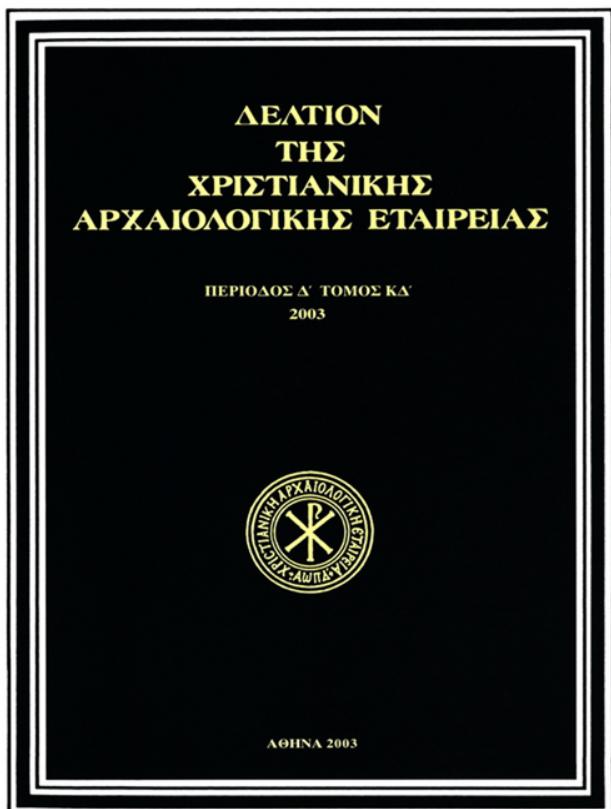


## Δελτίον της Χριστιανικής Αρχαιολογικής Εταιρείας

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*Sophia KALOPISSI-VERTI*

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# ΔΕΛΤΙΟΝ ΤΗΣ ΧΡΙΣΤΙΑΝΙΚΗΣ ΑΡΧΑΙΟΛΟΓΙΚΗΣ ΕΤΑΙΡΕΙΑΣ

Church Inscriptions as Documents. Chrysobulls -  
Ecclesiastical Acts - Inventories - Donations - Wills

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Sophia KALOPISSI-VERTI

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**ΑΘΗΝΑ 2003**

Sophia Kalopissi-Verti

## CHURCH INSCRIPTIONS AS DOCUMENTS CHRYSOBULLS - ECCLESIASTICAL ACTS - INVENTORIES - DONATIONS - WILLS\*

The practice of recording official documents on the walls of a church seems to go back to middle Byzantine imperial donations and acts. An interesting piece of information is given by Ruy Gonzalez de Clavijo, the Spanish high official who joined an embassy to the court of Timur in Samarkand (1403-1406) and visited Constantinople during his journey, in 1403. Clavijo recounts that at the entrance of the monastery church of Panagia Peribleptos, thirty castles and towns which were granted to the monastery by its founder Romanos III Argyros (1028-1034) were depicted under the figure of the Virgin; near by hung those documents, sealed with wax and lead, by which the privileges over these castles and towns were bestowed on the monastery<sup>1</sup>.

Of special interest are the still extant marble slabs with an inscription reproducing the edict of Manuel I Komnenos (1143-1180) which embodied the acts of the Council of 1166<sup>2</sup>. The council, which was presided over by the emperor

himself, discussed a subject concerning the nature of Christ, namely the passage in John, 14:28 “καὶ ὁ πατήρ μου μεῖζων μού ἔστιν”<sup>3</sup>. The slabs were reused in the mausoleum (türbe) of Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent at Istanbul from 1567; according to the sources, the edict was carved in stone and placed on the left-hand side as one entered St Sophia. The inscription is, moreover, mentioned in an epigram by Theodore Balsamon who praised Isaakios Angelos for having opposed the heretics and for having set up on both sides of the slabs the images of the two “pillars” of the Christian dogma: the saints Peter and Paul<sup>4</sup>. Interestingly a manuscript survives (cod. Vat. gr. 1176) which contains the five acts of the Synod of 1166<sup>5</sup>. The codex is considered to be the original one as it includes the signatures of the Patriarch Loukas Chrysoberges and of thirty clerical participants as well as the imperial portraits of Manuel I and his second wife Maria of Antioch. This is a rare case, among the exam-

\* This paper was presented at the *XXe CIEB, Pré-actes, III. Communications libres*, Paris 2001, p. 324. I am indebted to Professors Spyros Troianos and Helleni Saradi for their expert and ready response to many of my questions. My thanks are due to Aimilia Bakourou, director of the 5th Ephorate of Byzantine Antiquities, for kind permission to use photographs of Figs 1 and 2, which have been recently published in the catalogue *Η πολιτεία του Μνούσου, Mystras, August 2001-January 2002*, Athens 2001, figs 44 and 52 (Photographer: G. Patrikianos). I also wish to thank John Avgerinos for his friendly help in editing the English text.

1. For translations, *Clavijo's Embassy to Tamerlane 1403-1406* (transl. from the Spanish by Guy Le Strange), London 1928, p. 64. C. Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire 312-1453*, Englewood Cliffs, N.J. 1972, p. 217-218. Ρούι Γκοντάλες ντε Κλαβίχο, *To ταξίδι στην ανάτη των Ταμερλάνων*, Athens 1997, p. 99-100. Cf. S. Cirac, *Tres monasterios de Constantinopla visitados por Españoles en el año 1403*, *REB* 19 (1961), p. 374-375. A. Bravo García, *La Constantinopla que vieron R. González de Clavijo y P. Tafur*, *Erytheia* 3 (1983), p. 39-47. It may be possible that these castles and towns were painted later, in the time of Michael VIII Palaiologos, who was probably depicted next to the Virgin, Mango, op. cit., p. 217, n. 164. According to an anonymous tenth-century description (De sacris aedibus Deiparae ad Fontem, *AASS*, Nov. 3: 880 BC),

the empress Irene, after her miraculous cure of a haemorrhage, dedicated to the church of the Zoodochos Pege in Constantinople luxurious gifts and mosaic panels with the portraits of her son, Constantine VI, and herself carrying the gifts. This occurred during her regency for her son, between 780 and 790. According to Grabar's interpretation of the text, the gifts, apart from those held by the emperors, were painted or recorded on the walls of the church, A. Grabar, *L'Iconoclasm byzantin*, Paris 1984<sup>2</sup>, p. 190, 194-197. Id., *Quel est le sens de l'offrande de Justinien et de Théodora, sur les mosaïques de Saint-Vital*, *FelRev* 1960, p. 73-74. Cf. R. Cormack, *The Arts during the Age of Iconoclasm*, in A. Bryer - J. Herrin (eds), *Iconoclasm. Papers given at the Ninth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies*, University of Birmingham 1975, Birmingham 1977, p. 40. For an English translation of the passage Mango, op.cit., p. 156-157.

2. C. Mango, *The Conciliar Edict of 1166*, *DOP* 17 (1963), p. 317-330.  
3. S. Sakkos, *Ο πατήρ μου μεῖζων μού ἔστιν*, 2: *Ἐριδες καὶ σύνοδοι κατά τὸν ΙΒ' αἰῶνα*, Thessaloniki 1968, p. 107-114, 120-180.  
4. K. Horna, *Die Epigramme des Theodoros Balsamon*, *WSt* 25 (1903), p. 194-195, no. XXXII, p. 195, 1.39-40: τὸν Πέτρον ὃσει πέτραν ἀρραγεστάτην / καὶ Παῦλον ὃσει παῦλαν ἀσφαλεστάτην.  
5. I. Spatharakis, *The Portrait in Byzantine Illuminated Manuscripts*, Leiden 1976, p. 208-210, figs 155-157.

ples to be discussed in this article, where both the original document and the relevant inscription on stone have come down to us.

It should also be noted that, as has been recently argued, the mosaics in the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem, which represent the seven ecumenical and six provincial church councils and record the texts of their main acts, go back to the time of the reign of Manuel I Komnenos<sup>6</sup>.

Monumental evidence of imperial documents reproduced on the walls of a church increases in the Palaiologan period. On the west façade of the monastery church of the Theotokos in Apollonia a chrysobull is written next to portraits including those of the emperors Michael VIII, Andronikos II and Michael IX. The chrysobull was initially issued in favor of the monastery in Apollonia by Manuel I Komnenos and confirmed by Michael VIII Palaiologos after the defeat of the Franks in the battle of Berat in 1281/82<sup>7</sup>. Furthermore, traces of a twenty-line long inscription on the southern façade of the church of St Nicholas in Manastir have been interpreted as reproducing the text of a chrysobull issued by Andronikos II, prior to 1300<sup>8</sup>.

The most impressive example from the Palaiologan period occurs in the very well known southwestern chapel of the Hodegetria monastery church (Aphentiko) in Mistras (Fig. 1). The texts of four chrysobulls –and a fragment of a fifth– are painted on the walls of the chapel. Three of them were issued by Andronikos II in the years 1314/15, 1320 and 1322, and one by Michael IX, in the year 1319. The chrysobulls record the landed property of the monastery: estates, fields, vineyards, trees, mills, dependencies (*metochia*) etc<sup>9</sup>. Another example is the five episcopal acts whose texts are in-

scribed on the columns of the Metropolis of Mistras (Fig. 2). They include acts by the metropolitans Nicephorus (1312), Loucas (1330 and 1341) and Neilos (May 1339 and December 1339)<sup>10</sup>.

Both cases –Aphentiko and Metropolis– reveal the special interest of the abbots and/or metropolitans in assuring the privileges and the landed property of their monasteries. In their effort to secure the conceded properties for the future in perpetuity, the authors of the documents as well as the recipients of the grants do not merely appeal to the curses of the 318 fathers against anyone not complying with the terms of the chrysobulls but also record the text of the documents on long lasting materials, such as stone, marble or the walls of the church.

The particular interest of the emperors and of the high ecclesiastical authorities in securing the property of the last two monuments is reflected in their excellent quality. Especially in the case of Aphentiko, its relationship with the capital is well attested as regards the architectural form and painted decoration<sup>11</sup>.

A further example occurs in the metropolitan church of the Dormition of the Virgin in Stagoi (today Kalampaka) in Thessaly. Imperial and patriarchal acts reconfirming the bishopric's property, namely a chrysobull issued by Andronikos III Palaiologos in the year 1336 and a sigillion of the patriarch of Constantinople Antonios IV (1389-90 and 1391-97) of the year 1393<sup>12</sup>, are inscribed next to each other on the north wall of the inner narthex.

This Byzantine practice of recording imperial and ecclesiastical concessions to a church or monastery on the walls of a religious building was copied by the Nemanid rulers of Ser-

6. G. Kühnel, Das Ausschmückungsprogramm der Geburtsbasilika in Bethlehem, *Boreas* 10 (1987), p. 133-149. Id., Die Konzilsdarstellungen in der Geburtskirche im Bethlehem; ihre kunsthistorische Tradition und ihr kirchenpolitisch-historischer Hintergrund, *BZ* 86/87 (1993-94), p. 86-107. L.-A. Hunt, Art and Colonialism: The Mosaics of the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem (1169) and the Problem of “Crusader” Art, *DOP* 45 (1991), p. 69-85.

7. H. und H. Buschhausen, *Die Marienkirche von Apollonia in Albanien*, Vienna 1976, p. 143-182, 239-241, figs 16-19, pls 101, 104-107. Cf. V. Djurić, in P. Ivić - V. Djurić - S. Ćirković, *Esfigmatenska povelja despota Djuradj*, Belgrade-Smederevo 1989, p. 90, figs 27-28.

8. P. Miljković-Pepel, *Novootkrieni arhitektturni i slikarski spomenici vo Makedonija od XI do XIV vek*, Skopje 1973, p. 11-14. V. Djurić, *Byzantische Fresken in Jugoslawien*, Belgrade 1976, p. 239, n.12. Id., *Esfigmatenska povelja*, op.cit., p. 90-91, n. 33, fig. 26.

9. K. Zesiou, *Σύμμικτα*, Athens 1892, p. 45-71. Id., *Ἐπιγραφαὶ τῶν χρυσιανικῶν χρόνων τῆς Ἑλλάδος. Μέρος Α'. Πελοπόννησος, τεῦχος*

α', *Ἐπιγραφαὶ Λακεδαίμονος*, Athens 1917, p. 72-94, nos 201-204. G. Millet, *Inscriptions byzantines de Mistra*, *BCH* 23 (1899), p. 100-118, nos II-V.

10. Zesiou, *Σύμμικτα*, op.cit., p. 24-33, nos 12, 13, 14. Id., *Ἐπιγραφαὶ τῶν χρυσιανικῶν χρόνων*, op.cit., p. 31-36, nos 127-129. Millet, op.cit., p. 122-126, nos XIII-XV.

11. M. Chatzidakis, Νεώτερα γιά την ιστορία καὶ τήν τέχνη τῆς Μητρόπολης τοῦ Μυστρᾶ, *ΔΧΑΕ* Θ' (1976-79), p. 143-179. Id., *Mistra. Die mittelalterliche Stadt und die Burg*, Athens 1981, p. 53-67, figs 30-41. D. Mouriki, Stylistic Trends in Monumental Painting of Greece at the Beginning of the Fourteenth Century, *L'art byzantin au début du XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle. Symposium de Gračanica* 1973, Belgrade 1978, p. 72-73. Ch. Bouras, *Βυζαντινή καὶ μεταβυζαντινή ἀρχιτεκτονική στήν Ἑλλάδα*, Athens 2001, 213, figs 262, 263, 265.

12. G.A. Soteriou, Βυζαντινά μνημεῖα τῆς Θεσσαλίας ΙΙ' καὶ ΙΔ' αἰώνων. Η βασιλικὴ τῆς Κομήσεως τῆς Θεοτόκου ἐν Καλαμπάκᾳ, *ΕΕΒΣ* 6 (1929), p. 292, 297, 305. Ch. Astruc, Un document inédit de



Fig. 1. Mistras. Hodegetria monastery, SW chapel. Chrysobull of Andronikos II Palaiologos. 1314/15.

bia, as V. Djurić has shown in a study on the Esphigmenou monastery of Mt Athos<sup>13</sup>. According to the vita of St Symeon Nemanja, which prefaces the typikon of the monastery of Studenica (1208/09), the villages, icons, books, holy vessels and vestments that were granted to the monastery by Nemanja, were also recorded on the walls of the church<sup>14</sup>. Still preserved on the walls of the belfry at Žiča (ca. 1310)<sup>15</sup> is the

text of documents recording grants that were made by Stephan the First Crowned and by King Milutin. Furthermore, on the western wall of the diakonikon in the church of Gračanica the text of a document registers the concessions of King Milutin to the monastery (1321/22)<sup>16</sup>.

In Serbia the practice of recording official acts on the walls of royal foundations is followed in later examples not only by

1163 sur l'évêché thessalien de Stagi, *BCH* 83 (1959), p. 206-246, esp. 233-246. J. Koder - Fr. Hild, *Hellas und Thessalia* (TIB 1), Vienna 1976, p. 262-263. For another, very damaged inscription in Thessaly with similar content, A. Avraméa - D. Feissel, Inventaires en vue d'un recueil des inscriptions historiques de Byzance. IV: Inscriptions de Thessalie (à l'exception des Météores), *TM* 10 (1987), p. 383-385, no. 24, pl. IX, 2.

13. On the subject Djurić, *Esfigmenska povelja* (n. 7), p. 80-96.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 89.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 89, figs 23-25. M. Kašanin - Dj. Bošković - P. Mijović, *Žiča*,

Belgrade 1969, p. 182-199, figs on p. 15, 183-185. B. Živković, *Žiča*, Belgrade 1985, p. 38-39. V. Djurić, La royauté et le sacerdoce dans la décoration de Žiča, *Manastir Žiča, Zbornik Radova*, Kraljevo 2000, p. 124-125.

16. Djurić, *Esfigmenska povelja* (n. 7), p. 90. B. Todović, *Gračanica, slika*, Belgrade 1988, p. 63-68, 378, fig. 5. B. Živković, *Gračanica, crteži fresaka*, Belgrade 1989, diakonikon, IX, west wall, no. 3. For further examples in East (Georgia) and West (Italy) see Djurić, *Esfigmenska povelja*, p. 91-92, figs 30-31.

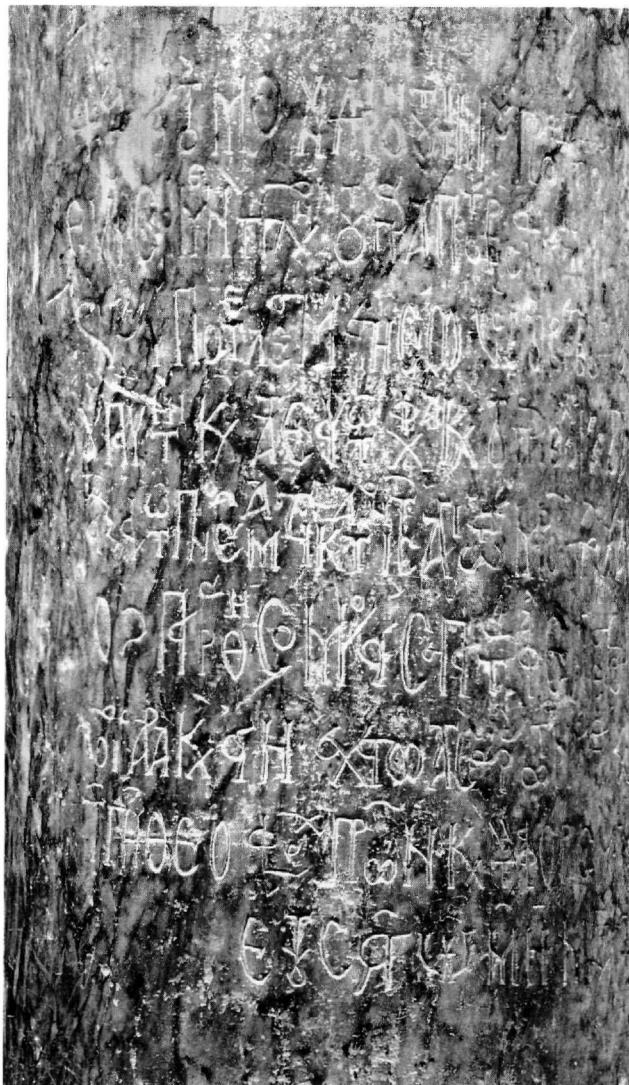


Fig. 2. Mistras, Metropolis, third column of south colonnade. Epis-  
copal act of Neilos. December 1339.

17. J. Prolović, *Die Kirche des Heiligen Andreas an der Treska*, Vienna 1997, p. 29-37.

18. Br. Cvetković, Manastir Lipovac. Prilog proučavanja, *Leskovački Zbornik* 39 (1999), p. 87-95, figs 9-11. I wish to thank the author for kindly drawing my attention to this monument.

19. G. Subotić, *Sveti Konstantin i Jelena u Ohridu*, Belgrade 1971, p. 4-28, 107-108, 113-115. For a gospelbook donated to a church of the Theotokos which was founded by the abbot of Saint Clemens of Ochrid before 1368 see Fl. Evangelatou-Notara, *Χορηγοί - Κτήτορες - Δωρητές σε σημειώματα κωδίκων. Παλαιολόγειοι χρόνοι*, Athens 2000, p. 57-58, 245 (no. 279); for another gospelbook offered to the church of the Pro-tomartyr Stephanos at Konče by its founder, a high-ranking official at

members of the ruling family but also by people ranking lower in the social hierarchy. The foundation inscription on the west wall of the naos of St Andreas at Treska, built shortly after 1374/75 and decorated with frescoes in 1388/89<sup>17</sup>, lists, among other items, villages endowed to the church. Two inscriptions that run along the outer and inner walls of the building reproduce documents of grants to the monastery issued by its founder Kraljević Andreaš, son of king Vukašin. Moreover, in the monastery church of Lipovac the (re)founding inscription of the monk Germanos (1398/99) is followed by an excerpt from a document issued by knez Stefan, the future despot Stefan Lazarević (1402-1427), and his brother Vuk, who endowed estates and vineyards to the monastery<sup>18</sup>.

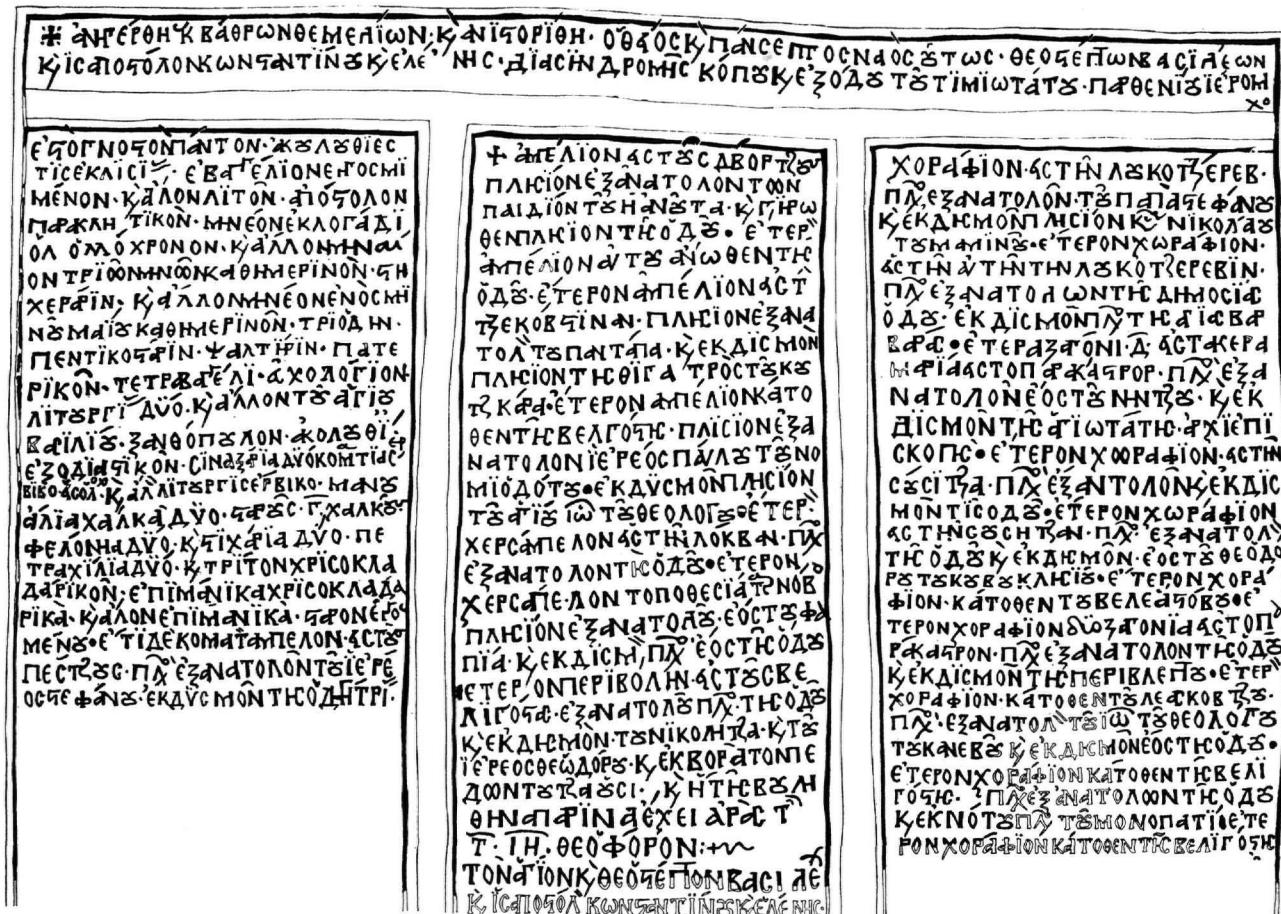
A further example occurs in the church of Sveti Konstantin i Jelena at Ochrid, dated to approximately 1380-90<sup>19</sup> (Fig. 3). The donor, a priest-monk named Parthenios, recorded on the south wall of the church in the Greek language, in the form of a triptych, not only all landed property (vineyards, fields, vegetable plots) but also the holy vessels and books belonging to the church. The whole text seems to reproduce the *brebion* of a monastic typikon, i.e. the inventory of monastic property both movable and immovable<sup>20</sup>. A parallel register of the movable property of a church occurs on the gold-plated silver revetment of an icon of the Virgin from Mesembria, now in the National Museum of Sofia. The first two inscriptions on the revetment, written in Greek, mention that the uncle of the great emperor Ivan Alexander renovated the church of the Theotokos Eleousa in 1341/42 and dedicated the golden and silver adornment (i.e. revetment) of the icon; the third inscription, in smaller Greek characters, enumerates other donations to the church, such as sacerdotal vestments, holy vessels in gold and silver, books etc<sup>21</sup>.

Lastly, an inscription on the western wall of the church of

the court of the Serbian emperors, c. 1366, see S. Gabelić, The frescoes of Konče, *XXe CIEB, Pré-actes, III. Communications libres*, Paris 2001, p. 348. Inscriptions comprising inventories that register the movable property of temples were known since Antiquity, M. Guarducci, *L'epigrafia greca dalle origini al tardo impero*, Rome 1987, p. 187-191.

20. K.A. Manaphes, *Μοναστηριακά τυπικά - διαθήκαι*, Athens 1970, p. 113-123. On the *brebia* (=inventories included in the typika of Byzantine monasteries) see J. Thomas and A. Constantinides Hero (eds), *Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents* (DOS XXXV), Washington, DC 2000, 5, p. 1926, index.

21. A. Grabar, *Les revêtements en or et en argent des icônes byzantines du moyen âge*, Venice 1975, p. 26-28, no. 6, fig. 9.



the Dormition of the Virgin in Velestovo, in the region of Ohrid, records the property that was collectively donated to the church by a priest and members of the village (1444 and 1450/51)<sup>22</sup>.

The practice of recording official documents – mostly notarial acts – on the walls of provincial and usually humble churches was widespread in the Late Byzantine period in provinces either belonging to Byzantium or under Latin or Turkish rule.

The Byzantine province of Laconia in Southern Peloponnes is rich in relevant examples. A long inscription painted on the northern wall of the church of Archangel Michael at Polemitas in Mesa Mani (1278) lists the donations of over thirty villagers consisting in fields of very limited dimensions, olive trees and vegetable plots<sup>23</sup>. A second, very damaged inscription on the southern wall of the same church<sup>24</sup> seems to have a similar content. In addition, fields donated by villagers are recorded in an inscription painted in the

22. G. Subotić, *Ohridska slikarska škola XV veka*, Belgrade 1980, p. 61-64, 198.

23. N.B. Drandakes, Δύο ἐπιγραφές ναῶν τῆς Λακωνίας: τοῦ Ἀρχαγγέλου (1278) στόν Πολεμίτα τῆς Μάνης καὶ τῆς Χρυσαφίτουσας, *Λαζπούδ 6* (1982), p. 44-45, fig. 1. A. Philippidis-Braat, Inventaires en vue d'un recueil des inscriptions historiques de Byzance. III: Inscript-

tions du Péloponnèse (à l'exception de Mistra), *TM 9* (1985), p. 314-317, no. 57, pl. XVI. S. Kalopissi-Verti, *Dedicatory Inscriptions and Donor Portraits in Thirteenth-Century Churches of Greece*, Vienna 1992, p. 71-74, figs 37-39, no. 21a.

24. Ibid. 75, no. 21c.

narthex of the church of Ai-Strategos at Boularioi of Mesa Mani<sup>25</sup> (13th-14th c.).

A mutilated inscription of the first half of the fourteenth century engraved on a marble colonette, now in the Museum of Sparta<sup>26</sup>, refers to vineyards and fields offered to a church or monastery in order that the holy liturgy will be held three times a week “in the church or on the tomb of a saint”<sup>27</sup>. Another dedicatory inscription (1367/68), painted over the iconostasis door, records the offerings in land and trees of a monk and two laymen to the church of St John the Forerunner at Chrysapha in Laconia<sup>28</sup> (Fig. 4).

Further, if less well attested, examples are known from the Greek mainland. It seems that on the columns of the catholikon of the monastery of Barnakova in Aetolia there were inscriptions which included information about the metochia and the landed possessions of the monastery<sup>29</sup>, among other matters. Although the original columns do not exist, the text has been preserved in a Greek manuscript (ms. 1) in the archives of the monastery of Barnakova and in an Italian version in a manuscript of the General State Archives (Γενικά Αρχεία του Κράτους). Both manuscripts date from the beginning of the nineteenth century but are considered to go back to older sources. The title of the Greek text, “Μετάγραψις εὐβηγαλμένη ἀπὸ ταῖς κολώναις τῆς ἐκκλη-

σίας τῆς Υπεραγίας Θεοτόκου τῆς ἐπονομαζούμενης Βαρνάκοβας, πλησίον τῆς πόλεως Ναυπάκτου”, indicates that the text of the manuscript must be a “copy reproduced from (inscriptions on) the columns of the church of the very holy Virgin so-called Barnakoba, close to the town of Naupaktos”<sup>30</sup>. Furthermore, the Chronicle of Galaxeidi, written in 1703 by the monk Euthymios Pentagiotes, which was based on older documents, mentions that the name of Michael II, sovereign of Epiros who founded the monastery of the Transfiguration of the Saviour near Galaxeidi about the middle of the thirteenth century, was written on a marble column in the narthex<sup>31</sup>. May we assume that on the same column were inscribed, in addition, Michael’s II offerings to the monastery – bronze candelabra, silver and golden lamps etc – recorded in the Chronicle?<sup>32</sup>

A further example of a donation documented on the walls of a church may be mentioned from Seljuk occupied Cappadocia. Thamar (ἡ κυρά Θαμαρή), the wife of the ἀμηράτζη κυροῦ Βασιλέου Γαγούπη, a Christian high military official (amir arzi) in the Seljuk court, donated a vineyard, according to an inscription, to the church she founded to honour Saint George at Belisrama (Kirk Dam Altı Kilise) between 1283 and 1295<sup>33</sup>. It is interesting to note that Belisrama is a typical example of hybrid culture in Turkish-occupied Cappadocia

25. N.B. Drandakes, *Bυζαντινά τουχογραφίατης Μέσα Μάνης*, Athens 1964, p. 63-64, pl. 48b. Philippidis-Braat, *Inscriptions du Péloponnèse*, op.cit., p. 322, no. 62, pl. XVIII, 2-3. Kalopissi-Verti, *Dedicatory Inscriptions*, op.cit., p. 70-71, no. 20b, fig. 36.

26. Philippidis-Braat, *Inscriptions du Péloponnèse*, op.cit., p. 322-324, no. 63, pl. XVIII, 4-6.

27. Ibid., p. 324. Furthermore, a donation of a vineyard and fruit-bearing trees by an individual to an unknown monastery is mentioned in a marble inscription in Mistras dated to 1300/01. The vineyard had initially been bought by the same individual from the monastery for 40 hyperpyra. The original setting of the inscription (built in the walls of a church or in the precinct of the cemetery mentioned in the inscription?) is unknown, A. Boeckh and J. Franz, *IG, IV*, Berlin 1877, p. 350, no. 8763. D.I. Polermis, *The Doukai. A Contribution to Byzantine Prosopography*, London 1968, p. 120, no. 88, n. 2.

28. Philippidis-Braat, *Inscriptions de Péloponnèse*, op.cit., p. 337-338, no. 76, pl. XXVI, 1. For a mutilated inscription from the Peloponnese which could be of interest for our context ibid., p. 344-345, no. 82 (first half of the 15th c.?).

29. K.N. Sathas, *Χρονικὸν ἀνέκδοτον Γαλαξειδίου ἡ Ἰστορία Ἀμφίσης, Ναυπάκτου, Γαλαξειδίου, Λοιδοριχίου καὶ τῶν περιχώρων, ἀπὸ τῶν ἀρχαιοτάτων μέχρι τῶν καθ' ἡμᾶς χρόνων μετὰ προλεγομένων καὶ ἔλλον ἴστορικῶν σημειώσεων*, Athens 1865, reprint Athens 1962, p. 42-44. A.K. Orlando, *Η μονὴ Βαρνάκοβας*, Athens 1922, p. 8-10. The original columns were destroyed during the reconstruction of the old church in 1831, ibid., p. 9.

30. B. Katsaros, “Ενα χρονικό τῆς μονῆς Βαρνάκοβας (χρ. 1 μονῆς Βαρνάκοβας), *Κληρονομία* 11 (1979), p. 347-390. Id., *Ζητήματα ιστορίας ἐνός βυζαντινοῦ ναοῦ κοντά στό Εύπαλιο Δωρίδος, Βυζαντίνα* 10 (1980), p. 35-41.

31. Sathas, op.cit., p. 200. On the monument see recently P.L. Vokopoulos, *Παρατηρήσεις στόν ναό του Σωτῆρος κοντά στό Γαλαξείδι, ΔΧΑΕ ΙΖ* (1993-1994), p. 199-210.

32. The power of the tradition of recording the property of a church on its walls, in order to secure it, is demonstrated by the following case. In the monastery church of Sigmata in Boeotia, in the niche above the western entrance of the lita, there is a copy of a chrysobull, said to have been issued by Alexios I Komnenos in 1106; it has been proved however that this document is a forgery probably of the nineteenth century, MM, 5, p. 253, no. II. Sp. Lampros, *Σύμψιτα, NE* 13 (1916), p. 363. A.K. Orlando, *Η ἐν Βοιωτίᾳ Μονὴ Σαγματᾶ, ABME Z'* (1951), p. 107. S. Vougiatzes, *Παρατηρήσεις στην οικοδομική ιστορία της μονῆς Σαγματᾶ στη Βοιωτία, ΔΧΑΕ ΙΗ'* (1995), p. 66-67. I wish to thank Dr. Stauros Mamaloukos for his interest in this study and for kindly drawing my attention to the examples of Barnakoba, Galaxeidi and Sigmata.

33. N. et M. Thierry, *Nouvelles églises rupestres de Cappadoce. Région du Hasan Dağı*, Paris 1963, p. 206-207. L. Bernardini, *Les donateurs des églises de Cappadoce, Byz.* 62 (1992), p. 132. On the inscription and the identification of the persons mentioned see V. Laurent, *Note additionnelle. L'inscription de l'église Saint Georges de Bélisérama, REB* 26 (1968), p. 367-371. S. Vryonis, *Another Note on the Inscription of the Church of St George of Belisrama, Βυζαντίνα* 9 (1977), p. 11-22. Ba-

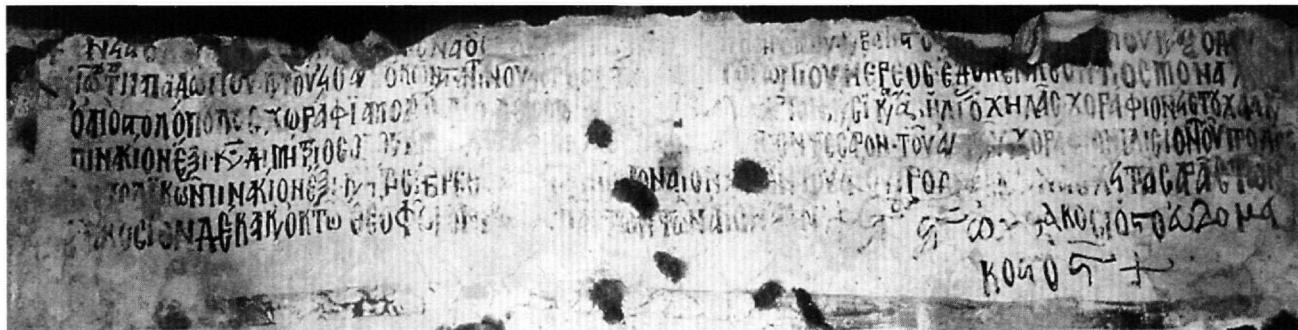


Fig. 4. Laconia, Chrysapha, St John the Forerunner, templon. Dedicatory inscription. 1367/68.

of the thirteenth century and that the dedicatory inscription mentions both the Seljuk sultan Masud II (1283-1305) and the Byzantine emperor Andronikos II (1282-1328).

Another type of donation, also reflecting a notarial act, is recorded in an inscription in the narthex of Hagios Nikolaos tes Steges in Kakopetria in Cyprus (14th c.). The supplicant couple offered to the church a shop or workshop (*χανούτι*)<sup>34</sup> (Fig. 5).

Recording wills on the walls of a church also seems a common practice in the late Medieval period. For example, a priest-monk wrote his will in the year 1286/87 on the omophorion of St Gregory of Nyssa, who is depicted in the conch of the diaikonikon in the church of St Nicholas at Klenia/Korinthia<sup>35</sup>.

He bequeathed to the church his cell, a vineyard and a field. In Cappadocia, three inscriptions of the year 1293 in the Tri-conch of Ortaköy (St George) refer to deceased people who

made grants to the holy monastery: the first an unknown number of hyperpyra, the second, who was a monk, 49 hyperpyra, and the third a field of one modios as well as a walnut tree<sup>36</sup>.

A final example comes from Venetian occupied Crete. Manuel Eremoioannes gives notice in an inscription of the year 1470, written in the church of the Holy Fathers (Άγιοι Πατέρες) at Pano Phloria Selinou, that he leaves to the church twenty goats, ten bee-hives, the enclosure of the monastery with the houses, the trees, the vineyard, as well as one more vineyard<sup>37</sup>. All these holdings had been initially granted to the church by the Venetian nobleman Aligizos Kokkos (Cocco)<sup>38</sup>.

The aforementioned inscriptions include both donations by donors granting property while still alive or wills<sup>39</sup> written by individuals who leave property to a church or monastery af-

σιλειος Γιαγούπης was either an emir or an ἀμυράτζης (amir arzi), in both cases a high official of the Turkish court in the thirteenth century.

34. A. and J. Stylianou, 'Ο ναός τοῦ Ἀγίου Νικολάου τῆς Στέγης παρά τὴν Κακοπετριάν', *ΚυπροΣπούδ* 10 (1946), p. 132-136, fig. 9.

35. M. Aspra-Vardavaki, *Oι τοιχογραφίες τοῦ Ἀγίου Νικολάου στὴν Κλένια τῆς Κορινθίας*, *Diptycha* 4 (1986), p. 98-100, pl. 7. Kalopissi-Verti, *Dedicatory Inscriptions* (n. 23), p. 77, no. 24b, fig. 42. C. Jolivet-Levy, *La Cappadoce médiévale*, Paris 2001, p. 86-87.

36. The inscriptions are written in the apse of the southern side-chapel. G. Jerphanion, *Une nouvelle province de l'art byzantin. Les églises rupestres de Cappadoce*, 2, 1, Paris 1936, p. 242-244, inscr. 165-167. J. Lafontaine-Dosogne, *Nouvelles notes cappadociennes*, *Byz.* 33 (1963), p. 134-136, fig. 16. Bernardini, op.cit. (n. 33), p. 132-135.

37. G. Gerola, *Monumenti veneti dell'isola di Creta*, IV, Venice 1932, p. 449-451. The date of the inscription, read by Gerola as 1462, was corrected to 1470 by P. Vokotopoulos, Η χρονολογία των τοιχογραφιών του Ξένου Διγενή στα Απάνω Φλώρια Σελίνου, *AAA* XVI (1983), p. 142-145. On the frescoes of the church M. Vasilaki-Mavrakaki, 'Ο ξωγάφος Ξένος Διγενῆς και ή ἐκκλησία τῶν Ἀγίων Πατέρων στά

Απάνω Φλώρια Σελίνου τῆς Κορήτης, *Πεπραγμένα τοῦ Δ' Διεθνοῦς Κοητολογικοῦ Συνεδρίου*, *Herakleio* 1976, 2, Athens 1981, p. 550-570.

38. According to the census records of Trivan the Cocco family belonged to a Venetian noble family of Canea (Nobili Veneti), M.I. Manousakas, 'Η παρά Trivan ἀπογοραφή τῆς Κορήτης (1644) καὶ ὁ δῆθεν κατάλογος τῶν κρητικῶν οἴκων Κερκύρας, *Κορητογρ* 3 (1949), p. 45.

39. On Byzantine private wills (number and qualifications of witnesses, publication of the will) see G. Maridakis, *Τό ἀστικὸν δίκαιον ἐν ταῖς Νεαρᾶς τῶν βυζαντινῶν αὐτοκρατόρων*, Athens 1922, p. 260-271, § 48-51. See also K. Amantos, *Περὶ τῶν βυζαντινῶν διαθηκῶν, Πεπραγμένα τοῦ Θ' Διεθνοῦς Βυζαντινολογικοῦ Συνεδρίου*, *Θεσσαλονίκη* 1953, 2, Athens 1956, p. 281-287. D. Simon, *Erbvertrag und Testament, ZRV* 24-25 (1986), p. 291-306. On monastic typika and testaments K.A. Manaphes, *Μοναστηριακά τυπικά-διαθῆκαι*, Athens 1970. C. Galatariotou, *Byzantina Ktitorika Typika: A Comparative Study*, *REB* 45 (1987), p. 77-138. Thomas - Constantinides Hero (eds), *Monastic Documents* (n. 20). On the legal aspect of the typika I. M. Konidares, *Νομική θεώρηση τῶν μοναστηριακῶν τυπικῶν*, Athens 1984.



Fig. 5. Cyprus, Kakopetria, St Nicholas tes Steges, narthex east wall. Supplicants and dedicatory inscription. 14th century.

ter death. They are found in humble buildings and represent collective (Polemitas, Boularioi) or individual (Klenia, Belisirama, Pano Phloria) donations by villagers (Polemitas, Boularioi), local archontes (Belisirama), priests or monks (Ortaköy, Pano Phloria). The mural paintings of these churches reflect a simplified version of monumental art as developed in the large artistic centres of Byzantium and are provincial in quality.

Recording the content of official documents on the walls of churches or monasteries testifies to the need for protecting the granted property from falsification and for securing their possessions from sale, appropriation or usurpation, by notifying them to a wider audience. Moreover, a document on parchment or paper may easily become lost or destroyed whereas a register on stone or on the walls of a church or

monastery is more permanent. The authors of monastic typika are well known to have taken care to secure their documents by writing exact copies (*ισότυπα*) for use whenever needed and by keeping the original copy in the skevophylakion of the same monastery or of another monastic foundation which was thought to be more secure<sup>40</sup>.

Donations and wills of individuals in the Late Byzantine provinces were as a rule written by ecclesiastical notaries, the so-called *nomikoi*, in the presence of a small number of witnesses<sup>41</sup>. The existence of *nomikoi* in remote villages, like those in the Mani, is documented by a collective dedicatory inscription in the church of Saints Anargyroi at Kipoula (1267) where the donor who offered the greatest sum of money was an *anagnostes* and *nomikos*<sup>42</sup>.

In the case of documents reproduced on the walls of a

40. Manaphes, op.cit., p. 109-110.

41. For the notarial system in Byzantium see H.G. Saradi, *Notai e documenti greci dall'età di Giustiniano al XIX secolo. I: Il sistema notarile bizantino (VI-XV secolo)*, Milan 1999. For references to ecclesiastical *nomikoi* in notes of codices in the Palaiologan period see Evangelatou-Notara, *Χορηγοί-Κτήτορες* (n. 19), p. 31, 40, 42, 73. For the middle Byzantine period ead., «Σημειώματα» ἐλληνικῶν καθδικῶν ὡς πηγή διάτην ἔρευναν τοῦ οἰκουμενικοῦ καί κοινωνικοῦ βίου τοῦ Βυζαντίου ἀπό τοῦ 9ου αἰώνος μέχρι τοῦ ἔτους 1204, Athens 1982, p. 96-98. Cf. J. Darrouzès, *Recherches sur les ὄφφικα de l'église byzantine*, Paris 1970, p. 119-120, 258, 381.

42. Kalopissi-Verti, *Dedicatory Inscriptions* (n. 23), p. 67-69, no. 19.

42. Karposh, V. G., *Byzantinovye inskripcii* (M. 25), p. 57-58, no. 19.

43. F.I. Uspenskij - V.V. Benešević, *Vazelonskie akty. Materialy dlja istorii krestjanskogo zemlevladeniya v Vizantii XIII-XV vekov*, Leningrad 1927, no. 26 (ca. 1260) four φωμάρια, no. 31 (ca. 1301) five φωμάρια, no. 111 (1254) two χοίνικες, no. 55 (ca. 1250-60) four χοίνικες, no. 46 (1264) two fields of one μόδιος each, no. 110 (2nd half of the 13th c.) a field of one μόδιος, no. 14 (ca. 1262) and no. 16 (ca. 1245) fields of two μόδιοι. For the surface measures φωμάριон (1/6 μόδιος) and χοίνιξ (1/4 μόδιος) see E. Schilbach, *Byzantinische Metrologie*, Munich 1970, p. 283 and *passim*.

church, no notary and no witnesses were needed since the ecclesiastical community as a whole served as a witness of the recorded agreements. It seems reasonable to assume that there also existed notarial acts written on parchment or paper recording the same donations, as in the case of chrysobulls or ecclesiastical acts which were also inscribed on the walls of a church.

The poverty of the members of Late Byzantine rural society, often attested in the church inscriptions mentioned above, is also testified in notarial documents of rural communities. For example, the acts of the monastery of Vazelon or Zaboulon in Pontos include donations to the monastery of St John the Baptist, dating from the thirteenth to the fifteenth century, in the form of small landed property. This property was offered for the salvation of the donor, his parents or other relatives and included land varying in size from four or five φωμάρια – or from two or four χοίνικες – to one or two μόδιοι<sup>43</sup>. Donations of single trees (walnut and apple trees) are also attested in the same documents<sup>44</sup>.

Donations registered in church inscriptions did not take the form of a notarial act, i.e. neither names of witnesses nor the name of the notary were included. Nevertheless, they shared some common features with notarial acts, such as the cross at the beginning and at the end of the text as a holy sign invoking God as a witness<sup>45</sup>. Another common feature shared by notarial acts and certain of the aforementioned documents related either to donations or to wills<sup>46</sup> were curse clauses. They were written at the end of the text and served both to protect the beneficiary (i.e. the church or monastery) and to warrant the will of the donor or testator. The

origin of maledictions in Byzantine texts goes back to ancient Greek religious and legal practices; maledictions were common in the Old and New Testament and very widespread in Early Christian funerary inscriptions<sup>47</sup>. It has been pointed out that curses were widely used in Byzantine legal texts such as decrees, in imperial acts such as chrysobulls especially from the twelfth century onwards, in oaths between state rulers, in documents of ecclesiastical authorities, in private transactions, especially wills, etc<sup>48</sup>. These maledictions aimed to secure the agreements or transactions against any infringement. Furthermore, dedicatory inscriptions of churches and notes in manuscripts often included the same kind of curses in order to secure ownership. Nearly all maledictions found in the documents of the present study contain the invocation of the curses of the 318 holy and god-bearing (Θεοφόρων) fathers who took part in the first Council of Nicaea. This was one of the most popular curse clauses in Byzantine documents and inscriptions<sup>49</sup>.

Among the above mentioned examples of wills, a problem arises concerning the wills of monks. Justinian's Novella 5, 5 (535 AD) forbade monks to write a will since the property they owned before taking the vows was transferred anyway into the monastery where they belonged. Leo VI's Novella 5 allowed monks to dispose by will the property they acquired after their entrance to a monastery<sup>50</sup>. Nonetheless, many examples of monks' wills dating from the twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth centuries have come down to us, in which no distinction is made between property obtained before or after taking the vows<sup>51</sup>. It should be noted in addition that according to Byzantine monastic typika private property,

44. Uspenskij - Benešević, op.cit., no. 114 (end 13th c.) a walnut and an apple tree, no. 175 (1449) a walnut tree. In document no. 10 (ca. 1435) a woman with her sons leaves her share of a walnut tree and another woman offers half a walnut tree.

45. Saradi, *Notai e documenti* (n. 41), p. 110-111.

46. See episcopal acts in the Metropolis of Mistra, inscriptions in the church of Sts Constantine and Helen at Ochrid and St Nicholas at Klenia.

47. R. Vallois, *Ἄγαι, BCH* 38 (1914), p. 250-271. J.G. Gager (ed.), *Curse Tablets and Binding Spells from the Ancient World*, New York - Oxford 1992. St.P. Dantes, *Ἀπειλητικά ἐπιγράφεις εἰς τάς ἑλληνικάς ἐπιτυμβίους παλαιοχριστιανικάς ἐπιγραφάς*, Athens 1983.

48. H. Saradi, Cursing in the Byzantine Notarial Acts: A Form of Warranty, *Bučavntiná* 17 (1994), p. 441-533. For curses in notes of scribes on codices of the Palaiologan period see Evangelatou-Notara, *Xορηγοί-Κτήτορες* (n. 19), p. 151-153. For the post-Byzantine period see P. Michaelares, *Ἄφορισμός. Η προσαρμογή μας πουνῆς στις ἀναγκαιότητες τῆς Τονοκοκοστίας*, Athens 1997, p. 168-175.

49. Saradi, op.cit., p. 506 and passim for examples. Evangelatou-Notara,

*Xορηγοί-Κτήτορες* (n. 19), p. 151.

50. A. Steinwenter, Byzantinische Mönchstestamente, *Ägyptus* 12 (1932), p. 55-64.

51. The acts of the monastery of Vazelon include several wills of monks (Uspenskij - Benešević, *Vaselonskie akty* (n. 43), no. 34, ca. 1264; no. 107, 2nd half of the 13th c.) and hieromonks (ibid., no. 12, 1435; no. 18, ca. 1260-70; no. 183, 2nd half of the 15th c.) as well as the will of a nun (ibid., no. 100, 1344). Wills of a nun and of monks are also included in the acts of the monastery of Panagia Lembiotissa near Smyrna, dated from the thirteenth century, MM, IV, no. 51, 1281, will of a nun leaving to the monastery of Lembiotissa a field and trees; no. 69, 1285, will of a monk leaving to the same monastery 46 olive trees with the land; no. 22, 1255, will of a monk leaving part of his property to the monastery, part to his family; no. 58 (s.a.), will of a monk leaving a field and a vineyard to the monastery of Lembiotissa, where he was to become a monk, and part of his property to his wife and children. Cf. the will of a nun (s.a.) leaving her property to members of her family, F. Trinchera, *Syllabus Graecarum membranarum*, Naples 1865, 551, p. 551.

though in principle prohibited, was allowed under certain circumstances, especially for monks and nuns coming from wealthy families<sup>52</sup>. In most cases the property of a monk was left to the monastery where he belonged, reflecting the prevailing practice in everyday life. This practice is also testified in wills recorded in the Late Byzantine churches, e.g. in Kleonia and in Pano Phloria.

Of special interest is the διαθηκῶν γράμμα of a monk of the year 1192 which seems to bear close similarities to the inscription of Pano Phloria Selinou in Crete. According to this document, included in the Acts of the monastery of Panagia Lembiotissa near Smyrna, the monk Gerontios left to the monastery of Hagia Marina τῶν Μήλου, which he himself had erected from its foundations by his own labour and expense, everything to be found in the monastery, i.e. animals, land, implements, ecclesiastical books, food supplies. All

this property was left to the monastery and to his son, also a monk<sup>53</sup>.

In conclusion: The literary and, in particular, the archaeological evidence of official documents painted on the walls or engraved on stone or on the columns of churches includes foundation charters comprising initial endowments to a church or monastery, later endowments or renewals, inventories of landed property and, in a few cases, lists of icons, holy vessels and liturgical books as recorded in monastic typika (*breibia*), as well as testaments of individuals.

It seems that the Middle Byzantine practice of registering imperial grants or acts on the walls of a church became widely disseminated in Byzantium in the Palaiologan period. The practice was followed by the Serbian rulers, and was also reflected in the donations of common people in the Late Medieval period in provinces either still belonging to Byzantium or under foreign rule.

## Σοφία Καλοπίση-Βέρτη

### ΕΓΓΡΑΦΑ ΣΕ ΕΠΙΓΡΑΦΕΣ ΝΑΩΝ ΧΡΥΣΟΒΟΥΛΑ - ΕΚΚΛΗΣΙΑΣΤΙΚΕΣ ΠΡΑΞΕΙΣ - ΒΡΕΒΙΑ - ΔΩΡΕΕΣ - ΔΙΑΘΗΚΕΣ

Το άρθρο πραγματεύεται μία σειρά επιγραφών σε ναούς, που αποδίδουν το κείμενο επίσημων εγγράφων, όπως χρυσόβουλλα, εκκλησιαστικές πράξεις, βρέβια, δωρεές, διαθήκες κτλ.

Σύμφωνα με τις γραπτές πηγές η συνήθεια αναγραφής επίσημων εγγράφων σε ναούς –στους τοίχους, σε κίονες, μαρμάρινες πλάκες κτλ.– ανάγεται σε αυτοκρατορικές χορηγίες και αποφάσεις της μεσοβυζαντινής περιόδου. Η συνήθεια αυτή υιοθετήθηκε στη συνέχεια από τους Σέρβους ηγεμόνες και άρχοντες και αργότερα διαδόθηκε και στον απλό κόσμο.

Όπως συνάγεται από τη μαρτυρία των μνημείων ιδιαί-

τερη διάδοση γνώρισε αυτή η πρακτική κατά την παλαιολόγεια περίοδο και μάλιστα όχι μόνο σε επίπεδο αυτοκρατόρων και ανώτατων εκκλησιαστικών αρχών αλλά και από την πλευρά του απλού λαού.

Η αναγραφή του περιεχομένου επίσημων εγγράφων, τα οποία αναφέρονται κατά κύριο λόγο σε παραχώρηση περιουσιακών στοιχείων, στους τοίχους ή στους κίονες εκκλησιών, φαίνεται να απηχεί την ανάγκη των μονών ή των ναών να διασφαλιστεί στο διηγεκές η περιουσία τους –κινητή και ακίνητη– χάρη α) στην αναγραφή σε ανθεκτικό στο χρόνο υλικό και β) στη γνωστοποίηση σε ένα ευρύ κοινό που χρησίμευε ως μάρτυρας.

52. Thomas - Constantinides (eds), *Monastic Documents* (n. 20), p. XXXIII-XXXIV.

53. MM, IV, p. 201-203, no. CXVII.