

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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## 50. *Gerasimos: Testament of Gerasimos for the Small Monastery of St. Euthymios in Jerusalem*

*Date:* November 18, 1344

*Translator:* George Dennis

*Edition employed:* A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, *Analekta Hierosolymitikes Stachyologias*, vol. 1 (St. Petersburg, 1894), pp. 255–57; cf. chronological notes, vol. 2 (St. Petersburg, 1894), p. 245.

*Manuscript:* Library, Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem<sup>1</sup>

*Other translations:* None

### *Institutional History*

This fourteenth-century “small monastery” (a *monydion*, like the dependency for which (48) *Prodromos* was written) of St. Euthymios in Jerusalem is not attested outside this document, which, among other anomalies, has led Bryer and Winfield (*Pontos*, vol. 1, p. 127) to question the authenticity of the text translated below. *Gerasimos’ Testament*, does not, however, claim any connection for this foundation with the famous late antique monastery of St. Euthymios the Great, located outside of Jerusalem and definitively destroyed after 1177.<sup>2</sup> That a certain John Doukas Trichas, described as a representative of the Trapezuntine emperor, presumably Michael (1344–49), should have been willing to endorse the document in spite of the fact that it was [4] the “ancestral property” of the late Empress Anna Anachoutlou (1341–42), who had recently been deposed and strangled,<sup>3</sup> should not, despite Bryer and Winfield’s assertion to the contrary, be surprising, for Trichas is here witnessing the second founder *Gerasimos’ Testament*, not approving “Anna’s deeds.”

Bryer and Winfield’s objections to the witnesses of this document are more troubling, though not insuperable, given how incomplete our knowledge is of the major personalities of the resident Christian communities in the Holy Land in the early fourteenth century. None of the witnesses are otherwise known, including the Arsenios said to have been patriarch of Jerusalem, and the Elias who signs as bishop of Bethlehem some decades before the next indication of the existence of a Greek Orthodox see at that city. However, the greatest difficulty with accepting the document’s authenticity is chronological rather than prosopographical.

If our author *Gerasimos* did indeed find [2] the monastery “completely in ruins and without resources” on his arrival there despite the relatively recent death of its patron Anna in 1342, there is perhaps too little time left to account for its complete restoration and the deaths of two of *Gerasimos’* monastic colleagues before the present *Testament* was issued in 1344 unless some major calamity had intervened to reduce the monastery to ruins before *Gerasimos’* arrival.

*Analysis*

This is a simple testament, professedly drawn up for a foundation that must have been similar in size, if not in function, to the dependencies of larger monasteries described in (44) *Karyes* [2] and (48) *Prodromos* [2].

When our author Gerasimos began the restoration of this facility, once the property of Empress Anna of Trebizond, he was accompanied [2] by two other monks at the monastery. Now, as the sole survivor among them, he designates [3] four other monks as his heirs and successors. He appoints the ordained monk Blasios as superior, but sets up a sequence of succession in which each of the other monks would in turn have a chance to become superior after the death of his predecessor. This curious order of succession, unlikely to work unless each of the four monks was younger than the one before him, recalls (48) *Prodromos* [6] ff., in which that document's author designates two monks as his heirs, but makes one of them superior.

None of Gerasimos' successors were to consign [4] the monastery to anyone but a Trapezuntine since it was the "ancestral property" of Empress Anna. The incumbent patriarch of Jerusalem was to continue to receive liturgical commemoration (*mnemosynon*). A space is left blank for the name of the foundation's administrator (*epitropos*) who was to be the incumbent superior of the Georgian monastery of the Life-Giving Cross. The document closes [5] with the customary curse of the 318 Fathers of the First Council of Nicaea on transgressors of Gerasimos' *Testament*.

*Notes on the Introduction*

1. See Papadopoulos-Kerameus, *Analekta*, vol. 1, p. 255, n. 255, for a note on this and other witnesses.
2. For this foundation, see Vailhé, "Saint Euthyme."
3. For Anna, see Miller, *Trebizond*, p. 49.

*Bibliography*

- Bryer, Anthony, and Winfield, David, *The Byzantine Monuments and Topography of Pontos*, vol. 1 (Washington, D.C., 1985), p. 127, with n. 24.
- Miller, W., *Trebizond: The Last Greek Empire* (London, 1926; rev. ed., Chicago, 1969).
- Vailhé, Siméon, "Les monastères de la Palestine: La laure et le couvent de saint Euthyme (425)," *Bessarione* 3 (1897–98), 209–25.
- , "Saint Euthyme le Grand," *ROC* 12 (1908), 183–88.

*Translation*

Copy and likeness of the *Testament* of the monk Gerasimos concerning the monastery of St. Euthymios situated within the holy city of Jerusalem, which lists his arrangements for the monastery, and which was reproduced from an old prototype. In the year 6852 [= 1344 A.D.].

[1.] According to the great Basil, the definition of philosophy consists in meditating on death.<sup>1</sup> But some people have paid no heed to this and have let the opportunity slip by without realizing how untimely death can be. The result is that the thief comes suddenly and snatches them away, and they leave their affairs in disorder. I too fear the uncertainty of this.<sup>2</sup> As the corn gets close to

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harvest, so I, while still whole and of sound mind, not compelled by any necessity or force, but freely and of my own will, wish to make proper disposition of all my affairs. First of all, I offer my prayers for our powerful and holy emperors, as well as for my most holy lord the patriarch, and likewise for all Christians, for whom I pray for love and pardon in Christ. I now make the following disposition of my affairs. [p. 256]

[2.] By ways known to God and by his favor, I came to the holy place in Jerusalem and dwelt in the small monastery of the great Euthymios there, which belonged to the late empress of Trebizond, the Lady Anna, Born in the Purple.<sup>3</sup> There also was the ordained monk, the late lord Pambo, and the monk, the late lord Sophronios of Trebizond, and I remained there until their deaths. After they had paid back our common debt, I was left behind by myself. How much I labored and suffered in this small monastery, for I found it completely in ruins and without resources, let God be my witness. Then, with the mercy of God, our own labor, and the assistance of the Christians, I managed to salvage it entirely. My predecessor Sophronios from Trebizond had given two hundred *aspra* towards its restoration. I raised it up and built the monastery as it is seen today.

[3.] Here with me now are the ordained monk, my beloved son lord Blasios, [as well as] Kyrillos, Gennadios, and Theodoulos. I designate them as my heirs and successors. Since it is necessary that one of them be placed over the other three, I therefore appoint the ordained monk Blasios to preside over them as superior. The others should accord him prompt and ready obedience in all things just as they would to me. Moreover, since we all owe the common debt, after his death I designate next as superior my beloved son Kyrillos, after his passing Gennadios, and then Theodoulos. Their relationship to one another should be marked by love, pure and harmonious peace, unity of desire and will. No one, superior or anyone else, should be allowed to drive another away, except for a good reason or suitable cause, such as scandalous behavior or causing a disturbance. I myself in this *Testament* expel anyone who will not be at peace and lead a tranquil life. In harmony and in peace, then, the four should really be as one, observing of course the special honor due the superior.

[4.] I declare that none of the four should have any permission to consign this small monastery to a person of any nationality other than to someone from Trebizond, since, as mentioned above, [p. 257] it was the ancestral property of the late empress of Trebizond, Lady Anna. They should also continue to commemorate the patriarch of Jerusalem who is in office at the time. I designate as administrator for the small monastery . . .<sup>4</sup> for my beloved sons whoever is superior at the time of the revered monastery of the Iberians [Georgians], which is named after the precious and life-giving cross.

[5.] These are the dispositions I make of my affairs. May whoever wishes to overturn this testamentary arrangement incur the curses of the three hundred and eighteen God-bearing fathers in Nicaea. For this reason the present testamentary regulation and disposition has been drawn up and given to my beloved sons and successors for their security and strength.

On the eighteenth of November, the twelfth indiction.

- + The *doulos* and *apokrisiarios* of our holy and mighty lord and emperor,<sup>5</sup> present at the making of this *Testament* and in solid confirmation thereof, I subscribe, John Doukas Trichas, *logothetes ton oikeiakon*.<sup>6</sup>
- + The *doulos* of our powerful and holy lord and emperor, George Doukas Maniates Kourtikas.<sup>7</sup>
- + Arsenios,<sup>8</sup> by the mercy of God, patriarch of Jerusalem.
- + The humble metropolitan of Basan, Germanos.
- + The humble sinner, Matos [metropolitan] of Gaza, *hypertimos*.
- + The humble bishop of Bethlehem,<sup>9</sup> Elias.

### *Notes on the Translation*

*Editors' note:* The assistance of our translator, George Dennis [GD], is gratefully acknowledged for the notes to this document.

1. This Platonic allusion (*Phaedo*, 81a) is found not in the works of Basil of Caesarea but in John Klimakos, *Scala paradisi* 6, PG 88, col. 797c.
2. The text has *adolon*, “guiltless,” which should be corrected to *adelon*, “uncertain.” [GD]
3. Anna Anachoutlou (1341–42).
4. A space is left blank for the name of the *epitropos*.
5. Michael (1344–49).
6. Logothete of the household, at this time a purely honorary title; cf. *Pseudo-Codinos: Traité des Offices*, ed. J. Verpeaux (Paris, 1966), index, s.v. Nothing else is known about this individual; see D. Polemis, *The Doukai* (London, 1968), p. 185. [GD]
7. Nothing else is known about this individual; his last name should perhaps be Kourtikes; see Polemis, *Doukai*, p. 139. [GD]
8. According to Bryer and Winfield, *Pontos*, p. 127, n. 24, a Greek Orthodox patriarch of Jerusalem with this name is otherwise unattested; cf. V. Grumel, *La Chronologie* (Paris, 1958), p. 452.
9. According to Bryer and Winfield, *Pontos*, p. 127, n. 24, this bishop occurs nearly a half century before the Greek Orthodox bishopric of Bethlehem is otherwise known to have existed.

### *Document Notes*

- [1] Meditation on death. See also the contemporary reflections on this subject in (49) *Geromeri* [1] and in (51) *Koutloumousi* [A1], [B14], [C1].
- [2] Restoration of the monastery. See also other restorations in this era described in (37) *Auxentios* [1], (38) *Kellibara I* [12], (40) *Anargyroi* [2], and (46) *Akropolites* [2].
- [3] Order of succession to the superiority. Cf. arrangements for the succession in (48) *Prodromos* [8] and (52) *Choumnos* [A3].
- [4] Monastery not to be consigned to anyone not a Trapezuntine; commemoration of the patriarch of Jerusalem; designation of an administrator. For other ethnic restrictions and preferences, see (21) *Roidion* [B3], [B4]; (23) *Pakourianos* [24]; (42) *Sabas* [2], [9]; and (51) *Koutloumousi* [B17]. For commemoration of the local patriarch, see (38) *Kellibara I* [15] and (39) *Lips* [1]; for use of administrators in a much earlier document, see (14) *Ath. Testament* [4], [6].
- [5] Curse on violators. For use of such curses elsewhere, see (35) *Skoteine* [46]; (37) *Auxentios* [2]; (45) *Neophytos* [22]; (48) *Prodromos* [16]; (49) *Geromeri* [16]; (51) *Koutloumousi* [A15], [B20]; (54) *Neilos Damilas* [21]; and (60) *Charsianeites* [B22].