latins and Orthodox.<sup>32</sup> In 1494 the Italian pilgrim Pietro Casola witnessed and vividly described an impromptu procession following a series of earthquakes.<sup>33</sup>

As in all the ports of call in the former Greek/Byzantine territory, the appearance of the Orthodox priests with their ‘peculiar’ habits, as well as local Byzantine-rooted rituals, attracted the attention of pilgrims. Many such descriptions survive in the travelogues in reference to the town of Candia, where several pilgrims attended and described Orthodox liturgies.<sup>34</sup> The anonymous author of *Le voyage de la sainte cité de Hiérusalem* (1480), Pierre Barbatre (1480) and Nicolas Loupvent (1531) appear to have been fascinated by the local rituals of death, while the latter two make interesting observations on the differences between Latin and Orthodox churches, noting that Greek churches may not be as majestic as the Latin ones, but are adorned with beautiful fresco decorations.<sup>35</sup>

32 About the Good Friday celebration and procession, see n. 191 below. Georg von Gaming describes it as follows: ‘Ante hunc verò diem, id est, in die Parasceves, vidimus quoddam tale spectaculum. Erant in comitatu trecenti ferè Latini pariter & Graeci, qui ante festa Paschae facem totùmque corpus velabant, solo dorso excepto. Hi per omnes plateas obeuntes, flagris acutissimis dorsa caedebant, adeo, ut per flagella, vestis tota caro ac platearum solum cruore manaret. Fertur verò quosdam inter eos fuisse, qui id genus flagellationis in recompensam passionis Christi spontè subirent. Majorem tamen partem fuisse dicunt eorum, qui idipsum pretio ab aliis conducti facerent & paterentur. Moris enim esse Senioribus terrae illius, ut, cùm ipsi aut prae senio, aut prae valetudine corpus suum acerbìus tractare non pravaient, alios, qui id loco eorum agant, subordinent. Itaque videas plures ephebos amore pecuniae corpus suum quasi truncatum aut statuam sine sensu saeviendo ferire, ictus sonare, saniem profluere ac omnia cruore soedari. Quid enim non mortalia pectora cogit auri sacra fames? Ad hoc spectaculum civitas tota effusa, adulti & pueri, mares ac foeminae per intervalla acclamitant; Latini quidem misericordia, misericordia, Graeci ἐλέησον, ἐλέησον, ingeminantes. Quae res commiserationis plena erat, ut namo, nisi ferrea habuisset pectora, se a lachrymis continere potuisset.’ Pez 1721, p. 164.

33 See n. 205 below.

34 See the description of Jacques Le Saige (1518): ‘C’est une chose merveilleuse des ceremonies qui font et dure plus trois fois que les messes de nostre pais; aussy ils ne dissent que les dimanches et les bons jours.’ Duthill 1851, 81.

35 French anonymous (1480) writes: ‘Et les Grecz ont une coustume que quant l’homme ou la femme est morte, il y a gens propres qui, ung an durant, vont ès maysons desdictz

The relations of the Latin rulers with their Greek subjects never cease to interest the pilgrims travelling through Greece, even more so in the case of Crete, since the apostle himself had written about the islanders: 'One of them, a prophet of their own, said, "Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, slothful bellies." This testimony is true.'<sup>36</sup> Those words of the apostle were of course well known to the pilgrims, who often repeated them when writing about Crete. In the travelogues this expression came to be added to the fact that 'the vast majority of them [Cretans] are heretics', negatively predisposing the Western visitors to Candia, while the German Dominican friar Felix Fabri (1480, 1483–1484) wrote about the animosity of locals towards the Latins.<sup>37</sup> However, when arriving on Crete many pilgrims formed an opinion of their own concerning the local Greek population, whom the majority of them came to like.<sup>38</sup>

As a former Byzantine capital, Candia had an Orthodox past that survived, among other ways, in its many churches. So, in the town the pilgrims could visit '[...] a great many beautiful big churches, both Orthodox and Latin'.<sup>39</sup> The map of the city of Candia, containing the names of the Latin and Orthodox churches of the town, made by the Swiss General Hans Rudolf Werdmüller right before its occupation by the Ottomans (1668–1669) is revealing (Fig. 62). It attests not only to the fact that the Orthodox institutions were more than three quarters of the total of 135 churches listed, but also demonstrates the large number of churches existing in the town.<sup>40</sup> Besides the town's cathedral, which was seized by the Latins along with the relics held in it, the new rulers

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Greez, tous les matins, faire de grans cris et lamentations en signe de deuil. Nous cuydions que ce fussent gens enragez qui cryassent ainsi.' Schefer 1882, 51–52. About the Orthodox churches, Pierre Barbatre attests: 'Nota que en toutes les eglises des Grecz ne y a quelque ymage de crucefix, Nostre Dame, saint ou sainte, sinon en paincture [...].' Pinzuti and Tucoo-Chala 1972–1973, 122. Nicolas Loupvent (1531) adds: 'Au reste se sont toutes esglises grecz, que sont en nombre plus de centz, mais ce nest pas grant chose a dire, voir au regart des esglises latines; mais a mon semblant, comme celuy qui a esté présent, ne sont point moïn décorée tant en dévotion comme en cérémonie.' Bonnin 1976, 56.

36 Titus 1:12–13.

37 Pietro Paolo de Rucellai (1500–1504): 'La maggior parte sono eretici.' Da Civezza 1879, 507. Felix Fabri (1480, 1483–1484), see n. 327 below.

38 Jean Thenaud (1512): 'Candie est une ville très policée; les habitants sont pleins de courtoisie; ils sont bien vêtus et portent des manches a commodo.' Schefer 1884, 167.

39 Nicolas Loupvent (1531): '[...] sont aincor en grant nombre de belles grandes esglises tant grecz que latine, comme la grande esglise cathédrale monseigneur saint Tite, deux belles esglises des Cordeliers, grandes et spacieuses, dont les ungz sont réformés et les autre non, les prédicateurs Carmes, Augustins sont tous latins'. Bonnin 1976, 56.

40 For the map, as well as the list with the names of the churches, see Gerola 1918; Georgopoulou 1994.



FIGURE 62 Map of Candia, after H.R. Werdmüller

built a number of churches in the town and the *borgo*. The ones standing out both in the urban space and in the travelogues were the mendicant monasteries and especially the majestic monastery of the Franciscans, imposing both in size and decoration. However, the Orthodox churches outnumbered the Latin ones to an extent that did not go unnoticed by the pilgrims: 'All the churches are Greek besides the ones of the mendicant orders and two or three more,'<sup>41</sup> said one, while 'In the town and its *borgo* there are at least one hundred churches, and it seems to me that only six or seven of them are not Greek.'<sup>42</sup>

41 Anonymous, *Le voyage de la sainte cité de Hiérusalem* (1480): 'Toutes les eglises sont grecques excepte les religions et deux ou trois autres.' Schefer 1882 (1970), 50.

42 Pierre Barbatre (1480): 'En la cité et dehors sont bien cent eglises et me semble qu'il n'en y a que VI ou VII que toutes ne soient grecques.' Pinzuo and Tucoo-Chala 1972–1973, 123.

As a result, and unlike the other ports of call within the area of this study, several Orthodox churches of Candia appear in the travelogues. The Orthodox cathedral, dedicated to St Mary of the Angels, as well as the monastery of St Catherine, a dependency of the famous Sinai monastery, two of the most prominent Orthodox establishments of Candia, appear sparsely in the pilgrims' narratives. On the other hand, two seemingly less important churches, the church of the Holy Cross and Santa Maria dei Miracoli, seem to stand out among the rest of the Greek religious institutions.

### 2.1 *The Hermitage of St Paul and the Church of the Holy Cross*

The small chapel dedicated to the Holy Cross, located on a mountain summit outside the town, amasses a significant number of references in the pilgrims' narratives. In fact, it is the third most mentioned site of Candia, appearing in the travelogues more times than the impressive Dominican monastery of the town. It was the place where, according to the legend, St Paul resided for a period of time, chased by the Cretans, and where he wrote his epistles to the island's patron saint: 'Also there preached Seint Paule the faith of Almyghti Crist and therfor thei saie there the Grekis drove him to a hille. And there hee wrote the Epistolis ad Titum. And there as hee wrote is a chapelle of Seint Crucis.'<sup>43</sup>

The island of Crete has been closely related to the apostle, since, according to the ecclesiastical tradition, it was visited by him twice: once during his transportation to Rome as a prisoner and once around 62 or 63 AD when, along with his disciple St Titus, he travelled there to preach the Gospel.<sup>44</sup> The southern coasts of the island, a grotto next to Kaloi Limenes and the seashore near the village of Agia Roumeli, as well as the small islet of Gavdos, are mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles in relation to Paul's first visit to Crete.<sup>45</sup> In particular, according to a popular legend, the saint disembarked at the seashore around the area of Kaloi Limenes, where he baptised the first Christians on Crete with the fresh water that ran through the beach gravel.<sup>46</sup> Around the 10th or 11th century the site of the apostle's disembarkation was marked by a small cruciform chapel.<sup>47</sup> Another chapel, this time on top of a mountain, marked

43 English anonymous (1480), Brefeld 1985, 153. The same information is conveyed by Jan Hasištejnsky in 1493 and Denis Possot in 1532. Strejček 1902, 32; Schefer 1890, 131.

44 Some scholars support that Paul visited Crete as early as 54 AD, while others place his visit to the island after the spring of 64 AD. Detorakis 1970, 21, n. 2.

45 Acts of the Apostles, 27:7–8, 12.

46 Nixon 2006, 62, n. 70.

47 The church of St Paul on the coast east of Agia Roumeli is a small cruciform building (6.50 × 8.30 m), accessible only on foot or by sea. It has been dated to the 10th or 11th century and is believed to have been founded by Ioannis Xenos. At some point, probably

the site of the saint's stay during his second visit to the island: the church of the Holy Cross. According to the tradition, the apostle resided for a period of time on a mountain summit, where he wrote several of his epistles. As transmitted by another popular legend, it was there that he was attacked by a snake, was liberated from it and subsequently freed the island from poisonous serpents. The Augustinian friar Giacomo da Verona, who visited Crete in 1335, refers to this legend when writing about the apostle's stay on the island.<sup>48</sup>

The apostle's passage via Crete and the legends concerning it seem to have been common knowledge for the pilgrims and hence were mentioned by many of them in their travelogues. The southern coast of Crete was difficult to explore and navigate: by the 13th and 14th centuries the route had become obsolete, and thus the aforementioned sites do not appear often; yet the church of the Holy Cross, on the other hand, has a constant presence in the pilgrims' narrations.

St Paul's short-term hermitage falls into a category of holy sites not yet encountered in the studied area, the 'extension of the Holy Land': sites and places connected to the apostles, visited by them during their frequent voyages around the Mediterranean.<sup>49</sup> As already mentioned in relation to the icon of the Virgin in Kassiope, as well as the rest of the Lucan icons, when apostolic connotations were attached to an icon, relic or site it was automatically elevated to a more worship-worthy item or place, an evangelic memorial that pilgrims appeared eager to approach.<sup>50</sup> Subsequently, and following the notion that the holiness of the land resided in its memorial meaning, the site that hosted the apostle himself became holy by extension.<sup>51</sup>

The popularity and resonance of this notion is directly reflected in the number of references in the pilgrims' travelogues to the church of the Holy Cross and the mountain where the apostle resided. Actually, a number of pilgrims refer to the site where Paul 'was chased by the Greeks' without mentioning the

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around 1300, it was decorated with frescoes, while by the 17th century the site appears to have been abandoned and used by pirates. See Nixon 2006, 62, 64–65; Georgopoulou 2013, 143–144.

48 'In illa insula Crete, est unus mons altissimus, qui videtur de mari multum longe, ubi Sanctus Paulus liberavit seipsum a serpente seu vipera vulneratum, ut legitur Actus, xxviii, cap. 6, et ibidem dicitur, ipsum dedisse illi, qui ipsum hospicio suscepit, gratiam contra serpentes et suis heredibus ex eis descendentibus, et vocatur ille mons Sancti Pauli [...]'. Röhrich 1895, 175. The same legend is transmitted by the Italian monk Francesco Suriano (1481–1484): 'In questa insula non se trova animale venenoso (exempto le fonine) che noze ad homo, per la benedictione che li diede San Paulo.' Golubovich 1900, 249.

49 Bacci 2017a, 132.

50 Bacci 2012, 148.

51 Bacci 2017a, 132.

church marking the spot.<sup>52</sup> While the site of the apostle's hermitage appears in the travelogues already from the beginning of the 14th century, the church of the Holy Cross was first mentioned at the beginning of the 15th century by the Florentine Cristoforo Buondelmonti.

According to the above, it becomes clear that the site was considered to be holy because of its connection to the apostle, and it was not the church, which could have been erected in a later period, that sanctified the area. This would explain the fact that, even after the construction of the church of the Holy Cross, several pilgrims omit to mention it when referring to the site of the apostle's retreat. The importance of such a site in the framework of the holy itinerary can also be attested by the fact that a number of pilgrims actually visited it, even though they had to walk for hours on rocky, uphill mountain paths.<sup>53</sup>

As it arises from the travelogues, at some point around the end of the 15th century the mountain where Paul resided was linked to the mountain where Zeus lived.<sup>54</sup> Long before it was linked to the apostle, the island of Crete had been connected to Zeus, the father of the ancient Greek gods. According to mythology, Zeus was born in a cave on Mt Dikti and raised in a cave on Mt Ida. Another cave, this time on Mt Youchtas, was considered to be his tomb. Reading the pilgrims' narratives, it becomes clear that the ancient history of Greece and its many myths were common knowledge. Indeed, very often while travelling through the area of this study, pilgrims refer to places recorded in classical literature. Therefore, the ancient myths connecting Zeus with the island were frequently mentioned in their travelogues. Among the many pilgrims who refer to Zeus, three connect the mountain where the ancient god lived to the

52 William Wey (1458, 1462): '[...] fugatus erat per Grecos [...]': Williams 1857, 57. From the pilgrims who refer to the site throughout the period of this study, almost half of them mention only the mountain top where the apostle, chased by the Cretans, ended up and not the church that existed there: Giacomo da Verona (1335), the writer of *Le voyage de la sainte cyté de Hiérusalem* (1480), Felix Fabri (1480, 1483–1484), Konrad Beck (1483), Peter Fassbender (1492–1493) and Count Alexander von Pfalz-Zweibrücken (1495–1496) all mention the mountain. Röhricht 1895, 175; Schefer 1882, 50; Hassler, 1843–1849, vol. 3, 280; Szegzárdi 1916, 69; Röhricht and Meisner, 1880, 252–253; Karbach 1997, 50. Jean de Tournai (1488), Denis Possot (1532) and Gabriel Giraudet (1555), besides the mountain, also mention a hermitage and the church. Péricard-Méa and Blanchet-Broekaert 2012, 168; Schefer 1890, 131; Giraudet 1583, 20.

53 According to their testimonies, the site was visited by Jacques Le Saige (1518), Nicolas Loupvent (1531) and Gabriel Giraudet (1555). Two of them, Jacques Le Saige and Nicolas Loupvent, describe their itinerary to the apostle's retreat in detail: Duthill 1851, 83–86; Bonnin 1976, 57–59; Giraudet 1583, 20

54 '[...] darauf ist Jupiter gessossen'. Gaudenz von Kirchberg (1470), Röhricht 1905, 123.

one where the apostle resided while on Crete. The first one to record this connection of St Paul's hermitage to Mt Ida is the German Dominican friar Felix Fabri (1480, 1483–1484).<sup>55</sup>

At this point, it should be noted that, when speaking about the church of the Holy Cross and the hermitage of the apostle, pilgrims mentioning them could be referring to three different sites: a summit on Mt Stroumboulas, west of Candia, Mt Youchtas, to its north, or Mt Ida, to its north-west. All three of these sites are mentioned by Cristoforo Buondelmonti, who visited the island at the beginning of the 15th century (1417–1420). Concerning Mt Stroumboulas, the Italian traveller wrote: 'Outside the said city, a mountain rises round to the sky, on the summit of which stands a church dedicated to the Holy Cross [...]; while he mentions two monasteries located in its foothills.<sup>56</sup> When writing about Mt Youchtas, Buondelmonti describes a church with three dedications: Christ the Saviour (*Ecclesiam Salvatoris*), All Saints (*Pantonaghion*) and St George.<sup>57</sup> Finally, referring to Mt Ida he mentions a hermitage and a small chapel dedicated to the Holy Cross.<sup>58</sup> All three of the churches mentioned by Buondelmonti still exist today, the two of them – on Mt Stroumboulas and Mt Ida – with the same dedication, the Holy Cross. In 1443 the church on Mt Youchtas acquired one more aisle and is today dedicated to the Deposition of the Holy Belt of the Virgin.<sup>59</sup> It becomes clear that, apart from the travelogues that mention the names of the mountain and church, and sometimes even in these cases, it is almost impossible to deduce with certainty to which of the three sites each pilgrim refers.

The summit of Mt Stroumboulas and the church of the Holy Cross, which remains a pilgrimage site to these days and has been linked to the apostle in

55 'Dicunt etiam in hunc montem Idon sanctum Paulum apostolum transfugisse, dum praedicaret ibi insula et quaereretur ad mortem.' Hassler 1843–1849, vol. 3, 280.

56 'Extra dictam Civitatem Mons in coelum rotundissimus in Celum erigitur, in cujus cacumine Crucem Sanctam Ecclesiam Magistri hedificavere, aqua circumcirca omnia cernis & tanquam filios alios sibi adherentes poteris appellare, de Monte paulatim fuit descensus Averni, in quo duo reperimus Monasteria [...]' Cornelio 1755, vol. 1, 95.

57 '[...] in nasum post frontis inquisitionem devenimus in quo tres congestas Ecclesias connumeramus; prima harum, quia in tali Monte principaliter Juppiter hic colebatur Ecclesiam Salvatoris hic hedificavere; secunda, quia per multos Deos Mundus regebatur Pantonaghion dicta fuit; Tertia quia Sceptrum Domini Cretensium antiquis temporibus per Ensem acquisierunt sco. Georgium sanctum stature, in quibus ad consolationem animarum nostrarum Missam celebravi [...]' Cornelio 1755, vol. 1, 97.

58 'Librum in supercilio Montis Yde heremita legebat dum prope Crucem Sanctam Ecclesiam non magnam sedebat [...]' Cornelio 1755, vol. 1, 104.

59 The other three chapels were dedicated at the time of Buondelmonti's visit to St George, All Saints and the Christ Saviour, while today they are dedicated respectively to Sts Anargyroi, the Holy Apostles and the Transfiguration of Jesus. Platakis 1970, 311.



FIGURE 63 The church of the Holy Cross on Mt Stroumboulas

a way that even affected the name by which it was known, would be ideal to identify as the site in question (Fig. 63).<sup>60</sup> However, the fact that several travellers, including Jacques Le Saige, who visited it in person, mention that on the same mountain one can see the cave where ‘Zeus resided’, makes this identification questionable.

The French Benedictine monk Nicolas Loupvent, who visited Crete in 1531, could be assumed to be referring to the Mt Stroumboulas, since he describes its characteristic pyramid shape (Fig. 64): ‘[...] on this mountain, on the summit, is erected a beautiful small and fine Greek church dedicated to the Holy Cross, having enough space for one hermit to reside (if he had something to eat), as well as a small cistern, the water of which is very good to drink [...]’.<sup>61</sup> At the end of the 16th century (1598), another pilgrim, Kristof Harant, also places the church of the Holy Cross at Mt Stroumboulas, since he mentions the neighbouring area of Almiros (*al armiro*).<sup>62</sup> The Czech nobleman refers to the mountain as Mt S. Pawel, while he describes a small church, two small buildings without roofs and a hermit residing at the site.<sup>63</sup>

In the following centuries several other travellers mention the small church on the summit of Mt Stroumboulas, attesting to its constant presence in the area. The site’s legendary relation to the apostle is also attested in the same

60 Mt Stroumboulas is referred to in several documents, as well as maps of the Venetian period, as *monte di San Paolo*. Platakis 1970, 306, nn. 32–33, 309, nn. 44–46.

61 The full text reads: ‘De la ville de Candie voyt on une haulte montaigne droict a meruelle, en mode de piramide distante dicelle environ x mil; en laquelle montaigne tout en la sommité dicelle est construite et érigée une belle petite et jolie esglise grec en lhonneur de sainte Croix, ayant habitation souffisant pour logier ung hermitte (sil avoit la quelque chose a grignoter), et yat une petite cisterne en icelle quest eaue très bonne a boire [...]’ Bonnin 1976, 57.

62 Harant 1608, 78.

63 Harant 1608, 78.





FIGURE 64 Mt Stroumboulas as seen from the Dominican monastery

documents that refer to Stroumboulas as Mt St Paul (*monte di San Paolo*), as well as in several maps of the Venetian period of the island.<sup>64</sup> The fame of the site and the habit of walking from the town of Candia to the church of the Holy Cross, a practice that has survived to these days, is attested as well in a report of the Captain and Proveditor of Chania, Filippo Pasqualigo, to the Venetian Senate that, among other matters, refers to a sailor named Lorenzo, who had made a vow to walk all the way up to the church on Mt Stroumboulas.<sup>65</sup>

The Venetian building of the church of the Holy Cross on Mt Stroumboulas is no longer extant, and no archaeological excavations have been carried out in the area in order to establish its exact location, form and architectural type. However, remnants of constructions roughly dated to the 14th or 15th centuries have been observed at the site, where today a modern small chapel with the same dedication stands.<sup>66</sup> The area is still accessible only on foot and continues to attract pious visitors.<sup>67</sup>

64 Platakis 1970, 306, nn. 32–33, 309, nn. 44–46.

65 '[...] occorre dopo, che uno di detti marinari, nominato Lorenzo, havendo (come disse) fatto voto di visitar il monte della Croce, procurò di far il viaggio a piedi'. Published in Platakis 1970, 305.

66 The site has not been thoroughly studied or excavated. The aforementioned information about the church's dating was provided by the Ephorate of Byzantine Antiquities of Heraklion.

67 Even today, the church can be accessed only on foot. A road leads to a point quite near the summit where the chapel is located, but a walk of almost an hour is still required in order to arrive at the site. However, many visitors choose to follow the same route the pilgrims did, and excursions from Heraklion are often organised. A public religious celebration

The church on the summit of Mt Youchtas is not clearly referred to by any pilgrim. The mountain, with its characteristic outline that looks like the face of a reposing man and according to the local tradition is the head of Zeus, was additionally linked to the Greek god by the cave located on its side, considered to contain his grave.

At the beginning of the 16th century, in 1518, Jacques Le Saige mentions visiting St Paul's hermitage and the church of the Holy Cross while in Candia. As described in his narrative, he left the town right after dinner, along with five of his companions and a hired local guide. They spent the night at a village on their way, arrived at the site early in the morning and were back in Candia by noon. If one accepts that the description of the itinerary of the French pilgrim is accurate, and given the distance and altitude of the summit, it would not be possible for him to have visited the church on Mt Ida in such a short period of time. It seems more probable, since he clearly states seeing the place where Zeus lived, that the company of pilgrims visited a spot on Mt Youchtas.<sup>68</sup>

However, the identification of the church still existing on Mt Youchtas, the one described by Buondelmonti, with the hermitage the French pilgrim describes seems rather improbable. By the 16th century the church in question had four aisles and, respectively, four dedications; however, none was to the Holy Cross (Figs 65a, 65b). On the other hand, the church visited and described by Jacques Le Saige was a poor, small building. It seems that the most plausible hypothesis is that either he and his companions visited a church on Mt Youchtas that has not survived to these days; or they went to the church of the Holy Cross on Mt Stroumboulas, assuming in this case that the travellers misunderstood the legend with the cave where Zeus used to live or that there was a now-lost tradition relating the mountain with the ancient Greek god.

Whatever the case may be, the French merchant conveys valuable information concerning the church of the Holy Cross. According to his narration, the chapel was very small and poor, and two Greek hermits resided there. He also appears to complain about the fact that there was no provision for the necessary liturgical objects for the performance of a Latin mass.<sup>69</sup> Continuing,

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takes place at the site twice a year, on 20 July and 14 September, and attracts a significant number of pious visitors.

68 '[...] ung petit lieu le devanture bien taillies et machonnee ou il y avoit des belles fenestres croysies [...] ou Jupiter se tenoit'. Duthill 1851, 85.

69 'Lhermitage est bien poure et se tient deux hermites; lung estoit prestre grecq et nont point d'aultre livre. Et se navoient point de hostie ne aultre chose propice a dire messe a nostre mode. Se fust nostre prestre trompes, car il n'avoit oses mengier.' Duthill 1851, 85. As already mentioned in the case of the church of the Virgin in Kassiopi, a great number of pilgrims report celebrating the, obviously Latin, mass in front of the icon. It seems that in the Corfiot church, the local community and clergy ensured that pious Western travellers had the permission and the necessary liturgical implements to perform their liturgies in



FIGURE 65a The church on Mt Youchtas, view from the east



FIGURE 65b The church on Mt Youchtas, view from the north

he offers the only, and thus very precious, pieces of information surviving in the travelogues concerning the interior of the church: 'There is nothing in this place besides two images of the Virgin and of saints painted on the walls, very old. I have not seen such in our country.'<sup>70</sup> Summing up, the church of the Holy Cross Jacques Le Saige describes was a single-cell chapel, in all probability Greek Orthodox, served by two hermits living on the spot. It was decorated with frescoes on the walls, obviously in the Byzantine manner, depicting the Virgin and portraits of saints, and was considered an important pilgrimage site by both the Greeks and the Latins.

Concerning the summit of Mt Ida, only one pilgrim makes a direct mention to it, relating it to the apostle: the German Dominican friar Felix Fabri (1480, 1483–1484), who mentions that 'They say that at this Mt Ida St Paul the Apostle had retreated.'<sup>71</sup> Over half a century later the Czech pilgrim Oldřich Prefát (1546–1547) refers to a small church on Mt Ida, without however stating its dedication.<sup>72</sup> The identification of the church mentioned by the pilgrims with the church of the same name on the highest summit of Mt Ida would be quite reasonable, given the connection of Mt Ida with Zeus (one can still visit the cave where according to the myth Zeus was raised) and the dedication of the church that according to Buondelmonti stood there since the beginning of the 15th century. Nevertheless, the fact that several pilgrims mention that the site was not far away from the town raises questions in regard to its

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it. Such a practice – the performance of liturgies of both rites in the same church, as seen also in other churches of Corfu, Modon and Crete – is probably the reason why it came as a surprise to the pilgrims that the necessary provisions were not made in the church of the Holy Cross as well.

70 'Il ny a audit lieu que deux ymaiges de nostre dame et des saints peinte contre les parois bien vieses. Je ne vis oncques de sy faite en nos pais.' Duthill 1851, 85.

71 See n. 55 above. In 1470 the German pilgrim Samuel Kiechel also mentions a mountain where Zeus lived and a church at the site where the apostle resided after being chased by the locals. However, it is not clear from his writing if those two sites are on the same mountain. Hassler 1866, 20.

72 The text reads: 'Od města pak asi pět mil vlaských, to jest míli českau, leží vysoký vrch velmi k západní straně města a neviděl jsem vyššího v tom ostrově ve všem; jest nahoře špičatý co homole a slove vlasky, jak mi pravili, Monte Ida; mám za to, že to ten vrch mons Ida, na kterým jest odchován Iupiter, o čemž poetové píší. Nyní na tom vrchu jest malá kaplice neb kostelík.' [Five miles to the west of the town of Candia, that is one Czech mile, there is a high hill; I have not seen a higher one on the island. The mountain is pointed and, as they told me, is called Mt Ida; I think it is the same Mt Ida where Zeus was brought up, the one about which poets write. Today on the mountain there is a small chapel or church.] Hrdina 1947 (2014), 79.

identification, due to its distance from Candia and the altitude of the summit where the church is built (2453 m).<sup>73</sup>

The small church standing today at the site, a single-aisled building, constructed with rocks from the area and without binding material is not the 15th-century chapel Buondelmonti described (Figs 66a, 66b). However, its size and form, as well as the surrounding rocky landscape, fit the pilgrims' descriptions. Due to its connection to Zeus, the mountain has been considered holy since the ancient period. The aforementioned, combined with the extremely evocative landscape, make the highest summit of the mountain an ideal 'holy site', although its altitude renders it hard to reach and thus to become a popular pilgrims' destination.<sup>74</sup> At this point, it should be mentioned that the French priest Nicolas Loupvent (1531), while stating that he went to 'a pyramid-shaped mountain near the town of Candia', thus considered to have



FIGURE 66a The climb to reach the church of the Holy Cross on Mt Ida

73 Count Alexander von Pfalz-Zweibrücken and Johann Ludwig von Nassau-Saarbrücken (1495–1496): 'Bei Candia'. *Karbach* 1997, 50. French anonymous (1480): 'près de Candie'. *Schefer* 1882, 52. Some of the pilgrims mention the church's distance from the town, but the divergence between their testimonies makes it difficult to rely on them. Nicolas Loupvent places it 10 miles away from Candia, Jan Hasištejnsky 5–6 miles, Gabriel Giraudet 2 leagues, Samuel Kiechel 10 miles. *Bonnin* 1976, 57; *Strejček* 1902, 32; *Giraudet* 1583, 20; *Hassler* 1866, 20.

74 Despite its high altitude and the fact that it is still accessible only on foot, the site continues to attract religious visitors, while every year on 14 September the Exaltation of the Holy Cross is celebrated at the small church.



FIGURE 66b The church of the Holy Cross on Mt Ida

been on Mt Stroumboulas, is the only one of the pilgrims who visited the site that could be placed on the summit of Mt Ida, since he describes an itinerary that lasted almost three days and an extremely difficult ascent to ‘the highest and most eminent place of the kingdom of Crete’.<sup>75</sup>

As far as the rest of the narratives mentioning the church of the Holy Cross are concerned, they refer to a small chapel on top of a mountain, not providing any further information that could help the identification of the spot, while two pilgrims, Peter Fassbender (1492–1493) and Jacques Le Saige (1518), write about a connection of the mountain with Zeus.<sup>76</sup> Some of the pilgrims, as they often do, mention the church’s distance from the town: they speak about 5 or 6 French miles, 2 French leagues or 10 German miles, thus excluding Mt Ida, at least in the first two cases and if one accepts their accuracy.<sup>77</sup> Two Swiss travelers of the 17th century, Johannes Habermacher and Wolfgang Stockman, who visited Crete in 1606, both place the church at ‘Mt St Paul’ (Mt Stroumboulas) and describe it as a small church, next to which was a small ‘open house’ (most probably the roofless building described by Kristof Harant in 1598) for the accommodation of the pilgrims. What is interesting in the Swiss pilgrims’ narratives is the fact that they both distinguish ‘Mt St Paul’ from Mt Ida.<sup>78</sup>

75 ‘[...] le plus hault lieu et éminent du réaume de Crète’. Bonnin 1976, 58.

76 Röhricht and Meisner 1880c, 252–253; Duthill 1851, 85.

77 See n. 73 above.

78 Schmid 1957b, 177; Schmid 1957c, 341.

It is clear from all the surviving descriptions of the site that there was nothing impressive or elaborate about the building or the decoration of the church. Furthermore, there does not seem to have been any special provision for the accommodation and the liturgical needs of the pilgrims who decided to visit it, facts that, combined with its location and altitude, forestalled its becoming an eminent pilgrimage site.<sup>79</sup> Hence, it appears that the site owed its holiness and fame to the apostolic connotations attached to it and the especially evocative surrounding landscape, as one can still see today in all three churches. Its uninterrupted presence in the travelogues and the fact that a number of travellers decided to undergo the hardship of walking to it could be used as an attestation of the site's importance and its fame among the pilgrims visiting Crete, leading to it surpassing its regional character and allowing its insertion into the network of the holy sites dotting the way to Jerusalem.

Summing up, given the persistence of the pilgrims on the church's dedication and unless there was a chapel dedicated to the Holy Cross on Mt Youchtas that is no longer extant, it would be plausible to assume that the narratives could be referring to two different sites: Mt Stroumboulas and Mt Ida. While the latter is by any means more imposing and has a long history of 'holiness' attached to it, both have the qualities of a prominent pilgrimage site, hence they continue to be treated as such to today. In the end, to whichever mountain the pilgrims were referring, the small chapel on a high rocky summit with a breath-taking view amplifying its sacredness and – most importantly – the site's relation to the apostle are reason enough to explain its constant presence in the travelogues and to render it as an important pilgrimage site for both Greeks and Latins.<sup>80</sup>

## 2.2 *The Church of Santa Maria dei Miracoli*

Around the end of the 15th century, more specifically in the year 1480, two French co-travellers, Pierre Barbatre and the anonymous author of *Le voyage de la sainte cyté de Hiérusalem*, write about a small Greek church and the miracles related to it:

Outside the town, in front of the gate, there is a small chapel dedicated to the Virgin; and it is known that five years ago the council of the town

79 In 1598 the Czech writer Kristof Harant refers to a roofless building standing at the site for the accommodation of the pilgrims. Harant 1608, 78. The same information is also conveyed about a decade later by the Swiss traveller Wolfgang Stockman (1606), who mentions an 'offen hus'. Schmid 1957b, 177; Schmid 1957c, 341.

80 Samuel Kiechel (1470): '[...] ein grose wallfart dohün geth von Grüechen unnd Ittalianern'. Hassler 1866, 443.

wanted to demolish the houses of the area to fortify and enhance the walls and the moats of the city; but when the time came to demolish the altar where the icon of the Virgin was placed, none of the people of the town, not even the builders, could nor damage nor destroy it, and it is now the most 'holy' place of the town. And many miracles are performed there such as: blind, deaf, mute and sick, and men fighting against the Turks are saved by their devotion to this church. There are canon priests there, who officiate and perform the canonical hours in Greek.<sup>81</sup>

The small church was mentioned again in four travelogues: the narration of the journey of Jean de Tournai (1488–1489) and the travelogues of Pietro Casola (1494), Jacques Le Saige (1518) and Denis Possot (1532).<sup>82</sup> As described by the pilgrims, the church, named as Santa Maria di Piazza (*Παναγία του Φόρου*), Santa Maria dei Miracoli or the Madonnina, became known when, during construction works for the reinforcement of the fortification of the town, the authorities tried to demolish it, but its demolition was miraculously prevented; and thereafter the Virgin 'rewarded' the town with a number of miracles.<sup>83</sup>

Located in the modern 1821 Street, during the Venetian period the church was right outside the city walls to the south, next to the Porta di Voltone. The two French 16th-century pilgrims refer to the church of the Virgin as an Orthodox institution, but the fact is that it appears in both the catalogues of

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- 81 Pierre Barbatre (1480): 'Au dehors devant la porte est une petite chappelle de Nostre Dame et est certain que depuis v ans on a voullu abatre toutes les maisons d'en pres comme a esté faict par le conseil des segnieurs pour fortiffier et croistre la muraille et fossés de la cité; maiz quant est venu pour abatre le lieu ou estoit l'autel sur lequel est une ymage de Nostre Dame en paincture, toulx ceulx de la ville, massons ne aultres n'ont peu mal faire ne abatre ledit lieu, maiz est de present le plus devot lieu de toute la cité. Et la ce font plusieurs miracles comme: aveugles, sours, muez, malades guaris, et gens en guerre sur les Turcqs salves par la devocion qu'ilz ont audit lieu. En ce lieu sont prebstrs chanoines lesquieulx font le service et dient les heures canoniales en grec.' Pinzuti and Tucoo-Chala 1972–1973, 123.
- 82 Pietro Casola (1494), see n. 85 below. Jacques Le Saige (1518): 'Après estés la une espasse allasmes a une eglise hors de la porte sur soleil de midy; elle est en lhonneur de nostre dame laquelle fait pluseurs miracles. Et mesmes nous fut dict quon vollut abatre une fois pour faire la les fossés pour fortifier la ville; mais on ne poeult. Nous y arrivasmes en ladite eglise ainssy que on commenchoit la messe en grecq.' Duthill 1851, 81. Denis Possot (1532): 'Toutes les eglises de Grecz en icelle isle ont esté destrucites excepté les religions et aulcunes qui sont près des villes du costé vers midy qui ont esté laissées pour la deffense de Candie et une chappelle de la Vierge Marie laquelle a esté miraculeusement deffendue, tellement qu'on ne la peult destruire, en laquelle par chascun jour, on dit les heures canoniales.' Schefer 1890, 129.
- 83 About the church of the Virgin, see Georgopoulou 2001, 174–175, 188–189; Starida 2016, 145; Gerola 1908, 157.



the Orthodox and the Latin churches. In particular, in the catalogue of the churches of the city of Candia of Vincenzo Maria Coronelli, it is characterised as a church that is 'half Latin and half Greek'.<sup>84</sup> The Italian pilgrim Pietro Casola corroborates this: 'Outside the gate leading to the *borgo* stands a beautiful church of the Virgin: it is governed by Greek priests, who are called calogeri; however, they also perform masses in Latin there.'<sup>85</sup>

The church appears in 1482 in the will of Donatus Grioni, while in 1499 it seems that Venetian noblemen were acting as its procurators.<sup>86</sup> However, a few years earlier, in 1492, the *Madonnina* was recorded as a Greek Orthodox institution.<sup>87</sup> A report of the Latin archbishop in 1625 stated that it had two altars, one for the Orthodox and one for the Latins.<sup>88</sup> Almost half a century before the archbishop, the French pilgrim Jean de Tournai (1488) attested to the existence of two altars in the small church of the *Madonnina*; more precisely, he witnessed a Greek priest performing the liturgy at the Orthodox altar, located behind the icon, while he mentions another Latin altar situated in front of it.<sup>89</sup> He is also the only pilgrim who attributes the miraculous icon of the Virgin to the Evangelist Luke.<sup>90</sup>

The location of the two altars in the church of the *Madonnina* as described by de Tournai brings to mind the arrangement proposed in 1627 by the Governor of Crete, Francesco Morosini, in regard to the church of the Saviour in Ierapetra in order for it to serve as a double-rite church. In the case of the latter, Morosini suggested the use of two altars, one for the Orthodox and one for the Latins, a scheme that according to his statement was known and applied in other churches of the island. In fact, he mentions a Latin church in the village of Kato Episkopi, where the Orthodox altar was located in its original place,

84 'Chiesa mezz'Italiana e mezza Greca'. Starida 2016, 146. The church of the *Madonnina* is included in a list of 1548 of Orthodox churches. Georgopoulou 2001, 188; Starida 2016, 146, n. 451.

85 'A l'uscire de la porta, che va in dicto borgo, egli una bella devotione de Nostra Dona: è governata per preti Greci, quali domandano loro calogeri; pur se li dicono ancora de le messe latine.' Paoletti 2001, 151–152.

86 Georgopoulou 2001, 188, n. 95.

87 Georgopoulou 2001, 188; Gerola 1918, 246.

88 Georgopoulou 2001, 188, n. 97; Panagiotakes 1987, 107.

89 'L'après-midi, je retournai à la chapelle Notre-Dame. Derrière l'image est un autel appartenant aux Grecs. Il y avait de la place et un Grec sonnait les vêpres. Je demandai au Cordelier qui gardait la place pourquoi il y avait deux autels l'un derrière l'autre, il me répondit que c'était à cause d'hérésies qui seraient trop longues à raconter.' Péricard-Méa and Blanchet-Broekaert 2012, 168.

90 'Je passai la porte au-delà du marché jusqu'à une petite chapelle où est un autel des latins avec une très belle image de Notre-Dame peinte par saint Luc. Nous tous, les pèlerins, y avons entendu la messe.' Péricard-Méa and Blanchet-Broekaert 2012, 167.

inside the bema and behind the templon, while the Latin one was placed right in front of it. The view to the Orthodox altar was blocked during the Latin liturgy by a large icon, which was moved when the liturgy was performed by the Orthodox priests, who used the lateral doors.<sup>91</sup> The governor's suggestion is accompanied by a drawing that shows the proposed arrangement.<sup>92</sup> Given that this plan concerned moving structures, the scheme cannot be archaeologically confirmed. However, the French pilgrim's description of two altars located 'one behind the other' could suggest the employment of an analogous arrangement in the church of the Madonnina during the 15th century.

The exact date of the construction of the church of the Virgin has not been determined with certainty. After its demolition in the 1960s and the excavation that followed, an underlying building of the second Byzantine period of the island came to light.<sup>93</sup> The Venetian Madonnina was a three-aisled basilica, with an elevated central nave that created a clerestory, pierced by five pointed arch windows (Fig. 67).<sup>94</sup> There were also pointed arch windows at the east end of the church. The aisles were separated by square piers, which supported round arches, while there was no apse to the east marking the sanctuary. The building was covered by a sloping timber roof.<sup>95</sup>

As already mentioned, the Madonnina was in all probability a double-rite church, with an Orthodox as well as a Latin altar to cover the needs of both confessional groups. After the end of the Venetian period of the town and its occupation by the Ottomans, the church was converted into a mosque, the Reishub Kuttub Hazi Hussein Efendi Cami (Fig. 68).<sup>96</sup> Later on, around 1898, it was used as a covered market, where the stalls were housed in the two lateral naves. The building was demolished in the 1960s.<sup>97</sup>

Although the Madonnina appears in only a few travelogues, pilgrims' references to it are quite detailed for such a small and seemingly unimportant monument. It becomes clear that around the time of the two French pilgrims' visit (1480), the legend of the small church and its miracle-working icon was

91 About the church of the Saviour at Ierapetra, see Papadaki 2009; Gratziou 2010, 168–172. About double-rite churches, their interior arrangement and the architectural solution developed for the use of one church by both rites, see Gratziou 2010 172–183.

92 The drawing of the interior arrangement proposed for the church of the Saviour in Ierapetra is published in Papadaki 2009, 239.

93 Starida 2016, 146; Georgopoulou 2001, 188.

94 Georgopoulou 2001, 174; Gerola 1908, 157.

95 Georgopoulou 2001, 174–175; Gerola 1908, 158.

96 Starida 2016, 146, 209; Georgopoulou 2001, 189; Gerola 1908, 157.

97 Georgopoulou 2001, 188–189; Gerola 1908, 158; Starida 2016, 146, 209.

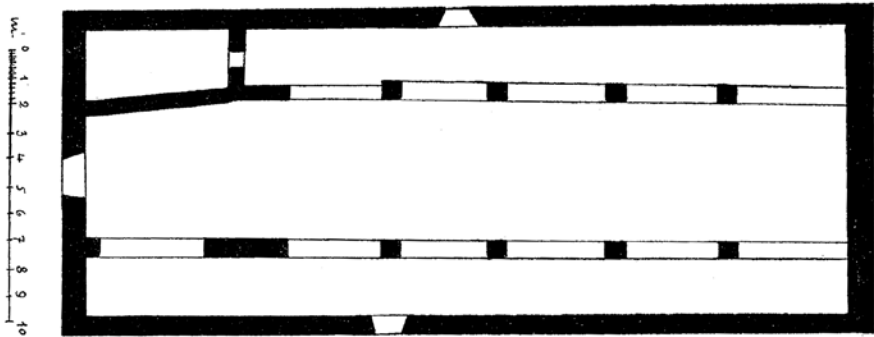


FIGURE 67 Plan of the church of Santa Maria dei Miracoli, Candia



FIGURE 68 The church of Santa Maria dei Miracoli, Candia, as a mosque, c. 1907

circulating in the city of Candia and was obviously transmitted to the foreign visitors. Thus, the fact that all the mentions to the church of the Madonnina appear in the late 15th century and the 16th reflects a certain increase in its fame during this period, related to the miracles performed by the Virgin as attested in the narratives. In this manner, the importance of the church of the Madonnina, as revealed by the travelogues referring to it, was amplified, since it arises as another Marian cult site of the town, venerated by Latins and Orthodox alike. The city of Candia showed a special devotion to the Mother of

God and was proud to possess several miraculous icons of the Virgin, including its most celebrated palladium of the Virgin Mesopanditissa.<sup>98</sup>

### 2.3 *The Church of St Titus, the Latin Cathedral of Candia*

As far as the Latin churches and monasteries of Candia are concerned, it is the town's cathedral and its renowned Franciscan monastery that amass the largest number of references in the travelogues. Apart from those, pilgrims also refer to the Dominican and Augustinian monasteries, while the Latin churches of St Mark and St Rocco are sparsely mentioned. In the *borgo* there was also a Benedictine establishment, a Servite monastery dedicated to St Paul and two hospitals with churches, the aforementioned hospice of St Anthony and St Maria of the Crusaders, which also appear sparsely in the travelogues. Unlike Modon and Corfu, Candia's Latin churches pleasantly surprised the Western visitors, since they seemed, aesthetically and architecturally, to approach forms and shapes familiar to Westerners. The cathedral, the mendicant monasteries and principally the church of St Francis were elaborate and impressive institutions that became poles of attraction for locals and visitors alike.

The cathedral of Candia, dedicated to the island's patron saint, St Titus, existed in the town prior to its occupation by the Venetians. It was located in the east of the main street (*ruga magistra*) leading from the port to the walls and the *borgo*, near the marketplace, the ducal palace and the square where later on the Venetian church of St Mark was erected (Fig. 69). Adjoining the church was the archbishop's palace, which was appropriated by the Venetians along with the cathedral for the use of the Latin archbishop.<sup>99</sup>

The cathedral's exact date of construction is uncertain, but it was most probably built soon after the moving of the island's capital from Gortyna to Chandax (present-day Heraklion) by the Emperor Nikephoros Phokas during the second Byzantine period of Crete.<sup>100</sup> Ever since its erection and until the town's occupation by the Ottomans in 1669, the church served as the cathedral of Byzantine Chandax and subsequently Venetian Candia.<sup>101</sup> It should be pointed out that, as supported by Maria Georgopoulou, the original dedication

98 Besides the Latin cathedral of the town, where Candia's palladium, the Lucan icon of the Virgin Mesopanditissa, was kept, all three conventual churches of the major monastic orders, the Franciscans, the Dominicans and the Augustinians of the town, are attested to have housed, at least at some point in their history, a Byzantine or Byzantine-style miraculous and/or Lucan icon of the Virgin.

99 Xanthoudides 1964, 24; Georgopoulou 2001, 109.

100 Kritsotaki 1995, 347; Georgopoulou 2001, 109; Xanthoudides 1964, 24; Andrianakis and Giapitsoglou 2012, 81.

101 Kritsotaki 1995, 347; Georgopoulou 2001, 109; Xanthoudides 1964, 24.



FIGURE 69 The church of St Titus, Heraklion

of the Orthodox cathedral of Chandax was not to St Titus, but to All Saints. Accordingly, the cathedral either had two dedications or was rededicated to St Titus following the translation of the saint's relics or after its appropriation by the Venetians.<sup>102</sup> As in most of the cases of Venice's occupied territories in Greece, following Candia's occupation the cathedral, along with the relics held in it, was seized by the new rulers and converted for the use of the Latins.

The actual form of the Byzantine cathedral has not been determined with certainty. Based on a depiction by Cristoforo Buondelmonti dated to 1429, Niki Kritsotaki proposed that the early 15th-century church, which in all probability was the Byzantine one, was a one-aisled basilica, while she considers the bell tower showing at the south-east corner to be an addition to the building after its appropriation by the Venetians.<sup>103</sup> It has been suggested that the church was destroyed and rebuilt in the first half of the 15th century as a three-aisled basilica, although there are no records of large-scale restoration works carried out during the Venetian period.<sup>104</sup>

<sup>102</sup> Georgopoulou 1994, 111; Georgopoulou 2001, 109.

<sup>103</sup> Kritsotaki 1995, 347.

<sup>104</sup> Kritsotaki 1995, 347–348; Gerola 1908, 41, n. 1; Georgopoulou 2001, 112; Georgopoulou 1995, 109. In fact, Maria Georgopoulou proposes that the rebuilt church of 1446 suggested by

In regard to the Latin cathedral's architectural plan and since the church standing today is a building of 1925, we can rely only on documents and depictions. Given its Byzantine origins, it would be quite safe to deduce that the building ended in a – probably vaulted – apse at the east.<sup>105</sup> Despite the lack of documentary evidence concerning a possible extensive reconstruction of the building after the town's occupation by the Venetians, it can be safely assumed that the appropriation of an Orthodox church by the Latins would lead to significant changes in the liturgical layout of its interior, mainly by creating new chapels and multiple altars.<sup>106</sup> According to the custom, wealthy patrons, dukes and archbishops were buried in the cathedral, thus new, elaborately decorated altars would have been added to the church.<sup>107</sup>

A 14th-century document indicating the existence of a dome could lead to the assumption that St Titus was a domed basilica: in 1350 Heregina Asoleis agreed an indenture to build a church that according to her wish should be adorned with a dome 'built the same way as the one of the church of St Titus'.<sup>108</sup> The building had its main entrance to the west, a large tripartite opening, as well as one to its south and one to its north side, leading to the archbishop's palace.<sup>109</sup> As can be deduced from written sources, in the 16th century the

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Giuseppe Gerola was actually a reconsecration of a new altar, created when the axial chapel was removed to house the tomb of Archbishop Fantinus Vallaresso. She also cites the part of the document that reads: 'consecratum fuit hoc altare in honorem'. Georgopoulou 2001, 112, n. 5.

- 105 The Byzantine origins of the church of St Titus are asserted by a document of 9 March 1670 by the former vicar of the Latin cathedral of Candia, Angelo Venier: 'La Chiesa preditta di S. Tito fu antichissima metropoli di Candia fabricata da Constantinopolitani et posseduta nel rito Greco per lungo tempo, pervenuta poi nel rito latino coll'aquisto del Regno da questa Serenissima Republica sotto l'anno 1204 senza mutar il titolo di essa chiesa.' Theochari 1961, 279; Georgopoulou 2001, 112. About the possible architecture of St Titus, see also Newall 2016, 116.
- 106 Maria Georgopoulou suggests, as a parallel of the gradual transformation of a uniform space divided in two by a templon into a series of private chapels surrounding the stalls of a choir, the cathedral of Negreponte. Georgopoulou 2001, 112, nn. 6–8. The aforementioned church has now been identified as the conventual church of the Dominicans of Chalkis. See MacKay 2006; Delinikolas and Vemi 2006.
- 107 Archival documents provide information about the chapels in the church of St Titus: three large chapels around the choir and four smaller ones at the north and south sides of the building were erected in the 15th century, while in 1467 there must have been at least eleven chapels in the cathedral. Franciscus Mudiano built a chapel dedicated to St Francis before 1463 and Leonardus Mazamano endowed a chapel in front of his family grave in 1473. Georgopoulou 2001, 113, n. 10; Kritsotaki 1995, 347; Panagiotakis 1984, 116.
- 108 Georgopoulou 2001, 113, n. 17.
- 109 A surviving description of 1662 of a ceremony that took place in the cathedral attests to the existence of the these entrances: 'entrando in stesso tempo in essa (la chiesa

central doorway was surmounted by a circular arch supported by lateral colonettes and topped by inscriptions.<sup>110</sup> The church also had a bell tower, as is clearly depicted in all views of Candia (see Figs 60, 61).<sup>111</sup>

Ever since its appropriation by the Venetians and until the end of the Venetian occupation of the island, St Titus remained the cathedral of Candia. During its Venetian history the church suffered damage from earthquakes, such as in 1508, while on 3 April 1544 it was almost destroyed by fire. After the occupation of the town by the Ottomans in 1669, the former Latin cathedral was turned into a mosque, the Vezir Cami. It was destroyed by the earthquake of 1856 and was rebuilt in 1925, when it was reconsecrated as an Orthodox church.<sup>112</sup>

The cathedral of Candia housed, at least since 1211, the relics of the island's patron saint, St Titus. The saint's cult, deeply rooted on Crete by the time of the Venetian's arrival, was appropriated by the new rulers and incorporated into the sacred hierarchy of Venetian Crete. Following their religious policy, the Venetian rulers of Candia used the local saint's cult as a link between the inhabitants of the Latin and Orthodox rites, but also as a sanctifying power of their authority. It is worth mentioning that the cult of St Titus and the veneration of his relic were never as strong and elaborate as during the period of the Venetian occupation of the island.

During the Venetian period the palladium of the city, the miraculous icon of the Virgin, known as 'Mesopanditissa', was kept in the cathedral.<sup>113</sup> The Byzantine icon of the Virgin, attributed to the Apostle Luke, was considered to be miracle-working and was probably the most venerated object in Candia. Soon after the occupation of the island, its cult was incorporated by the Venetians into their religious customs, and when the island succumbed to the

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cattedrale) tanto Monsignor Illustrissimo Arcivescovo per la porta cha passa nel cortile et corridoio arciepiscopalle, quanto li studetti Rapresentanti per le alter porte di detta chiesa ... Et doppo finita la funzione ... viene acompagniato detto detto Monsignor Illustrissimo Arcivescovo dalli Rapresentanti vicino alla porta suddeta del cortille dall quale poi si licenciano.' Kritsotaki 1995, 349; Georgopoulou 2001, 114, n. 22.

110 Georgopoulou 2001, 112.

111 The bell tower that in Buondelmonti's depiction of 1429 is placed at the southeast corner of the building is positioned at the southwest in later depictions (in the maps by Corner [1625] and Werdmüller [1668]). It could be assumed that it was moved to make way for several annexes built at the southeast side of the cathedral. The Venetian bell tower most probably served as the minaret of the mosque that succeeded the Latin cathedral and is believed to have been five storeys high, square in form and, by the 16th century, covered by a cupola. Kritsotaki 1995, 349; Georgopoulou 2001, 114–115, n. 23.

112 Kritsotaki 1995, 348–350; Georgopoulou 2001, 111–112; Detorakis 1970, 26–28; Xanthoudides 1964, 24, 58.

113 Georgopoulou 2001, 109; Andrianakis and Giapitsoglou 2012, 81.

Ottomans the icon was taken to Venice, where it is still celebrated in the church of Santa Maria della Salute.<sup>114</sup> Aside from the icon, and among other relics, the head of St Barbara, a crystal reliquary with the blood of Christ, the arm of St Ephraim and a piece of the tibia of St Sabbas were also kept in the cathedral, while relics of St Titus, St Martin, St Lucy and St Stephen were placed at the new altar erected above the tomb of Archbishop Fantinus Vallaresso in 1446.<sup>115</sup>

Pilgrims' narratives, as expected, often mention the Venetian cathedral. Most of the references to the church of St Titus are in relation to the saint's head, as well as the other relics kept and venerated in it. It is important to note that Crete, and by extension Candia's cathedral, had been invested with indulgences already from 1209 by Pope Innocent III.<sup>116</sup> However, oddly enough, the German Dominican friar Felix Fabri is the only one to mention it.<sup>117</sup>

As far as pilgrims' references are concerned, it is interesting to note that none of the travelogues that mention the cathedral, in a more or less detailed way, records all the aforementioned relics. The first reference to the church, made by the Irish Franciscan monk Symon Semeonis (1322–1324), is an indirect one, actually mentioning only the saint who Christianised the island.<sup>118</sup>

In 1435 Hans Lochner is the first to mention, other than the relic of St Titus, the head of St Barbara, also held and venerated in the cathedral.<sup>119</sup> Ulrich Brunner in 1470 enriches the catalogue of the relics held in the church of St Titus: 'the head of St Titus, disciple of the Apostle Paul who brought the island to the Christian faith; the head of St Barbara, queen of Cyprus, an arm of St Stephen, an arm of St Endris and an arm of St Blaise'.<sup>120</sup>

114 About the icon of the Virgin, see Theochari 1961, 270–282; Georgopoulou 2001, 217–223.

115 The altar was reconsecrated by Archbishop Fantinus Dandolus on 4 January 1446, the feast day of St Titus. Georgopoulou 1994, 112; Georgopoulou 2001, 113; Georgopoulou 2013, 145. About the inventory of the holy relics translated from the church of St Titus to Venice in 1669, see Gallo 1967, 125–127; Gerola 1903, esp. 259–260.

116 Georgopoulou 2001, 117; Xerouchakis 1933, 28; Tafel and Thomas 1856, 87–88. The letter of the pope, dated 27 February 1209, does not specifically mention the church of St Titus, but *Cretam* in general.

117 See n. 154 below.

118 See n. 149 below.

119 The full text reads: 'An heiligthümern fanden sich daselbst für das Interesse der frommen Pilger die Reliquien des auf der Insel geborenen heiligen Titus, de unmittelbaren Schülers des Apostels Paulus vor, sowie das haupt der heiligen Barbara, der Schutzheiligen der Konstbler und Bombarderie.' Geisheim 1858, 80.

120 'item zu Candia in der stat ist das haupt Titi, der do ist gewest eyn jünger sant Paulüs, und sanctus Paulüs hat die gantzenn inseln zu christenlichem glaubenn bracht. item do selbst ist das haupt sandt Barbera, der künigin von Cipern, item do selbst ist ein arm von sant Steffan un ein arm von sant Endris und ein arm von sant Blasius.' Röhricht 1906, 23–24.



As far as the actual building is concerned, no full descriptions of it survive in the travelogues. Generally, they simply mention the cathedral and its dedication to Crete's patron saint, as well as the relics held in it. Very few pilgrims provide details of the building. Wilhelm Tzewers in 1477 characterises the cathedral as small.<sup>121</sup> On the other hand, Pierre Barbatre, travelling in 1480, finds it to be a 'quite beautiful church', while the Netherlandish pilgrim Johannes Cotovicus, writing in 1598, seems to agree with the French traveller, referring to the 'very beautiful ancient cathedral of St Titus'.<sup>122</sup>

It is not an uncommon phenomenon for Western pilgrims to appear disappointed by the churches they visit in the Venetian-occupied towns of Greece. The Latins usually appropriated the already existing cathedral of each town and modified it to fit their liturgical habits, usually by adding new chapels and side altars. In the case of the cathedral of Candia, however, its appropriation by the Latins seems to have been architecturally expressed quite successfully, given the fact that Western travellers do not comment on it in the way they did for the cathedrals of the other Latin-ruled ports of Corfu and Modon.

The magnificence of Candia's cathedral is articulated in a 16th-century description of its interior: '[...] a large, tall structure with innumerable columns of various styles made of rare marble; it was adorned with the tombs and coats of arms of famous noblemen and with precious altars and chapels decorated in such a way that all these were an eternal ornament to the city.'<sup>123</sup> In addition, already from the 15th century and in particular during the incumbency of Archbishop Hieronymus Landus, an elaborate organ existed in the church, as well as a school of ecclesiastical polyphonic music.<sup>124</sup>

The church of St Titus was an important public monument of Venetian Candia for Latins and Orthodox alike. The duke attended mass there, while several dukes of Crete were buried in it. Housing the relics of the town's patron saint, as well as the highly venerated Lucan icon of the Virgin, it was a focal point for both the main religious communities of Candia. Common liturgies in honour of the relic of St Titus and his effigy were held in the cathedral, while the Greeks were allowed to venerate them following their rite and liturgical habits.<sup>125</sup> As in the case of Corfu's patron saint, St Arsenius, the Orthodox of Candia actively participated in the official veneration of St Titus. In fact, within

121 See n. 189 below.

122 Pierre Barbatre (1480): '[...] asses belle eglise et honneste'. Pinzuti and Tucoc-Chala 1972–1973, 123. Johannes Cotovicus (1598): 'Neque praetereunda est pulcherrimi & vetusti operis basilica Diuo Tito sacra.' Cotovicus 1619, 68.

123 Translation after Georgopoulou 2001, 113 and n. 16. The full text is also in Gerola 1908, 41.

124 Kritsotaki 1995, 348; Panagiotakis 1990, 14–17, 137.

125 See pp. 194–195 below.

the structure of the Venetian religious policy of retaining the fragile equilibrium between the local Orthodox population and the Latin Venetians, they were allowed to worship his relic in the church of St Titus and even, during its weekly procession, to carry it to the Orthodox cathedral, as well as other Greek churches of the town and *borgo*.<sup>126</sup>

The cathedral's importance for the town of Candia is also attested by the fact that in extraordinary circumstances state funds were channelled to the church: in 1320 a very significant income of the city, the toll tax (*padagium porte*), was given for a period of two years to the archbishop for restorations of the church.<sup>127</sup> Thus, the cathedral of St Titus very soon after its appropriation by the Venetians became the focal centre of most of the religious and secular events of Candia.<sup>128</sup>

### 2.3.1 The Relic of St Titus

The patron saint of Candia, St Titus, was a disciple of the Apostle Paul; hence much information about him derives from Paul's epistles.<sup>129</sup> The early sources concerning the saint do not mention his origins. It has been suggested that he was born in Corinth or Antioch, while the apostle refers to him with the general term 'Greek'.<sup>130</sup> Titus appears for the first time as a companion of Paul and Barnabas at the Apostolic Council of Jerusalem around 49 AD and then travelled with the apostle in Asia and Europe. The Apostle Paul refers to him as 'mine own son after the common faith' and brother, while entrusting him with the delicate task of restoring peace to the Corinthian Church.<sup>131</sup> Around 62 or 63 St Titus followed the apostle to Crete to preach the Gospel and was left there in order to organise the Cretan Church: 'For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee.'<sup>132</sup>

126 Papadaki 1995, 179.

127 Georgopoulou 2001, 116; Tsirpanlis 1985, 295.

128 *Laudi* and hymns to the *Serenissima*, the patriarch and the local authorities were sung in the cathedral at Easter and Christmas and on the feast days of St Mark and St Titus. The official ceremony of the *Laudi* had been established by Doge Pietro Ziani with the decree of September 1211 known as the *Concessio Crete*. Later on, *Laudi* were instituted on the day of the Epiphany, All Saints' Day and 10 May, in commemoration of Venice's victory over the rebels at the 'Revolt of St Titus' in 1363. Cornelio 1755, vol. 1, 31–33, 229, 258; Xerouchakis 1933, 28; Georgopoulou 2001, 118; Papadaki 1995, 76.

129 Specifically the second epistle to the Corinthians and the epistles to Timothy, Titus and the Galatians.

130 Detorakis 1970, 20; Galatians 2:3.

131 Titus 1:4. Detorakis 1970, 20; Halkin 1961, 322; BS 1969, col. 503.

132 Detorakis 1970, 21, n. 2. Titus 1:5; Detorakis 1970, 21; Halkin 1961, 322.

At some point after the 6th century a new, enriched *vita* of the saint appeared and created a whole new tradition concerning him.<sup>133</sup> According to it, Titus was a member of a prominent family of Crete and a descendent of the mythical King Minos. As a young man, he received a classical Greek education, until a voice urged him to travel to Jerusalem. Arriving in the Holy Land he became an eyewitness to the Passion and Resurrection of Christ and was converted to Christianity by the Apostle Peter.<sup>134</sup> Titus then became a disciple of the Apostle Paul, who, as already mentioned, entrusted him with the organisation of the Cretan Church. Many miracles were attributed to the saint during his lifetime, as well as after his death at the age of 94.<sup>135</sup>

The Western tradition concerning the saint that appeared in the 9th century also followed the aforementioned 6th-century *vita*. He was celebrated on 4 January, *natalis sancti Titi*, by the Catholics, while the Orthodox celebrated the day of his death, 25 August.<sup>136</sup> His feast day was one of the official public holidays of the town of Candia and was celebrated with pomp with a public veneration of the saint's relic, a liturgy and a procession with the participation of the town's authorities, the guilds and fraternities and representatives of both the Latin and Orthodox clergies.<sup>137</sup> As mentioned above, the Orthodox celebrated the saint on 25 August, but, due to the fact that the vine harvest took place during this summer month, many local synods of the Latin bishops were held and repeatedly moved the saint's feast day in order to ensure maximum participation in the celebrations. Thus, St Titus was feted, according to the respective synod decision, on 4 January, 4 May, 25 August and 2 October.<sup>138</sup> Eventually, following the proposal of Archbishop Hieronymus Landus at the synod of 1467, the celebration of the saint's feast was set on 2 October.<sup>139</sup>

133 The anonymous author, in an attempt to attach validity to his writings, attributed it to Zena, the jurist who worked with Titus for the organisation of the Cretan Church. Detorakis 1970, 22; *BS* 1969, col. 504.

134 Detorakis 1970, 22; Halkin 1961, 322–323; *BS* 1969, col. 504.

135 Hagiographical accounts refer to miracles performed by the saint at his tomb in the cathedral of Gortyna: 'Ο οὖν τίμιος τάφος αὐτοῦ θυσιαστήριον ὑπάρχει, ἐν ᾧ εἰσιν χειρόπεδα ἐν αἷς δεσμοῦσι τοῦ ἐπὶ πνευμάτων ἀκαθάρτων ἐνεργουμένου ἐν ᾧ καὶ ἰάσεως πάντες τυγχάνουσιν οἱ καταξιούμενοι τὴν κοίτην τοῦ ἁγίου περιπτύξασθαι.' Detorakis 1970, 22; Halkin 1961, 322–323; *BS* 1969, col. 504.

136 Detorakis 1970, 25; *BS* 1969, col. 504.

137 For the celebrations that took place on St Titus's feast day, see Georgopoulou 2001, 118; Xerouchakis 1933, 28; Papadaki 1995, 21, 70–71.

138 Detorakis 1970, 26; Xerouchakis 1933, 31.

139 Archbishop Fantinus Vallaresso suggested moving the saint's feast to 4 May, while Archbishop Fantinus Dandolus suggested 4 January, the day of the commemoration of the saint's death by the Catholic Church. With an edict issued on 26 December 1519 Duke

However, and despite the fame and veneration St Titus enjoyed in the capital city and its cathedral, his cult seems to have been localised in Candia. Besides the destroyed church at Gortyna, only one other church is known to have been dedicated to his name.<sup>140</sup> On the other hand, the saint was depicted in frescoes in churches around the island from as early as the 11th century, indicating an established cult already from the Byzantine period. The saint, following the Byzantine iconographic patterns, is depicted as an Orthodox bishop, holding in his left hand the Gospel and blessing with his right.<sup>141</sup> An icon of the late 16th century by the Candiot painter Georgios Clontzas depicting the saint as a Latin bishop could be used as another attestation of the fame he enjoyed among the Latins of the town.<sup>142</sup>

As mentioned above, the cult of St Titus was flourishing already from the Byzantine period and by the time the Venetians occupied Crete he was the most important figure in the local saintly hierarchy. In the 6th century a wooden-roofed basilica housing the saint's tomb was erected in the capital city of Gortyna and soon became a cultic attraction for pious Cretans throughout the first Byzantine period of Crete, until its occupation by the Arabs.<sup>143</sup> During the second Byzantine period of the island, when the capital was moved to the town of Candia, a new church was built in honour of the saint, and his relic was transferred and venerated there.<sup>144</sup> Thus, by the time of the Venetians' arrival, the cult of St Titus was strong and deeply rooted in the area.

After its translation to the cathedral of the new capital, St Titus's relic was placed at the central altar, where the pious could prostrate to it. Additionally, every year on the feast day of the saint it was displayed for public veneration.<sup>145</sup>

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Antonio Morosini determined the *feste comandate*, setting the day of the commemoration of St Titus as 2 October. Xerouchakis 1933, 21; Papadaki 1995, 25, 70.

140 From a total of more than 800 churches of Crete published by Giuseppe Gerola, only one is dedicated to St Titus. Gerola 1960, 90, no. 616; Detorakis 1970, 28.

141 Depictions of St Titus appear in at least four rural churches: St Euthymios, near Chromonastiri in Rethymnon, St Michael the Archangel at Kouneni, St Photini, near the monastery of Preveli, and Panagia Gouverniotissa in Potamies Pediados. See Georgopoulou 2001, 117 and n. 30.

142 Georgopoulou 2001, 117 and n. 37.

143 Detorakis 1970, 26; Georgopoulou 1995, 117; Georgopoulou 2013, 144–145. About the church of St Titus in Gortyna, see Di Vita 1985, 137–143, and Orlandos 1926, 301–328.

144 The reason for this partial translation of the saint's relics from Gortyna to Candia is not clear. Perhaps, as Maria Georgopoulou suggested, it was the result of a compromise between the two largest cities of the island. The actual date of the translation is also uncertain, but in 1211, when the Latin archbishop arrived in Candia, the head of St Titus was kept in the town's cathedral. Georgopoulou 2013, 144–145; Georgopoulou 1994, 111; Xanthoudides 1915, 318.

145 Georgopoulou 2001, 118; Papadaki 1995, 69–70.

No specific information has survived about the reliquary it was kept in, but there is no doubt that it would have been elaborate. A document of 24 February 1669, listing the relics transported from Candia's cathedral to Venice after the fall of Crete to the Ottomans, mentions that the saint's head was covered with silver, while also referring to a silver reliquary.<sup>146</sup>

Most of these facts, as testified by the documents, are corroborated by some pilgrims' narratives. In 1518 Jacques Le Saige reports seeing 'the saint's head entire', while the English priest Richard Torkington, who travelled during the years 1517–1518, wrote: 'I saw the hede of the seyde Titus Coverd wt sylver and golde.'<sup>147</sup> No other information is given by the pilgrims in regard to the saint's relic or reliquary. However, the Polish traveller Mikołaj Krzysztof Radziwiłł (1583–1584) describes the procession to the cathedral and the public veneration of the saintly relic, which was followed by a meal at the archbishop's palace.<sup>148</sup>

The first reference to St Titus's relic in pilgrims' narratives was made by the Irish Franciscan monk Symon Semeonis (1322–1324): 'They say that in this church is the body of Bishop Titus, disciple of Paul and patron saint of Crete, who is mentioned in Paul's epistles and the Acts of the Apostles.'<sup>149</sup> The sentence he uses to describe Candia's patron saint contains all the pieces of information pilgrims had about him and, amongst them, the most important detail: his relation to the apostle. It was through this connection that St Titus was elevated from a local saint to an important holy figure. All the pilgrims who refer to St Titus's relic after the Franciscan monk's first mention more or less convey the same information. The saint's personal experience of the Passion and his relationship to Paul, attested in the apostle's epistles, are underlined in the travelogues, since they connect the relic venerated in the cathedral of Candia to Jerusalem, allowing the evocation of the Holy Land.<sup>150</sup>

In broad lines, the pilgrims seem to have been well informed about St Titus. All of them mention that he was a disciple of the Apostle Paul, while most of them add that he was appointed bishop of Crete by him and that he is mentioned in the apostle's epistles. The fact that the saint's tomb was originally in the first Byzantine capital of the island, the town of Gortyna, is also mentioned

146 The inventory was published by Rodolfo Gallo, in Gallo 1967, pp 125–127.

147 '[...] le chief tout entier'. Duthill 1851, 83. Loftie 1884, 20.

148 'Inde itum est, cum Processione ad summum templum S.Titi; cuius venerandum caput integrum, magna ceremonia, spectandum populo proponebatur. Sumpto prandio salutauit Archiepiscopum.' Treter 1614, 20.

149 'In ipsa dicitur esse corpus beati Titi episcopi, Pauli discipuli et Cretensium patroni, de quo in Epistolis Pauli et Actibus Apostolorum mentio sepe habetur' Esposito 1960, 42.

150 About the strategies employed for the evocation of the Holy Land, see Bacci 2017a.

in the travelogues. Richard Torkington, the Englishman who described the saint's gilt head, actually visited Gortyna and attested that: 'In that londe, xxx myle from Candy, ys an old brokyn Citee whiche was callyd Cretina, And a lityll ther be syd stondyth an old Church which was byldyd in the honour of Jhu Criste And holowyd in the worshipe of Titus Epiis, to whome Seynt Poule wrott in Actibus Aptor ad Titum.'<sup>151</sup> In 1598 Johannes Cotovicus visited the cathedral of Candia and wrote about its most venerated saint: 'In it the body of St Titus, disciple of the Apostle Paul [...] is honourably kept under the main altar; and it is highly venerated by both Latins and Greeks.'<sup>152</sup>

In 1531 the French pilgrim Nicolas Loupvent provided even more information, linking the Cretan relic to the relic of Titus's sister, the virgin St Euphemia, kept and venerated in Rovinj, Croatia: '[...] The cathedral of the town is erected and constructed in the honour of St Titus, who was one of the 72 disciples of our Lord, brother of St Euphemia (whose body is at Rubigne [Rovinj] and we have already written about it) and disciple of the Apostle Paul, who often wrote epistles "ad tytum".'<sup>153</sup>

Oddly enough, the fact that the cathedral and the relics held in it were attributed indulgences already from 1209 does not seem to be known to the pilgrims. At least this is not mentioned by any of them, except the Dominican friar Felix Fabri (1480, 1483–1484). He mentions visiting the church of St Titus '[...] for the indulgences, as well as to see the holy relics: because this is what the pilgrims do in every place they visit; first and foremost [they] run into the churches for the indulgences.'<sup>154</sup>

Besides the obvious similarities to the cases of Corfu and Modon, Candia's patron saint presents a special, idiosyncratic case: the highly venerated saint

151 Loftie 1884, 20.

152 'In hac corpus Diui Titi, Pauli discipuli (qui primus in vrbe Gortyna, Cretae quondam regia, ab eodem constitutus Episcopus, Cretensem Ecclesiam rexit) sub arâ maxima conditum, honorifice asseruatur; estque in summâ apud omnes, & Latinos & Graecos, veneratione.' Cotovicus 1619, 68.

153 '[...] la cité métropolitaine et archiepiscopale est dict Candia. La grande esglise dicelle, érigée et construit en lhonneur de monseigneur saint Tite, qui fust lung des LXXXII disciples de Notre Seigneur, frère a madame sainte Eufemie (de laquelle corps gist a Rubigne, que nous avons devant dict), et disciple de monseigneur saint Paule, auquel souuente-foys escripvoit ses Espitres "ad tytum".' When visiting Rovigno (Rovinj) and St Euphemia's relic, Nicolas Loupvent also makes a reference to Candia and St Titus: '[...] on nous monstraict entièrement le corps de Madame sainte Eufémie, vierge et martyr, seure germaine a monseigneur saint Tite, disciple de saint Pol et patron de la grande esglise de Candie.' Bonnin 1976, 55, 37.

154 '[...] ingressi sumus ecclesiam S. Titi pro indulgentiis et ad videndum reliquias Sanctorum: sic enim in omni loco peregrini faciunt, quod primo et ultimo in ecclesias currunt pro indulgentiis.' Hassler 1843–1849, vol. 3, 287.

of Candia was known to Westerners already from the 9th century, while in 1209 Pope Innocent III promised the pilgrims who prostrated to his relic the same indulgences as the crusaders who went to Jerusalem, thus elevating the position of the saint within the hierarchy of the Latin church.<sup>155</sup> In addition, as Maria Georgopoulou aptly pointed out, St Titus's personal experience of the Passion of Christ and his special ties to Crete, as well as his Early Christian origin and the civic connotations of the continuing Byzantine tradition of his cult, made him a perfect symbol for the newly established Latin Church of Crete.<sup>156</sup> Especially after the particularly adroit handling of the 'Revolt of St Titus' in 1363, when the saint was used by both the rebels and the authorities as the divine protecting and leading figure, the Venetians elicited the saint's support in governing the island.<sup>157</sup> The Lauds service during the civic celebrations in Candia, after evoking Christ and praising God, the doge and the wise government of Venice, pleaded for the saint's help: *Sancte Tite tu nos adjuva*.<sup>158</sup> St Titus's relic became an integral part of the Venetian heritage of Crete and, following the island's occupation by the Ottomans in 1669, it was transferred to Venice. The relic of Crete's patron saint was kept at the basilica of San Marco and was displayed for veneration on the church's high altar every year on his feast day on 4 January, until it was returned to the church of St Titus in Heraklion in May 1966 (Fig. 70).<sup>159</sup>

Overall, St Titus is the undeniable protagonist in the pilgrims' narratives when it comes to Candia. During the period from the 14th to the 16th centuries, he is referred to almost as many times as St Leo of Modon and the monastery of the Virgin of Strophades. However, the number of mentions to the patron saint of Candia remains less than half than the ones to the church of the Virgin in Kassiopi.

155 Detorakis 1970, 25; *BS* 1969, col. 504. About the indulgences, see Georgopoulou 2001, 117; Xerouchakis 1933, 28; Tafel and Thomas 1856, 87–88.

156 Georgopoulou 2001, 116.

157 In 1363, because of the excessive taxation imposed by the *Serenissima*, the Venetian feudal lords of Crete allied with the local Byzantines and rose up against the Venetian government. Their banner declared the 'Republic of St Titus', highlighting the symbolic power of the cult on the inhabitants of the island. After the suppression of the revolt, the Venetian authorities instituted an annual procession starting from the church of St Titus, as well as a horse race (*palium*) on 10 May. Georgopoulou 2001, 119; Georgopoulou 2013, 145. About the rebellion, see McKee 1995, 173–204; Xerouchakis 1932. About the celebrations held for the commemoration of the suppression of the rebellion, see Papadaki 1995, 163–168, 171–174.

158 Georgopoulou 2001, 118; Xerouchakis 1933, 28.

159 Olivotti 1966.



FIGURE 70 The head of St Titus in the church of St Titus, Heraklion

### 2.3.2 The Icon of the Virgin Mesopanditissa

The icon of the Virgin, known as 'Mesopanditissa' or the 'Madonna of St Titus', was the most venerated holy object in Candia. The Byzantine icon, reportedly a portrait of the Virgin by the Evangelist Luke, depicts the Virgin of the Hodegetria type, flanked by two angels. Due to extensive overpainting, its date cannot be established based on a stylistic analysis. It is believed to have been a product of a Byzantine workshop of the 12th or 13th century (Fig. 71).<sup>160</sup>

The palladium of Candia was housed and venerated in the cathedral of the town already from the Byzantine period. In fact, its cult was so strong that it was almost immediately incorporated by the Venetians after the occupation of Candia and soon became the centrepiece of religious ceremonies. As in the case of the holy relic of the town's patron saint, the Venetian authorities

<sup>160</sup> Gerola 1908, 302; Theochari 1961, 271, 275; Georgopoulou 2001, 217.





FIGURE 71 The icon of the Virgin Mesopanditissa in Santa Maria della Salute, Venice

evoked the Virgin Mesopanditissa's support in governing the island. So, this icon also became an integral part of the colonial heritage of the Venetians and was shipped to Venice when the island fell to the Ottomans. The 'beautiful miraculous Virgin of St Titus', as mentioned in an inventory of 1669, was placed after its arrival in Venice on the high altar of the church of Santa Maria della Salute, where it remains until today (Fig. 72).<sup>161</sup>

The legend concerning Candia's most venerated icon follows a common topos in regard to miraculous icons, employed to enhance its antiquity and sacredness, that is, its Constantinopolitan origin and its transfer to Crete

<sup>161</sup> 'Beatissima Vergine miracolosa di San Tito'. Gerola 1908, 302; Gerola 1903, 246; Theochari 1961, 271; Georgopoulou 2001, 223; Papadaki 1995, 187.



FIGURE 72 The altar and the icon of the Virgin Mesopanditissa in Santa Maria della Salute, Venice

during iconoclasm.<sup>162</sup> However, the most interesting tradition related to it, which underlines its power and, most importantly, inextricably links it to the Venetians, legalising and justifying their authority on the island, is the one concerning its miraculous intervention that brought peace between the Venetian rulers and the Greek rebels in 1264. According to the account of the former vicar of Candia's cathedral, Angelo Venier, after a revolt in 1264 and following the submission of the Greeks, the latter, to ratify the peace, offered the icon to the island's new overlords. As attested by the chronicler Antonio Trivan,

<sup>162</sup> Theochari 1961, 271, 275.

the treaty between the Greeks and the Venetians was signed in front of the icon of the Virgin, which was afterwards carried in a procession around the town, followed by Greeks and Latins, laymen and members of the clergy.<sup>163</sup> According to the same tradition, it was then that the icon was attributed the epithet 'Mesopanditissa', translated in Venetian sources as *mediatrice*, mediator of peace.<sup>164</sup>

As mentioned above, the icon resided in the town's cathedral. Although its exact location in the church is unknown, it would be plausible to assume that Candia's most venerated, miracle-working icon was placed in an elaborate central chapel. A testament of 1501 refers to the altar of 'our lady Mesopanditissa which is inside the church of St Titus'.<sup>165</sup> It was there that, according to the tradition, the icon performed miracles. Surviving testimonies of the 16th century describe two miraculous healing interventions of the Virgin: in 1575 and in 1599 respectively, it enabled a 40-year-old woman and a Milanese soldier to walk again.<sup>166</sup> The chapel of the icon was decorated among other things with paintings. As attested in a document of 5 May 1573, the bishop of Siteia and Ierapetra commissioned two large paintings, one of the Nativity and one of the Coronation of the Virgin to adorn it.<sup>167</sup> The popularity of the icon among both Latins and Orthodox was reflected as well in the donations and ex-votos of the pious; it is known that in later centuries it was covered with a silver revetment and precious offerings. The icon's veneration followed Late Medieval practices: the pious would prostrate before it and make offerings of candles, donations and ex-votos, while a surviving description of the adoration of the icon by the Greeks provides very interesting details: 'There was always a group of Orientals who repeated the scenes in the Temple of Jerusalem and who,

163 Theochari 1961, 274, n. 13; Georgopoulou 2001, 218, n. 23.

164 The translation of the epithet 'Mesopanditissa' as mediator appears in the Venetian sources. However, Maria Theochari, who has studied the icon, does not accept this interpretation. Instead, she argues that the epithet refers to the location of the icon in the church, since in the Cretan dialect the adjective *μεσοπαντίτης* (*mesopanditis*) refers to the one living in the interior areas. Theochari 1961, 273; Georgopoulou 2001, 218; Papadaki 1995, 177; Xerouchakis 1933, 29. About the interpretation of the epithet 'Mesopanditissa', see Theochari 1961, 274–275.

165 '[...] altar de la nostra domina Mesopanditissa che est dentro la gexia de misser San Tito'. Georgopoulou 2001, 218, n. 22.

166 The miracles are described in two ducal letters to the doge, dated 26 October 1575 and 27 April 1599. The second miracle is also attested by the Archbishop of Crete, Tomaso Contarini. Both of the miracles were celebrated by a litany of the icon. Papadaki 1995, 185.

167 The paintings were the work of the Greek artist Markos Chalkiopoulos. Panagiotakis 1986, 24, n. 2.

during the big feast days, were not afraid to bring their beds to the altar of the Virgin Mary.<sup>168</sup>

However, the ultimate attestation of the icon's importance to the city of Candia and its rulers and inhabitants alike is the fact that it was carried in a procession every Tuesday. The weekly procession of the Mesopanditissa icon was one of the most important ceremonies of Venetian-ruled Candia.<sup>169</sup> The icon was also carried in procession during the celebration of Corpus Christi, while impromptu processions were carried out for such emergencies as earthquakes, famine, poor weather conditions and so on.

The fame and popularity the icon enjoyed in Candia both from Latins and Orthodox is not reflected by any means in the pilgrims' travelogues. Actually, there are no direct mentions to the Madonna of St Titus. Throughout the time frame of this study, two pilgrims refer to an icon of the Virgin painted by St Luke, which could thus be identified as the Virgin Mesopanditissa, but neither of them specifies its exact whereabouts.<sup>170</sup> It is also known that the Franciscans of Candia kept an icon of the Virgin attributed to the hand of the Evangelist in their conventual church, thus it cannot be determined to which icon each of the pilgrims was referring.<sup>171</sup>

If one accepts that the two pilgrims were referring to the Madonna of St Titus, those are the only mentions of the icon in the travelogues from the 14th to the 16th centuries. In the 17th century, however, two pilgrims, Wolfgang Stockman and Johannes Habermacher, clearly refer to the miraculous icon of the cathedral.<sup>172</sup> In particular, Stockman, who visited Candia in 1606, conveys important information about its cult and veneration in Venetian Candia. The Swiss traveller describes a procession of the icon from the cathedral to the Augustinian monastery, where another icon of the Virgin, originating from Rhodes, was kept. Additionally, he also attests to a miracle performed by the icon: after the supplication of the priests and the pious, it brought rain to the city.<sup>173</sup> Stockman's quite detailed description is indicative of the high rever-

168 Georgopoulou 2001, 223, n. 42.

169 Georgopoulou 2001, 221; Papadaki 1995, 179.

170 Jan Aerts (1481) and Hans Schürpff (1498). Nispen 1652, 152; Schmid 1957a, 8.

171 It should be noted that, as attested by only one pilgrim, the miraculous icon of the church of the Madonnina was also attributed to Luke. See n. 90 above.

172 While Wolfgang Stockman clearly refers to a miraculous icon of the Virgin kept in the cathedral and another icon originating from Rhodes, Johannes Habermacher seems to confuse the two images, identifying the icon kept in the church of St Titus as the Rhodian one. Schmid 1957c, 340–341; Schmid 1957b, 176–177.

173 Schmid 1957c, 340–341.

ence in which the icon was held by the inhabitants of Crete, both Latins and Greeks, and the way it was conveyed to a foreign visitor. The 'effectiveness' of the effigy is also eloquently expressed.

Apart from the documents and the travelogues that refer to the Madonna of St Titus, an interesting insight into its importance to the locals is also provided by the writings of a Cretan refugee in Venice. In his work *L'Occio*, Zuanne Papadopoli, a citizen of Candia who fled to Venice after its occupation by the Ottomans, describes his beloved town in detail. When writing about the town's Latin cathedral and although he dedicates quite a few paragraphs to it, Papadopoli makes no reference to any of the other relics kept in the church except for the icon and the phial containing the blood of Christ.<sup>174</sup> In fact, more than half of the description of the cathedral concerns the miraculous icon, its holiness and its intervention to bring peace to the town of Candia, where the Greek writer repeats the tradition of the attribution of the epithet 'Mesopanditissa', its weekly procession and its transfer to the church of Santa Maria della Salute in Venice.<sup>175</sup> This fact is indicative of the significance of the icon for the Greeks, since, aside from the cathedral's other relics, it seems to overshadow even the venerated relic of the town's patron saint, St Titus.

Summing up, as in the case of Candia's patron saint, the cult of the icon of the Virgin Mesopanditissa was very soon appropriated by the Venetians. The Byzantine icon, besides becoming Candia's most venerated cult object, placed the city in the network of Marian cult sites that dotted the sea route to the Holy Land.<sup>176</sup> In addition, it was used by Candia's new rulers as a sanctifying agent of their governance. It remained in the cathedral, where the Orthodox were allowed to worship it following their own traditions, while during its weekly procession it was carried to the Orthodox cathedral, as well as other Greek churches.<sup>177</sup> Similar to the relic of St Titus, the Lucan icon was employed as a unifying actor for Latins and Greeks, highly venerated by both in common elaborate religious ceremonies.<sup>178</sup>

174 Deligiannaki 2017, 66–68.

175 Deligiannaki 2017, 66–68.

176 About the Marian cult sites along the route to Jerusalem, see Bacci *et al.* 2017. About the Marian pilgrimage in Greece, see Moira and Mylonopoulos 2017.

177 Papadaki 1995, 179.

178 An analogous phenomenon on a much smaller scale can be seen in the town of Corfu in regard to the venerated icon of the Virgin Demosiana. There are also obvious similarities with the Venetian handling of the popularity of local saints, such as St Arsenius and St Spyridon on Corfu and St Leo in Modon.

### 2.3.3 Other Relics

Overshadowed by the relics of St Titus and the icon of the Virgin Mesopanditissa, a collection of several other holy relics was housed in the cathedral of Candia: among others, the head of St Barbara, the arms of St Ephraim and St Stephen, the relics of St Martin and St Lucy, the tibia of St Sabbas and a reliquary containing the blood of Christ.<sup>179</sup>

The relics of St Stephen, St Martin and St Lucy, along with the relic of St Titus, were placed at the new altar erected above the tomb of Archbishop Fantinus Vallaresso and were reconsecrated by Archbishop Fantinus Dandolus in 1446.<sup>180</sup> From this collection of other relics, translated to Venice in 1669 along with the rest of the possessions of the cathedral, only the arm of St Stephen is mentioned in the pilgrims' travelogues, by the German Ulrich Brunner in 1470.<sup>181</sup>

It has been suggested that the relic of St Stephen was translated to Crete from Constantinople after the reoccupation of the island by the Emperor Nikephoros Phokas in the 10th century.<sup>182</sup> The reliquary is today lost, but based on a 1627 transcription of the verses decorating its sides, Vitalien Laurent supported that it was commissioned by Vasileios Lekapenos, while Enrica Follieri identified its shape as similar to 10th-century Byzantine staurotheques.<sup>183</sup>

As far as the rest of the relics of the church of St Titus are concerned, it is the head of St Barbara that has a constant presence in the travelogues. Its first mention dates back to 1435, from the German Hans Lochner.<sup>184</sup>

The relics of St Barbara, which were exhibited for adoration along the way from Venice to the Holy Land, formed a special route of holy sites leading to the saint's tomb in old Cairo. In anticipation of their visit to her burial place, pilgrims could see and venerate her arm in Venice, her head in Candia and a column in Beirut, the purple veins of which were believed to have been created by the blood that ran from her at the time of her decapitation.<sup>185</sup> The martyr's head was covered with silver, while it bore a gilt bronze crown.<sup>186</sup> The relic was carried in a procession in which both clergies participated, on 4 December, the

179 Georgopoulou 2001, 113. About the inventory of the holy relics translated from the church of St Titus to Venice in 1669, see Gallo 1967, 125–127; Gerola 1903, esp. 259–260.

180 Georgopoulou 1994, 112; Georgopoulou 2001, 112; Georgopoulou 2013, 145; Gallo 1967, 125–127; Gerola 1903, esp. 259–260.

181 See n. 120 above.

182 Georgopoulou 2001, 113, n. 12; Follieri 1964, 455–464.

183 Follieri 1964, 455–464.

184 See n. 119 above.

185 Bacci 2017a, 138, n. 43.

186 After its translation to Venice, the head of St Barbara was given to the cathedral of Santa Maria Formosa. Gerola 1903, 12; Georgopoulou 2001, 113, n. 14; Gallo 1967, 125–127.

day of the commemoration of the saint. The presence of the Orthodox clergy was mandatory during the celebrations. According to the custom, the Greek priests would arrive at the cathedral on the morning of the saint's feast to follow the litany and pay the amount of one grosi to the church's archdeacon.<sup>187</sup>

As mentioned above, the relic of St Barbara was the only relic of Candia's cathedral other than the head of St Titus that was repeatedly referred to in the travelogues. Since its first mention in 1435, it has a constant presence in pilgrims' narratives. However, not all of the travellers appear willing to accept the identification of the saintly relic they see in Candia with the Egyptian saint. The thoughts of the German Dominican friar Felix Fabri on this subject articulate these doubts:

In the said church is the head of St Titus the Apostle, disciple of Paul and archbishop of Crete; and the arm of St Ephraim, an ancient Greek doctor; and the head of the virgin St Barbara. I believe that there were many more virgins named Barbara, as I saw many heads which were said to be of the virgin St Barbara.<sup>188</sup>

Wilhelm Tzewers (1477–1478) is the only pilgrim to refer to the one Christological relic kept in the Latin cathedral of Candia, a phial containing the blood of Christ.<sup>189</sup> Christological relics, reminders of Christ's passage on earth, were considered precious and were highly venerated. In Candia's cathedral the blood of Christ was kept in a crystal ampulla placed in a tabernacle, also of crystal.<sup>190</sup> During the celebrations for Good Friday and after the end of the Orthodox litany, the archbishop blessed the crowd that was gathered outside the cathedral with this reliquary, which he next carried into the church, where he placed it on a special altar and then blessed, one by one, all the state officials with it. The vicar, or another canon of St Titus, continued blessing the pious who gathered for this reason at the cathedral. This procedure usually

187 As in the case of other common litanies in Candia, the Orthodox were unwilling to participate in the procession of the relics of St Barbara and were threatened with the punishment of a fine in the event that they were absent from the celebrations. Papadaki 1995, 34.

188 'In illa ecclesia est caput S. Titi apostoli, Pauli discipuli et archiepiscopi Cretensis; et brachium S. Effrem, antiqui doctoris Graecorum; et caput S. Barbarae virginis. Credo plures virgines fuisse hujus nominis Barbara, quia plura vidi capita, quae dicuntur S. Barbarae virginis.' Hassler 1843–1849, vol. 3, 287.

189 'In civitate Candia est archiepiscopatus. Ecclesia katedralis parva. Sanctus Titus patronus est insule, cuius caput habui in manibus et brachium sancti Effraim et cuiusdam beate Barbare. Est ibi sanguis miraculosus.' Hartmann 2004, 104.

190 Georgopoulou 2001, 113, n. 13.

lasted until midnight.<sup>191</sup> After the island's occupation by the Ottomans, the crystal ampulla with the blood of Christ was transferred to Venice along with the other relics of the cathedral of St Titus and was placed in the basilica of San Marco.<sup>192</sup>

### 2.3.3.1 *Liturgical Habits*

The patron saint of Candia and of the cathedral bearing his name was, as expected, the focus of many religious as well as civic celebrations. *Laudi* and hymns to the *Serenissima*, the patriarch and the local authorities were sung in the cathedral at Easter and Christmas and on the feast days of St Mark and St Titus.<sup>193</sup> Later on, *laudi* were instituted on Epiphany and All Saints' Day and on 10 May in commemoration of Venice's victory over the rebels at the 'Revolt of St Titus' of 1363.<sup>194</sup> Grand liturgies were held and processions started and/or ended at the saint's church on Christmas, Good Friday, Epiphany and 10 May and during the celebration of Corpus Christi.<sup>195</sup>

Among these ceremonies, the majority of which was performed on the most important Christian religious holidays, two of them were directly linked and dedicated to Crete's patron saint: the celebration of St Titus's feast day and the commemoration of the suppression of the revolt of 1363. The latter, instituted by Duke Pietro Morosini, was celebrated annually on 10 May with a litany and a horse race (*palium*).<sup>196</sup> On the morning of 10 May, a grand litany started from the cathedral with the participation of both the Latin and the Orthodox clerics, similar to the litany performed in Venice on 15 June, the day of St Vito, in commemoration of the suppression of the revolt of Querini and Tiepolo.<sup>197</sup> The horse race took place in the afternoon.

St Titus's feast day was one of the most important public holidays of Venetian Crete, celebrated every year with grandiosity and a procession with the participation of both clerics.<sup>198</sup> Established during the Byzantine period, the

191 About the Good Friday celebrations, see Papadaki 1995, 123–126, esp. 125.

192 Gallo 1967, 125.

193 See n. 128 above.

194 Cornelio 1755, vol. 1, 31–33; Papadaki 1995, 76.

195 Papadaki 1995, 94, 124–126, 129, 135, 163. The celebration of Good Friday, when the Latin and Orthodox clergy, along with the state officials, participated in a common celebration following a complex ritual, is of special interest, as it is indicative of the peculiarities of a religious ritual based on the coexistence of the Latins and the Orthodox, as well as the way the saint was used as a sanctifying power of the Venetian authorities and at the same time as a unifying actor of the members of the two rites. See Papadaki 1995, 124–125, 201.

196 Papadaki 1995, 163, nn. 6–7.

197 Papadaki 1995, 164, n. 9.

198 Georgopoulou 2001, 486; Papadaki 1995, 70–71.



celebration of St Titus's day not only survived the Venetian occupation of Candia, but travelled along with the saint's relic all the way to Venice. After the fall of Candia to the Ottomans and the translation of St Titus's relic to the basilica of San Marco in Venice, documents attest that every year on 4 January the relic was placed on the high altar for public veneration, following the established ritual.<sup>199</sup> Attesting to the Byzantine origins of the celebration of the saint, a document of 1248 reports that during the Byzantine period, on the day of the commemoration of St Titus, the Orthodox patriarch invited the duke and his entourage to the metropolitan palace, a custom that also survived the Venetian occupation, as attested in the 16th-century *Cerimoniale*.<sup>200</sup>

On the eve of the day of the commemoration of the saint, the Venetian authorities, along with representatives of both the Latin and the Orthodox clergy, gathered at the cathedral, where, during the vespers, *laudi* were sung to the pope and the archbishop of Candia. The same ritual was repeated on the morning of the day of the feast.<sup>201</sup> On the morning of 2 October the Venetian officials arrived at the ducal palace, followed by the Orthodox clergy, to accompany the duke to the church of St Mark, where *laudi* were sung to the doge and the duke. They were sung in Latin by the Latin clergy and in Greek by the Orthodox. After this ritual, the procession headed to the cathedral, where the *laudi* were repeated and a liturgy was held. After the end of the liturgy the archbishop, following the Byzantine tradition, was obliged to invite the officials, as well as the Orthodox priests, to his palace.<sup>202</sup>

The grandness with which the island's patron saint was celebrated and, more importantly, the rite of the celebration, that is, the participation of the authorities and both the Latin and Orthodox clergies, as well as the *laudi* sung in both the churches of St Mark and of St Titus, underlines the symbolic power of St Titus. After the appropriation of his cult by the Venetians, St Titus became the sanctifying actor of the Venetian government and at the same time a unifying intermediary between the two Christian rites.

As already mentioned, even more than the relic of their patron saint the Candiots celebrated their Madonna, the miraculous Lucan icon of the Virgin Mesopanditissa. The icon was carried in a procession every Tuesday, as well as on major feast days, such as the celebration of Corpus Christi, special Sunday

199 Georgopoulou 2001, 118, Corner 1758, 196; Cornelio 1755, vol. 1, 195; Detorakis 1970, 25; *BS* 1969, col. 504.

200 Papadaki 1995, 21, 205; Tsirpanlis 1985, 43, 189.

201 First the *laudo* for the pope was sung, during which the archbishop stood with his head uncovered holding a candle, while, during the *laudo* for the archbishop, he had his head covered, and the candle was in the hands of the archdeacon. Papadaki 1995, 71.

202 Papadaki 1995, 73.

litany in preparation for the feast of the Assumption of the Virgin in August and, of course, in impromptu processions as necessary in case of earthquakes, famine, bad weather and so on.<sup>203</sup> A litany from the cathedral to the Franciscan monastery to plead for rain was witnessed and described in 1606 by the Swiss traveller Wolfgang Stockman.<sup>204</sup> An analogous case of a spontaneous procession right after an earthquake, in which the Mesopanditissa icon was most probably carried, was described by the Italian pilgrim Pietro Casola in 1494:

[...] I happened to see the beginning of the procession made in consequence of the earthquake. It was a very pitiful thing to see and hear. For in front of the great company of Greek boys without any order, who cried with a loud voice 'Kyrie Elieson', and nothing else, those Greeks carried in the said procession many very large figures, painted on wood. There were crucifixes and figures of Our Lady and other saints.<sup>205</sup>

Still, one of the most important ceremonies of Venetian-ruled Candia until the arrival of the Ottomans remained the weekly procession of the Mesopanditissa icon. The litany started from the cathedral of St Titus and moved on to the church of St Mark, where *laudi* were sung to the Republic. Afterwards, the icon was carried to the Orthodox cathedral, as well as to various Greek churches, where mass was celebrated in honour of private individuals and donations were collected.<sup>206</sup> The procession was followed by many people, including women, who were often barefoot to fulfil a vow to the Virgin.<sup>207</sup> Upon the icon's return to the Latin cathedral, *laudi* were sung for the archbishop.<sup>208</sup> According to the chronicle of Antonio Trivan, the weekly procession of the

203 Georgopoulou 2001, 222; Papadaki 1995, 147, 177–183.

204 See p. 190 above.

205 The text reads: 'El mercore a 11 de iulio, smontai de galea per andare a vedere questa città de Candia et me incontrai a vedere el principio de la processione inducta a fare per questo terremoto; era molta compassionevole cosa de vedere e de odire. Nam inante la grande brigata de fanciuli greci, sine ordine, chi cridaveno ad alta voce: "Kyrie eleyson" e nessuna altra parola; portaveno, in dicta processione, essi greci de molte figure depente sopra tavole assai grande, de crucifixi, de Nostra Dona e de altri santi.' Paoletti 2001, 150. The translation is after Newett 1907, 199–200.

206 The donations to the miraculous icon were collected by the *protopapas* and were distributed to the people involved in the litany and the canons of St Titus. Needless to say, the amount gathered from these offerings was substantial, and several times the sharing led to conflicts. Papadaki 1995, 182.

207 Georgopoulou 2001, 220–221; Papadaki 1995, 181.

208 Georgopoulou 2001, 221; Papadaki 1995, 179.

icon was established after the initial procession upon the signing of the treaty in 1264, thus providing a *terminus post quem*.<sup>209</sup> By 1368 the icon was carried by eight people, both Latins and Greeks of high status; for their service to the community, they were exempted from guard duty (*vaita*) in the *borgo*, as well as from corvée labour.<sup>210</sup> As already mentioned, in the weekly litany of the icon representatives of both the Latin and Orthodox rites participated. In fact, the participation of the Greek *protopapas*, as well as other Orthodox priests, was mandatory.<sup>211</sup> While the Venetians treated this common celebration as a means of satisfying the devotion of the Christians of both rites, the fact that the litany included acclamation to the duke and the Venetian government, as well as acceptance of papal authority, was not appreciated by the Greeks. Hence, the Orthodox clergy was often unwilling to participate, and already by 1515 the priests of both rites faced a fine of four hyperpera if they refused to take part in the Tuesday procession.<sup>212</sup>

Similar to most of the Venetian colonies in Greek territory, the appropriation of an already existing cult by the new rulers was carried out in the case of the Madonna of St Titus as well. The meaning of the Byzantine symbol was modified by altering the recipients of the sacred grace of the icon, which served throughout the Venetian period of the island as a sanctifying actor of the Venetian government and a mediator between Latins and Greeks on both a political as well as a religious level. After all, according to the official Venetian ideology, it was thanks to the miraculous intervention of the Byzantine icon of the Virgin Mesopanditissa that the coexistence of Latins and Greeks on Crete was achieved. St Titus's relic and the revered icon soon gained an especially high position in the saintly hierarchy of Venetian Crete. As pointed out by Maria Georgopoulou, the official standard of the last Venetian governor of Crete, Francesco Morosini, portrayed the Virgin Mesopanditissa above the lion of Venice, which is placed on the same level as St Titus, epitomising the sacred ties that the Venetians had established with the island's Byzantine tradition and demonstrating the Republic's adoption of the Cretan relics.<sup>213</sup>

209 Theochari 1961, 274, n. 13; Georgopoulou 2001, 218, n. 23.

210 Corvée, or *angaria*, was unpaid labour, imposed on the colonised population. By the 16th century the bearers of the icon were elected by the duke for life. The position became almost hereditary, as attested by the fact that from 1539 on they were chosen solely from among the inhabitants of the village of Ambrousa. Georgopoulou 2001, 218.

211 Georgopoulou 2001, 221; Papadaki 1995, 180.

212 Georgopoulou 2001, 221; Papadaki 1995, 180–181.

213 Georgopoulou 2001, 262–263. About the banner of Francesco Morosini, see Vokotopoulos 1981, 268–275.

#### 2.4 *The Franciscan Monastery of St Francis*

The Franciscan monastery of St Francis in Candia was one of the most important Franciscan monasteries of the entire province of Romania and, perhaps, of the entire East.<sup>214</sup> The monastery was located in the south-east, inside the city walls, in a prominent location on the highest hill of the city and thus visible to anyone approaching from sea or land (Fig. 73). It was destroyed by an earthquake in 1856.<sup>215</sup> The friary's site is presently occupied by the Heraklion Archaeological Museum (Fig. 74).<sup>216</sup>

As we have seen above, the mendicant orders enjoyed privileges in the Venetian-ruled territories: the Franciscans and the Dominicans had the right to preach, hear confessions and bury laymen in their churches, while their monasteries were autonomous establishments, exempt from the jurisdiction of local bishops and civic authorities.<sup>217</sup> Benefitting from the relative political stability under Venetian governance, Crete became the greatest centre of Western monasticism in Greece.<sup>218</sup> The Franciscans had established



FIGURE 73 The Franciscan monastery of St Francis, standing out in the view of Candia, c. 1575, engraving

214 Tsougarakis 2012, 111; Kitsiki-Panagopoulos 1979, 93. Significant work on the church of St Francis of Candia has been undertaken by Donal Cooper, soon to be published in the journal *Frankokratia*, in the forthcoming 2022 special issue dedicated to the mendicants in Heraklion.

215 Georgopoulou 2001, 133; Tsougarakis 2012, 111; Kitsiki-Panagopoulos 1979, 93; Gerola 1932, 313; Xanthoudides 1964, 59.

216 Remains of large arches that were probably part of the conventual building, as well as some sculptural fragments of the church's ornate west façade, were preserved on its north side. Georgopoulou 2001, 133; Tsougarakis 2012, 111.

217 Georgopoulou 2001, 132; Pagratis 1999, 113–116. About the religious orders in Greece, see Tsougarakis 2012, esp. 275–310.

218 Tsougarakis 2012, 111.



FIGURE 74 Remains of the Franciscan conventual church preserved at the site of the Heraklion Archaeological Museum

monasteries in all the major towns of Crete, while in Candia there was more than one monastery.<sup>219</sup> This is also testified by several pilgrims visiting the town.<sup>220</sup>

219 The major orders established their presence on Crete from the first years of Venetian rule, and by the 16th century 11 conventual churches stood in Candia. Tsougarakis 2012, 119; Georgopoulou 2001, 132.

220 Wilhelm Tzewers (1477–1478) writes: ‘Sunt ibi Minores reformati in magno et parvo loco. In parvo loco circa hospitale Minorum est vitis, que septem fructus producit in anno. Vidi in ea flores et comedi de ea uvas maturas. Habuit agrestam et quasi maturos botros.’

The exact date of the monastery's construction, as well as the circumstances of its foundation, remains unknown. It was already standing in 1242, since a surviving document mentions the burial of a nobleman in its church in the same year, but, considering that the first Franciscan missions started arriving in Greece in 1220 and that other orders had already established themselves on Crete by that time, it would be plausible to assume that St Francis was founded earlier than that.<sup>221</sup> As in the case of several Franciscan houses in Greece, the monastery of Candia was allegedly founded by St Francis himself during his stay on Crete on his way to the Holy Land.<sup>222</sup> As an attestation of the saint's involvement in the erection of the complex, or at least of his presence at the monastery of Candia, the pious visitors of St Francis were shown a well in the priory's garden that was, according to the legend, built by the saint himself, a tradition that also survived in the pilgrims' narratives.<sup>223</sup>

The monastery of St Francis soon became one of the more prosperous institutions of the town. The surviving inventories of its liturgical vestments and vessels, as well as lists of relics and catalogues of bequests of property to the monastery, show the measure of the monastery's wealth.<sup>224</sup> It also possessed a significant library, whose holdings have been preserved along with the aforementioned inventories.<sup>225</sup> The most famous benefactor of the monastery was Pope Alexander V, a Franciscan friar from Candia – in fact, an orphan who had been taken in and educated by a friar of the order. Pope Alexander endowed St Francis with precious relics, among which a part of the column of the flagellation, sacred vessels, a private chapel bearing his coat of arms and elaborate marble doors, crafted in Rome.<sup>226</sup> Among others, the monastery possessed the arm of St Simeon, a fragment of the True Cross, the head of St Stephen, a phial containing the blood of St Bernard and a piece of the habit of St Francis. In

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Hartmann 2004, 104. The existence of two monasteries is also attested by the anonymous French pilgrim who travelled in 1480, the German Dominican friar Felix Fabri (1480, 1483–1484) and Nicolas Loupvent in 1531. Hassler 1843–1849, vol. 3, 282; Schefer 1882, 49; Bonnin 1976, 60.

221 Tsougarakis 2012, 112.

222 As already mentioned, the monastery of St Francis in Corfu was also said to have been founded by the saint. Georgopoulou 2001, 133; Tsougarakis 2012, 112; Gerola 1932, 303; Moorman 1983, 105. According to another tradition, the monastery of Candia was founded by two Candiot Franciscan brothers, Petrus and Franciscus Gradonico. Tsougarakis 2012, 112, n. 34; Gerola 1932, 311.

223 See p. 211 below.

224 Georgopoulou 2001, 133, nn. 8–10; Tsougarakis 2012, 112–113; Gerola 1903, 243–245.

225 Tsougarakis 2012, 116.

226 Georgopoulou 2001, 134; Tsougarakis 2012, 118; Gerola 1932, 314–318.

addition, the church housed and put out for public veneration an icon of the Virgin painted by St Luke.<sup>227</sup>

At some point in the 15th century, before 1431, the monastery was handed over by the Conventuals to the Observants.<sup>228</sup> By that time, it was already very prosperous and popular in the city. In fact, this was one of the most interesting achievements of the Franciscan Order on Crete: the growth of the cult of St Francis among the Orthodox population. As detailed in a papal bull dating from 1414, on the saint's feast day the Greeks, along with their priests, flocked in vast numbers to St Francis and celebrated mass in their own rite.<sup>229</sup>

As far as the conventual buildings and church are concerned, as already mentioned they are no longer extant. However, thanks to its prominent position on top of the highest hill of the town, the monastery is portrayed in every view of Candia (see Figs 60, 61). These depictions, combined with reports and inventories, allow for a reasonably safe reconstruction of the monastery, despite its demolition in the 19th century.<sup>230</sup> The monastery's conventual church was a three-aisled basilica with a projecting transept, while at the east it ended in a tripartite apse or a chevet.<sup>231</sup> It had two storeys, although its elevation may have been partial due to the limited space available.<sup>232</sup> The main church was covered by a timber roof, and, according to the rules of the statutes, only the presbytery was vaulted.<sup>233</sup> In the early 15th century the three axial chapels

227 Georgopoulou 2001, 134; Tsougarakis 2012, 112–113. A list of the relics transferred from St Francis of Candia to Venice before its occupation by the Ottomans is published in Gerola 1903, 242–245.

228 Moorman 1983, 105.

229 Tsougarakis 2012, 117; Georgopoulou 2001, 135, n. 2. The text is published in Gerola 1932, 302, n. 4. As has been argued, the popularity of St Francis on Crete among the Orthodox grew to a large extent during the Venetian period. Besides the 15th-century papal bull, the appearance of St Francis in the murals of a number of Greek churches on Crete, as well as the relatively frequent use of names and surnames deriving from Francis, have been used as arguments in favour of the aforementioned. Tsougarakis 2012, 117–118; Lasithiotakis 1981, 149; Gerola 1932, 301–302.

230 Valuable information about the interior of the church, its altars and chapels, as well as the liturgical vestments and vessels, is found in the report of the Latin Archbishop Luca Stella in 1625, an inventory recording the possessions of the monastery compiled in 1417, with later additions, thus covering the first half of the 15th century, and an inventory of 1669, after the translation of the monasteries possessions to Venice. See Georgopoulou 2001, 133, nn. 8–10; Tsougarakis 2012, 112–113; Gerola 1903, 243–245.

231 Georgopoulou 2001, 133; Xanthoudides 1964, 59.

232 Georgopoulou 2001, 133.

233 Georgopoulou 2001, 133. The rule against vaults over the nave and aisles (mentioned after 1260 in the Franciscan statutes) even forbade vaults over the choir, except over the apse itself. Kitsiki-Panagopoulos 1979, 65. About the Franciscan regulations on art and architecture, see also Sundt 2019.

were dedicated to St John the Baptist, St Francis and the Holy Sacrament, while there were six or eight additional chapels along the lateral walls.<sup>234</sup> Under the choir there was a crypt that housed a number of tombs. A 15th-century inventory catalogues a number of bequests of property to the monastery from members of the most prominent noble families of Candia, containing arrangements to be buried in the monastery's cemetery or in private altars in the church, as well as provisions for annual or daily prayers to be said for their souls.<sup>235</sup> Such an incident is described by Jodocus von Meggen in 1542. The Swiss pilgrim, while recounting his visit to St Francis and the service held there in memory of his deceased uncle, provides information about the crypt:

There is this monastery of St Francis, which is an excellent temple, in which my uncle Giovanni of Meggen was buried, who, while travelling to Jerusalem got hit by pirates with a lethal arrow, and died, in the prime of his life. There, I took care of the performance of the sacred divine rites in his honour, according to the Christian custom. There, we saw under the said temple an underground crypt, where the bodies of the deceased are preserved, without decay or putrid odour, locked up in wooden and iron chests.<sup>236</sup>

Despite obviously following the Western architectural and liturgical setting, it seems quite possible that the priory had decorative elements of a Byzantine manner as well. According to Giuseppe Gerola, the walls of the church were decorated with frescoes in a Byzantinising style.<sup>237</sup> The most probable hypothesis, taking also into consideration the inventory of the monastery's possessions

234 According to surviving documents, the chapel of St Francis was endowed by Franciscus Caravello in 1371. The available material does not provide sufficient information to establish the locations of the lateral chapels with certainty. According to 15th-century notarial documents and inventories, they were dedicated to St George, St Michael, St Nicholas, St Mark and the Virgin. They also contain information about altars endowed by George Bolani, the Caravello family and the monastery's grand benefactor, Pope Alexander v. According to the report of Luca Stella and an inventory of 1669, there was also a chapel dedicated to a major Franciscan saint, St Anthony of Padua. Georgopoulou 2001, 133, nn. 8–9.

235 Tsougarakis 2012, 113.

236 'Est hic & religiosum B. Francisci coenobium, templum que eximium, in quo auunculus meus Ioannes à Meggen, florente aetate, quondam Hierosolyma rediens, cum à pyratibus laetali spiculo ictus esset, atque diem obiisset, sepulturae traditus est. Ego sacra illi diuinaque officia, pro eo ac debebam, Christiano more celebrari curavi. Vidimus illic sud ipso templo subterraneam cryptam, vbi defunctorum cadauera ligneis arcibus, siue ferreis inclusa, sine putredine & foetore diutius conseruantur.' Von Meggen 1580, 55–56.

237 Gerola 1908, 114–115.



that were transferred to Venice before 1669, would be that the interior of the church reflected the particularities of art appreciation in 16th-century Crete: it would have been adorned with panels and works of art of Cretan and Venetian artists that would be both *maniera greca* and *maniera latina*.<sup>238</sup> A 17th-century document attests to the existence of 'ancient' paintings at least in the second chapel, dedicated to St George, one of which, depicting St Francis and St Dominic embracing, survived to 1653.<sup>239</sup> The fact that the painting is referred to as very old (*antichissima*) could be an indication of a probable Byzantine style. According to the same document, a similar and equally 'ancient' painting existed in the Dominican monastery of St Peter the Martyr, constituting a link between the two most important monasteries of the town.<sup>240</sup>

In any event, the interior of the church would have been exceptionally well-structured and ornate, since, besides the aforementioned descriptions and inventories that reflect its wealth and possessions, pilgrims do not omit to praise the elaborate and beautiful monastery.<sup>241</sup> In 1480 the French pilgrim Pierre Barbatre writes: 'The most beautiful, honoured and big church is the one of the Franciscan brothers; in it there are many beautiful chapels, a beautiful

238 Gerola 1908, 115; Gerola 1932, 316; Georgopoulou 2001, 134. About the inventory containing a list of religious paintings transferred to Venice from the monastery of St Francis of Candia, see Gerola 1903, 243–245.

239 'Ritrovasi nella chiesa di san Francesco di Candia [...] nella capella seconda nel nell'usir fuori della sacrestia, intitolata san Georgio, a man dreta nel intrar in quella, una pitura di santi Francesco et Dominico che stano in atto di abbracciarsi, di altezza di statura di sette quarti in circa [...]. Continuing, the writer of the document describes the painting as follows: '[...] et si osserva in quella di san Francesco esser vestita d'habito capucino, cio è col capucio piramidale che ariva sino alla cintura et senya alcun segno di luneta o scapulare et questa pitura s'ha per sicura tradizione esser antichissima [...]'. Konstandoudaki 1975, 131.

240 'Ritrovandosi nella sacristia della nostra chiesa nel monasterio di San Piero di Candia dietro, la porta che entra dalla chiesa in sacristia, una pitura delli santi Domenico et Francesco che mostrano star abrazati [...]'. The embrace of St Francis and St Dominic in front of the doorway of St Peter in Rome is a popular iconographical theme in Western art. Its 'invention' was attributed to the Dominican friar Thierry d'Apolda, while it appeared in Italian art in the 15th century. Konstandoudaki 1975, 132, 134; Kirschbaum and Braunfels 1974, col. 276.

241 In 1480 the anonymous French pilgrim characterised the monastery as 'la plus belle'. Schefer 1882, 49. In the same year Pierre Barbatre writes: '[...] la plus belle eglise et la plus honneste et grande est celle des freres de saint François.' Pinzuti and Tucoc-Chala 1972–1973, 123. In 1493 Jan Hasištejnský of Lobkovice reports it was clean and huge: 'A gest welmi czisty, weliky a czistie vstaweny klasster'. Střežek 1902, 35. Several other pilgrims attest to the aforementioned: Pietro Casola (1494), Jacques Le Saige (1518), Nicolas Loupvent (1531) and Denis Possot (1532). Paoletti 2001, 151; Duthill 1851, 81; Bonnin 1976, 56; Schefer 1890, 129.

choir, pulpit, organ, cloister and more; and it is located adjoining the eastern city walls.<sup>242</sup> In 1494 the Italian Pietro Casola also praised the Franciscan monastery: 'The most beautiful is the church of St Francis, of the Observant brothers; it is more appealing than the cathedral; it has a beautiful choir, with three rows of elaborately carved stalls and its beautiful monastery.'<sup>243</sup>

The west façade of the church had an elaborate portico preceded by a semi-circular staircase. Fragments of its decoration, a bust of Christ and one of an angel, are exhibited in the Historical Museum of Crete in Heraklion.<sup>244</sup> A bell tower stood to the south of the church, while next to it there was an octagonal building, probably a baptistry, and a marble column adorned with a sphere at its top.<sup>245</sup> As far as the other conventual buildings are concerned, mentions survive about the dormitory, which had a large portico, as well as an infirmary that was donated by Johannes Greco in 1417.<sup>246</sup>

During the course of its history, the monastery was rebuilt at least twice, in the 14th and the 16th centuries, when, in 1508, it suffered severe damage from an earthquake. The friars resided in it until the island's occupation by the Ottomans.<sup>247</sup> Following 1669, the conventual church was converted into a royal mosque, the Hunkâr Cami (Fig. 75). In 1856 it was almost completely destroyed by an earthquake; later on it was demolished, and its building material was

242 '[...] la plus belle eglise et la plus honneste et grande est celle des freres de saint François; en icelle sont plusieurs belles chapelles, beau ceur, pulpitre, orguez, cloistre et aultres; et est joingnant des murs de la cité vers midy.' Pinzuti and Tucoo-Chala 1972–1973, 123. The monastery's organ also impressed the French pilgrim Nicolas Loupvent: 'On nous monstret au grantz cordeliers les plus belles orgues de crestienté; les a fait maistre Vincent Columbe de Montsarot.' Bonnin 1976, 60.

243 'E più bello li sî è la giesia de Santo Francesco di frati Observanti; è più bella cha la giesia cathedrale; ha uno bellissimo coro, con li stadii triplicati, a chi non sono mancati li belli intagli, con lo suo bello convento.' Paoletti 2001, 151.

244 Georgopoulou 2001, 134; Gerola 1932, 316; Xanthoudides 1964, 59.

245 Gerola 1932, 317; Georgopoulou 2001, 134; Xanthoudides 1964, 59.

246 Georgopoulou 2001, 134, n. 13.

247 The monastery's church was demolished in the mid-14th century, and plans were made for an extravagant replacement. However, it seems that Friar Raphael, the provincial minister of Romania, usurped a large amount of the monastery's money for this purpose, causing the involvement of Venice and the pope. The monastery was eventually rebuilt with the aid of two government grants, one of 25 hyperpera and a second one amounting to 1000 hyperpera in 1390. Tsougarakis 2012, 117; Georgopoulou 2001, 133; Kitsiki-Panagopoulos 1979, 93; Gerola 1932, 312–313; Xanthoudides 1964, 59; Gerola 1908, 112. The document mentioning the grant of 1000 hyperpera *pro fabrica ecclesie* is dated 13 June 1390 and is published in Fedalto 1978, 141, no. 350.

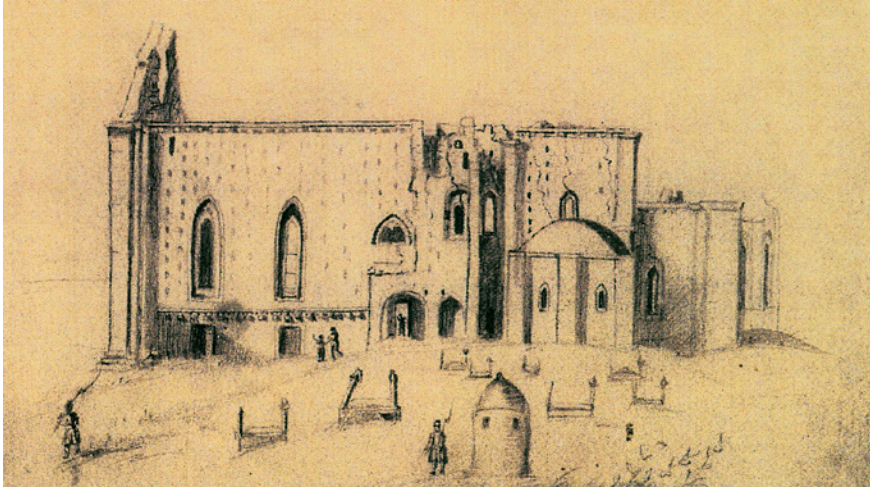


FIGURE 75 The church of St Francis as a mosque after the earthquake of 1856, after A. Alexandrides

used for the reconstruction of the Vezir Cami.<sup>248</sup> Today, only a photograph and two architectural drawings of the monastery survive.<sup>249</sup>

#### 2.4.1 Collection of Relics

As briefly mentioned above, the Franciscan monastery of St Francis of Candia owned an impressive collection of relics. Christological mementoes, saintly bodies and a Lucan icon, as well as mementoes of St Francis, were housed and displayed for public veneration in the conventual church.

##### 2.4.1.1 *Christological Relics*

Christological relics were considered to be especially significant. Material remains that claimed physical contact with the body of Christ and were associated with events related to his life and Passion served as a mediator of a partial, figurative translation of Jerusalem.<sup>250</sup> In the 15th century, during the papacy of Alexander V, the monastery of St Francis acquired one of its most significant relics: a piece of the column of the flagellation. This relic was showcased in a large elaborate silver reliquary with enamels of the Crucifixion, the

248 Georgopoulou 2001, 133; Kitsiki-Panagopoulos 1979, 93; Gerola 1932, 312–313; Xanthoudides 1964, 59; Gerola 1908, 112.

249 The architectural drawings of the monastery made by Antonios Alexandrides in 1866 depict the remains of the monastery after the earthquake. Gerola 1908, 114–116; Georgopoulou 2001, 135, fig. 87.

250 Bacci 2017a, 135; Klein 2010, 56–57.

Virgin and St John on one side and Sts Anthony, Christopher and Andrew on the other.<sup>251</sup> The reliquary and its precious contents were transferred to Venice along with the rest of the relics of the monastery, as attested by the inventory published by Giuseppe Gerola.<sup>252</sup>

The monastery's collection of Christological relics was completed with fragments of the golden doors through which Christ entered Jerusalem, as well as a piece of the True Cross, the ultimate contact relic, the actual instrument of the Passion. Those precious material mementoes of Christ's presence on earth gave the pilgrims the opportunity to evoke the cultic attractions they expected to see in Jerusalem in a synecdochical way; and it was through these relics that the friars of Candia transplanted some of the holy stones that shaped the Holy City's material body onto Cretan soil.<sup>253</sup>

Pilgrims' mentions of the Christological collection of the Franciscan monastery are fewer than one would expect, given the significance of the relics. All references to them are brief and appear in the late 15th century. The first to mention the True Cross was the Italian Antonio da Crema (1486) and almost a decade later the Bohemian diplomat Jan Hasištejnský of Lobkovice (1493).<sup>254</sup> Following Hasištejnský's reference, four other pilgrims indicate seeing fragments of the golden door and of the column of the flagellation in the conventual church, while no other mentions or descriptions of the collection of the Franciscan monastery have survived in the travelogues. In regard to the Christological relics housed in the church of St Francis, it should be noted that in 1519 the Swiss pilgrim Ritter Melchior also attests to seeing a nail from the True Cross in the church of St Francis.<sup>255</sup>

#### 2.4.1.2 *Saintly Relics*

According to the inventories, the Franciscans of Candia possessed and displayed for public veneration several saintly relics: the arm of St Simeon, the

251 Georgopoulou 2001, 134; Tsougarakis 2012, 113. The document of the 15th-century inventory, as published by Maria Georgopoulou, reads: 'In primus unum quadrum magnum de argento cum smaltis ab una parte crucifixum et verginem et beatum iohannem launtibus et ab alia parte sanctos Antonium, Christofori et Andrea et intus est unum magnum pecium columpne Christi et hanc donavit conuentui dominus papa Allexander [sic] quintus.' Georgopoulou 2001, 134, n. 16.

252 'Instrumentum pacis argenteum, in quo asservatur pars columne flagellationis Domini Nostri Jesu Christi, missa in ipsamet argentea capsula a prefato summon pontifice Alexandro.' Gerola 1932, 243.

253 Bacci 2017a, 135.

254 '[...] una crocetta del ligno di la croce dii nostro Salvatore'. Nori 1996, 140. '[...] kus krzize pana Krysta'. Strejček 1902, 35.

255 '[...] ein form des nagels vom helgen crücz'. Schmid 1957a, 47.

head of St Stephen, a phial containing the blood of St Bernard, a piece of the habit of St Francis and the tibia of St Lawrence. All of these were among the treasures of the monastery that were transported to Venice before the island's occupation by the Ottomans.<sup>256</sup>

The relic that amasses the majority of the pilgrims' mentions in regard to the Franciscan monastery of Candia is the head of St Stephen, followed by St Simeon's arm. However, the latter is not recognised by all of the travellers as belonging to Simeon the Wise; a number of the pilgrims attribute the relic to St Simon the Zealot. As far as the rest of the relics are concerned, they are all mentioned within the period between 1493 and 1525, always in a form of a list, by five pilgrims. The most complete list of the collection of the Franciscan friary was provided by the German Alexander von Pfalz-Zweibrücken (1495–1496): 'St Stephen's head; St Simeon's arm; an icon of the Virgin painted by St Luke; a piece of the column to which our Lord was bound; a piece of the golden Gate of Jerusalem; a piece of the habit of St Francis; the blood of St Bernard; a piece of the True Cross and many other holy relics'.<sup>257</sup>

St Stephen is traditionally venerated as the protomartyr of Christianity. According to the Acts of the Apostles, he was a deacon in the Early Church of Jerusalem who was accused of blasphemy and was stoned to death. According to the same source, 'Godly men buried Stephen and mourned deeply for him.'<sup>258</sup> His relics were subsequently miraculously retrieved and were soon disseminated to a large number of churches around the world.<sup>259</sup> On Crete the saint's relics appear to have been kept in the town's Latin cathedral, at the altar erected above the tomb of the Archbishop Fantinus Vallaresso in 1446.<sup>260</sup>

However, and while only one pilgrim attests to seeing the protomartyr's relics in the church of St Titus, several other religious travellers, all after the late 15th century, report seeing St Stephen's head in the conventual church of the Franciscans of Candia. In fact, some of them also attest to being able to see the marks made from the stones that led to the saint's death on his cranium. At the beginning of the 16th century (1500–1504), Pietro Paolo de Rucellai

256 Georgopoulou 2001, 134; Tsougarakis 2012, 118. The list of relics transferred to Venice is published in Gerola 1932, 314–318.

257 'De haben meine G.H. gesehen das Heiligtum: St. Stephans Bischofs Haupt; St. Simeons Arme; ein Bild nach unserer lieben Frau, das St. Lux gemalt hat; von der Säule, daran unser Herr gebunden war; ein Stück von der goldenen Pforte zu Jerusalem; ein Stück von St. Franziscus Rock; von St. Bernhards Blut; ein Stück von dem heiligen Kreuz und viel anderes Heiligtum.' The German duke was also the first pilgrim to attest to the existence of a Lucan icon in the Franciscan monastery of Candia. Karbach 1997, 59.

258 Acts 8:2.

259 About the relics of St Stephen, see Hunt 1981.

260 Georgopoulou 1994, 112; Georgopoulou 2001, 112; Georgopoulou 2013, 145.

wrote: 'In the capital city there is a beautiful monastery of the Observants of St Francis, where the noble relic of the head of St Stephen, first martyr of Christ, is kept: and one can see the percussions of the stones that trod and broke the bone towards the brain of St Stephen.'<sup>261</sup>

Thus, in regard to the whereabouts of the relics, it would be plausible to assume that either the arm of St Stephen was kept in the town's cathedral and his head at the Franciscan monastery or that the saint's relics, although they first appeared in the cathedral of St Titus, were transferred at some point in the 15th century to the Franciscan monastery, since a number of pilgrims attest to their presence in the church of St Francis. In addition, while in the inventory of February of 1669, listing the relics transferred to Venice from the Latin cathedral of Candia, there is no reference to St Stephen's relic, the analogous inventory of St Francis mentions the head of St Stephen the protomartyr, 'well covered in silver with many ornaments and precious stones, placed in a golden silver vase of noble shape and with many images and Greek letters carved around the vase.'<sup>262</sup>

Whatever the case may be, St Stephen's relic soon became the most mentioned relic of the Franciscan monastery. Most probably, the rise of the relic's fame and the fact that it started appearing in the travelogues from the end of the 15th century was due to its 'promotion' by the friars. The impressiveness of the monastery's collection of relics is a clear indication of the Franciscans' interest in attracting the pious, both locals and pilgrims, and promoting their monastery, and this seems to have been especially exploited after the monastery was handed over to the Observant branch of the order.<sup>263</sup>

The second most mentioned relic housed in the church of St Francis was the arm of St Simeon. He was the one who held the Christ Child at the time of the Presentation at the Temple and uttered the famous prayer of praise beginning with the words *Nunc dimittis servum tuum, Domine*. As most of the pilgrims attest, the prophet's relic was housed and venerated in the church of St Mary the Major in Zadar from the 13th century, rendering the church an international pilgrimage site and certainly the most popular pilgrims' destination of the

261 'Nella città principale è un bel Convento dell'Osservanza di Santo Francesco, dove è quella nobile reliquia del teschio di Santo Stefano, primo martire di Cristo: et vedesi due percussioni di quelle pietre, le quali calcarono et infransero l'osso verso il cervello a Santo Stefano.' Da Civezza 1879, 507.

262 'Cranium S. Stephani protomartyris, bene in argento ligatum cum multis ornamentis et lapidibus valoris, repositum in vase argenteo inaurato nobilis forme, cum plerisque imaginibus ac litteris grecis circa vas ipsum insculptis.' Gerola 1903, 243.

263 The monastery was handed over from the Conventual to the Observant branch of the order in the 15th century, probably before 1431. Moorman 1983, 105; Bacci 2017a, 145.

town.<sup>264</sup> Additionally, the saint's relics were also claimed by Venice, whereas in the port of Ragusa the cloth upon which the newborn Jesus was laid was venerated.<sup>265</sup> The travellers following the sea route from Venice to Jerusalem, having already visited the aforementioned sites, were informed, upon arriving in Candia, that the arm of St Simeon was kept in the Franciscan monastery of the town.

The arm of St Simeon appears in the monastery's inventories from the 15th century, while it was among the ones transferred to Venice before the island's occupation by the Ottomans.<sup>266</sup> According to the inventories, the relic was coated in pure silver at the expense of Marco Trevisan, provincial minister of Romania.<sup>267</sup>

Most of the pilgrims mentioning the monastery refer to this relic. St Simeon's arm is mentioned in five travelogues, between the years 1486 and 1525. However, only one of the pilgrims, Alexander von Pfalz-Zweibrücken (1495–1496), identifies it as the relic of Simeon the Wise. The other four pilgrims, Antonio da Crema (1486), Boguslav of Lobkowitz (1493), Duke Frederick of Legnica and Brieg (1507) and Arent Willemsz (1525), while all reported to have seen it, do not actually refer to St Simeon the Prophet, but to Simon the Apostle, also known as the Zealot, and celebrated along with the Apostle Jude Thaddeus. Thus, Antonio da Crema refers to the 'arm of St Simon the Apostle', Boguslav of Lobkowitz to 'an arm of St Simon and Jude', Duke Frederick of Legnica and Brieg to 'the right arm of St Jude Thaddeus' and Arent Willemsz to 'the arm of St Simon, brother of Judas'.<sup>268</sup> Given the fact that both the 15th- and 17th-century inventories refer to the arm of St Simon the Apostle (*brachium Sancti Simeonis apostoli*), it would be plausible to assume that the identification of the relic kept and venerated in the Franciscan conventual church with St Simeon the God-receiver could have been a – deliberate or not – misunderstanding that

264 About St Simeon's relic and the church of St Mary the Major, see Bacci *et al.* 2018, 363–367.

265 Bacci *et al.* 2018, 368–369; Bacci 2017a, 144–145.

266 Georgopoulou 2001, 134, n. 17; Tsougarakis 2012, 113; Gerola 1932, 314–318.

267 Tsougarakis 2012, 113. The text reads: 'Item brachium Sancti Simeonis apostoli totum copertum de puro argento totum de arger auratum pulchro opera quod brachium fecit fieri reverentus in Christo pater frater Marcus Riuisano de Veneciis, minister prouincie Romanie'. Published in Georgopoulou 2001, 134, n. 17.

268 Antonio da Crema (1486): '[...] uno brazo de sancto Simone apostolo'. Nori 1996, 140. Boguslav of Lobkowitz (1493): 'So Ssimonisse Judy hnat z ruky'. Strejček 1902, 35. Duke Frederick of Legnica and Brieg (1507): '[...] der Rechte Arm des Heiligen Judae Thadej'. Röhricht and Meisner 1878, 120. Arent Willemsz (1525): 'Den Arme van sinte Symon Judas broeder'. Gonnet 1884, 55.

actually elevated the relic, connecting it to a highly venerated saint, whose body was claimed by both Venice and Zadar.<sup>269</sup>

The Franciscans of Candia also possessed and displayed for public veneration a Lucan icon of the Virgin. The town of Candia and its cathedral, the church of St Titus, was already privileged to house a Byzantine icon of the Virgin attributed to St Luke, the palladium of the city, the icon known as the Mesopanditissa. The island and its capital had thus been integrated earlier into the subnetwork of Marian cult sites along the sea route leading from Venice to the Holy Land.<sup>270</sup> The Lucan icon of the Franciscan monastery appears for the first time in the travelogue of Antonio da Crema (1486), who refers to an icon of the Virgin painted by St Luke, while up until the end of the time frame of this study only two other pilgrims mention the icon: Alexander von Pfalz-Zweibrücken (1495–1496) and Duke Frederick of Legnica and Brieg in 1507.<sup>271</sup>

Neither the travelogues nor the few surviving documents concerning the Franciscan monastery of Candia provide further information about the icon mentioned by the pilgrims. The last reference to the icon in relation to the monastery is in the inventory listing the relics and valuable possessions transferred from St Francis to Venice before 1669.<sup>272</sup>

The collection of relics of the Franciscan monastery of Candia was completed by mementoes of saints associated with Western Europe, their religious order and especially of their founder, St Francis. Besides the mementoes of St Francis, and among others, the monastery housed relics of the Franciscan saints St Bernard, St Bernardine of Siena and St John of Capistrano. Undoubtedly, the mementoes of the order's founder were the most precious and important, as, according to tradition, he was also the founder of the Candiot monastery: a piece of the habit of St Francis was exhibited in a silver reliquary adorned with precious stones and a large crystal.<sup>273</sup> Four pilgrims mention

269 Georgopoulou 2001, 135, n. 19; Tsougarakis 2012, 113.

270 About the Marian cult sites on the same route, see Bacci *et al.* 2017.

271 Antonio da Crema (1486): '[...] una figura di la Madona picta demandi sancto Luca'. Nori 1996, 140. Alexander von Pfalz-Zweibrücken (1495–1496), see n. 257 above. Duke Frederick of Legnica and Brieg in 1507: '[...] auch ist alda in der Kirchen ein gang auff die rechte Hand ein bilde vnser Lieben frawen vnd man saget, dass es S. Lucas habe gemahlet, vnd ist ein klein bilde.' Röhricht and Meisner 1878, 120.

272 'Imago B. Virginis Marie a S. Luca evangelista depicte'. Gerola 1903, 245.

273 According to the 15th-century inventory, the reliquary was described as followed: 'Item reliquarium unum pro tunica sancti Francisci pulchrum cum pede de argento cum vitibus releuate et ponium et lapidibus vitreis legatis cum uno magno et pulchro crystallo et una capite superius quod donauit conuentui frater Franciscus Sanuto'. Georgopoulou 2001, 135, n. 19; Tsougarakis 2012, 113.



seeing this relic between the years 1493 and 1525.<sup>274</sup> In 1507 Duke Frederick of Legnica and Brieg added a piece of information, referring to a quadrate chapel where the reliquary was kept.<sup>275</sup>

As pointed out by Michele Bacci, following the popularity of the worship of St Francis as the *alter Christus*, a network was formed in which the memorial sites connected with the saint's voyage to Egypt were integrated and worked as an extension of his own topography.<sup>276</sup> As already mentioned, just as in many other cases of Franciscan monasteries in Greek territory, St Francis himself was according to tradition the founder of the Candiot monastery. This fact was exploited in Candia, since it allowed the friars to promote their monastery as a point of reference within the network. Pious visitors were led to the friars' garden, where they were shown the well that the saint himself had built during his stay on the island. Worship was directed towards a material object, sanctified by its prestigious provenance, and, at the same time, imbued with memorial meaning, since it bore witness to the saint's physical presence on Crete.<sup>277</sup> Thus, the Franciscan monastery of Candia was presented as the only place where the holy topography of the *alter Christus* intersected with the network of venerable places that dotted the Venetian sea route to the Holy Land.<sup>278</sup>

Two pilgrims visiting St Francis of Candia refer to the well: Jacques Le Saige (1518) and Jodocus von Meggen (1542). The French pilgrim simply repeats the legend according to which the well was built by St Francis during his stay on Crete.<sup>279</sup> The Swiss pilgrim Jodocus von Meggen, who visited the friary in 1542, enriches the legend. He does not mention if the well was actually built by St Francis or not, but he attests to the saint's physical presence on the island and the friary by stating that he was the one who turned the well's water from salty into sweet and drinkable.<sup>280</sup>

274 Jan Hasištejnský of Lobkovice (1493), Count Alexander von Pfalz-Zweibrücken and Johann Ludwig von Nassau-Saarbrücken (1495–1496), Duke Frederick of Legnica and Brieg (1507) and Arent Willemsz (1525). Strejček 1902, 35; Karch 1997, 59; Röhrich and Meisner 1878, 120; Gonnet 1884, 55–56.

275 '[...] ein stücke von dem Rocke des H: Francisci, auch ist in einer gevirten Cabell.' Röhrich and Meisner 1878, 120.

276 Bacci 2017a, 145; Bacci 1991, 31–57.

277 Bacci 2017a, 145.

278 Bacci 2017a, 145. About the sacred topography of St Francis, see Bacci 2009.

279 'Il y a un puich derriere le coeur, lequel dissent quil vint miraculeusement a monseur saint Franchois quant il demouroit la.' Duthill 1851, 81.

280 'Huic loco puteus est vicinus sane nobilis, cuius aquam ob vicinum mare olim salsam, post S. Francisci benedictione & prece in dulcem ac potabilem conuersam aiunt.' Von Meggen 1580, 56.

The significance of the collection of relics of the Franciscan monastery of Candia is not by any means reflected in the travelogues. Very few pilgrims appear to refer to it throughout the period of the 14th to the 16th centuries – in fact, all of the references to the monastery or the relics date from the late 15th century onwards – and even then with few, if any details or remarks. On the other hand, the narratives do provide new evidence about the monastery and its church, while they draw attention to a very clear boost in its popularity at the end of the 15th century, possibly linked to the enrichment of its relic collection through the donations made by Pope Alexander v, and to the taking over of the monastery by the Observant branch of the order around the middle of the century. In any case, the pilgrims' narratives attest to the existence and popularity of a rich and impressive collection of relics that would otherwise be known only through the monastery's inventories.

### 2.5 *The Dominican Monastery of St Peter the Martyr*

Like the Franciscan monastery, the Dominican monastery of Candia was one of the most celebrated Dominican monasteries of the entire province of Greece.<sup>281</sup> It was located in the north-west part of the city, right on the waterfront and, as a result, it was highly visible to anyone approaching by boat (Fig. 76). The German Dominican friar Felix Fabri (1480, 1483–1484) writes: 'In this town, our preacher brothers have a beautiful monastery built near the walls of the city, right above the sea [...]; while he appears quite impressed by the fact that the friars lived and studied in cells where the sound of the waves breaking so near would alarm someone not familiar with it.'<sup>282</sup> The impressive church of the Dominicans, dedicated to St Peter the Martyr, after having been restored, still stands today in the northern part of the modern town of Heraklion (Fig. 77).<sup>283</sup>

The exact date of the monastery's construction, as well as the circumstances of its foundation, remains unknown. However, documentary material suggests that it was established towards the middle of the 13th century, during

281 About the Dominican monastery of St Peter the Martyr in Candia, see Gerola 1908, 125–127; Tsougarakis 2012, 179–185; Kitsiki-Panagopoulos 1979, 87–93; Kitsiki-Panagopoulos 1981, 284–287.

282 'In eadem civitate fratres nostri praedicatores pulchrum habent conventum ad moenia civitatis supra mare [...]. Saepe miratus fui, quomodo fratres in illis cellis possent quiescere aut studere per confusionem sonitus maris et fluctuum, quia tantum facit aqua sonitum, quod homo proprium cantum aut vocem non audit.' Hassler 1843–1849, vol. 3, 281.

283 Beginning in 1972, the Greek Archaeological Service undertook restoration works at the Dominican conventual church. The works restored the building to its 16th-century appearance and not its original 13th-century condition. About the restoration of the church of St Peter, see Delinikola *et al.* 2008.



FIGURE 76 The Dominican monastery of St Peter the Martyr, Heraklion, view from the south-west



FIGURE 77 The Dominican monastery of St Peter the Martyr, Heraklion, view from the east

the incumbency of the Dominican archbishop of Crete Giovanni Querini (1247–1252).<sup>284</sup> The monastery was constructed after the donation of a plot of land inside the town of Candia from the Venetian authorities in 1248.<sup>285</sup> The original dedication of the monastery's church is also uncertain, although most probably it was dedicated to St Peter the Martyr from the beginning. If this assumption is correct, then its foundation should be dated a few years after the donation of the land, since Peter of Verona (later St Peter the Martyr) died in 1252 and was canonised by Pope Innocent IV in 1253.<sup>286</sup> Thus, the monastery must have been dedicated in the early to mid-1250s.

The first generous donation of 1248 was followed by quite a few concessions of feudal lands that enriched the Dominican foundation in the second half of the 13th century. In the following century, the Venetian state even decided to make an annual donation of 25 hyperpera to the Dominicans of Candia to convene their provincial chapter.<sup>287</sup> An extraordinary number of surviving wills, bequeathing money to the monastery, attest to the devotion that the Candians showed to the house of St Peter.<sup>288</sup> Many of the Venetians of the town, among them four dukes of Crete and several members of the nobility, chose the conventual church as their final resting place. Tombs for the most prominent citizens were erected inside the church, while many other citizens were buried in the church's courtyard.<sup>289</sup>

The monastery soon became one of the more prosperous institutions of the town, the only one to rival the popularity of the Franciscan monastery of St Francis.<sup>290</sup> In the 14th century it was the seat of the provincial prior of Greece and his vicars, while it housed some of the inquisitors against heresy in the province.<sup>291</sup> During the 15th century, and particularly after the Council of Ferrara-Florence, the Dominicans played an active role in pursuing the union

284 Tsougarakis 2012, 179; Georgopoulou 2001, 135–136; Andrianakis and Giapitsoglou 2012, 82.

285 Tsougarakis 2012, 179; Georgopoulou 2001, 136; Chronaki and Kalomoirakis 2004, 120; Andrianakis and Giapitsoglou 2012, 82.

286 Chronaki and Kalomoirakis 2004, 121; Tsougarakis 2012, 179–180.

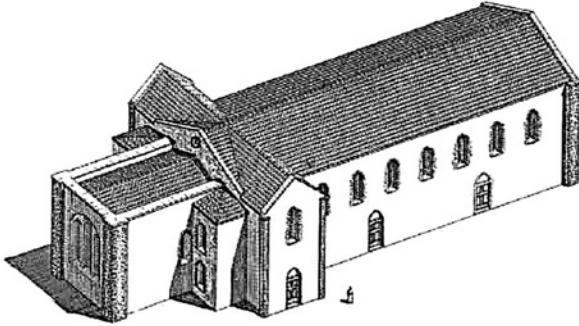
287 Further donations of land to the Dominicans of Candia were recorded in 1257, 1275 and 1301. Tsougarakis 2012, 179; Georgopoulou 2001, 136; Chronaki and Kalomoirakis 2004, 120–121.

288 At least 180 such wills from a period between the years 1312 and 1420 have been published. See McKee 1998, vol. 1, 345–346.

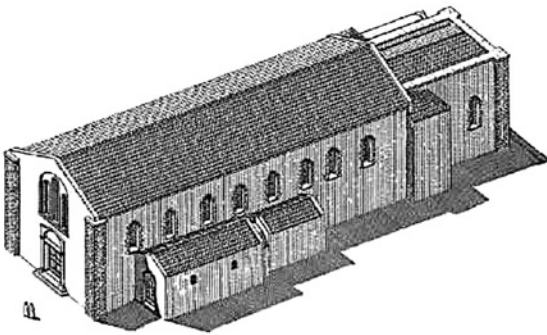
289 During the excavation works that were carried out, it was determined that the area in front of the church was used as a cemetery from the very beginning of the monastery's history up until the late 15th century. See Borboudakis 1968; Miles 1975. See also Tsougarakis 2012, 180; Georgopoulou 2001, 140; Chronaki and Kalomoirakis 2004, 122; Delinikola *et al.* 2008, 432.

290 Gerola 1908, 126; Tsougarakis 2012, 181.

291 Tsougarakis 2012, 184–185; Chronaki and Kalomoirakis 2004, 122; Delinikola *et al.* 2008, 431.



Εικ. 14. 1η φάση – Βενετοκρατίας. Γραφική αναπαράσταση.



Εικ. 15. 2η-3η φάση – Βενετοκρατίας. Γραφική αναπαράσταση.

FIGURE 78 The building phases of the Venetian period of the monastery of St Peter the Martyr, Heraklion

of the churches. Finally, and thanks to its popularity and significant property, the monastery of Candia was also expected, like the Dominican monastery of Modon, to share in some of the provincial expenses in the late 15th century.<sup>292</sup>

The Dominican monastery, as well as two other Dominican houses that were founded in the city, survived until the end of the island's Venetian period. Following the Ottoman occupation in 1669, it was converted into a mosque.<sup>293</sup>

The building of the conventual church of St Peter the Martyr has an austere and simple plan, with a square sanctuary and a two-storey elevation (Fig. 78). It has a large single nave that ends in a sanctuary with two bays. Its dimensions,

292 In 1487 the house was asked to contribute four ducats to help cover the expenses of the former provincial prior, Matthaëus of Venice, for his trip to the General Chapter. In 1491 the monastery was ordered to pay an annual sum for the studies of Friar Thomas of Candia. Tsougarakis 2012, 185.

293 Tsougarakis 2012, 185; Georgopoulou 2001, 141; Andrianakis and Giapitsoglou 2012, 82; Chronaki and Kalomoirakis 2004, 124; Delinikola *et al.* 2008, 432.

41 × 15 m, are less than half of those of the Franciscan church. Its size, along with a lack of sculptural decoration and the austerity of the architectural plan, could point to a foundation poorer than the Franciscans. On the other hand, the simplicity in plan and decoration could be a result of the statutes of the order.<sup>294</sup>

The exact original form of the church of St Peter is hard to determine, as a great many changes have taken place since its construction. During a second building campaign that took place, it can be assumed, in the 14th century, two chapels were added on each side of the sanctuary, accessed by two large rounded arches. The choir was rib-vaulted, framed by a tall circular arch that also divided it from the nave. At the north angle of the choir stood a small vaulted chamber, probably used as a treasury.<sup>295</sup> Two elongated side chapels were added along the south wall at a later date, while in one of them traces of wall paintings of female saints have been preserved (Fig. 79).<sup>296</sup>

The extension of the lateral walls of the nave, which abut onto the arcade between the nave and the sanctuary blocking the arched openings, may indicate a third construction period, most probably after the earthquake of 1508. Additionally, the ribbed vault of the choir was replaced by a semi-circular barrel vault, and the west entrance was surmounted by a flat entablature. The exterior walls were pierced by numerous large windows, providing natural light to the interior of the church.<sup>297</sup>

Three sides of the church had entrances, while the courtyard in front of the main west entrance of the building was paved with slabs.<sup>298</sup> The church also had a bell tower, as can be seen in all the medieval representations of the city (see Figs 60, 61). The whole complex seems to have been enclosed by a wall, most probably constructed in 1450 to prevent visual contact with the neighbouring Jews.<sup>299</sup> The proximity of the Dominican monastery to the Jewish quarter was commented upon by the pilgrims. The French priest Pierre

294 Kitsiki-Panagopoulos 1981, 285; Georgopoulou 2001, 136; Chronaki and Kalomoirakis 2004, 125–128; Delinikola *et al.* 2008, 430.

295 Kitsiki-Panagopoulos 1979, 88–89; Georgopoulou 2001, 137; Chronaki and Kalomoirakis 2004, 129–132; Delinikola *et al.* 2008, 432.

296 The state of preservation is very poor and does not allow for an identification of the subject. Traces of wall paintings survived as well in the fourth southern chapel and on another section of the wall south of the central aisle. Chronaki and Kalomoirakis 2004, 123; Delinikola *et al.* 2008, 431–432; Georgopoulou 2001, 137.

297 The north wall, completely reconstructed in the 17th century, had twelve windows in two rows, while the south wall was pierced by eight windows, some of which could possibly be dated to the 13th century. Kitsiki-Panagopoulos 1979, 90–91; Georgopoulou 2001, 137–138.

298 Kitsiki-Panagopoulos 1979, 91; Georgopoulou 2001, 141.

299 Tsougarakis 2012, 179; Kitsiki-Panagopoulos 1979, 91; Georgopoulou 2001, 137–138.



FIGURE 79 Traces of wall paintings in the south chapel of the conventual church of St Peter the Martyr, Heraklion

Barbatre, who visited the city in 1480, mentions that '[...] it is near the Jewish quarter, almost among the Jews [...]':<sup>300</sup>

As far as the interior of the building is concerned, very few material elements survive to attest to its form. It was, as mentioned above, well lit by several tall, large windows. According to a report of Archbishop Luca Stella in 1625, there were 11 altars inside the church, as well as a chapel dedicated to St Vincent in the courtyard.<sup>301</sup> The numerous wills concerning the monastery also provide details of its interior arrangement, sections of which were sponsored by prominent Venetian families of Candia.<sup>302</sup> Just like the town's cathedral and the Franciscan conventual church, the church of St Peter the Martyr also had an elaborate organ, installed in the 16th century and located above a vaulted chamber in a gilt case.<sup>303</sup> An interesting piece of information concerning the sacristy could be indicative of the way local Cretan and Byzantine tradition had

300 See n. 312 below.

301 Georgopoulou 2001, 138.

302 Tsougarakis 2012, 181; Georgopoulou 2001, 138.

303 Georgopoulou 2001, 140; Chronaki and Kalomoirakis 2004, 123; Delinikola *et al.* 2008, 432.

influenced the interior decoration of St Peter: a 17th-century document attests to the existence of a painting depicting St Francis embracing St Dominic that decorated the church's sacristy. The document, dated 13 June 1653, reads: '[...] in the sacristy of our church in the monastery of St Peter in Candia, behind the door that leads from the church to the sacristy, there is a painting of Sts Dominic and Francis embracing [...].'<sup>304</sup>

According to this document, the painting existed from the beginning of the monastery, that is, 28 June 1097.<sup>305</sup> As aptly pointed out by Maria Georgopoulou, the absurdly early dating of this painting most probably indicates that it was executed in a Byzantine manner.<sup>306</sup> As discussed above, the same document attests to the existence of an analogous icon or fresco in the conventual church of the Franciscan monastery of St Francis, thus linking the two most important monasteries of the town and attributing to them, among others, the prestige of inveteracy, since these representations were emphasised as being *antichisimi*.<sup>307</sup> The importance of the painting of the Dominican monastery was amplified by its miraculous preservation throughout the centuries: '[...] this painting is miraculously preserved from destruction; the others made at the same time have been destroyed, and this is the only one that remains intact.'<sup>308</sup>

The monastery's significance for the town of Candia, as well as for the province of Greece, is not really reflected in the pilgrims' narratives. Despite the fact that it amasses quite a number of references, most of them are restricted to a simple mention of its existence. The first pilgrim to mention the monastery of St Peter the Martyr is the Flemish diplomat Anselmo Adorno (1470–1471), who just refers to a Dominican monastery. Ten years later, the German Dominican friar Felix Fabri (1480, 1483–1484) dedicates several lines to the impressive structure of the monastery and its location right on the breakwater. The last mention of the Dominican monastery of Candia within the time frame of this study was made by the French Benedictine monk Nicolas Loupvent in 1531, again in the form of a passing reference.

During its history, the monastery underwent at least two large-scale reconstructions, in the 14th and the 16th centuries, when, in 1508, it suffered severe damage from an earthquake. The friars resided in it until the island's

304 'Ritrovandosi nella sacristia della nostra chiesa nel monasterio di San Piero di Candia dietro, la porta che entra dalla chiesa in sacristia, una pitura delli santi Domenico et Francesco che mostrano star abrazati [...]'. Konstandoudaki 1975, 132.

305 Konstandoudaki 1975, 132, 135.

306 Georgopoulou 2001, 140; Konstandoudaki 1975, 132; Chronaki and Kalomoirakis 2004, 123.

307 Konstandoudaki 1975, 130–135, esp. 131–132. See also p. xx above.

308 '[...] questa pitura si mantiene miracolosamente per esser distrute l'altre fatte nel medemo tempo, consumate, et questa sola resta intata.' Konstandoudaki 1975, 132.



occupation by the Ottomans. Following 1669 the conventual church was converted into the mosque of Sultan Ibrahim Han. After the end of the Ottoman occupation, the building was used for public services until the 1970s, when it began to be restored.<sup>309</sup>

In contrast to the Franciscan monastery of the town, which owned and displayed an impressive quantity of holy objects, the Dominicans of Candia did not seem to have been known for an analogous collection. According to archival documents, in the 17th century in their conventual church one could see and prostrate to a piece of the robe of St Dominic and a bone of St Thomas Aquinas. In particular, an anonymous account dated to 1650–1655 mentions: ‘There are some other relics, specifically a bone from the right index finger of St Thomas Aquinas and a small piece of the robe of St Dominic.’<sup>310</sup> However, none of the pilgrims who visited the monastery during the period within the time frame of this study refer to the existence of such relics or any other saintly remains being kept in the church of St Peter the Martyr, leading to the assumption that the aforementioned holy objects probably found their way to the Candiot monastery at some point during the course of the 17th century.

Nevertheless, two very interesting mentions in the travelogues refer to an Acheiropietos icon of the Virgin that was being housed in the church of St Peter. In particular, two French travellers (Pierre Barbatre and an anonymous pilgrim) who visited the town in 1480 mention seeing an icon of the Virgin ‘painted by an angel’.<sup>311</sup> The priest Pierre Barbatre gives more information than the anonymous French pilgrim:

In the town, near the sea, there is another church of the Dominicans, very beautiful and it is near the Jewish quarter, almost among the Jews, in which there is a painted image of the Virgin, painted by an angel; and on it the following is written:

309 The restoration of the Dominican conventual church was a long process that lasted until the first decade of the 21st century. About the history of the works carried out at the monument, see Chronaki and Kalomoirakis 2004, 125; Delinikola *et al.* 2008, 432; Tsougarakis 2012, 185; Georgopoulou 2001, 141; Kitsiki-Panagopoulos 1979, 87, 90.

310 ‘Vi sono alcune reliquie, particolarmente un osso dell’indice dextro del P. s. Tomaso d’Aquino et un poco della cappa del P. s. Domenico.’ Loenertz 1944, 112. During the restoration works of the period from 1991 to 1995, a medallion of St Thomas Aquinas came to light; it could be an attestation of the existence of the saint’s relics in the Dominican conventual church. Chronaki and Kalomoirakis 2004, 124–125; Delinikola *et al.* 2008.

311 French anonymous (1480), ‘[...] une ymaige de Nostre Dame que ung ange a paincte.’ Schefer 1882, 49–50.

Qui primo candidissime gaudium indixit  
 Prehendicat nunc passionis signacula  
 Carnem vero chastus mortalem inductus  
 Timensque letum talia pavet cernendo.<sup>312</sup>

Neither of the two travellers referring to the icon provides any information about its form or spatial setting within the church. However, the fact that they both mention that it was painted by an angel, thus attributing to it the nature of *Acheiropoietos*, is a strong indication that it was most probably an icon of Byzantine or Byzantinising style.

What makes these references even more interesting is the Latin inscription provided by Pierre Barbatre. An almost identical inscription appears in four 15th-century icons of the Virgin of the Passion signed by the famous Cretan painter Andreas Ritzos, as well as on the central panel of a tripartite icon of St Nicholas attributed to him.<sup>313</sup> The iconographical theme of the Virgin of the Passion, known already from the 12th century, became popular in 15th-century Venetian Crete, mainly because of its depiction in portable icons that subsequently circulated in the West. In this type of icon the Virgin is depicted holding the Christ Child, flanked by two angels holding the instruments of the Passion, a cross, a spear and a sponge.<sup>314</sup> Andreas Ritzos is the one credited with developing this form of the subject, appearing in the aforementioned panel around 1450, while its genesis has been suggested to have originated to meet the devotional demands of Roman Catholic patrons, a fact that justifies the Latin inscription.<sup>315</sup> It is worth mentioning a series of iconographically similar icons without the inscription, dated to the end of the 15th century, some of them attributed to Ritzos, as well as some later ones with an inscription of similar meaning in Greek.<sup>316</sup>

312 'En la cité, vers la mer, est une aultre eglise de Jacobins moult belle et est pres de Juifz quasi parmy tous Juifz, en laquelle est une ymage de Nostre Dame en paicture et a esté paincte par ung ange; et son par escript les vers qui ensuivent: Qui primo candidissime gaudium indixit / Prehendicat nunc passionis signacula / Carnem vero chastus mortalem inductus / Timensque letum talia pavet cernendo.' Pinzuti and Tucoo-Chala 1972–1973, 123.

313 The inscription on these icons reads: *Qui primo candidissime gaudium indixit / Prehindicat nunc passionis signacula / Carmen vero XPS mortalem indutus / Timensque letum talia pavat cernedo*. Newall 2016, 126–127; Cattapan 1973, 266–270.

314 On the iconography of the Virgin of the Passion, see indicatively Drandakis 1951; Sotiriou 1969; Tatić Djurić 1975; Milliner 2011.

315 Newall 2016, 128.

316 Newall 2016, 127–128, n. 136.

The hypothesis that the Dominican monastery of Candia housed an icon of the Virgin painted by Andreas Ritzos, a local painter known for his works for Latin patrons, is quite plausible. The inscription as transcribed by Barbatre is almost identical to the one appearing in known works of Ritzos, thus allowing the supposition of the attribution of the icon to his hand. The existence of this icon of the Virgin in the conventual church of the Dominicans of Candia is mentioned only in the two travelogues. The two pilgrims referring to it, the anonymous Frenchman and the French priest Pierre Barbatre, were travelling together, along with the Italian nobleman Santo Brasca, who makes no reference to the Dominican monastery of the town whatsoever. Whether the icon was permanently kept at the church of St Peter or it happened to be housed and exhibited there for a period of time during the 1480s cannot be determined with certainty. Still, the pilgrims' references are significant, since they indicate the existence in the monastery of an *Acheiropoietos*, as they attest, icon, one that could be identified as a work of the renowned Cretan painter and whose presence is not mentioned in any other sources.

## 2.6 *The Augustinian Monastery of the Saviour*

The Augustinian monastery of Candia was the most important of the Augustinian houses of the province of the Holy Land.<sup>317</sup> Its foundation was most probably linked to a papal bull of John XXII, and it may have been one of the first houses of the order that was founded in Greece.<sup>318</sup> It was located in the modern 1866 Street and until the time of its demolition in 1970 was one of the best-preserved Venetian structures in Heraklion.<sup>319</sup>

The exact date of the monastery's construction has not been determined with certainty. The house appears for the first time in a will of 1332, so its foundation can be safely placed before that date. The will's testator bequeathed 10 *hyperpera* to the Augustinians for building work and repairs, indicating the

317 The Augustinian monasteries of Greece fell under the jurisdiction of the province of the Holy Land. The province received its name from the monastery that the Augustinians initially owned in Palestine, which, however, was the first one to be lost to the order, and subsequently the province of the Holy Land comprised the insular monasteries of Greece and Cyprus. It was probably founded before 1317 and was sometimes referred to as the *Provincia Ultramarina* or the province of Cyprus. See Tsougarakis 2012, 234, nn. 1–2.

318 About the Augustinian monastery of the Saviour in Candia, see Gerola 1908, 120–121; Tsougarakis 2012, 243–247; Kitsiki-Panagopoulos 1979, 94–95; Georgopoulou 2001, 143–145; Ilko 2020.

319 Georgopoulou 2001, 143–145.

existence of the monastery.<sup>320</sup> Archaeological and architectural evidence also points to a construction date in the late 13th century or the early 14th.<sup>321</sup>

Numerous surviving wills that bequeathed money to the monastery attest to the fact that it was one of the most important Latin churches of the city. Further bequests enriched the monastery's landholdings, while there were also many endowments for chapels and family tombs of noblemen in the church.<sup>322</sup> The importance of the Augustinian monastery of Candia is also highlighted by the fact that at the General Chapter of Avignon in 1368 it was decided that the monastery would be the one to house the province's *studium generale*. It is not known if the Augustinians possessed a library like the one the Franciscans of the town did, nor if the 1368 decision for the *studium* was actually realised. However, the fact that it was the Candiot monastery that was selected to house it strongly indicates that it was one of the most important and prosperous monasteries of the Augustinian province of the Holy Land.<sup>323</sup>

The conventual church of the Saviour of the Augustinians was perhaps the largest Latin church in the city of Candia. It had one nave (44 × 16 m) that ended in a rectangular sanctuary. Its plan was simple and modest, and very few subsequent modifications altered its original form (Fig. 80). The choir was covered by two ribbed vaults, and the side walls were pierced by pointed arch windows and reinforced by nine buttresses on each side. The church was covered by a pointed wooden roof, and a bell tower rose on its north-west side.<sup>324</sup> The conventual buildings were located to the south of the church.

As far as the interior of the building is concerned, no material elements have survived to attest to its form. It was, as already mentioned, a large space, lit by several windows on its side walls. Based on the wills mentioning the church, we can deduce that elaborate altars and family chapels housing the tombs of members of prominent Candiot families could be found inside it. In 1625 ten altars were located in the church, while the high altar, dedicated to St Augustine, was covered in gold and bore the arms of the Piovence family.<sup>325</sup> The bronze lectern of the choir, which was decorated with an angel, was transferred in 1669 to Venice, to the church of Santo Stefano, but is no longer

320 McKee 1998, vol. 2, 503–505.

321 Kitsiki-Panagopoulos 1979, 94.

322 At the end of the 16th century two dukes of Candia were buried in the church. Georgopoulou 2001, 144; Tsougarakis 2012, 243.

323 Tsougarakis 2012, 246–247.

324 The bell tower was converted into a minaret when the church was turned into a mosque following the Ottoman occupation of the island. Georgopoulou 2001, 144; Gerola 1908, 121.

325 Georgopoulou 2001, 145; Panagiotakis 1987, 106–107; Ilko 2020, 11.

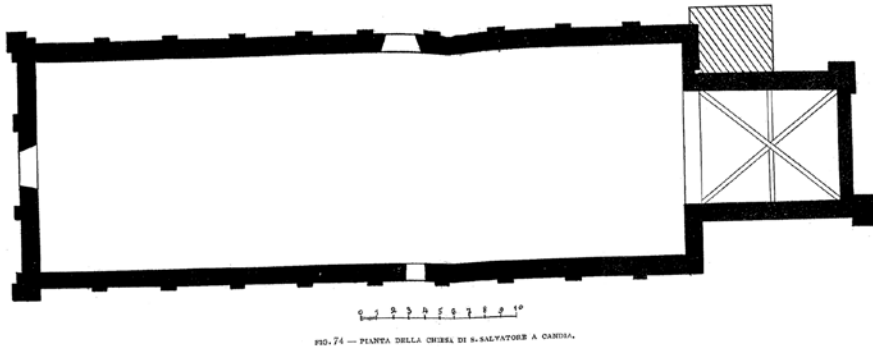


FIGURE 80 Plan of the Augustinian monastery of the Saviour, Heraklion

extant.<sup>326</sup> A very interesting and quite detailed insight into the decoration of the Augustinian conventual church was provided by the Dominican friar Felix Fabri (1480, 1483–1484), who describes the stalls of the choir decorated with figures of Christ, the Virgin, the apostles and St Augustine, as well as of the patrons of the church, carved in cypress wood.<sup>327</sup>

As already mentioned, the Augustinian monastery of Candia seems to have been the most celebrated one of the province of the Holy Land. Its significance for the order, as well as for the city of Candia, is not at all reflected in the pilgrims' narratives. The monastery is referred to in very few travelogues, most of which restrict its existence to a simple mention.

The first pilgrim to mention the Augustinian monastery of Candia is the Florentine merchant Felice Brancacci (1422–1423), who actually visited the conventual church twice during the celebrations of the saint's feast (6 August), in which the duke participated: '[...] and they led us to a church of the Saviour, where there was the feast day, and there we heard the vespers [...] On the sixth

326 Georgopoulou 2001, 145; Gerola 1908, 120; Ilko 2020, 15.

327 'Stalla vel sedilia chori sunt ingenioso artificio de lignis cypressinis facta, ita, quod supra quodlibet sedile est sculpta imago aliqua, Domini Jesu, beatæ Virginis, apostolorum omnium, beati Augustini, et imagines patronorum ecclesiae.' Fabri continues by mentioning an incident of vandalism of the holy figures by a Greek 'heretic', an act that, according to the Dominican friar, was driven by the Greek's hatred towards the Latin Church: 'Sed imagines illae passae sunt injuriam, quae etiam usque in contumeliam imaginatum pertingit; quidam enim graecus haereticus, occulte ingressus ecclesiam, abscidit nasos, omnium imaginum et opus egregium et devotum confudit. Sic enim Graeci, ubicumque possunt, nostras confundunt ecclesias, et si eis aditus ad sacra et sacramentalia patet, in odium Latinorum vel ea furantur vel effundunt.' Hassler 1843–1849, vol. 3, 282.

day the duke invited us to hear the mass, honouring us, and so we went to the aforementioned church [...].<sup>328</sup>

Just over 40 years later, in 1469, an anonymous traveller makes mention of the monastery and its church.<sup>329</sup> Following these references, and with the exception of the descriptive Dominican friar Felix Fabri, four other pilgrims mention the Augustinian monastery of Candia, without providing any further information about it, besides that it was a very beautiful church. The last mention of the monastery within the time frame of this study was made by the mayor of the city of Mons, Georges Lengherand (1485–1486), again in the form of a passing reference.

Over the course of its history, the monastery does not seem to have undergone large-scale reconstructions, thus its original form was preserved.<sup>330</sup> The friars resided in it until the island's occupation by the Ottomans. Following 1669, the conventual church was converted into a mosque, the Valide Sultan Cami. After the end of the Ottoman occupation, the building was modernised and housed a public school up until 1970, when it was demolished (Fig. 8).<sup>331</sup>

There are no specific records of relics having been kept and venerated at the Augustinian monastery of the Saviour of Candia. As already mentioned, the travelogues covering the time frame of this study make no mention of such relics or effigies in the conventual church. Nevertheless, a couple of very interesting records appear in two 17th-century travelogues, concerning an icon of the Virgin originating from Rhodes and kept and venerated in the conventual church. In particular, two Swiss travellers who visited the town in 1606 mention seeing this icon.

Johannes Habermacher, a priest from Lucerne who arrived at the port of Candia on 8 August 1606, while attesting to the existence of a (Lucan) icon originating from Rhodes, which had been translated to Crete in 1522 after that island's occupation by the Ottomans, places it in the Latin cathedral of St Titus.<sup>332</sup> It is quite possible that Habermacher confused the icon of the

328 '[...] ci menarono a una chiesa di San Salvatore, dove era il giorno la festa, e quivi udimo un vespro [...] A di 6 ci mandò il Duca a convitare a udir messa; e così andamo nella sopradetta chiesa, facendoci molto onore.' Catellacci 1881, 162.

329 Longo 1007, 202.

330 The church of the Saviour and the conventual buildings of the Augustinian monastery of Candia were damaged in the earthquake of 1508 and were subsequently repaired. Tsougarakis 2012, 247; Gerola 1908, 120.

331 Tsougarakis 2012, 185; Georgopoulou 2001, 141; Kitsiki–Panagopoulos 1979, 87, 90; Gratziou 2008, 211–214; Ilko 2020, 4.

332 '[...] Da hatt man ouch vnser lieben frowen bildnuß, so S. Lucas gemalet hatt, wöllche man von Rodis dahin bracht alls dieselbig jnsul vnder deß Türgken gwallt anno 1522 kommen.' Schmid 1957b, 176–177.



FIGURE 81 The Augustinian monastery of the Saviour, Heraklion

Mesopanditissa, which has been housed for centuries in the town's cathedral, with an icon that came from Rhodes in the mid-16th century.

The attestation of the second Swiss traveller is much more descriptive and detailed: Wolfgang Stockman refers to the Latin cathedral of the town and the icon kept in it, providing details – such as its procession to the Orthodox cathedral of the Virgin of the Angels – that make its identification with the icon of the Virgin Mesopanditissa safe, if not certain.<sup>333</sup> Subsequently, and while describing a procession of the icon in supplication for rain, the Swiss pilgrim speaks of another icon of the Virgin, kept in the Augustinian monastery, the one also mentioned by Johannes Habermacher, originating from Rhodes and translated to Crete in 1522.<sup>334</sup>

333 'Item in der sälbigen kilchen ist ein cappelen, darin ist ein altt vnser frowen bild, welches biild wunderzeigen gedan vnd noch duott. Dis gemältt bild nämend die Griechen alj ziinstdag vnd dragen es in der procesion vs gemälter kiirchen jn die kriegchisch thuomkiirchen, welche la Madona di Angeli genampt. Vnd läsen alda vff griechish manier jre mäs.' Schmid 1957c, 340.

334 '[...] so nämend sy gemälts vnser frowen bild, nitt alein Griechen, sonder ales volch in gmein vnd dragent es in procesion wiis in das closter zuo santt Saluator, alda es ein

The distinction between the Madonna of St Titus and the icon of the Virgin that came from the island of the Hospitallers is very clear in Habermacher's description, leaving no doubt that an icon other than the Mesopanditissa, the Lucan icon of St Francis or the one attested by the two French travellers in the Dominican monastery was kept and displayed at the conventual church of the Augustinian monastery.<sup>335</sup>

Neither of the two pilgrims referring to the icon provides any information about its form or spatial setting within the church. According to Krisztina Ilko, the icon mentioned by the Swiss pilgrims was indeed an icon of the Virgin originating from the Augustinian monastery of Rhodes, located in the chapel dedicated to the Virgin Mary. Based on its description by Archbishop Luca Stella in 1625, Ilko suggests that it was a *vita* icon, in which, instead of scenes from her life, scenes of miracles surrounded the central figure of the Virgin, resembling the icon of the Virgin commissioned for a Carmelite church, most probably in Nicosia.<sup>336</sup> Whether the icon was permanently kept at the church of the Saviour or it was housed and exhibited there for a period of time that coincided with the Swiss pilgrims' visit in 1606 and that of the archbishop's in 1625 cannot be determined with certainty, since today it is lost and no other records of it have survived.



Overall, Candia presents quite a different case than the other ports of call within the area of this study. It is the town that is mentioned more than any other, appearing in over 100 travelogues. As reflected in the narratives, the town stands out as an important port of call on the way to the Holy Land. Its safe and impressively fortified harbour was a meeting point of pilgrims from all over Europe and provided amenities for traders and travellers, as well as large markets both in the town and in the *borgo*. These details, along with information about the island's ancient and Christian history, are recounted in every travelogue that refers to it. However, the number of pilgrims that mention one or more of its religious institutions is significantly lower. Unlike Corfu and Modon, the town of Candia pleasantly surprised the Western visitors with its large streets and beautiful buildings, the grandeur of its churches and the

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ander vnser frowenbild hatt siberin, jn einem alttdar ingefasset, welches vnser frowenbild der grosmeister von Rodis nach der vbergabung Rodis anno 1522 mit sich in Candia mitsampt fiil anderen kilchenziertt gebracht vnd es dem closter vererett.' Schmid 1957b, 176–177.

335 Schmid 1957c, 340–341.

336 Ilko 2020, 11–12. The description of the icon can be found in Ilko 2020, 12, n. 57.



impressive and elaborate mendicant monasteries. In and around the town a religious traveller could visit imposing churches and monasteries and prostrate to important relics and effigies: Christological and apostolic mementoes, Lucan and miraculous Byzantine icons of the Virgin and saintly relics, as well as the mountain summit sanctified by an apostle's presence, all marking the holy topography of the town. These places and objects could not but appear in the pilgrims' narratives, inserting the island town into the topography of holy and sacred sites dotting the route to the Holy Land.

Candia is also the sole port of call in the studied area whose sacred sites do not coincide with a location evoked in the *Santa Parola*. In the cases of Corfu, the Strophades and Modon, each area's most eminent holy site or cult is evoked in the seafarers' prayer. Inversely, the only two sites on the island of Crete evoked in the *Santa Parola* are not located in the town of Candia and rarely appear in the pilgrims' narratives: the churches of the Virgin at Fraskia and Santa Veneranda in the Bay of Dermata may have been important navigational landmarks, but, as inferred by their omission from the travelogues, they were definitely not treated as worship-worthy sites by the pilgrims.<sup>337</sup> It makes one wonder if the inclusion of two of the most prominent cults of Candia, St Titus or the Virgin Mesopanditissa, in the *Santa Parola* would have boosted their fame and augmented their importance in the eyes of the religious travellers.

Summing up, Candia does not appear to be treated as a place of significance in the pilgrims' itinerary in a way that corresponds to what it had to offer to a pious traveller. As in all the towns within the area of this study, it seems that the agents that could promote it and render it an eminent pilgrimage destination were not mobilised. Perhaps, following the Venetian policy of religious tolerance and keeping in mind not to threaten the fragile equilibrium between the local population and the Latins, the town's authorities, both secular and religious, decided not to market the island's sacred topography to visitors, especially since their most popular 'commodities' – St Titus's relic and the icon of the Mesopanditissa – could also be claimed by the Orthodox. Thus, the rivalry that divided the two rites prevented the formation of a common strategy to showcase the island's sacred heritage.<sup>338</sup> In broad lines, the two major cults of Candia were strong and highly celebrated, but their promotion seems to have been mainly aimed at the locals rather than the pilgrims and travellers, and

337 In the case of Corfu the site evoked in the *Santa Parola* is also located far away from the town; however, it is the one amassing the largest number of references within the area of this study.

338 Georgopoulou 2013, 150–157, esp. 152.

it was indeed very successful on a regional level. The same appears to apply to the mendicant monasteries. The absence of references to the icon of the Virgin Mesopanditissa is perhaps the biggest puzzle when it comes to Candia, but one could postulate that the icons of the Virgin sold in the town's market, as attested by several pilgrims, were copies of the city's most venerated effigy. The holy sites of Candia have a constant presence in the travelogues throughout the 14th to the 16th centuries, but it appears that the grandeur and the richness of the relic collections of its religious institutions were not efficiently exploited, thus failing to elevate the town to the most prominent pilgrims' destination among the other ports of call within the studied area.

## Conclusions

In this survey the gradual shaping and formation of the sacred topography of pilgrims in regard to the wide area of the Ionian Islands, the Peloponnese and Crete has been observed and analysed, while travelling with them, through their writings, as they sailed the Ionian and the Aegean towards Jerusalem. The texts examined in this study proved to be invaluable sources of information. Behind the common descriptions of sites and objects that reveal that the vast majority of pilgrims were already well-informed by pilgrim guides, one can discern personal beliefs, faith and fears, thoughts and sentiments, as well as formed aesthetic views and cultural and social backgrounds.

The particularity of the studied area is compellingly reflected in the pilgrims' narratives: a space where Latins coexisted with a population with strongly rooted Byzantine traditions; the absence (excepting in the town of Candia) of elaborate structures and the 'important' relics pilgrims were so eager to approach; and, subsequently, their acquaintance with peripheral cults and sites, most of which were places of devotion of different confessional groups. It is in these cases, when the travellers move away from the norm of standard descriptions, that the true value of their narratives lies. In fact, in such examples as the cult of St Leo of Modon or the icons of the Virgin in the Dominican monastery of Modon and the Dominican and Augustinian monasteries of Candia their texts are among the very few – if not the only – available sources about them. Their testimonies, echoing expectations, both spiritual and aesthetic, and conveying personal experiences, reflect the ways in which each site was perceived and shed light on the reasons for its insertion and its importance in the pilgrims' holy itinerary.

Besides the pious travellers, the undisputable protagonists in the forming of the sacred topography of the studied area, other actors also played an important role. The mariners, linked with the sea, its dangers and its routes, had already formed their own religious topography. This network of sites, encompassing famous cults and sites, as well as the peripheral 'unknown' small *peregrinagia maritima*, found an expression in the *Santa Parola* litany, a mariners' prayer chanted in times of peril, listing all the aforementioned sites that dotted the main sea routes of medieval navigation. Lastly, the local actors, the religious and secular officials of each area, also participated in the process.

The studied area's sacred topography appears to have evolved along with the ports the pilgrims visited, induced in a way by their physical movement towards their desired destination, the Holy Land. Sailing through the Ionian and the Aegean, the galleys regularly docked at the Venetian-controlled

ports of Kassiopei, Corfu, the Strophades, Modon and Candia, and their passengers, anticipating the religious experience of visiting Jerusalem, sought – and projected – new and different cultic meanings at each port's cult sites. The 'sacred topography' shaped by the pilgrims included several sites and local cults belonging to already existing subnetworks, such as the ones of the Marian cult sites and the memorial sites connected with St Francis's voyage to Egypt, as well as the 'holy topography of sailing', the 'holy portolano' described in the *Santa Parola* litany.

Entering Greece and travelling around it towards Crete, the pilgrims experienced the liminality of the geographic space and the cult sites they visit while in the studied area; this concept of liminality was perceived in many ways and in several aspects: since embarking on the galleys in Venice, they travelled on a threshold between the sea and the dry land, visiting cult sites that stand between two dimensions, the earthly and the divine. In addition to the above, Venetian-occupied Greece also stood on the verge between the East and the West, the Orthodox Byzantium and the Latin Venice. In fact, all of the major cult sites visited within the geographical frame of this study are actually sites of interaction, mainly between these two different cultures. Furthermore, in the cases of the Virgin in Kassiopei and the Strophades monastery, the symbolic liminality of a site perceived as a threshold between heaven and earth was enhanced by the surrounding landscape, as well as its architectural framing, to such a degree that it almost became tangible.

While sharing the common characteristics of the Latin-ruled, formerly Byzantine Greek Orthodox territories, the studied ports of call differ significantly in several other aspects. The church of the Virgin in Kassiopei and the monastery of the Virgin of Strophades stand out as maritime Marian shrines directly linked to the circumstances of navigation. Their geographical location, offering protection from bad weather conditions and turbulent seas, was the reason for their inclusion in the sacred topography of sailing prior to their introduction to the pilgrims. Both sites are evoked in the *Santa Parola*, and there should be no doubt that the crews of the galleys would have informed the pilgrims about the miracles and legends with which they were enriched. Furthermore, the small church in Kassiopei and the fortified Strophades monastery, both Orthodox institutions that housed miraculous Byzantine icons of the Virgin, seem to have addressed to the core the religious pilgrimage by combining legends, miracles and divine power and protection with extraordinary – to the eyes of a Western visitor – architecture, decoration, customs and cultic practices, as well as an evocative interaction of the building with its surrounding landscape. Thus, their insertion into the sacred topography of the sea route to Jerusalem and subsequently their elevation to international pilgrimages

should be considered mainly as a result of the synergy of the two groups involved in the marine experience: sailors, who had already integrated them into their religious topographical network, and pilgrims, who, induced by the crews of their galleys, conveyed them to a larger audience.

The cities of Corfu and Modon, important ports of the Venetian *Stato da Mar*, appeared quite unattractive to the pilgrims. In both towns the Latin cathedrals housed the relics of their patron saint, St Arsenius and St Leo respectively, initially worshipped by the local Orthodox and subsequently appropriated by the Latins and venerated by both confessional groups. However, while Corfu's cathedral and the holy relics held in it appear sparsely in the travelogues, the holy body of Modon's St Leo has a constant and uninterrupted presence in their narratives, standing out as an important cultic focus. It would be logical to deduce that the status of St Leo as a pilgrim was a decisive factor in the elevation of his cult to an international level. Pilgrims would have felt closely connected to the saint, with whom they shared the common experience of pilgrimage. Prostrating to his relics would have been a spiritually rewarding experience, symbolically linking them to their destination. The case of St Leo of Modon could be indicative of the way in which a peripheral cult site located on the sea route to Jerusalem was associated with the Holy Land and attributed new meanings through the pilgrims' experience, resulting in it surpassing its regional character and obtaining a much larger audience.

Finally, the island of Crete and the town of Candia present a different case. The most important commercial port of the *Serenissima* in the Eastern Mediterranean offered the pilgrims visiting it a variety of cultic foci: Christological relics, Lucan icons, saintly relics and apostolic mementos were displayed for public veneration in its churches and monasteries. Furthermore, it was the only town where the buildings providing the architectural framing to the relics were praised as elaborate and impressive, while the grandiosity of their interiors was attested by many pilgrims. Its patron saint, St Titus, was an eyewitness of the Passion of Christ and was ordained as a bishop by the Apostle Paul himself. At the same time, it was the sole area within the geographical limits of this study where pilgrims could visit a memorial site perceived as an 'extension of the Holy Land' – the mountain summit where the Apostle Paul resided and wrote several of his epistles. The Franciscan friars of St Francis owned and displayed a significant collection of Christological relics, thus claiming for their monastery the title of a 'New Jerusalem' and enabling pilgrims to evoke the sanctity of the Holy Land by venerating the reminders of Christ's passage on earth. One could therefore speculate that Crete and its major coastal town of Candia had all the prerequisites and should thus have been the most prominent pilgrim destination within the studied area.

However, this does not appear to be the case. While it certainly cannot be supported on any grounds that Candia was not an integral part of the pilgrims' sacred topography, it seems to have failed to emerge as the foremost destination within the area of this study in a way commensurate to what it had to offer to a religious traveller. In any event, the cultic sites of Candia have a constant presence in the travelogues throughout the 14th to the 16th centuries, but the number, as well as the length, of references to them indicate that the grandeur of the city's religious institutions and their rich collections of important relics were not efficiently exploited and promoted in order to stand out among the other ports of call of the area of this survey.

Besides the aforementioned differences, the studied ports and towns share a number of common aspects that should be noted as affecting the reasons, the way and the extent of their appearance in the travelogues and, subsequently, their inclusion in the pilgrims' sacred topography. All of the major cultic sites frequently mentioned by the pilgrims, with the exception of the Franciscan monastery of Candia, were related to Orthodox cults and relics that were appropriated by the Venetians after their arrival and venerated by Greeks and Latins alike. In addition, aside from the cultic sites of Candia, all of the other sites and/or major cults (the Virgin of Kassiopi, the Virgin of Strophades and St Leo) were also parts of the 'holy topography of sailing', evoked in the *Santa Parola* litany, thus almost certainly promulgated by the crews of the pilgrims' galleys. Furthermore, aside from Kassiopi and the Strophades, which stood out in the pilgrims' references as Marian cult sites, Modon and Crete were also parts of the same subnetwork. In fact, as attested in many travelogues, in Candia one could see and prostrate to four miraculous icons of the Virgin, at least two of which were attributed to the Evangelist Luke. Finally, a common feature of all of the studied locations is the lack of systematic and organised large-scale promotion of their major cults by the local authorities and clergies as a pilgrims' destination. This should most probably be linked to the Venetian religious policy towards its Orthodox subjects, since the cults in question, and especially the cults of St Arsenius of Corfu and St Titus of Crete, were endorsed and grandiosely celebrated on a local level, aiming to ratify Venetian authority and contribute to the homogeneity of the local mixed society. Thus, their promulgation seems to have been directed to the city dwellers rather than to foreign visitors and pilgrims. The 'introverted' character of these cults should be considered as an important factor in the way in which they were perceived and the extent to which each one appeared in the travelogues.

However, the role of the metropolis should not be overlooked. Venetian rule provided the necessary framework in order for all of the studied towns to become a network of ports of call of the galleys carrying the pilgrims to the

Holy Land, thus introducing cultic sites and phenomena, which would otherwise have been restricted to a regional level, to an international audience. Even though there does not seem to have been a centralised, organised and targeted promotion of any of the studied locations as a pilgrims' destination, the Latin presence and the security provided under the aegis of the *Serenissima* were undeniably key factors that allowed other agents, such as the pilgrims and the mariners, as well as local actors, to promote and elevate each place's cultic phenomena. In this sense, Venetian rule linked the studied ports to each other, making them parts of the Venetian *Stato da Mar*, connecting them by extension also to Jerusalem, and it should thus be considered as a constructive element of the area's sacred topography.

The pilgrims' passage through the Ionian, along the coast of the Peloponnese and to the island of Crete presented them with a variety of religious experiences and acquainted them with Orthodox customs and practices. Reading carefully through the travelogues, one can distinguish the cults and sites that became pilgrim destinations on the way to Jerusalem. Out of all of the stops the galleys made in the former Byzantine Greek territories – Zante, Cephalonia and Coron, as well as several islands in the Aegean – the studied ports and towns stand out as important stages in the pilgrims' gradual approach to the Holy Land. The church of the Virgin in Kassiopi is the site that really stands out among all the rest, appearing in a significant number of travelogues throughout the 14th to the 16th centuries. Corfu, the Strophades, Modon and Crete also have a constant presence in the narratives. The emergence of these sites as integral parts of the network of holy and sacred sites dotting the way to Jerusalem allows for the observation of how that network was shaped and indicates that the insertion of a cult site into it was not due exclusively to its involvement in the Jerusalem pilgrimage, but was rather a synergy of several factors, with the pilgrims having the decisive role of imbuing it with a new perspective and introducing it to a new and larger audience.





# Bibliography

## Abbreviations

AB	<i>Analecta Bollandiana</i>
ΑΔ	<i>Αρχαιολογικόν Δελτίον</i>
BHG	Halkin, F. (ed.) 1957. <i>Bibliotheca hagiographica graeca</i> , Subsidia hagiographica 8a, Brussels: Société des Bollandistes.
BS	<i>Bibliotheca sanctorum</i> 1961–1970. Rome: Istituto Giovanni xxiii nella Pontificia Università lateranense, 12 vols.
ΔΑΕΚ	<i>Δελτίον Αναγνωστικής Εταιρείας Κερκύρας</i>
ΔΧΑΕ	<i>Δελτίον της Χριστιανικής Αρχαιολογικής Εταιρείας</i>
REB	<i>Revue des études byzantines</i>
ROL	<i>Revue de l'Orient Latin</i>
StVen	<i>Studi veneziani</i>
ZDPV	<i>Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins</i>

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