

## CHAPTER 23

### HODIGITRIA AND APEZANES

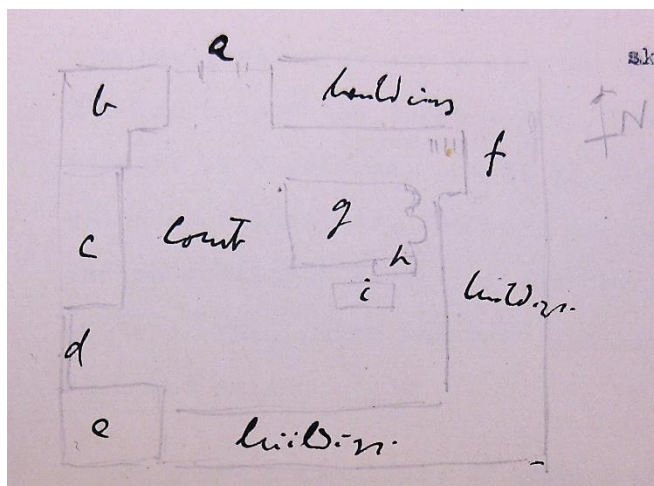
#### HODIGITRIA MONASTERY<sup>1</sup>



(left) IMG\_0992 The monastery, showing Xopateras' tower to the right  
 (right) IMG\_0993 The monastery church from the north

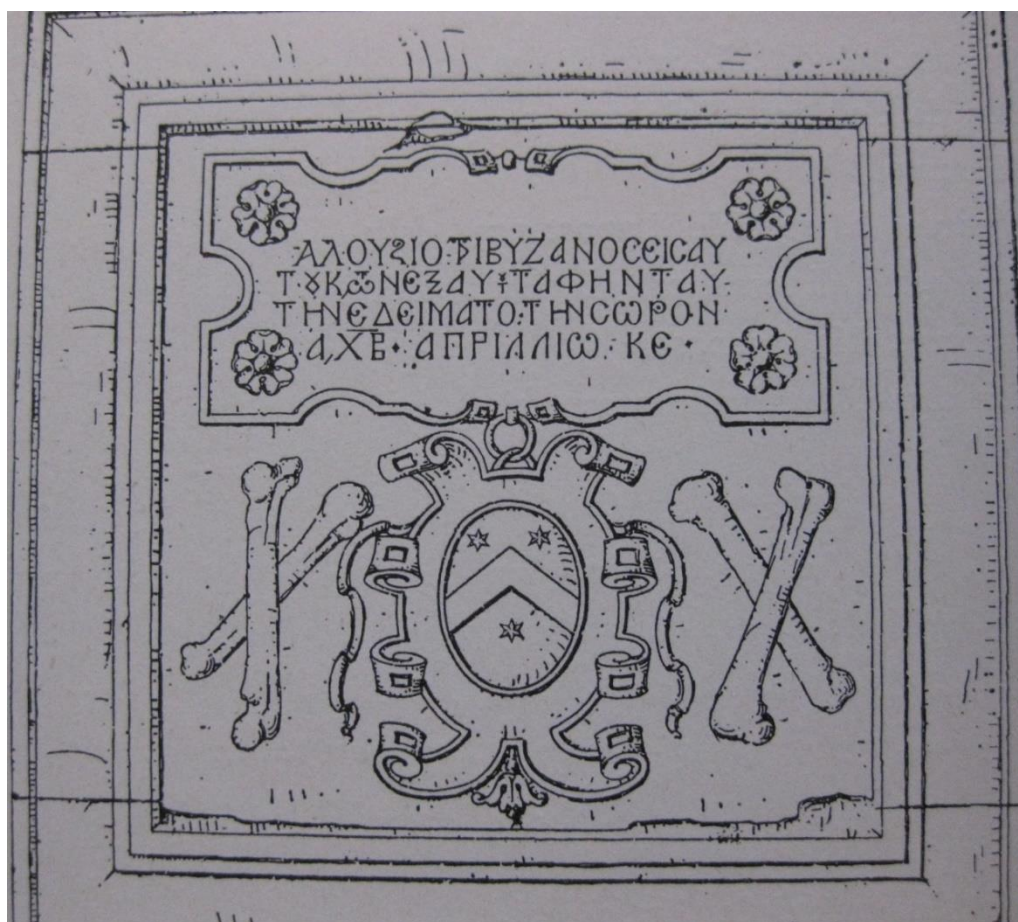
The Monastery of Hodigitria (Η Οδηγήτρια), Our Lady of Guidance, is about one hour to the north of Kaloi Limniones. It lies at the head of a narrow valley with low hills on each side. I passed through it in September 1917 [2 Sept. 1916] on the way from Kaloi Limniones [earlier version: one hour from Kaloi Limniones] to Pombia, and again in April 1918 coming from Matala to Kaloi Limniones: on this occasion I slept in the monastery. The buildings lie on a rising knoll amongst the higher hills and the rough, rocky slopes called in Crete *khalepa*.<sup>2</sup> Round the courtyard are a few olives and other trees and small gardens. It presents the usual type of a monastery built on open ground: an oblong court with a church standing free in the middle. The buildings are plain and very rustic: the only remarkable thing is the square tower to the right of the entrance with its little windows and battlements. This is the tower of the famous monk Xopateras [see below]. The buildings all have the old Cretan flat roofs and are, I think, of only one storey except the tower and the new guesthouse at the SW corner of the court. This has been left unfinished for lack of funds. The monks are preparing to give it a flat roof, though they would like to have the hideous red French tiles, to their taste so much more beautiful.<sup>3</sup> The church as well as the tower is said to be old; the rest of the buildings seem quite recent. The only notable inscription is one on a slab tomb in a small enclosure by the south wall of the church (h on the plan). It has been published by Xanthoudides, but I give my copy of it below.

The monastery is stavropegiac and therefore prays for the patriarch. Like most Cretan monasteries it practises the idiorrhymic way of life. [From earlier draft: though Toplou and Koudouma are koinovia.] It is one of the pleasantest and most old-fashioned of all the Cretan monasteries. As generally in west Crete, the monks wear the usual Cretan dress with bags but a monkish cap; cassocks are only worn on the more churchy occasions. [in earlier draft: Oldfashioned monks e.g. at Preveli don't wear cassocks and differ from the laity only in the little monk's cap and hair.]



Sketch plan of Hodigitria

- a. Gate
- b. Tower of Xopatera
- c. Abbot's cell
- d. Wall
- e. New unfinished *xenon*
- f. Present guest-room
- g. Church
- h. Inscribed tomb with inscription below
- i. Tombs<sup>4</sup>



Inscription on tomb (Gerola IV 563)

Inscription on tomb. It is a slab tomb in an enclosure by the south wall of the church. Below the inscription is the coat of arms with a foliated border and on each side of the coat are crossbones. Date AXB = 1602.<sup>5</sup>

At this visit I slept at the monastery.

The hero of the place is the monk Xopateras, after whom the tower is called. According to the tradition of the monastery, he was held a prisoner at Constantinople. He seized his gaoler, pressed his thumbs into his ears till he killed him, and made his escape to the patriarchate. Thence, disguised as a woman, he got back to Crete. A

force of Turks was sent to the monastery to take him. He made a desperate defence in the tower, was finally killed and the whole monastery burned. The buildings as they now stand, except the tower and the church, were built after this disaster. The old blind monk at Preveli, Meletios, told me that when he was defending himself in the tower, his sister stood by him loading the guns for him. When he had shot away all his ammunition, he took the beehives which were kept at the top of the tower and threw them down upon the Turks below. There is in the reception room a picture of Xopateras, but it is only a few years old [in earlier draft: dated only 2 or 3 years ago] and has no value as a likeness. The hero is represented, like the present monks, in Cretan dress in the conventional style of the Cretan warrior. There is a ballad of Xopateras which has been published by Jeannaris with the date [1828].<sup>6</sup>

I was given a few lines of such a ballad at Myrthios, and indeed most people seem at least to know snatches of it. [in earlier draft: Kosti Khronakis who was then I think with me knows a few lines.] The lines were:

Ούτε στην Κρήτη φάνηκε ούτε στην Εγγλιτέρα  
να πολεμήσει μνία Τουρκιά ωσάν τον Ξωπατέρα.  
“Μπουρμάδες μου, δεν είν’ αντρεία, μον’ είνε πουστουλούκι  
να πολεμάτ’ έναν παπά εννιά χιλιάδες Τούρκοι.”<sup>7</sup>

Neither in Crete has been seen, not yet in England  
one to fight against the Turks like Xopateras.  
“My Turkish clowns, this is no manly deed but a dirty trick  
for nine thousand Turks to fight against one priest.”<sup>8</sup>

### [NEAR HODIGITRIA]

When I came to Hodigitria from Matala I passed through the rather large village of Pitsidia which has a cruciform domed church. After passing through Pitsidia three crosses are to be seen cut on the rocky ground: these serve to mark the limit of the monastery lands. The same is found elsewhere in Crete, and at Toplou the little shrine called *Stavros* serves the same purpose [in earlier draft: according to Yannis].

On this same road, about an hour and a half from Matala, there is a wall-fountain – the spout of water is in the face of a wall, behind which there is as a rule some sort of cistern – and in front of it thirty stone troughs in a row used for watering sheep. On the fountain is an inscription: ‘This fountain was erected when .... was abbot in 1904’ (fig. 1).<sup>9</sup> The name of the abbot has been erased. I heard at the monastery that it was the present man, Meletios, but enough is left of the erased name to show that it was something different.

[in earlier draft: ROUTE: Matala Pitsidia Odiyitria, Kaloi Limniones, Apezanés.]

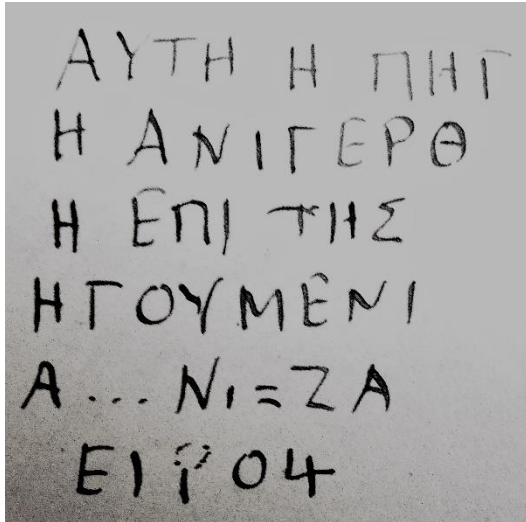
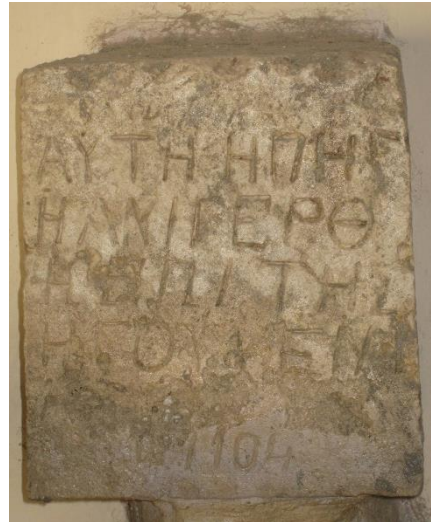


Fig. 1: Inscription on fountain



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Then, half an hour's distance from Hodigitria, the path goes by some fairly conspicuous buildings on a rise in the ground. Over the door of a little church – the door was locked – is the white marble fragment in the sketch (fig. 2) with letters – ΓΑΘ alone are left – set in the angles of a cross, and in a house now used as part of a sheepfold (*μυτάτο*) is a fragment carved with the usual Venetian billet moulding. The monks say that here Eftykhios, a disciple of St Titos, lived the ascetic life and they call the place [At] the Saints (*στος' Αγίους*).<sup>10</sup>

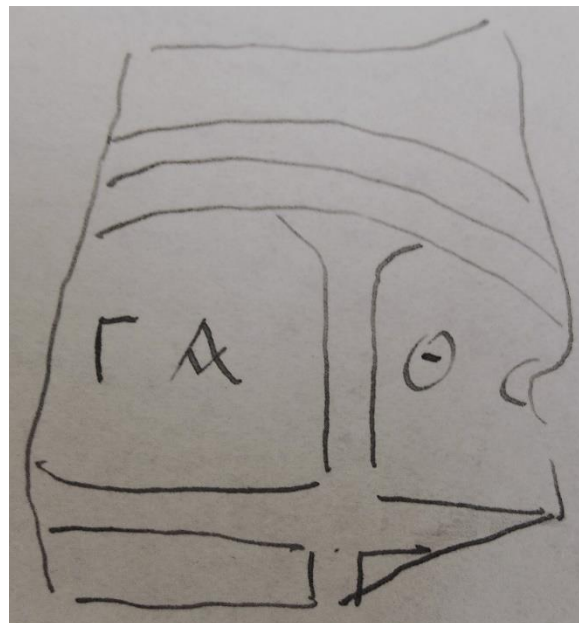


Fig. 2: Inscription over church door

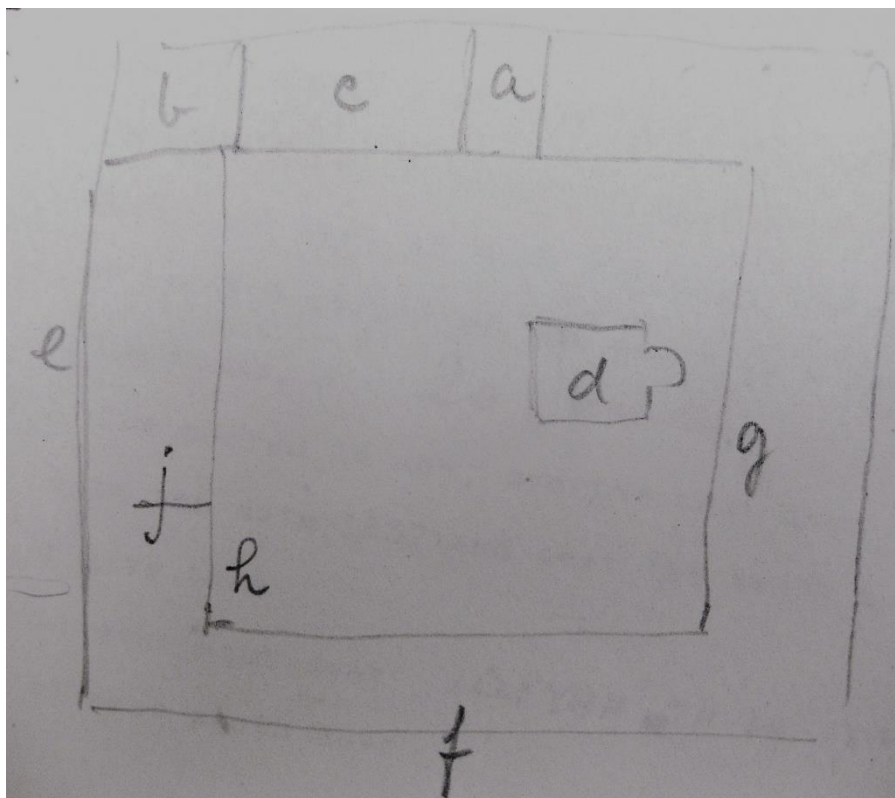


**Apezanes<sup>11</sup>**

There is another monastery close to Kaloi Limniones: this is the Monastery of St Anthony, called Apezanes. I went there in April 1918 after visiting Hodigitria. It lies on high ground [orig. text: 450m.] with a few trees round it, but no gardens or anything to lend charm to the cold and wintry-looking situation. Though there are some twenty monks there, the whole place looks neglected and woebegone. The buildings are all of one storey only, except the new and very ugly guesthouse, which with its two storeys and high rooms is the tallest building there. All have the old-fashioned flat roofs [orig. text: domata] and not tiles.

It lies just out of the big valley in which are the villages of Pigaïdakia and Antiskari. I came up from Kaloi Limniones through Pigaïdakia and nearly lost the way: it was not easy to find without a guide. I slept at the monastery and the next day went down to the Mesara plain [12-13 April 1918].

The court is all bare rock,<sup>12</sup> and this and the half-ruined half-reconstructed state of the buildings, which were never really rebuilt after being burned by the Turks in 1810 (see below), give the whole place a very desolate look.



Sketch plan of monastery from notes and memory

- a. Entrance gate
- b. Tower
- c. Guesthouse
- d. Church
- e. Old Venetian work on ground floor. Top floor burned.
- f. Old one-storied range
- g. Inscription (below) giving 1814 as date of restoration
- h. Plaque with date 1813, June 24th (see below)
- j. Inscription giving 1810, Feb 4th as date of burning

The door is on the north side of the court and looks new, but there is an older door further out which looks Venetian. On the outside of the west range there are remains of late Venetian windows on the ground floor. An upper floor has been destroyed by fire.<sup>13</sup> The south range, now at least of one storey only, also looks old.

At the north-west corner of the court is a tower, now united to the equally high guesthouse. The inscriptions on various parts of the buildings tell the story of the ruin of the place. First at J in the plan we have a record of destruction: “in 1810 on the fourth of February it was destroyed”. This inscription is worked in pebbles set in the plaster of a piece of wall belonging to the destroyed upper storey of the west range. It would appear that this surviving piece of wall was re-plastered

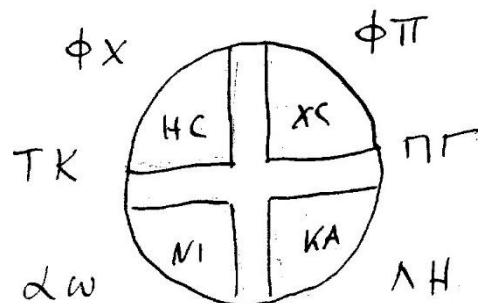
to carry this record of the destruction.

Next there is what must be taken as a building inscription at H in the plan, over the arch in the south-west corner of the court. The first four lines I found quite illegible, but the last three are as in the figure. The first line gives the date of building, June 24<sup>th</sup>, 1813 and the letters of the last two lines give the same date by adding up their numerical values, that is if in the place of the last letter, which is illegible, we restore I B; thus:

IC	XC
NI	KA
TK	ΠΓ
NEKE	ΕΜΜΙ
ΗΙΣΘΙ	ΙΘΝΙΟΓ
18	14

The next date is on a window of the range of cells near the south-east corner of the church (G). After the usual ‘Jesus Christ conquers’ in the angles of the cross, we have the letters TKΠΓ – Τόπος Κρανίου Παράδεισος Γέγονεν (The place of a skull has become Paradise), and then ‘Restored in the month of June, 1814’.<sup>14</sup>

Lastly the church, which looks quite recent, has over the west door the words ‘Restored [Founded] June 24<sup>th</sup>, 1837’ and over the south door the slab shown in the figure, with the date ΑΩΛΗ (1838). The four letters above (ΦΧ ΦΠ) mean Φως Χριστού Φαίνει Πάσιν (‘The Light of Christ shines upon all’). The other letters are the same as those in the inscription (TKΠΓ).



From the inscriptions therefore it seems that the monastery was destroyed [in earlier draft: burned] in 1810, that the monks returned and patched up the buildings in 1813 and 1814, and that a new church was built in 1837 and 1838 [in earlier draft: I saw no treasures there.]

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**Peter Mackridge's notes**

<sup>1</sup> For Odigitria Monastery see also Psilakis I 207 ff. We visited it on 21 Oct. 2009.

<sup>2</sup> These particular slopes have outcrops of whiteish rock (limestone or gypsum?).

<sup>3</sup> The guesthouse still had a flat roof when we visited.

<sup>4</sup> In 2009 the gate a was the side entrance, by which we entered. The main entrance was immediately north of the guesthouse. South-east of Dawkins' b was a barrel-vaulted well-head with a pointed arch. A building at or near Dawkins' f was a museum, formerly the olive-press (λαδαριό) bakery.

<sup>5</sup> I have substituted Gerola's sketch for Dawkins'. The tombstone is on the ground, no doubt in the same place as in Dawkins' time. The inscription, elegantly incised in archaic Greek, was transcribed by Xanthoudidis 1903: 134. It translates as "Aloizios Trivyranos built his mortal remains and those of his issue into this tomb." Xanthoudidis remarks that even though the man's Christian name and surname were Italian, he was an Orthodox Christian. I would add that his name is characteristically Venetian: Alvise Trevisan. There seem to be five people with this name who currently have LinkedIn accounts. Gerola's photo of the slab is published in Curuni and Donati, *Creta Veneziana*, p. 386.

<sup>6</sup> Jeannarakis publishes two variants (pp. 59-61), neither of which contains the abusive terms quoted by Dawkins. He erroneously writes the name Ξεπατέρας. Dawkins omits to explain the appellation Xopatēras 'defrocked priest or monk'. The reason why he was defrocked is said to be either that he killed a janissary or that he had an illegitimate child with a woman with whom he cohabited (or possibly both).

<sup>7</sup> These two couplets are from a longer song about Xopatēras published by Pavlos Fafoutakis, *Συλλογή κρητικών ηρωικών ασμάτων* (Athens 1889), p. 81. Μπουρμάς (from Turkish *burma* 'twisted, screwed, wringed') 'renegade' (term of abuse used by Christian Cretans against their Muslim compatriots): Orfanos 2014: 290-1); πουστουλούκι (from Turkish *puştuluk* 'behaviour of a *puşt* (sodomite); untrustworthiness').

<sup>8</sup> Dawkins retells the story of Xopatēras in "Folk-memory in Crete", p. 33-34.

<sup>9</sup> This was in the monastery museum when we visited in October 2009.

<sup>10</sup> The name of the location is properly stressed (according to the Cretan dialect) as στος' Αγιούς. The church with the marble fragment mentioned by Dawkins was the chapel of the ruined monastery of Saints Eftychios and Eftychianos. Gerola IV 563 says the inscription is Byzantine and reads the word it as ΑΓΑΘ[ΟΣ] 'good'. Only fragments of this monastery remain today; a new chapel was built on the site in 2008-9. According to the website [http://www.imodigitrias.gr/IMO\\_Eftihianoι.htm](http://www.imodigitrias.gr/IMO_Eftihianoι.htm), the monastery was destroyed during the Cretan war of 1645-69.

<sup>11</sup> Dawkins' original text and sketches are dated 12 April 1918. For Apezanes see also Psilakis II 239 ff. According to legend, the monastery was originally situated in the Agiofarango gorge, south of the Odigitria, where a medieval church of St Antony still stands. In order to save the icon of the saint from pirate raids, the monks took it inland. At a certain place the animal carrying the icon stopped and refused to proceed. Thereupon the monks decided to dismount and build a new monastery on that spot. The name Apezanes is reputed (rather implausibly) to derive from the Cretan verb απεζεύγω 'dismount'.

<sup>12</sup> The rock is now concreted (Oct. 2009).

<sup>13</sup> The old west range has since been demolished.

<sup>14</sup> No longer there Oct. 2009.