

This is an extract from:

*Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents:*

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

*edited by John Thomas and Angela Constantinides Hero*

*with the assistance of Giles Constable*

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## 41. *Docheiariou*: Rule of Neophytos for the Monastery of St. Michael the Archangel of Docheiariou on Mount Athos

*Date*: ca. 1118<sup>1</sup>

*Translator*: Robert Allison

*Edition employed*: Nicolas Oikonomides, *Actes de Docheiariou* (= Archives de l’Athos 13) (Paris, 1984), 91–97, with text at 94–97.

*Manuscript*: Original document<sup>2</sup>

*Other translations*: None

### *Institutional History*

#### *A. Origins of the Monastery*

The monastery of Docheiariou appears to date back to the early years of the eleventh century when, sometime before 1013, a foundation was dedicated to St. Nicholas at Daphne, probably by John the Treasurer or Cellarer (*docheiarios*), who was an official of another Athonite monastery, perhaps Xeropotamou.<sup>3</sup> At a later date, probably between 1051 and 1056, the original location on the southwest coast of the Athonite peninsula was abandoned in favor of a new site in the interior. Towards the end of the eleventh century, the foundation was moved to a third site, on the coast, where a dependency dedicated to St. Michael was located. Circa 1083–1108, this location became the permanent home of the foundation.

#### *B. Patronage of Neophytos*

Hagiographic texts dating from the sixteenth century describe the activities of our author, the “second founder” Neophytos, crediting him with replacing the original church on the new site with a larger edifice, building a fortified enclosure with a large tower for its protection, and acquiring properties to assure the foundation an adequate income.<sup>4</sup> Later, Neophytos was honored by his fellow Athonite monks by being chosen *protos* of the Holy Mountain. The *Rule* translated here confirms [2], [3] the essentials of Neophytos’ career as reported in the hagiographic tradition. Neophytos is also independently attested in a document from the Lavra monastery as superior of Docheiariou in 1108.<sup>5</sup> Other documents from the monastery’s own cartulary note Neophytos’ acquisitions of landed properties in the western part of the Chalkidike.<sup>6</sup>

#### *C. Subsequent History in Byzantine Times*

Neophytos’ eventual successor, who apparently had not yet been identified at the time that our author drew up his *Rule* circa 1118, was Barnabas, who was serving as superior of Docheiariou in 1141.<sup>7</sup> By then, the foundation had become one of the most important monasteries on Mount Athos. Aside from the fact that Docheiariou lost many of its properties in the Chalkidike in the

turmoil that resulted from the Fourth Crusade, little else is known about the monastery until the beginning of the fourteenth century, at which time a number of documents from the foundation's cartulary begin to be preserved. By 1311, the Archangel Gabriel had joined St. Michael as a dedicatee of the foundation, which is described at that time as an imperial monastery.<sup>8</sup> Oikonomides (*Docheiariou*, p. 13) believes that the monastery had no special relationship with the emperor, as this title usually implies, but rather that it had simply been the beneficiary of some imperial benefaction. As it had been in Neophytos's day, Docheiariou continued as a cenobitic monastery down to 1330/31, when a certain Neilos issued (48) *Prodromos* for one of the foundation's dependencies. By 1351–66, however, judging from an extended controversy over the personal property of a certain monk named Gregory Isbes, it appears that the idiorhythmic form of monasticism had made inroads here as elsewhere on Mount Athos.<sup>9</sup> Towards the end of the fourteenth century, Docheiariou, again like the rest of Mount Athos, began to suffer from the depredations of Turkish pirates.<sup>10</sup> Judging from various documents preserved in its cartulary, the later Palaiologan emperors, especially Manuel II Palaiologos (1391–1425), were solicitous of Docheiariou's welfare and property rights.<sup>11</sup>

*D. Docheiariou under Ottoman Rule*<sup>12</sup>

Along with the rest of Mount Athos, Docheiariou passed under Ottoman rule, even before the fall of Thessalonike to Sultan Murad II in 1430. The Russian pilgrim Isaias of Chilandar visited the monastery in 1489. He reported that it housed one hundred twenty monks, but his identification of the foundation as a Serbian monastery suggests he confused it with the neighboring monastery of Xenophon.<sup>13</sup> By the middle of the sixteenth century, the monastery was virtually deserted, and in 1560 the priest George of Adrianople, with the financial assistance of the Romanian prince Alexander and his wife Roxandra, was able to restore the monastery and reconstitute its endowment. Nearly all of the buildings currently on the site are post-Byzantine, and many date from the eighteenth century.<sup>14</sup> During the Greek War of Independence (1821–31) Docheiariou once again lost nearly all its properties and many of its monks.

*E. The Foundation in Modern Times*<sup>15</sup>

Several important buildings were added in post-Byzantine times, including a *katholikon* built in the sixteenth century, a refectory erected in the late seventeenth century, and nine subsidiary chapels. There is also a library housed in the top floor of the defensive tower. With only ten idiorhythmic monks in 1980, Docheiariou ranks tenth in the hierarchy of monasteries on Mount Athos.

*Analysis*

Like (1) *Apa Abraham* nearly five hundred years earlier, this document represents the traditional private religious foundations of Byzantium in their purest form as the author employs this vehicle to transmit his monastery to his chosen successor (there is a space for his name in [4] that is left blank) just as he himself received [3] it from his uncle through a document of abdication. After the author's death, his successor is to become [5] lord and autocrat (*kyrios kai autokrator*) of the monastery, entitled to control all administrative affairs, properties, assets and privileges. Moreover, he is to be irremovable from office, with no exceptions noted. In return, the author obligates

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[5] his successor to perform the doxology, conduct the yearly patronal feast of St. Michael, commemorate deceased monks, care for the brothers, and preserve the “rules of the Mountain.”

A prohibition [5] on alienation of property is the only indication of influence that the ideology of the contemporary monastic reform movement may have had on our author. The monastery was not to be sold, nor any of its immovable properties alienated on any pretext “unless the greatest need requires it,” and then only after taking counsel with the entire brotherhood and gaining the approval of the *protos* of Mount Athos. Citing patristic and canonical precedent, the author instructs that movable furnishings of the monastery were also to be preserved, and even increased if possible.

In order to preserve the chain of private transmission, the author instructs [5] his successor to choose in turn “another exceedingly competent man” (i.e., a *xenokourites*) or a “worthy disciple” as his own successor, a practice that he claims is “as the divine ordinances declare and the rule of our Mountain has given as custom from the beginning.” Transmission to a lay relative, always a danger in traditional private foundations, is explicitly forbidden.

The author presupposes an unvarnished authoritarian model of leadership in ordering [6] the foundation’s monks to obey their new superior “as Christ himself.” They are not to “resist him, nor contradict him at all if possible even in the slightest matter.” Thus there is no attempt to utilize the monks, or—as in the contemporary Evergetian tradition—even a select group of them, as a useful check on the authority of the superior. Instead, the author prefers to rely [5] on the office of the *protos* and Athonite customs as the only restraints on his successor’s arbitrary use of his proprietary rights.

### *Notes on the Introduction*

1. See Oikonomides, *Docheiarou*, p. 24.
2. Preserved at the *Docheiariou* monastery, presumably as dictated by the author, and signed by him; see Oikonomides, *Docheiarou*, p. 93.
3. For the problematic origins of the foundation, see Oikonomides, *Docheiariou*, pp. 3–9.
4. See discussion by Oikonomides, *Docheiariou*, pp. 9–10, cf. 3–4.
5. Lemerle, *Lavra*, pt. 1, doc. 57 (1108), p. 299.
6. Oikonomides, *Docheiariou*, docs. 3 (1112) and 4 (1117), pp. 60–89.
7. Lemerle, *Lavra*, pt. 1, doc. 61 (1141), p. 318; with Oikonomides, *Docheiariou*, pp. 10, 24.
8. Oikonomides, *Docheiariou*, doc. 11 (1311), pp. 116–19.
9. Oikonomides, *Docheiariou*, docs. 34, 35, 36 (all 1361), 38 (1366), pp. 205–14, 218–20.
10. Oikonomides, *Docheiariou*, docs. 48 (ca. 1381), 49 (1384), pp. 252–64.
11. Oikonomides, *Docheiariou*, docs. 52 (1409), 54 (1414), 55 (1416), pp. 269–70, 279–87.
12. S. Kadas, *Mount Athos* (Athens, 1979), p. 92.
13. Oikonomides, *Docheiariou*, p. 22.
14. Talbot and Cutler, “Docheiariou Monastery,” p. 643.
15. Kadas, *Mount Athos*, pp. 92–93.

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### *Translation*

I, the worthless monk Neophytos, superior of the monastery of Docheiariou and *protos* of the Holy Mountain, validated this rule by my signature.

#### [1. Meditation on Death]

+ Death is a beneficial thing, a great collaborator working with men toward their betterment, even though perhaps it seems to be by nature the penalty for transgression. For nothing of the things given or being given to us by God is wholly without benefit, no matter how it be given. Nothing is wholly for destruction, nothing wholly for harm, even if somehow to the unintelligent and those altogether without imagination it is not perceived appropriately.

Now consider with me how the benefit is evident: for if kings, magistrates and rulers did not fear death, what outrage would they not commit? Or whom of their inferiors would they leave living? If whores and fornicators and seducers and other such evildoers did not clearly shudder at such a penalty and at the accounting for their life's conduct and at the just verdict of the incorruptible judge, when would they be converted from their wickedness? Or who, if miraculously transformed from these vices, would persevere safe from vice through the future? So the prophet spoke well concerning this and with inspiration when he said, "death is a man's relief" (Job 3:23).<sup>1</sup> For death is by nature nothing other than the separation of the soul from the body, and a passage from perishability to imperishability. Accordingly, since death was established for some such use, and was given us by God for our benefit, it is incumbent upon us to give careful consideration to matters related to it.

Already even old age itself, like some resounding trumpet which has taken position near us, re-echoes that such a mystery is at hand. By no means is it possible for us to evade its nets, mortals and creatures as we are and subject to change.

Therefore, the very creator and fashioner of our nature, the dispenser of life and Lord, deigned to drink this cup (cf. Matt. 26:39) through his mercy and love for us, wanting to show that death is not something to be avoided and averted, nor has it been bestowed by him for harm to our race, or for destruction of the soul.

#### [2. Introduction to the *Rule*]

Therefore, I, the worthless and most lowly monk Neophytos, having come many years ago by God's mercy to tend and govern the most noble monastery of Docheiariou, which from the beginning was founded and has been honored out of faith in the all-venerable and divine name of the archangel Michael; and having now been chosen to serve as *protos* on this Holy Mountain<sup>2</sup> [chosen] I think by God in accordance with his own ways, which he alone knows; I am composing the present written and signed, plain, clear and definite testament in the name of the great and almighty God Jesus Christ, the one [God] of the holy, consubstantial and life-giving Trinity, and in

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the name of his eternal Father and of the Holy Spirit, having prefixed by my own hand at the top of the text the sign of the precious and life-giving cross with my own name, being, by the grace of God, still in possession of mental faculties which are sound and unwavering and in every respect healthy and vigorous.

In it I make disposition of the most holy [p. 95] and venerable monastery of Docheiariou, entrusted to me by God and my holy fathers, as the text will make clear. The text is as follows:

### [3. Foundation History]

The said most venerable monastery of Docheiariou came to me in the beginning from the document of abdication of my blessed and most holy father and uncle.<sup>3</sup> From that time to the present I possess and govern it. In it I have accomplished many labors, as the Lord who knows all hearts (cf. Acts 1:24; 15:8) recognizes, and as all men perceive who know me and who observe my zeal for every serious pursuit, even if I did nothing at all of what was perhaps owed or pleasing to the master of all. But still, what I have accomplished by the help of God and the approval and collaboration of his commander of the heavenly armies [Michael] prevails in full and manifest public view.<sup>4</sup> For behold, I erected a large number of buildings and planted vineyards and constructed cells, and I added the most precious cloths, and holy silver vessels, and all-venerable icons and holy books similar to those which were already there, and I established additional movable and immovable properties and erected this most sacred and holy church of the commander of the heavenly host, Michael, from its very foundation, demolishing the former one, and I adorned it with every beauty within my power, and as such I presented it for all to see. Nevertheless, all these things are for the glory and praise of God, and not for my own vain satisfaction. With much toil and care I gathered much additional wealth as well as other kinds of material goods whose amounts and descriptions I have not been able to recount within the length of this document. I have made documents very enduring and secure, and whatever else the usefulness of this life demands.

### [4. Designation of a Successor]

Accordingly, I wish and decree and will that after my departure from this life the most honorable monk lord \_\_\_\_\_<sup>5</sup> shall succeed me in the rule of this monastery, whom I tonsured; whom after much consideration and profound investigation for the longest possible time I have judged to be both most competent and at the same time most worthy of such rule; and whom I am convinced will shepherd the flock of Christ as irreproachably and blamelessly as is humanly possible, and will direct and set in good order all of the affairs of the monastery just as in the present he observes me doing, or even much better; and to whom, as my successor and disciple, I address and recommend by way of counsel the following.

### [5. Counsel to his Successor]

O brother in the Lord and dearest child of mine, since I left you behind as my successor by the providence of God and you are obligated after my passing to become lord and autocrat of the monastery of Docheiariou and to have control of all the affairs and properties as well as the assets and other privileges in it or having to do with it, that is, movable, immovable and animate [property]; and [since] there will never be [anyone] at all, in any period or time throughout your whole life, as long as you wish to hold this position, to remove you or intimidate you or in any way whatever threaten you or thrust you forth from it, it is necessary:

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That, above every other thing, you will offer up to the Lord and to the archangel Michael in harmonious and orderly fashion the praise [doxology] which is due them. That you will observe inviolate his life-bearing commands, through which salvation is made available to men. That you perfect the virtues, as an inalienable treasure, through which the commandments are preserved. That you maintain the ordinances of the divine fathers. That you guard the rules of the Mountain.

Next, that you cherish and care for all the brothers as [you would] your own limbs, both those whom you take over after me, and those whom you yourself receive and tonsure, and that you guide them with all your zeal and power and keep them in harmonious order on the road to salvation, from both the model of your own life and [that] of the encouragement and admonition of the holy scriptures, for by this method everywhere it is shown that shepherds and teachers are from God, and they themselves are obligated to give an account of their charges.

Next, that you wholeheartedly care for all the immovable and tangible possessions, through which all men provide for the needs of their bodies, and [p. 96] completely attend to the erection of buildings, to the planting of vines, to the husbandry of fruit-bearing trees, and, to put it all simply, to everything contributing to the constitution and increase of the monastery.

In addition to this, you are also obligated to conduct yearly the joyous feast of the great commander of the heavenly host, Michael,<sup>6</sup> and to commemorate unceasingly and pray for all the fathers and brothers who have labored in this monastery and then have passed away.

These [obligations you must observe] throughout your whole life. At whatever time you are on the verge of traveling out from the body and departing to the places of judgment beyond, you may not do anything unlawful against this monastery, whether perhaps to sell it off, or to alienate any of its immovable property at all, either for a favor, or for collateral<sup>7</sup> or for removal<sup>8</sup> unless the greatest need urgently requires it, but even then only with the authorization of the *protos* currently in office and the counsel of the entire brotherhood. The holy cloths and all the precious vessels which contribute to the adornment and sublime beauty of the church you must not only preserve completely inalienable, but you must be zealous to increase their number as much as it is possible to do so, just as the divine canons declare and above all the most wise Cyril.<sup>9</sup>

You shall transfer control of the monastery, in turn, to another exceedingly competent and zealous man, or to a worthy disciple of your own, just as the divine ordinances declare and the rule of our Mountain has given as the custom from the beginning. Only do not under any circumstances act otherwise, following [unworthy] human fashion.

But let this suffice as far as matters relating to you are concerned. This should be adequate. It is not fitting to prolong further my discourse of advice.

[6. Exhortation to the Monks]

But what of matters relating to the brothers? Shall we, then, leave these unarticulated? Should we give them over to silence? Certainly not. It is neither appropriate nor fitting. Come, then, let us offer to them some brief and most necessary exhortations in the manner of good counsel, employing requisite compassion.

O cherished brothers and spiritual children in the Lord, whom I begot in the manner of the theologian St. Paul (Phlm. 10–11; I Cor. 4:15), I give this advice to you, as to men who have elected to be saved and to walk the way of the saints, encouraging you in this above all else:

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Heed your superior and obey him as Christ himself our master. For you have, I know, a good conscience, wanting in all things to behave well. Do not resist him, nor contradict him at all if possible even in the slightest matter, since, indeed, he who resists or objects or contradicts him in any way whatever or causes him grief in some matter, or provokes him to anger, does all [these things] to God, inasmuch as he did it to the one given him by God in his stead to rule and shepherd you. To escape from the coming wrath is not possible for the sons of disobedience (cf. Col. 3:6; Rom. 11:32), since they have in fact set themselves against the ordinance of God. Demonstrating, accordingly, every obedience to the one appointed by God to be in authority over you, it is necessary for you to consider his orders outright divine law, doing and observing whatever he might tell you to do, so that by your obedience you may gain your souls (cf. Luke 21:19).

You must add to obedience both self-control toward all things and love toward each other, by wearing as a double cloak faith in God and hope, by pursuing in every way the path of our fathers who shone in discipline, and by applying yourselves to good works (cf. Tit. 3:8, 14), as you both saw and learned through my example, so that you may not be, in the Apostle's words, barren of fruit (II Pet. 1:8).

[7. Conclusion]

"Now I commend you," brethren and beloved children in the Lord, "to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you an inheritance among all the sanctified" (cf. Acts 20:32). Commemorate my labors and my toil which I undertook, caring night and day for our holy monastery and for the betterment of each one of you, to the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus [p. 97] Christ and the honor of his commander, Michael, whose grace be with us all now and forever. Amen.

### *Notes on the Translation*

*Editors' note:* The assistance of our translator, Robert Allison [RA], is gratefully acknowledged for the notes to this document.

1. Cf. John Chrysostom, *Expositio in Ps. 110*, PG 55, col. 280.
2. For Neophytos as *protos* of Mount Athos, see Papachryssanthou, *Prôtaton*, p. 133.
3. Presumably Neophytos' immediate predecessor Euthymios, founder of the monastery of St. Michael sometime in the last decades of the eleventh century; see Oikonomides, *Docheiariou*, p. 24.
4. Literally, "But nevertheless all the things which I have done prevail evident to all and manifest..." i.e., the fact that Neophytos' accomplishments have endured validates his supposition that he acted in accord with God's will. [RA]
5. Although the space for his name is left blank here, this would have been Neophytos' eventual successor Barnabas; see Oikonomides, *Docheiariou*, pp. 10, 24.
6. Feast of the Archangels Michael and Gabriel, November 8.
7. *kyrosin*, i.e., collateral for a loan, or perhaps confirmation for a donation received? The previous editor, Ktenas, reads instead *akyrosin*, "cancellation of indebtedness." [RA]
8. *aphairesin*, "removal," may mean disburdening the monastery of property either vacant or currently underutilized that might be expensive to maintain. [RA]
9. Cyril of Alexandria, *Ep. 78 (59)*, PG 77, col. 364C.

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### *Document Notes*

- [1] Meditation on death. See also the reflections on this subject in (5) *Euthymios* [3]; (6) *Rila* [2]; (7) *Latros* Introduction; (10) *Eleousa* [1]; (24) *Christodoulos* [B1]; (25) *Fragala* [A6], [B6]; (30) *Phoberos* [1]; (34) *Machairas* [1]; (35) *Skoteine* [1]; (44) *Karyes* [1]; (45) *Neophytos* [2]; (48) *Prodromos* [1]; (49) *Geromeri* [2] ff.; (50) *Gerasimos* [1]; and (51) *Koutloumoussi* [A1], [C1].
- [2] Introduction to the *Rule*. For the history of the monastery of St. Michael, see Oikonomides, *Docheiariou*, pp. 7–11.
- [3] Foundation history. For the author's career and relationship with *Docheiariou*, see Oikonomides, *Docheiariou*, pp. 9–10.
- [4] Designation of a successor. See also the testamentary designation of successors in (1) *Apa Abraham* [1]; (10) *Eleousa* [11]; (24) *Christodoulos* [B3], [B5], [C1]; (25) *Fragala* [A7], [B7]; (45) *Neophytos* [16]; (48) *Prodromos* [6]; (49) *Geromeri* [14]; (50) *Gerasimos* [3]; and (52) *Choumnos* [A3]; cf. vaguer formulations in (3) *Theodore Studites*, (5) *Euthymios* [1], (13) *Ath. Typikon* [54], and (44) *Karyes* [4].
- [5] Rights and responsibilities of the successor. See similar treatments in (10) *Eleousa* [12]; (13) *Ath. Typikon* [35]; (22) *Evergetis* [17] and related documents; (24) *Christodoulos* [A19]; (25) *Fragala* [A10]; (37) *Auxentios* [4]; (38) *Kellibara I* [18]; (45) *Neophytos* [15]; (48) *Prodromos* [7]; (57) *Bebaia Elpis* [27] ff.; and (60) *Charsianeites* [B9].
- [6] Exhortation to the monks. See similar treatments in (3) *Theodore Studites* [25], [26], [27]; (7) *Latros* [11]; (14) *Ath. Testament* [20]; (22) *Evergetis* [16] and related documents; (24) *Christodoulos* [A28]; (25) *Fragala* [A9], [B9]; (32) *Mamas* [24]; (33) *Heliou Bomon* [24]; (37) *Auxentios* [5]; (39) *Lips* [9]; and (57) *Bebaia Elpis* [37] ff.
- [7] Request for liturgical commemoration. See similar testamentary requests in (1) *Apa Abraham* [7], (5) *Euthymios* [2], (6) *Rila* [20], (14) *Ath. Testament* [21], and (52) *Choumnos* [A22].