

This is an extract from:

Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents:

A Complete Translation of the Surviving Founders' Typika and Testaments

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46. *Akropolites: Testament* of Constantine Akropolites for the Monastery of the Resurrection (*Anastasis*) in Constantinople

Date: 1295–1324¹

Translator: Alice-Mary Talbot

Edition employed: H. Delehay, “Constantini Acropolitae hagiographi byzantini epistularum manipulus,” *AB* 51 (1933), 263–84, with text at 279–84.

Manuscript: Codex Ambrosianus H. 81 sup. (14th c.)²

Other translations: None

Institutional History

*A. The First Foundation*³

The origins of this Constantinopolitan monastery are obscure. The claim that it was founded by Helen, mother of the first Christian emperor Constantine (306–337), as stated [2] in the document translated below, is surely apocryphal. It was in existence by the twelfth century, when it served as the site for the liturgical commemoration of St. Auxentios, and was noted by the Russian pilgrim Antony of Novgorod. Before his election to the patriarchate, Theodotos II (1151/52–53/54) was a monk at this monastery. During the Latin Empire of Constantinople (1204–61), the monastery was taken over by Latin canons, at least down to 1232. According to our document, the monastery church fell [2] into disrepair and was “almost completely destroyed.” If accurate, this may have happened during the last decades of Latin rule.

B. Restoration under the Patronage of the Akropolites Family

George Akropolites, who held the office of Grand Logothete (from ca. 1259–82) under Michael VIII Palaiologos, is credited [3] by our document with the restoration of this foundation.⁴ His son Constantine, our author, is anxious to claim a commensurate share of credit for the restoration, though the extent of his actual role is open to question (see below, Analysis). That Constantine bought [6] an auxiliary chapel for the monastery that he subsequently dedicated to St. Lazarus⁵ cannot be doubted, for this donation gave rise to our document. The gift may well have been associated with an undated chrysobull of Andronikos II (1282–1328), which joins the Constantinopolitan monastery of the *Anastasis* with its much older counterpart on Mount Galesios.⁶ Janin’s conjecture that the former was restored specifically to provide a place of refuge for monks of the latter after the Turkish conquest of Asia Minor is certainly reasonable, for the translation of the head of St. Lazarus of Galesios to Constantinople on October 25 is a Palaiologan feast.⁷

In a hortatory epistle, Constantine Akropolites exhorts the monks of an unnamed monastery to care for the sick housed in a public charitable institution (*katagoge*) belonging to them.⁸ The editors suggest that the monastery in question was that of the *Anastasis* and that the letter dates from towards the end of Akropolites’ life.

C. Subsequent History of the Foundation

In May 1324, after Constantine Akropolites' death, a monk Nicandros brought a complaint before the patriarchal synod of Isaïas (1323–32) alleging that his agreement with Makarios Tarchaniotes, superior of the *Anastasis* monastery, to build a church with a few monastic cells on a neighboring property belonging to that monastery had been violated by Akropolites, who ordered the demolition of these structures.⁹ The synod ordered the monastery to repay Nicandros his expenses and the rent payments he had already made in accordance with his prior agreement. In 1367, Myron, another superior of the *Anastasis*, stood trial before the patriarchal synod of Philotheos (1364–76).¹⁰ The last mention of the monastery is in the fifteenth century, when a meeting was held there to discuss the church unification proposals of Pope Eugenius IV (1431–47); therefore it is likely to have survived down to the fall of Constantinople in 1453.

Analysis

This document was written for a traditional private religious foundation, of which the author's father, George Akropolites (1217–82), was [3] "master" (*kyrios*), thanks to his role in rebuilding it from ruins after the Byzantine reoccupation of Constantinople in 1261.

The author is anxious to assert his own claim to being considered a founder (*ktetor*) or at least a restorer (*anakainistes*) of this foundation. More than half of this document ([1] through [5]) is given over to an elaborate attempt to build up the author's personal role in the reconstruction of this foundation. Since he admits [3] that he was only a child at the time, his actual role must have been minimal or non-existent. Previously when the concept of hereditary patronal rights was stronger, it would have been sufficient for the author to establish his relationship to the founder rather than (as here) make an elaborate defense of his personal contribution to the foundation's welfare.

Of his father's claim to the title of *ktetor* there could be no doubt. The author provides [3] interesting details of the financial accounting done for the reconstruction and notes that his father spent some 16,000 gold pieces until he decided to stop counting. The author claims [4] his father reduced his expected inheritance in view of the expectation that he would be inheriting the church from him instead. Later, his father reduced [5] the author's original inheritance of 7,000 gold pieces further in order to cover unanticipated expenses of the reconstruction. It is noteworthy that, long after the triumph of the reform movement's ideas on the inalienability of ecclesiastical property, the patronage of a church could be quantified in a sum of money thought comparable to a share in an inheritance. The father told his son to appeal to an icon of Christ in the church should he ever find himself in need. This may be taken to mean that the author considered that the foundation had an obligation to bail him out of any future financial difficulty.

The author's actual financial contribution [5] to the foundation was considerably more modest than that of his father, even on his own admission, some 1,000 gold pieces as opposed to more than 17,000 for his father. On the grounds of this expense as well as his foregone inheritance, the author considers [6] that "rightly double the [reward] of founders" was due to him. He had already buried his wife Maria in the monastery, a traditional patron's right. However, his principal concern in this document was to instruct the officials of the foundation how they were to discharge the "debt" owed to him. Specifically, the foundation was to conduct [6] commemorative services in the large church for the author, his children, and his descendants. At the chapel of St. Lazarus, a priest and two other resident clergy were to celebrate the liturgy at least three times a week, more

often if the chapel should gain additional funding from other benefactors. Saturday liturgy was reserved for the author, his wife, and his mother Eudokia.

The author also provides [6] for the celebration of the morning and evening hymnody. Services were to be coordinated with those taking place in the main church so that they occurred simultaneously, synchronized by the ringing of the church bell. Morning services would begin [7] in the large church, then the clergy assigned to the chapel would depart to start the hymnody in the chapel “together with the public congregation.” Additionally, annual commemorations were to be performed for the patron saint, and for the author, his wife, and his mother “in accordance with the times and prosperity (of the monastery),” a note of realism born of the newly restored empire’s poverty.

The author did not want professional singers (known as *kraktai* or *kalliphonoi*) to participate [7] in these commemorative services, “for it is intended that they should sing when there is a congregation of people, but only the monks should perform the hymns of the vigil.” This restriction was to hold also on feasts of the Lord and on the feast day marking the inauguration of the chapel. Judging from other documents,¹¹ it appears that the *kalliphonoi* had been developing since Komnenian times as professional singing troupes. There was one associated with the imperial court in the late thirteenth century, and the growing taste for secular musical performance apparently led to similar groups being imported into some monastic communities to lend extra festivity to special feast days. But being hired troupes, founders like our author may have thought that they would not be as efficacious as monks as intercessors.

The author emphasizes [8] the supplementary nature of the present document and its applicability only to the chapel of St. Lazarus, “while all the (affairs) of the monastery should be administered and managed as has been previously ordained and regulated”—presumably in a formal *typikon* issued earlier by his father. Nearly two hundred years before, (27) *Kecharitomene* [76] explicitly recognized the validity of documents like this one in decreeing: “The commemorations for those who were glad to offer and dedicate something of their own possessions will be carried out in whatever way they decree from what is given by them, that is, as an addition (*eis prostheken*) to what has been decreed by us.” This document then is an example of such a *prostheke*. Our author asserts that “my desires are not burdensome, nor do they require any expenditure of funds, as you yourselves can calculate.” This must have been an important consideration in order for foundations to be assured that carrying out the conditions of certain benefactions did not actually cause a drain on the resources of their principal endowments.

Overall, the author stresses the contractual nature of the relationship between himself and the foundation, stating at one point, “In view of my demands, it would be sufficient to bind you with a reasonable and acceptable oath.” This is a testimony to the significantly increased institutional autonomy that even a private monastery might enjoy in Palaiologan times thanks to the generalized acceptance of once radical reform ideas on this subject. If, as this document shows, the memory of more substantial financial rights of patronage had not entirely faded from the minds of contemporary benefactors, in actual practice holders of hereditary *ktetoreia* found themselves reduced to the status of the outside benefactors anticipated in (27) *Kecharitomene* [76], entitled to only such rights as they could negotiate with the recipient foundation in exchange for their tangible assistance.

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Notes on the Introduction

1. The document must date from after 1295, when Constantine Akropolites' wife Maria died (so Nicol, "Prosopographical Note," pp. 252, 253), for Maria herself was deceased when it was drawn up. A decision of the patriarchal synod under Isaias (1323–32) (ed. MM 1.102–04 = Darrouzès, *Regestes*, no. 2110), dated to May 1324, provides a *terminus ante quem*, since Akropolites is mentioned in it as being deceased.
2. See description in Delehaye, "Constantini Acropolitae," pp. 264–69.
3. See Janin, *Géographie*, vol. 3, pp. 20–21.
4. For the author's father, see Macrides, "George Akropolites," p. 49.
5. For this foundation, see Janin, *Géographie*, vol. 3, p. 298.
6. Dölger, *Regesten*, no. 2085, ed. MM 5.264–67.
7. Janin, *Géographie*, vol. 3, p. 21; cf. vol. 2, p. 249.
8. Dennis and Miller, "Care for the Sick," pp. 416–20, with English translation, pp. 417–21.
9. Darrouzès, *Regestes*, no. 2110, ed. MM 1.102–4.
10. Darrouzès, *Regestes*, no. 2529, ed. MM 1.490.
11. (27) *Kecharitomene* [75] and (37) *Lips* [39]; cf. the attitude shown towards sung hymns in (36) *Blemmydes* [13].

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Translation

A testamentary oration on the restoration of the church of the Resurrection of Our Lord.

1. What worthy offering could one make to God, who fills the heaven and earth, who has provided us with our very existence, and who was made incarnate and surrendered himself to death so that we might recover once more the well-being that we had lost on account of our transgression? How could one repay him for so many and such great blessings? Even if one were to offer himself in addition to his ostensible property (and I say "ostensible" because in truth nothing belongs to us who have been born and received mortal life), he will still fall immeasurably short in his debt; for what he has given is what he has received [from the Creator], and what payment would he need to pay off his debt? What repayment could one make equivalent to such gifts, where would he find them, from whom could he borrow them? It is in no way possible, in no way, to repay our benefac-

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tor for our blessings. Because he who is superior to us, and above all nature superior to ours [sc. nature of angels], was born in our likeness for our sake, we would not be able to repay him with deeds, nor to show our worthy gratitude with mere words. Nevertheless, [praise be to his] supremely infinite goodness, to his incomparable compassion and goodness to us, he accepts our grateful thanksgiving alone as a sufficient repayment, and presents in return a many times greater gift, and lavishes upon us the enjoyment of eternal blessings.

2. Thus, when I mulled over these things in my mind, I thought of the church dedicated to the Resurrection of our Lord and Savior, which was originally constructed from its very foundations by the celebrated St. Helen,¹ mother of the famous emperor Constantine, the equal of the apostles. For it was damaged by “time which subdues all,”² and was restored and consolidated again with imperial support, but after the conquest of Constantinople by the Italians it was once more reduced to ruins and almost completely destroyed, so as to have no expectation of reconstruction. Since I did not think it right to neglect it, although most everyone else equal to me, or even superior to me in rank and wealth, did not dare to lay a hand on it, [p. 280] I undertook the restoration, or rather reconstruction of this church, totally and with all my soul, and spared no expense. For many blessings have been granted to me by the bountiful right hand of God, from whom I received the greatest gift, a reputation for learning and wisdom, as others might perhaps say, although I myself would say a desirable education and a noble pursuit.

Therefore I spent a considerable sum of money to restore the fallen blocks of the holy structure, and properly braced and stabilized the roof, which was supported as it were on unstable [trusses] (so that I may say something similar to the one who said that the universe moves on an immovable foundation), and was in imminent danger of collapse; and the sight of these is the proof and my actions are unimpeachable witnesses to my words. Let me briefly describe the church or rather the present monastery.

3. I paid a salary of 1000 gold pieces, which was counted out and weighed, to the men who excavated the dirt, and cleared the area of debris, both the foundations and their surroundings. I will omit how I shared the labor of removal with my employees. But I will add another point to give greater credence to my tale. Specially assigned secretaries recorded in detail on paper the gold pieces delivered to the supervisors of the project, as is customary for those who undertake large projects. They made a monthly accounting, and after a year had passed, the expenditure was reckoned; when the supervisors stated that they had spent 16,000 gold pieces, my father [George Akropolites] said in reply: “From now on I do not want the expenses to be recorded in a ledger; for I do not give this [money] to man, I offer it to God who gave [it to me]. Thus, as if he were supervising, spend what you receive, and, as they say, ‘the experiment will show’³ how much was given and spent.” But now let me explain why I spoke as I did and how I joined my father in this notable project, and said I would be his associate in this magnificent undertaking, and how I accomplished this in a not unreasonable manner. For it is clear that he was the master of his property and whatever is and is shown (?) was accomplished by him alone. For I was still a child when this project was completed.

4. Therefore I included myself in the project, and made his purely personal undertaking common to both of us, not because I was born of him, nor because I happened to be his first-born son

(although [p. 281] this did contribute in a small way to my decision), but because he wished to bequeath to me as his first-born more than to the others. When I became involved in the project, he reduced my inheritance more than that of the others. For standing before the Lord and Savior, whose name the church bears, he spoke as follows to me—when I was devoting my time to school, as he urged, studying a general curriculum and visiting him from time to time—for he entrusted me to instructors and appointed tutors.

5. Thus once when I left my lessons and went to see him, when I learned that he was at the monastery, inspecting the progress, I was filled with concern and anxiety; for I thought that he would ask me one of his usual questions, such as: “What have you been taught this week? About whom did you learn yesterday? The day before?” He said nothing about these subjects, however, but took me by the hand and, entering the church, gazed at the icon of our God and Savior. “This is the One,” he said, “who provided being to those that exist, he who grants life to the living, the total Creator of everything. ‘He produced everything from non-being,’⁴ he also governs everything. According to the psalmist, ‘When he opens his hand, he fills every living thing with pleasure’ (Ps. 144 [145]:16). He is the One who also provided me with learning, the most honorable thing in life, which nothing on earth can equal, as one of the wise pagans testified;⁵ on account of it I became illustrious and prosperous, and I assisted most of my relatives; for I will pass over how I relieved the need even of strangers to the best of my ability. Now for the sake of these [blessings] and on account of them, I have undertaken this great project and have spent a lot of money, and am willing to spend in the future; therefore I intend to reduce your inheritance significantly. For I originally proposed to give you more; but since I need more [money], subtracting one-seventh in addition to one half of the remainder, I will bequeath the rest to you. (The sum he originally planned to give me was 7000 gold pieces.) But if you should ever be in want of necessities, God forbid, then come to this [icon], and gazing at the Lord Christ, say to him: ‘Benevolent Lord, as thou knowest well, my father spent most of my inheritance on thy church, and now I am in need and am in want of necessities. Therefore do not allow me to continue longer in miserable need, O bountiful provider.’ My dearest child, I am confident that, as a result of the ineffable mercies of this infinitely good Christ, he will not leave you unprovided for; [p. 282] but whatever you need, he will provide you with unexpected means.”

6. For these reasons I spoke as I did, and did not lie by saying that I collaborated with my father in the work; therefore, I, too, became with good reason a founder of this monastery, or rather a restorer, as I have explained; and rightly double the [reward] of founders is due to me. For when my wife [Maria Komnene Tornikina] died, I buried her body in this [monastery]. I purchased the chapel which is inserted near the large church, donating the gold pieces which the monks agreed to spend for its completion, and I want this debt [i.e., contribution] to be used for my commemorative services. For they should be performed in the large church on behalf of myself and my children and their descendants; but I also desire and wish that certain special [feast days] be celebrated there. Therefore I donated 300 gold staters and I ordered that next year the same amount be added.

The chapel which I bought and acquired should be honored with the name of the holy and miracle-working Lazarus.⁶ Therefore from now on no one should call it by any other name. As is

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the custom in churches named after holy men or martyrs, the name of the saint should be included in the prayer of dismissal at both morning and evening services. The divine and holy liturgy should be celebrated in this [chapel] three times a week; but if it should be necessary for the liturgy to be celebrated there more often, on account of certain people's request or some other necessity, I do not forbid it, rather I like and welcome [the idea]. But right now three should be celebrated. As for the large church, it is my pleasure and decision that all services be performed as has been previously ordained.⁷

The first [liturgy] should be offered to our Savior Christ on the first day [of the week], the Lord's Day, as is customary; the second on Thursday, in commemoration of the memory of St. Lazarus, after whom the church is named; and the third on Saturday, the last day of the week, on behalf of the soul of my late mother Eudokia, and on behalf of myself, Constantine, and my wife Maria. I want a priest who is a precentor to reside there, as well as two other members of the clergy, in order to offer up to God the Savior morning and evening hymns every day; and I want them to be at the same time as the [services] in the large church, and for the hymns to be sung together in both places. For the [p. 283] *semantron*, the holy bell, ought to awaken and assemble everyone together in the church named after the Lord.

7. Since the arrangement of the public and communal hymnodies is greatly lengthened by introductory and additional prayers and psalms, and by the reading of holy Scriptures, and especially in the stricter monasteries, among which this monastery of the Resurrection of Christ once numbered (and may it take the lead again as it did once in the past), the [monks] assembled in the large church should participate in the hymns and prayers until the beginning of the canons; and then two or three, together with the precentor—to whom the superior of the monastery would grant permission—would go to the sanctuary of St. Lazarus to perform the morning hymnody to Christ the Savior, and should finish it together with the public congregation. They should follow the same procedure at the divine liturgy. For it must be celebrated in the large church, preceded by the singing of selected verses of the Psalms and the *stichera*, as it is usually extended. Therefore the bloodless and salvific sacrifice should not begin in both churches at the same time, but the time should be calculated, for the reasons which I have mentioned, so that if possible neither of them finish before the other.

The annual commemoration of St. Lazarus should be celebrated forthwith and in perpetuity, and it should be celebrated solemnly and in a manner befitting God. *Kraktai* (to whom most people give the more euphonious name of *kalliphonoi* "singers with beautiful voices") should not be invited, nor should they come and enter uninvited; for when there is a congregation of people, it is intended that they should sing, but only monks should perform the hymns of vigil. The same should hold true at the dominical and important feast day of the *enkainia*.⁸ I do not make these statements by way of injunctions, but I am giving instructions and setting forth what seems to me a more solemn procedure. Immediately after the feast day of the saint my own commemoration should take place, that is, of my late mother, and myself, and my wife. It should be celebrated in accordance with the times and the prosperity [of the monastery]; I only beg that it not be overlooked.

8. These are the [services] I wish and desire to be performed in the church [of Lazarus] that I

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acquired, while all the [affairs] of the monastery should be administered and managed as has been previously ordained and regulated. Therefore, by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, by the blessed hopes for which you renounced the world and the ruler of the world, [p. 284] 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. In view of my demands, it would be sufficient to bind you with a reasonable and acceptable oath. But let me add something else, much less important than what I have said, but more customary for Christians and especially for monks. Thus, may you enjoy your salvation, may you attain the promised blessings, as you maintain and strive to accomplish these things. May both you and we attain them, you who dwell in this divine enclosure, and we who take confidence in your prayers, through the intercessions of the eternally virgin Mother of God, through the supplications of the holy Constantine and Helen, the equals of the apostles, through the prayers of St. Lazarus, renowned for his asceticism, through the grace and loving kindness of our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ, to whom is owed all glory, honor and veneration, together with his eternal Father and the all-holy and good and life-giving Spirit, now and unto everlasting ages, Amen.

Notes on the Translation

1. An apocryphal attribution; see above, Institutional History.
2. Simonides, *Fragm.* 5 [4].5.
3. Plato, *Theaet.* 200e.
4. John Chrysostom, *Liturgy*, ed. F. E. Brightman (London, 1896), p. 369, lines 27–29; p. 384, lines 27–28.
5. Unidentified quotation.
6. The mid-eleventh century author of (9) *Galesios*.
7. Presumably in a formal *typikon* issued by the author's father George Akropolites; see also [8] below.
8. For the feast of the *enkainia*, see (39) *Lips*, n. 11.

Document Notes

- [1] Impossibility of repaying the Creator. See also the reflections on this subject in (19) *Attaleiates* [2], (27) *Kecharitomene*, Prologue, and (38) *Kellibara I* [1].
- [2] Prior history of the foundation. For other foundations restored in Palaiologan times after ruination during the Latin conquest of Constantinople, see (37) *Auxentios*, Institutional History, and (38) *Kellibara I* [12].
- [3] Patronage by George Akropolites. For the author's father, see Macrides, "George Akropolites," p. 49.
- [4] Origin of Constantine Akropolites' role. For inherited roles in patronage of religious institutions, see also (27) *Kecharitomene* [3], [80]; (28) *Pantokrator* [70]; (32) *Mamas* [3]; (35) *Skoteine* [7], [8]; (37) *Auxentios* [15]; (38) *Kellibara I* [16]; (39) *Lips* [3]; (56) *Kellibara II*, Institutional History; and (57) *Bebaia Elpis* [19], [146], [158], [159].
- [5] Reduction of Constantine's paternal inheritance. For the explicit derivation of a private profit from a religious institution, see (19) *Attaleiates* [24], [37].
- [6] Assertion of patronal privileges; prescriptions for commemorative liturgies. For contemporary assertions of these rights, see (37) *Auxentios* [13]; (39) *Lips* [30], [42], [52]; (57) *Bebaia Elpis* [113], [114], [117], [116], [119], [134], [136], [142], [149], [150], [151]; and (60) *Charsianeites* [C15].
- [7] Coordination of services in the church and chapel; ban on use of *kraktai*. For liturgical processions elsewhere, see (4) *Stoudios* [A2]; (28) *Pantokrator* [29], [31]; and (29) *Kosmosoteira* [103]. For analogues to the *kraktai*, see (27) *Kecharitomene* [75] and (39) *Lips* [39].

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[8] Confirmation of existing regulations; new requirements not financially burdensome; benefits of fulfillment. For respect for prior *typika* in other foundations, see (13) *Ath. Typikon* [12], [13], [18], [20], [23]; (14) *Ath. Testament* [3]; (15) *Constantine IX*, Introduction, [1], [2], [3], [6], [7], [8], [13]; (33) *Heliou Bomon* [51]; (34) *Machairas* [4]; (40) *Anargyroi* [1]; (59) *Manuel II*, Introduction; and (60) *Charsianeites* [A12], [B1], [C10].