

This is an extract from:

Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents:

A Complete Translation of the Surviving Founders' Typika and Testaments

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Published by

Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection

Washington, D.C.

in five volumes as number 35 in the series Dumbarton Oaks Studies

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Trustees for Harvard University

Washington, D.C.

Printed in the United States of America

www.doaks.org/etexts.html

5. *Euthymios: Testament of Euthymios for the Monasteries of Psamathia and Ta Agathou*

Date: 917¹

Translator: Patricia Karlin-Hayter

Editions employed: P. Karlin-Hayter, *Vita Euthymii Patriarchae CP* (Brussels, 1970), with text at pp. 3–147 (*Testament* = chap. 23, pp. 143–47), and commentary, pp. 148–233; replaces “*Vita S. Euthymii*,” *Byzantion* 25 (1955–57), 1–172.

Manuscript: Former Berlin, State Library, graecus fol. 55 (12th c.)²

Other translations: P. Karlin-Hayter, *Vita*, pp. 142–46, employed here with minor adjustments to harmonize with the editorial conventions of this collection; Russian, by Alexander Kazhdan, *Dve vizantiiskie chroniki x veka* (Moscow, 1959), pp. 80–81.

Institutional History

The *Testament* is encapsulated in the anonymous *Life of St. Euthymios*, itself an important source of information on patronage in this era of traditional private religious foundations. Euthymios was the spiritual father of Emperor Leo VI the Wise (886–912), who had offered him (*Vita*, chap. 4, p. 24) the directorship of the imperial monastery of Sts. Sergios and Bakchos in Constantinople. This offer Euthymios turned down, declaring “God forbid that I should water another’s plantation.” Euthymios particularly objected to the necessity to cancel the rules drawn up by the previous founder in order to set up his own regulations and canons “as I would not be pleased to have happen to me at another’s hand.” In this way Euthymios showed the pietistic respect of one generation of founders towards the legislative arrangements of its predecessors, but he demonstrated even more strongly the typical Byzantine founder’s preference for a new institution all his own, “raised up for me from the very foundations,” as he put it. Yet he agreed (*Vita*, chap. 5, p. 29) to accept a property near the Stoudios monastery in the Psamathia quarter of Constantinople where there was an existing church of Sts. Kosmas and Damian suitable for enlargement.³ This had belonged to the disgraced courtier Leo Katakoilas, a relative of the deposed Patriarch Photios (878–886) and former admiral of the fleet, who had purchased the property privately, only to see the emperor confiscate it (presumably in 886) along with the rest of Katakoilas’ properties. When the disgraced courtier’s relatives protested the award to Euthymios, he scrupulously insisted that Leo VI recall Katakoilas from exile, pay him a just price for the confiscated properties, and receive from him the deeds of title in return. The account illustrates the contemporary acceptance of the sale and purchase of religious institutions as well as how private founders respected one another’s property rights in them.

Euthymios persuaded Leo VI to enlarge the monastery by adding subsidiary chapels dedicated to St. John the Forerunner and the Archangel Michael. Patriarch Stephen (886–893) officiated (*Vita*, chap. 5, p. 35) at the dedication, probably before 890, to which the emperor had also

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summoned “the chosen band” of the Studite monks. There is an interesting account (*Vita*, chap. 9, pp. 51–55) of Leo VI’s visit to Euthymios’ monastery in 899, on which occasion Euthymios hailed him as the founder (*ktetor*). The emperor arrived at supper time and commented on the “detestable” quality of the wine, the quantity (if not the quality) of which he was told was prescribed “according to the rule we have received,” an allusion to a now lost *typikon* for the foundation like (4) *Stoudios*. Indeed, given the close friendship of Euthymios with Arkadios, the superior of the Stoudios monastery (*Vita*, chap. 9, pp. 55, 57), and before him, an earlier Studite superior Anatolios (*Vita*, chap. 2), it is not impossible that this *typikon* was a variant of (4) *Stoudios*. To remedy the deficiency in the quality of the monks’ wine, Leo VI awarded the monastery a property formerly possessed by Empress Theophano capable of supplying a wine of suitable quality.

Euthymios’ biographer is anxious (*Vita*, chap. 8, p. 47) to establish his hero’s opposition to Leo VI’s controversial relationship with Zoe Carbonopsina, for which he claims Euthymios was exiled for two years at the monastery of St. Diomedous, a foundation rebuilt by Leo VI’s father Basil I (867–886).⁴ But eventually Euthymios proved more flexible on the issue than the patriarch, Nicholas I Mystikos (901–907), for Euthymios was chosen to replace the latter in that office in 907. In 910, the emperor’s powerful courtier Samonas, one of several high officials opposed by Euthymios, was temporarily confined at the monastery.⁵

Euthymios’ foundation also had a dependency (*metochion*) in the Asiatic suburbs of the city (*Vita*, chap. 16, p. 109) known as the monastery of *Ta Agathou*, that is, “on the estates of Agathos.”⁶ The identity of the individual who gave his name to the site and the precise location of this monastery are unknown, but the monastery itself was founded by Patriarch Nikephoros I (806–815), perhaps in a private capacity before his elevation to the patriarchate (Janin, *Géographie*, vol. 2, p. 23). After his deposition by Emperor Leo V (813–820), the patriarch was exiled here briefly before being transferred to another of the monasteries he had founded nearby.⁷ The estates on which the monastery was located were among those confiscated by Leo VI from Leo Katakoilas. Later, Leo VI awarded these properties, along with Katakoilas’ estates in Psamathia, to Euthymios (*Vita*, chap. 5, p. 29). The monastery once again became home to a deposed patriarch when Euthymios himself was exiled here (*Vita*, chap. 19; cf. 20) after his own deposition by Emperor Alexander I (912–913) on May 15, 912. Euthymios’ predecessor Nicholas I Mystikos (912–925) then returned to office for a second term as patriarch. After the death of that emperor in 913, Euthymios turned down (*Vita*, chap. 21) an appeal from Leo VI’s widow Zoe, then embroiled in a bitter struggle with Nicholas Mystikos, to accept reinstatement as patriarch. Euthymios was reconciled (*Vita*, chap. 32, pp. 141–43) with Nicholas Mystikos there in late July 917, shortly before Euthymios died at the dependency in early August 4 of that same year. Nothing is known of either the Psamathia foundation or its dependency after Euthymios’ time.

Analysis

Euthymios’ *Testament* is preserved at the end of the *Life* (= *Vita*, chap. 23). In it he provides [1] for a collective leadership of three of his subordinates for the 24 monks at Psamathia.⁸ He prescribes a similar arrangement of three monks providing the collective superiorship for the 12 monks at *Ta Agathou*. Subsequently, the community at Psamathia would elect a new superior in an open vote;

a steward would be appointed from among the monks at Psamathia to administer *Ta Agathou*. The new superior of Psamathia would be responsible for the overall administration of both facilities. There is another reference [2] to the lost rule governing the foundation mentioned earlier (*Vita*, chap. 9). A discussion of Euthymios' burial wishes follows, at which point the text breaks off.

As with the Stoudios monastery at that time, both a *typikon* and a testament governed this foundation, but here the order of composition of the documents was reversed. This would become the more typical pattern for Byzantine monasticism (e.g., (11) *Ath. Rule*, followed by (14) *Ath. Testament*). Like Euthymios, founders frequently were willing to allow their communities to exercise a form of self-governance in the next generation (see (10) *Eleousa* [16]), which suggests that there was a built-in tendency towards institutional autonomy even in private foundations.

The nature of the legal relationship between lay (and imperial) patrons and monastic directors, which is quite a common one in the Byzantine era, calls for further study. After Leo VI's death in 912, that is during the period of his own exile at *Ta Agathou*, Euthymios seems to have come to view at least this dependency and perhaps also the monastery at Psamathia as his private property (see *Vita*, chaps. 19, 20). Apparently Euthymios was unwilling to accord Leo VI's successors either the late emperor's status as founder or his rights of patronage. The present document represents Euthymios' bold attempt to extend his de facto control over *Ta Agathou* to the Psamathia monastery as well, though the apparent unwillingness [4] of the ecclesiastical hierarchy (in the conjectural textual restoration of de Boor) to allow his burial there (with all that that would imply for his proprietorship) suggests that this venture met with determined opposition.

Notes on the Introduction

1. The dating assumes the genuineness of Euthymios' *Testament* as encapsulated in the *Vita*, and that it was dictated from his deathbed shortly before his death on August 4, 917; the *Vita* itself dates from after 932, so Sophianos, "Bios," p. 296, and Kazhdan, "Euthymios," p. 756; Karlin-Hayter, *Vita Euthymii*, p. 10, however, dates the *Vita* to 920–925, on the presumption that the second deposition of Patriarch Nicholas I Mystikos in 925, had it already occurred, would have been alluded to in the *Vita*.
2. The manuscript, discovered by G. Hirschfeld in 1874 in the remains of a monastery library on an island in Lake Egerdir, disappeared from Berlin during the Second World War; see Karlin-Hayter, *Vita Euthymii*, pp. 5–6.
3. For details on the history of the foundation, see Janin, *Géographie*, vol. 3, pp. 116–17.
4. For this foundation, see Janin, *Géographie*, vol. 3, pp. 95–97.
5. Symeon Magister, ed. I. Bekker, in Leo Grammatikos, *Chronographia*, CSHB (Bonn, 1842), p. 713; John Skylitzes, *Synopsis historiarum*, ed. J. Thurn (Berlin-New York, 1973), p. 191.
6. For the history of the dependency, see Janin, *Géographie*, vol. 2, p. 23.
7. Ignatios the Deacon, *Vita S. Nicephori*, ed. Karl de Boor, *Nicephori archiepiscopi Constantinopolitani opuscula historica* (Leipzig, 1880), p. 201.
8. Compare to similar ambiguous administrative arrangements in (48) *Prodromos* [6], (50) *Gerasimos* [3] and (52) *Choumnos* [A3], all written for later private religious foundations, which may reflect a division of institutional property rights.

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- For the author’s other works, see Jugie, “Vie,” pp. 486–92, and Kazhdan, “Euthymios,” p. 756.

Translation

[1.] On the second day of August, whereon the memory of St. Stephen, the first martyr, is celebrated, our father, who is now with the saints, sent to the monastery of Psamathia, to summon all the monks to the monastery of *Ta Agathou*; and calling round him likewise those there, he spoke of the constitution of the two monasteries, how, on the one hand, there were at Psamathia twenty-four of the brothers consecrated to God and attending to the church. “Now those whom I have ordained, I order to rule over them, to the number of three of those who have served me; but when they are gone from you, a vote of the whole brotherhood [p. 145] shall elect whom God pleases and they desire to be their shepherd. Likewise, in this monastery of *Ta Agathou* also, I prescribe that twelve of the brothers be consecrated to God, attending to the church, and up to three, already designated by my humble self, to perform the office of superior. Afterwards, they being gone from you, you will appoint a steward from among your brothers who are at Psamathia, and both flocks will be led by one shepherd in the same rule and ordinance, by him whom the providence of God has entrusted with the superiorship of the monastery of Psamathia, as this deed of union in my own hand sets forth in detail.

[2.] “Children, the tradition you have received from me, guard in unity and brotherly love, and with all your strength do not weary of fervently praying the Divinity. Now indeed pray for this least of men, that I may obtain the wish of my great desire. For once that is achieved, I will not rest from entreating and imploring for you, taking to myself and embracing each one of you. Yet know this, after my going from you, you will meet with such straitening and want and distress, that you will lay hands on the sacred vessels themselves. But the Lord God will send you help from on high, may he defend you, and help you, and supply that which was lacking in me (I Cor. 16:17).

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Only do not set at nought my commands, though I be the least of men, nor, I charge you, be backward in observing the rule I have given you, which I fashioned in sweat with many strivings.” While the father was thus prophesying, and all of them in tears, he fell into a swoon; and as he remained silent, they went out.

[3.] Next day, which was the fourth of the month of August [917], our father Euthymios began to labor and pant, and his strength began, as it were, to leave him, when he himself, recognizing the end, in the hearing of all addressed these last words to himself: “Behold, holy Euthymios, the (II Tim. 4:6) time of thy departure is at hand, and the axe (cf. Matt. 3:10) is near that shall cut thee down, thou unfruitful tree. Why then dost thou kick? What fearest thou, summoned to incorruptibility, passing from slavery to freedom? There is no envy, nor strife, nor malice, nor the swarming presence of those who grieve and ill-use. To a merciful master thou goest. Do not be faint-hearted nor discouraged. [p. 147] For he is compassionate, long-suffering and of great mercy. If thou hast shown thyself unworthy (Eph. 4:1) of the vocation wherewith thou wert called, having achieved nothing, yet seventy-five years hast thou fulfilled in the monastic ranks. But now thou goest to thy Master, to thy God and Lord, whom thou hast loved from an infant, whom thou hast followed from an early age. Then do not resist, do not be ill-pleased. Go forth confident, not (cf. Tit. 3:5) in thine own works, but in his love toward man, and grace, ineffable compassion and most boundless goodness.”

[4.] But having called Basil, his nephew, he said, “Prepare for my burial; for tomorrow I leave the things here to go to another world. So it has been revealed to me.” So the other asks him; “Where do you wish your body to lie, that we may prepare a grave?” He [Euthymios, replied]: “At Psamathia, by the sacred shrine of the *Anargyroi*, in the right-hand chapel, that is dedicated to [St. John] the Forerunner, beneath my lord and master, Peter the Confessor and bishop of Gordorynia.”¹ Whereupon, the other answered him: “According to the patriarch, the me[tropolitans] are not willing [for your body to enter the city . . .]²

Notes on the Translation

1. For Peter of Gordorynia, whose remains Euthymios had translated (*Vita*, chap. 9, p. 59) to the Psamathia monastery from their original resting place at a chapel dedicated to St. Nicholas outside of Constantinople, see also Theophanes Continuatus, *Chronographia*, ed. I. Bekker, *CSHB* (Bonn, 1838), p. 378; Symeon Magister, ed. Bekker, in Leo Grammatikos, *Chronographia*, *CSHB*, p. 716.
2. Conjecture of de Boor, *Vita Euthymii*, 22, line 14.