

This is an extract from:

*Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents:*

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

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## CHAPTER EIGHT

### Later Private Religious Foundations

“Therefore, by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, by the blessed hopes for which you renounced the world and the ruler of the world, do not disobey my wishes and request. For my desires are not burdensome, nor do they require any expenditure of funds, as you yourselves can calculate.” (46) *Akropolites* [8]

“After the election, he should go off to the most fortunate *voivode*, our patron, and be formally installed by him as superior.” (52) *Koutloumousi* [B18]

“For according to the one hundred and thirty-first novel of Justinian, the commandments of the founders have authority in their own monasteries, as long as they do not contradict the divine and holy commandments, but are in agreement with them.” (54) *Neilos Damilas* [8]

This chapter includes fourteen documents that illustrate the history of private religious foundations in the last centuries of the Byzantine Empire. The documents were composed principally by monks, except for (46) *Akropolites* and (47) *Philanthropos*, which have lay authorship. All were written for monasteries except for (47) *Philanthropos* and (54) *Neilos Damilas*, which regulate convents. Three, (44) *Karyes*, (46) *Akropolites*, and (48) *Prodromos*, regulate the affairs of monastic dependencies (*metochia*). Unlike their counterparts in Chapter Nine, none of the foundations for which these documents were written are described as independent foundations, except for (44) *Karyes*, which is included here since its monastery was a dependency and thus not “independent” in the usual sense of the term. The possibility cannot be excluded, however, that some of the other foundations may also have been independent institutions even though they are not specifically designated as such in these documents.

Chronologically, these documents range from the early twelfth through the early fifteenth centuries, thus several predate the earliest documents included in our collection in Chapter Seven, while one, (45) *Neophytos*, is a thirteenth-century contemporary. The majority (8) of the documents in this chapter date from the fourteenth century. (54) *Neilos Damilas* alone represents the fifteenth century. The documents of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries in this chapter are the contemporaries of their independent counterparts in Chapter Nine, which follows.

The foundations for which these documents were written were dispersed throughout the provinces of the Byzantine Empire and beyond. Only two documents, (46) *Akropolites* and (47) *Philanthropos*, hail from Constantinople. There is a group of four documents from Mount Athos,<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> (41) *Docheiariou*, (44) *Karyes*, (48) *Prodromos*, and (51) *Koutloumousi*.

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and three others from elsewhere in Greece.<sup>2</sup> (43) *Kasoulon*, while written in Greek for a Greek monastery, comes from Norman Italy. (45) *Neophytos* comes from thirteenth-century Frankish Cyprus and (54) *Neilos Damilas* comes from fifteenth-century Venetian Crete. (42) *Sabas* most likely comes from the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem in the twelfth century, while another document associated with this area, (50) *Gerasimos*, if it is genuine, must date from the early fourteenth century, long after the Muslim reconquest. Thus, in addition to the overwhelmingly provincial orientation of this group of documents, five of them come from outside the boundaries of the Byzantine empire itself. This is a reflection not only of the empire's diminished political authority but also of the strength of Byzantine monastic institutions elsewhere despite foreign rule.

### A. Typology of the Documents

Six documents are self-described testaments,<sup>3</sup> while another six are *typika*.<sup>4</sup> (52) *Choumnos* contains both a testament and a *typikon*. (54) *Neilos Damilas*, though a single document, describes itself as being both “*Testament* and *Typikon*.” It should be noted, however, that one of the testaments, (45) *Neophytos*, is actually structurally more like a *typikon*. In fact he uses the terms *diatheke* (testament), *diataxis* (rule), and *typikon* interchangeably. (47) *Philanthropos* is represented only by a sixteenth-century excerpt, while (51) *Kouloumousi*, like (25) *Fragala* in Chapter Five, is preserved in three different versions. (48) *Prodromos* [14] contains a brief inventory, while a lengthy one by the author of (54) *Neilos Damilas* is preserved separately and is translated here as an appendix to that document. (45) *Neophytos* incorporates twenty of the author's disciplinary canons as well as others attributed by him to Basil of Caesarea. (43) *Kasoulon*, which in its published text deals only with dietary matters, and (53) *Meteora*, a brief “table of contents”<sup>5</sup> encapsulated in a hagiographical text, probably derive from longer documents now apparently lost.

### B. Characteristics of Later Private Religious Foundations

There are few apparent common concerns among the authors of these documents, no doubt as much because of the great expanse of time encompassed by the texts in this chapter as the usual tendency of private founders to legislate for their foundations pretty much as they pleased with few external or traditional restraints (cf. the attitude expressed in (54) *Neilos Damilas* [8], as quoted above).

#### 1. Small Size

Byzantine monasteries were rarely very large in the medieval period, and those private foundations represented here generally seem to have been smaller than their independent counterparts in the other chapters of our collection. Among those documents that indicate the size of the foundations for which they were written, (45) *Neophytos* [9]'s foundation is largest with fifteen to eight-

<sup>2</sup> (49) *Geromeri*, (52) *Choumnos*, and (53) *Meteora*.

<sup>3</sup> (45) *Neophytos*, (46) *Akropolites*, (48) *Prodromos*, (49) *Geromeri*, (50) *Gerasimos*, and (51) *Kouloumousi*.

<sup>4</sup> (41) *Docheiariou*, (42) *Sabas*, (43) *Kasoulon*, (44) *Karyes*, (47) *Philanthropos*, and (53) *Meteora*.

<sup>5</sup> See Catia Galatariotou, “Byzantine Ktetorika Typika: A Comparative Study,” *REB* 45 (1987), 77–138, esp. 80–81.

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teen monks, a number greater than the founder had originally intended to permit. (52) *Choumnos*'s monastery likely had at least a few more monks than the thirteen who are specifically mentioned in the document. Both (44) *Karyes* [2] and (50) *Gerasimos* [3] were written for tiny monasteries with no more than three to four monks each.

### 2. Institutionally and Ideologically Conservative

The documents written for these foundations are generally more conservative in their usages than their contemporary counterparts in the other chapters in this collection. Thus (41) *Docheiariou*, a testament, is closer in form and function to (1) *Apa Abraham* in the seventh century than to a much more nearly contemporary testament like (25) *Fragala*. (45) *Neophytos* was written about the same time as (34) *Machairas*, but, unlike the latter document, has only a vague association with the institutions of the monastic reform movement. Similarly, (54) *Neilos Damilas*, a contemporary of (60) *Charsianeites*, which was written for an independent foundation, is the more traditional of the two documents. The documents in this chapter are also more idiosyncratic, e.g., the peculiar structure of (52) *Choumnos*, the stern dietary provisions of (43) *Kasoulon*, and the strongly individualized character of (45) *Neophytos*.<sup>6</sup>

As might be expected from a group presumably made up of texts from more traditional private religious foundations, the majority of these documents show few traces of the influence of the Evergetian monastic reform movement. A sizable minority, however, are loosely linked to (22) *Evergetis*, either directly or (more likely) through various intermediaries. These exceptions are (45) *Neophytos*, which incorporates a fair number of important Evergetian customs, (47) *Philanthropos*, which actually quotes from (27) *Kecharitomene* or a related document in the Evergetian tradition, and (53) *Meteora*, which accepts some of the principles of (22) *Evergetis* and echoes its language. Only with (47) *Philanthropos*, however, is there a textual link to any of the Evergetian documents.

### 3. Tolerance for Alternative Forms of Monasticism

Some of the authors of our documents, including those who wrote (45) *Neophytos*, (47) *Philanthropos*, and (53) *Meteora* (i.e., those most under Evergetian influence) as well as (52) *Choumnos* [B19], [B20] and (54) *Neilos Damilas* [3] strongly championed the essential principles of cenobitic life, sometimes including (as in (52) *Choumnos* [B7]), the rejection of imposed monks (*katapemptoi*), but others, like the author of (51) *Koutloumoussi* [A9], were forced to make compromises for various reasons, such as securing patronal assistance, and the coexistence of hesychastic and cenobitic monasticism is taken for granted in (42) *Sabas*. The author of (45) *Neophytos* [17], himself a recluse, apparently envisioned friendly relations with kelliotic monks at his foundation, and for a time the author of (54) *Neilos Damilas* [6] allowed his nuns to live an idiorhythmic lifestyle. Even the militantly pro-cenobitic author of (53) *Meteora* [1] tolerated kelliotic monks already present at his foundation when he introduced the cenobitic regime.

### 4. Distaste for Financial Matters

The general lack of interest in financial affairs is a striking contrast to the interest in these matters

<sup>6</sup> For which see Catia Galatariotou, *The Making of a Saint: The Life, Times and Sanctification of Neophytos the Recluse* (Cambridge, 1991).

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shown by contemporary independent foundations. The author of (45) *Neophytos* [10] records his reluctance to acquire landed property for the monastery and disowns responsibilities for the expected consequences. The author of (52) *Choumnos* rejects [B11] the notion of seeking out novices who might contribute valuable entrance gifts, though he also advises [B22] his successor to take the foundation's economic well-being more seriously than he himself had done.

With varying degrees of enthusiasm, the authors of (45) *Neophytos* [C6], (52) *Choumnos* [B4], and (54) *Neilos Damilas* [10] all endorse the practice of manual labor by their monks. As far as other economic activities were concerned, both (47) *Philanthropos* [2] and (53) *Meteora* [4] (though not (54) *Neilos Damilas* [7]) display the anti-entrepreneurial bias of certain strains of medieval Byzantine monasticism that dates back to Basil of Caesarea.

### 5. Varying Attitudes towards the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy

(45) *Neophytos* [15] acknowledges the necessity of obtaining the local bishop's permission for hearing monks' confessions, and in (50) *Gerasimos* [4] the author seems to have enjoyed good relations with the local hierarchy. Other authors, however, show the reluctance, typical of private benefactors, to recognize the rights of the ecclesiastical hierarchy. The author of (54) *Neilos Damilas* ignores the rights of the ecclesiastical hierarchy completely while asserting [8] his own right to do as he pleased in legislating for his foundation.

### 6. Rigorist Approaches to Monastic Discipline

Rigorist observances and customs were popular among the authors of many documents. In addition to the aforementioned stringent diet favored in (43) *Kasoulon* and the penal canons endorsed in (45) *Neophytos* [CB1] ff., we find a discussion of appropriate sanctions for violent monks in (42) *Sabas* [5], voluntary dietary austerities in (45) *Neophytos* [C4], hostility to the conventions of secular music in (46) *Akropolites* [7] and (54) *Neilos Damilas* [12], a prohibition of bathing (also not explicitly permitted elsewhere) in (45) *Neophytos* [C9], and the punishments for those nuns who missed parts of the divine office in (54) *Neilos Damilas* [10].

### 7. Features Shared with Contemporary Independent Foundations

Liturgically, some authors, such as those of (45) *Neophytos* [12] and (53) *Meteora* [11], observe the trend noted among the thirteenth-century authors in Chapter Seven of relying on external *typika*. Constitutionally, the "leading monks" have important governing roles in (45) *Neophytos* [C11] and in (52) *Choumnos* [B4]. External protectors are found in (50) *Gerasimos* [4]; a patron is acknowledged as founder (*ktetor*) in (51) *Koutloumousi* [A4] and other benefactors receive honors in (49) *Geromeri* [15] and in (52) *Choumnos* [A18], [A20], [A26]. Institutional philanthropy, except for those foundations that were on pilgrimage routes (for which see (42) *Sabas* [8] and (45) *Neophytos* [20]), was generally not an important part of the lives of the foundations discussed in this chapter.

The broad, long-term impact of the monastic reform seems to have led even the patrons of private foundations to scale back their expectations of patronal privileges. Moreover, in the early fourteenth century, (46) *Akropolites* [6] shows evidence of the increasing insistence by contemporaries on linking the exercise of patronal rights to tangible assistance to the institution in question; this is the principle that led to the dispute between the author of (51) *Koutloumousi* and his patron later on in the same century.

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Two of the documents written for institutions showing the most palpable impact of the monastic reform, (47) *Philanthropos* and (53) *Meteora*, can claim a place in the Neo-Evergetian revival of the Palaiologan era, along with the documents, mostly of imperial or patriarchal authorship, written for contemporary independent institutions like (37) *Auxentios*, (39) *Lips*, (55) *Athanasios I*, (56) *Kellibara II*, (57) *Bebaia Elpis*, (58) *Menoikeion*, and (60) *Charsianeites*.

### 8. Differences with Previous Private Religious Foundations

In some respects, these later private religious foundations differed from those discussed earlier in Chapter One. Instead of relying on a single patron-owner, like the author of (19) *Attaleiates* in the late eleventh century, our monastic authors preferred to rely upon either a distant patron (as in (50) *Gerasimos* [2] and (51) *Koutloumoussi*) or several local ones (as in (49) *Geromeri* and (52) *Choumnos*). The monastic communities were also keen to embrace self-help, as in (49) *Geromeri* [2] and (51) *Koutloumoussi* [A4].

### C. Historical Context

#### 1. Traditional Institutions in the Era of the Monastic Reform

Were it not so institutionally and structurally conservative, (41) *Docheiariou*, the first document in this chapter, might well have claimed a place among its contemporaries in Chapter Six, all documents written for independent monasteries. As it is, the only trace of possible reform influence on this text is its prohibition [5] of the alienation of the foundation's property. It is easier to understand why the monastic reform had no apparent impact on the famous Jerusalem monastery for which (42) *Sabas* was written, apparently some time in the twelfth century during the life of the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem. The companion liturgical *typikon* for this foundation (not translated in this collection) was to gain a considerable following, initially on the periphery of the empire, as (20) *Black Mountain* [3] and (21) *Roidion* [B20] demonstrate, then in Byzantium itself in institutions with links to the Holy Land (see (24) *Christodoulos* [A17]), in Norman Sicily (see (26) *Luke of Messina* [10]), and in Frankish Cyprus (see (34) *Machairas* [75]). Eventually the Sabaitic liturgical *typikon* became in Palaiologan times the most popular guide to liturgical and dietary observances, displacing its earlier Studite and Evergetian rivals.<sup>7</sup>

(43) *Kasoulon* likewise comes from beyond the frontiers of the empire, having been composed in 1160 in southern Italy under Norman rule nearly a century after Byzantium had definitively lost control of this area. The isolation of the foundation for which it was written allowed its leaders to develop their own tradition of dietary observances that was considerably more austere than that practiced in contemporary twelfth-century monasteries in Byzantium under Evergetian influence. Here again, however, the customs embraced by a document that at first seems like the product of a backwater environment came eventually to influence developments in Byzantium itself, as (55) *Athanasios I* [4] illustrates (see Chapter Nine).

<sup>7</sup> Among the documents in our collection, see (37) *Auxentios* [10]; (39) *Lips* [24], [29], [30], [31], [32]; (56) *Kellibara II* [1]; (57) *Bebaia Elpis* [78], [80]; (58) *Menoikeion* [4], [16]. For the development, see Robert Taft, "Mount Athos: A Late Chapter in the History of the Byzantine Rite," *DOP* 42 (1988), 179–94, esp. 189 ff.

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### 2. Survival of Non-Cenobitic Forms of Monasticism

In Byzantium itself, traditional private religious foundations seem to have kept alive alternatives to cenobitic monasticism that had been ignored or even repressed by the mainstream reform tradition of the great independent monasteries during the twelfth century. Thus towards the end of the twelfth century we have from Mount Athos (44) *Karyes*, a document drawn up to govern [2] the “distinctive form of solitary life” that the founder, Sabbas the Serbian, envisioned for a dependency of a larger monastery. The example of influential foundations from outside the empire’s boundaries that were unencumbered by the reform tradition’s disdain for cenobitic alternatives (especially the Palestinian (42) *Sabas* [7]) may have lent support to domestic experiments, such as that envisioned in (24) *Christodoulos* [A24] as early as the late eleventh century. By the early thirteenth century, other founders outside the empire’s boundaries like the Cypriot author of (45) *Neophytos* [17] seem to have aimed at reviving a pre-reform kelliotic tradition of having carefully regulated establishments of solitary monks subordinated to a larger cenobitic institution. Even (34) *Machairas* [152], a contemporary Cypriot *typikon* for an independent monastery, lends careful endorsement to this trend.

Thus, just as institutions external to the empire came eventually to set the standard for its liturgical and dietary observances, so also many of these same institutions lent support to an attractive alternative model to the independent monasteries that were organized on an exclusively cenobitic basis. Surely the shattering of the Byzantine Empire’s political unity during the thirteenth century powerfully stimulated this development, since the great reform monasteries, whether supported by extensive landed endowments (as (28) *Pantokrator* or (29) *Kosmosoteira* were) or also by imperial subventions (as (33) *Heliou Bomon* and (34) *Machairas* were) prospered best of all under conditions of political and economic stability.

The development of an idiorhythmic form of monasticism, in which monks retain personal property, earn their own livings, and reside and eat separately from one another in their own cells, was a particular feature of Byzantine monasticism in the Palaeologan era. Much more so than kelliotic monasticism, it represented a basic repudiation of the ideals of cenobiticism, and in the post-Byzantine era it would become the predominant form of monasticism on Mount Athos.<sup>8</sup>

### 3. The Palaiologan Revival of Cenobiticism

A revival of the prestige of cenobitic monasticism had to await the reconstitution, partial though it was, of the political unity of the empire following Michael VIII Palaiologos’ recovery of Constantinople in 1261. This is reflected in our documents first by (47) *Philanthropos* in the first quarter of the fourteenth century, a heavily Evergetian-influenced text that appropriately owes its survival to its inclusion in a post-Byzantine collection of the mid-sixteenth century when once again cenobiticism found itself fighting for survival against idiorhythmic alternatives because of the dramatically unfavorable political circumstances of Ottoman rule. The slightly later (48) *Prodromos* is instructive, particularly in comparison to (44) *Karyes*—the late twelfth-century text mentioned above as a model of solitary life in an “independent” dependency of a larger monastery. In (48) *Prodromos*, the monks of the mother house of Docheiariou exercised a much tighter

<sup>8</sup> See below, Chapter Nine, D.6; for idiorhythmic monasticism on Mount Athos, see (59) *Manuel II* and Ph. Meyer, *Die Haupturkunden für die Geschichte der Athosklöster* (Leipzig, 1894), 57–64.

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control of the dependency in question, which they funded and from which they received agricultural dues. Moreover, the dependency was staffed by a small community of monks rather than by a solitary as in (44) *Karyes*.

These developments were paralleled by the creation or restoration of prestigious cenobitic monasteries under imperial patronage in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries that were organized as independent foundations such as those for which (37) *Auxentios*, (38) *Kellibara I*, (39) *Lips*, and (40) *Anargyroi* were written (see Chapter Seven). Yet as we have seen, even (37) *Auxentios* [11], while proclaiming the superiority of cenobitic monasticism as being in accord with “the law of nature,” permits coexisting settlements of solitary monks.

### 4. The Palaiologan Patriarchal Reform Program

Beginning with the two terms of office of Athanasios I (1289–93 and 1303–1309), the patriarchs of Constantinople began to show extraordinary assertiveness both in upholding monastic discipline and curbing the prerogatives of private patrons.<sup>9</sup> Among the documents in this chapter, (46) *Akropolites*, with its author’s tortured defense of his entitlement to patronal rights established by his father over the foundation in question, best illustrates the success the patriarchs had achieved in the last named undertaking by the first quarter of the fourteenth century.

### 5. Impact of the Political Fragmentation of the Byzantine World

During the balance of the fourteenth century, as the prestige and the territorial integrity of the Byzantine Empire steadily diminished, the authors of the rest of our documents in this chapter sought patronage and protection wherever they could find it. In 1339, Neilos Erichiotes, who significantly had earlier spent 31 years as an ascetic in the Holy Land,<sup>10</sup> drew up his testament, (49) *Geromeri*, in which he acknowledges the patronage of members of the local nobility as well as of John II Orsini (1323–1336/7), despot of Epiros, and his wife Anna Palaiologina. In the Holy Land itself, the testament of (50) *Gerasimos* provides for the transmission of a small monastery said once to have been the personal property of the late Anna Anachoutlou (1341–42), ruler of Trebizond, but more recently having been supported by the author’s predecessor as superior and now entrusted to the superior of a Georgian monastery as the foundation’s administrator. Most interesting of all, (51) *Koutlounousi* shows its author, Chariton, a fervent believer in cenobitic monasticism, anguishing over what disciplinary concessions he should make to the appointees (*katapemptoi*) of his patron, the Vlach *voivode* John Vladislav, in order to obtain indispensable financial support. At about the same time, the author of (52) *Choumnos* was relying upon local members of the nobility around Thessalonike to support the cenobitic *Nea Mone*, apparently in the absence of a traditional landed endowment of scattered income-producing properties.

### 6. Cenobitic Transformations on the Periphery of the Empire

Towards the end of the fourteenth century, Athanasios the Meteorite made an attempt to reorga-

<sup>9</sup> For the reform program of this patriarch, see (55) *Athanasios I*, with John Boojamra, *Church Reform in the Late Byzantine Empire: A Study for the Patriarchate of Athanasios of Constantinople* (Thessaloniki, 1982), and idem, *The Church and Social Reform: The Policies of Patriarch Athanasios of Constantinople* (New York, 1993).

<sup>10</sup> For his earlier career, see Donald Nicol, *The Despotate of Epiros, 1267–1479* (New York, 1984), 244.

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nize his monastery of the *Metamorphosis* along cenobitic grounds. As noted above, he was obliged in (53) *Meteora* [1] to allow kelliotic monks who refused to adopt cenobiticism to remain on site, even though his Evergetian-influenced rule is informed by one of the most uncompromising visions of cenobitic life in our collection. Some decades later in the early fifteenth century in Venetian Crete, the author of (54) *Neilos Damilas* also successfully sponsored a transformation from an idiorhythmic to a cenobitic lifestyle for his community of nuns, though, unlike Athanasios in (53) *Meteora* [4], he permitted his nuns to continue to engage in commercial transactions.