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Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents:

A Complete Translation of the Surviving Founders' Typika *and Testaments*

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CHAPTER ONE

Traditional Private Religious Foundations

"So, today we have been led by the fatherly commands to leave this rule in writing as an enduring monument for later generations; and as far as we can, we have submitted ourselves in obedience." (4) *Stoudios* [1]

"I made up my mind . . . to leave you the present fatherly testament of mine, just as carnal fathers leave their children an earthly inheritance of silver and gold and other property . . ." (6) *Rila* [2]

"When I said: 'But the brothers are afraid, father, that you will die suddenly and leave the monastery high and dry, without having either made a will or given any other instructions for the two monasteries,' the father answered: 'They have no cause for fear on that score; there will be a rule, and the emperor and patriarch are going to see it.' " (9) *Galesios* [223]

There are ten documents in this first group of Byzantine monastic foundation documents, dating from the early seventh to the late eleventh century. Most of these were written for the traditional private religious foundations that dominated the ecclesiastical landscape of the Byzantine Empire during these centuries.[1] Since monasticism itself had its origins in Egypt in the fourth century as a movement of lay piety, the first monasteries were themselves necessarily private foundations. Although the emperors and the ecclesiastical hierarchy sponsored churches from the time of Constantine (306–337), there was at first no tradition of patronage of monasteries by the public authorities of late antiquity. Many bishops who did later found monasteries, beginning in the fifth century, chose to regard them as personal possessions rather than as diocesan institutions. So even before the end of late antiquity, the tradition of the Byzantine monastery's independence of public authority had struck deep roots.

This proved to be one virtually ineradicable legacy of late antiquity bequeathed to the medieval Byzantine monastic tradition. Indeed, most of the documents included in this chapter take for granted the private status of the foundations for which they were written. They typically offer little explicit evidence on their patronage and legal status until either alternative forms of private organization or threats to their independence emerged, both of which happened in a significant way in Byzantium only in the eleventh century.

[1] For a survey, see my *Private Religious Foundations in the Byzantine Empire* (Washington, D.C., 1987), esp. chaps. 1, 2, and 4.

A. Typology of the Documents

1. Predecessors to the Monastic Foundation Documents

The development of the monastic *typikon*, the Byzantine monastic foundation document par excellence, was one of the achievements of this era of private religious foundations. Already in late antique times, there were documents such as Basil of Caesarea's *Longer Rules* that covered much of the same content as later medieval *typika* even if their structure was entirely different. By the same token, there were documents like the Pachomian *Precepts* or the *Regulations of Horsiesios* that were structured somewhat like medieval *typika* even if the scope and content of their regulation was more restricted than the later, fully developed examples of the genre. These early documents, proto-*typika* really, coexisted with other kinds of texts like the Basilian penitential canons and those of the Syriac tradition that would also influence the development of the medieval Byzantine *typika*.

2. The Monastic Testament

The monastic testament, however, was the most important of the forerunners of the medieval Byzantine *typikon*, and the testamentary format would continue to have a long life well into late Byzantine times.[2] Seven of the ten documents in this chapter describe themselves as testaments. Foreshadowed by Horsiesios' fourth-century Coptic *Testament*, (1) *Apa Abraham* commences our collection of the medieval Byzantine monastic foundation documents preserved in Greek. This document's purpose was simply to transmit the private monastery for which it was composed from the author to his chosen successor; strictly speaking, there is no regulatory content. The other examples of the genre are (3) *Theodore Studites* in the ninth century, (5) *Euthymios*, (6) *Rila*, and (7) *Latros* in the tenth century, and (8) *John Xenos* and (9) *Galesios* in the eleventh century. Of these, (8) *John Xenos* is the most basic, a brief document asserting the foundation's independence (i.e., private status) without offering any disciplinary regulation for the guidance of the community. (5) *Euthymios* is similar, but it provides a little additional detail on the governance of its monastic community. While the other documents share the testamentary format, all contain substantial amounts of disciplinary regulation, an attribute more typically associated with monastic *typika*.

3. The First Regulatory Documents

The oldest straightforwardly regulatory document in the collection is (2) *Pantelleria*, which shares its format and, to a lesser extent, its content with the Pachomian *Precepts*. More fully developed is (4) *Stoudios*, produced by the Studite community to preserve the disciplinary regime of its spiritual father, the author of (3) *Theodore Studites*. This is the first pairing of a founder's testament with a regulatory *typikon*. The hagiographic *Life* in which (5) *Euthymios* is preserved, however, alludes to a now lost *typikon* that once regulated that monastic community, thus providing another testimony to the pairing of testament and *typikon*.

The subdivision of the monastic *typikon* into separate texts governing liturgical performances (the *typikon leitourgikon*) and determining the administrative matters (the *typikon ktetorikon*) was

[2] See Artur Steinwenter, "Byzantinische Mönchstestamente," *Aegyptus* 12 (1932), 55–64.

still in the future when (4) *Stoudios* was composed sometime in the ninth century. It exhibits features of both of these types of documents. Since the *typikon leitourgikon* was the more formulaic of the two types, even later not every founder thought it necessary to compose one of these documents. The author of the tenth-century (7) *Latros* [8], for example, enjoins his monks to follow the "Rule of Jerusalem," a likely reference to the *typikon leitourgikon* of the monastery of St. Sabas near Jerusalem. Still, the principle of pairing two documents to govern the foundation was preserved.

The document included here as (9) *Galesios* is in fact a collection of extracts from Gregory the Galesiote's *Life* of the founder Lazarus that provides a fair idea of the content of the latter's lost *typikon* which bore the formal title of *Testament* (*diatyposis*). The extracts demonstrate that by the mid-eleventh century, the composition of *typika* had become so standardized that scribes knew appropriate boilerplate passages that needed to be inserted to cover routine contingencies.

The last document in this chapter, (10) *Eleousa,* is the product of nearly two hundred years of literary evolution since (3) *Theodore Studites*, during which *typika* developed under the influence of and as a supplement to testaments, while testaments gradually took on more and more of a regulatory function and became more like *typika* themselves.

4. Accidents of Preservation

The tenuousness of the preservation of many of the documents in this chapter deserves emphasis. One, (1) *Apa Abraham*, comes to us as an original text preserved by chance on an Egyptian papyrus. Another, (2) *Pantelleria*, was preserved through an extremely circuitous route in an Old Church Slavonic translation. Four of the documents owe their preservation to encapsulation in hagiographic literature.[3] The long historical continuity of the foundations for which (6) *Rila* and (10) *Eleousa* were written surely helped assure the preservation of those documents. Only (4) *Stoudios*, an influential text for at least a hundred years after its composition, is attested today in many manuscripts.

B. Concerns of the Authors

1. Transmission of the Monastery

The overriding concern of the author of (1) *Apa Abraham* was the successful transmission of his foundation to his designated successor. Like the authors of certain documents in the later Pachomian and the Syriac traditions, he was aware of the peculiar peril which faced private religious foundations: the possibility that family members would attempt to assert their property rights and thereby effectively secularize the monastery.

Assuring the succession to the leadership of his foundation is also the principal concern of the author of (5) *Euthymios*. (6) *Rila* is another testament designed chiefly to transmit the foundation, but with some disciplinary content.

2. Maintenance of Institutional Autonomy

The author of (8) *John Xenos*, the shortest document in our collection, is concerned only to ward off threats to the independence of his foundation.

[3] (5) *Euthymios*, (6) *Rila*, (7) *Latros*, and (8) *John Xenos*.

3. Preservation of Morality and Discipline

(2) *Pantelleria*, a more sophisticated regulatory document, betrays its early date through its concerns about homoeroticism, shared with the Pachomian *Precepts* whose treatment it resembles on this subject. The importance of manual labor also marks it as a relatively early document in the Byzantine monastic tradition. On the other hand, the grim disciplinary regime and (curiously) the acceptance of the use of wine link it to practices shared in common with the Studite tradition and the documents associated with it.

4. The Studite Tradition

The strongly pro-cenobitic Studite monastic reform is only partially documented by (3) *Theodore Studites* and (4) *Stoudios*.[4] (3) *Theodore Studites* demonstrates a concern, typical for this age, for strengthening institutional autonomy within the perilous legal framework of a private religious foundation and avoiding the threat to moral probity posed by close relations with women. Although the legislation of Basil of Caesarea is cited as a model, there is not much explicitly Basilian content. (4) *Stoudios* is primarily a detailed, but unsystematic, treatment of liturgical and dietary matters. It preserves roles for manual labor and for literacy, though both have clearly become less important than in the monastic rules of late antiquity.

The *Testament* of Paul the Younger, (7) *Latros*, written for a monastery under Studite influence, is a brief regulatory document with a diverse ideological heritage. The author cites Basil of Caesarea approvingly, and recommends the dietary tradition of the (Sabaitic) "Rule of Jerusalem" to his monks. The Studite influence is evident in the document's ban on women and youths, disapproval of unnecessary travel, provision of a small role for manual labor, and warning against hoarding material goods.

5. The Defense of Cenobiticism

By the time (9) *Galesios* was written in the mid-eleventh century, the monastic communities it describes had been formally divided into groups of those monks who performed choir services and those who worked at ordinary labors. The founder Lazarus' attempt to discourage cohabitation substitutes for the earlier Studite precautions against sexual temptations. The cenobitic life whose promotion was such an important part of the Studite reform had come under assault as many monks rejected common meals, retained personal property, and sought to embrace the lifestyle of solitaries. Thanks to its vivid portrayal of the decay of monastic life in old-fashioned private religious foundations, this document is a useful corrective to the preceding normative texts with their cenobitic bias.[5]

[4] See Julien Leroy, "La réforme studite," *OCA* 153 (1958), 181–214, and the discussion below in (4) *Stoudios*, The Studite Monastic Reform.

[5] For the diversity of forms of Byzantine monasticism in the era before the great monastic reform began in the late eleventh century, see Denise Papachryssanthou, "La vie monastique dans les campagnes byzantines du VIIIe au XIe siècle," *Byzantion* 43 (1973–74), 158–80. Alexander Kazhdan, "Hermitic, Cenobitic, and Secular Ideals in Byzantine Hagiography of the Ninth through the Twelfth Centuries," *GOTR* 30 (1985), 473–87, argues, however, for a cyclical variation on the popularity of cenobitic and hermitic alternatives.

6. Regulation of a Transitional Institution

(10) *Eleousa* presents one founder's attempt to preserve as much as possible of the old order of private patronage as a new order was dawning under the auspices of the monastic reform movement of the late eleventh century. In this document, liturgical performances assume an important place, while the practice of manual labor has apparently disappeared. Nothing is said about book learning and literacy, though the Studite concern about preventing sexual misconduct remains. The greatest perceived threat to the monastery's independence is no longer the founder's family, as in earlier centuries, but the public authorities of the imperial government and the ecclesiastical hierarchy.

C. Historical Context

1. Private Religious Foundations after Justinian

The earliest documents in this chapter come from the era following the dismantling of the regulatory system of Emperor Justinian (527–565), who had energetically sought to restrict the prerogatives of private ownership in religious institutions in order to subordinate these foundations to the ecclesiastical hierarchy and to prevent their use as refuges for religious dissidents.[6]

Our first document, (1) *Apa Abraham*, illustrates a typical private monastery of its era, handed down by its owner to his designated successor as if it were any other piece of ordinary private property. For all practical purposes, that was what many monasteries had become, for private benefactors began to enjoy a free hand again as they had in the era before Justinian's regulations, particularly as political conditions became more chaotic with the Arab conquest of North Africa, Syria, and Palestine in the later seventh and eighth centuries.

Our second document, (2) *Pantelleria*, was almost certainly written for a private foundation as well, for nowhere in it is there any mention of an external ecclesiastical authority or any other public official. Most likely this document was written in the late eighth century, well before the completion of the Arab conquest of neighboring Sicily.

2. Private Religious Foundations in the Iconoclastic Era

The bitter Iconoclastic controversy, which commenced in 726 and was resolved only in 843, stimulated the interest of the imperial government in the patronage and control of monastic institutions.[7] Byzantine monasteries in the ninth century had a very different economic base from the Pachomian and Basilian foundations of late antiquity that institutionalized manual labor and strove for economic self-sufficiency for their communities, or even the monastic foundations of the sixth

[6] For the Justinianic regulatory system and his imperial-sponsored religious foundations, see Michel Kaplan, *Les propriétés de la couronne et de l'église dans l'Empire byzantin* (V^e–VIe *siècles*) (Paris, 1976); A. Knecht, *System des justinianischen Kirchenvermögensrechtes* (Stuttgart, 1905); and my own *Private Religious Foundations*, chap. 2, pp. 37–58.

[7] For an important study of the relationship between monasticism and Byzantine society during the Iconoclastic controversy, see Kathryn Ringrose, "Saints, Holy Men and Byzantine Society, 726 to 843" (Ph.D. diss., Rutgers University, 1976).

and early seventh centuries that had relied on cash incomes assigned by their patrons.[8] While (3) *Theodore Studites* and (4) *Stoudios* show very little concern for such prosaic matters, they hint at the general changeover to formal landed endowments of property as the new means of supporting monastic foundations that other sources show took place at this time. Although the practice of manual labor was not yet abandoned and was still defended energetically on at least a theoretical level by Theodore the Studite himself, it became less important in the ninth century as it was no longer essential for an institution's support.

3. New Means of Financial Support

The adoption of landed endowments was not a drastic change, for it seems likely that few institutions had been truly self-supporting (in the Pachomian or Basilian sense) since Justinian's time. The reliance of many private monasteries on cash incomes during the sixth, seventh, and eighth centuries surely cushioned the impact of the further change that took place at the beginning of the ninth century. But as Byzantine monasticism emerges in clear view at this point after several centuries of poor documentary attestation, the overall impact turned out to be considerable, sharply differentiating medieval monasticism from its late antique forebears. To mention just one obvious change, the size of the typical foundation had been significantly reduced. Henceforth, Byzantine monasteries would more typically be populated by a dozen or perhaps a score of monks rather than by hundreds or (if some Pachomian and Studite sources are to be believed) upwards of a thousand ascetics. The high costs of maintaining large communities of economically unproductive monks in prayerful leisure were surely responsible for this scaling down in size, though there were some exceptions, notably the Lavra monastery on Mount Athos, which was the beneficiary of an extraordinary amount of imperial support (see below, Chapter Two).

4. The Benefits of Imperial Patronage

Since the individual private fortunes available to support these monasteries necessarily had their limits, some founders of the ninth and tenth centuries began to seek an alternative or supplementary source of income for their foundations from imperial patronage. The emperors, both iconoclasts and iconodules, seem to have welcomed these requests for support as a means of extending their influence and control over privately founded monasteries. (3) *Theodore Studites* and (4) *Stoudios*, for example, are associated with one of the most famous and influential monasteries of Byzantium, named after its founder Stoudios, a consul of the fifth century. By the time these particular documents were composed in the ninth century, however, the constitutional status of the Stoudios monastery, once undoubtedly a private monastery, had become less clear, thanks to its expropriation under Constantine V (741–775) and a subsequent tradition of imperial patronage.[9] (5) *Euthymios* is likewise associated with a monastic foundation (of the early tenth century) developed by a private patron (a future patriarch of Constantinople) as the beneficiary of imperial patronage by Leo VI the Wise (886–912).

5. Private Religious Foundations at Their Height

The early tenth century was really a golden age for private religious foundations in Byzantium.

[8] See the discussion in my *Private Religious Foundations*, pp. 123–25, 127–30; for earlier financing devices, see pp. 47–53, 115–18.

Leo VI had effectively dismantled the last remaining Justinianic restraints on the prerogatives of their founders, and public subsidies and other means of support for these foundations were increasingly common. Yet private benefactors were not willing to permit imperial patronage to compromise their control of these institutions. The ultimate success of the author of (5) *Euthymios*'s attempt to "privatize" his imperial foundation is unknown, but other tenth-century founders sought to develop monasteries that would be immune from public control. In Bulgaria, (6) *Rila*, whose founder counsels [8] the rejection of gifts offered by "earthly kings and princes," and in Asia Minor, (7) *Latros*, whose author Paul ignores all public authorities, are illustrative of the trend.

6. The Crisis of Private Religious Foundations

In the second half of the tenth century, however, this favorable environment changed dramatically, first with the abortive ban on further private religious foundations issued by Nikephoros Phokas (963–969) in 964, withdrawn by Basil II (976–1025) in 988, then most menacingly of all with the innovation of the *charistike*, most likely about this same time. The *charistike* was a public program sponsored by the emperor and the ecclesiastical hierarchy for the private management of religious institutions.[10] Temporary grants separated the rights of management and financial exploitation from the ultimate rights of ownership over older private religious foundations for the benefit of new private concessionaires, allegedly for institutional improvement and maintenance. At first only ruined foundations were brought into the program, but eventually what amounted to wholesale confiscations of private religious property became the rule.

7. Benefactors' Response to the Crisis

It was against the background of this infamous but lucrative *charistike* that the last documents in this chapter were written. Benefactors of the eleventh century, confronted frequently by hostile public authorities determined to assert control over the private monasteries located in their jurisdictions, responded commensurately. In 1031, the author of (8) *John Xenos*, clearly worried about a confiscation under this government program of his many dependent monasteries on Crete, pronounces [2] a curse on any emperor, patriarch or metropolitan who might dare to appropriate his foundation's properties. In more specific terms, (9) *Galesios* [141], [223] portrays its founder desperately trying to maintain his foundation's autonomy (i.e., its private status) from the local metropolitan of Ephesos. Finally, (10) *Eleousa* [16] shows its founder, a bishop, forbidding his own successors in office any rights over the foundation except for the blessing of a new superior.

8. Development of the Independent Monastery

By the late eleventh century, the independent and self-governing monastery, an attractive alternative form of institutional organization apparently invented in the mid-tenth century on Mount Athos, had become more common. The authors of (8) *John Xenos*, (9) *Galesios*, and (10) *Eleousa* all prudently exploited their friendly relations with a succession of emperors to gain recognitions

[9] See the discussion below, (3) *Theodore Studites*, Institutional History.

[10] For the *charistike*, see Michel Kaplan, "Les monastères et le siècle à Byzance: les investissements des laïcs au XIe siècle," *CCM* 27 (1984), 71–83, and the other works cited in the General Bibliography, XXIV. Monasticism and the *Charistike*.

of the independence of their foundations. An independent monastery had its own endowment, under the administration of its superior, and was managed by its own officials without interference by or concession of economic benefits to the founder or his family. Though the independent and self-governing monastery was in its origins a deliberate mutation of the traditional private religious foundation, it necessarily obliged a founder to make substantially greater financial sacrifices. Therefore, despite its increasing prestige towards the end of the eleventh century, the new form of organization was not universally popular. Manuel of Stroumitza, author of (10) *Eleousa*, clearly hesitated between the traditional and the new form of institutional organization, finally opting for the latter, but was unwilling to permit it to take effect until another generation of leadership after his own had passed on.