

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](http://www.doaks.org/etexts.html)

## 47. *Philanthropos*: *Typikon* of Irene Choumnaina Palaiologina for the Convent of Christ *Philanthropos* in Constantinople

*Date*: ca. 1307<sup>1</sup>

*Translator*: Alice-Mary Talbot

*Edition employed*: Ph. Meyer, “Bruchstücke zweier *typika ktetorika*,” *BZ* 4 (1895), 45–58, with text at 48–49.

*Manuscript*: Iveron codex 593 (1540 A.D.)<sup>2</sup>

*Other translations*: None

### *Institutional History*

#### *A. Foundation under the Choumnos Family*

Irene Choumnaina, the daughter of the influential courtier Nikephoros Choumnos, was the founder of this convent, to which she retired under the monastic name Eulogia after the death of her husband the *despot* John Palaiologos, eldest son of Andronikos II and Yolanda-Irene of Montferrat, in 1307. This foundation was built into the Theodosian sea walls in the extreme easternmost part of Constantinople, on the site of an earlier monastic complex about which nothing is known. For nearly fourteen years until his death in 1322, Eulogia’s spiritual advisor was Theoleptos, metropolitan of Philadelphia. Five of his letters to her on monastic subjects are preserved. These provide useful insights into Eulogia’s suitability for leadership and various disciplinary problems in the foundation. Some ten to fifteen years after Theoleptos’ death, Eulogia acquired another spiritual advisor, a young monk whose identity is unknown. An extensive correspondence between them has been edited by Angela Hero.<sup>3</sup>

There was a companion male monastery associated with the convent also bearing a dedication to Christ *Philanthropos*. At the conclusion of his career, Nikephoros Choumnos retired to this monastery under the monastic name Nathaniel. In his *Testament*, he leaves instructions for his burial there and claims that he and his wife were responsible for building it.<sup>4</sup> His wife, Eulogia’s mother, evidently retired at the same time to the convent under her daughter’s direction. Nikephoros died at the monastery in 1327, and his wife at the convent a little later. Eulogia herself died circa 1355.

#### *B. Subsequent History and Fate of the Foundation*<sup>5</sup>

The Russian pilgrim, deacon Zosima, reports the existence of the convent of *Philanthropos* ca. 1420. Other Russian travelers of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries point out a famous miracle-working image of Christ. There was also a miraculous, healing fountain located under the church which flowed into a cistern on the beach outside the sea walls and then out onto the sand. Majeska (*Russian Travelers*, pp. 373–74) reports that this fountain was visited by local Greek Christians

down to the nineteenth century even though it was then on the grounds of the sultan's palace, the construction of which surely led to the demolition of the rest of the Christian complex. Both the cistern and substructures of various monastic buildings still exist on the site. Excavations carried out by the French army of occupation in Constantinople in 1921–23 have made it possible to identify the foundations of the former church.

### *Analysis*

This text owes its preservation to Pachomios Rhousanos, a monk of the Athonite monastery of Iveron, who in 1540 transcribed the surviving excerpt of this document along with that of (56) *Kellibara II* in support of his attack on the idiorhythmic monastic foundations that were popular in his own day. He was clearly looking for authoritative pro-cenobitic citations such as this document provides. His excerpts from (56) *Kellibara II* are concerned with related themes of monastic equality ultimately derived from the Evergetian monastic reform movement.

#### *A. Model Typikon*

The excerpt that makes up all that remains of this document here is a reworking of Empress Irene Doukaina Komnene's (27) *Kecharitomene* [2].<sup>6</sup> Since the Komnenian empress was also the founder of an identically named male monastery of Christ *Philanthropos* for which she presumably wrote a *typikon* analogous to (27) *Kecharitomene*, the document represented by this excerpt here may have been an adaptation (genders changed) of that institution's lost *typikon*.<sup>7</sup> However, Janin thought that the Komnenian and the Palaiologan foundations were entirely different foundations, located in different areas of Constantinople.<sup>8</sup>

In any event, this document is a valuable example of the utilization and elaboration by an author in Palaiologan times of a much older document in the Evergetian tradition. Even if there was in fact no institutional link between the Komnenian and Palaiologan monasteries of the Philanthropic Savior, there is other evidence of a renewed popularity of the Evergetian monastic usages in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. As we have seen, (37) *Auxentios* shares certain usages and even a few similarities of diction with (22) *Evergetis*. Like (47) *Philanthropos*, (58) *Menoikeion* appears to copy another document in the later Evergetian tradition, specifically (32) *Mamas*. Moreover, (39) *Lips* and (56) *Kellibara II* both suggest an acquaintance with Evergetian models, (27) *Kecharitomene* and (22) *Evergetis* respectively.

#### *B. Lives of the Nuns*

The author's enthusiastic endorsement [1] of cenobitic life, while actually traceable to (27) *Kecharitomene* [2], is credited both to "the holy and inspired fathers of old" and contemporary authorities, namely bishops, ascetics, monks and nuns, presumably including (so Trone, "Philanthropic Savior," p. 84) the author's own spiritual mentor Theoleptos, metropolitan of Philadelphia († ca. 1322) and Patriarch Athanasios I (1289–1293, 1303–1309), author of (55) *Athanasios I*. The essentials of the cenobitic life [2] were the common refectory, kitchen, and manual labor. Nuns were expected to devote the "appropriate amount of attention" to the communal activities of handiwork, ecclesiastical services, housekeeping duties, and reading and prayer in their cells. This suggests a common participation in these activities rather than the specialization by particular

classes of nuns that was featured at other contemporary institutions, e.g., (39) *Lips* [4]. A nun caught practicing private crafts or cooking food in her cell was to be disciplined “no matter who she is” (i.e., regardless of social standing) and expelled if unrepentant.

The author singles out [2] for condemnation nuns having an entrepreneurial approach to their work. As in (27) *Kecharitomene* [2], the convent’s cenobitic constitution was not to change [3] regardless of whether the foundation became richer or poorer in the future. Her adoption of her model’s prescription [4] that the superior should oppose the nuns or vice versa should any constitutional change away from cenobiticism be proposed omits the oversight roles provided for in (27) *Kecharitomene* [2] for the protectress and the founder’s relatives. At the end of his excerpt, Pachomios Rhousanos appends a note that suggests that the lost text of our document continued at length in a similar vein, emphasizing the virtues of monastic poverty.<sup>9</sup>

#### *Notes on the Introduction*

1. See Hero, “Irene-Eulogia” (1981), p. 5.
2. See Meyer, “Bruchstücke,” p. 50.
3. Hero, *Woman’s Quest*, pp. 26–100, with English translation, pp. 27–101.
4. Nikephoros Choumnos, *Testamentum*, PG 140, cols. 1465–98, esp. 1481.
5. See Janin, *Géographie*, vol. 3, p. 528, and Majeska, *Russian Travelers*, pp. 371–74.
6. First noticed by Salaville, “Formes,” p. 46.
7. For pronoun gender changes, see Trone, “Philanthropic Savior,” p. 84.
8. Janin, *Géographie*, vol. 3, pp. 527–29, cf. 525–27.
9. The note may refer to a lost chapter of (47) *Philanthropos* based on (27) *Kecharitomene* [50], though that particular chapter is not in fact very long. It is also possible that Pachomios’ reference is to other lost chapters in (47) *Philanthropos* and/or (56) *Kellibara II* that were independent of those extant in the known models for these respective documents.

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## FOURTEENTH CENTURY

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*Key:* As noted above, the author of this *typikon* utilizes a portion of (27) *Kecharitomene*. In our translation, the borrowings are indicated in boldface type.

### *Translation*

[An excerpt] from the *typikon* of the venerable monastery of Christ the Philanthropic Savior, restored from its foundations by the pious princess Irene Laskarina Palaiologina, who took the name Eulogia after adopting the divine and angelic habit, and by her parents,<sup>1</sup> [the said *typikon*] having been expounded and issued by her.

[1.] [cf. (27) *Kecharitomene* [2], ed. lines 218–23]: I think it would be **right that something be said more clearly and briefly next concerning the way of life of the nuns and the whole**

**organization of life in the convent.** For **what will be prescribed on this matter will be compatible with what has been clearly stated and declared by** the holy and inspired **fathers** of old, the present holy bishops and the most experienced ascetics and monks, as well as elderly nuns, who over a long period of time have assembled exact and true experience of asceticism. **For they decided and laid it down that those** who have renounced the world and worldly things **and took refuge in the calm harbor of monastic life** in accordance with God, that they should follow a **cenobitic way of life and give themselves up to [a life of] submission, renouncing their own will,** which the fathers termed “mortification.”

[2.] [cf. (27) *Kecharitomene* [2], ed. lines 226–29]: **Therefore obeying these [authorities], I very much wish and desire that the nuns in the convent** of my Philanthropic Savior **should live in a cenobitic order and way of life** and not only should they all have a common refectory, but also a common kitchen and the same handiwork. For thus [the nuns] would devote the appropriate amount of attention [to all their] common [activities], their handiwork, church services, all the [housekeeping] duties, reading [p. 49] and prayer in their cells, and all other spiritual labor, since thereby they behave like nuns and not like businesswomen and even worse than laymen. If one of the nuns should be caught doing her own private handiwork, or preparing food in her private cell, she should be severely censured and disciplined, and banished from the church and the refectory until she mends her ways, no matter who she is. If she should disobey and act insolently and not be willing to mend her ways, she is to be expelled from the convent. For a few women gathered in the name of the Lord are far superior to many who reject a life in accordance with God and the monastic and ascetic mode of conduct.<sup>2</sup>

[3.] [= (27) *Kecharitomene* [2], ed. lines 229–39]: Thus my majesty wishes that **the rule** of such a cenobitic system **should always be in force in it, unchanged and unaltered and unshaken by every misfortune, perverted or changed in no way during the existence of this whole age, nor altered for any reason or pretext whatsoever, neither because of wealth or poverty, neither through scarcity or abundance, nor any other plausible reason or pretext whatsoever, but the cenobitic order and way of life should be completely preserved in every way unbroken for ever. Even if the entire income of the convent should happen to be reduced to what would be enough for two nuns, we wish them to live in the cenobitic way and conform to the rule for this way of life.**

[4.] [= (27) *Kecharitomene* [2], ed. lines 239–48]: **If a future superior wants to countermand this, the nuns** have permission **to speak against it, and if the nuns** should attempt **the opposite,** she has permission to overrule them. **But if she and the nuns should both be led astray, we grant permission to anyone who wishes to fight for a holy object to go to court for goodness itself and the reward for this, to seek that what we have laid down should be effective and that those chiefly responsible for the dissolution of the cenobitic way of life be expelled from the convent and not consider this a small achievement but one that is very great and brings salvation.**

## FOURTEENTH CENTURY

[Scribal note:] The *typika*<sup>3</sup> of the pious rulers also had other chapters on poverty, but I omitted them because of their length.

### *Notes on the Translation*

1. Nikephoros Choumnos and Choumnaina; see Verpeaux, “La famille Choumnos,” pp. 254–57.
2. Cf. the language of (22) *Evergetis* [23].
3. (47) *Philanthropos* and (56) *Kellibara II*.

### *Document Notes*

- [1] Sources of authority for the cenobitic life. Shared in part with (27) *Kecharitomene* [2], (32) *Mamas* [5], and (33) *Heliou Bomon* [5].
- [2] Common refectory, kitchen, and handiwork; practice of reading and prayer in the cells but no private handiwork or cooking. Shared in part with (27) *Kecharitomene* [2].
- [3] Inalterability of the cenobitic life. Shared with (27) *Kecharitomene* [2].
- [4] Superior and nuns may prevent one another from instituting changes; outsiders may bring suit to prevent abandonment of cenobiticism. Shared with (27) *Kecharitomene* [2].